

seriously **strange** magazine

seriously Unidentified

UFO conference
Three years on

Also inside your
32 page
winter edition:

Fortean London:
Animal Ghosts

The Vanishing House
Ghostology - book preview

Fortean Dimensions in
Robot Evolution

Ursula Kemp and the
St Osyth's Witches

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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).

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The Mystery of the Bells

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

Roundabout 2000 BC the ancient Chinese developed their metallurgy to a point where it became possible to create the first bells. Within a very short while after the first one was made, bells became an essential part of culture and religion. Bell-making and bell-ringing developed into very important skills that spread from ancient China to Asia and then over to Japan.

Long before the Christian era – where bells and churches are almost inseparable – bells were associated with pantheons of ancient gods. The biggest bell ever known to have been made was known as the Great Bell of Dhammazedi, which weighed about 300 tonnes. Thieves who stole it to melt down into cannon for their ships lost it at the confluence of the Bago and Yangon Rivers, off what is now known as Monkey Point.

Bells feature as the central aspect of many curious mysteries.

Victor Hugo, alleged to have been one of the Grand Masters of the Priory of Sion, may have based his famous Hunchback of Notre Dame story on a real-life hunchback who worked in the 1820s as the foreman of a government-run sculpting workshop which helped to restore Notre Dame after the French Revolution. Quasimodo and the mighty bells on which he swung were central to Hugo's great Gothic novel.

Bell mysteries are not always melancholy and pessimistic, however. The song "Serenade of the Bells" which Sinatra made famous many years ago concerns a young couple in San Juanita. The full name of the town is San Juan de los Lagos and it is situated in the north-eastern area of Jalisco in Mexico. The bells of the church there had been broken for many years, and the parents of the young couple who disapproved of their match, asserted that they would only give permission for the marriage if the bells rang. The heartbroken youngsters prayed desperately for the bells to ring – and they did! As in all good fairy tales, they lived happily ever after.

Many bell mysteries are associated with the sea. At Bosham in the Isle of Wight, there is a tradition that Viking raiders stole the great tenor bell from the village monastery, and made their way out to sea with it. The monks, however, rang a loud peal


on the other bells and the stolen tenor replied. It tore its way through the hull of the Viking longboat and sank it. The wreck and the great tenor bell are now said to lie beneath the waves of Bosham Deep which is also known locally as Bell Hole.

A further legend relates that centuries later the people from the Bosham area attempted to recover the bell. A local Wise Man told them that they needed a team of pure white oxen in order to drag the great bell from the depths. The attempt was going well until the rope snapped and the bell plunged once more into Bosham Deep. Close examination revealed that one of the oxen had a single black hair in its tail.

Another bell theft on the part of Viking raiders took place at Saint Govan's Head in Pembrokeshire. A beautiful silver bell was once located in a small chapel near the cliffs, and the raiders attempted to carry it away with them down the cliff steps. As they rested lower down, near the edge of a well, a miracle occurred. A huge stone wrapped itself around the bell, and then fell into the well, where it can still be seen. Traditionally, if this stone is struck, it gives out a metallic ringing sound – apparently emanating from the bell within it.

An interested group of ASSAP researchers might like to make some further investigations into these curious bell mysteries.



A silhouette of a person holding a camera lens against a background of blue and yellow geometric patterns. The person is wearing a dark t-shirt and is holding the lens with their right hand, pointing it upwards and to the left. The overall mood is professional and focused.

Return of the
ASSAP Training Weekend

S E R I O U S L Y

INVESTIGATING

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Book at:
assap.ac.uk/training

The ASSAP Training Weekend Marsh Farm Hotel, Wiltshire M4 J16, 19-20 March 2016

The ASSAP Training Weekend has, over the decades, prepared hundred of paranormal investigators to take on and handle cases.

The weekend focuses on practicing the skills needed to handle a client from start to finish including assessing a case, science and ethics, interviewing skills, analysing evidence and report writing.

Important to note this is not a 'how to' guide for how to run a group vigil with vigil attached. There are many commercial events companies that offer such experiences. The ASSAP Training Weekend is a client focused introduction to serious investigation.

The weekend is also very friendly with group work and social opportunities galore.

Your journey will include a pre-training phone conversation to make sure this is the right course for you, a pre-training learning book and assessment, NRPI e-learning assessment and a post-weekend report.

You also get the opportunity to become an ASSAP Approved Investigator (AAI*) and the weekend acts as a good foundation for undertaking ASSAP's accredited distance learning qualification.

Please note these events can sell out very quickly. Past Training Weekends have sold out in less than a week.

Costings if booked in December: £25 (no Lunch) / £39 (including two Lunches) / £54 (including two Lunches and Dinner)

Costings if booked in January: £35 (no Lunch) / £49 (including two Lunches) / £64.00 (including two Lunches and Dinner)

A two-course evening meal is available for £15 on Saturday, which will give you the option at checkout to Book with Lunch. Book accommodation direct with the Marsh Farm Hotel for £50 a night. Ref: ASSAP Training Weekend Telephone Bookings: 01793 842800 The course runs from Saturday 10.00am to 6.00pm and Sunday 9.30am to 5.00pm

Book at: assap.ac.uk/training

You need to be a member of ASSAP to attend the Training Weekend and join the NRPI. If you're not currently a member you can join at www.assap.ac.uk/join

*Note that AAIs will eventually be phase out and be replaced by Qualified Investigator status. No refunds after 16th January. If following the

pre-training phone conversation we find that this is not the course for you we will issue a full refund. Your place will be cancelled without refund if you do not complete the NRPI E-Learning and assessment by 19th February or if your behaviour breaches an acceptable standard before or during the event.



SERIOUSLY Enchanted

12 MARCH 2016 , THE
ACADEMY, HOLIDAY INN, BRISTOL

MINI PROGRAMME

Belief in and stories of powerful supernatural entities probably date back to the dawn of humanity. Highly magical and often capricious... helpers, adversaries and even victims... claims of meetings between such beings appear in the earliest written accounts of most cultures. All such beings are ascribed magical powers and have the attributes of both material beings and spirits. In all instances they are perceived with some degree of fear, humans crossing them at their extreme peril.

It is from such fears that the most commonplace name for these entities derives from.... the fair folk, or "the faeries". In Northern Europe both the English, Nordic, Scots and Irish all have tales and myths about them, each with their specific name "elves", "huldufólk", "Sidhe" and "Sith". Recorded folktales (that often dealt with them) became known as "fairy tales" in common parlance and are popular with children to the present day. Once treated almost as demigods by pre industrial cultures , the image of these once ominous and capricious entities became, within popular culture (and thanks to sanitised versions of folk legends) were transformed into diminutive winged beings akin more akin to naughty children; a process

consolidated with decades of various Disney cartoons.

As society became more technologically sophisticated and isolated from nature "the faeries" seem to fade into the mists of discarded past belief. However, people still claimed to meet such beings. The "fair folk" had not gone away....

Seriously Enchanted , to be held on the 12th March 2016 at the University of the West of England (UWE) in Bristol, England will discuss the origins, evolution and continuation of belief in "faeries" and similar beings. What is the context of these experiences, and do such encounters tell us about other paranormal and inexplicable phenomena and reality in general?

Gods? Spirits?? Subconscious Constructs?? Come to Seriously Enchanted and make up your own mind

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Finding Us

The Academy is accessed from the second floor of Holiday Inn, Bond Street, Bristol.

Useful Information

Physical tickets are not sent ahead of the event, but you can print out electronic tickets. Your name will

be on a list on the door, on registration you will be given a name badge to give you access for the day.

Registration

Registration will take place between 10-1030am but if you are joining us later (you can come in any time you like) you can register at any time.

Travel

The Academy is 15 minutes walk from Temple Meads train station, which is on the main line running east-west from London and north-south.

Parking

There is free car parking for delegates at the adjoining NCP. Take a ticket on entrance and exchange it for a pre-paid ticket at the end of the day at the second floor reception.

Evening Social

We will have an informal social with cash bar for the evening social and a full menu.

Refreshments

We will be selling tea and coffee throughout the day. The Academy is adjoined by a bar and restaurant for meals and snacks.



SERIOUSLY *Enchanted*

12 MARCH 2016 , THE
ACADEMY, HOLIDAY INN, BRISTOL

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OFFICIAL NOTICES RELATING TO THE RUNNING OF ASSAP AS AN INCORPORATED CHARITY

As of close of nominations for director positions on 31st October 2015 the only nominated received were the automatic nomination of serving and co-opted members of the ASSAP Board of Directors. As fewer candidates stood for positions than positions available all candidates are declared elected unopposed. These candidates were Dave Wood, Nicky Sewell, Christian Jensen Romer, Becky Smith, Anne Radley, Robert Moore and Norie Miles/Jonathan Fost (job share). ASSAP's accounts are available to all members. These can be found on the members area of the website under Reports and Annual Report 2014. Please email chairman@assap.ac.uk if you have any questions.

London's Animal Ghosts

by Paula Dempsey

London is cold and misty today; looking out of the window at dusk on the day after Halloween I hope it isn't too late for a spooky story or two. London has rather too many ghosts for its own good and many of them are famous. Most interesting, perhaps, are those phantoms that aren't people at all. Here are some stories about London's animal ghosts.

Three Bears, but no Goldilocks

The Tower of London has a dark history. What with all the murdered princes and beheaded queens it is arguably Britain's most notorious prison. It wasn't just people that were confined there, though. Between the thirteenth and the nineteenth centuries the Tower was the home of the Royal Menagerie. It began in 1210 with the arrival of a number of lions; a species which was to be kept at the Tower throughout the history of the Royal Menagerie.



In 1251 Henry III was presented with a polar bear by the King of Norway. The poor beast was kept at the Tower in depressingly cramped conditions for a creature accustomed to a territory of many miles in its native Arctic. Some relief came from its daily swims in the moat, where the bear could catch its own fish suppers. Eventually the bear died but its spirit may still linger. According to the Historic Royal Palaces website, a soldier guarding the Martin Tower one night was frightened to death by the spirit of a huge bear. I'm trying to work out how anyone

knew there was a ghostly bear involved. Presumably the soldier used his dying moments to communicate the circumstances of his demise to someone? Or perhaps another guard with a more robust constitution also witnessed the ursine apparition?

Another contender for the bear in the tower is Old Martin, a grizzly bear who arrived at the Royal Menagerie in 1811, a gift from the Hudson Bay Company to George III. Although it did not have the freedom of the moat granted to his predecessor, Old Martin's story ended a little more happily. A number of animal attacks, on other animals and on human visitors led to the sensible decision that the Tower of London was not a suitable place for large exotic animals. In 1832 Old

Martin moved, along with the other captive animals, to the newly founded London Zoo at Regents Park where he lived the remainder of his days, dying in 1838.

Although the history of both these bears is well-known, in my view the strongest contender for the ghost-bear of Martin's Tower is one of those wretched creatures kept there for the sport of bear-baiting. Bears and lions were forced to fight with dogs in the seventeenth century. Could the anguish of one of these bears have somehow become imprinted in the very stones of the Tower, only to be picked up two hundred years later by a sensitive young soldier?

Another bear story comes from Chelsea, where a spectral creature was seen on a number of occasions in the garden of a house in Cheyne Walk. In his book *Haunted London* Peter Underwood says that the area had once been part of grounds of a royal palace which, again, had been a site for bear-baiting.

A Ghost Chicken, Seriously

This story is from John Aubrey's *Brief Lives*. In the winter of 1626 the scientifically-minded Sir Francis Bacon and his friend Dr Winterbourne were travelling through Highgate by coach while debating Bacon's theory that extreme cold would be an effective way to preserve meat. Winterbourne remained unconvinced so Bacon proposed a practical experiment. The coach was halted and the two men went in search of an experimental subject. A chicken was purchased from a rustic local and said unfortunate fowl was duly slaughtered and packed with snow. A further casing of snow was applied to the outside. The frozen carcass may well have outlasted Bacon himself, who caught a severe chill that night. Feeling too ill to travel home he spent the night at the Earl of Arundel's house in Highgate. All might have been well had not the bed been damp. The chill worsened and Bacon died soon after. Strangely, it is not Bacon but his chicken that now haunts the area around Pond Square, fluttering partially-plucked wings and clucking dolefully.

The spectre was seen several times in the twentieth century, once by an airman in 1943 who first heard, but did not see, a carriage approaching. As the sound of the wheels died away the man saw the chicken flapping about before vanishing. The chicken was frequently sighted in the 1940s, particularly by ARP wardens out after the blackout. The last reported sighting was by a courting couple in the 1970s. The chicken appeared, flapped about a bit and then vanished through a wall, apparently. In many of the accounts, the fact that the chicken was running in a circle was emphasised.



CC Image: Rick&Brenda Beerhorst
Above image: Mary Evans Library

seriously unidentified?

ASSAP'S FIRST UFO CONFERENCE

...Three years on

by Robert Moore

In November 2012 ASSAP hosted the Seriously Unidentified conference, an event conceived to discuss and hopefully answer this significant question;

Has ufology somehow “lost its way”? Is the subject in a state of flux, stasis or terminal decay? If Ufology is dying what is the cause? If the subject remains a living concern why does it give an impression of decline? If changing, what is the profile and process of this transformation? (Moore, 2012).

The conference reached - the albeit very general conclusion - that, yes, while there was indeed evidence of some decline there was, equally, indications of a process of transformation extending over a period of four decades from the 1980s onwards. Classic “flying saucers” have since 1989 have notably been superseded by “flying triangles”. The CE IIIs type entity encounters is now rarely claimed in either the UK or the US, but abduction claims have become commonplace. While Europe and the US no longer experience protracted waves of activity (termed “flaps” in UFO parlance) other developing countries such as Mexico, China and Russia are still host to them (i.e. Saunders, 2015).

While the British UFO scene has undergone a significant recession since the late 1990s, the US retains a thriving UFO movement, one featuring 1 week long UFO conferences and where a large national group - MUFON - have State investigation divisions as large (or larger) than some British national bodies. In the UK the impression is of a visage of sighting claims consisting of easily-explained low strangeness events. While this is largely also the case in the US, American ufology still uncovers significant events (Marsh 2013, 2013A).

One factor likely to engender this difference – highlighted during the summary discussion section held at the end of Seriously Unidentified – was the decline in the number of active British UFO enthusiasts. It may be that the cohesive, united disposition of American Ufology provides an infrastructure facilitating the location and recording of UFO claims. British Ufology, on the other hand, is more insular; consisting of independent researchers who often focus on a singular topic or region. There are, of course, exceptions, as exemplified by British groups such as BUFOG and LAPIS - but these are mainly regional bodies, whose activities are confined to specific portions of the UK.





Photo by David Feast. UFO Conference from left to right; Mike Oram, Malc Robinson, John Hanson, Peter Paget, Matt Lyons, Steve Mera, Kevin Goodman

Two other factors are nonetheless shared by both US and British Ufology; the significance of online modes of information exchange and emphasis on researching decades-old classic cases. While both these factors are cited as influences contributing the “death of ufology” why, then, has American ufology not experienced a similar recession of interest as the UK? The answer may lie in the fact that the concept of “ufology”, as far as Britain was concerned a 1950s era American import and its cultural moment, at least in regard to the UK, has now passed. There is a dearth of British Ufologists, then, for the same reason there is a dearth of “Teddy Boys” or hippies in 2015 - our society has simply “moved on”. Our country (unlike the US in regard to MUFON) lacks an active support structure to sustain interest in Ufology. The only growth in any British UFO scene has been with “experiencer” groups, where reputed “UFO abductees” contact other abductees for support. UFO researchers are often bypassed in this instance, being often dismissed as self-interested and mercenary and lacking validity due to their status as non-experiencers. Hence, one main outlet for growth present within British Ufology is, alas, often closed

to the average researcher - unless he or she is perceived as sympathetic to experiencers, or is one themselves.

Thus, due to a low level stream of relatively unimpressive recent “UFO” reports it seems British Ufology, more than ever, focuses on classic examples of UFO activity - most notably the Warminster “Thing” and the Rendlesham Forest incident.

The events at Warminster relate to supposed manifestations of the so-called “Warminster Thing”; the popular name given to a series of disparate anomalies associated with UFOs continuing into the early 1970s (Shuttlewood (1967) Dewey and Ries (2006), and Dewey and Goodman (2015)). The events occurring around this small army garrison market town in Wiltshire, located on the edge of Salisbury Plain, made it the most significant places in British Ufology during this era.

The initial “Ur-source” Warminster Thing event reputedly occurred on the 25th December 1964, relating to a woman on her way to Holy Communion being allegedly assaulted by bizarre sensations of pressure and an anomalous aerial crackling noise. Similar claims were made by others over



Mural photo: “Heart of Warminster”

the next few months; accumulating in sightings of anomalous lights and reputed daylight photographs of “flying saucers”. By late 1965 local journalist Arthur Shuttlewood, initially sceptical of these sighting claims, became convinced of their actuality, hosting many eventful skywatches over the next decade. Shuttlewood further reported a meeting with an entity he took to be an extraterrestrial, while others claimed to see mysterious tall beings clad in balaclavas, likewise also taken to be “UFO entities” The British UFO Research Association played a significant role in highlighting these reputed anomalies, assisting with a now infamous discussion of “The Thing” held at Warminster Town Hall to holding various mass skywatches; the most notable of which occurred over a long August Bank Holiday weekend in 1965... (Shuttlewood (1967), Dewey and Ries (2008).

By September 1966 Shuttlewood had reputedly seen around 322 UFOs, and further claimed that 800 out of Warminster’s (then) population of 11,000 had alleged observations of “UFOs” (MUFORG 1967). By the late 1970s Shuttlewood had authored six books on the subject before retiring from the subject due to declining health and dying in 1996.

Sceptics were, however, convinced Shuttlewood and others had simply misinterpreted natural objects such as satellites, army flares and similar army pyrotechnics. Likewise, the various “daylight disc” photographs were claimed to be fabrications – with some overt confessions of same to support this suspicion (Dewey and Ries (2008)). During the early 1970s David Simpson and a group of sceptical UFO enthusiasts conducted a series of hoaxed events to determine the reliability of both witnesses and UFO experts alike; finding them both wanting, at least to his perspective (Clarke, 2015). UFO incidents in Warminster continued until the early 1980s, albeit waning throughout that period, albeit with some notable exceptions (Goodman 2008). But in the past decade interest in “The Thing” has been reignited and various skywatches held around the town - albeit to a lesser degree than in the 1960s. The most recent conference, Warminster 2015, was held in the town on the 29th August 2015 to celebrate “50 years of the Thing”. Here, Kevin Goodman (the conference organiser) explains what took place....

“We decided to approach Warminster Council way back in May 2014 with the



ASSAP President, Rev. Lionel Fanthorpe

idea of holding a ‘celebration’ of 50 years of the enduring mystery in 2015. The council were initially responsive, but later withdrew any support for the project, citing that any such publicly funded event would be unpopular.

By a complete freak accident, we mentioned the event in passing to the hotel we were staying in. They embraced the whole concept, and the conference then began to take shape. One of our overriding ideals was that we wanted a number of speakers who were actually involved in the Warminster Mystery, and apart from myself, we were lucky enough to get Peter Paget [he of the “Fountain Centre” fame] and Mike Oram, a Warminster veteran from the early 1970s. It soon became apparent that the event was going to be popular, and indeed turned out to be a sell out.

In the week leading up to the conference, there was major press interest, with the “Sun” carrying a two page spread on Warminster’s rich and varied UFO history. It was a pity that they managed, in typical “Sun” style, to get the date of the event wrong! BBC South West, the “Wiltshire Times”, ITV South and BBC Radio 4 all carried news items on the event, mirroring the press hype during the 1960s. As UFO conferences went, everything passed off smoothly, with every person enjoying the packed day of speakers. We

aimed to make this non-profit making, and at the time of writing this, the “Old Bell’s” nominated charity “Help for Heroes” will benefit by around £800. I’m off to a dark room now to recover, vowing “never again”, but as they say, “never say never”...” (Goodman, personal communication 2015).

Here, we have an example where a group of enthusiasts have managed in this instance to reverse the narrative of decline within British Ufology by employing interest in classic British UFO heritage. Furthermore, Warminster, a town once embarrassed



Dave Wood introducing the conference



Conference delegates

by its “flying saucer” heritage is now seemingly awakening and conducive to the tourist potential of such interest. But whether this has the potential to kick-start new interest in Ufology remains to be seen...

Another focus of Ufological interest in the UK is the the now world-famous events that comprise the “Rendlesham Forest incident” that occurred in December 1980 (Pope 2015). The zone host to those events has since become a mini Warminster, with sky watches, reputed UFO events and paranormal style occurrences (Kinsella and Butler 2013). In recent years some significant percipients of the Rendlesham Forest Incident have openly spoken of their recollections of those events, most significantly Col. Halt in July 2015. While the region does attract visitors due to its special ufological status the Rendlesham scene seems more insular than Warminster and lacks its appeal.

Another individual looking back at the past is Dr. David Clarke with his book “How UFOs Conquered the World” (Clarke 2015). This provides both a perspective on Ufology and a critical overview of Ufology. The book provides an overview of the subject from a British perspective; ranging from the subject’s historical origins to issues of perception, misperception, hoaxing, and folklore. Other significant elements of the UFO subject - such as governmental UFO studies, crashed flying saucer claims, contactees, Christian interpretations and the issue of “alien abductions” - are equally well covered.

It contains much novel information; providing overviews of the British Flying Saucer Breaux (BSFB), the Christian UFO Research Association, the Aetherius Society and MoD’s UFO monitoring attempts. David Simpson’s UFO faking activities at Warminster is documented in some detail. Of equal interest are interviews with a diverse collection of significant – but often overlooked - figures such as the late “Father Paul” (Eric Inglesbury), Dennis Plunkett and the late Alex Cassie; an individual who assisted the MoD in technically assessing UFO sightings during the 1960s.

The book adopts a critical approach towards UFOs, citing as justification for its stance the lack of conclusive physical evidence, the evidential weakness of eyewitness testimony and numerous examples where supposed

UFO events had prosaic explanations. More significantly, Clarke feels there is little (if any) significant difference between “UFO” events deemed to have obvious rational solutions and those promoted as “True UFOs” by various commentators. Indeed, the author highlights examples of seemingly inexplicable “UFO” incidents that were later shown to have prosaic causes on more detailed investigation.

The author emphasises the importance of cultural and sociological factors in relation to UFOs, and suggests the first “flying disc” events melded with concepts as diverse as science fiction, post war technological developments (most notably space travel and aviation), fears of nuclear annihilation and a subliminal desire to find new gods better fitting a more scientific age. These factors gave cultural momentum to what would have otherwise been just another transient wave of “aerial wonder” reports. Indeed, these are likely factors that engendered interest in Ufology among enthusiasts during the 1960’s, 70’s and 1980s. The fact that interest and concern in such topics have waned since the 1990s may be a major influence in the decline of interest in Ufology within the UK. Differing cultural factors in America, on the other hand - such as a greater degree of religiosity, an active space programme and a powerful military – may have mitigated any recession of interest there. The existence of an influential national UFO group (MUFON) to



Guest speaker: Ian Ridpath

organise enthusiasts and sustain their interest and forums to promote their work (commercial and otherwise) further acts to support and sustain such activities in the US.

Serious works such as *How UFOs Conquered the World* may act to ignite academic interest in the subject, one which has been lacking for many years. One serious issue that British Ufology must address is the dearth of intellectual interest in this topic, a situation not helped by the poor quality of debate regarding UFOs, both online and via the printed word. Unfortunately while many Ufologists want engineers and space scientists to become involved in the subject it is more likely, in the 21st century, to attract the “soft” sciences such as sociology, anthropology and psychology. While it is possible for an academic renaissance of interest to occur it may well be viewed as an unwanted one by at least some UFO enthusiasts, given that such sciences will interpret the subject in a manner at odds to their perceived physical reality.

Conclusion

It appears that Ufology is not “dead”, merely amended or at the most muted in some aspects. Other countries are host to forms and levels of significant activity associated

with the US and British UFO scene of the 1960s and 70s. Other areas of the subject, such as abductions, have experienced growth but are often off-limits to “non-experiencers”. While this article has not examined the reasons for such changes one suspects cultural factors to be responsible. One aspect notable in relation to the UK has been the decline in the number of enthusiasts willing to commit themselves to UFO sighting investigation.

The current British UFO scene is one that seemingly promotes passive interest and nostalgic overviews of the past; unlike the MUFON dominated scene of America that encourages and supports investigation of current sighting claims. While British Ufology seems to have suffered a recession of interest since the inception of the 21st century, the potential does exist for either percipients or academic interest could invigorate the subject over the next few years. It may be significant that the last era of its prominence has been attributed to Chris Carter’s TV series “The X Files” that (albeit incidentally) promoted interest in Ufology during the mid to late 1990s. A new series of the X Files is due to air soon; it would indeed be ironic that a work of fiction could rekindle the flames of enthusiasm where history, incidence and considered discussion have so far failed.



The conference also raised money for Hope for Heroes.

Thanks to all who contributed!

Thanks also to Kevin Goodman for his help with this article

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Photographic Ghosts

by Chris Jensen Romer

No not ghost photographs; we have all seen a lot of those, from the humble orb to the Brown Lady of Raynham Hall. Yes the whole question of ghost photos is vital for what it tells us about the true nature of spooks, but it's not what concerns me today. Today I'm interested in ghosts who were photographs, or had the attributes of photographs, and what that may be telling us. I only have two from my own collection, but I have a feeling others exist. And the parallels between the two I have had of are striking.



Both were of women in “old fashioned” dress, and both were seen at night, while actively looking for ghosts in a ghost hunt, in old pubs. In both cases the percipient was on their own, and the room was dark except for light entering from outside. One case occurred in 1994 at the Old Bell Hotel, Dursley, and one occurred at a pub in Swindon. What makes these cases so fascinating was the appearance of the ghost, and what that may be telling us.

The first case occurred over twenty years ago, and I believe it made the pages of *Psychic News*. It was the same case that the medium Morven Alexander shocked me at by getting information right that I and others in the building believed at the time to be wrong, until Lionel Ayliffe a local historian revealed a coroner's record from 1904 to show that Morven was right where the legend was wrong, and she had almost perfectly given the name of a woman who had tragically hanged herself in the room ninety years before.

Still that story can be told another time – what is important is my very strong minded friend Huw had strayed downstairs in to the dining room, and suddenly turned and walked straight out past myself and Hugh (same name, different spelling!). Huw was extremely shaken, and remained so for hours – something of a cynic he observed that “only mad people see ghosts; and I just saw a ghost”. I don't know his opinion on the matter today, but he was pretty certain back then as to what he saw.

So someone on their own on a ghosthunt looks up and sees a spook. This is not very evidential. However what he saw was quite extraordinary – it was a woman, dressed as he said in the uniform of a maidservant of the turn of the century – but the ghost appeared as if it was a photographic negative, with black and white inverted. Now Hugh and I scurried in to the room as Huw came out quietly swearing to himself, and we saw nothing at all – Huw himself suddenly saw the woman standing as if against the wall as he turned in tot he room, then turned and walked out.

Could it be pareidolia? Just patches of moonlight, or an uneven wall surface, or light reflected off – well look, it was twenty years ago, and none of us present on the night knew what it was. Huw had broken the rule of never being alone, and we had no back up testimony from a second witness. He believed he saw something; that was clear – and he was insistent it was in negative, not a quality usually associated with spooks. (I did ask if it could be a Black lady, but Huw gave me a piteous look and said no, this was in full negative).

I'd pretty much forgotten about Huw's ghost; in those early days of my investigating career so much seemed to happen, and cases were so rich in fascinating phenomena, I really wonder what happened. (My suspicion is after 2003 and the Most Haunted inspired explosion of ghost groups mean cases are far less likely to reach my attention now, as a local group gets their first!). I have marked it down as an oddity. I seem to recall reading of one other spook in negative, possibly in a book called *500 British Ghosts*, but I don't have the book any more. Becky did not find any accounts in her research she says.

Then last night I was talking to my friend Sharon, a wise and sceptical ghosthunter, and a clever one. I'd say she was an excellent witness, and she told me a story in some ways similar. She is on a ghosthunt, in a room with the lights off, and they have probably been playing with a Ouija board. There are a number of people sitting around a table, and her daughter is opposite her, with another lady next to her – when suddenly she sees the ghost standing between, looking at the table, leaning forward as if looking at something lying on the table.

Now this ghost was not in negative – but while she appeared solid, three dimensional and lit appropriately to the room, she was sepia toned, like an old photograph.

Let's give her actual account;

"I happened to look towards Hayley who was sat opposite me and there was a woman stood behind her, this woman had a long skirt on, white high necked blouse and her hair was either pulled back or in a bun, I had a camera on the table in front of me but was in such shock at what I was seeing that I didn't even think about picking it up. As I was looking at this Woman, and I have to say it was a matter of 10-20 seconds, she looked up towards me, seemed to notice I was looking at her, gave a startled jump and vanished."

So the important bit is that like many apparitions, the spook here seems to be aware of Sharon – and in fact in the previous case, Huw said the lady looked straight at him. More often than not in cases it does appear the ghost is aware of the percipient, something that would appear to be a fatal objection to popular notions of ghosts as stonetape/recordings/residual energy).

Now Sharon raised this with me because I had reposted an article from the ASSAP blog on why people don't take ghost photos when they see a ghost given the near ubiquity of smart phones now (worth going and reading the ASSAP blog, as always!) but I was of course fascinated as I always am. I thought again of Huw's spook – in both cases the person who saw the ghost was aware a woman in "old fashioned dress" was purported to haunt, and then saw her, so maybe just a hallucination induced by expectation?

Then I started to really get interested, for Sharon stated "Weird thing is, the woman had no colour to her, she was all in sepia tones." Like an old photograph? And of course, if we are asked to imagine an Edwardian maidservant or Victorian lady, and we are not followers of Downton Abbey or Upstairs, Downstairs where have we seen one? In photographs.

Now this must be a fairly short piece – I'm the Editor so I can't take up half the magazine – but there has been a debate in medical circles since the 1890s onwards on how the images in hallucinations are generated. Do we create entirely new things, or do we simply draw images from a stock of memory, perhaps forgotten? In my dreams I'm fairly certain that many of the places I visit exist, though the geography is scrambled, and I pass from my old school to my old college to houses I once lived in through streets I once knew. Dreams are a form of hallucination; so say

many experts like GNM Tyrell and the Sidgwick Group are ghosts. The sceptic and the early psychical agreement are in agreement that the ghost is a thing of mindstuff (so there can be no ghost photo, for there is nothing for light photons to bounce off); the difference is the psychical researchers believed the hallucination could contain accurate information, and was an objective entity seeded by a telepathic impulse. (Myers suggested in his theory of the meta-etheral plane that ghosts might be recordings in the ether, in something similar to stone tape, but we will pass over that – the recording still replayed telepathically).

Now those of you who read or heard my first or second conference presentations at Seriously Strange will know that I seriously doubt this "ghosts as hallucination" idea

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explains all spooks. Sure a hallucination can appear to turn and look at you, or look startled, because your brain is creating the hallucination, and yes you make it so that. The apparent independent consciousness is a trick of your brain to make the hallucination seem more real. Now of course an awful lot of spooks are seen collectively, by more than one witness at the same time, which creates difficulty for the hallucination hypothesis, and some are seen over the years by many people who did not know about the earlier witnesses experiences. However to me the real issue is the seemingly physical nature of some hauntings, and physical phenomena like objects moving. To get round this problem hauntings have been quietly sectioned off – cases where the phenomena occur over

many years and appear place centred – and ditto the poor old poltergeist. I think some of our categories do violence to the evidence, and the prevailing theoretical framework distorts the evidence – but enough banging my drum, you have all heard this from me before!

What is striking is in this case the experiences both suggest a hallucinatory element to the experience. That does not make it necessarily less real – though the cases would have been stronger if they did not know the ghost's supposed appearance before seeing it – but are these "ghostly photographs" an attempt by the brain to respond to something, maybe an information point or thing, that is sensed? Now I question hallucinations as an explanation for all cases, but astonishingly recent research heralded on the IFLS webpage had rediscovered the SPR's 1894 discovery in the Census of Hallucinations – that normal sane people while awake commonly experience hallucinations.


So where Sharon and Huw's spooks simply expectation induced hallucinations? And are hallucinations therefore drawn from our existing visual stock of memories, so some will always look like old photos? If so I would predict that white, sepia and negative ghost had their heyday in the period 1900 to 1945, before Television, and especially colour TV gave us a much better stock of images to work from. I'm not entirely convinced by this "stock footage" explanation, or the perversity of Huw's brain choosing a negative image but it deserves to be broached. And I'd be very interested to hear of any more "ghostly photograph" cases that you may have come across.

Fortean Dimensions in Robot Evolution

by Dr David Sivier

*This is one of those
Damned facts Fort wrote about.*

*'By the damned,
I mean the excluded' ...*

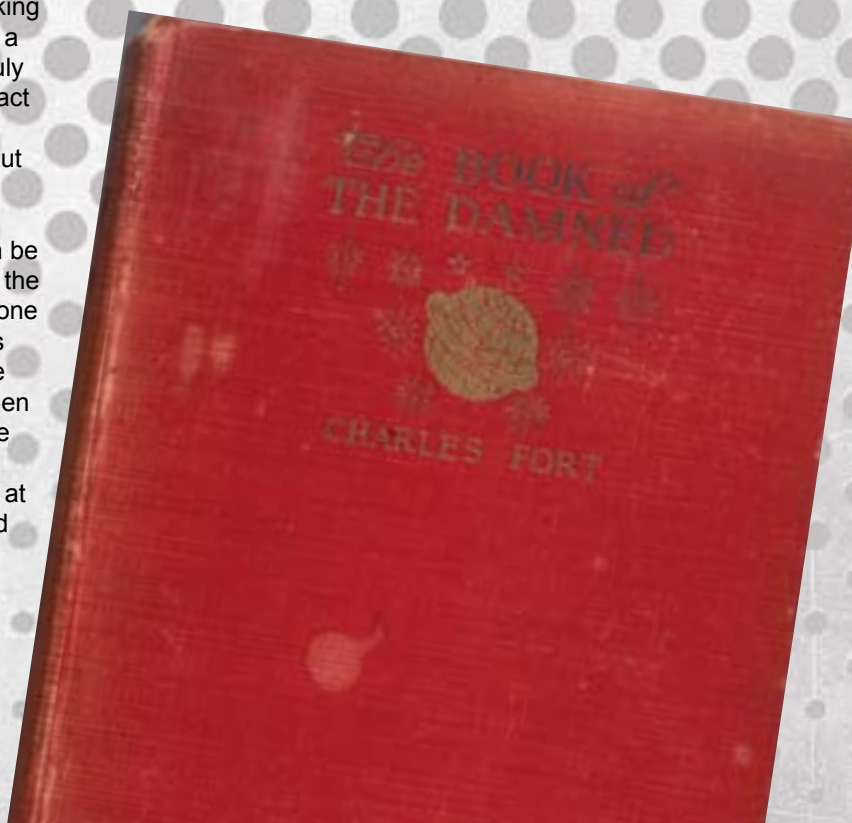


Way back in August 2002 Radio 4's long-running science programme, *The Material World*, did a feature on robots inspired by biology and the natural world, following the experiments of Gray Walter and his mechanical 'turtles' at Bristol University. During the host's discussion with some of the scientists and engineers working on in the field, a bizarre and truly Fortean little fact came up. The host asked about robot evolution, and the process by which one machine can be made to build another. One of the scientists speaking said, yes, they had done it, but they didn't like it. The programme's host inquired why that was. 'Because we don't understand it', came the reply. When the host asked why that was, he got the answer 'Because we can't see how it works. When you take it out and look at it, some of the parts aren't connected to anything.'

For a long time now there's been the prediction that Artificial Intelligence will one day outstrip humanity's natural intelligence, and that when they start designing other robots they

may be of so complex and scientifically advanced that human scientists won't be able to understand how they work. But this is something different. This states that machines now are capable of constructing other machines, whose operation is a mystery because it appears to defy natural, scientific laws.

Fort's *Book of the Damned* is all about facts recorded by scientists, but which are excluded from scientific discussion and research because they appear to violate the official, accepted scientific consensus. This would appear to be another. Always assuming this is a real phenomenon, rather than false results due to faulty calibration or measurement of the equipment, or simple human oversight in



examining the machines' operation. It's possible that there may have been some contact somewhere between the supposedly disconnected components, but that this was missed by the people examining it.

But if it is a real phenomenon, then it raises all kind of strange, disturbing questions about the nature of reality, and the operation and function not just of machines, but of biological organisms and the whole natural order.

Firstly, it could be that the component functions, despite being disconnected, through some entirely subtle physical effect. Perhaps some of the electricity that should operate the device is getting to it through some process of transmission too subtle to have been observed by conventional science. Or its due to a weird kind of electromagnetic sympathetic vibration. Just as the strings on an instrument like a guitar or harp vibrate in sympathy when one of them is plucked, so the component duly responds in sympathy when the whole system, of which it forms an integral part, is switched on and begins to operate, despite being unconnected to the rest.

One the other hand, perhaps its a strange quantum effect, pointing to the existence of parallel realities. Just as the multiple interference patterns produced by the passage of a single electron point to the existence of the electron's possible path through multiple dimensions, and quantum computers may one day perform truly incredible feats of calculation through simultaneously accessing and calculating all possible states of bits of quantum information, so this may be a simple quantum phenomenon. The disconnected components operate, because somewhere in the nearby multiverse there are a series of possible realities in which the component has been connected, and operates logically. These quantum states have bled over into our dimension, to cause the disconnected machine to operate as if it were not.

This, however, raises awkward questions about the boundary between quantum effects in the subatomic and macro levels. So far, quantum effects are supposed to operate only at the level of sub-atomic particles, but not at the level of people, streets and buildings. An electron, for example, can be in two places at once before its wave function is collapsed through observation. People's cars, by contrast, remain stubbornly in one place, so that you can't be simultaneously parked outside the local supermarket while at the same time heading down the motorway to visit your aunt in Weston-Super-Mare.

Fort's Book of the Damned is all about facts recorded by scientists, but which are excluded from scientific discussion and research because they appear to violate the official, accepted scientific consensus.

It also raises further questions about teleology and ideal forms. The physicist, science populariser and cosmological and evolutionary heretic, Fred Hoyle, suggested that evolution could work teleologically, with organisms developing according to information received from the future. See his book *The Intelligent Universe: A New View of Creation and Evolution*, published by Michael Joseph in 1983, where he discusses 'quantum consciousness', 'information in living matter', and 'information from the future'. Hoyle was sceptical of orthodox Neo-Darwinian theory to explain the evolution of living organisms. His own position was a form of Intelligent Design, in which machine intelligences from elsewhere in the multiverse guided the development of biological organisms in the cosmos through seeding the universe with novel varieties of DNA. See his book, *Evolution from Space*.

It's fair to say that Intelligent Design is an intensely controversial and extremely heretical theory that has been bitterly attacked by the vast majority of orthodox scientists. Hoyle was an atheist, but the strong religious views of many supporters of Intelligent Design have led its critics to denounce it as 'Creationism in a cheap tuxedo'. Perhaps – and this is certainly stretching the theory, these machines are the result of subtle interference in our reality by the same machine

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intelligences Hoyle talked about, carefully twisting physical law in order to further the evolution of intelligent machines.

Or perhaps we do indeed live in a cosmos of Platonic forms. Plato and Aristotle both suggested that there was in addition to the material cosmos a universe of ideal forms, accessible only to the intellect. These forms were the templates for the objects and concepts of the material world, such as animals, but also abstract concepts like 'length' and 'beauty'. Aristotle himself compared the Forms and the teleological creation of

material objects to the mental pattern a sculptor has of the object he wishes to create from matter, such as rock, wood or gold. Perhaps somewhere out in the realm of intelligible forms there the Ideal Form of the robot, of which modern automatons are merely pale reflections. This Form nevertheless allows its material expressions to function, even when they're not entirely connected. So that, like Plato's chained men watching shadows in the cave, we in the physical world can perceive the existence of the intelligible world and its true nature.

This also leads on to something like magic. If inanimate objects can move and





Scientists on the programme offered no explanation for the weird phenomenon they had observed

operate, merely because their components are in the right place for them to operate, if they were connected, then it raises the possibility of sympathetic magic. This is the form of magic which operates through the similarity of an image or a process to the effect the magician wants to achieve. For example, the sorcerer wishing to inflict pain on an enemy may make an image of them and stick pins in it. You're even left with the possibility that images may weep, bleed and move, in imitation of real people, through their participation in their natures as their images. The rational explanation for weeping or bleeding statues, particularly in the ancient world, is that it was the custom for them to be richly painted and anointed with the fat of sacrificial animals. The tears or blood oozing from them could simply be these fats or blood dripping down. And some of the statues that have done the same today could simply made or treated with substances that have similarly reacted, so that it just seems that the statue is shedding blood or tears. But the existence of machines that work, merely by conforming to the forms of those that do, suggests that some of these miracles may be genuine.

If all this is true, then we're back to a pre-modern, Neo-Platonic cosmos operating at one level partly through the processes of sympathy-antipathy, rather than the completely mechanistic models of contemporary theorists and cosmologists. It's a view closer to Newton's original idea of the operation of the universe and the nature of universal gravitation. Newton was, like many natural philosophers of his time, interested in Neo-Platonism. He's been described as 'the last alchemist', and his theory of gravitation was based on the Neo-Platonic idea of sympathy-antipathy. And it was attacked by other scholars of the time for the same reason Einstein was most definitely unhappy with quantum theory: it allowed 'spooky action at a distance'. And if there is a Neo-Platonic element to the universe, then this may not necessarily contradict mechanistic interpretations

of its operation, in the same way that Relativity has transcended as superseded Newtonian physics, but has not disproved it. It has merely added another level to the operation of reality.

All this is, naturally, pure speculation, some of which is extremely far fetched. I'll make it plain that the scientists on the programme offered no explanation for the weird phenomenon they had observed. As I've said, they made it plain that they were completely stumped by it. My guess is that if the phenomenon they observed really exists, then it's probably due to something Richard Dawkin's termed 'perinormal', rather than 'paranormal' – some stranger quirk of quantum physics, perhaps, or the sympathetic transmission of power through related, but not connected systems. Whatever the cause, the effect should be worth examining and investigating, because of the insight it could possibly give to the nature of reality beyond what is currently known, or expected to be known, by science.

Always assuming that the facts haven't been Damned in the meantime.

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Volunteer spotlight: Alison Topham

This edition we get to know a little about ASSAP's Seriously Strange magazine designer and (long-suffering) wife of Ian Topham!

What provoked your interest in anomalous phenomena?

I guess I've grown up hearing some ghostly encounters or unexplained noises from my family - my dad used to work on a plant nursery in Hartlepool, Tunstall Manor Gardens, and at one of the old cottages you could hear footsteps on the path leading down the side of the building. According to Dad, in rain you'd hear splashes, or in winter, you'd hear ice cracking, but no-one ever came to the door. Mum also had a ghostly encounter at a hotel she worked in - seeing a lady in grey seated at a table she went through to the bar area to let the staff know a customer was in, however the lady had vanished. The Grey Lady was seen in the same area by others.

So I think I'd always had an interest but it wasn't until meeting Ian at Art College in Carlisle that I became a bit more involved. Ian was a member of the ASSAP 'Northern Group' so I came along to an overnight vigil at the Commodore Club.

This was my first taste of staying up all night and sitting very still for 45-minute shifts whilst recording any odd noises and temperature changes. Thankfully the lights were left on as I can scare myself walking in to the kitchen if it's dark.

I liked the approach taken by the group - no assumptions were made and at the end of each 'shift' notes were compared to rule out noises from the other groups and see if similar experiences had occurred. To this day I'm not entirely sure what led the group to go on a ghost vigil there, and I still like that fact. I had no external influences on my imagination, feelings or reactions.

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

A) Hello, have you met Ian...?! It was more a case of join in or be left out!! ASSAP was the group Ian was a part of therefore I became a part of it. Albeit unofficially for many years, I don't think I actually became a paying member until joint membership was introduced.

Since I'm a Graphic Designer by profession it made sense to help out more on the magazine side. Working for a local media publishing group also gives me great access to stories and

paranormal accounts published in Cumbria.

In my design team I also work alongside fellow ASSAP member, Stephen Graham, so I expect to get him involved in future magazine layouts!

B) I think the social side is what I enjoy most - I've enjoyed helping out at the conferences and the odd training course I've been at. Taking on the magazine layouts this year has been a good challenge and I've enjoyed working with Sarah and now CJ in pulling the pages together.



Tim Birch, myself and Ian Topham on a blustery day during our walk of The Ridgeway back in June!

What's your favourite area/ category of weirdness?

I'd have to say it's good old-fashioned ghosts, myths and folklore. In my nineteen years of tagging along with Ian to various vigils at Muncaster Castle and meeting so many friends that have had experiences I'm sure something is going on - but I've no idea what.

I think that's why I like ASSAP so much - it allows for individuals to present their own findings and beliefs, encourages exploration of ideas and actively generates discussions and debates. And who doesn't love a heated debate at a conference!

Coming to conferences have certainly widened my interests. I particular enjoyed Seriously Staked - and I'm sorry to be missing Seriously Bewitched as this is another area that I'm particularly interested in.

Recently we watched Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (filmed whilst in production at the Old Vic this year) - set in Salem during the witchtrials and based on real-life events it was an intensifying performance from the cast. The power of hysteria, mixed with strong beliefs and subsequent breakdown of a small community was dramatic and thought-provoking.

What's your favourite animal?

Monkey - has to be really, given that I lived in Hartlepool while I was younger. I'm a proud 'monkey-hanger' - just look it up :)



The Vanishing House

by Chris Jensen Romer

Many, many years ago I wrote a book with Eric Quigley and Nicola Talbot (nee Jordan) named Spectral Suffolk about the ghost stories of that county. This blog entry interested Dr Carl Grove, whose careful research in to the case is published in the accompanying issue of ANOMALY. It seemed fitting therefore that Seriously Strange should carry my original account this issue.

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ROUGHAM GREEN, SUFFOLK: We have all heard of haunted houses, but who has ever heard of a house that is a haunt! Yet for over a century this is exactly what has

been occurring on the stretch of road between Rougham Green and Bradfield St. George. Our story begins in 1860 when a Mr Robert Palfrey was out in the fields on a warm June evening, putting the finishing touches on a haystack. He shivered as the evening grew suddenly chilly, and then was shocked to suddenly see a large redbrick house with gardens in full bloom, where there had been no house a moment before.

The next sighting was in 1912 and happened to the great grandson of Mr Palfrey, Mr James Cobbold. While riding on a pony trap alongside the village butcher George Waylett both were startled by a sudden cool breeze and drop in temperature, along with a whooshing noise suggestive of air being displaced. The pony reared in panic, and the butcher was thrown to the ground. Any thought of helping him vanished from young James' mind as he saw a great three storey Georgian mansion, complete with grounds, where moments before there was only the fields. As he

turned round to see what had become of George the house was enveloped by a mist... and then simply not there. The butcher was unimpressed. "That's the third time I've seen that happen" he stated, and picked himself up out of the road.

Mr Cobbold was to tell his story in the pages of the magazine *Amateur Gardening* in 1975, and stated that he knew of two more sightings from the previous ten years. Our next sighting however dates from an October afternoon in 1963 when a young school teacher and her teenage ward were exploring the countryside in the vicinity of Church Road. Walking down a path they came upon a greenish yellow wall to a large estate, and shortly thereafter passed the great iron gates. Making a mental note to enquire as to who lived at the grand house, they returned home. Over evening tea however they were surprised to be met with a general shaking of heads. There was no house of that description in the neighbourhood, and attempts to retrace their steps left the two women totally confused. In 1934 the story was featured on a BBC radio broadcast and to this day no solution has been found.

Mr Edward Bentley was as a young man in the early 1940's employed by Aubyn Davies, the fashionable gentleman's outfitters of Bury St Edmunds. In those days Mr Davies himself ran the business and in the summer months after harvest time it was his habit to deliver catalogues of his clothes to all the houses in the rural districts surrounding Bury, as the worker's received a harvest bonus payment and often acquired new outfits then. On a hot sunny afternoon Mr Bentley, Mr Davies and another lad were making deliveries and driving down Southall Street when Edward spotted a large Georgian style house set back from the road. He called out to Mr Davies, who reversed the car, and found... nothing. Ashamed, Edward put it down to a trick of his mind until one day many years later when discussing these things the authors related the story of the vanishing house. Edward pointed out the exact spot where the house was seen before, near Colville Grove...

The vanishing house sounds like it may have a prosaic explanation. In the 1950's a similar example of phantom scenery was located by a diligent SPR researcher following up the case, down a slightly different road to that the witnesses believed they had followed. It is also worth noting that the house normally appears on bright sunny days, and this led experienced psychical researcher Tony Cornell to investigate the area with a view to establishing if there was any similar property in the area. As it happens a large house does stand relatively close as the authors ascertained by field research, but it does not correspond with the detailed descriptions of any of the witnesses. We have deliberately not given those details here, so that if anyone else sees the house we can establish its identity and the strength of their claims by comparison. Tony, who is still active today and is among Britain's best field researchers of the paranormal, could not find a solution.

This fascinating story does not appear in any of the standard books on British hauntings but in the few cases where it is mentioned one fascinating claim is usually repeated, namely that no building of the nature described ever stood on the site. Yet this assertion is very doubtful, for it seems to stem from the fact that the excellent local historian Mr Leonard Aves and Mr James Cobbold were unable to find the house marked on a map dating from 1885, some 25 years after the 'ghost house' was first seen... I would refer the curious reader to maps extant in Suffolk County Record Office in Bury St Edmunds. The 1815 map of Southall Street left us unsure, but an earlier eighteenth century map seems to show a large house in roughly the right place. I say roughly because the family coat of arms could indicate the house stood anywhere in a three mile radius, the map being more pictorial than diagrammatic. This offers superb possibilities for a fascinating piece of research.

The authors conducted their own enquiries. Firstly we carefully examined the accounts, and were delighted to find that the seeming contradiction in the colour of the house can be explained by the fact that Miss Wynne and her pupil were apparently on a footpath that ran along where we may presume the back of the estate was, and thus saw different terrain from the other witnesses. Our next move was to explore in detail the location. We swiftly discovered fragments of red brick and pan tile, although we felt they were probably of comparatively modern manufacture and not that uncommon in any field. Then as we walked through a copse towards the road where most of the witnesses were, a realisation struck us. There is a path down the centre of the

wood and it is slightly lower than the sides, which appear banked. Furthermore the largest trees seemed to stand on either side of the banks. We were in a long overgrown avenue, similar to that described by Miss Wynne and her pupil! Frantically scraping away the earth bank we found underneath what was clearly a foundation of a wall, made of crumbling greenish-yellow brick. It is the author's intention to pursue our enquiries with the landowner this summer, and we would welcome any offer of assistance! Did a house really stand on this site in the early 1800's, as its architecture seems to suggest? We are still not sure, but perhaps the mystery is starting to unravel.

The Vanishing House offers an intriguing glimpse of a bizarre possibility. If the house really did displace air, it is presumably physically present. Is it, just possibly, usually outside time and space as we know it, a kind of homely Brigadoon? The question it raises is obvious. What if we were to enter it? Where would we go when it vanished. Would we return many years in the future, or simply die of starvation in some unknown part of space? Are the inhabitants still living on within, ageing only a few minutes each decade, waiting till they return to earth full time? CJ's facetious suggestion involves a doctor with a floppy hat, long scarf and strange metallic dog who drops in for a quick pint now and again!

As he turned round to see what had become of George the house was enveloped by a mist... and then simply not there. The butcher was unimpressed. "That's the third time I've seen that happen" he stated, and picked himself up out of the road.

Ghostology

This month sees the release of ASSAP member and veteran ghosthunter **Steve Parsons'** new book *Ghostology*. Steve kindly provided us with an exclusive excerpt from the new book, to share with Seriously Strange readers. Like his previous book this one is available from Amazon.co.uk if you would like to read more!

GHOSTOLOGY - What is a Ghost?

That infernal question that all who are engaged in psychical re- search and specifically spontaneous cases of apparitions and hauntings have been striving to answer for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Some may say that serious science really only took an interest in trying to answer the question in 1882 following the formation of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). Before then the question wasn't asked, as society generally accepted ghosts and spirits as part of their (unseen) world or was only occasionally considered by philosophers and men of religion. This notion is untrue, for as long as mankind has existed ghosts have been part of our shared human experience and there have always been those who would seek to try and understand such experiences. Of course there are many who already claim to know what ghosts are. Spiritualists inform us that they are the trapped souls of the deceased unable or unwilling to move on to the higher planes of existence. Parapsychologists offer the opinion that ghosts represent nothing more than hallucinations or some other un- kind trick of the mind. There are countless paranormal investigation teams, throughout the USA, Britain, and further afield. Many of these amateur investigators have developed their own theories and notions about the nature of ghosts and how they manifest, theories they derive from their investigations or television ghost hunting shows and from sharing their ideas and evidence via social media and the internet.

Ghosts Exist

Every day people experience ghosts. They see ghosts, they hear ghosts, and, they interact with ghosts. There are many definitions of what ghosts represent and most of the definitions make assumptions

that are based upon general notions or sometimes the beliefs of the person writing the definition. According to the Oxford dictionary a ghost is: "An apparition of a dead person which is believed to appear or become manifest to the living, typically as a nebulous image". But there are plenty of examples in which apparitions of living people have appeared and plenty more in which the apparition is far from nebulous. Parapsychology considers the study of ghosts to be related to aspects of survival beyond death but there is little to indicate ghosts are visions of the returning dead. They may equally well be hallucinations, anomalies of time and space, or something else entirely. In 2002, parapsychologist Ian Baker¹ offered the definition of a ghost as being: "A sensory experience in which there appears to be present a person or animal (deceased or living) who is in fact out of the sensory range of the experient..." But people have witnessed ghosts of vehicles and described smells of burning timber, and oil, and by what mechanism can a person have a sensory experience that is in fact outside of their sensory range?

In truth, all these definitions show that when it comes to the experience of ghosts we are usually either just guessing or imposing our own beliefs and ideas onto the question. Whenever we talk or write about ghosts, are we actually considering the same phenomena? A flitting shape seen out of the corner of our eyes, the solid appearance of an armour clad Roman soldier, translucent figures that walk noisily or glide silently across floors only to disappear through solid walls; all are described as ghosts. The word 'ghost' may therefore best be considered to be a generic expression; an all-encompassing term to describe



1 Baker, I. S. (2002). Do Ghosts Exist? A Summary of Parapsychological Research into Apparitional Experiences. In J. Newton (Ed.). *Early Modern Ghosts*. Durham, UK: University of Durham.

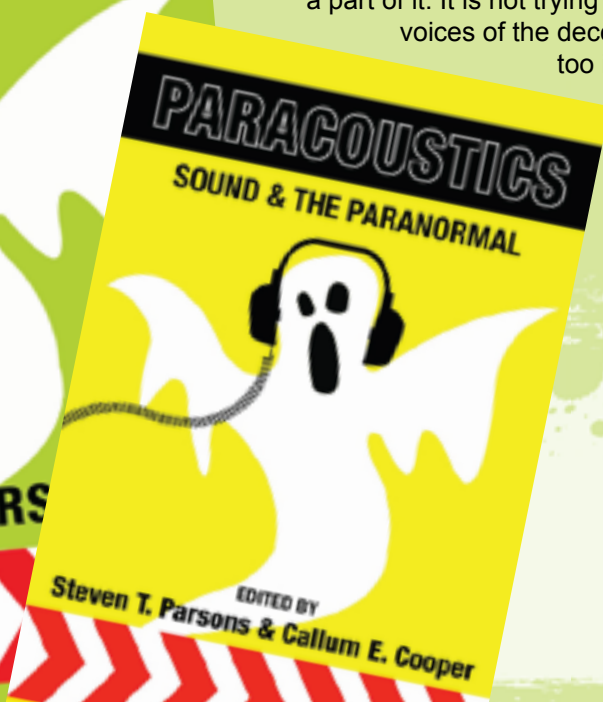
Some sensation or sensory experience that we are unable to explain by normal means.

In the hunt for ghosts many different methods have been employed. Good old-fashioned séance techniques and other methods drawn from Spiritualism still prevail. Ouija boards and dowsing with pendulum, crystal, or rods continue to be popular tools of the ghost investigator. Modern technology has allowed us to peer into the darkest cellar and the spookiest hiding place of ghosts using infrared and thermal imaging. The electromagnetic spectrum is routinely scanned for the energy used or manipulated by ghosts and spirits using a variety of meters; whilst the voices of the dead are listened for intently using modified radios and audio recorders. All so far (sadly) to no avail. Despite claims to the contrary by numerous investigators, we still lack that most crucial item of equipment - the ghost detector! But, that is hardly surprising when one considers that it would be impossible to create a device that has the ability to detect or measure something we know virtually nothing about. It is a truth, perhaps not universally acclaimed, that after so many centuries of study by countless investigators and amounting to millions of man-hours of research we still do not have an answer to the question, what is a ghost? But should that mean we should cease searching? No, of course not.

Ghostology

People continue to see ghosts and ghosts continue to be a fascinating aspect of our humanity and one that deserves to be studied. Such phenomena are generally described as being spontaneous i.e., they are unplanned, unexpected, or unsolicited. Ghosts and their associated phenomena and experiences represent a unique subject for investigation and study. Ghost investigation is often confused with Spiritualism (which is in reality a religion), mediumship, or the survival of bodily death. Ghost investigating is also frequently confused with parapsychology, which is the academic study of psychological or mental phenomena that are generally ignored by orthodox psychology. Ghost investigating certainly takes account of both spiritism and parapsychology but it out of necessity it also draws upon the sciences, engineering, and humanitarian disciplines too. In reality, ghost investigation is an area of research that is distinct and separate. Those who investigate ghosts are required to conduct much of their research in conditions that lack many of the formal experimental controls that science usually demands. Ghosts do not appear on demand in the laboratory, they cannot be predicted. Ghosts are reported in busy modern shopping precincts, derelict and ancient castles, in fact, ghosts are reported by night and by day under almost every imaginable circumstance. Such situations do not lend themselves to the rigours of scientific control, yet the ghost investigator must be able to work through the chaos in order to obtain useful and usable information. Ghost investigators have to take account of the need to record and document unusual and unexpected human experiences and they may have to document and examine the history and geography of a location. They are required to obtain and record objective measurements of environmental changes and they have to be able to conduct their research under conditions that most others would consider to be chaotic and un-conducive to accepted methods or techniques.

The study of ghosts, or Ghostology, is not trying to capture apparitions on camera, although that is sometimes a part of it. It is not trying to record the sounds and the voices of the deceased or of spirits, although that too is a part of it. Ghostology is the holistic study of a fascinating aspect of our humanity, a shared human experience that dates back to the earliest civilisations and is common to all of them.



A look at Electronic Voice Phenomena

of Bubbles, Salads, and Models by John Mizzi

So here I am having spent 14 years in Paranormal Research. I am not a well known character, so now you can get to know me a little better. I am an Electronics Technologist with a background in sound and digital computing as well as mechanics with a wife, two children, one dog and one cat.

Out of my years in Paranormal Research I found out pretty quickly that the most responsive form of evidence gathering was Electronic Voice Phenomena. So I have spent a lot of my time with that particular aspect. I have learned a lot through evidence gathering and study. I feel that careful study of EVP can lead into some great insights and take us farther into the realm of the Paranormal with confidence. Ahead are some ideas you may not agree with but I beg you to keep an open mind and to quote a worn out nineteen eighties phrase; "Think outside of the box."

Lets look back.

I am not going to bore you with a bunch of history lessons. For those of you in the know about EVP you already know that one of the great pioneers of EVP capture is Friedrich Jurgenson (1903-1987) and he was a true Renaissance man, He did everything; he was a Painter, a Musician, an Archeologist and a Film / Recording Artist. Let's take a closer look at that. He had lots of stage experience, and he probably knew his equipment very well. Although I am not as extensively trained as Jurgenson I too have a background in recording and I know that on that fateful day when Jurgenson captured his first EVP he was trying to record bird songs. The type of Microphone he was using was probably a Shotgun Microphone. This is what was typically used on sound stages and most notably wildlife recordings. The Shotgun Microphone is very directional (picking up sounds from only its very front) and highly sensitive (It can pick up sound from longer distances). I believe he also used an Uher reel to reel tape recorder which is a far cry from what we use today but this recorder would have had a very good frequency response. (It can capture more frequencies in its recordings). It would also be very clear playback as these were used for studio recordings. So what's the point of all this? Jurgenson was using very clean, very sensitive, and very directional equipment. Those EVP were coming in wall to wall!

How many people in the paranormal field have given any thought to what equipment he was using that day or how that equipment operated? All we care about is that he got disembodied voices on tape and that alone is fantastic, right? So it is. Then what happened? How did we go from super clear recordings to White noise, Echo, and Vocabulary generators? Are we thinking outside the box or are we creating for the sake of creating?

The Paranormal Bubble

So what the heck is a Paranormal Bubble ? It is difficult to explain EVP without one. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out why EVP sounded so different. Why did EVP have such odd characteristics?

I have found that EVP can be recorded at a faster rate or a slower rate. It can also be recorded at different amplitudes and intonations; then I thought what could cause that? What changes the sound from the time it is generated to the time it reaches our ears? Then it occurred to me. THE BELL JAR!

It is simple physics that in a vacuum sound cannot be heard. This is because sound waves need air to travel. This usually is demonstrated by placing an alarm clock in a bell jar and extracting all the air. Soon you will no longer able to hear the clock. Then I got to thinking, "What if there were different atmospheres surrounding Paranormal Activity? If

there was a bubble that surrounded the manifestations as they appear, and inside that bubble the atmosphere is different, the sound waves would still reach your ears as they left the bubble. They would, however, be distorted depending on the environment, so sound waves will travel differently in different mediums and they would distort even further when they make the transition from their atmosphere to ours—just like waves crashing on the shore.

This Hypothesis works great for EVP but to further strengthen my argument let's look at some of the other things that a different atmosphere could cause. Have you ever heard of investigators not feeling well during investigations? Light headedness or nausea or even passing out are common and could also be due to lack of oxygen. This could occur in that bubble. How about when the hairs start to raise on the back of your neck or your arms? Ionized atmosphere could cause that also. This could explain hot or cold spots as the temperature inside the bubble could be vastly different than the existing atmosphere. This is a strong argument for my hypothesis.

Ghost Psychology

I have recorded many EVP in my time. Some depressing, some shocking, but every single one of them has something to say. Yet it is not just words. What is said and the tone and delivery all give me clues. I just don't stop at receiving an EVP and then posting it to YouTube so all my friends can hear it. I want to analyze what they are saying and what their mood is.

What is the most common EVP phrase? You know this one. "GET OUT!" is one of the most common phrases I get. I also get cursed at and told to leave. Why is that? I firmly believe it is just what it says; they don't want to be bothered by you. To them you represent everything they had to leave behind in this world and they miss it very badly.

I have also been told to not leave on several different occasions. I believe it is because those ones are lonely and again miss this world very much. It is very sad and not a good prospect after death.

I have noticed that most successful EVP capture occurs outside. (this is possibly due to the bubble dissipating quicker into our atmosphere). It is also more successful in conversations. Just the same as when you are holding a conversation with someone, you will hear them interject words between yours. I believe this is due to them still wanting to be part of our conversations, but they don't want you to know. So what is the best way to capture them on recordings? Do not let them know you are recording them. If you wanted to comment on a conversation but not be heard what would you do?

You would whisper, and what do a lot of EVP'S do? Just

that. I would imagine they would be a bit of a distance from you also if they didn't want to be heard, just like a songbird will sing its song, but will remain a safe distance from you. Now let's go back. What was Friedrich Jurgenson doing? Recording bird sounds!

Early in my investigations I had the opportunity to gather EVP in one location. I went back several times over months to record EVP. One of those times I decided to try an experiment. I had three tape recorders with three identical microphones. I handed the other two recorders to two other investigators and I kept one for myself. We stationed ourselves about three to five metres apart. I asked the question, "If there is anyone that has something to say please say it now ". At that point a response was recorded in a whisper; "We're here". It was pretty fantastic that we got that response in the first place, but the really unique thing was that we could differentiate levels of volume between the recorders. Mine was the loudest, the next person was much less pronounced, and the third had nothing. I realized that this implied positioning, and that what was being recorded were actual sound waves. The sound could only travel so far before it fell out of the range of the Microphones, and that was the key.

Paranormal Activity is still bound by the laws of Physics.

This is a very bold statement but I firmly believe that this is true. I believe that Paranormal Activity has Mass, and that Mass can be manipulated. I also believe the voices although disembodied are still Sound Waves created by that Mass. The idea that the voices are being recorded proves that to me they are not being imprinted on tapes. Now we are using digital recording and we are still hearing these voices. The diaphragms of the Microphones are still vibrating and the Microphone is still converting those vibrations to a electrical signal. (The basis of most Microphones).

When I was a child, I had the unfortunate experience of growing up in a haunted home. Although these experiences left me scarred for the rest of my life, they also provided me with insight into the Paranormal that other people may have not had the chance to experience. One of the more gripping memories is of waking up in my bed one night and feeling an indent at the side of the bed. So much so that I kept rolling toward the lower part. I was too terrified to look, but I knew something was there. On another occasion I also woke up to having my sheets being pulled down toward the end of my bed, I had to physically hold them from slipping further until I screamed loud enough to wake up my Father who came running in and turned on the light and it stopped. This for me is the strongest argument that ghosts have mass. In both instances it exerted force to influence objects (and scare

the hell out of me!)

Tainting the evidence

So over the years since Jurgenson, many have come and gone and each person has attempted to add to or change the way we gather evidence. I cannot fault them for trying a better way but have we been moving in the right direction? Just because we change an idea or a method it doesn't mean that it is an improvement.

Lets start with examining the work of Konstatin Raudive (1909-1974). This Scientist first became interested in EVP after reading Friedrich Jurgenson's book, *Voices from Outer Space*. This inspired him to make his own recordings. He recorded well over 100,000 tapes of disembodied voices. Raudive was convinced that White Noise was instrumental in recording of the voices. (White Noise is the culmination of all frequencies pushed together). Back then he probably thought that white noise was used as a carrier of the voices. Today it is thought that White noise is converted to voice by the Paranormal Activity, and we will talk about that in a moment. Raudive went so far as to use AM radio tuned to "off" stations. Many people questioned his work, and I can think of several flaws that might have occurred. The worst one was when he was asked to attempt recording in a environment of blocked AM radio signals and of course received nothing. All his work was tainted as the radio signals could have been recorded ruining any real evidence he may have gotten. Such a shame! To this I say, even though bad evidence is gathered it doesn't mean that good evidence was not collected. EVP may have been collected DESPITE the improper methods used. We will never know for sure.

Remember what I said earlier? Paranormal Activity is still bound by the laws of physics. I am pretty sure that I can't make objects move with my mind. (I have tried and failed) and I am pretty sure no one else has. I also don't believe I can take the frequencies from white noise and form them into a coherent language. I also don't believe that Paranormal Activity can manipulate electronics to the point of selecting words from a vocabulary to form answers, especially when I don't even know what words are in that vocabulary, unless I can read computer data bases with my mind (and I can't). I do believe however that many people believe this to be true but without anyone asking the right types of questions it will never be resolved.

I repeat. Even though bad evidence is gathered it doesn't mean that good evidence was not collected. EVP may be have been collected DESPITE the improper methods used. We will never know for sure.

So whats the point?

I think it's time we take all these hypothesis and start to make use of them. We now have all of these devices

that are to help the spirits talk, such as the ghost box, the Ovulus, the SB7. These devices all seem to work but how much of it is Paradolia or Radio Signals or real EVP? The problem is we can't tell. The evidence is muddled and subjective and leaves much to the imagination which makes it unreliable. What if it was crystal clear? What if it was at least as clear as possible? Given the timing of the paranormal Bubble (Remember it dissipates over time providing less distorted voices), let's remove all the white noise and the radio signals and the vocabulary generators. What does that leave us? Pure unadulterated sound, and clear voices. This would probably make the Sceptics a little more comfortable. I also feel that it could greatly improve communication with the other side as well as the Sceptics.

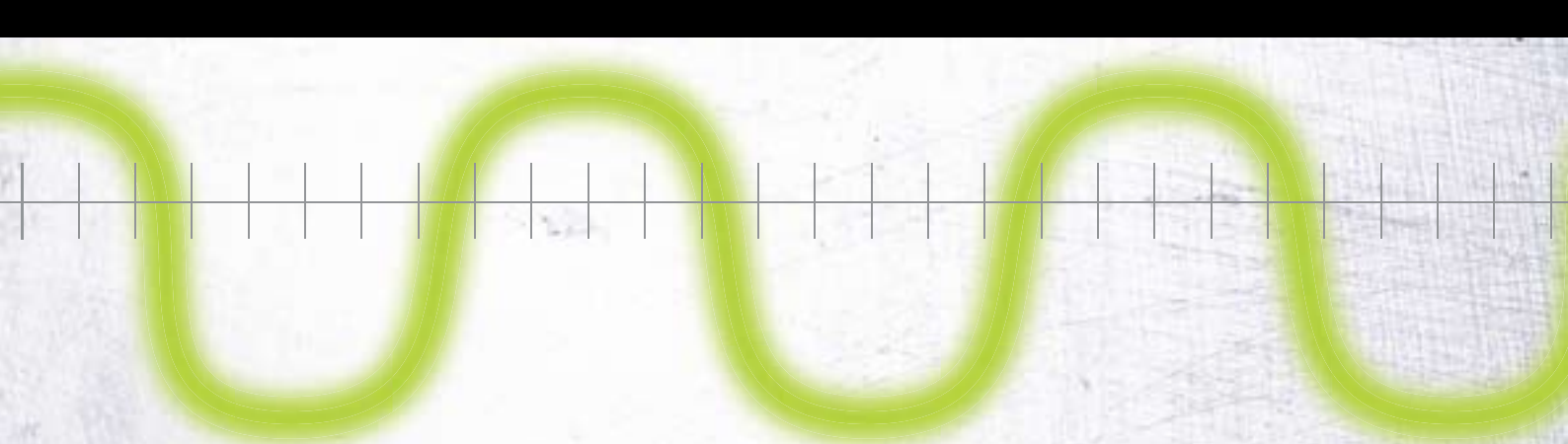
How do we do that? We need to look at how the equipment we use works. Unfortunately a lot of people spend a lot of money on detection and evidence gathering equipment without understanding how they work or even what they are supposed to be doing. Try to find equipment that you feel might be able to sense what YOU think would be good indicators of Paranormal Activity.

For example; a sensor designed to indicate your own body's response to the Paranormal like your heart rate or oxygen level might be useful.

Very early on I decided that I was going to take a different route. Since I already had an interest in audio electronics and a bit of education I analyzed the devices available at the time and found nothing that would suit my goals. I decided to create detectors that would pick up sound from great distances as clearly as possible. Try to find people who possess the necessary technical skills to corroborate on your projects and if you have a group ask them to join.

The salad bowl.

When I first got involved with Paranormal Investigation, I vowed not to go bankrupt. Instead of investing in expensive equipment, I designed some based on proven devices that have been used for years. The easiest thing to build was the Parabolic microphone. It is perfect for my application because it can detect sound over long distances. Unfortunately finances were tight so the only thing I could use for a parabola was a metal salad bowl mounted on a broom handle. This device proved very useful with a special Microphone configuration but it sure got me a lot of laughs. I still have it. It certainly didn't look professional; however it netted some very clear EVP. Why was it effective? I believe it is because spirits cannot hide from it. If something was whispering, trying to be part of a conversation but not wanting to be heard, this would still hear it. This of course is far superior to the digital recorder type Microphones which are designed to only pick up human voice within a few feet. If something whispered 15 feet away the recorder, the Microphone would never catch



it but the salad bowl would. The digital recorder is still useful of course to make the actual recording.

Next generation.

That was a long time ago and since then I have developed several different devices but the original principles still apply. Just to let you know, they are not for sale. If you think that what I have written here makes any sense, and if you happen to be electronics savvy (novices look away), then research the internet for super sensitive listening devices. The net is full of plans for parabolic microphones and high amplification circuits. For the not so inclined, there are lots of places that sell scientific equipment. You would be able to purchase Parabolics from there. A few other things would work. PZM Microphones may not be able to pick up at as long a distance but they have the property of equalizing loud and soft sounds in a room. To pull this all together try to use Microphones and recording equipment that are sensitive to longer distances, with lower distortion and no adulteration of the sound. You will have to be more diligent in your evidence gathering practices. You will have to document every detail of your investigation and double check every piece of evidence with everyone involved.

The paranormal model.

When I receive an EVP there are a lot of characteristics that can tell me if they are genuine. Some of the more common traits are a shift in speed and pitch (either slower or faster), and strange intonations that are different from the inflections of normal speech with an emphasis on an odd part of the word. You will also find varying amplitude. This is probably due to the fact they are very far away from you or very close to you.

I have a recording of an EVP that was Clairaudient. I actually have microphones embedded in my hat (insert laughter here, but it works). I recorded something and it sounded perfectly normal. About 50 metres away in a wooded area adjoining where we were it occurred again. On the recording you can hear the first one and then the second one but the second one had to be boosted by ten decibels and it was echoing as it bounced off the tree line. I did not even hear the second EVP naturally as it was out of ear shot. It was only a few seconds between the EVP'S. This demonstrates that they can be at varying distances very quickly. It's something to think about.

A few years ago I read an SPR Journal article by Dr. Barrie Colvin. I was very impressed by his work and I contacted him about it. Dr. Colvin was able to prove that rappings created through past Poltergeist hauntings were of a paranormal nature. This has remained undisputed so far. With Dr. Colvin's permission I started using his work as a basis for proving that EVP voices are also Paranormal.

This is what I call the paranormal model and I use it to prove my EVP evidence.

Are they really Spirits?

Since no one has yet proven the existence of Ghosts it is difficult to prove that what we are hearing are Ghosts. Even Friedrich Jurgenson did not think of his EVP as Spiritually Paranormal; instead he thought they were Aliens. There is no doubt at least in my mind that we are recording Paranormal voices.

I have never been contacted through EVP by anyone I know who is deceased. What I can tell you is that I have received EVP that are speaking directly to someone (Who is still alive!) and address them by name, and I have one (Only one) That makes reference to a former deceased Historical person who used to live in the home where we were investigating. As I said before, they don't like us knowing they are there so I would imagine that information is not that forthcoming. As an example; I once received an EVP after asking "What year were you born"? The answer, to my chagrin, was " 2 ". Did I mention that EVP can be cynical?

Back to Spirit Psychology

If you want to speak to someone, and the first thing you say to them are questions without even introducing yourself or becoming acquainted, how do you think they would react? What if you angered them or started swearing at them? Here is a good one; what if you walked into a room where someone was and without saying a word placed a tape recorder there turned it on and left? They are already upset at having left this world and not being a part of it and you ask them what year is this or how did they die. Treat them like human beings and think about the way you are asking questions.

As an example; During an EVP session an investigator asked, "Do you like the cold?" I said to the investigator in response, "Isn't that a silly thing to ask a Ghost?" The investigator then changed the question to "Do you feel the cold?" Immediately it responded, "No"

In conclusion

I know this article might have been a bit long. It is difficult to fit 14 years of research into just a few pages. I also know that some of things I have written about might not agree with your point of view. I would, however, encourage you to assess these ideas for yourself. If you do, I am sure you will come to the same conclusions and you will find a few surprises that I haven't even written about yet. They are left to discover on your own.

Ursula Kemp and the St Osyth's Witches

by Ian Topham

In Chelmsford, 1582, fourteen women from St Osyth were put on trial. The charge was witchcraft. Ten of those women faced charges of 'bewitching to death'. Separate skeletons found in St Osyth during 1921 were thought to belong to two of these women, executed as witches.

According to the 'Suffolk Free Press Newspaper Archive' for 25 May 1921 'On digging sand at St Osyth workmen hitting something hard came upon a complete human skeleton, the skeleton was lying about 6 ft below the surface, the skeleton was not coffined, investigations suggest it is a woman who was fixed with an iron bar, it is thought the woman may have been a witch as in 1645 it is believed there was a rounding up of witches in this country.'

A skeleton was found in the back garden of Mr Charles Brooker, Mill Street, St Osyth which was said to be that of Ursula (or Ursuley) Kemp (or Kempe) (born 1525 – died 1582), probably the best known of the witches and Mr Brooker made it into a tourist attraction, charging admission to see it and selling postcards.

Ursula Kemp

Kemp was known in St Osyth as a midwife and someone who would heal the sick, but unfortunately she became involved in a feud with a local family and following some unfortunate deaths she was accused of witchcraft. The trial in February 1582 was overseen by Justice Brian Darcy and one of her key accusers was Grace Thurlow (or Thurlowe), a neighbour from St Osyth.

Grace approached Kemp when her son Davy Thurlow fell ill and Ursula helped the child (supposedly with incantations) and he apparently recovered. An argument erupted between Ursula and Grace when Thulow refused to let Kemp be the nursemaid for her infant daughter Joan. The young child at some point then fell from its crib and broke its neck. This probably spread to rumors about Ursula spreading. Grace again approached Ursula for healing when she became lame possibly with arthritis. Kemp assisted and the pain eased, however, another argument ensued when Grace refused to pay claiming she could not afford the requested fee. When the lameness returned, Grace blamed Ursula for her ailment, her sons sickness and the death of Joan, so she filed a complaint with the authorities.

She was also accused of the death of Elizabeth Letherdale, the daughter of Alice Letherdale. Alice had

refused to lend Ursula some cleaning materials and when Elizabeth became ill and died some time after Kemp was seen muttering or murmuring in her direction, it was clearly a case of causing death by bewitchment.

During the trial Darcy persuaded Ursula's illegitimate eight year old son Thomas Rabbet to testify that his mother used witchcraft and managed to get a confession from Kemp in private, possibly after promising leniency.

Through the testimony of Thomas and Ursula it became apparent that Kemp had four familiars, Tytтей (a male white lamb), Jacke (a male black cat), Pygine (a female black toad) and Tyffin (female gray cat) to which she fed cake and beer and her own blood. The trial confirmed that Tytтей (the lamb) had been sent to kill Joan Thurlow and Jacke (the cat) to kill her sister in law. The other two familiars were used to make people ill.

Obviously confessions such as these did nothing to dissipate the fear and hysteria associated with the witch hunts.

Ursula Kemp also named other witches from St Osyth who in turn confessed and named more. The other accused women who stood trial were Alice Hunt, Alice Newman, Elizabeth Bennet, Margery Sammon, Joan Pechey, Agnes Glascock, Cicely Celles, Joan Turner, Elizabeth Ewstace, Anis Herd, Alice Manfield, Margaret Grevell and Anne Swallow.

Ursula Kemp and Elizabeth Bennet were found guilty and hanged. The others received a mixture of acquittals, discharges and reprieves.

But did one of the skeletons discovered in 1921 belong to Ursula Kemp? In 2007 Dr Alison Rowlands a leading historian and an authority on witchcraft pointed out that ten women from St Osyth have been executed for witchcraft and therefore if the suspected skeleton of Ursula was that of a witch, it only has a one in ten chance of actually being Kemp.

According to a story in the Daily Gazette entitled 'St Osyth: Which witch is which?' (dated 9th May 2007); 'Dr Rowlands' research, part of the university's annual Essex Local History Day, claims the skeleton found in a garden in Mill Street in 1921 may not have been that of Kemp, who was hanged after a trial in Chelmsford in 1582. She claims the skeleton was quickly labelled as Kemp after rival reports in the Clacton Graphic and the Essex County



Standard, but no scientific testing of the skeleton was ever conducted. The skeleton, and another unearthed later that year, were believed to be Ursula Kemp and Elizabeth Bennett, both hanged as a witches, because they were bound by iron rivets driven into their knees and elbows. She said: "In fact, it could have been one of ten women. "Two skeletons were found and there are at least ten possibilities - five who died at Chelmsford before witchcraft trails, as well as three women who were tried as witches in 1645.....Dr Rowlands added that usually villagers would not have wanted to return the witches, who were executed in Chelmsford, to their village. If it was the family who rescued the body, she said the question must be asked why they would bind the woman's hands in such a fashion. She added that the skeleton required testing and proper dating before it could be named as either of the women hanged in 1582.'

Whether the skeleton was that of Ursula Kemp or not, I believe it eventually found its way to the Museum of Witchcraft in Boscastle, Cornwall, then sold to the artist Robert Oscar Lenkiewicz (born 31 December 1941 – died August 5, 2002) in the late 1990's. A Plymouth Evening Herald article quoting Dr Philip Stokes stated "The skeleton was lying inside the coffin, which was lined with blue material. The skeleton was laid out in the coffin with nails laid beside it at the appropriate points. It was at the far end of the library on the first floor, where the indexer would work. There was nothing special about it, it was just dried out old bones. I was not surprised it was there because Robert has had major projects on death and he was an authority on witches. His library of witchcraft materials was unique. He got a number of skulls from various sources over the years."

Lenkiewicz had an extensive library including possibly best private collection of books on witchcraft and magic which were sold at Sotheby's in 2003 following Robert's death.

St Osyth's Dragon

There is a tradition that a Dragon prowled the area around St Osyth in the 12th Century. According to Sir Richard Baker (born 1568 – died 18 February 1645) 'In the seventeenth year of his (King Henry II) reign, there was seen at St. Ofyths in Essex, a Dragon of marvellous bigness, which by moving burned houses and the whole City of Canterbury was the same year almost burnt.' [Chronicle Of The Kings Of England From The Time Of The Romans Government, Unto The Death Of King James]. As King Henry II (born 5 March 1133 – died 6 July 1189) reigned from 25 October 1154, this dragon would therefore date from around 1170 – 1171.

A broadside or broadsheet published in 1704 also refers to the dragon, using the same descriptive terms as Sir Richard Baker. 'Before Henry the second dyed, ... a Dragon of marvellous bigness was discovered at St. Osyph in Essex.'

Again the same information is repeated in Dr William Howell's *Medulla Historiae Anglicanae: Ancient and Present State of England* (1712), 'At St. Osyphs in Essex was seen a dragon of marvellous bigness, which by moving burned houses.'

I dare local stories will have developed involving the dragon and I have come across references to it having lived in the cellar of the priory in St Osyth. It would be interesting to gather these and also try to identify any sources earlier than Richard Baker.

St Osyth's Fountain

Some wells in Britain are associated with the beheading of their patron saint, examples of which include the case of St Winifred, St Fremund, St Juthware and St Osyth. Charles Hope in 'The Legendary Lore of the Holy Wells of England' (1893) gave the following two accounts of St Osyth's life, her martyrdom and the creation of the healing fountain.

ST. OSITHA was the daughter of Redoald or Frewald, the first Christian King of the East Angles, by Wilburga, daughter of Penda, King of the Mercians. She was born at Marendon, in the county of Bucks, and, according to the legend, took a vow of perpetual virginity at an early age. She was compelled, however, to marry Sighere, the Christian King of the East Saxons. The marriage was not consummated, for in her husband's absence she assumed the veil, and afterwards obtained his consent to the fulfilment of her vow. Sighere gave her the village of Cise or Chich, in the Tendring Hundred of Essex, ten miles south-east from Colchester, and sixty-one from London; now called St. Osyth, or, according to the natives, Toosy. Here she founded a church of St. Peter and St. Paul, and instituted a nunnery, supposed to be the most ancient monastic establishment in England. She was beheaded by the Danes, and the legend runs that at the place of her martyrdom a fountain sprang up, which continues to this day as a sovereign remedy for many diseases; her head was cut off; the body rose, and taking the head in her hand walked--guided by angels--to the church. Here it knocked at the door, and then fell to the ground. The stream was afterwards collected by the monks in a long pipe. "But a few years ago," says Mr. Watson (Tendring Hundred in the Olden Time), "a modern goth, wanting ballast for his yacht, tore up and utilised the leaden pipes, and thus destroyed the pride of ages."--Communicated.

St. Osyth was commemorated October 7.

Another account is as follows:

If what honest Capgrave tells of St. Osyth be correct, it is scarcely wonderful that her restless spirit should "walk" at certain approved times of the year. She seems to have met with nought but ill-luck from her infancy. When a child she was sent with a book by St. Edith to St. Modwen, at Pollesworth, in Warwickshire, but on her way fell into a river and was drowned, but restored to life after three days at the intercession of the latter. Against her will she was betrothed to Sibere, prince of the East Saxons, but giving him the slip, she took the veil, and then prevailed upon her disappointed lover to give her the land whereon to build a nunnery. Here she reigned as Abbess, till in A.D. 653 some roving Danes landed on the coast of Essex, destroyed the convent, and cut off St. Osyth's head. Had her old friend St. Modwen been at hand, or that St. Benno who successfully repaired St. Winifred after a similar calamity, she might yet have defied her fate; but they were not, and, left to her own resources, she picked up her head, and, carrying it in her hands, made off to the nearest church. She reached the sacred portal, struck the door with her blood-stained sconce, and, fairly overcome, fell prostrate, and so expired. Where she received the fatal blow a fountain gushed forth, famed in after days as St. Osyth's well, and*

blessed by many a sufferer who found there a medicine for his ills. Her body, removed to Aylesbury and there buried, was miraculously brought back to the church to which she made her last and certainly most remarkable journey, and till very lately there was a legend that the murdered abbess, head in hand, visited again well, and wood, and church, scaring the traveller who was so unfortunate as to be belated in Nun's Wood. Scoffers have said that the sign of the "Good Woman" at Widford owes its origin to the legend of the headless Saint, but this is too deep a subject to be discussed here.--East Anglian Handbook, 1885, p. 69.

*This comment probably refers to John Capgrave (born 21 April 1393 – died 12 August 1464) who wrote accounts of the lives of several obscure saints.

A further account appears in 'White's Directory of Essex' (1848)

'The parish, anciently called Cice, or Chich, derives its present name from St. Osyth, daughter of Redoald, King of East Anglia, and virgin-wife to Sighere, a Christian King of the East Saxons. She was born at Quarendon, in Buckinghamshire, and, according to the monkish legends, made a vow of virginity at an early age, but was compelled by her father to marry. The marriage, however, was never consummated; for, in the absence of her husband, she assumed the veil; and having afterwards obtained his consent to the fulfilment of her vow, she retired to Chich, and founded a Church and Nunnery. This establishment was plundered and destroyed by the Danes, under Inguar and Hubba; and the royal foundress herself beheaded near an ancient fountain. Her remains were first interred before the door of her church, but afterwards removed to Aylesbury, where many miracles are fabled to have been wrought through her intercession. After the Danes had obtained regal domination in England, Chich St. Osyth was given by King Canute to Earl Godwin, the celebrated Earl of Kent, who granted it to Christ Church, Canterbury; yet at the time of the Domesday Survey, it belonged to the See of London.'

The current Grade I listed parish church and dates from around 1118, being consecrated by Richard de Belmeis, Bishop of London. At the time of its construction there was also an earlier Saxon church, which may or may not have been the one associated with the legend of St Osyth's beheading. At the same time as the Church was being built, Bishop Belmeis established a Priory for Austin Canons, supposedly on the site of St Osyth's nunnery.



St Osyth's Priory - CC image: Stephen Dawson

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A person in a white, ethereal costume stands in a forest with colorful autumn leaves. The person is wearing a long, flowing white dress and a crown of white flowers. They are holding a small object in their hands. The background is a dense forest with trees and leaves in shades of red, orange, and yellow. The overall atmosphere is magical and enchanting.

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