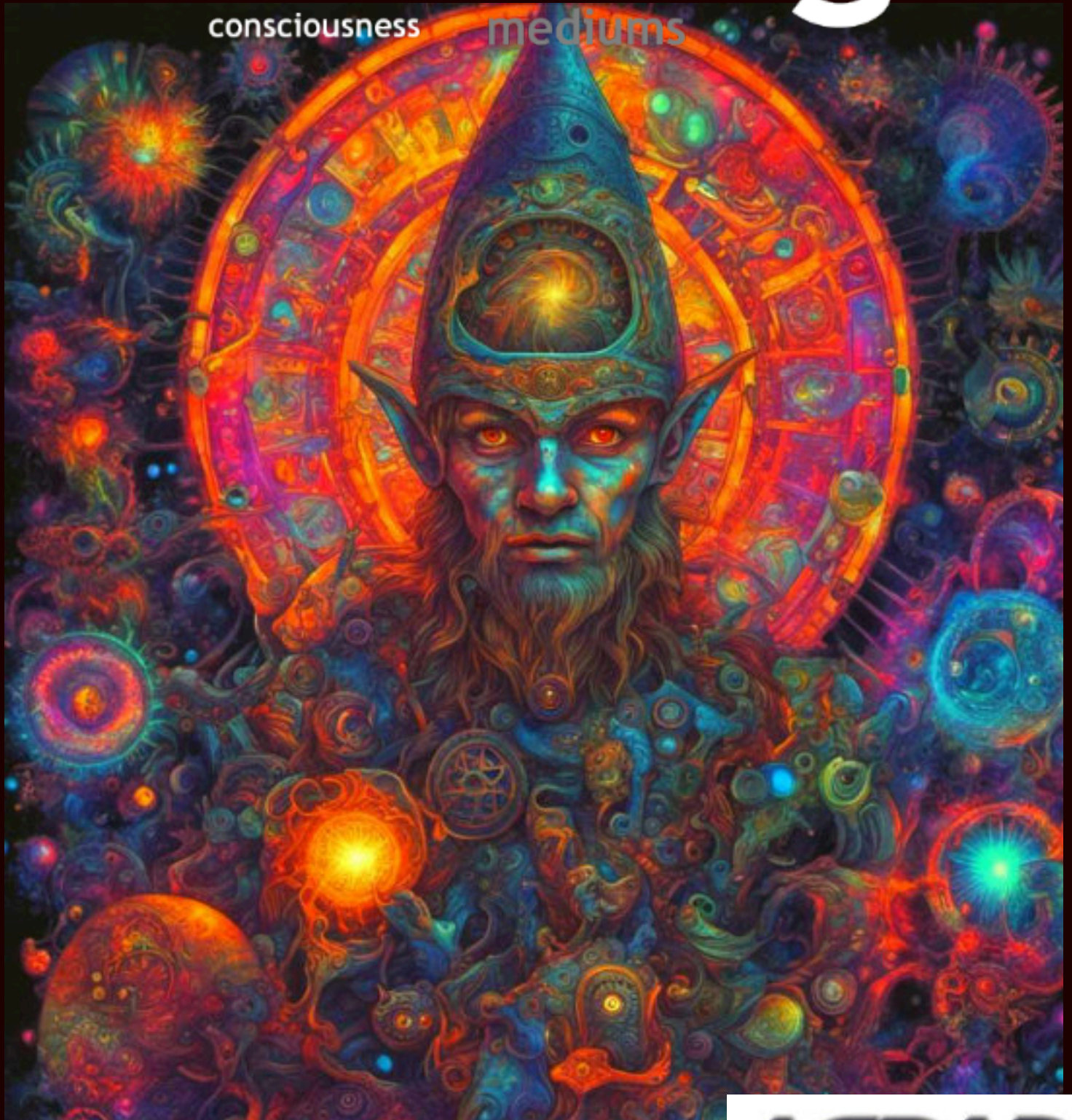


paranormal UFOs vampires psychology
ghosts **seriously** earth mysteries
psychic EVP hauntings
anthropology **strange**
cryptids

consciousness mediums



ISSUE 160

ASAP

ASSAP AFFILIATED GROUPS

Groups provide incidental support for ASSAP's charitable objectives by acting as forums for research. Should you wish to affiliate or start a group please contact groups@assap.ac.uk

Bristol Society for Paranormal Research and Investigation (BSPRI)

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Cymru Paranormal

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Sarah Liney

Gwynedd Paranormal Society

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Plymouth ASSAP

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e: eustacetuttle@yahoo.co.uk

Lee Norton

Spirit Team UK

w: <http://www.spiritteamuk.com/>

Alan Clifford

Pembrokeshire Ghost Club

e: pembrokeshireghostclub@gmail.com

Greg Hardman

ASSAP REGIONAL MEETS

ASSAP Cotswolds

Meet one Monday a month in a back room at The Tivoli, 36 Andover Road, GL50 2TJ. First meeting scheduled for 7pm October 16th, 2023. Details from Byron Hadley on sherborne@hotmail.com

ASSAP East Anglia

Meet for socials, Investigations and events. Details from groups@assap.ac.uk (Graham Philpot).

ASSAP NEWSLETTER

Is your inbox missing something? The best way to get ASSAP updates throughout the year is to sign up to our e-newsletter. If you're not already receiving it go to

<https://www.assap.ac.uk/mailling-list>

ASSAP 2024 CONFERENCE

Our next conference will be held at the University of Winchester on the 31st August and 1st September. You can book a weekend or day pass, gala evening, and accommodation on our website on the events page.

If you would like to help out at next year's conference, please email events@assap.ac.uk

ASSAP TRAINING

Our next training day will be held at Scolton Manor, Pembrokeshire on the 18th November 2023. The training will only be open to people who have completed the ARI training at Fort Widley, or both parts of the NRPI training. For more information please email events@assap.ac.uk

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EDITORIAL

As I write these words my second full year as ASSAP Chair is rapidly drawing to a close. Will I be voted out, and who will replace me? Well nominations open on October 10th for all the roles running ASSAP. If you have been a member for a year already, you might want to volunteer to serve in a role as a trustee or director of ASSAP. There may well be elections this year, so all the details are given in an article in this issue.

Unfortunately our long serving and amazingly talented layout genius Alison Topham has stood down as of the last magazine, and as a result I have put this issue together as best I can. I apologise for the difference in appearance, but I promise the content is excellent. Also you may have noticed that for the second time in a few years I have doubled the page count of the magazine.

In case you were wondering the cover I call 'Machine Elf 23' and he is meant to be one of those entities people encounter on DMT trips. I thought it was an interesting and colourful entity to lead with.

Anyway thank you for all your support over the years, and whether I stay or go, I have done my best for ASSAP

CJ (Chris Jensen Romer)

Many thanks to Zoe Bevan for permission to use her cute Sleep Hag picture on p. 15.

The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena was formed in 1981 to research a wide range of anomalous phenomena.

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Get Involved!

ASSAP 2024 Elections

No one in ASSAP is paid. This is unfortunate, and indeed means that many otherwise excellent candidates can not stand: but to change it would require a massive increase in our membership fees. We are all volunteers, doing what we can to deliver our objectives as well as we can....

Any ASSAP member can get more involved at any time by emailing chair@assap.ac.uk with a suggestion for a project they can take on or for ideas on research programmes or experiments to try. Some people want to be even more involved, and are willing to sacrifice their time and become an Exec or Director of ASSAP. Please do seriously think about becoming more involved, and if you can spare the time, the details are all below. Even if you don't want to take on the responsibility right now, read on to learn more about how ASSAP functions.

How to Stand

Would you like to be a bigger part of ASSAP? If you are aged 18 or over, and have been a member of ASSAP for at least one year, then you can stand for election to fulfil one of the three director's roles or many Exec positions within ASSAP. Positions will open when this magazine is published, and you can go and put yourself forward now at www.assap.ac.uk/elections where you will find a link to the form. If for some reason the form does not work for you, you may apply directly by email to chair@assap.ac.uk. Once you have told us which role you wish to stand for, we will ask you to find three members to nominate and second you. You can ask for support with this from chair@assap.ac.uk, but good options are asking at our Facebook group, in chat at webinars, or by emailing friends and associates. Members may only support one

candidate for each position; Directors may not nominate candidates. (You could always persuade three good friends to join ASSAP I suppose!). It's worth noting that persons who were on the Exec committee in 2022/23 will not need to provide nominators and seconders, and are automatically put forward as candidates unless they withdraw their nomination by email to chair@assap.ac.uk or chose to stand for a different Exec role.

If we don't have an up to date email address for you please email membership@assap.ac.uk. Following the 2010 amendment, ballots will be sent electronically where an email address is held, except where you request a postal copy of the ballot before 27th October.

Director Roles

If you are elected as Chair, Treasurer or Secretary you will be a Director of ASSAP, and will be registered as such with Companies House. You will have to be capable of being a Director, and so must not be an undischarged bankrupt, have certain convictions for Fraud, or be barred from being a Director by the courts. We are obliged to legally check this, and so please do look at the restrictions – though most people will not have any problems in qualifying. You will also be a Trustee of ASSAP, and therefore listed as such on the registry entry at the Charity Commission. Again, it is easy to look up the requirements to be a Trustee, and you probably qualify. Things people often worry will disqualify them like unemployment, being broke, or not being an academic really don't matter. ASSAP welcomes applicants from all areas of life and you will hopefully be supported and helped grow into your new role. The roles of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are hopefully self-explanatory but do not hesitate to email me or the current holder to ask about the role and what it requires. Roles are held for two years before re-election barring dismissal or resignation.

Exec Roles

If you are elected to an Executive Committee role you will have a defined role within ASSAP. The positions available to stand for will be Archives & Library, Education Officer, Events Coordinator, Groups Coordinator, Media Officer, National Investigations Coordinator, Publications Officer, Research Officer, Training Officer, UFO Officer, and Webmaster. Exec roles are for one year, barring dismissal or resignation.

The roles and their scope are –

Archives & Library – dealing with enquiries about our archives, holding a small reference library of books, administering loans of books to members on request, maintaining a confidential archive of Case Reports and preparing the monthly ASSAP e-bulletin. The librarian needs the capacity to store books, existing and future acquisitions, but the library is not currently sizable in terms of bulk.

Education Officer – We are at least in part an educational charity, and we have an accredited qualification that was paused some years ago while we tried to work on the best way to deliver it. This role would be ideal for a candidate with teaching skills (though not necessarily qualifications) able to work on delivering distance learning and navigate course planning and outcomes.

Events Coordinator – is responsible for organising ASSAP's annual conference, and the Training Days and other ASSAP events, in conjunction with the Treasurer and Chair. The Events Coordinator takes on a huge responsibility and the role may be raised to a Directorial position in the next year.

Groups Coordinator – deals with local meets ups and supporting the formation of local ASSAP groups, and with the affiliation of existing groups, as well as working with other organisations in the field to further our mutual interests.

Media Officer – works to raise the profile of ASSAP, and handle all media enquiries. This is at times a demanding role, as usually the media request everything but offer nothing, and it is often

necessary to ensure we are not made to look ridiculous by bad reporting,

National Investigations Coordinator – the NIC is responsible for assigning cases that come in to ASSAP to members of the NRPI, our body of trained investigators (they are assigned by proximity) and ensuring all reports and records of cases are completed and submitted to the Library.

Publications Officer – duties include preparing the magazine and journal for publication, dealing with the Mary Evans Picture Library, sourcing art and articles, and arranging printing, packing and delivery of the magazine.

Research Officer – what the name suggests; coordinating and undertaking research duties as required by the needs of ASSAP and its members.

Training Officer – is responsible for provision of training for Spontaneous Case Investigations and experimental work, and for providing the necessary courses, teaching and at least two training events a year for the development of the members skills.

UFO Officer – responsible for liaising with existing UFO groups and with assisting in training and assignment of work and investigations within the specific purview of UFO cases.

Webmaster - responsible for maintaining our website at www.assap.ac.uk

All positions are available for election: if more than one candidate is nominated then the simple majority vote of members will decide the elected candidate.

ASSAP's annual general meeting will be held via Zoom on Sunday, 29th October, 2023. Each candidate who is nominated will receive five minutes to talk about their suitability for the role at the AGM and will take questions from the floor. Voting will commence after the close of the AGM, and will continue until 7pm on November 5th, 2023, when it will conclude. You will be able to vote via www.assap.ac.uk/elections

Dark Life

Rob Gandy

Boultham Park is situated on the southwest side of the city of Lincoln, and formed part of the estate of the 18th- or 19th-century Boultham Hall.

After WWI, much of the land was sold for new housing, with the remaining grounds finally secured by the City Council in 1929. The grounds were laid out as a public park with the hall being demolished in 1959. The only remaining evidence of the hall until 2017 was the original pediment and steps. The park has been deemed a Critical Natural Asset and has been designated by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust as a site of nature conservation importance. Its lake represents 5% of the total wetlands habitat in Lincoln^{1,2}.



I first became aware of the park when I was researching for my *#Strange Fenomena - A Lincolnshire Casebook Series* for *Fortean Times*, when witnesses described faceless phantoms³. Their testimonies read as follows:

Back in 1977 my friend and I were a couple of teenage girls returning home from a dance at the Ancaster Day Centre in Lincoln. We were keen to get home before our parents' strict deadline of 11.30pm. Because we were running late we took the cinder path that runs from Russell Street to Lake View Road, and then decided to be brave and take a shortcut through Boultham Park. We linked arms and hurried forward. Just after we went past the swings I looked behind me and saw a man come from behind the tree - he was dressed in a long, light-coloured mack and a hat. My recollection is that it didn't seem strange at the time that I could see him, even though it was really dark. However, I did notice that he didn't have a face! We started walking faster, and I remember looking again as the man seemed to 'float' into the bushes by the side of the lake. I deliberately didn't say anything to my friend until we got out of the park, just in case she ran off and left me alone. When I did tell her what I had seen my friend wasn't totally surprised because she said that others had seen him (or whatever it was) there in the past! Even over 40 years later I can still remember what the man looked like!

The second witness described his partner's knowledge of the park:

Martin's partner Amy (both pseudonym's) knows Boultham Park very well and played there as a child, having been born in one of the nearby roads. Over the years she played there for many hours, and local children always felt as though someone was watching them when playing near or on the old swings, which were close to the lake. When a bit older, she would often cut through the park at night to get home quickly. She says that when she got near to the swings she always felt uneasy and that something or someone was there, watching.

But she never actually saw anything like the 'faceless man'.

Obviously both cases are intriguing, but in July 2023 I was contacted by Christopher (pseudonym), who has lived most of his life in Lincoln, and from 1982 to 1993 lived on Boultham Park Road, close to the park itself. Now in his early 50s, he was a teenager back in the summer holidays of 1984 when, on a bright Sunday morning, he went out for a walk on his own. When he was on Hall Drive, he decided to take a shortcut through the park; which took him past St Helens church, to his left. As he passed its churchyard, he glanced a look at the gravestones. There, in the bricked-off back portion of the graveyard, he saw a man dressed in black trousers and a white shirt, wearing a big black hat that had a grainy black and white feel about it. The man had his back to Christopher, but was solid looking. What disconcerted Christopher was that the man's attire looked like it had come from the 1820s, and he was cutting the grass with a scythe!



Christopher had never seen anyone cutting that grass, let alone anyone with a scythe. What struck Christopher was the fact that there wasn't any sound coming from the man; he was totally silent. Understandably, Christopher decided not to approach the mysterious Grim Reaper-like man, and briskly continued into the park.

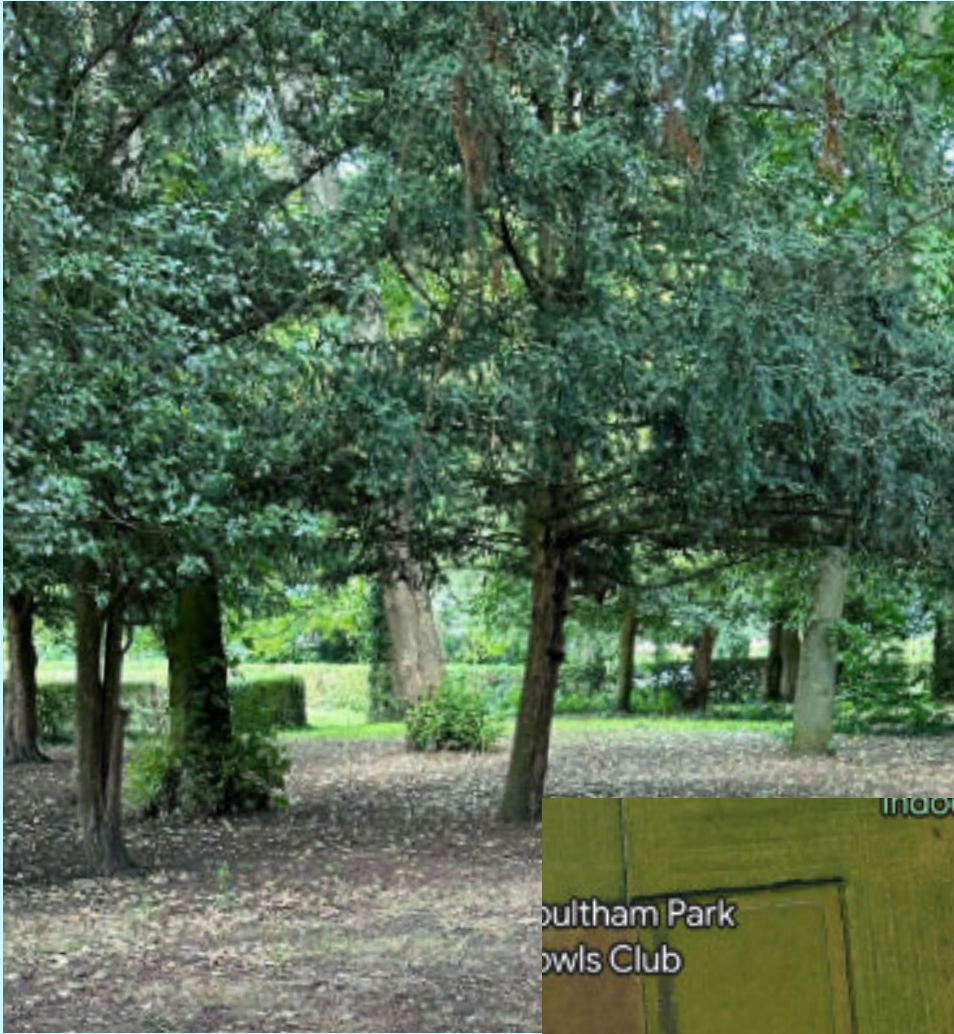
Invisible Horse

It was a couple of years later that Christopher again found himself taking a shortcut through Boultham Park, as he made his way home. It was gone 10.30pm one night in early September, and he was just going past the benches near the old conservatory. It was at this point that he heard heavy hoofbeats pounding the ground towards him, following a line through the trees from the playground towards the park gates by St Helens church. But he could see nothing! Indeed, he continued to hear the (what he assumed to be a) horse as it thundered past him. He heard its breathing, and saw its impact on the ground! He also felt the air rush past him - but whatever it was it was invisible! Terrified, Christopher just took off running and didn't stop until he got home half a mile away.

Interestingly, a few months later, Christopher was walking down Hall Drive with a few friends on their way to his house. It was early in the evening when a police car pulled up alongside them. The officer then asked if any of them had seen any horses on the loose, because people had reported hearing them. This was only 100 yards where he had had his experience....

What to make of all this?

It would appear that Boultham Park and its surrounding area is subject to strange, infrequent phenomena that don't neatly fit into any one set category. What is certain is that these phenomena can be pretty scary! However, it would be unlikely that any group



References

- 1 <https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/boultham-park>
- 2 <http://www.boulthampark.co.uk/history/>
- 3 Rob Gandy (2021) Not the Face! *Fortean Times*, FT414 p.46-47

of ghosthunters would experience anything if they camped out in the grounds overnight. No doubt they would enjoy a very nice picnic and have a convivial time, but the park is large and so where would they target as a 'best' location? Perhaps by the swings? Perhaps by the entrance off Hall Drive? Nevertheless, for those people who *have* had such frightening experiences, maybe they would prefer to call it '*Ghoultham Park*'?



The Jacket

Colin Bilsland

Back in 2010 I needed a jacket so I bought a second hand one – German, WW2. I asked my ex-wife to take a few photos and on one of them there seems to be a pair of hands in front of me!

My wife once she seen it ordered me to throw the jacket out so I did what most blokes do : I hid it in the spare room. I had two dogs, one old a black Labrador the other young a white Alsatian. The older dog would stay away from the spare room but the younger dog would run past the room and hide in the bathroom then run back and hide under my legs.

Christmas I got a new camera and took its first picture the image was unusual. I uploaded these photos onto a website called Flickr which I re-found and noticed the photos have all the details, what camera used and settings ISO lens etc.

Where I lived it was a very run down area we used to get lots of people ringing the doorbell so I disconnected the doorbell. Then we got a new dog, a Staffordshire terrier making 3 dogs in all. The new dog chewed the doorbell cable at least a good two foot of cable was missing. One night I was sitting watching TV when the doorbell rang, I got up and looked out the peephole ...nobody there! Then I realised the cable was bitten through not connected. I checked the time, it said 10.30. One week later it was Halloween night, and our older dog wasn't good; he was losing weight. I took him to the out of hours vet who sadly put him to sleep. I looked at time it was 10.30.

Another night when I went to bed my ex-wife was working nights, the white dog ran and

jumped on bed, he growled and jumped off, I suddenly had a strange feeling I was being watched, I opened my eyes and seen... a faceless head staring at me, the hair pulled back. I closed my eyes and thought “nope u ain't there” and it vanished. Later that night my ex-wife came home from work and went to the kitchen, the kitchen blinds fell from the window, across the room and hit her on the head while she was looking in the fridge. She came running into the bedroom and woke me up.

Next day I took the jacket out the spare room and put it in the shed, all was quiet. A few days later for some reason ... I put it back in the spare room. That night I could smell smoke in the flat at 3am, I woke my ex-wife up, asked her if she could smell it too which she could,



we checked all the flat, the plug sockets, cooker and even the outside communal bin but all was good no sign of a fire.

Few days went by, I was working with a friend of mine, we stopped at his house to get a coffee, we went into the house. His house had two sets of stairs, one stair went down to the bedrooms, the other stair went up to the living room and kitchen. As I passed the stairs going down I looked to my left. I froze I could see a black shadow standing on the stair. It said "Brian" then it suddenly vanished, I was a little shaken and told my friend what I had seen and that it said his name before vanishing, that was on a Thursday.

That night I fell asleep and dreamed I was driving my work mate home, above us was a RAF jet,.. as we got closer to his mother's home the jet nose dived and stopped above his mother's house, I said "let's go In" but he refused. I knocked on his mums door,. She called out " come in" so I opened the door and went in, standing next to her was the black shadow man. She was sitting in her chair. She said "where is Brian?" I said "he is afraid to come in" and she replied "tell him not to be afraid, he has to come see me now it's urgent, I can't wait". I woke up and saw him in the morning, and told him about my dream. Brian said his father was in the RAF and he had booked a ticket to go home for Monday but would exchange the ticket for Saturday.

Monday morning he told me "I got home. I walked into the front room and my mum was sitting on the chair. She looked at me, smiled then died!" His son was with him at the time .The jacket was thrown away right after!



Man who remembers past life as WWI pilot visits 'his own grave in Llandudno'

Tony Hayes

Man who remembers past life as WWI pilot visits 'his own grave in Llandudno' the headline screamed out!; The story went on; Steve Mulligan from Manchester is convinced he was a pilot shot down over France in 1917 in a 'previous incarnation'. OK, it's just a newspaper story but does Steve Mulligan's experience, and others like him, do anything for the survival hypothesis?

In my own opinion, past lives offer us one of the most intriguing areas of research which may one day prove beyond all reasonable doubt, that individual consciousness does survive bodily death. When claims are made of such a reincarnation, we do need to sit up and take them seriously.

In general terms, we can separate Past Lives into two groups. Group 1; who appear to have memories of an unconnected past life, normally experiencing and demonstrating within childhood between the ages of 18 months to eight years of age. Group 2 are those who require 'assistance' to remember a possible past life, normally through Past Life Regression. In the case of Steve Mulligan, who is aged 61 years, he said he attended Hypnosis

sessions which in turn triggered his past life memories.

In his book 'Return to Life' Dr Jim Tucker, an associate Professor of Psychiatry in Virginia, USA, investigated over 3000 cases of Group 1 involving mostly young children. His conclusions are intriguing, for example; 70% of cases of possible reincarnation in children were male, compared to 30% female. This does not mean men are more likely to be reincarnated because of sex, the 70% male to 30% female, matches almost exactly the figure of unnatural deaths in adults; a male is more likely to die an unnatural death than a female, and these unnatural deaths will include accident, suicide, wars, and conflict. The male takes more risks, something I am sure we all agree with.

So how do we measure the accuracy of a reincarnation claim? The majority of Dr Jim Tucker's cases were pre-internet, so researching in advance of a claim was more limited. We can also break the data down into two areas --

1. The quality of one single claim
2. The possibility of existing knowledge.

We could also offer a percentage as a measurement. If ten parts of the reincarnation claim are 80% accurate, 8 out of 10 parts of a claim are proved to be positive, we could use a measurement of 80% or more as a measurement of proof. But we also need to take into account the quality of the claim, for example, if someone said they were a reincarnation of a male, the quality of that statement would be poor, for measurement's sake, we would give that answer may be 1 out of 10.

A five-year-old child, in principle, would be less likely to have researched a claim and less likely to commit fraud, in simple terms, lie. If however they said they were killed on an exact date, and no online sources were available, but

you later came across an obscure document in a library miles away from the claimant's home, you might consider using a higher mark of may be 8 out of 10. So it's the quality of the claim that is important, not the number of statements within the claim.

The case of James Leininger.

James Leininger, is an American child who at age two began having intense nightmares of a plane crash. He then described being an American pilot who was killed when his plane was shot down by the Japanese. He gave details that included the name of an American aircraft carrier, the first and last name of a friend who was on the ship with him, and a location and other specifics about the fatal crash. His parents eventually discovered a close correspondence between James's statements and the death of a World War II pilot named James Huston. Documentation of James's statements that were made before Huston was identified includes a television interview with his parents that never aired but which the author has been able to review.

The documentation in James's case provides evidence that he had a connection with a life from the past. On the face of it, the most obvious explanation for this connection is that he experienced life as James Huston, Jr. before having his current one. The facts in the case indicate that this explanation warrants serious consideration. (Tucker, J.B; (2016);Explore; 12:200-207)

The Steve Mulligan case.

The newspaper 'North Wales Live', which is still available online to read, made a number of claims. We shall now take a closer look at what Steve Mulligan is stating.

1. **Though he wasn't born until 1961, Steve claims to remember his past life in Llandudno as early as 1903 when he was Sydney Sutcliffe, son of Abraham "Arthur"**

Sutcliffe, an entertainer at Llandudno's Pavilion Theatre.

Sydney Sutcliffe did exist, however, the 1911, and earlier census, shows Sydney and the family were living in Bradford, West Yorkshire. This included his father Abraham Sutcliff, a Public Entertainer. Given Sydney Sutcliffe was killed in October 1917 aged 24 years, the maximum time he could have lived in Llandudno was six years, and this includes his time at war in France as well as presuming the family left Bradford to live in Llandudno when the census was written in 1911, so it may have been much later than 1911.

2. Steve said: "Since my childhood I've always been drawn to Llandudno, even when I came here as a child I knew my way around and my mum used to be amazed at how I knew where to go." When we'd be walking around it was like I was having *deja vu*, like I'd been there before.

If Steve Mulligan was remembering his past life as a child, why would he not focus on Bradford and the place he was born and lived in for at least 18 of his 24 years?

3. Steve says he can remember the moments before his aircraft was struck down above the trenches. "I remember being in the aircraft and looking down on the ground below and thinking I was glad I wasn't down there. "I can remember thinking, I'm like a bird." During the hypnosis, Steve recalled joining the Fusiliers in Wrexham and later joining the Royal Flying Corps before serving as an aerial photographer and gunner during WWI. He says his last memories are of an aerial reconnaissance flight over enemy lines near Cambrai, France. Steve says he can remember looking out of the aircraft to the ground below moments before it was hit by enemy fire, causing the plane to spiral out of control. He said: "I can remember that feeling as the aircraft was going down and it was really strange because I had no control of it. "I could feel that loss of life but there's nothing I could do."

Sydney Sutcliffe did join The Welch Fusiliers before joining the Royal Flying Corps (later to become the RAF), that is correct, but Sydney's war records are missing, presumed destroyed along with 25% of others during the London Blitz of WW2. However it isn't too difficult to find online sources which state the same information as Steve Mulligan. As far as speaking about how he died, Sydney was in the rear seat of the aircraft, a Bristol F2b biplane, where he undertook aerial reconnaissance. The aircraft was armed with a machine gun and manning it was part of the rear seat passengers' duties. Steve Mulligan states he was hit by enemy fire which caused the aircraft to lose control. This was the common cause of Air Corp deaths, brought down by ground fire, even small arms fire could bring one of these wooden framed aircraft down.

In the reincarnation cases Dr Jim Tucker investigated, the details of the way the person died was always detailed. I was able to find out exactly what happened to Sydney Sutcliffe and the pilot, which differs from Steve Mulligan's account.

"Late in the afternoon of the 2nd October 1917, along with the pilot, Justin McKenna, took off from an airfield near Arras in a Bristol F2b biplane. Sydney Sutcliffe was the observer and gunner in the aircraft but after an hour it was surrounded by seven German planes near Cambrai. During the ensuing dogfight, McKenna and Sutcliffe shot down four of the enemy before they were brought down themselves with the loss of both men".

I would have thought those last moments of shooting down enemy aircraft would be part of Steve Mulligan's memory, but it wasn't. This information wasn't that easy to find, so anyone without some knowledge of how to research war records would struggle.

4. Steve Mulligan also states: Alongside visions of the war, Steve says he has 'vivid' memories of growing up in Llandudno more than 100 years ago. He said: "I didn't know anything about Llandudno apart from coming here as a child until I did the regression. "I had never heard the name Sydney Sutcliffe, so for me to choose that name out of millions of names and for that to be someone who did live in Llandudno, it's just incredible.

5. Steve also says he remembers performing on stage at Llandudno's Pavilion Theatre with his father, who he believes was an entertainer. He said: "I can remember my father was an entertainer and I can see him doing his act on stage and making the crowd laugh. "I remember I would help him on stage sometimes, kind of like a Stavros Flatley father-and son routine.

Again, the story states he remembers being brought up in Llandudno, but Sydney Sutcliffe wasn't brought up in Llandudno, he was brought up in Bradford. He did perform with his father on stage before the First World War, and later, his father would hold the annual 'Syd Sutcliffe Wounded Soldiers Benefit Fund' at the Pier Head Pavilion in memory of his late son.

On visiting his own grave in Llandudno.

Sydney Sutcliffe was buried twice but never in Llandudno, he was buried in France. The young Llandudno man was granted a

funeral with full military honours and received a Military Medal for bravery. Later the bodies of pilot Justin McKenna (the uncle of actress and wildlife campaigner Virginia McKenna) and Sydney Sutcliffe were re-interred at Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery, where they remain to this day.

6. Steve says he felt "elated" when he learned of his past life and was keen to know more. In December last year, he and partner Sharon visited Llandudno to see if it would trigger any further memories. Steve says walking the streets evoked



memories of his childhood home, where he remembers living with his parents and three sisters. The couple also visited the Llandudno Cenotaph, where a 'Sidney Sutcliffe' is listed among the local soldiers killed during WWI.

Again, Sydney Sutcliffe was never walking the streets of Llandudno as a child and he didn't have three sisters, he had two sisters and a brother. Sydney Sutcliffe is remembered on the Llandudno War Memorial.

7. They then travelled to Llanrhos cemetery, where Sydney's parents Abraham 'Arthur' Sutcliffe and Rhoda

Sutcliffe are buried. Steve said: "We had been looking for the headstone in the cemetery for a while and couldn't find it. "We actually started to think we weren't going to find it but then a pheasant flew past, which startled me, and as I looked over that's where it was.

What are we to make of the story?

Steve Mulligan states the regression triggered the memory, but did he research it? If he did use research to help a fraudulent claim of a past life memory, he didn't do a very good job.

Alan Wilson from Stilton, Peterborough, Cambs, UK
- Bristol F2b Fighter



MY EXPERIENCES WITH SLEEP PARALYSIS.

Dave Holdich.

Some parts are accurate, and it's easily found with some basic research, but I would have expected him to get the sexes of his siblings correct, something he didn't. The story is full of inconsistencies and inaccuracies, I would have expected a more detailed account of how he was killed. One thing with reincarnation cases is the detail of the way they died, it's always detailed, in Steve Mulligan's claim, it wasn't.

If you took a sceptical view of the claim, you would point out the high possibility of false memories. Maybe he had read an article and the regression simply triggered this false memory? Or has Steve Mulligan simply made the whole story up and backed it up with some online research? Or did the regression genuinely trigger a memory of a past life in which tragedy ended the life of a young airman, but the story we got was just a bit muddled up?

What isn't in doubt is that Sydney Sutcliffe was killed on the 2nd of October 1917, and like many, he is buried a long way from home but he was always remembered and loved by his family. If indeed there is such a thing as reincarnation, I think you will agree that young Sydney earned his right to a new life, as so many others did during a dreadful event we call the First World War.



I've just woken up and I have no idea what time it is and I can't open my eyes... I can't move. There's someone or something standing in my bedroom doorway staring at me. They can't know I'm awake or they'll kill me and I'm terrified to move. Actually I literally can't move...why are they staring at me, what have I done??

I lay there still, the thoughts in my head are like a wasps nest that's been disturbed and then suddenly, a sense of clarity falls in...

"Stop being an idiot Dave, there's no one there. Open your eyes and end this nonsense".

I dig deep and pluck up all the courage I have left and open my eyes...nothing.

There's no one in my doorway looking at me and I turn on the bedside lamp and scope out my room. No one and nothing unusual, so I sit up in bed and my body feels cold, I'm shaking slightly and I'm actually sweating; not to mention my heart thumping like mad.

I'm absolutely terrified and the silence is so loud that I have to put my TV on to fill the void. There's no way I'm getting back to sleep yet anyway, it's 02:45 and I have my alarm set for 5am to be up for work...oh what fun.

A few months later...

I head upstairs at work in Unit four, the CB pick faces in front of me and Order Start almost directly below me, but something feels

strange, like there's someone there who shouldn't be. I'm a shift team leader and I know all my staff very well; it's something I pride myself on. Someone is here who shouldn't be but I can't see them and again I find myself terrified...and then I wake up.

My room is full of sunlight, but there's a heavy weight across my body and I can't move. I try but nothing happens, so I try and call my dad who's asleep in the room next door but I can't talk either; just a series of indiscernible moans barely manage to escape my lips.

That's it for me, I'm once again laying there in a cold sweat and scared to death, my mind in turmoil and then, just like before; an instant of clarity drowns out my panic and I realise this is just sleep paralysis and it'll pass soon. Surely it did pass shortly after and I was again left shaken by my experience and sleep was not to be forthcoming as a result.

The National Health Service (NHS) website lists the symptoms of sleep paralysis as:



- * Awake but cannot move, speak or open your eyes.
- * Like someone is in your room.
Like something is pushing down on you.
Frightening.

The same website goes on to list the following causes:

- * Insomnia.
- * Disrupted sleep patterns, maybe as a result of being on shift work (which I am).
- * Narcolepsy, a condition in which the casualty will suddenly fall asleep.
- * PTSD.
- * Generalised Anxiety Disorder.

The Stanford Medicine website goes on to explain about REM behaviour Disorder, which is more commonly known as Atonia.

Atonia is a lock-down of bodily muscles during REM sleep when we are more likely to dream. It prevents people from acting out their more vivid or perhaps violent dreams preventing damage to property or injury to the individual involved. Normally this muscular lock-down will release as you wake up, but on rare occasions when an individual awakes suddenly Atonia will still be in effect and this will cause the above often distressing symptoms.

I had never experienced sleep paralysis before the events described above, and they frightened the absolute **** out of me. I often find fear is a catalyst for me to research a subject, which largely goes to explain my interest in the paranormal and ghosts and – by extension -- anomalous psychology.

To close this brief article, I would invite the reader to share their own experiences of sleep paralysis and e-mail me at d.holdich@outlook.com

REFLECTIONS ON PRECOGNITION

Peter A. McCue

Precognition is a form of extrasensory perception (ESP) in which people obtain information about the future. Judging from reports, it can occur in various ways – for example, via dreams or visions.

Conceptualizing supposed precognitive experiences

Hardline sceptics would argue that there are prosaic, non-paranormal explanations for seemingly precognitive experiences. Imagine, for example, that I dream of a tragic event occurring in Bristol, and that the next day there is indeed such an event there. A sceptic could rightly argue that millions of people have dreams and that it's only to be expected that, purely by chance, some of them will match subsequent real-life events.

But if precognition truly occurs, how might it work? One possibility is that the past, the present and the future somehow co-exist, enabling us to look ahead and see the future, or look back and have retrocognitive experiences (popularly known as 'time-slips'). But, of course, if our futures are already mapped out, we may need to give up the notion that we have 'free will'.

Another possibility is that precognitive experiences are like Met Office weather forecasts – *predictions about what's likely to happen, based on what's currently known*. Arguably, though, ordinary people wouldn't have sufficient knowledge or 'computational power' to come up with detailed and accurate forecasts. However, it might be conjectured

that, unconsciously, they're able to glean information by telepathy and clairvoyance. Alternatively, it could be that when they foresee future events, people acquire the information, unwittingly, from a higher intelligence, one that possesses enormous knowledge and massive 'computational power'. Either way, construing precognition in terms of probabilistic prediction leaves open the possibility that the anticipated future can be changed.

Instances of *apparent* precognition could, perhaps, be explained in terms of *psychokinesis* (a paranormal 'mind-over-matter' effect) rather than true precognition. For example, imagine an experiment: Every 10 seconds, a participant, Julie, is asked to guess the identity of a letter of the alphabet that will be randomly selected by a computer *after* she has made her choice. Now, if she scores significantly above (or below) what would be expected by chance, it's possible that psychokinesis (PK) came into play, enabling her – presumably unconsciously – to influence the selection of target letters or to make the computer record an incorrect number of correct guesses.

By the same token, if Julie has a vivid and detailed dream about an unexpected disaster, and if the dreamt-about event subsequently occurs, it could be that Julie brought it about via PK! However, I think that most people would deem precognition to be the more likely possibility in a case of that sort.

Case examples

An incident reported to me many years ago by Malcolm, a correspondent from Dundee, accords with the notion that precognitive experiences may sometimes enable people to avert bad events. It occurred, he believed, in the late 1950s when he was visiting a friend who lived in an old tenement building in the city. Malcolm had just put his foot on the first

step of the spiral stairway when ‘something’ made him run up the stairs. Rounding the first corner, he saw a young woman, with a baby in her arms, saying goodbye to her mother. As the young woman turned, she lost her balance. Malcolm was braced to catch the mother and child.

Unfortunately, though, there are cases of ostensible precognition where the foreknowledge *didn't* enable the experimenter to prevent a tragedy. Take the following report, which came to me in late 2000 from a man in Aberdeen whom I'll call Brian. In 1983, when he was aged about 63 or 64, he turned on his car radio and ‘heard’, on the 8.00 a.m. news, details concerning the murder of George Murdoch, a taxi driver, on the western outskirts of Aberdeen. Brian mentioned the murder to two technicians at his workplace, but they said that they hadn't heard about it. When he returned home, he expected to read about the crime in the *Evening Express*, but there was no mention of it. However, five weeks later:

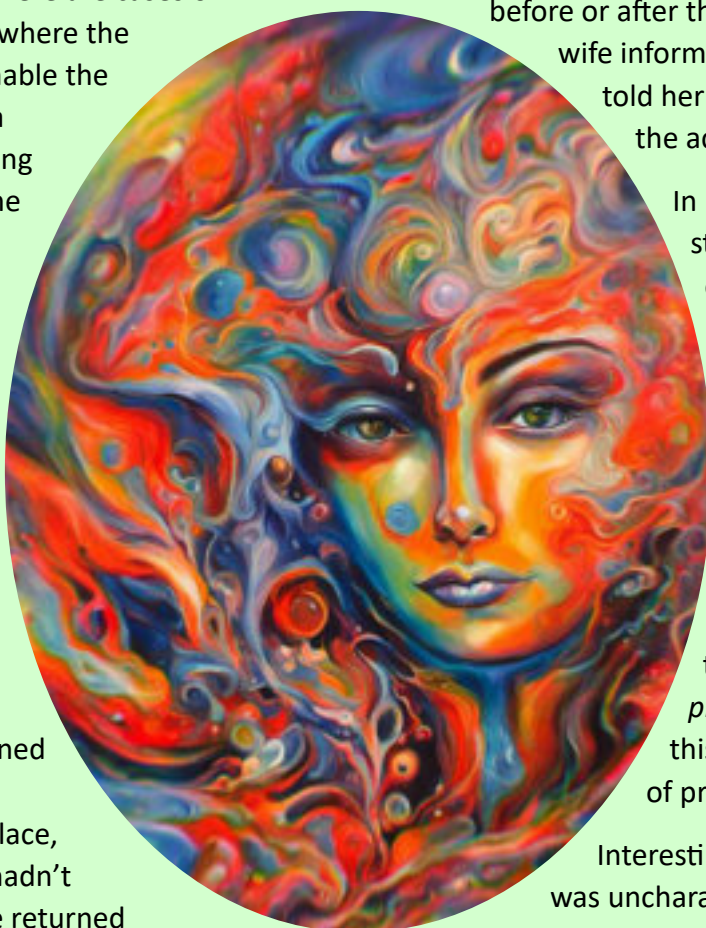
“...Aberdeen woke to the news of a taxi driver being murdered, exactly as I had told the two technicians...About six months later I had a visit from the police, who gave me a cloth cap which belonged to the driver, and his pen. They asked me to handle both items to see if I could give them a lead...I could not help in that respect, but [I] said that they would not get the killer, in my opinion.”

I asked Brian whether he could give me the names and addresses of the technicians he'd

mentioned, which he did, although he pointed out that he hadn't seen one of them for about 11 years. In the event, the latter didn't reply to a letter from me, although it could be that he no longer lived at the address I was given. The other former colleague of Brian's did respond, although he stated that he couldn't recall whether Brian had mentioned the matter before or after the incident. However, Brian's wife informed me that her husband had told her of his experience *prior* to the actual murder.

In his initial letter to me, Brian stated that his experience had occurred in 1985, although he subsequently acknowledged that he'd got the year wrong and that it had occurred in 1983. However, if he and his wife remembered the *sequence* of events correctly – i.e., if his experience of ‘hearing’ the radio news item *preceded* the actual murder – this would appear to be a case of precognition.

Interestingly, Brian reported that it was uncharacteristic of him to listen to the radio in his car, unless he was parked. Maybe his behaviour on that occasion was brought about, unconsciously, to create a setting in which he could unobtrusively have an auditory hallucination featuring a report about the future murder? Or was his recollection of turning on the radio and hearing the news item a *false memory*, engineered, unconsciously, to give expression to paranormally acquired information about the future? Either way, it's possible that the precognition, if that's what it was, related to Brian's *future experience of hearing about the murder* rather than to the murder *per se*.



Judging from another report from Malcolm, whom I mentioned above, it may be that precognitive experiences aren't confined to impending accidents or tragic events. He related that he was cycling home from work one evening when "the silliest idea came into [his] head. Something told [him] that the next six cars to come around the bend ahead of [him] would all be Fords. This is exactly what happened. The seventh car was a Vauxhall." However, this experience may have been based on *clairvoyance* (ESP involving direct perception of physical events), operating in the present, rather than precognition. In other words, Malcolm's mind may have reached out and discerned that six Ford cars were approaching the bend ahead of him.

About the author:

Based in Scotland, Dr Peter McCue is a retired clinical psychologist with a longstanding interest in anomalous phenomena. He's the author of numerous articles and four books with a paranormal theme. Peter is a member of ASSAP and the SPR.



Tobar an Dualchais: A Treasure Trove of Accounts of Anomalous Experiences

Katherine Stark & Cameron
Stark

Folklore can be a potent source of local and national identity.¹ In Scotland, stories and traditions present echoes of historical Scotland to the international gaze and affect how the country is seen on the world stage.² These stories connect communities to their history, and act as a source for folklore tourism.³

Scottish folklore is rich in stories of the paranormal. Some traditions, such as that of Second Sight, are well known, and the Scottish witch trials have been documented through legal records that allow some access to the statements of the people concerned, accepting the limitations of accounts largely recorded by the persecutors.⁴ Other voices are more transient, particularly when they cover information, events and beliefs that were often seen as trivial or irrelevant. This article discusses *Tobar an Dualchais (Kist O'Riches)* an online resource that permits access to oral histories that give a glimpse of marginal voices that contain much of interest to members of ASSAP.

Tobar an Dualchais allows access to many Scottish field recordings from The University of Edinburgh's School of Scottish Studies Archives, the BBC Archives, and the National Trust for Scotland. The available online collection is a small proportion of the total resource held by the partners. Clearing copyright is a slow

process, as consent to share is needed from the fieldworker, the subject, and the relevant institution, or their estates. Navigating the ethical issues in the digital turn of contemporary oral history research is challenging.⁵

For the recordings that are available on the site, copyright is owned by the original contributor or their next of kin, and the organisation which has shared the resource with *Tobar an Dualchais*. The copyright officer at *Tobar an Dualchais* works with partners to agree access, so the resource will develop further over time.

Recordings are mainly in Gaelic, Scots or English, but Doric also features. In some recordings subject and interviewer flit between Gaelic and English during their conversation, depending on the terms they want to use, which can make some recordings harder to follow at first listen.

The website includes a search function. The frequency of return of some common paranormal search terms are shown in Figure 1. Queries were run for Scots, English and Gaelic, and the results combined. In some cases, the same story will be returned for both languages as the interview is tagged with both. Searches were conducted in May 2023, and results will change as interviews are added or tags altered.

Minor changes produced differences in numbers. For example, 'spell' yielded 3336 hits, while 'spells' produced 3505. Some terms had a far lower yield, including Black Dog (124); Selkie / Selkies (56) and Haunting (39).

A more detailed review of individual returns on searches demonstrates both the limitations of the use of individual terms, and the richness of the data. Using a systematic sampling strategy to review a 5% sample of the 1663 entries tagged with 'ghost' and available in English, 83 recordings were reviewed. 53 (63.8%) appeared to have no relation to ghosts or

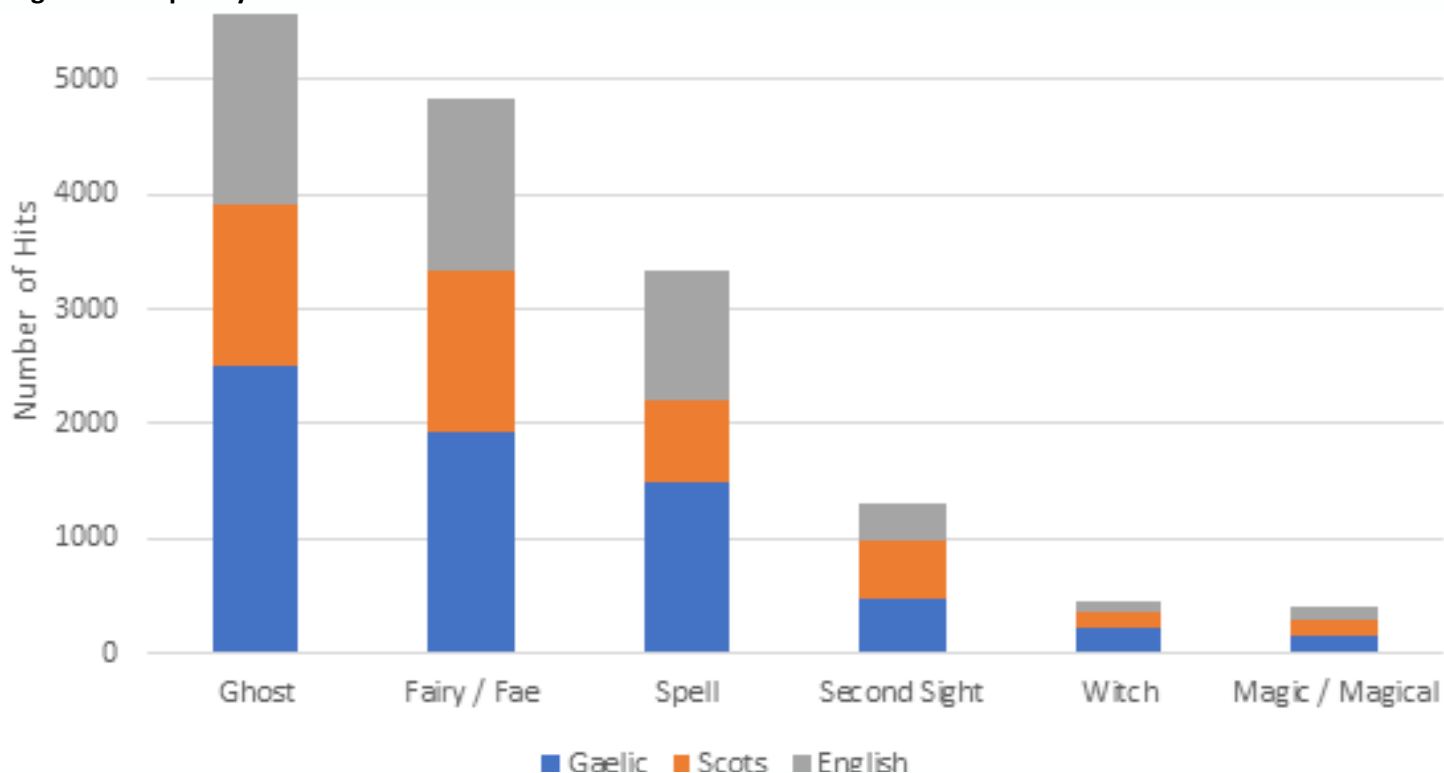
other paranormal stories. 12 (14.5%) were directly related to accounts of ghosts. A further 18 recordings (21.7%) included at least one reference to other paranormal occurrences including witches, charms, evil spirits, transformation into a seal, or superstitions. Of the accounts that referred directly to ghosts, one was an account of a first-person experience and a second related an experience reported by a family member. Three accounts referred to stories from a named local area. One account did not specify the area, and the remaining accounts were presented as traditional stories, rather than accounts of experiences.

Almost inevitably, some of the accounts immediately adjacent to the systematically sampled recordings had fascinating titles that begged further exploration. The tagging of some entries with paranormal terms that did not seem to appear in the accounts, also suggests that there will be untagged terms of interest to the researcher of the folklore and the paranormal.

Oral history theory demands attention to the context of the interview, the process of the interview, and the interviewer and interviewee. When listening to the archive, some interviewees appear to have interests which they explore in more detail, so there may be unconscious biases in the prioritisation of some content. Some interviewees appeared surprised that their interviewer wanted to hear them relate stories on paranormal topics, which gave some reassurance that stories were not being preferentially introduced by interviewees with a particular interest in uncanny topics. The interviewees often appeared to regard the stories as not worthy of being recorded.

The strength of the archive is the opportunity to hear direct from informants, many of whom will now have passed away. The informants represent a broad spread of Scottish life. Many informants will not have written a book or recorded stories in other written formats, so

Figure 1: Frequency of a Selection of Paranormal Search Terms



the archive allows voices to be heard that would otherwise have been lost. The accounts include frequent references to stories passed down from previous generations, so the recordings provide insight not only into the views of those who are interviewed but give information on stories and accounts that relatives and neighbours thought sufficiently important, or sufficiently interesting, to relate to the interviewee.

Several informants noted that transmission of accounts was being interrupted by changes to contemporary life. Story sessions on dark winter evenings were less common with the coming of electric light and television. Informants sometimes commented that the ancestor whose stories they related had been one of the last Gaelic speakers in the area, suggesting that the archive is important in allowing the transmission of long traditions that could otherwise have been lost completely. The archive allows a social history turn which does not depend on accounts of the activities of the rich and famous. Oral history can open new areas of research and break down barriers between generations.⁶

The University consortium that provides the resource deserves a vote of thanks from lay people and academic researchers alike. *Tobar an Dualchais* is a valuable resource for researchers of folklore and paranormal accounts that deserves to be better known. The chance to hear accounts and stories direct from people whose voice would otherwise have been lost to us is an important benefit that allows transmission of these otherwise lost voices into the future.

<https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/>

Acknowledgements

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A visit to a 'very haunted' public house and hotel in Downham Market, Norfolk

Graham Philpot

- * Location – The Swan Hotel and Lounge, 29 High St, Downham Market, Norfolk PE38 9HF
- * Date – Tuesday 2 May 2023
- * Time – 20:15-21:30
- * Attendees – Graham Philpot; Jason (manager and proprietor); Harry (barman); B.T. engineer, x2 customers at the bar.

Graham visited The Swan pub nestled in the heart of Downham Market, West Norfolk(<https://www.theswandownham.com/>), to discuss arrangements with Jason Fisher, the proprietor, for a future ASSAP investigation.

The site of the Swan, a stone's throw from the clock tower, is said to have played host to some Royal guests centuries ago.

King John stayed at a hostelry which stood on the site in 1216. It was also a place of refuge for Charles I in 1646, when he was trying to evade capture from Parliamentary forces disguised as a vicar, after losing the Battle of Naseby. The hotel has a long and rich history – but unlike its near neighbour, the (now former) Castle Hotel, it didn't have much known locally in the way of paranormal activity.

However, with new proprietor Jason Fisher, paranormal activity was occurring "every day". This was something that ASSAP simply had to know about!

He explained that he and Harry, with a builder, had uncovered a hidden cellar

leading from the female toilets, in February. Since that date, they had "uncorked the genie's bottle", as Jason stated. Events witnessed by them include electrical disturbances (such as an iPad and karaoke machine playing random – but related music – and lights switching on/off).

Whilst I was asking questions to Jason, I was shown some CCTV footage by him and Harry. On one footage, it showed the bar's karaoke system come on by itself at around 02:00 one night in mid-April. There is the sound of chairs moving, and then a deep growl (repeated about 2-3 times). Both Jason and Harry confirmed that they were not inside the premises on that occasion, as was no-one else.

On the second piece of footage, there appears to be what can only be described as a transparent octopus perched on the inside bar/sink area, and reaching out towards the iPad that played the karaoke machine.

Whilst being shown the latter footage by Harry, Jason then shouted to me to come and see his iPad. As I observed it, writing was appearing on it – "CELLAR JASON JASON JASON... Go To The [sic]". Underneath the writing, the iPad then began to play 'No Place That Far', by Sara Evans. Taken into context, the wording could read as "Jason, go to the cellar, it's not that far away from you". If this is not a hoax – and I am unsure that it isn't a third party intentionally either winding Jason up via a Bluetooth or other hack, or Jason/ Harry or a friend doing it, to get the failing pub into the news and public domain – then it would suggest an invisible intelligence of some description, or a joint hallucinatory experience.

Further to this, the karaoke machine - powered by the iPad – then began to play 'Tip-Toe Through the Tulips with Me' by Tiny Tim. Jason explained that in his view, the song is played every time (day or night) when the 'entity' is trying to make contact with him and/or Harry.

This song then followed by the soundtrack to the film 'Insidious', which had various

speech intersected with the music, and then of a man screaming loudly, repeatedly. It turned out that during the track, the phone had switched to another soundtrack entitled 'Les Horreur' (or in English, 'The Horror'). This then cut out and Jason turned off his connectivity, by putting the phone on airplane mode. However, whilst in this state, the phone then played some sort of white noise, and it sounded like a male voice talking in the background (but it was inaudible).

A B.T. engineer was drinking at the bar who witnessed this and confirmed that to do all three things via a tablet and phone was 'largely impossible, especially when it is effectively switched off'.

Jason also explained that on the previous Saturday morning (29 April) at 03:00, he was alone in the premises and in bed. He had recently finished clearing up downstairs and retired to bed but was not yet asleep. He heard footsteps coming up the stairs and they then stopped outside of his bedroom door. He looked at the door and saw the feet and legs of a 'male' apparition between the gap in the door and the corridor outside (note that there was no torso, etc). At this point, the room went cold, and the apparition simply faded away. It was this incident that frightened Jason and he believes that the activity is intensifying.

On the Sunday, he re-boarded up the toilet cellar 'door', but activity has continued. It is worth noting that he has called in the television programme 'Help my House is Haunted!' to see whether they can assist – filming began on Wednesday 19 May and concluded on the Friday. It is likely that it will be transmitted on Sky this autumn.

Update – September 2023

Several members of the ASSAP Executive Committee viewed the footage and also theorised on what had caused the alleged activity, ranging from apps to potential manipulation of the CCTV footage. In addition, there seemed to be no other witnesses (apart from Harry) who could testify to Jason's

accounts (although it is, in fairness, unlikely that anyone would be with him at 3am!). Therefore, it was concluded that it was dubious as to whether the alleged activity had a paranormal source, although it could not be completely ruled out.

To ascertain further, the East Anglia ASSAP group had arranged for a full investigation to take place during one Saturday in mid-May, after the filming. However, when our members turned up, the front door was locked, and the proprietor was not returning calls, emails, or social media instant messages (although had seen them). The investigation therefore did not take place, and given that there has been limited paranormal activity previously reported at the premises, we could only conclude that it was in all likelihood, not haunted (very much!).

Subsequently, on the lunchtime of Monday 11 September, several men were seen entering the premises and taking control of the building. Several hours later, every window and door had been metal sheeted, and the public house is now closed. Even the local media have launched a semi-serious investigation - <https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/mystery-over-future-of-historic-town-pub-after-it-is-boarded-9330089/>.

There are many theories around – and one of which has been provided to me from a very reliable source – but for now, the hotel remains just as mysterious as its phantom owners.



Mesmerism: akin to Hypnosis or akin to Healing?

Bill Eyre

Mesmerism, or animal magnetism as its practitioners would often call it, was first practised in France by Franz Anton Mesmer, a German physician, in the 1770s. Before long, it was outlawed in France as being 'quackery' but became popular, especially among the more affluent classes, in the UK during the early 18th century. During the mid-18th century, it was still practised, alongside the early use of hypnosis, pioneered by James Braid. Thereafter, mesmerism died out, mainly because of the scientifically invalid supposed explanation for the therapy.

Healing in its various forms has been practised for thousands of years, having featured in Christianity, Paganism, Islam and other religions at various periods in history. Within Spiritualism, spiritual healing took off slowly during the early 20th century.

Mesmerism is generally thought of as being the forerunner of hypnosis. However, a study of the method employed by mesmerists and the results obtained suggests that mesmerism

may have had as much in common with healing (with its spiritual / psychic / Reiki variants) as it had in common with hypnosis.

References to healing in this article do not include the type of faith healing practised by some evangelical churches, which bears no relationship to either mesmerism or other types of healing, although it does have an interesting connection with hypnosis, as explained in *The Mind Possessed* by William Sargant.

Similarities

Mesmerism treatment consisted of using strokes (or passes) over certain regions of the body without physically touching the body. When some reiki healers treat patients, they often hold their hands slightly away from the patient's body and make passes down the body to effect the treatment. Hence a similar process is often employed.

Mesmerism induced a relaxed state in the patient, as do both hypnosis and healing, to the extent of sometimes rendering the patient slightly sleepy.

Beyond that, a main characteristic of mesmerism is its ability to place the patient in a state of trance. Hypnosis can also place a subject into trance. By the term 'trance' here is meant a state of consciousness in which, judging from personal experience, both the conscious and unconscious minds are active together, in the same way that they are in other altered states of consciousness such as lucid dreaming and hypnopompia. Although the term 'trance' has been around for about a thousand years, the common, synonymous parlance used by mesmerists in the 19th century was to refer to the patient as being 'sleep-awake', or in a state of 'artificial somnambulism' rather than being in trance.

Mesmerism was claimed to render a patient insensible to pain during a surgical operation and the same effect has been found using hypnosis. The only example of this phenomenon in the healing area is in the relatively unusual practice of trance healing, where the healer, rather than the patient, is entranced. Thus patients going under the knife for psychic surgery administered by the Brazilian healer Arigó would feel no pain.

When quizzed about whether spiritual healing was more efficacious in the case of physical ailments or in the case of mental ailments, Bert Potter, a successful spiritual healer, opined that it tended to be more successful in the case of physical conditions. He quoted rheumatism and arthritis as examples. Indeed, on one occasion, an elderly lady at Sutton Coldfield Spiritualist Church explained to a group of church members how she had been suffering severe back pain and had been diagnosed by the hospital as having a slipped disc. Happening subsequently to bump into Mr Potter on a street corner in Sutton Coldfield, she mentioned her problem to him, he placed his hands on her back for a little while, to administer healing, and all her pain disappeared. She said that when she went for her next hospital appointment, she felt like a fraud, as she no longer had a problem. Mr Potter was present when the lady was explaining this and confirmed her account of what happened.

Similarly, a study of actual cases treated by mesmerism suggests that this therapy was commonly employed to alleviate physical ailments. The detail of a number of such cases may be found in 19th century literature.



Typhus seems to have been particularly amenable to mesmeric treatment. The case of a Mr Abel Smith is given, who had a feculent abscess and typhoid fever in 1847.

Administration of what passed at the time as orthodox medicine, by way of large doses of opium and other narcotics, failed to prevent sleepless nights and led to a deterioration of his conditions to the point where priests had administered the last rites. Three and a half hours of mesmerism accompanied by prayer led to a good night's sleep. Daily mesmeric treatment for a few weeks led to the abscess declaring itself externally, enabling its removal

without the need of a serious operation, cured the typhoid fever and produced sound slumbers at night. A further case described involved a Mr Rixworthy, suffering from advanced typhus fever to the extent that he was unconscious and not far off death.

Mesmeric passes made initially by Dr John Ashburner but mainly by a Mrs Skelly, over a number of hours, resulted in the return of full consciousness and the cure of the typhus fever.

When used therapeutically, both mesmerism and hypnosis can be efficacious when the patient has a psychological or psychosomatic medical condition. An example would be that of hysterical blindness.

Accounts of mesmerism suggest that most commonly a number of treatments were required to effect significant improvement in a patient's condition and this also applies in the case of both hypnotherapy and healing, although, in a minority of cases, an immediate cure can be achieved via any of these therapies. The literature makes no mention of mesmerised patients experiencing any internal

bodily sensations and the same situation applies in the case of hypnosis.

Mesmerists would sometimes make use of prayer whilst administering their treatment and this practice is also employed by spiritual healers, although there is perhaps a fine dividing line between prayer and a general state of mind on the part of the therapists in terms of their thinking that they wish the patient to recover, which would apply to all three types of therapy.

There are accounts of both mesmerism and healing being used successfully on animals. Mesmerism did not always produce an improvement in patients' conditions and this is true of both hypnotherapy and healing (and, for that matter, of the various other types of complementary medicine and orthodox medicine).

Differences

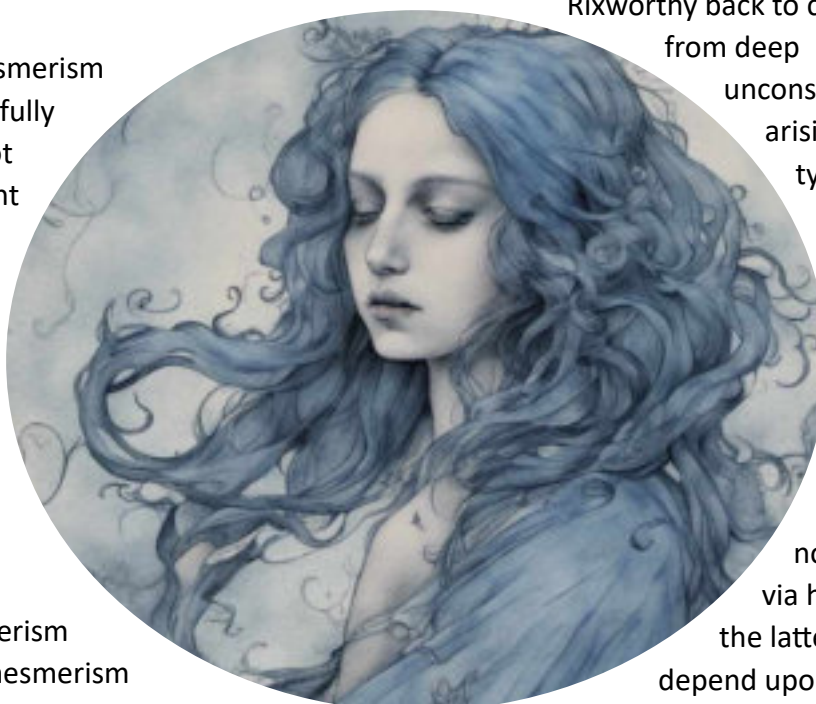
One difference between mesmerism and hypnosis is that whereas mesmerism employed passes near to and along the patient's body, hypnotherapy utilises mainly the therapist's voice to give suggestions to the patient as part of the process of rendering the patient into a hypnotised state and to make suggestions to the patient that his / her medical condition is being alleviated. Mesmerism's technique of using passes without touching the patient's body contrasts with the usual practice in spiritual / psychic healing of using 'the laying on of hands', i.e. keeping the healer's hands still and in contact with the patient's body, although the healer would typically hold them against more than part of the body during a treatment session.

Mesmerism's capability to render the patient in a state of trance differs from healing, as the latter does not result in a trance state.

Whereas it would appear that mesmerism was frequently used to treat physical ailments, hypnotherapy is used most often, and more likely to be successful in, the case of psychological or psychosomatic conditions. A good example of the difference here is the above quoted case of mesmerism bringing Mr

Rixworthy back to consciousness from deep

unconsciousness arising from typhus fever, which would be thought of as being a physical ailment, which would presumably not be possible via hypnosis, as the latter would depend upon the patient



being able to hear and

understand the therapist. It is worth pointing out, though, that hypnotherapists emphasise the mind-body connection, rendering it sometimes difficult to distinguish between problems of the mind and problems of the body; thus while pain might be thought of as being a physical problem, suggestions to the mind by a hypnotherapist can remove the pain.

One difference between mesmerism and healing is that during healing treatment, the patient experiences a physical sensation within his / her body, viz. heat (the most common sensation), cold, tingling or vibrations, which contrasts with a lack of reports from mesmerised patients of experiencing this.

Whereas mesmerism was sometimes employed over a period of some hours, a typical hypnotherapy session would be unlikely to last more than one hour and a typical spiritual healing session would be unlikely to last more than half an hour.

Unlike in the case of mesmerism, it is difficult to see how animals could be treated via hypnotherapy, as the success of the latter depends on the therapist being able to talk to, and be understood by, the recipient of the treatment.

Perhaps the most significant differences lie in the hypothesised explanations for mesmerism, hypnosis and healing. The mesmeric hypothesis is that a 'fluence' is transmitted from the practitioner to the patient, interacting with a magnetic force within the patient's body, with a claim that actual magnets can similarly affect the magnetic field of the patient. Within Spiritualism, the hypothesis is that spiritual healing is directed by a spirit (typically, but not necessarily, that of a deceased medical practitioner), through the healer and into the patient. The understanding in reiki is that the healer is passing energy from the Universe through himself / herself into the patient's body, to correct the bio-energy flows within the body. Hypnosis is explained as giving access to the patient's unconscious mind and that the latter is more suggestible than the conscious mind.

Summary

It will be seen that there are both similarities and differences between mesmerism and hypnosis but a similar number of similarities and differences between mesmerism and healing. The relationship between mesmerism and hypnosis is clear from the point of view of the use of trance and that some people are more susceptible to trance than others, etc.

Whilst the connection between mesmerism and healing is less obvious, it is worth noting that the likelihood of successful improvement to a patient's health when healing is used depends to a significant extent on the degree to which the therapist has the gift of healing. Examples of healers with a particularly high rate of success would include Harry Edwards, Matthew Manning and Ted Fricker – and, if the New Testament is to be believed, Jesus, whereas many healers may only find success with their patients from time to time. It could be that the same concept may have applied in the case of mesmerists; for example, Dr Ashburner was mindful that Mrs Skelly's skill at successfully treating patients was greater than his own. So perhaps she and other particularly successful mesmerists had the gift of healing. Thus there may have been elements of both hypnosis and healing involved with mesmerism.

This article is meant to suggest an original, and probably controversial, partial explanation for mesmerism – but readers are invited to express their views on the matter via ASSAP's Facebook page.

Sources of Information

On mesmerism: *Notes and Studies in the Philosophy of Animal Magnetism and Spiritualism* by Dr John Ashburner, published in 1867 by H Baillière.

On hypnosis: Mike Rush, former ASSAP Healing and Religion Coordinator and holder of Diploma in Hypnotherapy, together with introspection.

On spiritual healing: Bert Potter, former President of Sutton Coldfield Spiritualist Church and Leader of its healing group, together with introspection.

On reiki healing: Oriel Blissett, Chairperson of Chesterfield Psychic Study Group and reiki master.

The therapists consulted above wish to emphasise that any information provided by them is restricted to their understanding and that other therapists may use different methods or have different views.

A Mother's Ring

Ynske Heeringa

Time: between 13.00 - 13.30 h
Dutch time (so between 12.00
-12.30 UK time)

Date: 14 April 2023



Left photo: Top shelf corner closet in the front room where the ring is kept in the top box. Right: the ring in the box.



I then picked up the vacuum cleaner and heard a noise which sounded like something had rolled out and then rolled under the mouth of the vacuum cleaner. When I then lifted the Hoover the ring came out and I then picked it up from the floor. I was astonished at what had just happened. The box where the ring is kept, I have not opened in many months.

On the 14th of April 2023, between 12.00/12.30 UK time, when I was about to start vacuuming the bedroom. As I prepared to do so, a silver ring rolled out of the vacuum cleaner's mouth/pipe before I was about to switch the Hoover on.

On inspection of the ring, I realised it was the same ring that belonged to my late mother and that was kept in a box in the wardrobe. The box had not been opened for some time, more than 36 months.

The vacuum cleaner was in a different room to that where the ring is kept. After dusting the room and changing the sheets on the bed I talked to the picture of my mother (her picture is on a shelf above the bed, as well as a number of other pictures of my dearly departed family) The bedding has a large garden print with lupine scenery on it and she always loved those flowers. So that's when I said 'Mom you would have loved these sheets, look there are beautiful lupin's on them'.

I then went to the other room to put the ring back and noticed when picking up the box and putting my hand on the other jewelry the ring seemed to feel warmer than the other silver objects, however, this might be due to my hand being warm and the ring had warmed up?

The box containing my mother's ring has not been opened in months, and given I use the vacuum cleaner often, I have no idea how it came to be where it was found.

On Thursday 13th April 2023, I attended an ASSAP webinar at 19.00 and the talk was by Dr Cal Cooper about 'after death communication'. The reason I have noted this is due to not being able to find any other reason such as an anniversary date and could be just a coincidence? Ynske

A Mother Rings

Christian Jensen
Romer

Time: 16.07 UK time

Date: 14 April 2023

There was an odd coincidence in relation to Ynske's experience, noted above, that while not as dramatic occurred to the Editor. On the same day, the 14th of April 2023, I was traveling cross country by train, heading back to East Anglia ready for the ASSAP East Anglia group meet that weekend.

I arrived at Peterborough station and found myself on a different platform to the one I had often used for the train to my parents. Having some time before my connection I waited in a small station café, and charged my phone as the battery was running low. At 16.06 I phoned my housemate Lisa to see if I had left my pullover behind, and after I hung up at 16.07 my phone rang: my parents were calling. A picture of them displayed, on their landline, 01284 7*****.

This was very common when I was waiting at Peterborough station: mum was convinced I messed around and deliberately took ages on trains and would phone to see where I was and why I was not home an hour before my train was due. I had thought of her on the journey: this was my first time on the train since she died on September 20th, 2020. My father had died on January 18th, 2019; my brother sold the house and there are complete strangers living there now – I have no idea if they kept the

same phone number we had when we lived there, or even have a landline.

It took a moment to register that my parents could not be phoning me, and then I hit the cancel button. I was shaken and confused; the night before I had attended Dr. Cal Cooper's ADC webinar, and Cal is of course probably best known for his phone calls from the dead study. The timing seemed too perfect to be coincidental?

I posted two minutes later on Facebook what had just happened, and at the suggestion of a comment I checked my phone log. No call from the number was registered on the phone. Hallucination? Had I somehow activated Contacts and mistaken that for a call? I don't know – but when Ynske told me about her experience that same afternoon it seemed like too much of a coincidence to ignore. CJ



A haunted bridge, angels and cherubs, and afternoon tea!

Emilia Ukkonen

After reading about the mysterious 'dog suicide bridge' in Scotland I decided to visit the place myself. Overtoun Bridge became infamous when the media reported that hundreds of dogs had leapt from the bridge for no apparent reason, injuring or killing themselves upon the rocks below. Some people place the blame for their deaths on a ghost.

I travelled first to Glasgow on a rainy February day, and from there went by train and local bus to Dumbarton the next day. The weather had turned rather sunny and Spring was in the air. From the bus stop, helped by Google Maps, I hiked up a hill in the direction of Overtoun House. The landscape was hilly and dotted with cows and horses. Everything seemed tranquil and serene. After my short hike through this peaceful Scottish landscape I arrived at Overtoun house. You could not mistake it for another.

Overtoun is a stunning gothic mansion in Dumbarton, built in the 1860s by the wealthy industrialist James White. After the death of James White, his son John inherited the estate. John White, later first Baron of Overtoun, wanted to expand the estate by building a road connecting the eastern and

western sides of the grounds, and having the Overtoun Bridge erected. The house and bridge were later said to have been haunted by John's grieving widow, also known as the White Lady of Overtoun. She was said to have been devastated by the loss of her husband, and for years she had been seen walking back and forth across her husband's last creation, the Overtoun bridge. Perhaps the intensity of her grief left an imprint on the bridge. Some claim that her spirit is seen by dogs crossing the bridge, possessing and making them jump to their deaths, perhaps carrying out an act she herself contemplated many years before while walking the Overtoun bridge.

There are those who believe that the area around Overtoun is a so-called 'thin place' where the veil between this world and the spiritual realm is more permeable, and spirits from the other side can pass into our world more easily than they do elsewhere. The residents of the area are particularly superstitious, and many have felt the presence of something otherworldly on the Overtoun grounds. There are reports of people being touched by invisible ghostly hands while on the bridge.

If there is a place where one would expect to see a ghost or hear ghost stories, this Scottish 19th century gothic house is it. It could very well be used as the setting for a remake of *The Haunting of Hill House*. The dark gloomy structure seems like an open invitation to ghostly tales. Of course all of Scotland's mansions, castles and ruins have a portion of grim tales to tell.

The first thing that put a smile on my face was the dog walking service van. [SEE PHOTO] The area is very popular with dog-walkers and no wonder, because of the lush greenery and the natural beauty of the place. Passing the van I head to the bridge. It is a very heavily built stone bridge for the narrow and shallow current that runs under it. I did not feel anything out of the ordinary on the bridge. I preferred to investigate the immediate area

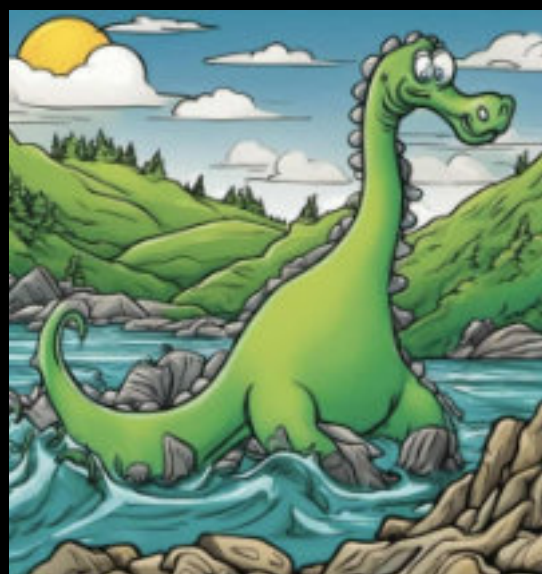




further - a small path takes you down to where you can walk under the bridge itself. The stream that runs there is not very wide or deep, but the current is still rather strong. The path follows the stream. If you believe in fairies and elves this is where you might expect to see them. The trees and ground are covered with green moss and ivy that make the forest look mystical. The only time I felt something strange was when I was down in the stream and felt watched - I could see the house between the trees, and it was like the house itself had a presence and was watching, keeping an eye on me.

After my little adventure in the forest I decided to have some refreshments at Overtoun House. As I walked back there, a woman crossed the bridge just in front of me with her golden retriever. The dog was not on a leash and it looked like it had just been paddling in some muddy pond. I did not observe anything strange in the dog's behaviour and it did not seem to have the slightest interest in jumping from the bridge. We all got across safely.

It was a beautiful day although uneventful. A Christian centre that runs Overtoun house has opened it to the public as a tearoom. It has a small inexpensive lunch menu from salads, sandwiches and stuffed potatoes to sweet cakes, a variety of buns, and hot and cold drinks. I could imagine that there had been very few changes to the interior since the house was built; the ceilings are painted with angels and cherubs. You can enjoy your cheesecake and hot chocolate while gazing at the serene Scottish landscape outside. I enjoyed a well-deserved tuna salad after my hike in the forest. Even though I did not experience anything supernatural on my journey, I can still recommend visiting on a day trip if you happen to be in Scotland. This may not be the most infamous haunted location in Scotland - but the house, bridge and its surrounding area do have a special, enigmatic atmosphere.



THE GHOSTS OF HAUNTED PART ONE

*By Cat Ward, Victoria,
Australia.*

I want to talk to you about something. A little food for thought before we start our journey into Australia's dark past. The light from the stars we see in our night sky has reached us after a hundred thousand years- those stars may be long gone now, but we are nonetheless enchanted by their light.

In a way, our souls, or the ghosts left behind by some unwilling or unable to leave this plane are similar. Some ghosts have lingered for centuries, though the bodies which once housed them have long since crumbled to dust. People sense them sometimes in certain places, and sometimes not where one would expect to see a ghost. This suggests that there is some kind of recording of events, in some way, as the light from long-dead stars seems imprinted on our night skies. There are happy ghosts, reliving fond memories over extensive spans of time, and traumatised souls trapped in an eternity of suffering. There are playful ghosts, helpful ghosts, even sexy ghosts, and malicious, hostile ghosts. Like the light from

those stars from long ago, we still see them even if they are just replayed, like a tape recorder stuck on an endless loop, or a scratched record that plays the same few words over, and over, and over...

With that thought in mind, let's go shall we? In 1987, the Ten Television Network Australia released "Haunted", a documentary which featured 13 haunted locations around the country. This is when I first saw the documentary, aged 11, and it has remained a fond memory since then. I've been investigating and researching hauntings for around 25 years now, with various incarnations of my paranormal team. I'm also absolutely bonkers about parapsychology. I've got the PSI symbol tattooed on my arm to prove it! I'm a weirdo, but a proud and happy one!

Recently I decided to try podcasting, as I've grown tired of the lack of education that has been a thorn in the side of this field for so long. I don't have much reach, going from the numbers on my blog page, but I've never really attempted to grow my audience. I'm just curious, and I like to learn, and pass on what I've learned. I know people that do have reach, however- I've known a fair few of my guests for years. I reached out, and they all said yes, they'd help including Iain Gillespie, the man responsible for making "Haunted". I became friends with him through Facebook, when I stumbled across a segment from the documentary, which he had shared on the Australian Parapsychological Research Association page. An extremely excited me, recognizing it straight away, told Iain via a comment that it was my favourite one of all, and asked him if he could tell me about making "Haunted", and he sent me his email address! We talked via messenger and phone and became friends. Iain is a veteran award-winning freelance journalist and general film producer, and a private, but friendly man.

“Haunted” used a parapsychologist, Dr. Maurice Marsh, for an alternate point of view on ghosts. He is a South African man who left the country due to his objection to apartheid. He moved to Australia in 1960, where he became a senior lecturer in Therapeutic and Abnormal Psychology at the University of New England, in New South Wales. He has degrees in psychology, the arts, and education, and was also one of the first in the world to qualify in Parapsychology. It was not really heard of here at that time, and I had no idea what it was, being only eleven. I knew it had something to do with ghosts, as the show was all about ghosts, but couldn't grasp the concept of telepathy, or of other things studied by parapsychologists.

The documentary filmed on site at the haunted locations, and included witness interviews, and as close as Iain's production team could come to a visual reproduction of the phenomena witnessed. None of the witnesses were paid to tell their stories, thus risking ridicule, and Iain's researchers sourced only credible, respectable people for interviews, 34 in all but some were edited from the final production due to time constraints for each segment. I'll be able to add those missing witnesses in, thus allowing you to read information previously not released.

Now pour yourself a drink and grab a comfy chair, as I'm about to take you on a strange, sad, sometimes terrifying armchair tour of 13 locations across this vast, often inhospitable Great Southern Land I'm proud to call home. In the documentary I'm about to introduce you all to, you will meet 28 people. I will add my own research from Trove, and any research done by my historian and author friend Allen Tiller, as he has uncovered some inaccuracies in the book I'm using as a reference. I'll add his research but in my own words, as I will search the references he listed in his thesis on Trove and interpret them using my terms. In the documentary you are introduced to everyday

people from all across Australia; policemen, construction workers and supervisors at a little athletics camp at the old York Hospital in York, Western Australia (you're definitely going to need a drink for their story if you scare easily!), who claim to have seen a ghost, or experienced phenomena which could be attributed to one.

The stories behind the ghosts come from various periods in time, for instance, the story of Fisher's ghost, Australia's most famous ghost, who was sighted once and eventually became the cause for a yearly celebration, the Fisher's ghost Festival, which is still running to this day. We are a weird mob, as the old-timers used to say! Then there's Frederici, whose ghost has haunted the grand balconies and the stage of Melbourne's gorgeous old Princess Theatre for over a century. I'll tell you all about them soon, and I'll tell you about our oldest ghost story too- but not in this article. Australia's ghost stories stretch back in time further than you may think.

We're a young country as regards white settlement, but Australia has the unfortunate distinction of having been settled originally as a penal colony- a depository for criminals from the U.K. For those not in prison, the conditions were still challenging, and many suffered and died in a vain attempt to tame our land and the challenges it presented. Our humid, dense and often impenetrable forests, our jagged mountain ranges, our vast sandy interior, our dangerous and venomous wildlife, and our treacherous waters proved fatal for many, whose final thoughts were perhaps of the cooler green climes of their mother countries and their families and homes. Now that I've explained the utter horrors of what life was like for our early settlers, it's best we start the tour. Ready? Let's go then...

Our first visit is to the Brisbane (QLD.) suburb of Bardonia, where three young women had rented a house. The building was fifty years

old, and had no reputation as being haunted, so the women were not afraid to move in. The women began to have odd things happen when alone there, but each thought it was their imaginations, so they never spoke about it to the others. Maria MacDonald, the first witness you meet, heard footsteps one night, and when she asked the others, she discovered things had happened to them there also. The footsteps were heard every day and night by Maria from that point on. The women all had the feeling that they were never really alone in the house even when by themselves. Another of the women, Jackie Noble, told of how she felt like she had hands on her chest, and fingers through her hair, when wide awake and lying in bed. The ghost was first seen when the third woman, Helen McLennan, saw a hazy, white figure in human form near her wardrobe. She closed her eyes, thinking it must be a trick of the light caused by a streetlight outside, but when she opened them again, the figure was still there. She did this three or four times, and each time the figure remained. Maria MacDonald tells of looking through a gap in her bedroom window shutters where one of the wooden slats had fallen out, and seeing a skinny, naked man in a tree, who would look up at the sky and then back to the window at her, doing so several times. The women had the strong impression the ghost was unaware he was dead.

We're moving on now to a much nastier place, which has been listed as one of Australia's most haunted locations. It's cold where we're going- you may need a jacket. We're heading south now, to the cold, desolate ruins of Port Arthur, a brutal convict penitentiary with a hideous past full of suffering and death. Often described as Hell on Earth, it operated as a penal colony between 1830 and 1877. Port Arthur lies on an isthmus, or narrow strip of

land separated from the mainland of Tasmania (formerly known as Van Diemen's Land), our island state.

Port Arthur was heavily guarded by armed men with vicious bulldogs on chains, and was surrounded by freezing, shark-infested waters. Prisoners, male and female, and some of them children, were brought across from England for minor crimes such as stealing a loaf of bread.



They were imprisoned here on large prison boats, also called Hulks. These were often un-seaworthy, and anchored offshore, sometimes housing hundreds of prisoners at a time, and the guards were often former prisoners themselves. The conditions were cramped and appallingly filthy. Sickness was rife, and many died on the long journey over, which took many months.

The misery didn't end when they reached our strange and hostile shores however, as sometimes they had to stay aboard the Hulks while the prisons were being built. Some even

were made to build the very walls that housed them. A prison was also built to house female prisoners, this was called the Female Factory, and was in Cascades. A bare remnant of the foundations is all that remains. The better-behaved female prisoners were sent to private households to serve the wealthier families, and the male prisoners could eventually earn a pardon or ticket of leave. (Some also earned their freedom by marrying a free settler and some prisoners were given land grants, and some even prospered through agriculture).

Once inside the cold stone walls, conditions didn't get much better. The cells were filthy and often crowded, and children brought over with their parents were kept in the cells with them. Often children left to fend for themselves were imprisoned with their parents to protect them from coming to harm on our lawless streets. Some prisons still had buckets in each cell for use as toilets until the day they closed their doors, often this didn't happen until the mid-1990s.

Prisoners suffered unimaginably inhumane treatment at the hands of sadistic guards, including floggings and forced hard labour. They were made to wear leg irons and shackles, and hoods on their heads, which were removed only when they went to church. They were also not allowed to speak, and some were hanged for minor misdemeanours. Some prisons were designed in a "Panopticon", a central guard tower with eight arms radiating outward from it, so that guards could see down each wing without having to move from their post. Port Arthur is a complex of over 30 buildings, but the punishments the prisoners were given were the same as those used in the Pentonville system, which began in Pentonville Prison, London, in 1842. These were intended as being penitence to God for sins. Cell windows were slanted upwards and were positioned high on walls, so that the prisoner was looking to God. Cells used to house those

due to be hanged the following day were often positioned close to the gallows, and often the prisoners could hear the preparations being made for their own execution. There were also solitary confinement cells, and these were in a building called a Model Prison at Port Arthur.

These cells were tiny, dark, and stifling and some were also underground. Misery-stricken prisoners were often locked up for weeks at a time for minor misdemeanours such as whistling, and looking at or speaking to the guards or other prisoners. The meagre rations they were given were often only a piece of stale bread and a cup of tepid water. Often the torturous conditions caused the prisoners to go insane, and external wards were built or prisons were converted to house those deemed too dangerous to be kept with other prisoners. For some, death was the only escape, and some prisoners chose suicide over the inhumane treatment meted out by the guards.

The building with the most haunted reputation is oddly the parsonage, built in 1842. A group of building contractors, renovating the old building, were witnesses to the hauntings, as they stayed there during renovations. The men lived in Launceston, a three-hour drive from Hobart, hence their decision to stay there overnight.

The first witness, Mike Smith, tells of hearing knocking sounds coming from what seemed to be the back section of the roof. This was heard by all three men. Kevin White goes on to tell that while it started as a joke amongst the men that there may be a ghost, it ended up being far from it. The men also mention sudden drops in temperature, common in many haunted houses, although sudden temperature rises have been reported too. Smith resumes the story, telling of coming back from dinner one night at a hotel nearby, and says that upon opening the front door to the sleeping area and turning the light on, he saw the

transparent figure of a woman in a long gown against the wall, and he could also see that his bed, previously made, was now in a state of disarray. He says that the curtains billowed out even though there was no wind at all outside, and that the whole lot -- curtain rods and all -- came crashing to the floor, further out than they would have landed had they simply fallen. He got out of there faster than he had ever moved in his life, he said. The next witness, Craig Goodwin, described a strange sleep-paralysis incident, called pre-dormal narcosis, which is also known as the "Hag" effect.

He says he was fast asleep, and upon realising he was awake, discovered he couldn't breathe, and felt as if something was sitting on his chest, crushing him. Kevin White describes his friend as having his arms up as though trying to push something off himself, and says Goodwin was gurgling as if being choked. Psychologists estimate about one in every seven people have had such an experience, Dr. Marsh adds, and you will find it has also happened in other haunted houses as well. In a section edited from the final programme, Goodwin told that one night his dog just flopped down on the floor, shaking all over. It was like the dog was frozen with fear, he says, and the men just couldn't move him. Goodwin says he didn't think too much of it at the time, as Kevin White was in the same room fast asleep, and he and Smith were in a room at the far side of the building. He says he settled down to sleep as well.

The parsonage was believed to have been haunted for around 112 years at the time, and the first report of unusual phenomena occurred in 1874. Photographer and journalist George Gruncell describes in his memoirs "Port Arthur Twenty Years Ago", (which were serialised in 1893 in "The Clipper" newspaper) how a doctor by the name of Dr. Eugene McCarthy, Senior Medical Officer at Port Arthur between June 1871 and February 1874,

reported the first unusual incident at the parsonage. Dr. McCarthy knew that Rev. Roland Hayward and his family had been away in New Norfolk, but upon seeing lights ablaze upstairs thought that they had returned to the parsonage. Dr. McCarthy rang the doorbell, meaning to welcome the Hayward family home. A servant girl answered and told McCarthy the family were still in New Norfolk. Dr. McCarthy insisted that the lights were on upstairs. A thorough search of the building ensued, and found nothing at all, and no sign of the Reverend and his family.

A judge, Sir Valentine Fleming, who was also a guest at the parsonage, had witnessed a bright light coming from under a door on the opposite side of the landing, and upon peeking through the keyhole he found the room brilliantly lit as if by a gas lamp. Fleming opened the door, only to find the room in darkness again. The Haywards themselves also found a lit candle in a locked room one evening, as they were sitting in a drawing room upstairs with the door open and noticed light streaming from under a closed door across the passageway. Rev. Hayward peered through the keyhole and the room appeared brightly lit, but upon opening the door he found the room was empty and in total darkness once again. The next witness was a serving girl, who saw through a window the figure of a man in a strange, hooded garment holding a knife, poised as if he was ready to attack. She promptly fainted at the sight and refused to enter the room afterwards if night had fallen. Gruncell himself also heard footsteps at the parsonage when all the others were asleep. Many other witnesses have seen ghosts at the history-soaked old building, including an architect, an archaeologist, and a historical botanist.

The Haywards suspected the cause of the trouble to be the ghost of the former Reverend, George Eastman, a morbidly obese

man who died after a short illness on the 25th of April 1870, and was buried on the nearby Isle of the Dead, said to be the eeriest location at Port Arthur. It is he whom Rev. Hayward had replaced. Rev. Eastman's body was too heavy to be carried down the stairs, so a rope and pulley was used to lower him down from the window. The rope unfortunately snapped, and the bloated corpse tumbled into the gutter where it lay sprawled in an undignified manner.



The ghost was also witnessed by Rev. Hayward's mother, Mrs. Price, an elderly woman who was still quite sharp-minded. Her husband had once been a Commandant at Port Arthur. It occurred in the same room where the serving girl fainted, due to having seen the menacing spectre of a man outside the window. Staying with Mrs. Price was the Reverend's sister, Miss Price. Mrs. Price was in bed one night, in a downstairs guest room and saw a diaphanous, white figure- but she didn't mention the figure as having had Rev. Eastman's huge girth, thus ruling out his ghost as being responsible for all the spectral shenanigans. She lay frozen, fearing attack, and watched as a match was struck against a wall, and a figure moved to where her daughter was sleeping nearby. The phantom quietly gazed at her daughter, before drifting from the room into the shadowy passageway. Rev. Hayward

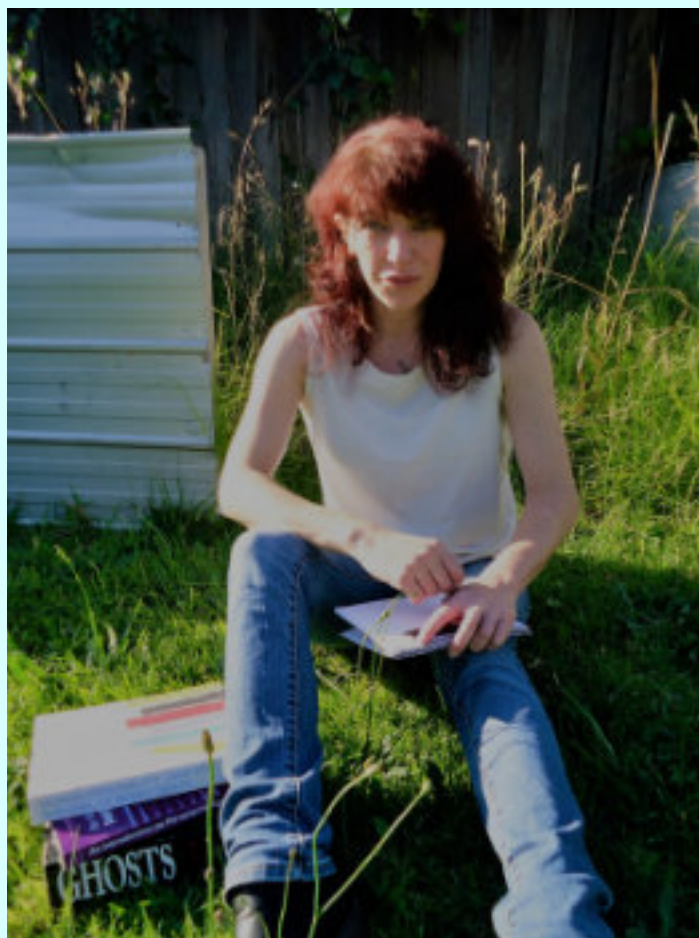
was the last resident priest at Port Arthur and left shortly before its closure.

Another grisly tale stems from the old church, where a prisoner named Joseph Shuttleworth, while digging the foundations of the chapel with two fellow prisoners, William Riley and Joseph Chidy, struck Riley a series of three blows to the head with a pickaxe he was holding, on the 16th of December 1835. Joseph Chidy stopped him before he could strike a fourth blow to the mortally wounded Riley, upon which Shuttleworth said calmly "I am satisfied" and dropped the pickaxe. Despite his horrific wounds, surgeon Cornelius Casey reported that Riley retained control of his mental faculties, but that he then convulsed for half an hour and died. Chidy testified at the hearing, and Shuttleworth was hanged for murder. William Riley's ghost has been witnessed from time to time, still bearing the ghastly holes in his head from the blows of Shuttleworth's pickaxe. He smiles, raises an arm as if holding a weapon, and promptly vanishes.

Spectral sightings and unusual phenomena have been reported from all over the charred, cursed yet somehow picturesque ruins of Port Arthur, a lot of which were destroyed by a series of three bushfires in 1883, 1895, and 1897. There are reports from the now-restored Medical Officer's residence, which was converted into a guest house in 1879 and became the Carnarvon Hotel in 1897, also from the Commandant's residence, where it is reported that the ghost of Charles O'Hara Booth, the best known of those that oversaw Port Arthur has been witnessed. He has been seen gazing down from the house's lonely hilltop perch and watching the settlement. It has been said that he weeps silently also, but this story has been altered over the course of time, as has the story of the "blue lady", once said to be the wife of a former Medical Officer, then the wife of an accountant, both of whom

are said to have miscarried a baby and died. She is no longer solely confined to the parsonage. Instead, she is seen near the former Commandant's residence and the chapel. People claim to have seen the ghostly figure of a woman in a pale blue crinoline dress and a bonnet, with her arms outstretched as if desperately searching for something. Sometimes she is seen standing at the back door of the Commandant's residence gazing out across Port Arthur.

There have been tales of the terrible stench of death which have been linked to the ghost of Rev. Eastman. His ghost is also said to have badly frightened a small girl, who said she saw him staring grimly down at her from an upstairs window of the parsonage, when in fact the original second level was removed after the 1895 bushfires. The reason given as to why ivy refused to grow on the wall of the church, from which a prisoner was said to have fallen to his death after a struggle with another prisoner, (he is identified as being Joseph Shuttleworth in some tales), is also false. It is said that the reason the church was not consecrated because a death had occurred there, when in reality it wasn't consecrated because it served all denominations. There have also been reports of ghostly lights, noises, bells, touches, sighs, footsteps, moans, groans and screams, offering visitors a virtual banquet of ghostly phenomena upon which to sate their appetites. There are more than 30 buildings at this wretched place so I can't share the ghostly tales about those with you this time, but I'll take you back for another visit soon. There are many invented ghost stories, but I feel their origin still exists- it has merely been lost in the passage of time, or altered to add scares to what is already a horrifying place. This shouldn't ruin your interest in a story, as they all start somewhere. I'll tell you about those that aren't in Iain's documentary when I bring you back to Tasmania later in this series.



The tour is over for tonight- next time I'll take you to what was once a police station, with a strange tale attached to it- and then to the "haunted use" of my childhood, where unusual things occurred ten years before I was born. Sleep well, readers...

My grateful thanks and acknowledgments to Iain Gillespie and Allen Tiller for their assistance.



Haunting Hounds

Julie Elizabeth Boyd

The legend of the supernatural Black Dog – regardless of its actual colour – can be found all over these islands but nowhere so commonly as in East Anglia. A large and complex folklore surrounds black dogs – in some senses a generic term meaning a supernatural canine. Though most reports describe them as black, there have been cases of white, grey, and brown ‘black dogs.’ The legend of the black dog could be rooted in prehistory, yet it is historically in Britain where the legend is most fully documented. The phenomenon is however a worldwide folklore which is known from England’s West Country to the American Deep South.

Unlike dogs of this world, spectral hounds seem to attach themselves more to places than to people. It is not completely unknown, however, for black dogs to attach themselves to certain families, perhaps in a way similar to the poltergeist phenomenon where spiritual energies are known to haunt a particular family for a period of time. Indeed, such a real-life family legend inspired Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to write *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, probably one of his most famous Sherlock Holmes novels. Nevertheless, black dogs are more likely to be known as creatures who walk

alone, often seen loping along river banks or lonely roads, or leaping over church-yard walls before disappearing among the tombstones. Travellers may encounter a black dog on a dark, lonely road where the animal may either menace him/her or guide him/her to safety out of a dangerous situation. Sometimes the presence of a spectral hound presages the death of the witness. In medieval and post-medieval manuscripts and chronicles of manifestations associated with witchcraft, the legendary black dog was regarded as a shape-shifter or even a manifestation of the Devil himself. Apart from worldwide traditional beliefs, there are documented reports of alleged actual sightings. Witnesses to such encounters usually describe the dogs as quite large beasts and often mention the creature’s bright, glowing eyes. Sometimes, in fact, the witness claims to have seen little more than the eyes but, for one reason or another, assumes they belong to a ghostly dog. When the animal is seen, it does not matter how dark the night may be as the form is so much blacker that the dog can still be identified. Those who have felt the animal brush past them or who have touched it describe the creature’s coat as wiry like pig bristle. Such dogs are also said to appear in an instant and mysteriously vanish just as quickly. Most such sightings are at crossroads, the animal having a tendency to appear on the left-hand side of the witness, cross the road from left to right, then disappear into a hedge with a rustle of leaves. The first known written account survives in a French manuscript, *Annales Franorum Regnum* (856 AD). Here a chronicler records what happened after a sudden darkness enveloped a provincial church midway through a service. Apparently, a large black dog with fiercely glowing eyes appeared suddenly, dashed about the church as if searching for something and then vanished abruptly. Then there is the well-documented black dog of Bungay (fifteen miles south of Norwich). Here, on August 4th, 1577, a

spectral hound suddenly appeared inside the church during a violent storm. The creature ran down the aisle killing two worshippers and injuring another by burning him severely. According to an old pamphlet, the two dead appear to have died from strangulation and the burned man was left looking like, 'a shrunken

piece of leather scorched in a hot fire.' On the same day, a similar attack occurred inside a church in Blibery, a mere seven miles away. And it was during this 'great storm' that the Devil is said to have left his mark in Blythburgh church. There is no shortage of 20th century



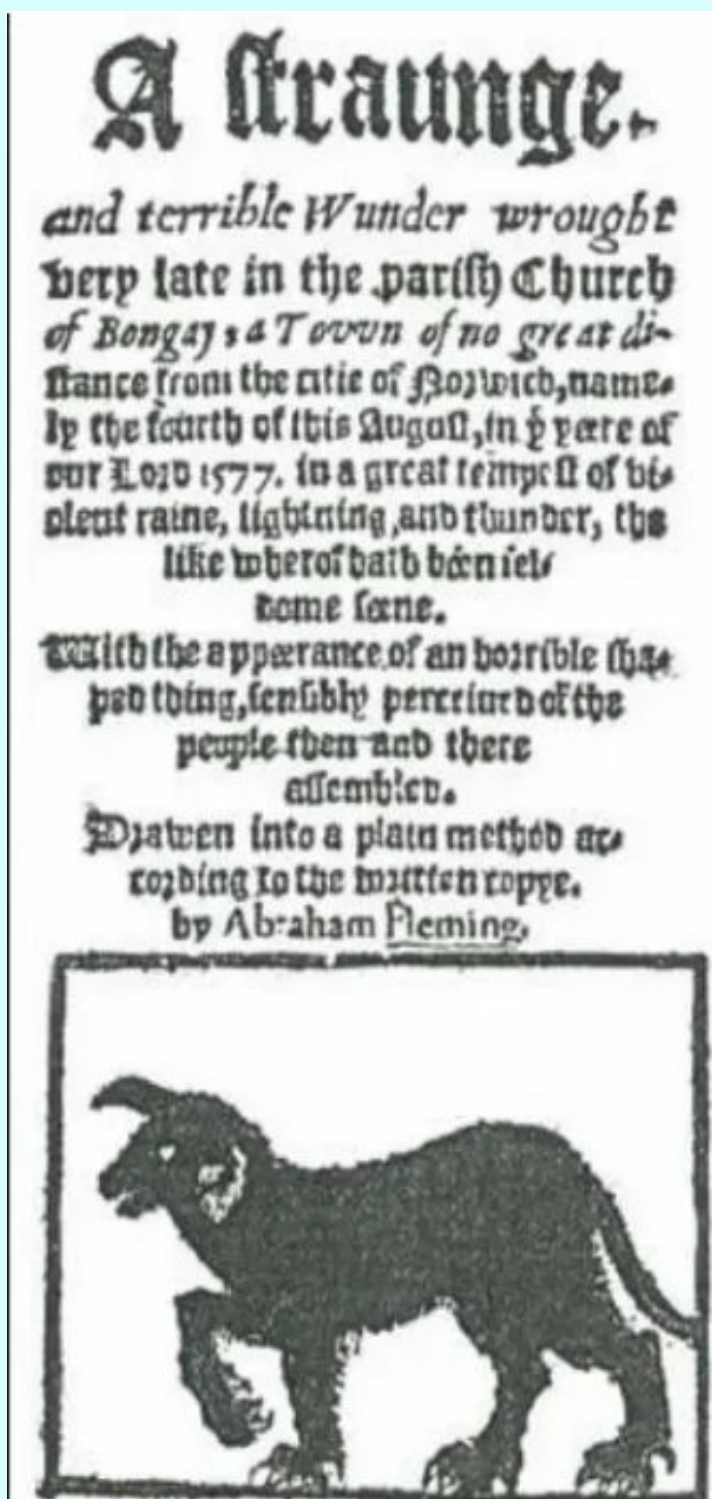
sightings either. In rural Mississippi early this century, the local population told folklorist N.N. Puckett of huge Black Dogs with big red eyes glowing like chunks of fire-coal. Ethel H. Rudkin also collected a number of reports of such sightings in her native Lincolnshire and published them in a 1938 paper on folklore. In the 1950s, George Kerson received an account from Theodore Ebert of Pottsville, Pennsylvania, who told him that he had a childhood encounter with this mysterious beast. He was out one night walking with friends along Seven Stars Road when a big black dog appeared from nowhere and came between him and one of his friends. When he went to pat the dog, it simply disappeared instantly from right under his hand. On October 25th, 1969, a hound the size of a Great Dane was reported to have stepped out in

front of a moving car on Exeter Road in Okehampton. Before the driver could stop, the car passed right through the animal which then disappeared. In April 1972, in Great Yarmouth, a coastguard saw a large black dog on the beach. As he watched, it ran and then stopped as if looking for someone, then simply

vanished in front of his eyes. During the Spring of 1974, sightings of creatures which looked half-cat, half-dog were reported by Hampshire and Cheshire residents. One Autumn night in 1984, a man noted seeing a large black dog in front of him as he was driving his car through Devonshire. As he put on his brakes, the animal walked right up to the car and looked over the bonnet to stare at the driver with green, glassy eyes before vanishing completely from sight. The man recalled feeling the hair on his neck stand up: A sensation often experienced when a person encounters psychic phenomena. In Uplyme, Devon, there is a legend attached to the inn.

A local man, tired of being haunted by the ghost of a black dog, chased it into his attic where he struck it with a pole. The dog escaped through the thatching but the pole disturbed some old beams and a cache of ancient coins fell to the floor. With the money, the man bought the pub which he renamed The Black Dog Inn after his ghostly intruder which, according to reports, can sometimes be seen running through the neighbourhood at dusk. Dartmoor is infamous for the so-called Whist Hounds, or Hounds of Hell, said to be a pack of spectral dogs which haunt the locality. In Cornwall, these creatures are known as Dandy Dogs while in the North of England they are called Gabriel Hounds from the ancient term *gabbara* meaning 'dead body.' The black dog phenomenon seems most prevalent in East Anglia. Here it is known as Black Shuck, or

sometimes as Old Shuck, which is thought to be derived from the Anglo-Saxon *succa* meaning demon or Satan. There is a suggestion that the prevalence of spectral black dogs may be the result of the ancient practice of sacrificing dogs and burying them under the door-posts or walls of new buildings in the belief that their spirits would act as guardians of the property. However, there is also a strange connection between the black dog syndrome and other anomalous phenomena, in particular UFOs. In 1963, in South Africa, two men were driving along the Potchefstroom/Vereeniging Road one night when they observed a large dog-like creature crossing the highway in front of them. Minutes later, they also observed a UFO which buzzed their car several times, causing them to leave the scene in quite a hurry. In 1973, in Georgia, USA, several youths claimed to have spotted a group of ten, big black hairy dogs run out of a landed UFO and through a cemetery in Savannah. Ed Walters, in his book *The Gulf Breeze Sightings*, claimed to have had images of many dogs implanted in his mind during his alleged experiences with persistent UFO phenomena. In the Loch Ness area, famous for its reputed monster Nessie, there have also been sightings of UFOs as well as reports of spectral hounds. There appears to be a connection with, or at least an overlap of seemingly separate categories of anomalous phenomena that pervade our world. Black dogs are observed in areas of reported UFO activity and other strange sightings. So, alongside other unexplained phenomena, these creatures remain a mystery.



G h o s t s : F i r s t - H a n d A c c o u n t s f r o m C a v e r s

Andy Owens

While writing my book my media appeal extended to a wide range of publications and one of my letters appeared in *Descent*, a magazine for caving enthusiasts. I received replies from cavers with spooky experiences from as far afield as Malaysia, West Virginia and Wales. A massive thank you to the editor and publishers of *Descent* for promoting my research.

Children of the Dark

Alan Gray, editor of the journal for the Axbridge Caving Group, based in Somerset, included reports from members who had been on the 1998 expedition to explore Foh Thye Mine and Dark Cave in Malaysia.

In a Foreword to the reports, Mr Gray explains: 'During the exploration of Foh Thye Mine and Dark Cave, which have been reported as linking, as well as the supposed oxygen deprivations that were suffered by Paul, (and to a lesser extent Liz), Karen had a very strange experience, which I think is worth relating. I will leave it up to the readers to draw their own conclusions. The words ... are almost word-for-word as Karen related the story to me. However, before I relate Karen's story, it is worth relating the introductory paragraph from Martin:

'For me, it started in Glastonbury, a few weeks before we left for Malaysia. I was talking to a spiritualist friend called Emma about the caves of northern Malaysia. She suddenly said she could see a place where there was iron or metal: an ore. Then she said the reason I was going back was to release the trapped souls of children who were killed in a dreadful accident, and that I should take lots of lights and candles and to burn incense. But that was all out of the question as this was a caving expedition. Whilst she was saying this, a very uneasy feeling crept over me. My first reaction was to dismiss what she said, but what if she was right? What an awesome responsibility.'

'Later, I couldn't forget or discard her words. Realising she was talking about the tin mines I remembered the very uneasy feelings experienced in Foh Thye Mine on the last expedition. It was a chamber on the further side of the sump. There was a high boss with Chinese writing burnt onto it with a carbide flame. Roger had suggested that the chamber would make a good underground camp. He was right, but there was no way I was going to stay a night inside the mine. If Emma was right, then that was the place. After a few days, I talked to a non-caving friend who suggested I should take a crucifix with me, just in case, so I found an old rosary, which had belonged to my father who was a Church of England priest.'

'The rest of the story Karen and Paul have described. For my own feelings, in a couple of areas inside the mine I felt uneasy, but when Karen reacted, I blocked out all thoughts. If Emma was right, then Karen was the catalyst. The best thing I could do would be to stay calm, be aware and help her.'

Alan Gray adds: 'I must stress that Martin did not inform any of the other members of the expedition of this Glastonbury meeting prior to the incident.'

Karen begins:

'I was born in Singapore in 1964 and left there

in 1967 and don't remember any of it but have always had a yearning to return to the area. When the possibility of joining a caving expedition in Malaysia was offered, I just had to go, and (yet I) would have done anything to get out of there.'

Friday 30th January 1998 -

Foh Thye

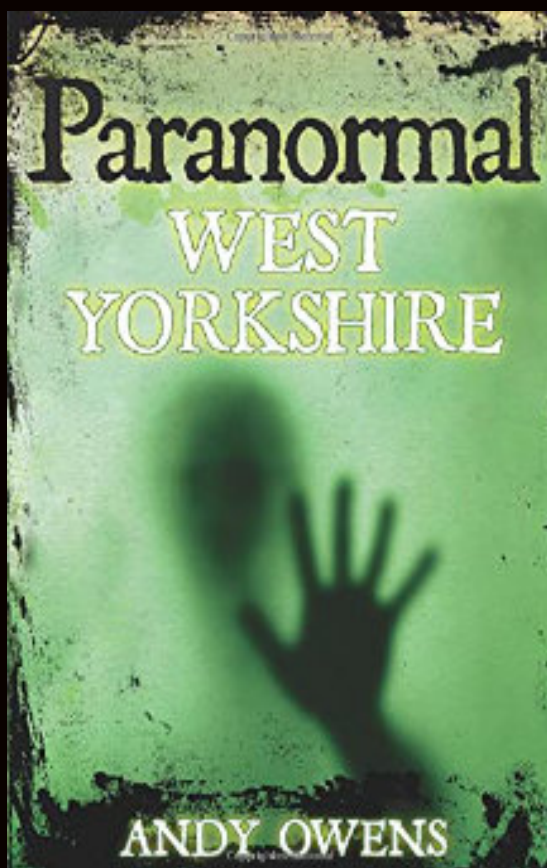
Mine

'Due to the bad air problems in this mine the length of the trip was reduced, and I only reached the eye-hole. When I was climbing through, I was very aware that the feeling of the cave was one of blackness, evil, but I didn't know why. I felt very uneasy. We then caught up with Duncan who was

helping Paul to exit the cave; he was feeling most unwell, probably due to oxygen deprivation. We returned to the van, changed, and then off for some food.'

Alan Gray interjects and says: 'Later that evening, I spoke to Martin regarding this strange experience. I said I was glad we were not planning on returning to the mine due to the bad air problems. Martin asked Karen why she did not want to return, and she told him of the blackness and the feeling of evil.'

Karen continues: 'Martin said that if we had progressed further into the mine there was an area further on that they had reached on the 1996 expedition where he had felt distinctly uneasy, and so he was not surprised that I also



felt this but was puzzled that I felt it so early on in the system. Martin then stated that he had been told that the Japanese had committed atrocities in the mine and perhaps this is what we felt.'

Saturday 31st January 1998 -
Dark Cave

Karen said: 'A very relaxing morning and then in the afternoon we visited Dark Cave. On the way through the mined entrance there was a very strong wind following the party in. In the flooded chamber, Roger slipped through the rotten planks. There were many mining relics left behind and many of the tools were heavily coated in calcite.'

'Martin asked if I felt OK; I replied "Yes." We then carried on to an enormous, mined chamber and I felt a curious whispering, and also felt many eyes looking at me. The whispering asking me: "Why are these people here? Who are they?" They didn't frighten or surprise me; it was almost as if I expected this to happen.'

'Martin again asked me if I felt alright; I replied "Yes, but we are not alone." Martin queried this statement and I stated that I could hear whispering and feel them peering out of the darkness, but I was fine.'

'We continued onwards and abseiled down a pitch into the streamway, and this was followed by a swim in the stream. A short scramble upward and we continued and saw neatly stacked piles of boulders around the left-hand wall. We looked up to the top of the chamber and saw a mined roof passage choked with boulders. The others continued and as I reached it, I just became very, very sad. Paul asked if I was alright; I said "No," and tears streamed down my cheeks. I was racked with sobbing. Paul had to hold me up. I just kept saying: "Get Martin, get Martin."

'Martin returned and then knew I was feeling

something, and asked what it was, and all that I knew was that it was sad, so sad. It was tragic, that was the only way I could describe it. I suddenly became aware of children, lots and lots of children and I asked Martin if there had ever been children working in the mines. He said that he didn't know but that it was very possible. All I knew was that I could feel the presence of children. There was so much sadness, pain, fear and tragedy. I could not hear them, but I could feel their cries.'

'Again, Martin asked if I wanted to go out, but I still wished to go on. We reached the black lake, and I can remember Duncan picking up a pipe and talking into it and the others were laughing. I just broke down. They knew that I was upset, but didn't know why, so their behaviour was not disrespectful; it was just a bit of hi-jinks. There was a conflict between my emotions and the messing about. There was such a feeling of tragedy and sadness out in the lake. I could not take any more. Martin said: "I am taking you out," and I agreed.'

'On the return journey, I just kept saying the Lord's Prayer, still clasping the rosary. When we reached the swim in the stream ... I had enough strength to swim across. I was exhausted, both emotionally and physically. We climbed up the short pitch. They then asked if I wanted to go on ahead, but I knew I wanted everyone in front of me with their lights. I was now beginning to feel very heavy-footed as if I was dragging a great weight (like) a concrete block behind me. Paul later said that although he didn't know what was happening, he was aware of a presence trying to prevent me leaving the cave.'

Two other members of the expedition, Paul and Liz, added their own comments about the above. Paul recounted the expedition, adding the various comments Karen had made about the team being watched and followed.

He wrote: 'Karen was obviously strained and looked as if she could burst into tears at several points. At one stage, she said aloud to herself that there were too many of them, and at

another (time) I felt the going was very difficult, as if I was struggling against something. The wind in the tunnel seemed to momentarily reverse and be going in the wrong direction. Eventually we reached the exit. After making sure that Karen was alright, we left her outside near the entrance to contemplate on her strange experience.'

'This incident is quite interesting, for after it (happened), some of us much later recalled the talk we had had with a Chinese man in the village on our previous expedition, which Karen was not on. The Chinese man spoke very good English and appeared to know a lot about the mines. He had spoken of the extent of the mining activity and had indicated that those in the hills many kilometres away were at one time linked to this operation. But more importantly, he spoke of tragic accidents in the mines, one was of a large set of wooden scaffolding collapsing (and) killing a lot of children, and it was thought that he also alluded to the Japanese committing atrocities in the mines during the Second World War.'

Another team member Liz wrote: 'I had been in Foh Thye Mine three times during the 1996 expedition, and had always liked the cave, and never had any bad feelings there. In fact, I wrote in my caving log: "It was a brilliant streamway, small for Malaysia...Very nice place...Great cave...Great system." When we entered in 1998, I was excited about the possibilities of pushing this cave and maybe even connecting to a cave at Kaki Bukit. So, I went into the cave with good feelings. However, as soon as we left the streamway and descended down the dry passages, I started to feel odd. I thought maybe it was a CO2 build up, but the symptoms weren't normal. (I have experienced high CO2 levels in other caves). Then I just felt lightheaded. I wasn't happy but carried on down to the top of the pitches. After kitting up, I decided I wanted to go out. Roger followed me as far as the free climb, and then I went out the rest of the way on my own. My carbide light went out and I was quite worried and went as fast as I could. I was really relieved to reach the

surface and continued to feel lightheaded for a while.'

'I was expecting the others to be hours...so I was very surprised when Paul and Duncan appeared after seventy-five minutes. I learnt that they'd all gone down to the pitches, but Paul went pale and uncoordinated and couldn't function. So, Duncan brought him out and the rest de-tackled. A couple of others had mild headaches.'

'It was a disappointing trip for me, and an inexplicable incident. I am not a spiritual person and have never sensed any supernatural/inexplicable feelings at any time in my life. Therefore, I was puzzled by the incident, and assume it was something to do with the air (oxygen deprivation). I had no negative feelings about the cave itself, and never before had I felt uneasy in there.'

'Since I have lived in Malaysia, I have heard many stories from fellow cavers and outdoor enthusiasts about supernatural experiences they have had in the forest, such as seeing mysterious lights, hearing sounds of children laughing, even getting lost for a few hours or overnight, and not being able to hear the shouts of the rescuers. Nothing has ever happened to me, and I have always dismissed it as mumbo-jumbo. I have spent time trekking alone for up to three days in the forest, sleeping out in caves, and experienced nothing unearthly. A 'bomoh' (or magician/witch doctor) had once told me that spirits inhabit one particular cave at Batu Caves. I had been in the cave on numerous occasions and had never experienced anything. When I asked him why this was, he just said the spirits leave me alone, as I am a strong person (emotionally) and have no interest in them...'

Phantom of Floyd Collins

Art (Arthur) Palmer writes: 'I have a PhD in Geology, and my wife Peggy has an MA in the same field. We've taught courses at university

level (State University of New York), undergraduate and graduate level up to PhD. Nothing could be further from the paranormal, although most people don't consider geologists to be "normal."

'As geologists concerned with cave origin, my wife Peggy and I have visited over 1,000 caves throughout the world, some of them hundreds of times. Our most frequent visits have been to Mammoth Cave in the Mammoth Cave National Park more than 600 times (+4400 hours) and the most frequented part is Crystal Cave, also known as Floyd Collins' Crystal Cave. We have done most of the surveying and all of the geologic mapping here.'

'Crystal Cave is known for its early explorations by its discoverer, William Floyd Collins, whose family owned the cave before the National Park was established. Floyd explored large parts of the cave - probably 5-10 km of its presently known 20 km. His signature is scattered sparsely throughout the main passages and a resting spot (or campsite) is located in a large chamber in one of the lower levels. His beer cans and utensils are still preserved there. He almost always explored alone.'

'Floyd met an early demise in a narrow cave several kilometres to the south, which he hoped to connect to Crystal Cave to provide greater access to tourists. Alone, as usual, he was trapped when a rock fell and pinned his foot. Rescuers were unable to free him, and he died there. A shaft was excavated to free him, and his body, in a coffin, was displayed in the first major room in Crystal Cave. The story was widely broadcast, and he became the chief feature of interest on the tours.'

'I first visited Crystal Cave in 1965 with the (CRF) Cave Research Foundation which was actively exploring and mapping Crystal and other nearby caves. In 1969, Peggy and I started a geologic survey of the cave to determine the geology and passage levels. This required many repeated trips there - usually the two of us alone. We were given sanction to work 'alone'

(the two of us) within a certain distance from the entrance, as long as we had a surface watch.'

'On August 18th 1969, a Park Service ranger named Steve joined us for a short photography trip into the main passage only a few hundred metres into the cave. The entrance was sealed by a steel gate, with a lock accessible only through a hole - 10-11 cm in diameter. Peg and I stayed near the entrance to take photos while Steve descended into the 'Grand Canyon' - the room where Floyd resided - to take photos of the coffin and headstone.'

'A few minutes later, Steve came running up the slope gasping: "Did you hear that?" We hadn't heard anything. So, we followed him down into the long canyon-shaped room. It was about 10 metres long, 22 metres high and 15 metres wide, with a flat ceiling. There was the sound of frantically flapping wings moving slowly along the length of the room, taking about a minute for a single pass. Back and forth it flapped - apparently a large bird? It was certainly not the fluttering sound of a bat. It was a relentless chugging sound that could only have been made by a large creature. It evoked the image of standing beneath a railway trestle with a train going overhead, but not so loud. We were bothered by the fact that we couldn't see it. We even tried to take a photo, but in the transparency there was nothing out of the ordinary. The 'wings' passed back and forth about ten times before we finally decided to continue our trip. An hour later when we returned, there was no sound.'

'We were not perturbed, assuming that it was simply a large bird. But the hole in the entrance gate was not an inviting target for a bird, and such a noisy one would have been of a size too great to squeeze through it. Later, on the surface, Cave Biologist Tom asserted that no nocturnal bird would make a noise like that.'

'When a bird is trapped in a garage, for example, the place becomes decorated with white splotches and probably a few feathers. In

the following days we made a careful search of the room, but no hint of a living creature was evident. We mapped the geology of the room very carefully in later years and never saw a single trace of a bird - droppings, feathers or bones. Still, to us, it was a mere curiosity, not frightening.'

'But we began to hear strange tales from other people. Back in the early 1960s, soon after Crystal Cave had been incorporated into the National Park, and while the private residence at the entrance was being created, a couple of geologists, Will and George, (well-published researchers) were descending into the 'Grand Canyon' when a telephone rang. They looked at each other. "Was that a telephone?" Sure enough - there was a phone at the low point in the room - ringing - a relic from the tourist days, when communication was needed between groups. They ran down to answer it. Will grabbed at it and said: "Is someone calling Crystal Cave?" He told us that all he heard was a babble of voices, as though at a party. A voice gasped and the line went dead. A short time later when they left the cave, they traced the phone line. It had been severed long before, and the bare end was dangling from a tree branch.'

'These tales are a source of great mirth among the CRF cavers. I was entertaining a group, most of whom we didn't know, by telling tales of Crystal Cave. I had heard that a caver was once taking a photo of Floyd Collins' coffin when the camera "jumped out of his hands, over his shoulder and hit the ground behind him." This produced the customary laughter - except that one person was not laughing.

"Yes," said the person. "That was me."

'Cameras did seem to have an irritating effect on whatever is in charge of paranormal incidents in Crystal Cave. Caver Gordon once rested his camera on the coffin. He told us that the camera started to slide off and he grabbed the cable release, which pulled the shutter control mechanism right out of the camera.

Recently, a different person explained to us how his camera, carefully placed on the coffin, also began to slide off and was barely caught in time.'

'Caver Don told us of a local man he met who, with a companion, once drove to Crystal Cave to view the entrance. The driver had no interest in the cave and stayed behind in the pick-up truck. He later related that, while alone, he had heard a voice in what he claimed was his 'deaf ear' that urged: "Help me, Johnny!" He knew nothing about the cave or Floyd Collins, or that Floyd had often gone caving with a younger companion called Johnny.'

'Lots of tales seem like the product of fertile imaginations, with elaborations added with each telling. But each time these tales were told, the same details were repeated with no further elaboration.'

'The one truly inexplicable event that we remember vividly, took place on July 28th, 1973. Peggy and I were on a long geologic survey and photography trip in Crystal Cave. We visited the 'Long Passage', which contains excellent examples of chert (flint) dykes. I was setting up the camera on the tripod, when I heard a muffled pounding like a person beating on a slab of rock with a hammer some distance away. It was coming from far down the passage. I tried to ignore it as I fussed with flash guns and focusing. "What's that noise?" asked Peg, a bit alarmed. The photo shows her with wide-open eyes. I invented some kind of answer, but our mutual discomfort fed on itself, and we decided to evacuate.'

'It is a big passage, and long. This section of it

was entirely dry, and even if there had been drips of water, they would not have produced such an intense sound. Falling rocks are extremely rare in caves - we've never witnessed one - and they would sound nothing like this. The pounding was perfectly rhythmic, like the bass drum in a parade. To exit, we had to run nearly three hundred metres toward the sound!

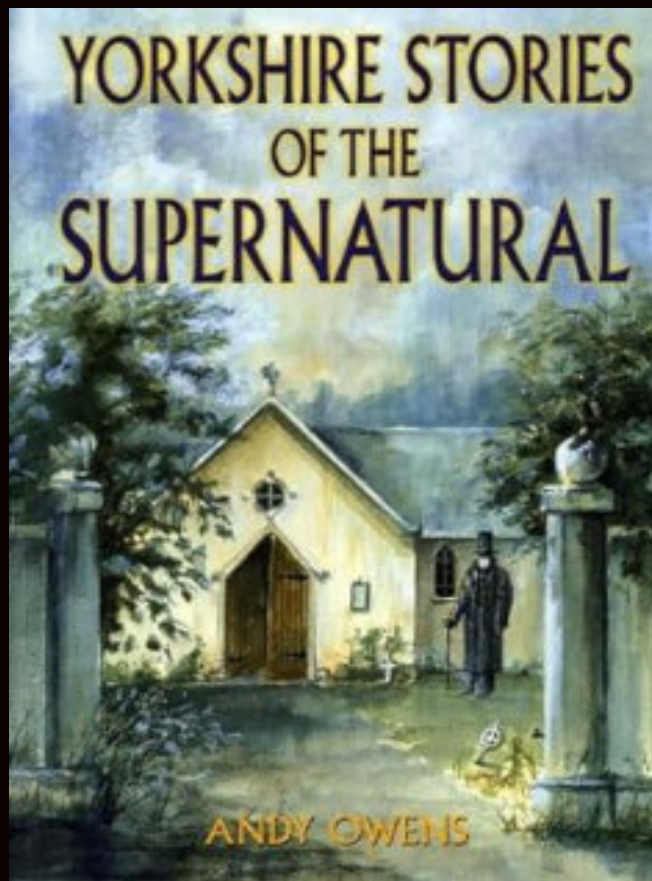
We squeezed up through a narrow slot into a higher level (another good photo of Peg erupting from the slot), and finally down into the comfort of another, quieter passage.'

'Some important details: We were alone in the cave, with the entrance locked. We were more than two hours from the entrance, a trip that requires hundreds of metres of flat-out crawling. No caver in the area knew our location, or even how to get there. For our safety, our general location was written down for a colleague who was busy with his thesis and had no inclination or ability to enter the cave or to pull

tricks. There are no houses, roads, or trails above. Unauthorised access to the caves is strictly prohibited. We've never heard anything remotely similar in Mammoth Cave, or in any other cave.'

'A couple of years later, it finally dawned on us that the pounding had come from an area of the Lost Passage where Floyd Collins had set up a sort of kitchen, where he cooked and ate and ... *flattened his bean cans with a rock!*

The National Park Service was not enamoured of their role as caretakers of a body, and so around 1990, Floyd's coffin and granite monument were relocated to a nearby cemetery. His headstone always seems to be



decorated with flowers and trinkets, left in his honour by visitors, both local and from elsewhere. Since then, we have never witnessed or heard anything inexplicable in the cave, and apparently no one else has either.

Underwater Ghost?

Steve Thomas is not only a caver, but a cave diver, which involves locating waterlogged sections of a cave and then exploring them underwater with scuba-diving equipment.

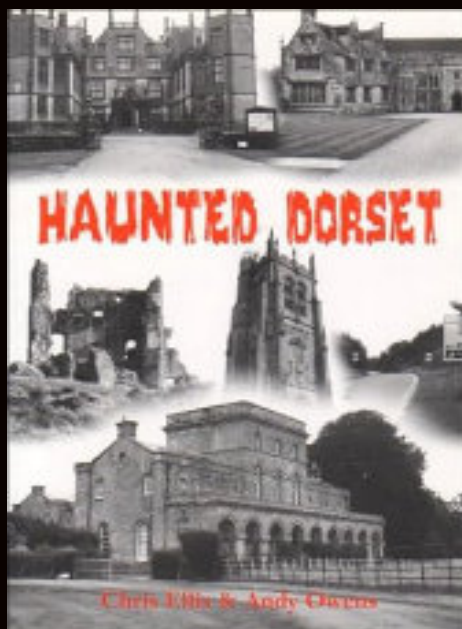
In 1995, Steve and a friend explored Dan yr Ogf cave in the Brecon Beacons National Park. It had been explored by many previous cavers, and discoveries included forty-two human skeletons dating from the Bronze Age.

At that time, Steve had ten years' experience of caving and cave diving and knew the potential risks. He said: 'There are a lot of dangers involved in caving, and a lot of people have paid with their lives. You can overcome the majority of them by very, very strict training. The risks are there, but you train yourself mentally and physically. (However) the one thing you cannot afford to do is panic - because there's nowhere to run to. When you're cave diving, you're trained for anything to go wrong, and you expect the expected. You're not expecting what I reluctantly call a ghostly experience to happen in an underwater situation in a cave ... it's most bizarre.'

'The whole point of that day's activities was to get through a section of cave that was flooded full of water, and you take your diving kit off at the far end and then go off caving as a normal caver would. And there was a good chance of extending the caving that would involve digging, removing boulders in a collapsed area, trying to get through to a nice new section of cave.'

The expedition went well, and the two men were returning underwater through the last flooded area. Although visibility was poor, there were no underwater currents to slow them down. They entered a section of cave known to divers as a 'squeeze.' This was a narrow section, large enough for just one person to pass through and with no room to turn round. His friend went through first and, after waiting three or four minutes, Steve followed. But, as he swam through, something bizarre happened.

He says: 'Someone grabbed my foot; my ankle. I looked back. There was nothing there. I wasn't caught on anything. My feet were free and yet I was (being) held!'



As an experienced diver, Steve said: 'You're in tune with a cave; you're not expecting it. You have no reaction. You have nothing in reserve to deal with that 'cos it shouldn't be happening. So, I started getting a bit irrational. What could it be? Maybe I (had) passed my partner. Maybe he's in trouble and he's trying to let me know. But that was impossible. My colleague had dived down first and there was no room in the squeeze to pass each other. And then something else bizarre happened. Someone started tugging at my fins (flippers). I then started being pulled backwards. By this time, I was absolutely out of my mind ... it was terrifying!'

But then suddenly, the grip on his feet stopped and Steve swam to an air pocket so he could surface briefly and catch his breath. He was planning to turn around and head back into the squeeze to find the solution - but Steve was surprised to see his partner sat in the enclosed chamber.

'He was there, pale as a ghost, shaking,' said Steve. 'Exactly the same thing had happened to him.'

After a brief discussion, they both dived through the last section and then made their exit from the cave.

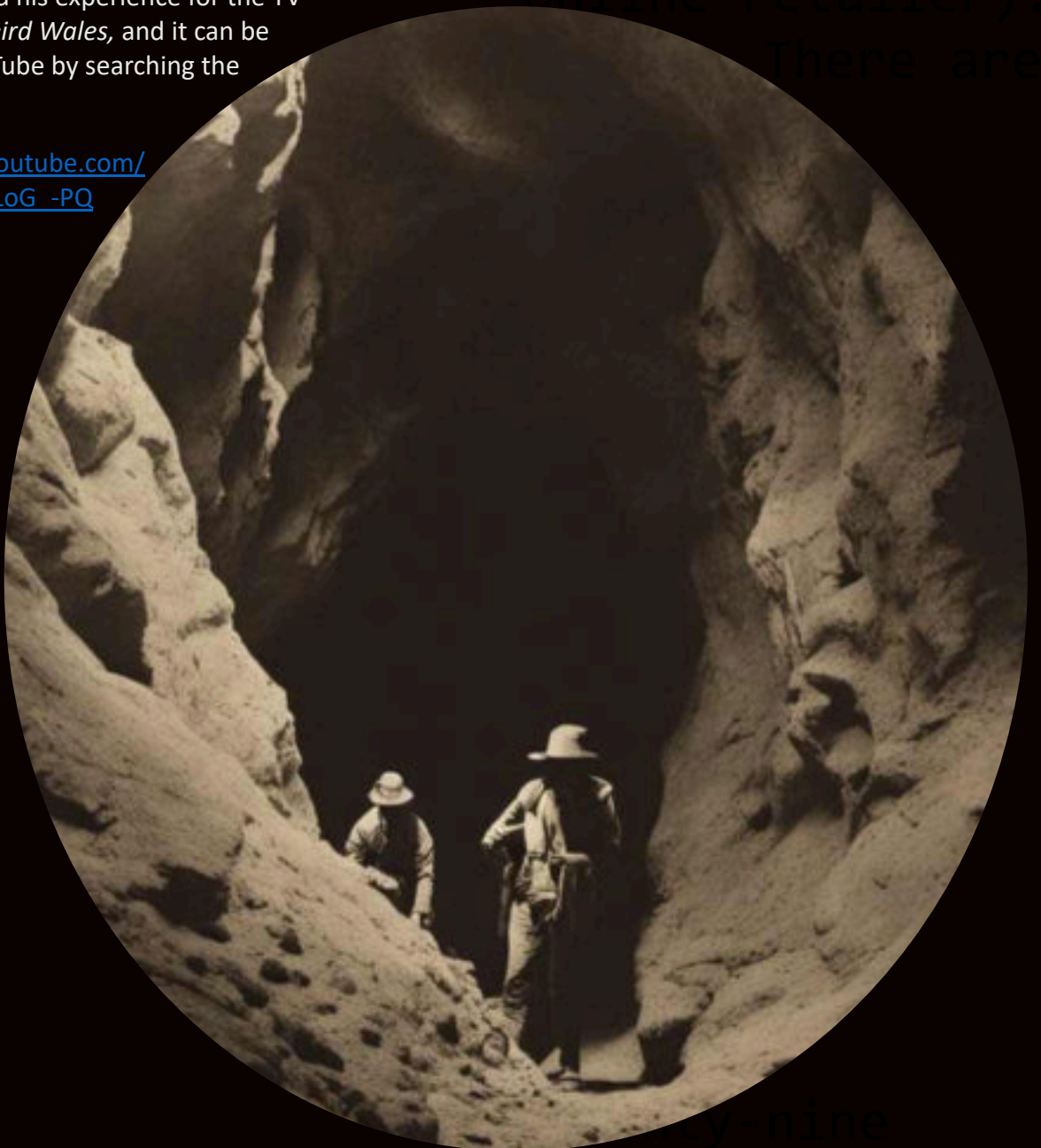
'I have no idea what it was,' said Steve. 'The only thing I can say to describe it adequately is "a ghost with a sense of humour that likes a bit of cave diving!" It's there (in my mind) forever. I'll never forget it and I don't think I'll ever be able to explain it.'

Steve recounted his experience for the TV programme *Weird Wales*, and it can be viewed on YouTube by searching the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZ2XLoG-PQ>

the article 'Ghosts: First-Hand Accounts from Cavers' was taken from ASSAP member Andy Owens' book *Ghosts: First-Hand Accounts of the Supernatural* (4ward Books, £7.95). Signed copies, postagefree, from

<https://owensandy.com>, or any bookshop or online retailer). There are



by-nine accounts in the book, and they

Romero, Romero, Wherefore Art Thou Romero?

Rob Gandy

Rob Gandy looks into which USA states are most likely to have zombies appear after the night of the living dead

Clearly zombies do not exist, although many Fortean will want to keep an open mind on the possibility. Nevertheless, this did not stop Daniel Zelterman, Professor of Biostatistics at Yale

University, from exploring the distribution of zombies across the various states of the USA¹!

The research will have benefits for any individuals who are prone to zombie-avoidance behaviour, and people whose poor judgement and erratic demeanour appear to attract the attention of zombies, if the evidence of umpteen B-movies is anything to go by. No doubt readers will be asking how on earth the good professor and his team could ascertain how many zombies were in each state, particularly as they do not appear as a category in the decennial census? Well, I am pleased to

report that they did what any self-respecting researchers would do in these circumstances – they used Google!

Yes, a Google search acted as the primary source for data: for each of the 50 states they entered the word 'zombie' followed by the state's name and recorded the number of hits reported.

Unfortunately the fact that recording star Hannah Montana and American football star



Joe Montana were linked to zombie activities, or identified as zombies themselves, meant that the number of hits went off the scale, even though there was no link to the state as such. Therefore the state had to be excluded from analyses. The research examined a large number of demographic variables. These included:

Google zombie references per 100,000 population: the primary measure of zombie distribution, although whether it can be assumed that all the zombies reside in a given state is open to question; for example, might

there be seasonal migrations, with some older zombies moving to warmer climates (sun-belt zombies)?

State population: it is reasonable to assume that the more populous states are likely to have greater numbers of zombies.

Per person zombie references: the mean per-person zombie reference rate was 21.4; ranging from 5.4 (Pennsylvania) to 65.7 (Alaska); (Montana had a stratospheric 125!).

Age-adjusted death rate per 100,000 population: clearly more deaths could mean more zombies!

Percentage of the state population voting for George W Bush in 2004: it was not clear to the researchers whether a presence of zombies is related to conservative political thinking or a reaction to it! The observation was made that although zombies do not have the right to vote in the USA, many long-dead individuals appear to have this privilege and regularly make use of it, especially in Chicago. It makes you wonder if they might have influenced the results of the Presidential Elections in 2016 and 2020, won by Mr Trump and Mr Biden respectively? Given the advancing years of these two Presidents, perhaps zombies voted for the candidate most likely to join them in the near future?

Per-capita shopping malls: this can be a measure of income and suburban sprawl, and as is well-known, shopping malls often play an important role in zombie culture; for example, in *Dawn of the Dead* the survivors of a vicious zombie attack barricade themselves in a large Midwestern mall.

Cremation rate as a percentage of deaths: intuitively if there is a high cremation rate there should be a lower per-person zombie rate, because cremated cadavers don't reappear as zombies (do they?).

Fraction of population self-described as binge drinkers: there is a good argument that zombies are more likely to attack or be attracted to individuals with impaired judgement; or maybe zombies are more easily seen through a haze of alcoholic stupor.

Firearm deaths per 100,000 population: it is true that more gun deaths may not necessarily correlate with greater gun ownership, but in the USA gun ownership is positively correlated with attitudes towards conservative politics. The question needs to be asked as to whether guns are kept in houses for defence against perceived high zombie prevalence, or as an effective means to reduce zombie populations? Apparently legislation in several USA states allows patrons to carry loaded firearms into bars – which might impact on the population of binge-drinkers!

Federal taxes paid per capita: states with higher per-capita taxes also tend to have more shopping malls and might be safer places to live and work, if 'safe' translates to fewer firearms deaths (see above).

Number of Miss America winners: this was used as an indicator of the attractiveness of the residents of each state. As you will be aware, the physical attributes of zombies mean that they are unlikely to get past the preliminary rounds of any beauty pageant. Therefore, the more attractive a state's residents might be overall the fewer the number of zombies likely to be found in that state.

Unsurprisingly there are lots of detailed statistical analyses and diagrams produced by Professor Zelterman, but I know that *Seriously Strange* readers will want to cut to the chase and hear about where it might be safest to spend their next trip to the USA, just in case the night of the living dead happens to erupt while they are there.

So a summary of the findings is as follows: One of the highest (negative) correlations involved

the number of Miss America winners. The three states that had the most Miss America winners (six) also had relatively low rates of per-person zombie references, viz. California, Ohio and Oklahoma. By comparison, the standout figure of 65.7 per-person zombie references and no Miss America winners belonged to Alaska!

The per-capita number of malls had a statistically significant (negative) relationship with per-person zombie reference rates. Again, the state with the standout figure is Alaska, but it is argued that there can be other factors such as zombies not requiring retail therapy (judging by the state of their regular attire) and their appreciation that malls act as good places of defence against them.

Surprisingly there was a very strong positive correlation between the cremation rate and the per-person zombie reference rate. It was speculated that a high cremation rate might reflect an existing high zombie population, and it is a reaction to it by the fearful living population.

There was a strong negative relationship between the percentage of binge drinkers and the per-person zombie reference rate. Maybe people who see zombies decide to give up the juice or switch to strong prescription drugs?

By comparison there is a strong positive correlation between higher gun death rates and the per-person zombie reference rate. Perhaps on seeing a zombie, gun owners accidentally shoot themselves or someone else present at the time?

So based upon the above it seems that it's best to head for the states where the beautiful, teetotal, rich people live, and avoid those with

lots of gun-toting crematorium attendants (and Alaska!).

Actually, if you simply rank the states for each measure so that the state ranked 1 is 'best' in relation to zombies, and the state ranked 50 is 'worst', and then add up the rank scores, the three worst states all begin with the letter 'W' – Washington, West Virginia and Wyoming! Ignoring Wisconsin, these are the three states that are nearest to 'Zombie' in the dictionary – Spooky or what!?

Of course, Professor Zeltermann only did the research as a bit of fun and the findings should not be taken too seriously. Nevertheless, some conspiracy theorists will undoubtedly use his work as evidence that the world is being

primed and prepared to accept that zombies really *do* exist, so that when this truth is finally revealed people will be welcoming and accommodating, and not reach for their guns and head for the nearest shopping mall. Or perhaps Professor Zeltermann's alleged links with the Bilderberg Group is just fake news on my part.....



1 All of the details in this article are lifted from Daniel Zeltermann's *'A groaning demographic'*, which appeared in the Royal Statistical Society's *Significance* magazine (December 2014, Volume 11 Issue 5 Pages 38-47). They are supplemented by Rob's own comments and attempted humour, for which he humbly apologises to Daniel. Daniel's article itself was an extract from *Mathematical Modelling of Zombies*, edited by Robert Smith (No! Not *The Cure's* Robert Smith!) © 2014 University of Ottawa Press (ISBN 9780776621685), which sets out an apocalypse survival kit that includes such essentials as: mathematical models; differential equations; individual-based modelling; zombie swarming; statistical estimation; fuzzy decision-making; network theory; discrete-time models; spatial diffusion of the undead; and adaptive strategies for zombie attacks. What's not to like!?

Into the Mystics

Neil Nixon

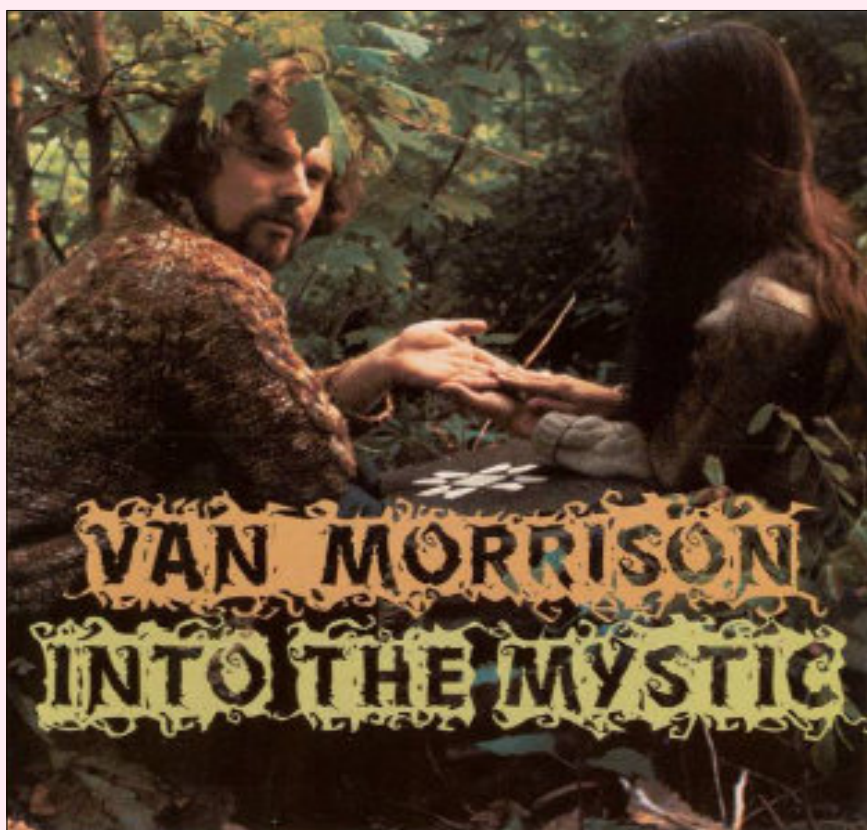
There's a simple point to this article, which is to consider the extent to which mankind's cultural history is also a history that ASSAP might usefully explore. Beyond that, what matters – I think – is that we consider the examples below as a handful of insights into this main point, at least they should encourage some critical thinking on paranormal claims in general.

Skeptoid's Brian Dunning currently signs off shows for non-premium members (i.e., those helping themselves to free downloads) with an incitement to pay up for his brand of hardheaded enquiry into the anomalous that battles the worst examples of "edutainment," a word that has replaced the previously ubiquitous "infotainment."

Whatever term you apply, this battle to describe something that collides serious investigation with entertaining an audience identifies work frequently forced into niche markets. *Ancient Aliens* turned 14 this year, having lasted 19 series and over 230 episodes despite consistent critical broadsides blasting it as "pseudoscience" and a lengthy charge sheet of historical mistakes on the show. It's beyond dispute, however, that the show continues and presents an estimable track record of

worldwide sales to channels very happy to screen it and very satisfied with their ability to sell advertising on the back of its loyal audience. Crudely, the show packages the paranormal and history into an easily digested concoction that relies on the audience's willingness to believe historical wonders were created by aliens. Most of the phenomena putting the AP into ASSAP exist to some extent in this way. Ufology, ghost hunting, the search for cryptids and the like may share some similarities in the way they present fleeting bafflement to eye-witnesses who didn't go out expecting to be ambushed by the uncanny, but the best-selling books on these subjects and best-known documentaries are typically those presenting the subject as a self-contained set of mysteries and looking for answers specific to their own niche area. In other words, each paranormal investigation area can usefully claim to have its own market.

This set of realities is at odds with another way of approaching human experience which acknowledges that we've been encountering the uncanny and interpreting it in our own way

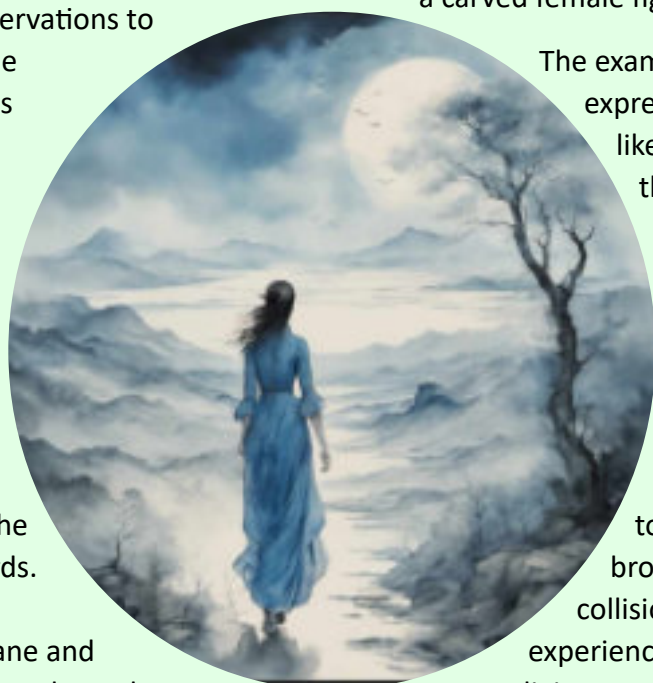


for at least as long as we've been recording our own experiences. A point brought home to me when I set about considering mystery, as a separate entity, for a recent book. A few readers as old as me will have spotted where I stole the title idea for this piece and that's a good place to start.

The song *Into the Mystic* closes side one of Van Morrison's highly regarded 1970 album, *Moondance*. Less well known is Morrison's own debate on what the near-perfect ambiguity in some aspects of the song means. Crudely, it's a meditation in Morrison's own words "about being part of the universe" but it includes hard to fathom observations to the point Morrison admits he struggled to send lyrics to his record company because he couldn't decide on the spelling of words in certain lines. "Born before the wind" or "borne before the wind" and "ere the bonny boat was one" or "ere the bonny boat was won" presented problems. His strong Belfast accent blurs the issue when he sings the words. The song is a beautiful and brilliant fusion of the mundane and mystic, perhaps never more so than when Colin Tilton's saxophone hits a perfect low note to accompany Morrison's singing about "coming home" as "that foghorn blows" at which point Morrison's take on "being part of the universe" also conjures up the dreeky mistiness of the Belfast shipyards and the deep connection he feels with his home city. A mystic experience for sure, but one with a place and scene many wouldn't regard as typically mystic. ,

There is enough evidence of mankind's history of engaging with the mystic to show it covers at least the entire period in which we have

recorded our existence and may well be older than that. The Lascaux cave paintings in France depicting running and (in one case) a wounded animal are around 17,000 years old. Debates on what they represent vary but the work of creating vast and complex art below ground that long ago was a major undertaking, indicating it was a significant and highly meaningful act for the artists and the community in which they lived. The cave paintings are relatively young compared to the Venus of the Berekhat Ram (at least a quarter of a million years old), a rock found on Israel's Golan Heights in 1981 believed by some to be a carved female figure.



The examples of primitive art and expression we have found are likely a small fraction of those that existed with researchers like Alastair Pike (Professor of Archaeological Sciences at the University of Southampton) expressing the opinion that much of what once existed in the landscape has long been lost to time and the elements. A broader consideration of such collisions between human experience and the mystic suggests our religious and mystical experiences are central to our humanity. Reza Aslan – considering the work of a collection of anthropologists who have studied these phenomena – stated simply: "Religion, they say, is not an evolutionary adaptation; religion is an accidental byproduct of some other *preexisting* evolutionary adaptation." [Aslan's italics]

Put simply in the context of everything we currently celebrate in ASSAP there's an argument here that the ability to perceive the strange and uncanny is a basic human trait and our reactions to such experiences – from

carving a single rock to maintaining a major religion – are largely determined by the groups in which we live. Of course, that observation leaves open the debate about whether any of the things we encounter might be classed as genuinely paranormal and whether any God we might recognise exists. The important point in this brief investigation is that we're probably doing a disservice to our claims toward "scientific study of anomalous phenomena" if we insist on grouping these phenomena into niche investigations like ghost hunting and ufology.

I'd go further and suggest an obvious source of reality checks is out there in the vast body of non-fiction English literature that sets out to explore and present the uncanny. A few random examples below support this point. Many psychics report using a spirit guide and those associated with mysticism – especially religious mystics – encounter divine figures. Margery Kempe (c. 1373 – c. 1438) was celebrated as a religious mystic but also frequently accused of heresy. Some assessments of Kempe's mysticism suggest a severe episode of post-partum psychosis might explain the visions that defined her life. Initially overwhelmed with demons and devils, Kempe carried out acts of self-harm and was probably suicidal before Christ himself appeared. Kempe had 14 children, and quite possibly more given the prevalence of still-births at the time. Her writings cite sensory experiences including smelling and hearing things.

The unexpected find of a complete manuscript of The Book of Margery Kempe in 1934 allowed the full account to re-emerge,

complete with its frequent accounts of mystic and religious experience.

For many so called "mystic" writers the defining moments in their work are instances in which their senses are overwhelmed by nature. A classic rapture appears in Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus* (1545), capturing a moment in a snowy landscape: *"the winde was whisteling a lofte, and sharp accordynge to the tyme of the yeare. The snowe in the hye waye lay lowse and troden with horse feete: so as the wynde blew, it toke the lowse fnow with it, and made it so slide upon the snowe in the felde whyche was harde and crufted by reason of the frost ouer nyght, that thereby I myght fe verye wel, the hole nature of the wynde as it blew yat daye."*



Surrendering to the moment became such a feature of the writings of James Boswell (1740 – 1795), especially in his study of the life of Samuel Johnson, that critics would later discuss the concept of Boswellian time for those instances where scenes run in the slowest of slow motion. By the early 19th century, the writers of the romantic movement sought out the power of nature; wilfully being washed in sensory experiences to achieve moments William Wordsworth described as "trances of thought and mountings of the mind." A darkly comic episode in Wordsworth's work sees an act of late 18th century joy riding involving boat theft in the middle of a summer night on Ullswater. The incident forms a vivid section of his epic autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*.

"Within a rocky cave, its usual home/ Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in/ Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth/ And troubled pleasure...."

Soon his feelings of guilt overtook him to the point the surrounding landscape appeared to be alive:

"a huge peak, black and huge/As if with voluntary power instinct/Upreared its head. I struck and struck again/And growing still in stature the grim shape/Towered up between me and the stars, and still/For so it seemed, with purpose of its own/And measured motion like a living thing/Stroke after me."

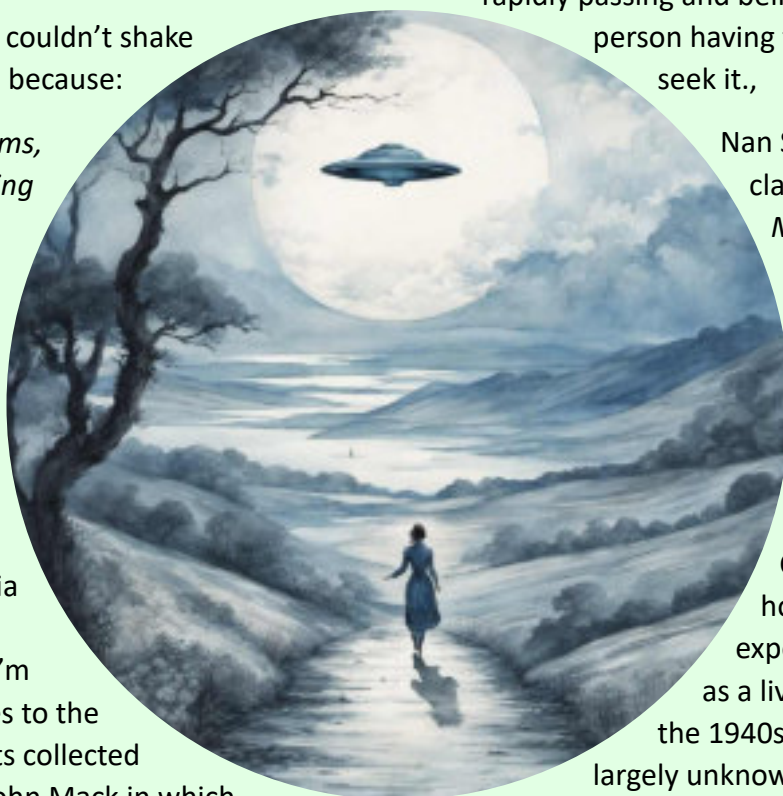
Returning the boat, he couldn't shake the mental disturbance because:

"...huge and mighty forms, that do not live/Like living men, moved slowly through the mind/By day, and were a trouble to my dreams."

For Wordsworth the landscape came to life to judge and threaten him, inducing a paranoia that briefly blighted his life. Reading that now I'm struck by the similarities to the UFO abduction accounts collected by Budd Hopkins and John Mack in which the original events are followed by lengthy periods of abductees feeling their lives are beyond their own control.

The autobiographical *Copsford* (1948) appeared over a quarter of a century after Walter J C Murray spent a year in a remote house in Sussex attempting to make a living harvesting medicinal herbs. In one notable scene the weather – almost demonic – breaks into his home, driving him away. But, by that point he has already achieved a sense of oneness that informed the rest of his life: "A remarkable sense of freedom pervaded my being. Every common custom, every irksome convention, fell from me like broken fetters."

Murray likely saw himself as more middle-Englander than mystic and spent the bulk of his career as a headmaster but his biographer explores the links to nature in Copsford in the context of William James' "four marks of mystic states." James saw such states as presenting the ineffable "more like states of feeling than states of intellect," having a "noetic quality" within which some key knowledge is revealed, being transient, or rapidly passing and being passive because the person having the experience didn't seek it.,



Nan Shepherd's nature classic, *The Living Mountain* (1977) is arguably an extended exploration of this mystic state. A most unusual travelogue in that Shepherd continually revisits the same area of the Cairngorms near her home, coming to experience the landscape as a living entity. Written in the 1940s, the manuscript lay largely unknown until it was finally

published when the author was in her 80s. It's now regarded as one of Britain's best works of nature writing largely because it is so insightful on human experience and sensitivity, as Shepherd notes: "every reality that matters ultimately to human beings, is a reality of the mind." Despite Shepherd's continual choices to visit to the same landscape her reveries easily fit William James' notion of mystic experiences being passive and temporary largely because Shepherd is clear on the fact she is open to those moments when the uncanny occurs: "*often the mountain gives itself most completely when I have no destination, when I reach nowhere in particular but have gone out merely to be with the mountain.*"

Having spent a lifetime obsessed with the paranormal and a working life largely devoted to teaching professional writing, including understanding literature I'm struck by the strong resemblances in both worlds that I have only had time to touch on here.

Crudely, first hand paranormal accounts and much of what we celebrate in nonfiction and – particularly - nature writing revolve around instances in which vivid descriptions present us with the most uncanny and mysterious moments. English literature and paranormal investigation have lengthy histories of studying these examples, grouping them, and explaining how and why we can learn from them. But the focus on niche investigations and particular details often misses the larger picture that throughout history, in all cultures, we have a huge and varied record of individual responses to the strangest of experiences.

No group of people, anywhere at any time have been spared exposure to anomalous phenomena, and those of us claiming to study the whole area should treat our entire cultural history as source material.

About the author

Neil Nixon has been interested in all things ASSAP for as long as he can remember and has been writing and researching these various interests for decades. His most recent books are *UFOs, Aliens and the Battle for the Truth* (2021) and *Why Mystery Matters* (2023). His live talks have included *Seriously Strange Weekends* and regular ASSAP webinars and he can be contacted via his website, especially if you want to swap ideas on anything written in this article: <http://www.neilnixon.com/>

1 Brian Hinton, *Celtic Crossroads: The Art of Van Morrison*, Sanctuary Publishing 1997, p108

2 Van Morrison, *Astral Weeks*, Warner Bros Records 1970

3 Neil Nixon, *Why Mystery Matters*, Olcan Books 2023, pp 24-26

4 Reza Aslan, *God: A Human History of Religion*, Corgi 2018, p.35

5 BBC In Our Time podcast considering Margery Kempe and others collectively known as the medieval mystics: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07cyfkg#:~:text=In%20Our%20Time%20Melvyn%20Braug%20and%20guests%20discuss,be%20the%20first%20autobiography%20in%20English.%20Show%20more>

6 Full text at the Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/stream/RogerAschamToxophilus1545/TXT/0000%20-%200129.txt>

7 Walter J. C. Murray, *Copsford*, Little Toller Books 2019, p.75

8 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Penguin Classics 1985, pp 379-382

9 Tom Wareham, *The Green Man of Horam: The Life and Work of Walter J.C. Murray (Second - Revised - Edition)*, self-published 2017, pp 112-114

10 Nan Shepherd, *The Living Mountain*, Canongate Press 2019, p.1 1

1 Nan Shepherd...p.15



ASSAP Training Day - How it went!

*Caroline McKendrick and
Martin Gibson*

We had applied to attend the course a good few years ago, but with lock-down, and also ASSAP rewriting the course and training content, we had been on the waiting list for some time.

Our whole paranormal team, Somerset Paranormal Investigators U.K.(SPIUK), were due to attend this training together. So when the time drew nearer Martin and I were both nervous and excited to be attending.

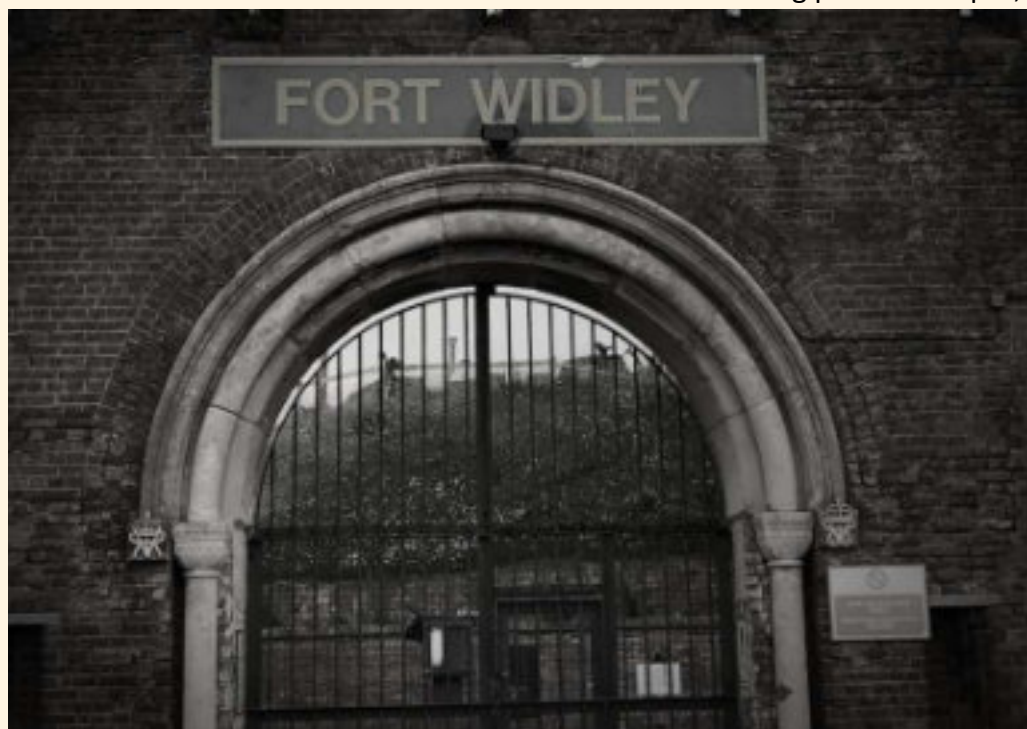
When we arrived, in the bright warm sunshine, we were met outside the large metal fort gates, in the car park, by Norie Miles. We were led through and down into the fort. The huge temperature change hit us instantly as we descended the stone stair case, and into the room that was being used for the classroom. This only added to setting the scene for the investigation part that was to come later that evening.

We were greeted with a very relaxed setting in the training room. We signed ourselves in, chose our seats, and started the day off with

the complimentary Tea/Coffee and Biscuits. We were issued everything that we needed for the training day. Name badge, notepad, pen, and a copy of the SPR 'Blue Guidance notes for Investigators of Spontaneous Cases' book. These were the notes to support the training, (Which we get to keep).

Caroline- "As the NRPI Lead and investigations case handler, I was looking forward to meeting new investigators during the training event, but equally I was nervous in case I was singled out to give answers. I wanted to concentrate on the training and remain in the background. I had nothing to worry about. The training was equally inclusive for all people attending, with no one being singled out".

Martin- "I don't usually like classroom environments in case of being put on the spot,



but I had nothing to be concerned about, it was relaxed, but not too relaxed"

To open the day, we had introductions and safety instructions by Steve Parsons, followed by a little icebreaker to get the group thinking.

The training day was scheduled to be a very long day. It was enjoyable. We covered various different topics during the day. Audio



Pareidolia, Investigation methods, and the method of 'tweet' reporting during the investigation, are just to name a few.

Martin - "It was a long day, but we had plenty of breaks which helped".

Caroline - "We had dinner organised in a local pub, which was very a welcome break after concentrating hard during the day"

After dinner, we returned back to the fort, refreshed and raring to go, excited to carry out the investigation part of the training.

We were split into 4 groups of 6/8 people, and the 4 teams were assigned team leaders. The team leaders were instructed to implement a simulated mock investigation in the fort.

2 of the groups went to the East part of the fort, 2 of the groups went to the West part of the fort. 1 group upstairs, 1 group downstairs.

They changed floors after 1/2hr. Whilst on this mock investigation, everyone put into practice what they had been taught during the day. All 4 groups repeated this in the opposite parts of the fort.

Despite it only being a mock paranormal investigation, our groups did experience some activity that we can't debunk. (We will save that information for another time).

We returned to the training room, handed in our 'tweet' reports of the mock investigations, and had a debrief of the course. Then it was time to head back to our homes or hotels.

Martin - "The venue was really good for this event. It was an interesting place that I'd like to return to".

We weren't told of the alleged paranormal activity that had been reported by previous visitors to the fort, because our assignment exam was to research and write a report on

this. This research was incredibly interesting and eye opening.

Caroline - "I love research, finding out the heritage and history of the venue, and opening the door to the past. Learning about the lives that were lived in that venue, and sometimes the tragedies that occurred there. So I took my research a little further after I finished my assignment".

Martin - "A lot of what I found out through the research made sense".

Our Team has been investigating for quite a few years, some of us around 12 years, some only a few years. Despite the variation in experience, we all learned new things, and also reinforced some previous learning.

Martin - "We can definitely improve ourselves in the team, implementing some of the things that we learned during the course"

Caroline - "The team love the 'tweet' reporting style, and have implemented this since returning home and attending private case investigations".

The positives from this AAI training were;
-Being able to physically attend the event, we agree that learning was made easier in person.

-The location was a great choice. It fitted the requirements perfectly.

-Meeting lots of like minded people in person, rather than conversing with them on social media platforms.

If you would like to know more about what's involved with investigators training with ASSAP, please contact events@assap.ac.uk.



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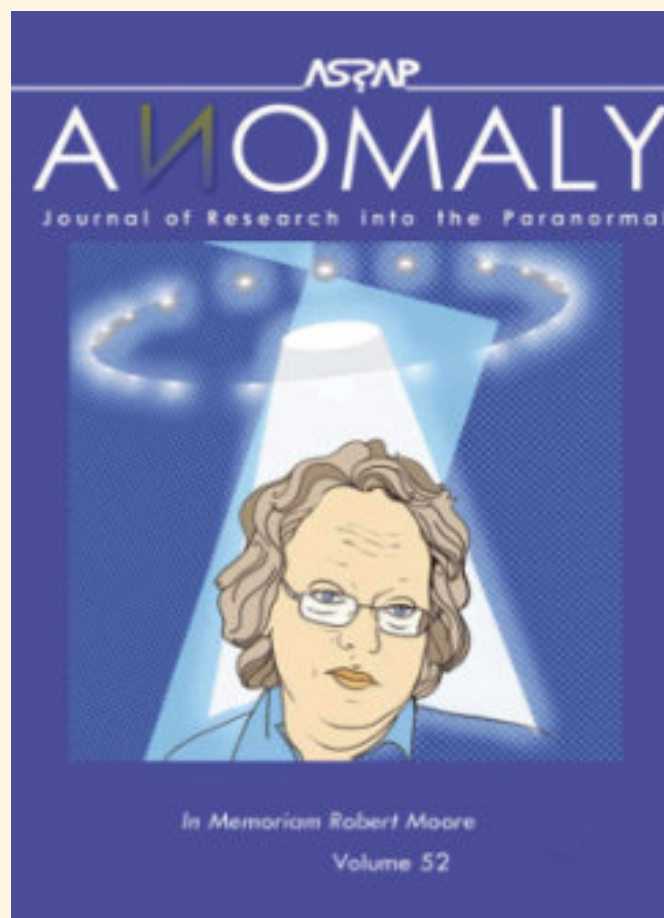
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And of course the late Robert Moore. Gone but never forgotten...



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