

ASSAP NEWS

ASSOCIATION FOR THE
SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF
ANOMALOUS PHENOMENA

Number 10
December 1983

OUR BRAVE NEW YEAR

As 1983 draws to a close the ASSAP executive would like to thank everyone for their support. Already plans are being made to make ASSAP a better, stronger and more exciting organisation, in 1984. Our message in the first issue of ASSAP News was help us make our ambitious programme a reality; two years later, and with much of the programme realised, we dare to make it even more ambitious and ask again: "Help us make it a reality." Chairman Maurice Townsend adds this message:

ASSAP is a young organisation. It is no longer in the process of being born however and the days of judging its mistakes as enthusiasm without experience are now over.

It would be easy to talk of our launching a new membership drive in 1984 but first we should ask ourselves what do we have to offer the new member (or indeed the existing member). If 1983 was the year of regional and group development (there are now several groups affiliated to ASSAP and many more with strong links) then 1984 must be the year of individual development.

One of the more exciting developments for 1984 is the training departments programme for distance learning. Since it is now clearly recognised that many

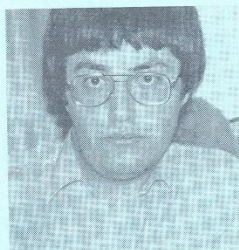
the latest developments in their various fields.

ASSAP NEWS will contain more ASSAP News so that members can keep up with the society activities and can (through contact addresses) help.

As well as the continuing investigations effort members will be able to get involved in practical research through the MERLIN and ALBION programmes. MERLIN will ideally offer a good (and useful) co-ordinated programme for mixed ability groups. The project itself will, quite possibly allow members to witness their first paranormal phenomena (if all goes well) which they can then judge for themselves. ALBION meanwhile will stimulate a quite different sort of research (more in the way of a detective investigation). It will be suitable for individuals working alone unlike so many other types of anomaly research.

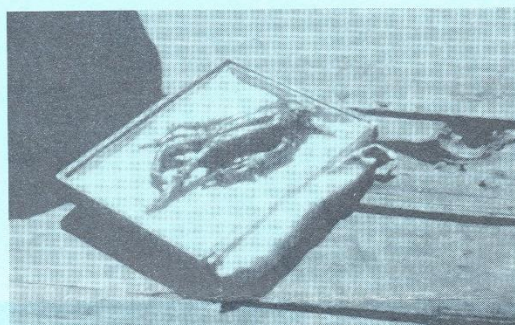
The emphasis then is to get members involved actively in ASSAP at all levels. Only when these activities are fairly underway can we claim to offer members as much (or as little) practical involvement as they like.

All members should be much better informed of all these going on through an improved ASSAP NEWS. In addition to the activities mentioned above we will continue with the successful elements of earlier programmes. All in all 1984 offers much greater possibilities for involvement than 1983. It should be an exciting year.



members cannot travel any great distance to group meetings distance learning offers the chance to gain insight into the paranormal at home. There will however still be conferences (though less training events as such) to hear from researchers

Picture exclusive: hand of the Yeti?



THIS is possibly the first picture of the hand of the Yeti. It was taken by Pat Manning, one of Britain's leading women mountain climbers at the Pangboche monastery in the Khumbu province of Nepal in April this year. She could only report on its existence, not on whether it was genuine, and said it was treated as a religious relic.

Janet Bord, co-author of *Alien Animals*, *Bigfoot Casebook* and other works, saw the picture and commented: "I believe it's the first time I've ever come across any such relic as this and just don't know what to make of it. It certainly looks interesting from the picture." More may be discovered about the hand when a British researcher returns from Nepal later this year.

Qualifications for researchers

As we look forward to 1984, ASSAP's Training Officer Dennis Bury explains what his department has achieved so far, and what it hopes to achieve in the future.

Training consists at present of a three fold action based upon a policy of meeting the learning needs of those who are entirely, or nearly entirely, new to the subject. Such 'newcomers' will surely one day include teachers, institutes, clubs and other unaffiliated persons outside

ASSAP. The action is founded on these three points:

1. Providing materials, booklists, slides, tapes and videos upon various aspects of the subject for individual's and groups.

2. Providing 'events' in as many places as possible to link up members with each other. A research interest contact service is also part of this.

3. Providing tuition for and supportive learner

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THE YEAR OF THE CAT

The year 1983 looks set to become known as The Year of the Cat. Strange puma-like creatures have been stalking the British countryside attacking sheep and other animals before seemingly vanishing into mid-air.

This ghostly quality and their out of place appearance in this country has roused the interest of researchers into anomalous phenomena.

The latest Fortean Times contains ten pages of puma sightings from 1983 as far afield as Sussex, Derbyshire, Bucks, Gwent, Stockport and Scotland; that list is by no means complete. As I write this article (November 11 1983) reports continue to be made.

The height of the activity came in May and centre of the stage was Exmoor where "the beast" killed more than 100 sheep in five months. Police invariably described it as a wild cat, a cross-breed of dogs or a panther. Repeated reports said the beast is cornered and will soon be caught. It always escaped. Even game park boss Captain Philip Lasbrook, who claimed he could outsmart the Beast with his nine years experience of tracking animals in South Africa, was outwitted.

On July 29 the Police declared "The Beast is dead" having been shot by a farmer and crept off to die in secret. August 2 the Beast kills its 100th

sheep and police have to admit the animal is not dead after all.

The Royal Marines were called in at one stage but were withdrawn in the interests of public safety after the Daily Express offered £1,000 for a photograph of the Beast. On May 1 a senior policeman at Barnstable claimed a local man had come forward saying he had once owned a puma but it had now vanished.

The sightings were by no means just around Exmoor. In August the puma returned to the Chilterns, having last been seen three months before. This time it attacked a pet cat in the village of Chalfont St Peter.

Owner Jean Sellars said the animal was black and had an 18 inch tail, fangs and a sharp studded collar. Alien animal researcher Chris Hall of Fleet, Hants, commented: "A puma with a collar? I'd put my money on a large black dog based on the news item, but would be interested in any additional information.

"I have a case of the Surrey Puma savaging a pet dog but no attacks on cats - dead animals have been found killed in typical puma fashion. Pumas are not noted for attacks on people unless provoked, in their native country". He adds that one project he would like to try is checking the claimed puma/ley correlation.

Chris sent photocopies of reports of sightings of the Surrey Puma from July 1983. Reports claim the puma was seen in West Heath Road, Farnborough, on the ranges near Caesar's Camp, Aldershot and on Hazely Heath near Heckfield.

On 22 August a report appeared in the Daily Star to say an animal, believed to be a puma, was roaming the Isle of Wight. It had been seen three times.

The Daily Mirror reported on August 15 that sheep, lambs and chickens were being killed by the Beast of Brechfa. It said a creature looking like a large ginger cat about four feet long with short fur, thick legs and a long tail had "struck fear into villagers" at Brechfa, Dyfed.

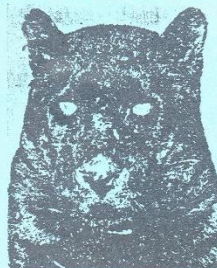
As we go to press Essex researcher Andy Collins is hot on the trail of black panther sightings at Horndon on the Hill in his county.

Two sets of witnesses independently saw the same type of animal - jet black fur, flat nose - on the afternoon of Friday November 4. Strangely the books in his local library have the pages dealing with panthers torn out!

Paranoia fans will also want to note the Sunday Times for July 31, 1983, which told of mysterious vans being seen on Exmoor and two huge black dogs

DAILY EXPRESS Saturday May 7 1983

**£1,000
REWARD**



**The
Beast
of
Exmoor**

WANTED: ALIVE

"It sucks the blood you see. You tell me what other animal does that?" - Farmer talking about the Exmoor Beast which savagely killed 100 sheep within five months.

seen being controlled by a man acting suspiciously.

And at Loch Ness where Nessie has apparently been photographed by Mr Shine and his team of researchers there has been unusual activity of a rather more dangerous nature. The Daily Star reported on August 22 that the team had been petrol bombed.

Exciting education all can take part in

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help for members to undertake an examined project, leading to a basic qualification at present called (unsatisfactorily perhaps) the ASSAP primary certificate.

At this present juncture we are some way towards fulfilling number 1; quite a selection of materials are already available.

With 2 we now have a computer search contact service operational but events are

hard to engineer outside London and even then bad luck can diminish efficiency. With 3 we are just beginning to establish ourselves.

Educational programmes might not seem too interesting but actually developing a sound educational approach is rather exciting.

If any of these ideas interest members they would be most welcome to become involved.

Ice fall is a wonder

OUR report in ASSAP News 8 about a falling block of ice in Birmingham elicited a letter from a Northants reader.

Mr. Steiner of Wellingborough writes: "I had just been listening to the TV News and they told of another block of ice falling through a petrol station roof.

"What is all this? Do ice blocks often fall or are we up against a new paranormal phenomenon!"

Falling ice was first suggested as paranormal by Charles Fort at the beginning of the century along with falls of many other objects - frogs, fish, coal and so on.

It happens quite regularly - but in August we had at least three

falls within a week.

In the case Mr. Steiner refers to a block of ice the size of a suitcase fell through the steel roof of a service station in Hitchin, Herts.

Another block - the size of a carrier bag - fell in Bushey, Herts, and a third fell in Ampthill, Bedfordshire.

The Civil Aviation Authority at first said it fell from an aircraft. The CAA then said it was due to 'freak' weather conditions, but what these conditions were is not said.

For a more detailed and complete account of falls of ice see the latest Fortean Times (issue 40), price £1.25 from BM-Fortean Times, LONDON WC1N 3XX.

Profile

ASSAP was criticised by a few people for the long questionnaire included with the application form but the benefits of this were soon apparent to the Executive. It showed just what a wealth of talent and expertise lay within the rank and file membership and the range of fresh and interesting ideas. The confidentiality of the files meant these would lay hidden away so it was suggested that each issue of ASSAP News should contain a "profile" of one of our members. I will be writing to many members inviting them to submit a profile but do not hesitate to submit an unsolicited copy. Talk about yourself, your views, any experiments you want to try out, any experiences you have had...be as diverse as you wish. And don't forget to include a photograph of yourself! Kicking off is William Craighs. He's 24, married with four children and presently unemployed.

My interest in the unexplained started at school where I had a schoolboy fascination for the macabre. This developed the more I read into the interests and views I hold today. Practically anything which cannot be explained by science, and some that can, interest me.

This was helped by subscribing to the Unexplained: a weekly magazine that covered subjects I had never heard of, such as SHC (Spontaneous Human Combustion), Lycanthrope, Levitation, MIB (Men in Black), Alien Animals, Timeslips, etc. which after 157 editions will ever serve as a reference for me.

The next step was to join an association with interests similar to my own. After sending off to many such organisations, some of which did not come up to my expectations by either charging too much, like an American society where for \$1,000 you can become a director, to the Society for Psychical Research which was interesting but a bit too intellectual for me. Then I found the address of ASSAP.

After sending off for details, I received two copies of ASSAP News which interested me very much. There was no pressure to buy things or to subscribe, which I found with some of the other societies. The stories were of interest to me, and the investigations were professionally done. I hold my own views on most subjects. For example:

PHANTOM HITCHHIKERS

I put stories of phantom hitchhikers down to rumours spread by people who believe them to be true even though it actually has no basis in fact. You can imagine a group of people on Halloween trying to scare each other. The most frightening story is the one remembered. The next year all the people go to different parties, each one tells the same story. The main theme is remembered and again passed on. So you reach the situation where nobody knows where the story originated from but you know someone who knows someone who does!

An example of this is when I was a child at school a story went around that if you went into a

certain graveyard at night the Green Lady would get you. Approximately ten years after my own kids were talking and one said to the other: "If you stay out after dark the Green Lady will get you." The same Green Lady but this time serving a different purpose.

During the war, stories like this were spread about deliberately to help people think we were invincible. For example: The story of the British tourist out driving his car on the continent when he turns a corner to find himself going to collide with a road block of German tanks. Thinking he is going to hit them he braces himself...but nothing happens.

Looking back he is amazed to see that the tanks are really only plywood imitations. The Germans also had a story like this, only in their story it was a German tourist and of course the tanks were British!

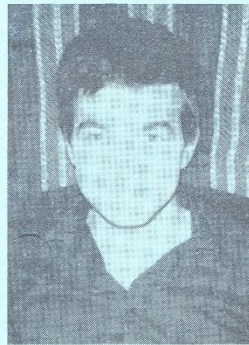
UFOs

The UFO enigma is one of the most perplexing of all the phenomena I have read about, because the case for them is so strong. It is one of the most talked about subjects there is. There is the danger of it becoming a quasi-religion like the Aetherius Society. Too many people regard it as so common that serious sightings are passed over. There is also the danger that the subject will become outdated as new avenues of exploration are opened up and new theories are proposed.

GHOSTS

Again, like UFOs, there is the danger of ghosts becoming old fashioned. Everyone knows some one or have themselves seen a ghost. This can have the effect of making you rather unattached to the problem of investigating them. For this reason I tend to stick to poltergeist cases where physical proof can be recorded.

If all the reports of anomalous phenomena, hauntings, UFO sightings, or indeed any strange happenings were put down on a central computer open to all interested parties this would help to bring all the societies and organisations together and maybe help to speed up the answering of some of these questions. It would



also help investigators find the facts quicker and more efficiently.

I personally haven't had time to investigate cases but to be given the opportunity to correspond with people with similar interests as my own will help broaden my understanding. If more people came out of the closet, so to speak, and aired their views we may well come a little closer to solving the unexplained.

Editorial note: All opinions contained in contributions are personal ones, and in no way reflect a corporate attitude or opinion of ASSAP.

Rare books

A NEW dealer in out-of-print and rare books has made his appearance, specialising in 'folklore, occultism, mythology and magic' but in practice covering almost the entire field of ASSAP's interests.

He issues catalogues periodically and can be visited by appointment. He has a lot of interesting cryptozoological titles — not so many since my visit — and enough miscellaneous stock to make it worth contacting him for any item you're looking for. Prices are reasonable, but inevitably reflect the rarity of some of his items.

For more esoteric books, the primary source continues to be

find elusive books is matched only by his knowledge and understanding of their contents. He, too will be glad to hear of your specific wants — Hilary Evans.

Dreams are made of this

by Jenny Randles

ON Wednesday, October 19 1983 Granada TV featured a 30 minute programme on 'dreams', in which I took part on behalf of ASSAP North West.

Also present were Dr Peter Evans, whose book 'Landscapes of the Night' (about the science behind dreams) has just been released, and John Grant, who has a book called 'Dreamers', about famous dreams throughout history, to be published in the Spring.

In the audience were many local viewers who had written in with their strange dreams and others who had come to query the experts. A fascinating debate on the nature of precognitive dreams was undertaken.

Dr Evans did not put any great store by precognition at all, and John Grant stated that 95% of supposed paranormal dreams are really just coincidence. If you think of the very large numbers of dreams being dreamt each night, he said, it is hardly surprising that some appear to come true. We just never hear about those that do not!

I challenged this by pointing out that precognitive dreams are often highly emotive and vivid...which suggests that there is a connection between vividity and the importance of the dream. Both researchers could not reject this point.

Members of the audience had shared many strange dreams including one lady who had suffered terrifying premonitions of the Yorkshire Ripper murders. Several of the dreamers requested ASSAP to pursue their stories and our North West team are to be kept busy for a time chasing these up. Of much interest was an individual who claimed frequent (i.e. weekly) lucid dreams. About 90% of the dreamers who had responded to the TV survey were female.

One of the audience reported on a dream from the previous night where a member of the Coronation Street cast had died. As this programme is made by Granada TV and has been much in the news of late (with various sackings and resignations by key actors and actresses) little thought was given to this. But less than hours later came the sudden shock death by heart attack of the actor who played "Bert Tildsley" in the series...It would have been rather interesting to see the face of Dr Peter Evans when he heard that news!

John Grant, when challenged by me, said 'Well I never actually claimed that precognition does not exist...' No indeed!

Aim is a textbook on the paranormal

It will be a little while before MERLIN (ASSAP's main research programme) can offer significant results for publication in this research column. Until then it is proposed that we look at other research topics, philosophies and news. Here we look at one of the main objects of ASSAP's research effort.

Why is it that when you walk into a well-stocked bookshop you cannot get a text book of the paranormal in the way that you can find a standard account of, for instance, the laws of chemistry? Put simply, one of the main objectives of ASSAP's research effort is to put such a book there. This is not as simple as it might appear. There are two main factors which have prevented this book appearing so far.

Firstly there is the attitude of the public and, in particular, the attitude of the scientific establishment. Superficially the paranormal is rejected because it seems to defy common sense. The long history of fraud in paranormal research offers an easy excuse for such objections. Scientists who are used to the subtle effects underlying everyday events have less excuse for rejecting the paranormal out of hand. They expect controls on parapsychology experiments to be far greater than those on ordinary psychological or other scientific experiments.

I believe there is a more funda-

mental reason underlying this hostility towards the paranormal. Imagine for a moment that everyone was capable of limitless telepathy. Everyone would instantly know what others thought of them. In our polite society quite a few problems would arise. Indeed it seems likely that life would become

so intolerable that society as a whole could well break down altogether. Since there are obvious advantages to living together peacefully a biologist might argue that we would suppress anything like psi for the overall good of the species and of the individual. There would then be a natural instinct to suppress any psi (whether it existed or not) and discourage anyone trying to establish or enhance it in any way. It is certainly no excuse for not researching psi. By understanding psi we can at least hope to control it.

The second problem facing paranormal researchers is that of not looking at psi on 'its own terms'. People decided to investigate the paranormal because of reports of spontaneous cases. Scientists naturally wanted to examine the phenomena in controlled laboratory conditions on their 'own terms'. They came up with rather sterile, unimaginative experiments at first such as tying up mediums and holding card guessing sessions. These yielded ambiguous results. Serious researchers found even tied up mediums too uncontrolled and

mostly moved to the laboratory. There picture guessing had replaced card guessing. To make the experiments a little more like spontaneous cases 'emotive' targets (pictures) were often used. Such techniques as the ganzfeld (using sensory deprivation) were used to force the mind to use telepathy rather than ordinary sensory channels. These techniques still regularly produce ambiguous results. Enough significant results emerge to say that there is something worth investigating. There still does not seem to be enough to make that text book though.

To try to hurry along the process the MERLIN project is adopting a different approach. This is NOT an original approach but it will hopefully be developed further than in the past. One thing that the laboratory experimenters have noticed is the experimenter effect. This seems to show that the observer of an experiment is an integral part of the apparatus and can influence the results directly. The sheep/goat effect seems to show that an antagonistic approach is not very helpful.

In such things as Mind Games, Sitter groups etc. the experimenter(s) is a completely integral part of the experiment; she does not stand back and watch but actually takes part as a subject. It is left to tape recorders, video recorders and other automatic equipment to observe what is

going on in a more dispassionate way than any experimenter could ever do.

There will also be a much closer look at the psychological interactions of those taking part. As I was reminded recently by a psychic — paranormal research is about people! It is perhaps through psychology that we can discover the peculiar perversity of paranormal phenomena which seem to change the rules of their 'game' almost every time it is played. It is indeed odd that in a subject which calls itself parapsychology there is so little psychological research. Whatever physical effects are finally found to underlie psi there will probably be a huge slice of human psychology overlaying it. Indeed psychology will probably form at least two thirds of the text book of the paranormal when it emerges at last.

Please tell us what research you are doing so that we can feature it in future editions of ASSAP NEWS and give you any help we can! Send research news to the first address above.

News from the publications team

'WHAT should I think about reincarnation?' 'Should I take UFOs seriously?' 'How close are we to understanding poltergeists?' These are the sort of questions which interest ASSAP members — but they also interest a great many members of the public.

So, from the start, ASSAP saw it as one of its responsibilities to provide answers to such questions — or, at least, to supply the facts from which people could work out answers of their own.

This is how our 'Evidence Series' came into being: a collection of specially-commissioned books in which members of ASSAP with special knowledge or experience share it with fellow members and with the public. Produced in co-operation with Aquarian Press, each book sets out to present the evidence for and against a particular phenomenon, allowing the reader to draw his own conclusions.

The first two volumes appeared this autumn — *The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary* by Kevin McClure, and *The Evidence for UFOs* by Hilary Evans. Spring 1984 will see two more — John Rimmer's *The Evidence for Abduction by Aliens* and Janet & Colin Bord's *The Evidence for Bigfoot and other Man-Beasts*.

Following them will come books

on subjects as varied as life after death, ghosts, mind over matter, phantom hitchhikers, and many more: some of these books are already in progress. In the course of time they will build up to a comprehensive collection providing unique documentation of the subjects within ASSAP's field of interest — so start collecting now!

We are always glad to have suggestions from members as to other subjects to cover in the series, and if any member would like to contribute a volume, we will be delighted to hear from you.

Though inevitably the Evidence Series is our major undertaking, other publication projects are also in hand. We want to produce one-off manuals and guides to help researchers and investigators, and one such — a guide for investigators of psychic phenomena — is already in hand. Again, we are glad to receive suggestions from members. Compiling such a manual is very much the sort of

thing an active group might do as a team effort, and is a good way of sharing the results of experience.

At the same time our periodical publications continue to appeal albeit on somewhat elastic schedules. Readers of *ASSAP News* know that we plan some changes in its approach to meet members' needs: we are always glad to have suggestions — constructive, for preference — and, better still, contributions. *Common Ground*, our journal of record, continues to offer a wide-ranging forum of debate, situation reports and new hypotheses.

Under Kevin McClure's lively direction it is essential reading for anyone who wants to know the state of play in phenomena research. If you're not already a subscriber, it's time you became one; as an ASSAP member you can obtain it at a preferential rate.

There can be few young organisations with quite so ambitious a publications programme, and we trust that it is having its intended effect in sharing information among members and disseminat-

ing it to the wider public. Publications means that, even if we are scattered geographically, we can keep in touch with the latest developments. So buy the books, subscribe to *Common Ground*, not only because they need your financial support, but also because there's no better way of knowing what's going on in anomaly research.

Contacts