

ASSAP NEWS

ASSOCIATION FOR THE
SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF
ANOMALOUS PHENOMENA

NUMBER 2
December 1981

New training plan unveiled

by Hilary Evans

ASSAP was created to bring together all those who are interested in the study of anomalous phenomena and inevitably its members range from relative expert to the absolute beginner. So an important part of ASSAP's work must be to encourage, and provide opportunities for the former to share their knowledge and experience with the latter. In the sense that ASSAP was formed to study phenomena all its members are by definition students. Many of its activities are designed to disseminate information and encourage the exchange of ideas, thus constituting in itself an informal training program.

However some members will feel a need for a more purposive development or for specific guidance in particular fields. To assist them ASSAP's training team will provide appropriate facilities and resources.

Heading the training team is ASSAP's training officer, Dennis Bury. He told me he is the first to recognise that some people will say there is no way of training in the study of anomalous phenomena and that only by practical experience can a student advance his knowledge.

However Dennis points out that there can be given to people who are still encouraging them to gain experience in the field.

Dennis said: "There are many ways this can be done. One example that springs to mind is in the study of ley lines where, as ley walker Laurence Main points out, getting your boots muddy is an essential part of ley-hunting. A group of trainees accompanied by one or two experienced ley hunters could spend an instructive and enjoyable day walking a ley line."

ASSAP's development program will have two main aspects:

- * To learn more about the subject, what is already known about it and what efforts are being made to learn more; and
- * To develop the ability to evaluate information and evidence and to conduct investigation, tests, research etc.

Dennis accepts that formal training courses are hardly feasible because of the varying needs of students and the diversity of subject matter, but

he also emphasises that this does not mean it has to be nothing but a correspondence course.

Development will take the form of individualised programs designed by the student in consultation with a counsellor and taking the form of personal guidance supplemented by appropriate practical activities.

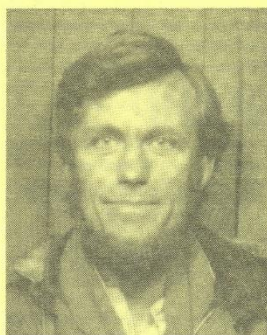
According to Dennis, 'by a counsellor we do not imply an absolute expert, because in this business absolute experts simply don't exist! We mean someone who is in a position — and has the capability — to offer guidance to others, by virtue of his knowledge and experience.'

Many people have already written in to ASSAP offering their services, and Dennis feels that often it is in training that these offers of help can be put to best use. He comments, 'At present there's no such thing as a formal training program, on a national scale, on any aspect of anomalous phenomena. That goes for ASSAP as well. But we have to recognise that one of the first things a new member of ASSAP would be likely to look for would be guidance in developing his interest.'

'He'd want to know if there are any groups active in his neighbourhood, or courses being run in the area: are there any individuals, working in his field, with whom he could be put in touch? ASSAP will be able to tell him all this, and also provide back-up such as reading lists for home study, and suggestions for

practical participation such as the 'Dragon Project'.

'All this will be on an individual basis,' Dennis explains, and compares it with the tutorial as opposed to the class method of teaching. 'The first step will be taken by the individual himself: he will sit down and draw up a two-year development program, let's say, indicating his interests and his aims. Then he would discuss this with a counsellor, a member of the training team, who would advise on the best way of implementing the program, and indicate additional



ASSAP's training officer Dennis Bury: "Members will gain the opportunity to have some feedback about their proposed plan of study in a personalised way."

lines of development. For example, a member interested in survival would be given a reading program, suited to his line of interest, and specific activities would be suggested — lectures he might attend, projects and workshops in which he might participate. On a specific point he might be referred to a consultant, who might be an ASSAP member or might be an outsider who has offered his services. At the same time he might be advised to study the claims of reincarnation, or to visit his local

Spiritualist church, to see his subject in a broader context. As his program progressed, he would benefit from feedback, enabling further progress to continue in a pragmatic, personal manner'.

Such an approach applies not just to individuals, but equally to small groups. A tailor-made training program can be devised for two, three or more people who wish to work together; this has the added advantage that such a study group could itself form the nucleus of 'feedback events' — thus we could imagine a group reporting their first year's progress — its setbacks as well as its successes — as the basis of a very practical workshop.

One-day seminars and workshops are just two of the ways in which members can benefit from the experience of their colleagues. ASSAP will hold one such workshop on Saturday, 6 March. Under the comprehensive title **BELIEVING YOUR EYES**, it will present a package of demonstrations, exercises, practical work and discussion. Participants will be exposed to conjuring performances, examine the psychology of fraud in children and adults, consider the practical problems of studying phenomena such as metal-bending, and take part in experiments on the accuracy — or otherwise! — of reported evidence.

The venue will be in North London; further details will be announced in ASSAP NEWS nearer the date, or Dennis Bury may be

By fortunate coincidence (synchronicity?) at 7pm on the same day ASSAP member Kevin McClure, editor of *Common Ground*, will be speaking to BUFORA members at Kensington Library on 'SEEING IS BELIEVING'. Non-BUFORA members are welcome.

Editorial

In this issue I am pleased to devote a lot of space to what I believe ASSAP News should treat as its main function — talking about research. As you will see on page three, a lengthy list of cases is given which I hope will not only be a regular feature of the newsletter but will also become a longer list.

In a small way you can already see how this service may help researchers. There is a case in Lancashire which seems to have similar characteristics to a case in Essex and obviously notes can be swapped between the two researchers with a view to helping each other. I remember at the 2nd London International UFO congress someone discussing a peculiar shaped UFO which was seen by a witness in the north of England and immediately another researcher cried: "Oh, I had a case like that at about the same time!"

The speedy exchange of information is surely paramount to a more effective investigative network — in particular an exchange of information which crosses the boundaries of specialist groups such as ufology and psychical research. Again at the UFO congress a researcher from abroad reported on the rumour of a film which had been made of an object dematerialising. The object disappeared apparently piece by piece in a falling leaf motion. To a psychical researcher the description "in a falling leaf motion" means nothing but to the ufologist it is immediately recognised as a characteristic movement of some UFOs. Is there a connection between the two and if so what?

For some reason ufology seems to attract more petty squabbles and attempts at one-upmanship between researchers or rival groups than any other type of research. Too often I pick up a UFO journal and find the pages filled with schoolboy fights instead of being filled with pages of case notes or helpful information. No such fights will find their way into ASSAP News.

Space is a premium and there is no room for anything short of constructive comment. Ufologists should take a leaf out of the ley hunters book. See how the different disciplines, not only in the earth mysteries field but in other subjects studying anomalous phenomena, have rallied together to support the work of the Dragon project at the Rollright Stones, Oxfordshire. This illustrates how researchers can work as a team and produce exciting results. Note also how in The Ley Hunter magazine Number 90 archaeologists and ley hunters can come together under the same roof and hold a reasoned debate.

Now is the time for researchers to put their swords away and take out their notepads and pens. Progress will only be made in the study of anomalous phenomena if every effort is put towards attacking the problems of the paranormal instead of each other.



Alan Cleaver

All copy for the next issue of ASSAP News should be sent to the Editor by February 22nd 1982. Any contributions for the Letters page should be sent to the Editorial Secretary by the same date.

Forming a group — 2

Nigel Blair, co-ordinator of the Wessex Research Group Network concludes his suggestions for forming a local group.

Don't be afraid to go ahead and invite speakers you don't know except by their books; but do get a recommendation of their speaking ability — not all writers are good speakers! Buy plenty of books to get an idea of the range of subjects and possible speakers. Often the publishers will be friendly and take a real interest, especially if they are local ones.

It is also helpful to subscribe to a wide range of periodicals on the relevant subjects and to contact related organisations which are often very keen to offer speakers to promote their beliefs.

External speakers are valuable not only in themselves but to attract attention, justify wide-spread publicity and create a nucleus of local interested people from among the audiences. Visitors should be encouraged to give their names, addresses, telephone numbers and interests; they can

follow up the themes highlighted by the lecturers.

A list of those known to be interested can be issued with the lecture programme; this can be very helpful in making such potential group organisers known.

We have already had a number of enquiries about possible parallel research groups outside Wessex and if anyone is interested please send for our programme. Subscription is £2.00 annually, or enclose a large sae with postage for 100 grammes.

One final word: an excellent way of paying for, or at least subsidising the printing of a programme is to persuade local advertisers to take space in it. If you give it away at meetings and elsewhere and only charge to subscribers to whom it has to be specially sent, you are then in a position to guarantee advertisers quite a high circulation. If on the other hand you make a charge for it you create problems of distribution and make a guaranteed circulation impossible.

Focus on Maidstone

One of the aims of ASSAP will be to link together many of the regional groups scattered throughout Britain enabling them to exchange ideas and views, not only on the paranormal but also on how to run a local group. In Maidstone, Kent one such group has been running successfully for several months and ASSAP News 2 now highlights them and their activities.

Maidstone Parapsychology Group (MPG) was formed in January 1981, by a nucleus of 20 or so members who had attended an evening course during the autumn of 1980. The evening course, entitled "Parapsychology and the Paranormal", had been run by Andrew Green who is well known for his books on ghosts.

In 12 evenings it was really only possible for Andrew to introduce the main areas of parapsychology. However, so infectious was his enthusiasm that we decided to form our own group to take our interest further.

Starting with one introduction from Andrew Green, we contacted a number of speakers, all of whom agreed to come and talk to us. It was this help and encouragement from so many people that enabled us to

consolidate our interest and membership.

To date we have had visiting speakers covering UFOs, ghosts, palmistry, pyramidology, physical phenomena and hypnotism; with speakers on clairvoyance, metalbending and astrology planned for the future. During this time we have formed links with, and made reciprocal visits to, similar groups in the Kent area.

We accept however, that we cannot maintain this format for our meetings indefinitely, although we have attracted some new members and hope for more. We would like to introduce some experimental work into our activities and hopefully develop more into a study group as well as a lecture class. We have made one attempt with some simple psychometry experiments but while the experiments themselves were successful the recording and evaluating of the results were less so.

We are looking to ASSAP for some advice on suitable areas for experiment and how to evaluate them so that meaningful conclusions can be drawn.

Anomalous phenomena currently under investigation in Britain

The primary aim of ASSAP News will be to carry brief reports of cases currently being investigated in Britain and research being undertaken. The launch of ASSAP and the resultant publicity has meant a sudden influx of cases. Although ASSAP's investigative network is yet to be made fully operational, many of those who will be its component parts are already functioning as investigators.

ASSAP's External Affairs Officer, Dr Hugh Pincott, reports that 120 people responded by letter and telephone to the ASSAP broadcast on Radio Two's John Dunn Show which featured the experienced researcher Hilary Evans who is ASSAP's Publications Officer.

Hugh said: "Many wanted information about the new organisation; many told us of very interesting experiences they had had, but for a dozen or so it was a chance of help that no other agency could provide."

Some rare, but natural, phenomena that cannot be explained by most people but can be by serious scientists were brought to ASSAP's attention. The report of seaside phosphorescence had no anomalous element and the plague of unidentified fibres threatening to engulf an East Anglian household is likely to have a normal, if unusual, explanation once ASSAP's scientists have completed their report.

Sightings of Unidentified Flying Objects were referred to appropriate bodies for investigation.

Hugh said: "A quiet chat on the telephone reassured several sensible people that their experiences of spontaneous telepathy, clairvoyance, night-time apparitions, UFOs and precognition were fairly common."

"We were able to reassure them they were not going out of their minds and a few letters from ASSAP giving background information on frightening phenomena that people could not understand earned heartfelt thanks and praise."

There were one or two people definitely in need of medical attention who, after consultation, were referred to the proper authorities for further guidance. Birmingham Samaritans telephoned for details of ASSAP and asked if we could give assistance on any of their future cases having an anomalous content.

Dr Pincott emphasised: "ASSAP's members are not psychic counsellors, nor are they necessarily qualified to adjudicate on what person should be referred where, and work of this sort should certainly not be undertaken to the detriment of systematic or investigative research. But it is now clear that access to a group of level-headed people, broadly informed on aspects of the anomalous, is increasingly being appreciated by the public."

"Furthermore, as a result of announcements in the British Medical Journal and elsewhere, the wealth of professional talent joining ASSAP is formidable and will enable us to do this job even more competently in future."

It is hoped in future issues of ASSAP News to present reports of cases and research, not necessarily by people who are members of ASSAP, in the following format.

In this way it is hoped that someone in Liverpool investigating a sputnik shaped UFO can discover if someone in another part of the country is investigating a similar sighting. Also, if someone is experimenting on a particular theory, for example, with hypnotic regression, he may know what other research groups are working on similar ideas.

Please send your reports to the Editorial Secretary, Miss Lesley Park whose address is on page 2. You should also write to Lesley if you wish to contact the person in charge of a case report in ASSAP News.

BARNSELY, SOUTH YORKSHIRE. July 1981. UFO sighting. Mr M.E. was sunbathing in his garden on the afternoon of the Royal Wedding, when a small silvery cigar-like object was seen to shoot across the sky, in a parabola, moving below cloud level. It travelled in a south-westerly direction and was only in view about five seconds. The witness at first suspected a satellite but this is in fact quite implausible. Satellites cannot be seen in daylight and certainly do not travel below cloud level. Dr Michele Clare and Mr Chaz Lippeatt of the Sheffield Society for Research into the Paranormal are investigating.

BRAMPTON, CUMBRIA. October 1966 onwards. Survival. Mrs M. is a woman who is wary of further investigation but who wished to describe her "problem". She is 52 and divorced but with a family. Following a seance in 1966 she says she found herself "stuck with" an entity which communicates in a telepathic fashion. The entity provides information about famous people whom he supposedly contacts in the after-life, and messages of a personal nature have also been given. But nothing detailed in the form of automatic writing or the like, has ever been communicated. The entity claims to be Charles Dickens, although

Mrs M. expressed certain doubts about this. She has read some biographies of the man and finds that his personality has similarities with that attached to the entity.

Certain physical manifestations (within the womb) which appear to be rather disconcerting, have also regularly attended the communications. Dr Hugh Pincott has written to Mrs M broaching other possible explanations rather than the face-value hypothesis and pointed out that, should she be willing, a local ASSAP member will be sent in by the investigation team.

HARLOW, ESSEX. 1973 onwards. Environmental.

Mrs S. who lives with her adopted daughter and son has, for about eight years been plagued by a recurring smell of unknown origin. It is mainly associated with one room and there has been no other paranormal phenomena at all. Unless a researcher can be found who lives nearer Alan Cleaver will investigate further.

IRLAM, GREATER MANCHESTER. November 1981. UFO sighting.

Mrs R. observed a strange phenomenon on the eve of the ASSAP Manchester meeting. While travelling along the M62 motorway at 4.55 pm she observed a stationary yellow/orange phenomenon resembling a "fish finger". It changed shape instantly and sprouted flames. An atmospheric plasma of unusual nature is suspected but Jenny Randles is investigating.

OSWESTRY, SHROPSHIRE. Autumn 1980. Ghosts.

A very lucid report was received from Mrs J.W. from this pretty market town. She describes an observation made by her married son (aged 23) and his sister-in-law (18), while they were driving through the old (and deserted) part of the town, late at night. They passed three very small girls who were dressed in "authentic" Victorian costume. One of them was crippled with symptoms reminiscent of T.B. which is virtually unknown in today's Britain.

Both witnesses, it should be noted, had worked in hospitals. The children seemed completely solid and a man who was passing appeared to see them also as he was noted by the witnesses to run away as if terrified.



Dr Hugh Pincott

Both witnesses felt extreme compassion for the children and said their faces were unforgettable. The man immediately wrote down a description of the events and posted this to himself as a dated record.

Neither witness was willing to have the story sensationalised by discussing it with the press but they are prepared to talk with serious investigators. Mrs J.W. helped in the subsequent (discreet) efforts to find a natural explanation including checking local halls where a concert or fancy dress party might have been held but found none. Investigation is proceeding.

RAWTENSTALL, LANCASHIRE. 1974 onwards. Poltergeist.

Mrs W. is a middle aged woman who lives in an old cotton town in the Pennine foothills. She claims that since 1974 (when she had an operation to remove her right inner ear) she has experienced dizziness and something invisible that seems to tap her on her shoulders and arms. She has also been plagued by a smell (akin to rats but sometimes gaseous) that follows her wherever she goes.

On one occasion she woke to find paw marks up the side of the lounge wall. This was one of the most recent incidents to occur and the marks were still visible and shown to the investigator. Her daughter also claims to have seen a bespectacled figure kneeling beside the bed when she slept at the house at one time.

Preliminary investigation by Arthur Tomlinson suggested that the case was probably explicable. He believes that the physical effects described by Mrs W. (smells, dizziness etc) are after-effects of the operation which led to disturbance to the

□ Continued on page 4

continued from Page 3.

nerves associated with balance. She has been advised to check with her doctor. As for the "paw marks" the subject does possess a dog and the investigator concluded that the marks observed were consistent with leaping up to, for example, catch a moth. As a precaution however a person gifted in psychometry is being called in to see if any psychic help is either possible or warranted.

WEYBRIDGE, SURREY. February 1979 onwards. Environmental. Mrs S.W. has been "persecuted" for nearly three years by a buzzing noise and heavy vibrations which have given her little rest. She has moved home to try and escape the noise but to no avail. Tinnitus, the illness normally associated with a buzzing in the ears, seems an unlikely explanation in this instance since the noise is recordable on tape and has been played to several investigators. She has approached many organisations for help including the Institute of Sound and Vibration Research at the University, Southampton but nobody has been able to help. Alan Cleaver has offered to do a detailed preliminary investigation in order to compile a report. This will then be sent to scientists with specialised knowledge in this field in the hope they may be able to offer technical advice.

SIDCUP, KENT. November 1981. The Christos. Members of KASPR (The Kent Association of Psychical Research) have been researching the Christos — an altered state of consciousness technique which allows a person to vividly imagine he is in another time and another place.

In an unusual twist to the normal procedure Mrs Eileen Barnes — who was "running" the subjects — asked each to imagine themselves as a child. In a manner more commonly associated with hypnotic regression she asked Stephen Brushett to go back even further. First to about five years of age, then to one year old and then back into the womb. All this he managed

quite easily and was able to describe to the other KASPR members in the room the things he saw and sensed.

Eileen then asked him to go back even further. After a long pause Stephen suddenly found himself fighting in the first world war in the trenches in France. He gave his name as Corporal John Hacker, number 798432 of the London 43rd Foot Regiment. Investigations to verify any of the information given is still going on.

Stephen (as Corporal Hacker) then described how he was killed in action by shell. The next image he received was that of spinning round in space. Stephen then described how he seemed to be on another planet.

His experiences did not stop there but what they mean, how true they are and what causes them is still to be discovered.

The Christos is a safe and easy to accomplish technique which can be tried by any small group of people wishing to do serious research. The technique is described in detail in "Windows of the mind" by G. Glaskin.

Help!

If you require specific help with a project you are working on, a piece of apparatus, a particular book or aid of some kind write to the "Help!" column in ASSAP News c/o Miss Lesley Park whose address is on page 2. You may also write c/o Miss Park if you can help the person appealing through this column.

Maurice Townsend would like help from anyone who can perform OOBES (out-of-the-body-experiences) regularly and is willing to take part in a research project. He is also wishing to contact anyone interested in research into physical mediumship.

A London-based group require a room in the centre of London (Covent Garden) where they can carry out, undisturbed, regular Philip experiments. As it may involve a lot of noise until late at night a room where there are no neighbours to be disturbed would be preferred.

Diary Dates

JANUARY 14: Society for Psychical Research at Kensington Central Library, Campden Hill Road, London W8. Manfred Cassirer lecturing on "Apparitions: Creatures of the mind?"

JANUARY 24: The International Institute of Integral Human Sciences at the Clarendon Court Hotel, London W9. One-day seminar entitled: "The Reality of Psychic Phenomena" including guest speakers Eileen Roberts, Andrew Green, Harry Oldfield and Bryan Fearon. Special guest, Tony Ortzen, Editor of Psychic News. Cost £12 (not including lunch) from

JANUARY 25: Maidstone Parapsychology Group at "The Chequers" Old Loose Hill, Loose, Kent. Open evening.

FEBRUARY 6: BUFORA at Kensington Central Library, London. Robert Morrell lecturing on "Substance and Shadow in the Extra-terrestrial hypothesis". Start 7 pm.

FEBRUARY 8: Maidstone Parapsychology Group at "The Chequers", Old Loose Hill, Loose, Kent. Larry Dale talk on UFOs.

MARCH 6: ASSAP will be presenting "Believing Your Eyes", a practical workshop for developing accuracy in observation. (See page one).

MARCH 6: BUFORA at Kensington Central Library, London. Kevin McClure, Editor of Common Ground, lecturing on "Seeing and Believing — Religious responses to UFO experiences". Start 7 pm.

MARCH 8: Maidstone Parapsychology Group at "The Chequers" Old Loose Hill, Loose, Kent. Mr Baldwin and Mr Smith on mediumship.

AFTER EASTER: ASSAP will be presenting "Creating Viewpoints", a workshop offering to all members of ASSAP a chance to present their own writing, experiments or demonstrations to other members of ASSAP and other interested parties (see page one).

In addition there are ongoing courses being run by Bio-feedback Workshops on psychotherapy, osteopathy, biofeedback equipment and a wide range of other services.

Letters

The Bureau for the Investigation of Paranormal Photographs is a non-profit making and privately financed and was established some years ago at the suggestion of academic, medical and scientific friends who, while helping with advice and technology, are in the main unwilling for various reasons to become personally involved in research into paranormal or psychic phenomena.

Many research groups, newspapers, Spiritualist societies, ghost hunters and of course the Society for Psychical Research co-operate by referring paranormal and psychic photographs or paranormal phenomena to us for investigation and I have received sympathetic though discreet assistance from the technical departments of the leading photographic film manufacturers and processors.

Our archives contain large numbers of paranormal psychic and thought photographs of all kinds ranging from Mumler's spirit photographs dating from the 1860s, to photographs being taken today and including the results of my own personal research. Our archives are constantly being added to and we are actively seeking examples of old or new photographs which show paranormal psychic phenomena of all kinds and investigate as many of these as is possible.

We would greatly appreciate if members or their associates would let us see or pass to us any information about such photographs.

Cyril Permutt, Director. Bureau for the Investigation of Paranormal Photographs, Temple Fortune, London.

How to join ASSAP

If you wish to join ASSAP or learn more about it please send a stamp only (first or second class) to the Membership Secretary Janice Bagnall,

COMMON GROUND is the quarterly journal edited for ASSAP by Kevin McClure containing articles, not necessarily by ASSAP members, on a wide variety of topics. We urge all ASSAP members to subscribe to this journal, always outspoken, often controversial, but committed to the search for that 'common ground' where our studies converge. A single issue costs £1 within the UK, a four-issue subscription £4. Foreign subscription is \$4 for a single issue or \$15 for a four-issue subscription. Foreign orders to be paid for in US currency or by International Money Orders in sterling. Postal charges and exchange rates allowing, airmail will be used wherever possible.

In the latest issue of Common Ground Guy Lambert writes on "The Geography of English Ghosts" and explains why natural phenomena may explain some hauntings. Nigel Watson examines phantom airships over Britain in 1909 and their impact on Society. The Editor asks "What is wrong with ouija boards?" and there are many more articles examining a wide range of phenomena.