

**DIGITAL
EXCLUSIVE**

INSIDE: FULL CONFERENCE PREVIEW
OF SERIOUSLY STRANGE 2026

seriously
strange

SUMMER OF STRANGE

FEATURES AND ARTICLES INSIDE >>

UNCOVERING THE SIX PHASES OF THE BRITISH UFO EXPERIENCE
STRANGE FLAMES: THE 1938 LEEDS GHOST FIRES

ENCOUNTERING ALIEN BIG CATS

DISCOVER DORSETS MYSTICAL GEMS

FOOTBALL MEETS FATE: THE RAMSEY EFFECT

WHAT IS THE **REAL DANGER FROM THE PARANORMAL?**

ABOUT ASSAP

Welcome to the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena

ASSAP, investigating the weird seriously (and the seriously weird) since 1981.

ASSAP is a scientifically-orientated educational and research charity and learned society dedicated to a better understanding of anomalous phenomena. As well as education, we carry out investigations and research. Producing content and using the medium to share those ideas

2026 ASSAP celebrates 45 years

"ASSAP is a scientifically-oriented educational and research charity, as well as a learned society, dedicated to advancing our understanding of anomalous phenomena through investigation and evidence-based study. We share these efforts with members and the public via publications like this magazine, webinars, and events – creating a space to explore ideas, present findings, and invite feedback that helps refine theories and build on existing evidence.

ASSAP was founded on 10 June 1981. Founders included well known authors Hilary Evans, Alan Cleaver, Maurice Townsend and Jenny Randles as well as Fortean Times editor Bob Rickard and scientists Drs Hugh Pincott and Vernon Harrison.

Our present president is the Rev Lionel Fanthorpe, Vice Presidents Dr Hugh Pincott and Bill Eyre and our Chair is Steve Parsons.

ASSAP Membership

Having an ASSAP membership gives you access to publications, like this one! Online access to a large catalogue of issues, access to investigator training, the opportunity to apply for research grants,

Early bird / membership price to the annual Seriously Strange LIVE Conference and events.

Access to the popular ASSAP Paranormal Webinars, a continuing weekly series of live presentations, talks and special events. The ability to participate in live Q&A and conversation.

An ASSAP e-membership does grants access to the live webinar events.

Website: www.ASSAP.ac.uk

Registered office: ASSAP, 63/66 Hatton Garden, Fifth Floor Suite 23, London, EC1N 8LE. (Soon to change, moving around the corner in May.)

ASSAP holds no corporate views and the views expressed by individual authors are their own.

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Seriously Strange Conference 2024 Panel, Deb Oakes, Dr Kate Cherrell, Prof Chris French, Dr Paul Rogers, Dr Ann Winsper and Deborah Hyde.

FEATURING



SIX PHASES OF THE BRITISH UFO EXPERIENCE

Robert Moore, former Vice Chair of the Association who passed away in 2023, was a prominent contributor to British UFOlogy through BUFORA and ASSAP.

A number of his unpublished works including a book are within our sphere of access, and we are striving to bring them to our members. as Robert would have wanted.

Whilst outside enjoying the summer sun, be sure to keep a watchful eye on the sky. Numerous encounters have been experienced through the decades, Robert characterises them into distinct Phases.

Strange Flames: the 1938 Leeds Ghost Fires

Explore the mysterious 1938 Leeds ghost fires, where inexplicable outbreaks puzzled investigators. This in-depth look at the event balances chilling personal accounts with the broader, tense historical context of a nation on the brink of war.





PREVIEW

IT'S THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

Welcome to the Summer of Strange our 2026 Digital Exclusive Edition

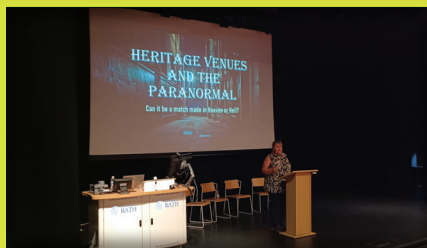
08 **ANNOUNCEMENTS** Issues Rediscovered, Threads, High Strangeness, Behind the scenes Building Resources and more!

38 **DOREST'S MYSTICAL GEM** Richard Brown debut article exploring Knowlton Church Henge, a captivating prehistoric site in the Dorset countryside where a 12th-century ruined Norman church stands dramatically within an ancient henge dating back to 2500–2000 BCE.

This atmospheric location, part of a vast ritual landscape of barrows and earthworks, is steeped in history and legend – from ghostly monks and spectral horsemen to the legendary Black Shuck – making it a must-visit destination!

42 **FOOTBALL MEETS FATE: THE RAMSEY EFFECT** With the World Cup 2026 well into swing, Dr Rob Gandy revisits an article formerly published in Fortean Times. FT325 p53–55. Examining The Curse of Aaron Ramsey, does his goals really bring about the demise of a public figure? Or is it a merely a coincidence?

54 Discover the mystery of **Alien Big Cats (ABCs)** in Britain with Sylvia Wix, where panther-like shadows, puma-sized beasts, and leopard-spotted felines continue to spark excitement and debate across the UK countryside every summer.



14 2026 is **ASSAPs 45th Anniversary** on 10th June 1981 we held a Special Birthday Broadcast Webinar, let's recap and you can watch now!



26 We move to publish **The SIX PHASES of British UFOlogy Experiences** written by Former Vice ASSAP Chair Robert Moore.

42 Darren Llewellyn writes for ASSAP for the first time **The Real Danger from the Paranormal** is a bold debut.

48 Dr Mike Benbough-Jackson pens a substantive feature examining the **1938 Leeds Ghost Fires** that blazed spontaneously throughout the city, leaving fire crews responding and questioning their nature; with assistance by Keith Linder



The Issue between Issues!

EDITORIAL

We have reached beyond the half way mark of the year and the Solstice is now in the rear view which can mean only two things! Nights will begin to draw in again, and there is a Conference all about the aspects we enjoy the most, the Seriously Strange Conference, occurring live and in person at the University of Worcester in August. We would most graciously welcome you to attend.

The weird finds itself in vogue again in 2026, as with so much its like the tides, it flows in and flows out.

We trust we will engage and inspire your mind with a weekend and more of presentations and activities, I have prepared in depth preview in this Summer of Strange Issue

In recent years we have seen a flourish of many successful events and productions in the anomalous interest space, which is fantastic. More eyes and ideas into these subjects that surround us the better. I dare say the air is plapable to anomalies at present, the Disclosing Era underway stateside with large releases of files to the public, from a bipartisan effort across the aisle. The third such large release of content from the intelligence services becoming available a week out from writing this and a fourth about due. Brazil has followed suit releasing large volume of documents, videos and technical files. The cascade effect saw Japan also release publically files of high strangeness.

Significant individuals have stepped into the public eye to discuss their involvement. This leads us to the question, what of our own UK government position now is? A Reform UK councillor Kieran Lay, proposed using the closed Doncaster Sheffield Airport for air safety and an UAP committee, monitoring to restore public confidence.



Stating NASA recommendations of an evidence based approach to the UAP concern with aviation safety at the heart.

Whilst one may say comically, this government would struggle to arrange to get together in a brewery. The UK Government due to public pressure and demand, did release those volumous UFO files in 2009, but there is a unquenched hunger of is that it? Surely, there's got to be more?

Steven Spielbergs new opus, Disclosure Day now in the cinema is adding to the mix, though the reaction seems to be a mixed bag so far, I suspect there is a lot of nuance that will be evident in later viewing and with director commentaries. In this issue I bring Robert Moores '6 stages of the British UFO Experience' to publication.

Reading through the ASSAP News early editions, put together by Hilary Evans, Jenny Randles, Alan Cleaver and the early alumni has been an injection of inspiration, to have great connections with people, groups and organisations. We all have so much we can do when we communicate with one another. I certainly come with the mindset that all ships rise with the tide.

Enjoy the issue.

Disclaimer

All submitted articles to Seriously Strange Magazine must be 'Original Works', commentary, features, articles and associated graphics/art. We are not responsible for articles that appear in the magazine which do not belong to the individuals submitting them. Some pieces may be reproductions and updates to pieces published elsewhere, owned by the author.

We endeavour to credit individuals work and images. Some images are AI generated, and are used in context. If you are aware of any material featured in Seriously Strange Magazine that is not credited correctly, then please inform us as soon as possible. at publications@assap.ac.uk

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The views and opinions expressed in any of the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Association of the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena.

We may not always get it right, we strive to learn and improve.

"ENGAGE WITH OUR OFFICIAL SOCIAL SPACES"

Association of Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena

Add your email to receive the Inside ASSAP E-News letter to your inbox



Facebook

Search "ASSAP: The Association of Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena" for the official ASSAP Facebook page.

A lively place with more than 3,900 followers, a place for news, featured posts, members sharing posts and discussion.



Facebook

Search "ASSAP British UFOlogy Overview"

A relaxed vibe with 1,900 followers, a focus on the topic of British UFOlogy and relevant UAP discourse. Created by the late Robert Moore.



X

@ASSAPParanormal

3,900+ followers, a place for announcements, news and inside ASSAP.



INSTAGRAM

@ASSAP_Paranormal

Our new space to tag and share pictures and graphics and promotional material.

ANNOUNCEMENTS>

Issues rediscovered

In the events of backing up and moving digital files and folders, there can be moments and rediscovery. For those who have had the experience of moving house, will no doubt be familiar with this, the clearing out of one of the corners where items have been piling up or tucked away. Your hands touch upon an item that provides you with a wave of memories, nostalgia and youth. Pausing to engage the crescendo of the familiar washing over, a physical déjà vu and to anyone noticing it's very apparent. You were momentarily somewhere else, living, feeling and sensing with the connection of the item in your grasp.

Kristian came across files, more than 50 ASSAP News publications, digital PDF files. Tucked away deep inside folders within folders dating back to 1981 to the very early days of the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena!

The mission statements of why we exist and the purpose, sometimes it pertinent to capture that understanding, of why we do what we do.

What a treasure trove of reports, accounts and intentions!

Instantly started to bring them to the Members attention, creating a way for them to become available to the membership, adding an additional Catalogue to the Members Resources Area of the ASSAP website. Before jumping on social media to raise awareness and add more value.

The volumes are an important milestone in recognition of heritage, what has been wrote before, laying the groundwork and foundations for where we are today.

For many reading them, it is highly likely memories came trickling back to when they were physically first issued. Sent by the Secretary to the subscribers on printed paper of the day, produced on a typewriter with photographs arranged. Photocopied, stapled and then sent by Royal Mail.

You may be able to help because the Catalogue of ASSAP News is alas incomplete! Several volumes are missing!

Many collectors of anomalous publications COULD have them, you may be reading this in the knowledge you have them tucked away in a box in your archives.

assap_paranormal

Our new Treasurer brings ASSAP to Threads!

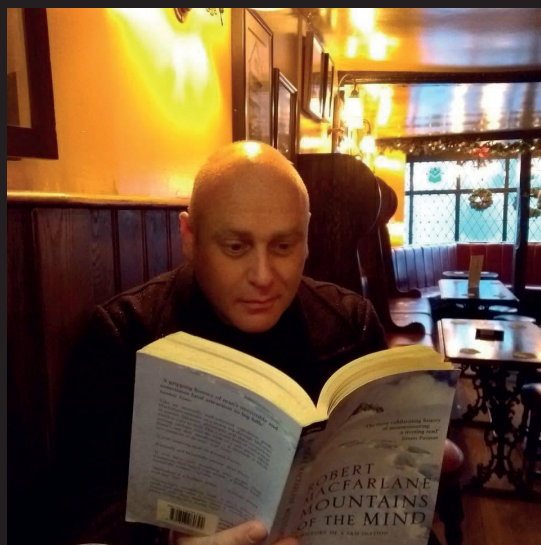
We're pleased to announce Tomas Stanger has come onboard to the committee of ASSAP as Treasurer.

Kristian has brought cohesion and stability to our finances, and will continue to be a supporting figure.

Instagram has been a fun addition in our social media connection, the sharing of pictures and graphics for webinars and our activities. Reaching out beyond our membership to connect bridges and engage with the phenomena enjoying community. Besides Instagram in Meta's suite of services, is of course Facebook, they also have Threads.

Threads is a service similar to X / Twitter quick short burst update posts, and Tomas is a big proponent of. We have launched Threads to our repotiare of social connections under the eye of Tomas.

Join the conversation, like, share, and tag us in your own strange encounters! @assap_paranormal

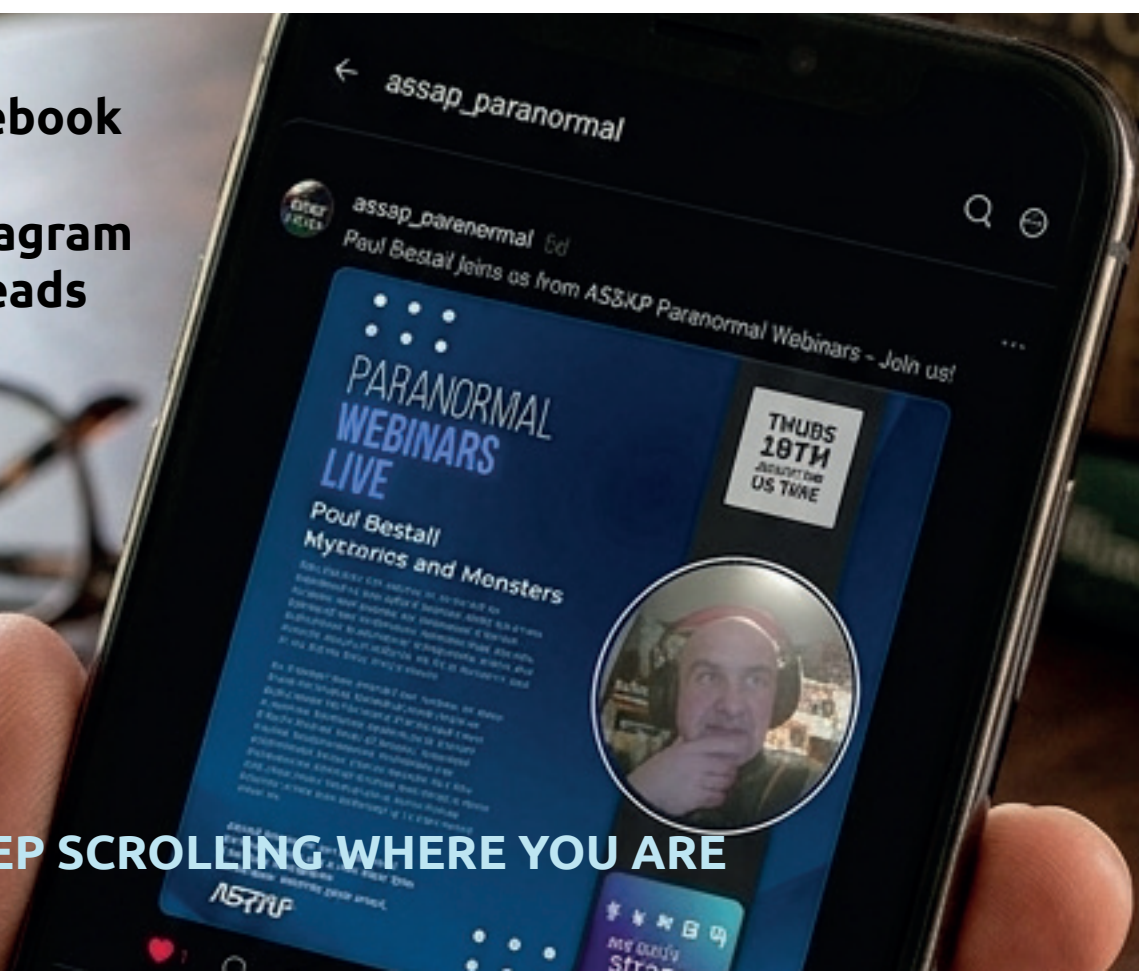


Tomas Stanger deep into his books and Threads!

@threads

Facebook
X
Instagram
Threads

KEEP SCROLLING WHERE YOU ARE



New series



The debut episode is a perfectly bite-sized 16 minutes – ideal for your commute or a quiet listen at home.

Gladys brings her signature style and warm Cuban-Miami vibe to the paranormal, exploring liminal spaces, the subtle strangeness of places, and stories recorded on location. This first episode focuses on Highgate and Queen's Wood.

With her distinctive monologue delivery, Gladys blends history, atmosphere, and personal reflection – setting the tone for what promises to be a compelling new addition to paranormal podcasting.

“High Strangeness in the UK begins by exploring the mysterious, the hidden, the uncanny, and the unexplained experiences that linger just beneath the surface of our everyday lives.”



This new series from film producer, lecturer and ASSAP Member Gladys San Juan will consist of 6–8 episodes. The first few episodes will be released as bonus episodes on the ASSAP Seriously Strange Podcast to build initial awareness.

Future episodes (from 2 or 3 onwards) will also be available on their own dedicated channel as we may need to update the name.



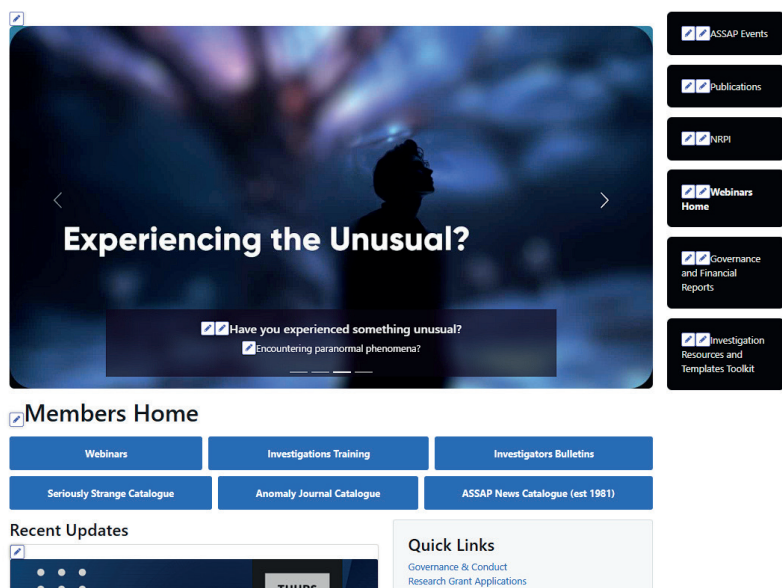
Connections

By the time, you receive this our webinar producers Caroline McKendrick Gibson and Kristian Lander both became published in the same issue of Haunted Magazine. With our Secretary Sheena Aspinall and Events Officer Norie Miles working together creating an infoarticle for the Seriously Strange Conference in the following and present issue 50.

www.hauntedmag.com



June also saw an ASSAP presence at Neil Packer's Parameet conference event in Hinckley, Leicester. Both Caroline McKendrick Gibson and Kristian Lander promoted the Association. Speaking on Lithobolia the Stone Throwing Devil and Phenomenal Nottinghamshire. Many ASSAP members were in attendance for the weekend bringing in the Summer Solstice and promoting healthy relationships in the paranormal community...and guess who we bump into!



Behind the scenes building resources

WWW.ASSAP.AC.UK

Growing Together

Since migrating to Expression Engine back in 2022, the ASSAP website www.ASSAP.ac.uk has served as our home base. However, we know that for many of you, it hasn't always been the easiest place to navigate. Over the past few months, thanks to the behind-the-scenes efforts of Kristian and Steve, we have been working hard to change that.

We didn't just want to "fix" the site; we wanted to transform it into a true hub—a place where members can keep up to date, find what they are seeking from our publications and also follow articles.

Here is a look at the updates we've implemented and where we are heading next.

Accessibility First: Finding Your Way

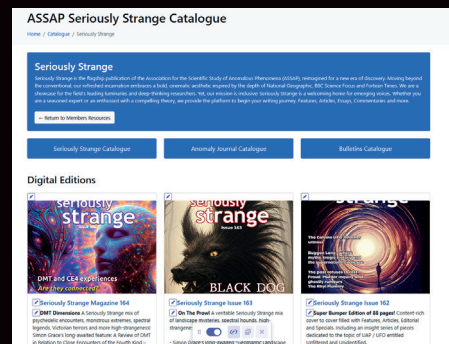
Key feedback we received "I can't find the login button?", "Why do I have to scroll down to login?" and "Where are the magazines?" We've heard you loud and clear.

Overhauling our navigation menu and colour schemes to make everything more intuitive.



The "Members Login" button is now prominently featured and coloured.

Login screen is now large, clear and very easy now.



EASY ACCESS TO PUBLICATIONS

With the exciting news that many of the ASSAP News est 1981 publications are available. Come and learn about the Merlin Matrix, formation of Project Albion, experiment with the Cristos Method of Out of Body Experiences.

Homes and Hubs

Hub for knowledge: The New Members Resources Home and Webinar Hub

We are thrilled to introduce our new Members Home

Previously, publications and documents were hidden under the navigation menu and finding issues wasn't bright and user friendly.

Finding our webinars meant jumping between YouTube, Spotify, and other platforms. Now, when you log in as a member, you have access to an entire, organised catalogue of webinars to launch into.

Whether you are looking for past presentations, upcoming live schedules, presenter profiles, or need help troubleshooting Zoom, it's all in one dedicated Webinar Hub.

How do you know when you've seen a ghost? It is a question that haunted Roderick. He had set out to be a famous rock star and yet somehow ended up running a small company whose clients had a habit of not always paying their bills.

Gwen, his new assistant, was about to depart on a trip around the world, but she had somehow omitted to tell Roderick. And the company had, for some reason, attracted the attention of a group interested in paranormal phenomena, notably hauntings.

Maybe Laura, Roderick's best friend could help him unravel these mysteries, given that she lived in a haunted flat.



You could see a ghost in the street
- M R Townsend



<https://www.amazon.co.uk/You-could-see-ghost-street-ebook/dp/B0F5HF7HLS/>

Available online and Kindle Unlimited

Maurice Townsend was one of the founding members of ASSAP. He has been fascinated by anomalous phenomena since childhood. He was involved in research for ASSAP for many years, coming up with concepts like the orb zone theory and xenonormal. When it came to writing a book, however, he decided on a novel as it felt like a better way of celebrating the paranormal.

On our listening and watch list



Historian Stephen Miller was recently on a guest on ASSAP Paranormal Webinars LIVE and the Seriously Strange Podcast. This is a historical research podcast investigating poltergeist cases from across the UK with a time threshold of more than 100 years. Episodes unfold like a journal diary exploring into the depths of the cases, as more layers and details are unveiled. Keighley, The City of London, Sunderland and Edinburgh are available to listen where you listen to podcasts.



The much anticipated return of The Secret of Skinwalker Ranch at the end of May stateside, for Season 7. Ranch owner Brandon Fugal leads and funds independently a team of scientists, engineers and biologists documenting year round the unexplained phenomena occurring on the infamous 512 acre ranch in Utah. UAP, strange figures, poltergeist phenomena and something that emits powerful earth to space communications frequencies. Sending out gamma and microwave radiation that may be connected fragmented large object deep inside the Mesa.

So far the team have been drilling into the top of the Mesa, finding ceramics used on spacecraft and metals inside. "The Bubble" continues to be a focus of investigation activity and a return to Homestead 2. UK watchers are challenged by licensing, as seasons are split across on demand on Channel 5, Amazon Prime, NOW TV / Sky History as well as bursts on Blaze TV occasionally.



Filmmakers John Shackleton and Andy Bourne lead with an authentic approach to investigations in their standout Youtube series The Supernatural UK. With a revolving cast of investigators each episode giving the show variety and flavour to its approach. Their own neutral views as filmmakers challenged by the events they encounter.

"The Supernatural UK is unscripted and rooted in real-time investigation. With no agenda, no staged scares, and no exaggerated claims, the series offers a rare balance of critical enquiry and emotional truth..." - John. Season 2 continues.



Storyteller Owen Staton, brings to life stories, not just from folklore, encounters with high strangeness and real events of Wales. An actor, narrator and former servicing police officer. Exploring the rich tapestry of traditional tales woven into the culture. Owen brings a rare warmth, that is enchanting and engaging. So gather at the firepit at the centre of the forest for a feast for your mind. The Time Between Times podcast is available on your favourite podcasting app.

What are your recommendations?

Summer of Strange

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

10TH JUNE 2026 SAW ASSAP CELEBRATION 45 YEARS TAKING THE STRANGE, SERIOUSLY.



THERE WAS CAKE

The lively evening was a captivating trip down memory lane, steered by host Kristian Lander, who brought a lighthearted touch to the proceedings by digging through the early editions of ASSAP News—revealing just how much the organisation has evolved since its humble, paper-trail beginnings. Looking at the purposes and vision.

The discussion was brought to life by early chair Alan Cleaver and Hugh Pincott, who traded witty and insightful anecdotes about the “Wild West” era of the organisation’s formation. Jenny Randles focus on establishing quality and standards, Dennis Bury who led the workshop upskilling to drive citizen science and research. Maurice Townsends also joined the evening, we spoke of early important projects like the Merlin Matrix and Project Albion.

How the media attention, sought to promote and get involved. Reflecting our present incarnation, are we living up to the values set our by precursors? Events, outreach, research, and communication. Striving to have a grounded and curious approach.

Joined by dozens of members live.



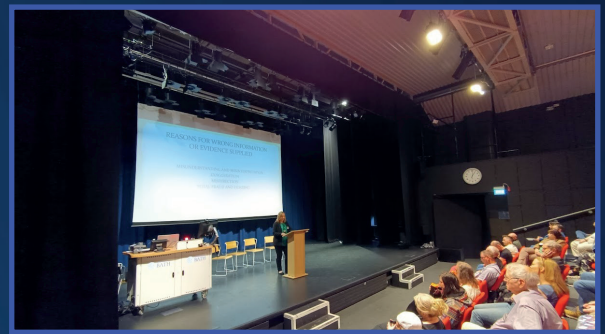
Watch the Seriously Strange
45th Birthday Special
available now



ASSAP 45th

seriously strange

ASSAP CONFERENCE 2026



**21st – 23rd
August 2026**

Options to stay from Friday 21st to Monday 24th



**University
of Worcester**

Always Exceptional Value.

Speakers and special guests
Dive into Ghosts, Poltergeists, UAP,
PSI, Consciousness, Occult,
Fortean Mysteries and More
all with a scientific and curious edge...

Conference Entry

Weekend Pass: £45.00 (Access to all talks, Sat & Sun)

Day Tickets: £25.00 (Saturday or Sunday only)

Affordable Campus Living

Make the most of the conference by staying on-site.

Ensuite Room with Breakfast: Only £60.00 per night (Available Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights).

Full Weekend "All-In" Package: £220.00 (Includes weekend conference pass, two nights ensuite accommodation, breakfasts, lunches, and the Saturday night Gala.)

Social Highlights

Saturday Night Gala: £30.00 (Includes food, entertainment, and disco into the night!)

Lunch Options: £15.00 (2-course lunch with refreshments available for both Saturday and Sunday.)

Our preview reveals all you need to know!

For anything else, talk to Norie Miles.
events@assap.ac.uk

Speakers and guests

Dr Kate Cherrell

Burials and Beyond

Dr Kate Cherrell is a paranormal historian, award-winning investigator, and PhD scholar whose academic research into Victorian gothic, mourning, and Spiritualist history has produced multiple books and papers. A familiar face on television, she has appeared on Uncanny, Jack Osbourne's Haunted Homecoming, Unexplained: Caught on Camera, Weird Britain, and more.



Dr Mark Fox

Transcendence: Unlocking the RERC Archives

A leading researcher in the fields of religion, spirituality, and the paranormal. Dr. Fox will present findings from his work with the Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. With access to an archive of over 6,500 documented accounts of spiritual and paranormal phenomena, he offers a unique, evidence-based perspective on the nature of human experience, the common threads of transcendence that appear across time and culture.



Andy Guy

Evidential Excellence, the motivation for gathering evidence

Andy Guy, researching the paranormal for more than 35 years, founder of technology firm SCIRE, Passionate about gathering and coordinating data, datalogging the environment and investigation variables.

Andy designs and produces equipment with a goal to sharing his findings with as much of the paranormal community as possible to help develop further insights and discoveries.



Prof Chris French

A skeptics Guide to Ghosts and Hauntings

Professor Chris French is a leading psychologist and founder of the Anomalistic Psychology Research Unit at Goldsmiths.

People have claimed that they have experienced a ghost even though they may not in fact have done so. Topics covered will include hoaxes, sincere misinterpretation of natural phenomena, hallucinatory experiences and pareidolia (seeing things that are not there), inattentional blindness (not seeing things that are there), the fallibility of eyewitness testimony, the possible role of complex electromagnetic fields and infrasound, photographic evidence, electronic voice phenomenon (EVP), and the role of the media.



Deborah Hyde

Deborah Hyde is a writer, speaker, and leading UK skeptic fascinated by why people believe in weird stuff. She attributes her lifelong interest in the supernatural to a childhood spent with her "mad aunties," and explores the subject through the lenses of psychology and history.

A passionate advocate for evidence-based thinking, Deborah served as editor of The Skeptic Magazine for ten years, was Co-Convenor of Westminster Skeptics, and in 2018 was elected a Fellow of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry. Frequent contributor of BBCs Uncanny as Team Skeptic.



Dr Paul Rogers

Dr Paul Rogers is closely associated with one of the most intriguing modern paranormal cases – the Doddleston Messages.

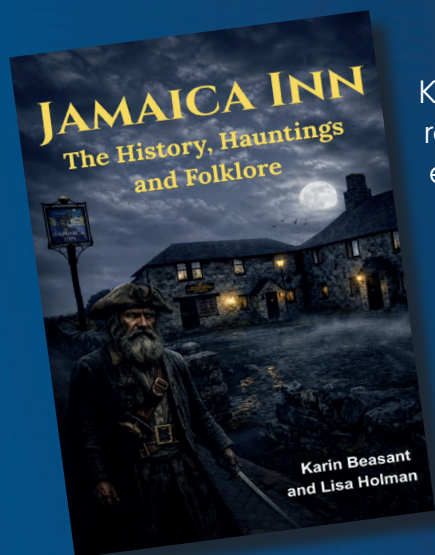
His detailed research into this baffling case of apparent real time time-slip communication continues to fascinate and challenge ideas about reality and the unexplained.

Dr Paul Rogers is a Researcher officer of ASSAP.



BOOK LAUNCH

Karin Beasant and Lisa Holman



Karin Beasant is a dedicated researcher and investigator exploring the frontiers of paranormal phenomena, and has been part of the Jamaica Inn team for more than a decade. Lisa is an author of 2 major publications has been on a tremendous health journey.



They have a shared passion for a dedication to heritage and history. Seriously Strange 2026 will see the launch of a book, long in the making **Jamaica Inn, The History, Hauntings and Folklore.**

Rev Lionel Fanthorpe

Rev Lionel Fanthorpe is a prolific author, Mensa member and long standing explorer of the worlds greatest mysteries. From

Oak Island to ghosts, aliens and the unexplained his vast knowledge and storytelling flair have entertained and enlightened audiences for many decades. Of course the legendary Fortean TV

Rev Lionel Fanthorpe is the President of ASSAP



Casey Meave

Studies of the occult in classic literature

Lecturer at University of Worcester, Institute of Arts and Humanities, Department of Sociology, History and Politics.

Analysing Sapphic poetic networks at the end of the nineteenth-century.



Sarah Pilkington

Strange Events of Clapham Woods

Passionate paranormal researcher and investigator known for her calm and methodical approach to cases, her specific area of interest is the function of cryptids within traditional knowledge along with historical forteana and unsolved mysteries.

An academic background with first degrees in art, history, forensic social work along with an MA by research in the dynamics of interpersonal violence.

Sarah is the Governance officer of ASSAP



Brian Hoggard

Protection marks 'witch marks' on Buildings.

Apotropaïos – Greek turning away (evil). Researcher of strange things found in walls since 1999.

Brian Hoggard is one of Britains foremost experts on the archaeology of counter-witchcraft and folk magic.

For over 25 years he has uncovered concealed objects, protective marks, and rituals hidden in old buildings – shedding light on how our ancestors fought precieved unseen forces.



Dr Luke Divine

Dr Luke Divine is an academic researcher and lecturer in occult studies at the University of Worcester, specialising in the hidden traditions, esoteric practises, and mystical philosophies that have shaped humanity's relationship with the unseen.

Exploring how occult knowledge, altered states, and ancient wisdom intersect with modern paranormal experiences and the boundaries of consciousness.



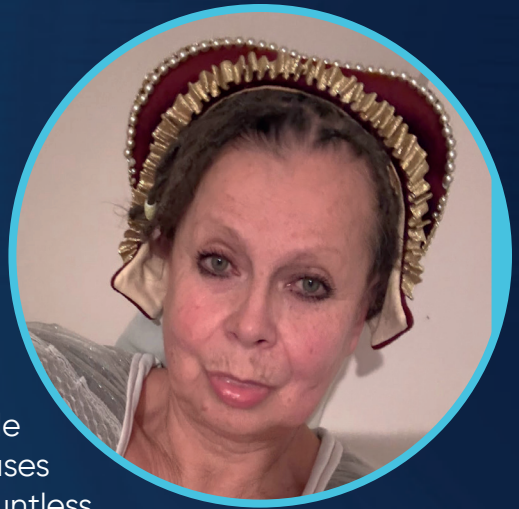
Speakers and guests

Joanna Walpole

Chingle Hall, A tour guides experience.

Joanna Walpole is the current Media Officer and NRPI officer for ASSAP, as well as a long-standing accredited paranormal investigator with a deep passion for ghosts and folklore.

For many years she served as a official tour guide at Chingle Hall - widely dubbed one of Britains most haunted houses - where she personally witnessed and documented countless strange encounters while sharing its eerie history with thousands of visitors.



Dr Benbough-Jackson

Strange aerial phenomena 1945-1950 over UK and Ireland.

Senior lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University. Mike is a historian of Modern Britain and specialises in sub-national place identities and strange/weird/supernatural events.

Dr Mike Benbough Jackson is a Research Officer with ASSAP



Dr Rob Gandy

The Wraith of Riveracre Road

Dr Rob Gandy, a visiting Professor now retired from Liverpool John Moores University and one of Britains most respected researchers into road ghosts, phantom hitchhikers and regional folklore hauntings.

A regular speaker at events and a favourite on the Seriously Strange stage, frequent contributor and feature writer to Fortean Times.



He brings decades of meticulous investigation and compelling storytelling to some of the UK's most persistent paranormal hotspots.

Dr Ann Winsper

Dr Ann Winsper is no stranger to Seriously Strange Events. A respected paranormal researcher and intuitive approach to spirit communication and haunting phenomena.

Co-founder of Para.Science. Ann has been investigating hauntings for 4 decades, and PhD with the University of Central Lancashire researching the psychology of Electronic Voice Phenomena. critically examining how individual differences and auditory perception influence the interpretation of ambiguous sounds. Presented extensively on timeslips.



Kristian Lander

will be covering the multiple events of Gnomes of Wollaton Hall

Kristian is our media producer and currently serves as our Publications Officer and Webinar presenter, wearer of many hats within ASSAP.

Kristians approach is characterised by his ability to translate complex and often misunderstood topics into engaging and accessible content. His work regularly features collaborations with researchers, historians and investigators, helping to document and analyse the most compelling of mysteries. Has been with ASSAP since 2011.

Being from Nottingham, Kristian will be resending this year on the novel forteen event of the Wollaton Gnomes, and a number of other gnome encounters and similar encounters in the area.

Producer of Our Curious World, Phenomenal Nottinghamshire and The Unearthly Bureau with Caroline McKendrick Gibson.



BOOKING OPEN
TICKETS AVAILABLE...
...DOWN TO SINGLE DIGITS
SECURE YOUR PLACE TODAY

Useful info:

University of Worcester – University of Worcester is centrally located with great road, railway and air links. Also accessible for those with mobility needs. .

Bus Services 31 and 31A provide a direct link between Worcester City Centre and the University of Worcester campus. Price is £2.20

City Centre to University Campus is approx 1.3m (20-25min walk)
Over the bridge and on to Hylton Road.

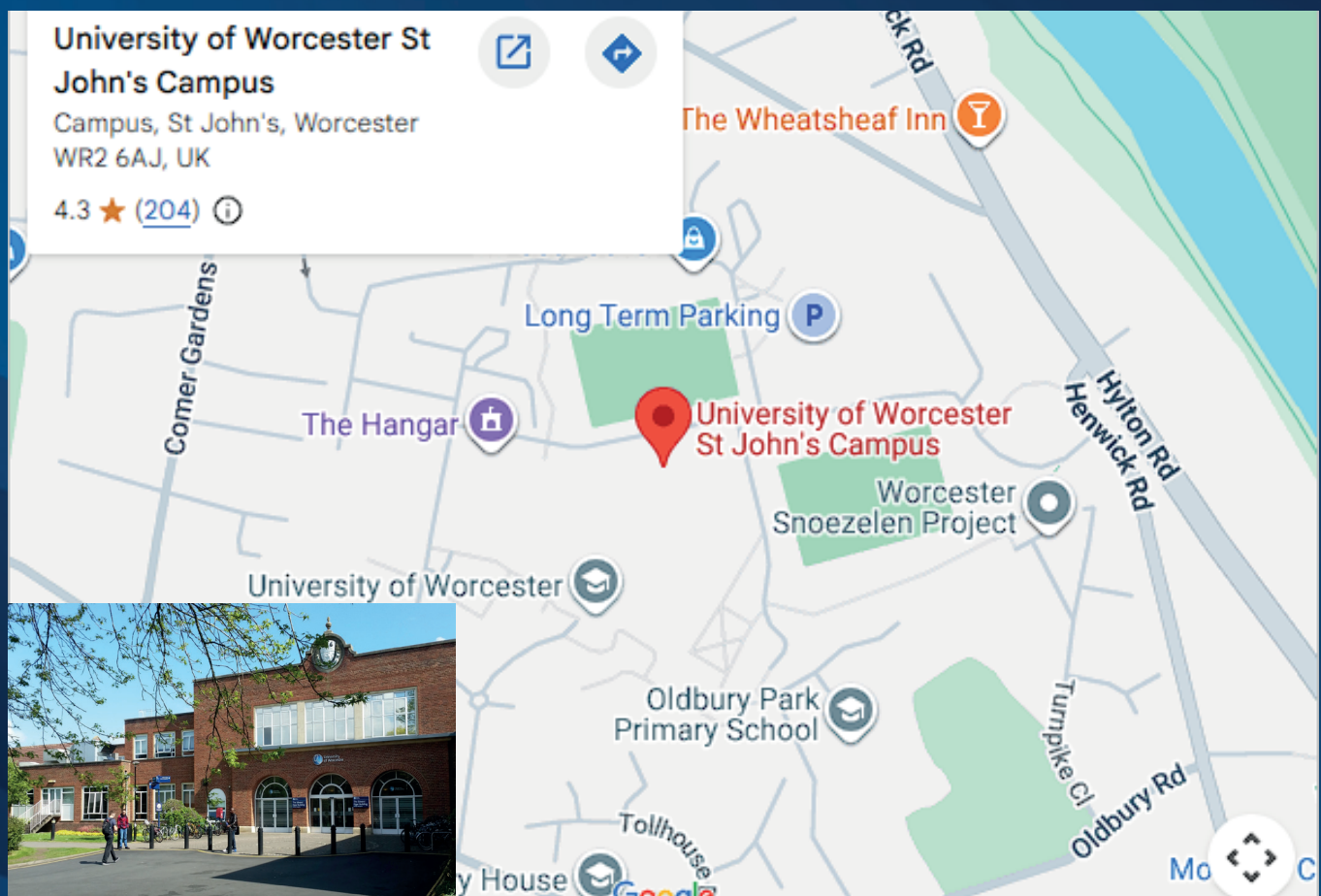
Taxi services – Cathedral Cars 01905 767 400 Worcester Cabs 01905 700750,
City Taxis Worcester 01905 726726

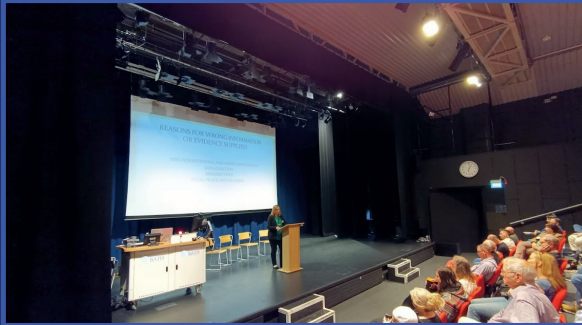
University of Worcester St Johns Campus – Main reception is WR2 6AJ
University of Worcester Main reception phone: 01905 855000

University Venue for Seriously Strange 2026 Main University Carpark [///shout.civic.tools](http://shout.civic.tools)
Reception, Conference Venue and Accommodation are adjacent to one another.

Conference Venue: The Edward Elgar Building. (50ft/15m from the Reception Area)
Accommodation block: William Maurice Block and additional block.

Contact Norie Miles events@assap.ac.uk for finer details.





Activities

ASSAP CONFERENCE 2026

Friday 21st August 2026

7pm – Exclusive private use and Ghost Tour of The Commandery Museum. Last approx 1hr.
WR1 2HU //frozen.quiz.putty

Available only to those who have prebooked the tour and the places have sold out.



Saturday 22nd August 2026

Days presentations and panels begins with a State of ASSAP address at 950am
Including Book launch of **Jamaica Inn, The History, Hauntings and Folklore.**
Ends at 530pm

7pm – **Gala Evening** 2 course meal hot buffet, Live entertainment with as featured on Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway Stage Hypnotist and Mentalist David Bolton. With music/disco into the night at The Hangar Student Union venue on Campus. Fully stocked bar until 11pm.
///hails.vivid.bright

Sunday 23rd August 2026

Days presentation and talks begin at 950am
Ends at 4pm

Post Conference AGM

Plenty of time and space to socialise, many cafes and eateries on campus and nearby.

Visit www.ASSAP.ac.uk as Norie Miles is updating the Conference pages

THE SIX PHASES OF THE BRITISH UFO EXPERIENCE

British sighting accounts encompass the total spectrum of UFO events reported elsewhere; from humble lights in the sky, car stops, physical trace cases to abductions. The history of claimed British aerial anomalies before and upto AD 2000 can be roughly divided into six general phases...

By Robert Moore

Robert Moore was a highly respected British UFO researcher, scholar, and advocate for rigorous, evidence-based ufology. He joined BUFORA in 1982 at the age of 15 and went on to serve as a director, Special Projects Officer, and coordinator of the LIGHTBALL research project, while also investigating cases in Somerset. He was Vice Chair and UFO Officer of ASSAP, and authored the influential Ufology Handbook (now in its 3rd edition), which remains a core training resource for BUFORA investigators.

A self-taught expert known for his intellect, humility, and commitment to facts over sensationalism, Moore contributed chapters such as "Science v. Saucery" and championed the Mundane-Synthesistic Hypothesis. His extensive body of work, generous sharing of knowledge, and trailblazing approach continue to shape British ufology. He is greatly missed.

1: The pre "flying disc" era The middle ages to 1947.

While there was no conception of "flying discs" or "UFOs" prior to 1947, there are British accounts of aerial anomalies prior to that date. The supposed Ampleforth (or Byland) Abbey appears to be an outlier, relating to a "round flat object... like a discus" supposedly overflying the monastery on the 28th October 1290. This is, however, widely acknowledged as a hoax enacted in the 1950s by sixth form schoolboys. There are, however various authentic medieval and early modern accounts of "fiery dragons", "flying ships", multiple suns", even of giant people in the sky. Many seem ascribable to various prosaic atmospheric phenomena such as sun dogs, mirages and Brocken Spectre type effects etc.

From the 1890s through to the commencement of World War One there were various alleged observations of "airships" seen throughout the world. The UK experienced waves of such reports in 1909 and during 1911-1912. None were traced to any known flying vehicle.

14 August 1950, Flight Lt. Hubbard, observed a "discus" with a shimmering "mother of pearl" surface producing bluish sparks of light.



2: The "Flying Disc" era... 1947-1960.

The conception of "UFOs" as they manifested in the UK was (and continues to be) influenced by well-publicised incidents from the United States; The term "flying saucers" was inspired by a description by Kenneth Arnold relating to his observation on the 24th June 1947 of mystery flying-wing type "objects" over the Cascade Mountains in Washington State. He described their motion as being akin to "a saucer skipping across the

water". This was widely (mis)interpreted as defining their appearance and popularised by the US press.

Determining the first British "flying disc" observation is problematic; several early accounts have been retrospectively reported, including several notable war-time incidents involving RAF bomber-crew. Unfortunately, no known contemporary record denotes them being reported at the time. The first instance of anything comparable

to an early "flying saucer" observation occurred in January 1947, involving detections of unaccounted RADAR targets over the North Sea.

What is likely the first British claimed visual observation of a "flying disc" occurred at 05:15 hrs BST, on the 30th June 1947 at Sandwich, Kent. Mrs. Marjorie Hyde observed a moving sharply-defined grey form "more of a ring than a saucer" while she waited at a railway level crossing. The form was only observed for a



few seconds "not too high up, moving inland...from the sea". The witness only approached the press due to coverage of the Roswell incident. It is quite possible the Hyde object" was actually a smoke ring; Mrs. Hyde was adamant this was not the cause.

The literary popularisation of the "flying disc" in Britain lies with two notable US authors; pulp writer Donald Keyhoe and the first "contactee", George Adamski. Keyhoe's first work on the subject - *Flying Saucers Are Real* - was published in 1950. This described (in a dramatised, narrative format) the first significant American sightings

and the concept of an insider "cover-up" instigated by a "silence group". The "contactee" claim of Adamski premiered in an English-published book *Flying Saucers Have Landed* (1953), co-written by the Anglo-Irish author Desmond Leslie. This recounted Adamski's supposed meeting with a "Venusian".

This both introduced an influential conception of a "flying Saucer" (an elaborate domed disc with portholes and three spheres on its underside) and the concept of the "contactee"; a singular chosen mouthpiece for entities usually originating from Venus and Mars. England was soon to have its own; the

book *Flying Saucer from Mars* printed in 1955 detailed the supposed contact experience of a "Cedric Allingham" in Scotland. This is now widely believed - as is Adamski's claim - to be a hoax.

The term "UFO" (an acronym equating to Unidentified Flying Object), came into common use from the mid 1950's. Until that time, they were defined as "flying discs" or "flying saucers", even when the "object" concerned wasn't disc-shaped. An overview of UFO cases reported up to the mid 1950's enacted by Dr. Graham Knewstubb so defined them:

"According to visual observations, 52.5% of the objects sighted were discs, 14.1% were cylinders, 15% were spheres, and 8.2% (are of) miscellaneous shapes" (shaped not recorded in 10.2% of cases) ... In colour the objects fall into two main groups: 32% appear as bright, metallic solid objects, 28% are luminous bodies of differing and varying colours, while in 40% of cases no colour is specified."

Unlike America, British sightings occurring from 1947 through to the early 1950's are generally not well documented. Civilian saucer groups did not come into existence in Britain until 1953. Their ability to collate sightings was highly dependent on the disposable income and inclination of their members.

The then-existent Air Ministry only began to monitor sightings from 1953 onwards. The Technical Intelligence "Flying

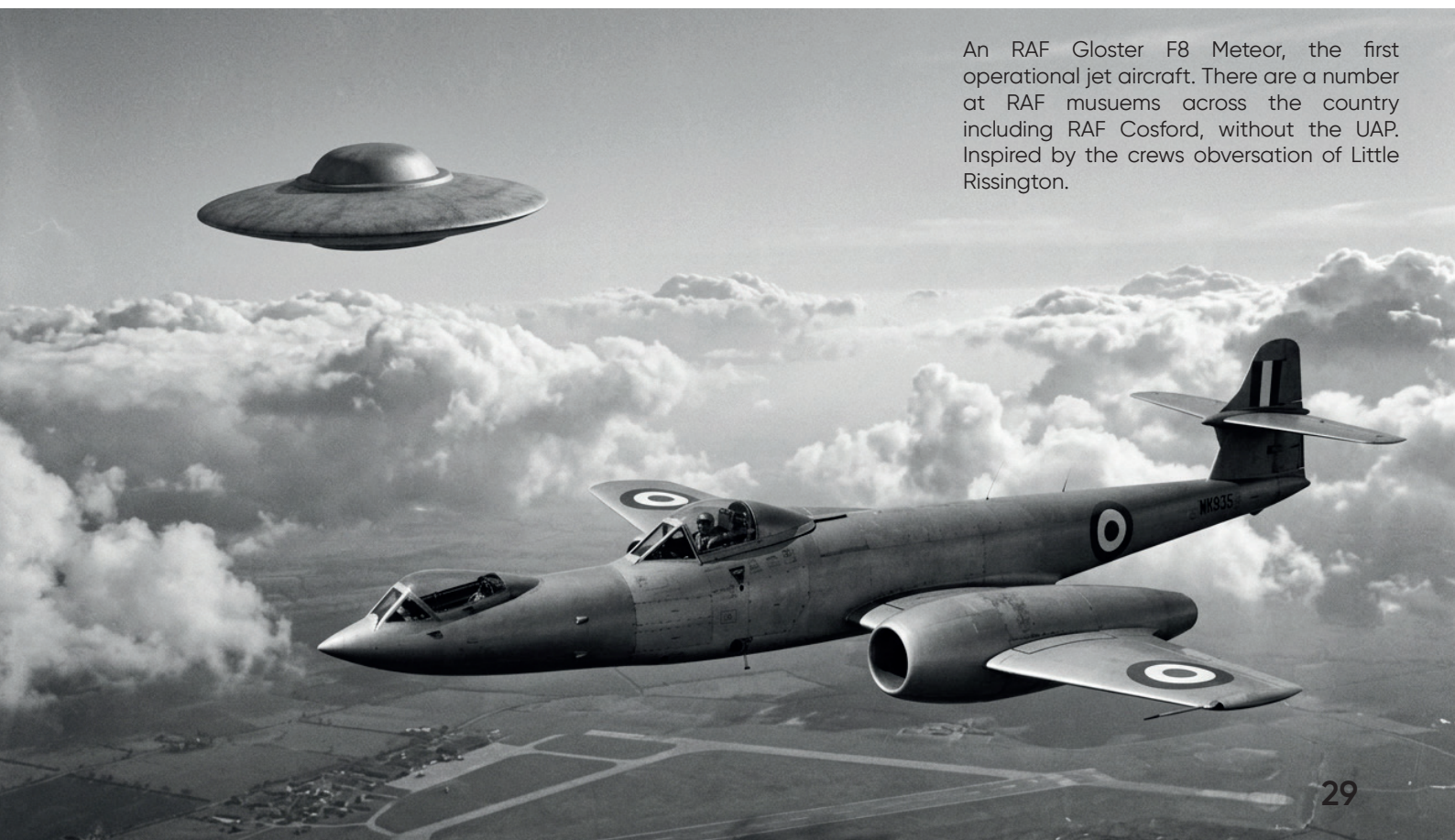
Saucer Working Party" active during 1950-51 concluded that the reports likely had prosaic causes. The Air Ministry were able to present relatively coherent sighting causation statistics from 1953 onwards. {S}

On the 1st June 1950 at 14:30hrs a Meteor pilot landing at RAF Tangmere reported observing (while flying 20,000 feet over Portsmouth) a circular, fast-moving bright metal "object", travelling on an Easterly above the pilot on "a reciprocal course", at an estimated speed of around 800 knots (920 mph). The Air Ministries' Flying Saucer Working Group concluded the event was either an optical illusion or a metrological balloon. This is considered the earliest account of a visual "flying saucer" observation from a military source and the first to be officially evaluated by a British governmental agency. Other sightings by RAF

personnel would follow. At RAF Farnborough, 11.27 hrs on the 14 August 1950, Flight Lt. Hubbard, observed a "discus" with a shimmering "mother of pearl" surface producing bluish sparks of light.

On 19:10hrs 19th September 1952 at RAF Topcliffe, Yorkshire 2 RAF officers and 4 aircrew were observing a Gloster Meteor jet-fighter flying East to west, when a silver-white coloured circular object was seen 10,000 feet up and 5 miles astern. It was observed descending like a pendulum, swinging left to right, before accelerating away at incredible speed.

On 1 October 1952 a Gloster Meteor crew from RAF Little Rissington, observed three "perfectly circular" white shiny "parachutes" at an estimated height of 12,000 feet. These pilot accounts would be joined by many more in the decades to follow.



An RAF Gloster F8 Meteor, the first operational jet aircraft. There are a number at RAF museums across the country including RAF Cosford, without the UAP. Inspired by the crews observation of Little Rissington.

What presently stands as the first recorded British UFO landing claim occurred on the 20th May 1954 at Wincanton, Somerset. A man returning from a dance at 02:00hrs BST reputedly observed a hovering bowl-shaped object with a windowed "dome", which took off at great speed.

Among the first documented British observation of "UFO entities" reputedly occurred on the 21st October 1954. A housewife heard a sound like "water being poured on a fire" while in her home at Ranton, Staffs. On looking up, she observed a "sombbrero" shaped object with two "entities" looking out. These resembled Adamski's "Venusians", having long blond hair and high foreheads. The witness reported a long history of psychic and paranormal experiences before and after this incident.

3: Era of Social Consolidation 1960-1969.

While conceptually on their way to being established within the English public consciousness this was still an incomplete process; UFOs often referred to as "things" in various media accounts of the time.

In 1962 the Air Ministry merged with the Admiralty and the War Office to form a new organisation; the Ministry of Defence (MoD). While the UK government didn't - as in America - establish a formal project to assess UFO reports, the MoD had an ad hoc procedure to evaluate them. The division charged with evaluating sightings was variously known as AS2 (Air) or DS8; along with DI55 (Tech), who monitored the military technology of rival nations.

In this decade what could be termed the British "UFO study movement" matured; with a number of bodies amalgamating and forming BUFORA (the British

UFO Research Association) in 1964. UFO journal articles of this period exhibit a subject in two minds - some articles documentarian and critical, while others speculated about "alien spacecraft" with "anti-gravity drives" and "force fields". By the decade's end, interest in contactees had largely died out.

One factor looms large within any discussion of the 1960's British UFO scene; the numerous sightings associated with the market town of Warminster, Wiltshire, all grouped under the label of "The Thing". This was instigated by a series of events in mid-1965 involving strange noises, vibrations, followed by various reputed UFO observations (including alleged photographs). Central to this was local journalist Arthur Shuttlewood. He played an important role in sustaining the town's reputation as an "attractor" for aerial anomalies, writing six books on the topic.



Here, it should be noted Warminster is adjacent to a part of Salisbury Plain used by the Army for combat training; unsurprising, then, the area was host to various sounds and light displays! The town was the scene of several large "skywatches" enacted during the 1960's and 1970's. The regularity of such gatherings made them a target for hoaxers, who staged various bogus sightings for this unwitting captive audience.

4: Era of increasing strangeness: 1970-1979.

By this decade, the concept of UFOs had acculturated into mainstream society; most British people being aware of this concept. MoD records indicate that 780 reports were made to its so-called "UFO desk" in 1978; among its highest yearly totals prior to the 1990s and beyond. But the MoD ceased to issue UFO statistics quantified by suspected rational causes from 1973 onwards.

Interest in Warminster had waned and skywatching had fallen out of favour;. While the scientific community and the MoD remained sceptical of UFOs, civilian bodies became more organised; with several major concerns collating reports; BUFORA, CONTACT UK, UFOIN and the Northern UFO Network. While moves were made towards greater objectivity, this came with an emphasis on structure, bureaucracy and systems thinking that some researchers

found too clinical and burdensome.

The dominant populist interpretation for seemingly inexplicable reports was that they were extra-terrestrial, although there were notable dissenters. Some championed the view that sightings were influenced by cultural and social factors; the psycho-social school of interpretation. This was to remain an influential idea within British Ufology for the next two decades.

BUFORA, on the other hand, pioneered a "broad church" approach, concluding claimed UFO incidents had a variety of causes; most were explicable but others required more exotic explanations; from rare natural phenomena, experimental aircraft... and maybe "something" from "elsewhere".

From 1977 through to 1978 there was a concentration of reported activity from Dyfed, within an area popularly termed "the Welsh Triangle". This ranged



from UFO sightings to observations of "UFO entities". The most famous occurred on the 4th February 1977; children from Milford Haven School reporting a landed "dome" and a "figure" in a "silver suit". At least 3 books were written on these events. Like Warminster, the reports had a focus (BUFORA investigator Randall James Pugh) and have been notably critiqued.

Another significant (and well documented) 70's era occurrence was the so-called The Livingston (or Denchmont Law), Scotland, incident of 9 November 1980. This involved a forestry worker being rendered unconscious on encountering a landed "dome" and "sea mines" while patrolling the woods.

The best documented early examples of British abduction claims also occur around this time, most notably the November 1978 incident at Daventry and the Todmorden event of November 1980.

But possibly the first recorded British abduction reputedly occurred on the 16th October 1973. A woman driving to visit her mother claimed to observe a hemispherical-shaped object on legs near A361, after her car unexpectedly stalled near Langford Budville, Somerset at 22:45hrs. She encountered a 6ft tall humanoid "robot", and (after passing out two times) found herself bound in a chair in a room containing "machinery", where she was examined and unfortunately later abused by human-like entities in surgical outfits.

Hypnosis wasn't required to recover details of her claimed experience, but probably the first instance where it was so employed relates the experience of the Avis family. On Sunday October 27 1974 at around 21:50hrs, while driving home the husband, wife and three children of this family unit observed an oval light that stopped and started in union with their car. They then encountered a dense green mist covering the road; while they seemingly passed through this in seconds they discovered they were half a mile from their prior location.

The family arrived home at 01:00hrs, from a journey that usually only took 20 minutes.

Following experiences of anomalous trauma and sudden life-style changes Mr. & Mrs. Avis underwent several hypnotic regression sessions. This produced a narrative implying the family had been taken aboard a UFO and medically examined by two groups of beings - one tall and human, the other small and covered in a strange pelt. Communication occurred between Mr. Avis and the UFO entities, regarding the craft's origin and means of propulsion.

ASSAP Training Weekender 2025 took place in the very centre of Broad Haven and in 2026 seeks to return.

Check Social Media and ASSAP website for details and booking information.

Email: Training@ASSAP.ac.uk



5: Abductions, skycrashes and flying triangles 1980-1989

British Ufology was dominated during this decade by the Rendlesham Forest incident of the 26th-27th December 1980; a highly controversial event involving American airmen reputedly witnessing a low-level UFO at close quarters - and later discovering supposed landing traces with elevated radiation levels - and observing strange lights in the woods a few days later.

A worldwide resurgence of interest in abduction claims was instigated in 1981 by the publication of the US book *Intruders* (authored by Budd Hopkins), then by *Communion* authored by Whitley Strieber published in 1987. The first reputed observations of "Flying Triangles" occurred in Belgium in 1989; the UK eventually being host to comparable observations.

UFO researcher Jenny Randles first defined the Oz Factor early in this decade. This defines an "aura of unreality" reported by some witnesses prior and during a claimed UFO manifestation. This includes a succession of noise, instances of slowed or missing time and/or senses of unease or "presence".

View across the Broad Haven bay, where in the 1979 Clive Harold book *The Uninvited*, recounts the events of the Coombs family. The island is where UFOs would fly over and out of sight, or would fly into. from Seltlands Hill, and former hotel. Where a silver figure allegedly was sighted levitating.

Summer of Strange

6: The Media, Fiction and Flying Triangles; UFOs 1990–1999.

The broadcasting of the Si Fi/Horror serial the X Files from 1994 onwards on BBC1 and BBC2 generated a wave of popular interest in UFOs which lasted for the remainder of that decade.

Exploiting this interest, various newsstand publications on the topic appeared, endorsing a populist ETH view; the best informed of being a reiteration of YUFOS' journal Quest, at that time renamed UFO Magazine. However, by the decade's all but "UFO" magazine had folded, and even that closed in 2002.

While numerous UFO incidents occurred during the 1990's, few

are especially notable. However, the Calvine, Perthshire, Scotland event, reputedly occurring at 21:00hrs on the 4th August 1990 has recently acquired notable attention. Here, two young men supposedly observed a hovering low-altitude diamond-shaped object, seemingly buzzed by military aircraft. Six images were reportedly. These were sent to the MoD but incidentally lost – but one print surfaced in July 2022. While an assessment by Sheffield Hallam University concluded the "UFO" was not placed there "post-production", researchers Robert Shaeffer and Wim Van Utrecht believe the pictures to be fabricated. The witnesses' identity presently remains unknown.



Robert Moore standing ready as part of the Supporting Crew at Seriously Strange 2022.

Some thoughts and personal conclusions:

1: For most of its existence the British UFO experience has been largely influenced by trends originating from the United States. The concept of "flying discs" was incepted by an American observation; even the first known British "flying saucer" observation was only reported to (and by) the press as a consequence of the Roswell "UFO crash".

2: British sightings of "cigar", "disc" and "sphere" configuration UFOs occurred virtually from its onset and continue, joined by observations of "flying triangles" from the late 1990s.

3: The process of "acculturation" of UFOs in Britain involved "motivators"; individuals who inspired the concept of "UFOs" (or aspects of same) in others.

4: The vast majority of claimed sightings have a rational solution. A small residue

nonetheless remains. While most (if not all) unknowns remain elusive, some likely involve rare atmospheric phenomena or experimental aircraft.

5: "high-strangeness" events often share similarities to apparitional experiences and thus may be induced by the same processes. The underlying process may be "paranormal" or (disappointingly) mundane in nature.

6: Some unexplained events seemingly involve apparent high performance seemingly constructed devices. Presently, there is no irrefutable evidence they have an extra-terrestrial or other exotic causation, due to a lack of definitive, supporting evidence (from physical traces and convincing image captures).

7: Nonetheless, recent releases of footage from American military and paramilitary sources over the past 10 years – if truly anomalous – may answer this criticism.

While our understanding of the UFO problem is far from complete, some aspects, as it manifested in Britain is now much clearer than it was in 1947.

Robert when he brought this essay together it was dedicated to Kevin Goodman, UFO experienter and expert on Warminster's UFO. "Kevin was always willing to listen and help and he will be sorely missed. We will keep the flame burning" – Robert.

And in turn we will keep your flame burning. I wonder how excited Robert would be with many of the revelations of the Disclosing Era we have progressed into, since 2017?

With a dedicated audience
of learned and interested
membership.

Lets get back on track to
what's important



Seriously Strange
Magazine and the weekly
Webinars are platforms of
opportunity to present and
publish.



On the Prowl in the English Countryside for Alien Big Cats

By Sylvia A Wix

Sylvia A Wix is influenced by pop culture, inspired by creatures from dinosaurs to the ones that crawl in our dreams. A lifelong follower of curious accounts of bizarre animals.

Every summer, excitement about ABCs (Alien Big Cats) in Britain tends to reach a fever pitch. Sightings of large and mysterious felines, panther-like shadows, puma-sized beasts and leopard-spotted animals spike across the country. While many reports turn out to be misidentified dogs, deer, or even domestic cats the sheer volume and consistency of some accounts keep the mystery alive.

If you're heading for a 'big cat spotting' summer adventure there's one golden rule: make sure you stay in the car. Never get out to photograph, follow or approach these animals as big cats are powerful predators that can close distances with alarming speed, so deserve respect even when viewed from a distance. The most responsible and safest way to enjoy the phenomenon, should you be lucky enough to spot one, is from inside the car with the windows up.

Some of the UKs most famous hotspots include:

Bodmin Moor (Cornwall): Famous for having decades of big cat sighting reports, such as the famous "Beast of Bodmin Moor"

Exmoor and Dartmoor (Southwest England): Regarded as one of the most active areas and home to the legendary "Beast of Exmoor".

Cambdridgeshire, Wiltshire, Suffolk and Cumbria: Where regular sightings happen in the rural and wooded areas and where they found DNA extracted from a sheep carcass that suggested whatever attacked it had leopard-like genetics!

And the Scottish Highlands, which has frequently had reports of felines larger than the much smaller, native Scottish Wildcat.

Recent sightings have kept the topic buzzing, as witnesses near Granton-on-Spey, Scotland, described a 'large, cat-like animal crossing the road' that was significantly taller than a sheepdog and possessed a long tail. Two separate puma-sized cats were reported in Conwy, Wales, one of which was seen to be carrying a bird, in May. A dog walker in Chippenham, England reported a dark and slinking creature lurking on a public footpath in January.

Not every sighting is a genuinely wild big cat however, as in the latter days of June tawny, spotted 'big cat' was reported and photographed in Bramerton. It turned out not to be a true big cat but an escaped F2 Savannah Cat, which is a legal hybrid of domestic cat with one Serval grandparent. The elegant and large eared felines are often responsible for the reports of 'leopard' like animals across the UK.

While DNA evidence has occasionally supported the presence of big cats, many experts believe that the sightings usually involve escaped or sadly, released exotic pets. Groups like Puma Watch North Wales continue to map and log encounters, and there are educational exhibits at places like the Dean Heritage Centre to help the public understand what it is that they are seeing.

Whether these animals are truly out there or not (and I for one, think that there is some good supporting evidence to say that there are), the British countryside still holds its mysteries, but they're best observed safely from behind the wheel.



Big Cats have been reported across the British Isles for decades? Do you have a sighting?

As June comes to a close, Owen Sennit for BBC Norfolk wrote the story featuring an African feline spotted prowling in a field near Bramerton, a village outside Norwich 23rd June 2026, "Originally we thought it was a big fox, but we zoomed in our camera and thought it looked like a leopard" claimed Tom Baker, 27 who was out walking his dog with his girlfriend.

Baker said the pair had since reported the sighting to the RSPCA, which told them it had not received any reports of an escaped serval or Savannah cat in the area but urged people to be on the lookout.

Curiously, a Savannah cat I discovered on a Facebook group is currently missing in the area, Kevin Murphy of Norfolk Wildlife Rescue is on a mission to capture the cat. a Savannah cat is a hybrid breed created by crossing a serval with a domesticated cat breed.

On 26th July 2013, in the Bridgewater Mercury Kirsty James reporting on a Big Cat sighting with photographs prowling on a country estate near North Petherton. "Tom Baker captured the animal on his camera phone", "Tom 25, who had been putting rubbish out at the time. Thinking it may have been a deer at first.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0qy70w7eqgo>

<https://www.bridgewatermercury.co.uk/news/10574572.beast-of-north-newton-caught-on-camera/>

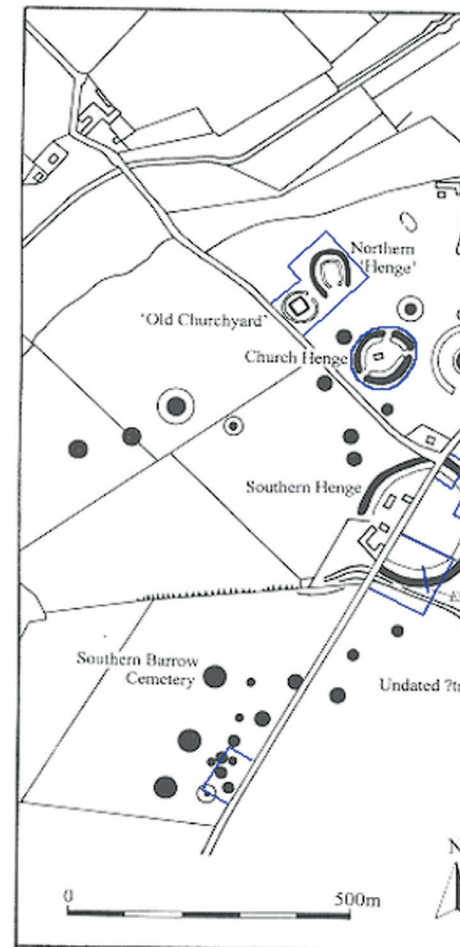


2 Alien Big Cats, 2 Tom Bakers and not a TARDIS in sight.

Dorset's Mystical Gem

by Richard Brown

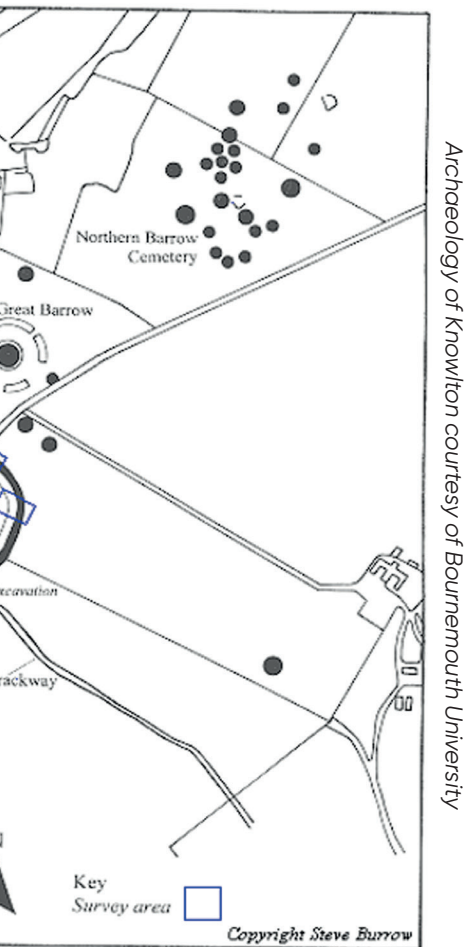
The beautiful and historic county of Dorset has many places of interest, folklore, and mystery. However, one particular location has been a magnet for historians, archaeologists, paranormal enthusiasts, spiritualists, and pagans for many years. Just off the B3078 Wimborne to Cranborne road is a Neolithic earthwork with the ruins of a Norman church in the centre of it.



The History

Knowlton is a former hamlet in the Dorset countryside on the banks of the River Allen. One of many rural villages ravaged by the plague, it became nothing more than a widespread farming community, however its history starts far earlier. Knowlton is part of a vast prehistoric landscape which includes henges, barrows, pits, burials, and the nearby Dorset Cursus. The immediate area includes four earthworks, of which 'Church Henge' is the best preserved due to the location of the church in the centre of it. The other three henges have been severely damaged by farming and construction, including the largest Southern Circle that has the B3078 dissecting it. The largest round barrow in Dorset is also located just metres from the edge of Church Henge.

Despite the damage, Bournemouth University conducted its Knowlton Prehistoric Landscape Project from 2002 to 2008. Findings from this project dates the original construction of the henge between 2500-2000 BCE, and the site subsequently being used in the Bronze Age as a ceremonial complex. The project believes there to be about 170 prehistoric burials within a 1KM radius of the henge. This points towards a significant landscape in honour of the ancestors.



The church itself is a 12th century Norman church, although Papal Bulls from 1145 and 1163 list a monastic chapel possessed by the Benedictine Abbey of nearby Horton in Knowlton prior to the Norman construction. Anglo Saxon Christian burials within metres of the Church Henge confirm earlier Christian use. Some of the original Norman construction survive to this day, and the church went through alterations and additions in the 15th and 18th centuries. In use from its Norman conception there were calls for the church to be demolished in the 1550's due to lack of use. It not only survived this call, but it also witnessed a revival and in 1730 the north aisle was added. Later in the 18th century the roof of the church collapsed, which signalled the final knell for the church. It was abandoned and left to become the ruin we see today. The site is now under the protection of English Heritage.

The Myths and the Paranormal

There are many tales of unusual goings on at Knowlton, some quite fantastical, some misinformed and some a little less easily explained. For example, there are a couple of tales relating to the outcome of the bell that once hung in the tower at the church. One says that it was stolen by the devil and thrown into the nearby River Allen, while another claims that the villagers removed the bell on hearing that the devil was on his way to steal it. Again, in this story, the bell ended up in the river when the villagers dropped it. The ending of both stories claimed the bell could not be recovered from the river and it's ghostly tolling can be heard. It doesn't take a great deal of myth busting to dismiss the devil's involvement, plus a river which is a couple of inches deep is not going to swallow up a church bell! Depending on wind direction, neighbouring church bells can be heard at times which could explain the ghostly tolling.

While the bell story is nothing more than local folklore and mostly repeated in jest, another regular tale relating to the church is told from a deemed basis in fact, and repeatedly used particularly by the many paranormal investigators who film their trips to Knowlton and publish them on YouTube. This story states that the church was



Knowlton Church & Earthworks by Richard Brown

built with the taken down and broken up stones of the pagan henge. A fantastical story intent on increasing the role of the early Christian church's imposition of itself over the native pagans.

The ending of both stories claimed the bell could not be recovered from the river and it's ghostly tolling can be heard

Other sites around the country show us that while churches were placed at important pagan sites, the destruction of standing stones is not something that the church was inclined to do. There is also no evidence whatsoever of any of Knowlton's four henges had any standing stones. So why do we have this story? I have searched back and can find no reasonable starting point for this myth. It seems to be used as a story to explain some of the spirits in the area as pagans roaming the land, angry about the destruction of their sacred stones and the intrusion of the Christian faith on their sacred site. Indeed, there

have been reports of figures in prehistoric clothing walking around the banks of the henge, but these hauntings are not seen as angry pagans or menacing in anyway.

Nevertheless, there is a darker entity associated with Knowlton that dwells within the centre of the henge inside the church. Probably Knowlton's most infamous 'resident' is a religious man that is active within the remains of the church. Some describe him as a monk while others as a priest. He is said to give off negative energy and is responsible for a heavy and quite foreboding feeling the closer you get to the church. I, for one, can vouch for this uneasy feeling you get when entering the centre of the henge. Many people have reported seeing a monk or cloaked figure both day and night. There is even a couple of very grainy photographs that claim to be of this figure. Paranormal investigators have tried calling out to this spirit and claimed to receive intelligent responses via electronic equipment.

Probably Knowlton's most infamous 'resident' is a religious man that is active within the remains of the church. Some describe him as a monk while others as a priest

One of the most regular sightings reports at Knowlton is the man on a horse. Numerous sightings of this figure have been reported including by some within my local investigation team. The horseman appears at nighttime riding at full speed and appears to ride through the church building as if it is not there. Of these reports nobody can distinguish if the figure has period clothing that might identify a specific time in history.

Of course, we cannot have a good British haunted location without a shuck. This is no different as people's report seeing a very large black dog with red eyes around the area of the church and earthworks. I have never witnessed this but was present when a couple of our team experienced

what sounded like growling, when walking towards the edge of the earthworks from the church. I have since heard several others coming forward to confirm the same scenario of growling when walking from the centre to the edge of the earthworks.

I found this particularly interesting after I found out about a hypothesis put forward by Irish archaeologist Richard Wagner, which was supported and elaborated on by others. Wagner has suggested that some henges were built to entrap entities. This idea struck a chord for me in relation to Knowlton. All the negative experiences people report here are centred around the middle of the henge, while at the earthwork and the edges appear benign. Now here is where I go completely gung-ho with a suggestion. What if this theory has some credibility? What if this is the reason for the black dog? Throughout folklore, particularly in Celtic and Germanic circles, the hound is to be found at the thresholds from this world to the otherworld. Take for example Dormarth and Cŵn Annwn in Welsh mythology, the shapeshifting Morrigan who is said to appear as a crow, wolf or hound in Irish mythology and of course Garmr from the Norse. Is this fantastical? Yes of course, but it is a fun tangent to find yourself on.

If you ever have the pleasure of visiting Dorset 's countryside, take time for a stop off at Knowlton. Day or night it is a beautiful place. Arrive in time for a solstice sunrise and join the local Druid Grove practice its arrival, in the shadow of the ruin church put there to discourage them. I would definitely recommend a visit after dark to see what you could encounter, the monk, horseman, or any of the numerous other entities said to roam the prehistoric landscape. It's free of charge and there is roadside parking right outside.

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Football Meet Fate! The Ramsey Effect

Is there a sinister link between a midfielder's goal and a celebrity's final bow? When legendary actor Robin Williams passed away in August 2014, media headlines—perhaps surprisingly—turned their attention toward Welsh footballer Aaron Ramsey. The resulting urban legend of the “Aaron Ramsey Curse” suggested that every time the Arsenal star found the back of the net, a high-profile death would soon follow.

But is this phenomenon a glimpse into the supernatural, or simply a trick of the human mind? Prof now retired, Dr Rob Gandy dissects math of mortality and the psychology of patterns...and of course it's World Cup fever! Let's kick the ball!

Robin Williams, the great American actor, comedian, film producer and screenwriter, tragically committed suicide on 11 August 2014. The reasons put forward for this, discussed in various media, have varied but appear to include depression, the effects of the drugs he was taking for Parkinson's Disease, financial worries, and a downturn in his acting career. However, surely the strangest cause attributed to his death is “the Curse of Aaron Ramsey”.

“Who is Aaron Ramsey?”

many will ask – certainly outside of the United Kingdom, and particularly in America. They will find that he is a Welsh footballer, born in 1990, who plays midfield for Arsenal in the English Football Premier League and the Wales national football team. Arsenal signed him for £5 million in 2008 from his hometown club, Cardiff City. They will then, inevitably and rightly, ask the follow-up question: “What has Aaron Ramsey got to do with Robin Williams?”

The answer is: “Nothing”. But



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He will be in person, speaking at Seriously Strange 2026.

in its 13 August 2014 issue, that esteemed British newspaper the Daily Star headlined with: Robin Williams dies, Aaron Ramsey scores – has the Arsenal star's curse returned?

The ‘curse’ is supposed to be that whenever Aaron Ramsey scores a goal, the death of a celebrity occurs. The Star piece goes on to say: “The strange phenomenon became apparent throughout 2011 and 2012 when a bigname celebrity died within days of the midfielder scoring a goal for Arsenal. And

hours after the star scored in his club's Community Shield victory on Sunday, the tragic death of comedy actor Robin Williams was announced. Many on Twitter have talked of the curse returning, while others slammed the FORUM-325 aaron ramsey. indd 53 disrespectful nature of the coincidence. There has not been a case of the curse since November 30, 2013, when Fast and Furious actor Paul Walker died in a car accident. Ramsey scored two goals against Cardiff that day. But after the midfield dynamo scored 14 more goals last season, the curse was forgotten. Previously, four celebrities passed away as the Welshman scored four goals for his club".¹

Four major celebrity deaths are then listed as being linked to Ramsey finding the net:

Osama bin Laden was declared dead on 2 May 2011, and Ramsey bagged a goal against Manchester United the day before.

Apple guru Steve Jobs died at his home in California on 5 October 2011, and Ramsey hit the headlines by scoring in a north London derby against Spurs the weekend before.

Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi was captured and killed by rebels on 20 October that year, and Ramsey was there to bag an injury-time winner against Marseilles in the Champions League.

Finally, Whitney Houston was found dead in her bathroom on 11 February 2012. Just hours before, the Gunner had struck against Sunderland. Others believe he may have killed off other celebs with his goals,



Aaron Ramsey World Cup 2022.

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including legendary basketball player Ray Williams and Russian billionaire Boris Berezovsky.

Now I know that it is questionable ABOvE: Ramsey scores! And Sir Richard Attenborough dies the following day... whether some of the above should be described as 'celebrities', but there is no doubt that they are all famous people, even if infamous might be more appropriate for Bin Laden and Gaddafi. So how on earth did this 'curse' come to prominence?

Nick Enoch asked the question about the alleged phenomenon in the Daily Mail

on 15 February 2012,² only four days after Houston died on 11 February, with the deaths of the other three celebrities occurring over the previous eight and a half months. As you need a minimum of three events even to be thinking about a pattern, it's clear that someone picked up on it at some time between Gaddafi's and Houston's deaths.

At the time that reference was made to the 'curse', Ramsey had not been a prolific goal

Connecting the Goals and the Curses

scorer: his goal at the time of Bin Laden's death was only his sixth for Arsenal in three seasons, which had admittedly been disrupted by a serious leg break. His seventh goal for Arsenal was when Jobs died; his eighth was when Gaddafi died; and his ninth was on the day of Houston's death. Spooky! Added momentum was given to the 'curse' when Taiwanese animators NMA produced a humorous but controversial cartoon clip of Ramsey as the 'celebrity slayer' – "Aaron Ramsey's 'Kick of Death'" – which went viral on the Internet.³

Fortunately, there is nothing in the 'curse', and there is a very simple explanation. On average, the number of deaths every day in the UK is just over 1,500⁴ and in the USA it is over 7,300,⁵ so if you include the number of deaths on the day before and the day after Ramsey scored a goal, then you treble these numbers to 4,500 and 21,900 respectively. It is virtually certain that there will be some celebrities included in such numbers, however these might be defined. There are specialist websites that list famous people that have died each day: The Life In Legacy website⁶ is primarily US-focused, but has lists of deaths for each week going back as far as 2007, with around 30–40 people recorded for each week; the IMDB website has pages for 'Most Popular People With Date of Death'⁷ in a given year; and Wikipedia has 'Lists of Deaths By Year' going back to 1987, with generally more than 10

deaths recorded for each day.⁸ So, there are inevitably going to be around a couple of dozen celebrities, or people famous for one thing or another, who die on the three days surrounding an Aaron Ramsey goal. Just pick the one who is most famous and add him or her to the 'curse'!

As stated above, the 'curse' was forgotten when Ramsey banged in 16 goals for Arsenal and two for Wales in 2013/14. So, just for fun – and definitely not to provide evidence for the 'curse' – I identified all the goals scored by Ramsey from when he first moved to Arsenal,⁹ and selected famous people that died on the day he scored, or

a day either side, given that deaths in North America could be recorded as the day before because of time zones. I have used the above and similar Internet sources, and then created my own roll-call of Ramsey's 'victims'. The result is the list provided. You will see that Ramsey even brought the curtain down on George W Bush's favourite pooch, and nearly nailed Nelson Mandela!

Interestingly, at the time of writing this article, Ramsey scored in Arsenal's 2–2 draw at Everton, and Sir Richard Attenborough, the celebrated Oscar-winning actor and director died the following

By Ronnie Macdonald from Chelmsford and Largs, United Kingdom – Giroud celebrates his goal 1, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=38178903>



day after a long illness.¹⁰ Attenborough was Life President and a lifelong supporter of Chelsea FC, Arsenal's great north London rivals.¹¹

Clearly, it was easy to create this list, which shows that the 'curse' is nonsense. With so many deaths of celebrities each day and football matches now taking place every day of the week, it is possible to name any footballer and link a famous death to every time they score. I have every confidence that the story of the 'curse' started in a north London pub in a chat between some Arsenal supporters over a pint. Given Ramsey's limited number of goals at the time, his scoring a couple around the time of Jobs's and Gaddafi's deaths will have been very notable and generated jokey comments; this might have been reinforced by someone checking to see if anyone had died the previous time he scored and finding Osama bin Laden. And from there, it would have grown, with Houston's death and the NMA cartoon sending it viral. The only difference between these celebrities and other famous people was that their deaths dominated the media for some time, just as Robin Williams's did. Given the media references to the 'curse', I have no doubt that Ramsey and the Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger will simply laugh it off; but I will be watching to see if Arsenal fans start to sing Queen's "Another One Bites The Dust" every time Ramsey scores in the futures.

NOTES

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5. <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/?theme=country&vid=20800>
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There are more than 40 attributed to the Aaron Ramsey Curse. We've taken a famous dozen.

Goal Date	Famous Person	Date of Death
01 May 2011	Osama bin Laden	02 May 2011
02 Oct 2011	Steve Jobs	05 Oct 2011
19 Oct 2011	Colonel Gaddafi	20 Oct 2011
11 Feb 2012	Whitney Houston	11 Feb 2012
22 Mar 2013	Ray Williams / Boris Berezovsky	22/23 Mar 2013
21 Aug 2013	Elmore Leonard	20 Aug 2013
18 Sep 2013	Ken Norton	18 Sep 2013
30 Nov 2013	Paul Walker	30 Nov 2013
11 May 2014	HR Giger	12 May 2014
11 Aug 2014	Robin Williams	11 Aug 2014
11 Aug 2014	Lauren Bacall	12 Aug 2014
23 Aug 2014	Sir Richard Attenborough	24 Aug 2014

with over 7,000 deaths daily in the US alone, statistical coincidence is inevitable—yet the pattern persists in the public imagination.



Picture by CottonBro Studio, Pexels

The Real Danger from the Paranormal

by Dr Darren Llewellyn

Why misinformation, "authority" talking and conspiracy thinking may be a greater threat than ghosts, demons or haunted locations

Now, when you hear people talking about danger from the paranormal, your mind would normally leap to the idea of some sort of issue from paranormal phenomena. I can imagine most people's thoughts springing to the notion of a spirit following you home, or the possibility you have unleashed a "dark entity" after performing a Ouija Board session. It may even be that you believe you are in a state of oppression or possession, if you believe in that. However, what I am talking about here is the real-world harm that can be caused by a certain type of people who "work" in the paranormal field.

When I mention the real harm that is being done in the field, I am not talking about investigators or researchers who perpetuate myths, or clamp on to a hypothesis and recite it like a fact. I am not even referring to those who see dark and demonic entities in every investigation. Although such approaches are harmful to paranormal research, they are becoming more accepted within the field.

These "researchers" certainly can cause distress to their clients, because they are acting in an irresponsible way. I do, however, feel deep down that these people are trying to be helpful and are not intentionally trying to do harm.

These kinds of issues could be sorted out with a code of practice; I know there have been many attempts to do this. I believe Dr. Ciaran O'Keeffe tried this a few years ago, and I know a group called ParaNexus developed a set of guidelines known as CIPRIS, pronounced Cyprus. The kind of behaviour I am referring to, however, would not be sorted out by a set of regulations to govern our behaviour. These are the self-aggrandising, self-praising groups that have a core set of participants, that have set up their own community, and use it to perpetuate their ideas and hypothesis like fact.

'Self-aggrandising, self-praising groups that have a core set of participants, that have set up their own community, and use it to perpetuate their ideas and hypothesis like fact.'

The Authority Trap

Quite often, they have an extremely wide definition of the paranormal that bends more to myths and conspiracy theories than actual paranormal research. There is a pattern in the way this is presented that makes them appear to be the authority on these subjects. They also present the information they are imparting as if they are being kind enough to give us, the uninformed and under-educated researchers, the knowledge they have.

I am not saying you need a PhD in a topic to be knowledgeable; there are great many people out there who are very well-read on a great many topics. They are frequently far more intelligent than many people I have met in academia. I do, however, think that you need to air a certain amount of care when you are giving information to people through a publication style medium. While the print and broadcast industries have a lot of restrictions, there are far too many internet options that are not governed. On the opposite side of this, we as the receivers of this information need to be just as cautious, so as not to accept misinformation easily. We really need to use our critical thinking and look at the information and judge it for what it really is, and if it's poor or nonsensical, then call it out as that.

While the idea of a group that has its own views may not seem much different from a lot of groups and researchers, the issue with this type of "researcher" I am talking about is that they will couch themselves in a sense of professionalism and authority, aggrandise and promote themselves to a point that would make the Trump administration blush.

They have a professional public image that garners a sense from the reader that these must be a legitimate source of information. They are very fond of giving the impression of being well qualified and experienced in the field, but when it comes down to the brass tack, they are merely presenting what they believe as fact, wrapped in an impression of scientific credibility.

'We really need to use our critical thinking and look at the information and judge it for what it really is, and if it's poor or nonsensical, then call it out as that.'

When genuine research is presented alongside what can only be described as conspiracy theories, there is a real risk of credible work being confused with tawdry, ill-conceived gibberish. This kind of "work" gives mainstream scientists and debunkers the ammunition they need to shoot paranormal research down. What really adds to the problem with this type of writing is that it becomes written in a manner that tries to legitimise the content. This is done with many linguistic phrases that subconsciously make you feel they have greater knowledge on the subject than you do.

You will regularly see phrases like "every good paranormal investigator knows about this", or "has heard of this". While you may think that would not shake your opinion of the work, research into linguistics has shown that certain phrases have a subconscious effect that can build up. This can then lead you to feel they are an authority on the topic, and you should give deference to their knowledge. Over time, or even over the course of a single article, this can draw readers towards the author's point of view. People may find themselves agreeing with what the piece says, because they do not want to appear lacking in knowledge when faced with a supposedly reputable source. This creates a situation that could be best described as a lit match next to a tank of napalm.

A Case Study: Stargate

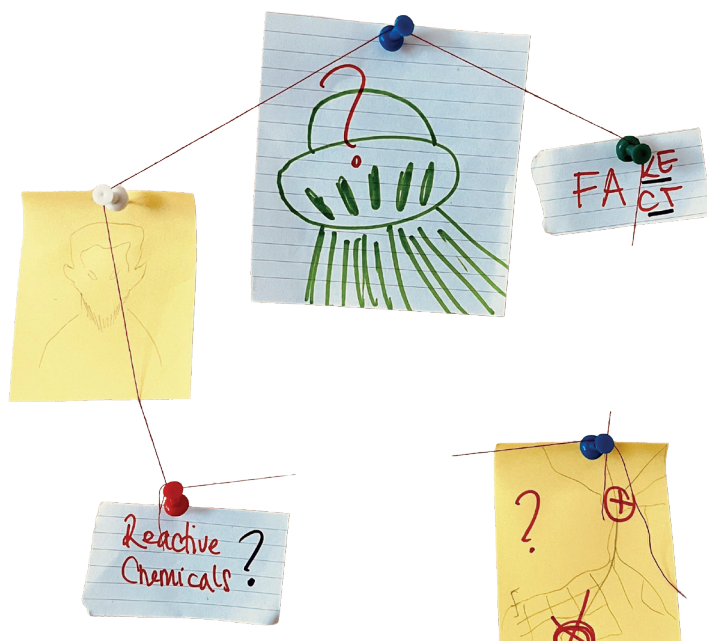
An article came to my attention which discussed what was basically a conspiracy theory about a CIA Stargate report. Stargate was a CIA program involved with remote viewing for intelligence gathering. The author used some very clever phrasing to make it seem that if you

did not know about this, you were not in the loop, so to speak. The phrase that was used was to refer to people who knew about it was 'Astute Researchers'. Well, I guess I am not one of them, even after over 40 years of interest and study in the paranormal, and reading loads of books on conspiracy theories, mysterious people and events. I have to say it was a new one to me, and I know some real corks.

They also listed a long list of people who would recognise this, including people who have researched the esoteric and metaphysics. Once again, I seem to be missing something, even after doing some modules regarding these topics and much reading over the years; not even in those topics did I ever even come across a hint of it.

What was the report about? Well, it covered a secret Chronogarchy that is using quantum access tunnels to control and manipulate human history and the Interlife. The idea proposes that we are trapped in a matrix-like reality by these time travellers, and how the Gregorian calendar is irregular, and the sixty-minute clock distorts our view of time. This "sinister plot" was discovered by the Voyager probe as it passed by Saturn.

Now, I don't want to be too picky on this topic, but surely, if we are dealing with a secret cabal of time travellers whose sole purpose is to rewrite history and keep us trapped in a Matrix-like reality, it would be reasonable to assume they would prevent any evidence of their existence



from emerging. More likely, they would simply "pop" back in time and either stop the leak or destroy the evidence. Since we know about this, they have not done so, which suggests that this is a conspiracy theory that has not been well thought out.

It even seems to build on this by incorporating elements of astronomy, esotericism, and the occult, leading to what I can only describe as a bizarre conspiracy theory. Looking this one up, there do seem to be a few books about it, yet that still does not make it factual. The mixing of these practices and ideas in an attempt to make them seem like a factual, academic, or journalistic reporting creates a very dangerous situation, where fact and fiction can get very easily blurred.

A Case Study: Mental Health and Mediumship

Recently, I read an article on a site that I am not going to name, which purports to be one of paranormal research and scientific study. The article was a report on a paper one of its staff members that aimed to expand the work of Stanislav Grof. Grof was a psychologist who is most well known for his work with psychedelics in the 1960s and as one of the founders of Transpersonal Psychology. Transpersonal Psychology takes a holistic approach to healing, and relates mental and physical health with spiritual health.

'The mixing of these practices and ideas in an attempt to make them seem like a factual, academic, or journalistic reporting creates a very dangerous situation, where fact and fiction can get very easily blurred'

At this point, I feel it is important to point out that most of Grof's research has been generally dismissed by the mainstream scientific community as pseudoscience. While this may not be so bad in the field of paranormal research, the main point of the article was a Brazilian study that suggested serious mental health conditions, such as schizophrenia and psychosis, could be treated by mediumship. This idea is very much couched in a scientific-sounding way, yet presents very little evidence.

The whole concept of this paper is proposing that mediums should be used in the diagnosis of the conditions I mentioned above, and to determine if this is Spiritual Intrusion (Demonic Possession) rather than a mental illness. I should point out that some Brazilian studies, although I have not read the specific one referenced in the article, suggest that helping people with their spiritual well being can be beneficial as part of their treatment. However, they do not suggest that mental health conditions are anything but medical. I had assumed that the notion of mental health issues being caused by demons, while popular in the Dark Ages, had gone out by the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The danger here is quite obvious. People who are not trained in mental health diagnosis should not be making this judgment, nor should we be suggesting to people in a state of distress that they may be possessed. Given the self-importance and plaudits they give themselves, and the fact that the head of this site is a self-professed medium, I do wonder if this idea has more to do with a heightened sense of self-importance, rather than a desire to help.

A Case Study: The Telepathy Tapes

There was also another example of this dangerous behaviour in an article about the Telepathy Tapes. If you haven't heard of it, the podcast focuses on research conducted by Dr Diane Hennacy Powell and presented by Ky Dickens. I should note that there are some differing reasons why her medical licence was temporarily suspended. She claimed it was because of her research, while others have claimed it was down

to poor record keeping, medication management issues, and ignoring serious symptoms from patients.

Dr. Powell put forward the idea that non-verbal autistic children had telepathic powers. The issue with this has come from the scientific community pointing out that there was prompting and that the methods of testing were flawed. I have only seen two videos from her research, one was of a young girl filmed at home showing her telepathic abilities. The second showing a girl in a more clinical setting, and this second video then moved into an appeal for donations to fund her research, with the classic phrase no amount is too small.

While an article on this doesn't seem out of place or problematic, it quickly moves into a critical stance towards the Center for Inquiry and James Randi's Institute. They argue that these organisations are primarily interested in debunking findings, and that they should not be testing these children, as neither has ever demonstrated evidence of psychic ability, in a fairly dismissive tone. Now, whether they have ever found a psychic should arguably be irrelevant if their research is good and valid. If they are catching out fraud that others miss, that may simply reflect differences in methodology or scrutiny between investigators. A tension appears here because just a few lines earlier the author suggests that sceptics and

'It is not so much the reporting of this research that is dangerous, but the language that implies that if you don't believe it, then you do not understand it as they do'

debunkers will say anything to put down Dr Powell's research. The same pattern seems to reappear when similar criticisms are directed at these organisations for not finding evidence of psychic ability. The claim that Dr Powell is not interested in prize money but focused on research sits somewhat uneasily alongside video material referenced on the site, which shows appeals for donations to support her work.

This kind of double standard can cause real issues and goes to show that true believers and debunkers are often two sides of the same coin, equally quick and often vitriolic in their attacks on the opposite side. It is not so much the reporting of this research that is dangerous, but the language that implies that if you don't believe it, then you do not understand it as they do. You also need to factor in the overall true believer mentality, especially when there is some research that either fits into their world view or has its origins with a scientist, regardless of what peer reviews have shown.

I would think if her research was as solid as they claim, then she would only be too happy to accept the offer and collect the money from them. What better way to put down "debunkers" than have them prove your research as correct, red faces for them, nice research grant for you.

So, What Can We Take From This?

What we really need to have is a better definition of what we are researching with the paranormal. A former teacher always promoted the idea of cross-disciplinary training, believing that the more we knew about these topics and their related aspects, the better we could analyse them. While this is a wonderful idea, we, however, need to closely look at what is covered by the term paranormal.

This "Wild West" if you will, that we are in now is where the danger lies. Not only in harming the reputation of witnesses and researchers, but also in the very real harm that can be caused to people who are in genuine need of help. Whether it's from the medical profession or from paranormal researchers due to strange happenings or sightings, only the medical professionals can really make that call.

At present, the paranormal seems to cover everything from conspiracy theories and urban legends to hauntings and psychic abilities, by way of cryptids and UFOs. I am not saying we should only allow hauntings and psychic phenomena in the field. I see no issues with cryptids or UFO research bundled together, after all, they are

'(...) we could fall into the abyss of pseudoscience forever, rather than find a way back to a position of scientific research of unexplainable phenomena.'

beyond the normal experience. Now, the real problems with this definition come with some of the urban legends that refer to the headless motorbiker riding his bike along the road of his last trip, or the phantom hitchhiker, who gets picked up, vanishes, and when the driver returns their belongings to the house, finds their passenger died years before.

These kinds of myths could have been true or not, and a lot of people have done some research into them. Then we have the other type of urban legends, like the Slender Man, which are a completely made-up myth and really shouldn't be classed as paranormal; this is more of a cultural phenomenon than a paranormal one.

What we really need to be aware of, though, is the dangers of having urban legends and conspiracy theories mixed up with real and genuine research. This mix creates a dangerous precipice for the field of paranormal research, where we could fall into the abyss of pseudoscience forever, rather than find a way back to a position of scientific research of unexplainable phenomena.

We should always be very careful when reading these articles to look out for phrases that suggest we know less than them, or we may not be good researchers if we haven't heard of the topic. All us not knowing means it is either something we had not yet come across, or it may not be a paranormal topic, and they are just after followers of the idea they believe in.

Training Weekender Returns!



Details and news coming soon.

Keep your eyes peeled to ASSAP Social Media and www.ASSAP.co.uk for the imminent announcement and details of the 2026 Training Weekender special event, hands on training of our unique workshop and training programme.



In 2025, we were at the epicentre of the Broad Haven Triangle and the Dyfed mystery.





STRANGE FLAMES

The 1938 Leeds Ghost Fires

The fire triangle of combustion is a convenient way to illustrate how fires start. Many of you will be familiar with this image from safety courses. There need to be three factors for a fire: oxygen, heat and fuel. Remove any of these and ignition is impossible. Fuel is almost everywhere, as is oxygen. With enough heat most material will burn.

When we turn our attention away from the triangle, however, the question of what causes fire becomes more complicated. There are cases when the reasons for a fire cannot be easily ascertained or the conflagration behaves in unexpected ways. This has led to some abandoning the triangle and adopting the fire tetrahedron. The new model adds a chemical chain reaction within the fuel to the equation. Once this is activated, an external cause is no longer necessary.

Yet even the tetrahedron cannot explain the unusual fires that happened in 8 Neville Street, Leeds. The large four-story building housed three businesses and a warehouse for another company.^[i] It was located next to the Dark Arches that support the city's railway station. During the latter part of September, numerous inexplicable outbreaks took place throughout the building, and despite no one being seriously injured, these peculiar circumstances attracted the attention of the local and national press.

On hearing the phrase "spontaneous combustion" we tend to think of an unfortunate person or another creature, like the rabbit discovered by a police officer in 1989, that die or are seriously injured as a result of a fire that appears to come from within.^[ii] The spontaneous combustion of inanimate objects are less likely to send a shiver down your spine, but they are puzzling and merit attention.

Larry Arnold's work on this topic will be familiar to many readers (FT: 460-2 2025). His extensive research challenges the



conventional explanations for human combustion. Unsurprisingly, given the medical and legal ramifications of this serious topic, Arnold has shown less interest in spontaneous combustion of the non-human kind.

Nonetheless, Arnold touches on the 1938 Leeds fires in *Ablaze!*. Before drawing on the work of Eric Frank Russell, he refers to fifteen mysterious fires that broke out over nine days in the premises from 11-19 September. Arnold acquired this information from the *Daily Telegraph*. Seeing as no one died during this outbreak, he moves on to list the more morbid cases Russell collected during the late 1930s, "a terribly inflammatory period in Great Britain." [iii]

Using the local press and fire service records, this article takes an in-depth look at the Leeds fires. These strange outbreaks puzzled investigators, and expert opinions were sought. Those who worked in the various businesses that occupied the building had dreamlike, surreal experiences. It is a pity that these events are not more well-known. Perhaps the strange flames of September 1938 were overshadowed by the flames of war that arrived a year later.



Dr Mike Benbough-Jackson with assistance of Keith Linder for images.



Leeds, September 1938

Since 1936, Leeds council had been discussing the possibility of aerial bombardment. Preparations were accelerated during the "September Crisis" in 1938 amid concerns that Adolf Hitler's move to acquire Sudetenland, part of Czechoslovakia with a substantial German population, could cause further conflict.

Air Raid Precautions, most notably the construction of trenches in parks and other open areas, were set in place. Gasmasks were distributed. Telephone operators practiced answering calls while wearing respirators that included a microphone. The public were asked not to panic.[iv]

By the end of the month, however, the crisis had ended. Sudetenland became part of Germany. After meeting Hitler on 15 September, Neville Chamberlain accepted the German leader's claim to the region. Further negotiations culminated in the Munich conference and subsequent agreement of 30 September.

Neville Street, Leeds, was in the press at the same time as its political namesake. Hitler had announced his intention to annex part of Czechoslovakia on Monday 12 September. Two days later, a fire broke out in the basement of 8 Neville Street and the "Neville Street Puzzle" began.[v] By the time Chamberlain waved his famous piece of paper at Heston Aerodrome eighteen days later, the fires had abated.



. SMALL "SPOOK FIRE"



The Climate of Crisis

In September 1938, the Munich Agreement was finalised as a desperate attempt to avoid war in Europe. Representatives from Germany, Britain, France, and Italy met to address Adolf Hitler's demands for the Sudetenland, a region of Czechoslovakia with a large German-speaking population. Neville Chamberlain famously presented the resulting accord as a guarantee of peace, though it effectively surrendered the territory to Nazi Germany, leaving Czechoslovakia vulnerable and the continent on the brink of wider conflict.



RES" WITNESSED

635	19 K.	5.27	Ever Ready (Great Britain) Ltd.	Warehouse	8 Neville Street	A	Unkennon
636	19 K.	5.57	Brimmings Ltd.	Warehouse	8 Neville Street	A	Unkennon

Entries for fires in 8 Neville Street on 19 September from the Leeds Fire Brigade Record of Fires for 1938.

Blazing Batteries

Fire brigades were often praised in the press of the time as being "ever ready," so it was a little ironic that the first major outbreak took place in part of the block used by British Ever Ready, which had separated from its American parent company in 1914. Radios, bicycle lamps, torches and other appliances were stored in the basement along with batteries.

Dense fumes from the burning electrical goods meant that cars and trams were diverted for two hours. Alkaline batteries contain manganese dioxide, an oxidizing agent that intensifies an existing blaze. Firefighters

wore respirators, and it took an hour to bring the flames under control. The building was near a railway bridge where a train driver left his locomotive and stood looking down at the flames. Perhaps he wondered if this was a foretaste of what would happen if the Luftwaffe arrived.

After the initial blaze, other inexplicable fires broke out in different parts of the building. Some of these "spook fires" resulted in the fire brigade being called out, others were dealt with on the spot by office and warehouse staff.^[vi] Although the larger outbreaks will be considered first, the smaller ones were the strangest.

Carpet Burns

The initial blaze was substantial, but the second outbreak at the Ever Ready store on 15 September posed a greater threat to human life. Fleeing the flames, workers made their escape by rope from nearly 80 feet from the ground. This was the fifth time the fire brigade had visited the property in four days. It looked like those high-tension radio batteries were ever ready to combust. John Burke was not laughing though. He told a reporter from the Yorkshire Observer that he was "nearly choked" by fumes.^[vii]

Meanwhile, firemen experienced minor shocks from the 'live' water.

Number 8 Neville Street also housed a Brintons carpet warehouse. The fire that took place there on the evening of 19 September took two hours to extinguish. Carpet burns well, and the "thousands of gallons from two jets" ended up doing as much damage to the stock as the fire.^[viii] Like the earlier battery fires, the inferno was limited to one floor. Nevertheless, by 20 September it was estimated that the various blazes had resulted in between 10 to 15 thousand pounds worth of damage. Brintons were not

taking any risks and transported their most expensive carpets to another property.

On 19 September, the firms in the building established a watch system with at least one member from each company staying overnight to spot any foul play or alert the fire service at the start of a major fire. Five men were on patrol during the night of the carpet conflagration. One of them, Richard Little, was interviewed by the Yorkshire Evening Post. His account captures the uncanny nature of a phenomenon that appeared to be playing a game with the watchmen.

Little described how, at around 9 pm, they checked the carpet store, and seeing as all was fine there, they went upstairs to the stock room. Soon after ascending the stairs, they smelt smoke before seeing it rise from the lift shaft. On rushing back down, the men saw a roll of wallpaper was on fire. They extinguished this on the landing, which had a concrete floor. Soon afterward, the large fire in the stockroom above began.

"Happenings such as that shake one's nerve," Little told a reporter.^[ix] People were perplexed and unnerved, it was as if an invisible arsonist was at work. In a book published in 1938, the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard described fire as being "the ultra-living element."^[x] It was certainly alive and licking in 8 Neville Street.



Small fires and hotspots

People who worked in the building reported seeing calendars and maps on the wall slowly char at the edges. Items on desks caught flame as did those in drawers. Sometimes paper burned but desks did not. The only damage experienced at an optician in the building, amounted to a few burned papers. This may not have been a costly fire for the company, but it was bizarre.

One of Little's fellow watchmen, Bernard Daly, went into the offi-

ces of Lever's Optical company on the evening of 19 September. He shone his torch around the room. On the manager's desk, there were a pile of papers that had been burned and a few lightly scorched letters.

The most disturbing experiences, however, seemed to be when workers saw items slowly begin to catch flame. Finding a fire is one thing, but seeing the way it started was, as an anonymous witness told the *Daily Mirror*, "enough to make any man haywire." They went on to say how they were shocked by the way a paper would "shrivel up

before your eyes."^[xi] It would have been more natural of it had just burned as if lit by a match.

It was a small fire that convinced the emergency services that they were not dealing with a canny arsonist. Up until then, only those who worked in 8 Neville Street had seen these unusual phenomena, and that was not enough for the police or fire service. But when a firefighter, who was keeping watch in the building after the carpet fire, saw a piece of tissue paper begin to smolder on an office worker's desk, arson was ruled out.

At the start of 1938, a surrealist art exhibition took place in Paris. Although there were no flying dogs or shark-headed taxi drivers in Leeds, the events in the fire-prone building could easily have come from the imagination of Salvador Dali or Marcel Ducamp. Wooden partitions and tables became too hot to touch. A coat hanging on a door caught light. An umbrella started to burn. Telephone operators wore rubber shoes to avoid getting shocks from "electrified phones."^[xii]

And then there was the smell. Unfortunately, the reports said little about the nature of this odour. Smell is often the most neglected sense in the historical record possibly because of its offensive and invasive qualities. On this occasion, it was mentioned only once and described as unusual. Yet it was also noted that the aroma preceded even the smallest fire. This fact made the strange scent as mysterious as the fires themselves.



Fire, Police and boffins

A fire assessor with 36 years in the field conceded that he had never seen anything like this and could not think of a reason for the numerous outbreaks. Senior firefighters, Superintendent McKinley and Chief Inspector Taylor were also at a loss to explain what was taking place, despite each having served for 30 years. Police officers were equally flummoxed. Detective Superintendent James Craig, CID, confessed that he was bewildered.

The record of fires kept by the Leeds Fire Brigade for September 1938 can be consulted at the West Yorkshire Archives.^[xiii] It contains information that cannot be found in the numerous press reports about the fires, including the time at which they were reported. The source reveals how the causes of the fires went from the banal to the inexplicable. The initial fire in the Ever Ready store on 14 September was attributed to a "dropped light," and Division A of the Leeds brigade responded at 8.59 PM. The following day, the first fire was a "recurrence of the previous fire," and the following two were attributed to "overheating of primary batteries."

On 19 September both the fire at the Ever Ready warehouse in the afternoon and at Brintons in the evening were regarded as being "unexplained." There are no other entries about the

minor fires, but the transition from a discarded cigarette to an unestablished cause in this record captures the confusion expressed by experienced firefighters.

If those who combatted fire and investigated crime could not establish a cause, it was time for people with a more theoretical understanding to step in. Jack Firth, an analytical chemist from Leeds, blamed the fire on an electro-statically charged vapour. The gaseous battery theory held sway in the press. This explanation resonated with a population fearful of deadly chemicals being dropped from enemy planes, despite the use of such weapons having been prohibited by the Geneva Convention. On 14 September the Yorkshire Evening Post outlined what would happen if the city "suffered gas attack."^[xiv]

Craig wanted another opinion and called on Cecil Chadfield from the Leicester College of Technology. Perhaps Craig had heard about this inventor from the reports about Chadfield's death ray in 1934.^[xv] After arriving on 23 September, Chadfield conducted several experiments using a special piece of equipment, the "electrometer." Like Firth, he thought that after the first fire electricity in the air had started all the following outbreaks. When he gave the "all clear," Workers breathed a sigh of relief and could once again light up their cigarettes indoors. Fire was tamed.

Yorkshire Evening Post

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1938. ONE PENNY

MYSTERY FIRES AT LEEDS WAREHOUSE

'NEVILLE STREET PUZZLE' BAFFLES EXPERTS

**Fifteen Outbreaks
in Four Days**

LEEDS, Wednesday.—The mysterious fires which broke out in various parts of the big warehouse at 8, Neville Street, close to the railway station, still remain unexplained.

Fifteen outbreaks have been dealt with since Sunday.

The suggestion of arson has been discounted.



Firemen at work at the Neville Street warehouse.

Experts play an important part in the damning of "damned facts" and both Firth and Chadfield provided an explanation for the fire. Yet the final words from Chadfield that we see in the press before he left at the end of September are far from confident. He referred to unusual local conditions, said he had his theories but was unable to reveal them at present. The most he could say was that electricity must have played a part. He promised to submit a report after returning to Leicester.^[xvi] A search of the press and online archive catalogs has so far not located this document.

Some comparisons

For those involved in the Leeds fires of September 1938, "electric gas" served to

explain fires that were not accompanied by a visible heat source to initiate combustion. This is not the place to run through all the other possible reasons for the Leeds fires. But it would be great to hear FT readers thoughts on this case. However, a few salient features will be considered by way of a conclusion.

Unlike many other historic examples of fires from nowhere, arson was ruled out. A spate of spontaneous fires in a home would often be attributed to a disgruntled child or servant. That is one of the benefits of investigating strange outbreaks in the workplace. Arson or an accident is considered at first, but repeated outbreaks and unusual ignition are less easy to dismiss in the long run.

Spontaneous combustion of material is acknowledged in certain circumstances, for example the ignition of densely packed grass, because of heat released during decomposition. Coal and oil can also catch light without an external heat source. ^[xvii] This does not explain the events in Leeds where paper objects on walls and in desks burned slowly.

Despite the presence of copious amounts of carpet in the building, static electricity from humans is an unlikely cause. The simple reason is that the small fires were not the result of people touching things. Whether something else was touching the items is another matter.

Vincent H. Gaddis notes that warehouses are more likely than homes to have explicable recurrent fires over a short period. He argues that examples in houses are more convincing than those at the workplace. Gaddis's reasons are sound regarding the possibility that fire services may overlook a potential source that could cause a blaze to resume. Indeed, he noted that fire services tend to leave staff on the scene at such locations. ^[xviii] This could explain the fire starting again in the battery store at 8 Neville Street.

Yet as we have seen, there was a lot more to the Leeds fires than a potentially overlooked ember. Indeed, there are similarities with a case Gaddis described involving the Willey family, near Macomb, Illinois, in

1948. One of the most striking features of the outbursts in the Willey's farmhouse were the appearance of singe marks that developed into fires on the wallpaper. In the end the 13-year old niece of the famer was blamed. At one point in the investigation, gas in the walls was also mentioned as a potential cause for the burning wallpaper.[xix]

A series of fires in a farmhouse in Odon, Indiana during 1941 also included some that were similar in nature to those that occurred in Leeds in 1938. Michael Harrison described the Indiana case as being "distinctly unusual" because items caught fire in closed drawers, a calendar burst into flames as did a coat hanging on a door.[xx]

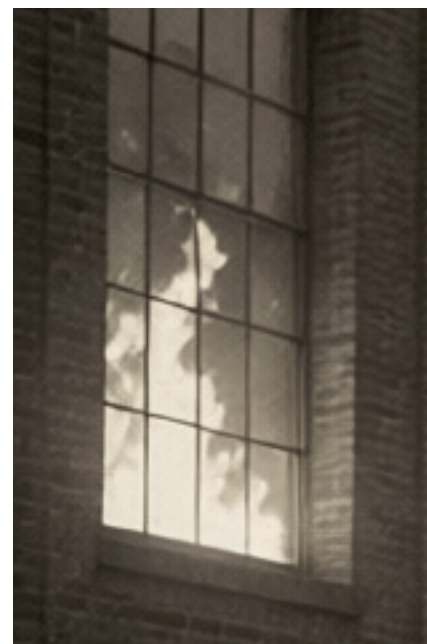
Some might attribute the fires to a form of psi known as

Psychopyresis. This need not be intentional incendiarism by thought as much as unintentionally generated by fear because of tension in central Europe. Or perhaps it was something closer to home. Charles Fort speculates that anxiety might be behind inexplicable fires associated with "poltergeist girls." [xxi] Equally, others could suggest that a poltergeist was responsible. A journalist in a Scottish newspaper informed readers that fans of Algernon Blackwood knew that the Leeds fires were "just an ordinary fire elemental at work." [xxii]

Whatever their cause, these fires were unusual. Apart from the fires that led to the fire brigade being called, there were forty-three outbreaks in the building in the space

of just over a week. There was no doubt that something was setting off a chemical chain reaction in combustible materials. Whether it was down to an elemental or electricity, an invisible force was at work in the building that September."

Dr Mike Benbough-Jackson



- [i] Kelly's Directory of Leeds 1936, p. 358.
- [ii] Jenny Randles and Peter Hough, *Spontaneous Human Combustion* (Hale, 1982), pp. 128–130.
- [iii] Larry E. Arnold, *Ablaze! The Mysterious Fires of Spontaneous Human Combustion* (M. Evans, 1995), p. 66; Eric Frank Russell, 'Invisible Death', *Fate* (December, 1950), pp. 4–12.
- [iv] *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 24 September 1938, p. 9.
- [v] *Leeds Mercury*, 21 September 1938, p. 5.
- [vi] *Birmingham Sunday Mercury*, 25 September 1938, p. 5.
- [vii] *Bradford Observer*, 16 September, p. 5.
- [viii] *Bradford Observer*, 20 September, p. 5.
- [ix] *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 20 September 1938, p. 11.
- [x] Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (Beacon Press, 1964), p. 7.
- [xi] *Daily Mirror*, 22 September 1938, p. 6.
- [xii] *News Chronicle*, 21 September 1938, p. 11.
- [xiii] *West Yorkshire Archive*, Record of Fires volume 1938 (LC/FIRE/1/1/7), 622–4, 626, 635–6.
- [xiv] *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 14 September 1938, p. 10.
- [xv] *The Electrician*, 112 (1934), p. 229.
- [xvi] *The Daily Independent*, 30 September 1938, p. 2.
- [xvii] Randles and Hough, p. 150.
- [xviii] Vincent H. Gaddis, *Mysterious Fires and Lights* (Dell, 1968), p. 154.
- [xix] Gaddis, p. 179.
- [xx] Michael Harrison: *Fire from Heaven: A Study of Spontaneous Combustion in Human Beings* (Pan, 1977), pp. 195–196.
- [xxi] Charles Fort, *Wild Talents* (Claude Kendall, 1932), p. 88.
- [xxii] *Daily Record*, 24 September 1938, p. 11.

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