

# **Common Ground**

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**Studies at the Fringe of Human  
Experience.**

# Common Ground

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It doesn't seem to matter much what mysterious objects are seen or perceived, or what supposed secret is partially revealed - human beings will, sooner or later, build myths about them. Paul Screeton, journalist, editor of 'The Ley Hunter' from 1969-1976, author of 'Quicksilver Heritage' (Thorsons 1974, Abacus 1977), 'The Lambton Worm and other Northumbrian Dragon Legends' (Zodiac House, 1978), and 'Tales of the Hexham Heads' (Outlaw Press, 1980), and train-spotter par excellence, has explored an archetypal example of myth-making which may, just, have a little basis in fact.

## GHOST TRAINS

### by Paul Screeton

THE STRATEGIC RESERVE - A MODERN MYTH OF THINGS SEEN AS PIE IN THE SKY.

Once, the chugging and clanking steam locomotives were common, and then the British Railways Board in its wisdom waved a magic wand and in a puff of smoke, the once proud culture of glamorous steam engines was ousted by the characterless and robotic diesels.

Were all slain on the altars of genocidal efficiency, their sad entrails dismembered by oxy-acetylene weapons prophesying salvation by the new order? Region after region was engulfed by oil-burning tins on wheels, and the majestic clans of steam classes dwindled and were squeezed towards the North-West, ending up in breakers' graveyards. Unless, of course, you subscribe to the persistent, romantic, yet dubious belief in the existence of a cache of these metal dinosaurs, occulted from prying eyes, their whereabouts known only to a chosen few. For among train-spotters, platform-end rumour has averred for many years that hordes of their beloved locomotives have been secretly stored somewhere to be steamed again in time of war or economic crisis. I would like to think that C.G. Jung would have found no little interest in the scenario.

It is certainly rather an offbeat myth, and I have been on the trail for several years, noting the uniformities among my informants' stories and the irritating irresoluteness of substantiation. The rumour was certainly encouraged by two events; firstly, the firemen's strike with the seeming conjuring out of thin air of the Green Goddess vehicles, and secondly a sudden cut-back in oil supplies to British Rail, which fuelled further the usefulness of coal-based energy. Attentively I noted that the strategic reserve folklore was reflecting several strands found in other themes of myth creation and transmission.

The idea of a large reserve of locomotives in a camouflaged shed, or in a tunnel complex under a mountain, awaiting the call to come to Britain's rescue in a time of crisis has all the hallmarks of the belief in King Arthur and his Knights slumbering until danger threatens their Kingdom. For the chivalrous sleeping heroes to be awakened by a call on a horn, imagine the once familiar chime whistle of an A4 Class 'Streak' hurtling along, and the emotive effect engendered by such in full battle-cry on the east coast main line. Verily those same steam engines which helped win the last war could easily vanquish diesel power in times of an oil blockade created either by economic sanctions or a hostile power.

This fanciful idea is sustained because rail enthusiasts want it to be a reality. Wish-fulfilment fantasies are common in the apocrypha of all common interest groups. But rail fanatics have strong counter arguments to the sceptic; notably, that there are now many steamers in private ownership which could also be commandeered, that a proportion of these work sponsored specials on British Rail, and that this alone suggests that a reserve could function. Removal of water-towers and troughs, coaling towers, turntables and other hardware not required for diesels has been ingeniously by-passed. Plenty of crews are well under retirement age and, indeed, steam footplate staff are again being trained. Though many private locomotives are always undergoing slow and costly maintenance, those volunteers involved form a large pool of skilled labour with the potential to be 'called up' to service strategic reserve motive power. Other aspects of the 'pro' case appear elsewhere (1), (2).

I wish, however, to concentrate on the correlations with other myths. A favourite from folklore old and new is the interrupted journey. In the early mode a traveller is stopped in mysterious circumstances, offered a special gift, and in certain circumstances a supernatural time element occurs (such as a visit to fairyland is extended in human span). Modern cases usually involve a car journey where a flying saucer stops the vehicle, abducts the occupants, gives them special knowledge which is often only retrievable by hypnotic regression; often, they find their journey time has been lengthened.

Here from STEAM RAILWAY is a strategic reserve lore version: "One old driver recalls an unusual incident on a Sunday when, only minutes after coming off shed with a convoy of scrappers, he was halted at signals and called up to the signalbox. The signaller explained that he had just received fresh 'orders'. The driver and his mate were to be relieved of this particular duty and they could book off with full pay. They never saw which crew it was that took over the train, and the engines were never seen again."

A similar account. A permanent way worker friend of mine, Alan Shepherd, has told me that when working at West Hartlepool depot a crew was specially picked to haul a line of former War Department 2-8-0s for scrap around 1966, and then were stopped after 50 or so yards and replaced by a crew of strangers.

Is this not a mysterious interrupted journey, the reward being full pay for doing virtually nothing, the time factor apparent in the sudden addition of extra leisure time, the incident being recollected only with the topic's rise into a more general consciousness? And, not least, the arrival of strangers, and a destination not known?

I listed in (1) such old chestnut sites for the strategic reserve as Army depots at Bicester, Oxon., Marchwood, Hants., Hessay, near York; and also a mysterious complex with security guards at Rhyd-y-mwyn, North Wales (unconfirmed testimony from authority figure policeman who saw the engines but could not enlarge as the information was classified). Afterwards, an acquaintance revisiting Seaton Carew waved my article at me and announced that the real location was a Royal Army Ordnance Corps depot at Heapey, Lancs., where the track had been lifted supposedly to camouflage the fact that the strategic reserve was hidden there underground. He had not personally seen the engines, but a friend who lived nearby had been inside and seen them. He took my address and promised to send further details. No reply so far - just another friend of a friend tale.

Later, on a journalistic assignment to report about a special futuristic lightweight diesel train, I fell into conversation with a British Rail engineer who had been instructed to find a means of adequately storing redundant diesel locomotives at Swindon. With no precedent, he approached the Royal Navy at Portsmouth and found their warship 'mothballing' techniques unsuited to railway needs. He presumed it would be even harder to have a fleet of steam locomotives available at short notice than would be any attempt to find a solution as to how to keep valuable diesels ready to run again if the recession vanishes. He then confided that as a Cornishman, and one time keen spotter of ex-G.W.R. products, he would dearly love to believe that under some Wiltshire hill lay a squadron of mixed-traffic 'Grange' locomotives. Just as I doubt the presence beneath the downs of calves, coffins, and chariots, all made of gold, I would question that here lies the Holy Grail of ferroequinology.

The strongest evidence to douse the crock of steel waiting for a rainy day at the end of rumour's rainbow is a series of booklets, 'Whatever happened to Steam', published by Peter Hands (4). He has told me of many reservations following his researches, not least that by now someone would have found the reserve, though there was the remote possibility that, 'British Rail publicised false sales to scrap merchants to satisfy enthusiasts'. My friend Peter, however, regards that as almost nonsensical and I see no need to dwell upon the wilder realms of conspiracy theory, for he has spent seven years tracing where every steam locomotive was allocated since 1957, where it was stored pending withdrawal, and where and when it met its fate. His meticulous study has been a marvel, a model and a masterpiece. Only a tiny minority are now unaccounted for and, in the large, are basically the least likely to be of future use (3). He will send details of his booklets to anyone interested (4).

The STEAM RAILWAY article provoked much correspondence on the strategic reserve, largely dismissive, but it led to the discovery of the reticent but unequivocal 'contactee' Stephen Burgess. Like the average UFO abductee, Burgess was a bemused pawn when he found his journey back to college in 1975 ended in being shunted, and he strangely awakening alone on his train in a siding beside several lines of steam locomotives, (steam was eradicated in 1968). He admitted he was disoriented, and wandered until a railwayman directed him to his station. Only years later did he mention his story, which had certain elements corresponding vaguely to the marshalling of scrap engines. Like those encountering other unfamiliar situations, Burgess's tale may well have been an out of the body encounter, or more probably a hypnogogic state. Its investigation was praiseworthy (5).

Burgess's testimony shares facets of signed affidavits familiar in Ufology, but in both realms hard evidence is unobtainable. There are no supporting documents in strategic lore - or, indeed, photographs. Sadly, we must conclude that here is a common theme in a new guise. Rather than waiting as a once and future reserve to be reckoned with, a dispersed fabled strategic reserve now pounds through ethereal junctions of a steam Valhalla in the sky. Some train-spotters cannot comprehend that memory lane is just a dead end track.

#### REFERENCES.

- (1) Screeton, Paul, 'Steamed up about Strategic Reserve', Mail, Hartlepool, 29.8.80.
- (2) Wilcock, David, 'Strategic Reserve', STEAM RAILWAY, No.3, 1979, and correspondence in later issues.
- (3) Screeton, Paul, 'Tracking down steam engines of Yesteryear', Mail, Hartlepool, 11.11.80.
- (4) P. Hands, 190, Yoxall Road, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands, B90 3RN.
- (5) Wilcock, David, 'Strategic Coincidence', STEAM WORLD, No.1, 1981.

## ABSTRACTS

All of the journals, magazines, etc. listed below have appeared in the journal listings in this issue, or in CG1 or 2. We will produce a full listing again in CG5, but if you are unable to obtain details for any publication mentioned, please drop us a line with an s.a.e. and we'll be happy to supply them. The abstracts, and any opinions contained therein, are the work of Kevin McClure and Jenny Randles.

#### Ancient Skills and Wisdom Review. No.13.

'Centres of Energy', an EM piece, by Circumlibra (the late Frank Lockwood) plus the customary copious and extensive reviews.

#### The Atlantean. No.184.

Background and discussion of methods and prophecies of Nostrodamus, 'Climate and Human Behaviour in the 1980's', Hopi tribal concepts of Armageddon, and instructions on how to find lost cats!

#### Black Mirror. No.1.

Technique of magical thinking; incense in ritual; text of the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram.

#### BUFORA Bulletin. No.2.

Second issue of this downgraded (and now editorless) BUFORA Journal is far better than the first. Brief comments on amnesia and the biological basis of memory (Moira McGhee); issue one, in this form, of Nigel Watson's pre-1947 UFO bulletin (on airships and ancient UFO sightings), and comments on liaison and cooperation between groups from Jenny Randles and Bob Easton. All the ins and outs of BUFORA's year (inside and outside of ufology).

#### Earthlink. August 1981.

The usual intriguing and pleasantly produced mixture of reports, messages from aliens, inspirational material, and the ETH. But what makes this issue almost unique is a review which finds credible Frank Johnson's amazing book 'The Janos People'.

#### Fate. October 1981.

Apart from the excellent 'Starbaby' (see 'Skeptics and Inquirers'), there is also an Americanised version of Hilary Evans' 'Welsh Triangle' expedition, and a discussion of Pole shifts.

#### Flying Saucer Review. Vol.27. No.2.

Turned out to be quite a precipitative issue. Main item is a report by Jenny Randles on a Manchester group investigation into a curious case from W.Yorks. involving a mysterious dead body and a subsequent time-loss CE4 by the police officer called in. No direct connection was implied, but newshounds being newshounds they sniffed and sniffed until they found one. In the subsequent blaze of media coverage (which mentioned neither FSR nor the investigators from MUFORA - thankfully!) both local and national press squeezed out of the W.Yorks. police that they had investigated the dead body in connection with possible UFO sightings (not that they found a connection, mind you, but to the press, what the Hell?). The Sunday Mirror even gave the story front page banner headlines - "AMAZING UFO DEATH RIDDLE" - with passing relevance to the truth as presented earlier in FSR. Since this publicity explosion, the West

Yorks. police have withdrawn support from all UFO investigations, and the officer concerned had to sign a 'secrets act' form stopping him mid-course in the regression hypnosis experiments he was undergoing. This is all rather sad really, as the MUFORA team complied with the Code of Practice, beyond its limits. Not only did none of them ever speak to the press in any way, but they also kept the police officer's name confidential (using a pseudonym in FSR) despite his having signed to the effect that MUFORA could use his name, and despite said police officer having his name and photograph included in the local paper (at his instigation) a few days after his encounter! Those who wish to read sinister plots into this will find much fuel for their fires! But even so, the saga is a most enlightening one concerning human nature, publicity, and ufology/public inter-relations.

Fortean Times. No.35.

What can I say - this magazine makes me appallingly jealous! Another superb issue, with John Michell on Darwinism, a detailed re-examination of the Grace Pett SHC case (this is a classic example of historical investigation), a fascinating account of imagined runic writings, and vast quantities of news and events. Undoubtedly the best magazine in the whole research field that is covered by ASSAP.

Journal of Transient Aerial Phenomena. Vol.2. No.1.

Bertil Kuhlemann on operational levels in UFO research, Stuart Campbell on defining the term 'UFO' (an uphill task if ever I heard of one), an excellent review of the regression-material in the Hill case, plus the regular informative features.

The Lamp of Thoth. No.6.

Almost beyond description, but this issue has Enochian Chess by J.H.Brennan, Doreen Valiente on the Tarot, the sinking of Atlantia, initiation ceremonies, refutation, by gematria, of Crowley being the Beast of Revelation, building an Arcadian Harp, Lucid Dreams and R.E.M., and much more. Tremendous.

Magonia. No.7.

Peter Rogerson, the man of a million references, with a remarkable historical/developmental account of UFO belief and understanding, "Where have all the UFO's gone?" Plus the second part of 'From Conspirators to Contactees', and a thoughtful editorial on not making a living from ufology - something most of us find all too easy!

Meeting the Third Millennium. Vol.2. No.1.

Dan Lloyd on 'Astrology; true or false?'; Russell Evans on Teilhard de Chardin; Roma Browne on the contemporary significance of fairy legends.

Mersey News. 21 & 22.

Barry Cashin writes in both issues about the split between real, solid, UFO events and a parapsychological experience. He presents some reasonably intelligent arguments for his case. Danny Cheveux (21) takes the other line, and argues for physically real craft by discussing 'retrievals' and other 'solid' evidence. Back in 22 there is a review from investigator Les Barlow of a fascinating case from Shropshire (the three witnesses live on Merseyside) which is virtually beyond categorisation. They saw a floating, pulsating humanoid form, multi-coloured with 'jellyfish' eyes - but what was it? A UFO entity? . . . A ghost? . . . A time distortion? A perfect indication of the fluidity of subject boundaries, and the value of an inter-disciplinary approach.

Nufois News. Vol.1. No.2.

Report on the year's NUFOIS activities, plus a lengthy, uncredited, and rather surprising critique of ASSAP itself, and of its approach to ufology in the UK. Perhaps unreasonably pessimistic, it seems to be more propaganda than constructive criticism. However, it will be interesting to see if events develop as the writer suggests they might.

Occult World. No.6.

Discussion, interesting as ASSAP gains momentum, of cooperation between Pagans; publicity, image, communication, etc. Continued in no.7. Also a useful range of contacts and adverts.

Parapsychology Review. Vol.12. No.4.

Psychological dimensions of the OOBEE; arguments, experiments, and theories re. OOBEE's; induced OOBEE's in different groups; and the idea of the experience being related to individual absorption levels. Also a reassessment of near-death experiences.

Probe Report. Vol.2. No.2.

Particularly valuable, illustrated reappraisal and revelation of the Wiesbaden 'Mister X' crashed and recovered alien case. Makes Charles Berlitz appear sillier than ever, but with his money I don't suppose he cares much. This issue of 'Probe' is worth obtaining for future reference.

Sangreal. Vol.4. No.3.

'The Sin of the Mindless', by Gef Stuart Dearn, the editor. A fascinating piece, drawing from Dion Fortune, Blavatsky and Regardie, discussing aspects of historical and contemporary relations between the human and non-human. Plus ritual in Dante, and useful contacts. No.4, includes 'The Nature contact of the Celts', Lost landmarks in S.England, and a thorough discussion of runes.

The Serpent. No.1?

Spell for dissolving partnerships, Healing Ritual with Candles, unusual ads!

Skeptical Inquirer. Vol.5. No.4.

Two psychics 'investigated' by James Randi; survey of beliefs among members of the U.S. Parapsychological Association; expectation factors in personal validations of astrology, and some insights - which seem well-argued - into the Travis Walton UFO abduction case. I think these may well be of importance.

Skywatch. No.40.

Mostly devoted to a long reprinted article from Australia. By John Prytz, and entitled 'Information needs of Ufologists', it looks at the various sources of data available to ufologists, and suggests how an individual can best mobilise his personal resources store to produce maximum benefit for himself and the subject at large. A great deal of discussion of this topic is occurring at this time (as debate forum in OG2) and this article is timely. Elsewhere there are letters, book reviews and news jottings. But I like the 'End Bits' best - each issue. Some topical, often amusing quotes . . . e.g. 'Some so-called open minds should be immediately closed for repairs' . . . nice one, Anon, whoever you are!

Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal. Vol.4. No.2.

'Psychical Research and Parapsychology'. Beautifully produced survey of parapsychology, treating it as a heresy with the features of a cult. From an impressive evangelical Christian organisation. Worth obtaining.

The Supernaturalist. No.1.

A most impressive start from Andy Collins, who is already known to many of us. A solo effort on the writing side, the 64 pages include fascinating background and updating on the Aveley Abduction and its aftermath, a historical appraisal of ufology, and a discussion of the nature of ghosts, plus Essex' First Ley Hunter, The Path of the Dragon, and more, all linked by Andy's now more even-tempered New Age approach to the paranormal. Excellent value - please see Journal Listings for details.

Sut Anubis. Vol.2. No.4.

Occult crossword, runes, and a reprint of a rare short story, 'The Stratagem', by Aleister Crowley.

UFO Insight. Vol.2. No.3.

An editorial criticism of remarks in CQ2, an informative interview with Bertil Kuhlmann, who also provides a scheme for the organisation of data. Another version of the revelations in 'Probe' re. the retrieval nonsense that appears in 'The Roswell Incident'. Less fortunately, yet another episode in the Randles/FUFOR/Llanerchymedd saga, which is becoming terminally boring. Surely, it would be best if any further discussion were to take place away from the printed page, be it in UFO Insight, or Northern Ufology.

STOP PRESS

Society for Psychical Research. Journal, October 1981.

Anita Gregory on "Psychical Research as a Social Activity", concluding that, it is of importance to keep 'open lines of communication between high level research and social ground of phenomena'. Together with a report on the 1981 International Conference, interesting discussion of the 'Minilab', and a most promising (in view of our recent moans) request from the Editor for comments on the technical level at which submissions should be acceptable - or, to put it another way, how many SPR members can hope to understand their Journal! If you are a member, please try to respond. The SPR Newsletter, No.3. also continues in its informative open-minded way, with a very fair contribution about ASSAP and its aims.

INFO Journal. No.39.

Canadian Lake Monsters noted by the excellent "X", Phantom Planets - more particularly Vulcan, and some anomalous animals from Loren Coleman.

Psychic News. 14.11.81.

Yet more dramatic revelations, again by the recurrent Alan Cleaver, who seems to be working fearfully hard at his new job! A remarkable case, if it is true, involving some complex and shadowy 'cross-correspondences' that seem to still be happening. I suspect that some of the elements at least have an air of hoax about them, and it is clear that much more research is required before the claims can be regarded as verified. However, this is first-rate raw material, and it ought to be perused. Might ASSAP investigators be invited in to the investigation of such cases found by PN?

The following piece is essentially the product of my own laziness. To save myself a seemingly lengthy task, I asked Hilary Evans to provide a sort of 'super-abstract' of the lengthy article, 'STARBABY', which appears in the October 1981 issue of 'Fate' magazine. This article runs to some 32 closely argued pages, and contains the most cogent criticism yet of the attitudes and intentions of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, who publish the 'Skeptical Inquirer'. If you can find a copy of 'Fate', then read the article in full. As Hilary has found, it just will not readily abstract into a page or two, but nonetheless his comments on the issues that it raises are relevant and timely.

## SKEPTICS AND INQUIRERS

by Hilary Evans

When I was at college I had a girlfriend who was a member of the University Labour Club. When I asked what the club did, she said they had speakers to lecture them. What kind of speakers? From the Labour Party of course, what else? When I suggested Communists, Anarchists, even Tories, for them to test their beliefs on, she was horrified.

Yet such is the true dialectic whereby intellectual progress is made: opponents' views are the finest whetstone to sharpen your own. The Catholic Church wisely employs an Advocate Diaboli to give reasons why so-and-so should not be made a saint; similarly, in the world of claims for the paranormal, the cold questions of the sceptic provide an admirable antidote to the gush of the gullible.

But we have a right to ask that it be true scepticism: and recent disclosures about CSICOP - the American-based Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal - once again raise the question, what is a sceptic? (No, Nigel, it is not what you put Dettol on - Editor). (1).

The Oxford Dictionary is over-helpful, recognising several alternative meanings. But one thing emerges clearly: if scepticism implies a reluctance to believe in a thing, it implies also a reluctance to believe in the contrary of that thing. A sceptic may not believe in reincarnation, but neither does he believe in the impossibility of reincarnation: if he does, then he has abandoned his sceptical position and has become as committed a believer as, on the opposite side, the man who believes in reincarnation. Of all the meanings offered by Oxford, none is in my opinion better than Sir Walter Raleigh's: "The Sceptick doth neither affirm, neither deny any position; but doubteth of it".

In 1930 Walter Prince, Research Officer of the American Society for Psychical Research, wrote a book (2) demonstrating how otherwise intelligent men and women, when they cross the 'enchanted boundary' which separates the normal from the paranormal, let go the standards of judgement and logic they customarily employ, and resort to false reasoning and emotional evaluation such as they would not dream of applying in other fields. Nor, half a century later, are matters much improved. His hostility to the very idea of UFO's led American journalist Philip Klass to an absurdly unscientific notion that the majority of UFO's can be explained as a form of ball lightning (3), while the eminent astronomer Donald Menzel produced a host of 'natural' explanations hardly less

far-fetched than those of the most extreme True Believers (4). Even the more rational Robert Sheaffer makes his case only by selection and evasion (5).

Sheaffer is a leading light of CSICOP, writing frequently for its journal (6). As a ufologist, I am of course interested in how sceptics approach the UFO problem; but I have yet to see any writer in the Skeptical Inquirer even consider the possibility that UFO's may present a valid subject for serious scientific enquiry. Instead, their comment is limited to easy jibes at far-out UFO claims, or jeers at the bafflement of serious ufologists. Such derision of the wilder shores of ufology is easy; constructive criticism is rather more difficult, and it is significant that the most effective debunking of ufology has come not from CSICOP, but from within ufology itself, from working ufologists such as Hendry (7) and Story (8).

Hitherto, selective comment, evasion and faulty logic have been the worst that could be said of the sceptics who set themselves up as champions of reason against the rising tide of pseudoscience. But now they stand convicted of something worse. In a 32-page article in FATE, Dennis Rawlins, a physics graduate from Harvard and one of the co-founders of CSICOP in 1976, claims that the Committee "bungled their major investigation, falsified the results, covered up their errors, and gave the boot to a colleague who threatened to tell the truth".

The specific issue was that hottest of potatoes, Gauquelin's neo-astrological claims (9). Astrology has always been the pseudoscience par excellence, and it was an article attacking neo-astrology which led to the formation of CSICOP in the first place. Once formed, the Committee set about a replication of Gauquelin's claims, confident that they would not hold up; unfortunately for CSICOP, they did.

At this point a truly scientific body would have openly admitted the findings and acknowledged that, at the least, Gauquelin had indicated an anomalous finding which merited serious investigation. But CSICOP, seeing in such an admission the thin end of a wedge which would open up the floodgates of pseudoscience, preferred to attempt a cover-up. Unfortunately they managed it with as much ineptitude as certain other compatriots operating in a different sphere: now they stand convicted of malpractice as blushing as that of any of the pseudoscientists they have sought to unmask.

Another CSICOP co-founder was Danish-born Marcello Truzzi, a sociologist at Eastern Michigan University. Like Rawlins, he had welcomed the formation of a rational, nonsense-exposing committee which would objectively evaluate claims for the paranormal; but within a year he had come to see that objectivity was not the name of CSICOP's game. He had been hoping for 'not a de-bunking, but a truth-seeking operation', but found that for his fellow-members, investigation and debunking were synonymous. In 1979 he claimed "the Committee is emerging as an advocacy body upholding the orthodox establishment view of science towards these claims. It is not merely sceptical in the sense that all good science is sceptical of extraordinary claims. It is ultrasceptical, it is hard-line sceptical; in some cases it is dogmatically denying". (10).

That statement was made two years before Rawlins blew the gaff; today, CSICOP's credibility is so low that it is doubtful if it will ever regain even what respect it formerly had. Which, such as we may deplore the attitude of the Klases and the Randis, is a sad consequence for open and honest debate.

Fortunately, there are other voices. Best of all, there is CSICOP defector himself, with a journal which breathes the true spirit of scepticism (11). In its pages, believers and their opponents meet in open debate, without prejudice and partiality, 'neither affirming, neither denying, but doubting'.

1. FATE, October 1981.
2. Walter Franklin Prince, The Enchanted Boundary, ASPR 1930.
3. Philip J. Klass, UFO's Identified, Random House 1968.
4. Donald H. Menzel & Lyle G. Boyd, The World of Flying Saucers, Doubleday 1963.
5. Robert Sheaffer, The UFO Verdict, Prometheus 1981.
6. The SKEPTICAL INQUIRER, published quarterly by CSICOP, Box 229, Central Park Station, Buffalo, NY 14215, USA.
7. Allan Hendry, The UFO Handbook, Doubleday 1979.
8. Ronald J. Story, UFO's and the limits of Science, NEL 1981.
9. Michel Gauquelin, Cosmic Influences on Human Behaviour, Garnstone 1974.
10. FATE, September-October 1979.
11. THE ZETETIC SCHOLAR, published twice a year by M. Truzzi, Dept of Sociology, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197, USA.

## Teach Your Children Well

While we have no right to stand in judgement upon mere eccentricity, in a research field like ours less than in any other, I must express considerable reservations about a potentially offensive piece that has recently appeared in the magazine 'MAGIC SAUCER', a magazine which is contributed to by a number of respected writers, some of them ASSAP members, and which is aimed very much at children and young people. We have become accustomed to the less than verifiable messages from extra-terrestrials that form the basic philosophy of MS, and the uncritical attitude to sighting reports - these are no worse than appear in a number of other places.

However, in the latest issue, no.17, there is an uncredited article about the group of children who suffer from Hypercalcaemia, the 'Pixie-Children' as the media have recently termed them. The article points out that all the children are facially similar, have unlimited energy, and abnormally high intelligence. It also mentions that the Infantile Hypercalcaemia Foundation has been set up, "to seek the truth behind the mystery of the Pixie People". While mysteriously failing to mention that the children are effectively quite seriously handicapped by the disease, the article concludes . . . . .

"In fact, none of the Pixie People look anything like their own families. Yet they all look incredibly like each other! Magic Saucer asks:- By what deliberate coincidence of nature did they all take a high dosage of Vitamin D? Was this just one factor of their common karma? Have they all perhaps reincarnated from another planet - the same planet - to be here on Earth for some special reason at this time?"

MS is sent unsolicited to children reported in the media as having been involved in sightings. At worst, a copy could go to a child who knows one who suffers from IHC - or even to a family in which a child has the disease. At best, unless a clear statement appears in the magazine's next issue, many of its readers are going to have the most peculiar ideas about the delightful, attractive, but handicapped children they see on the television. Readers must surely be told that the ideas in this theory are wholly speculative, and without foundation; as they stand, they do all of us who are striving for scientific standards a grave disservice, and may have wider effects.

# Journal Update and News

It will not require much perception to tell that there is a very high proportion of magic, magick, and witchcraft oriented publications listed this issue. No, I'm not sitting here in a horned helmet, garlanded in oak leaves; nor, indeed (chance would be a fine thing) am I off to the sabbat when I've finished, trailing nubile initiates behind me like some Alex Sanders of ASSAP. The simple truth is that when you send off for one magazine in any particular field you find a list of others, and so on till you have a stack of them, and you wonder why you ever started! But I do think that such magazines cover another interpretation of, another angle on, spontaneous, or even contrived, anomalous experience, and that they therefore have a place in our own field of study. Anyway, that's my excuse, and I'm sticking to it!

## NEW LISTINGS.

The Atlantean. The professionally-produced journal of The Atlanteans, a British religious/philosophical grouping. Atlantis, astrology, prophecy, trance-messages, and a good 'news' section. 75p a copy, £3 p.a. from; The Atlanteans, 51, Rodney Road, Cheltenham.

Black Mirror. "A Journal of Wicca and High Magick". Practical magic, with instructions for performing same, reviews, and editorial. Seems to be sensible and level-headed. Quarterly, £2.50p.a. or single issue 65p from; BCM Box 641, London, WC1N 3XX.

Fate. Probably known to most of you, but worth mentioning because it is becoming so hard to find on public sale in the U.K. It only costs 45p. yet setting aside the trashy adverts, and the silly personal experiences, every issue contains at least one major, original article by a leading name in the UFO or paranormal field. It's worth the trouble of finding - maybe if we all ask for it, we can encourage the distributors a little!

The Lamp of Thoth. This is an ambitious, wide ranging and informative journal of what I can only describe as The Occult at its best, with name writers, a sense of humour, and a rare talent for self-criticism. Packed with original material: instruction, theory, experience and system, and an agony column to boot! I found this most impressive. Six-issue sub. £7.77p, or sample issue £1.50p from Sorcerer's Apprentice, 4/8, Burley Lodge Road, Leeds, LS6 1QP.

Occult World. An interesting, co-operative effort, duplicated, quarterly, by a number of known and unknown names across the whole field from SF to off-white magic. Strong, but intelligent Pagan theme running through this improving and ambitious magazine. £1.20p.a. from Magdalene Graham, 91, Lytham Road, Blackburn, Lancs.

Parapsychology Review. Journal of the Parapsychology Foundation, bimonthly. A serious, sensible, and above all approachable journal of parapsychological research, with a number of to-the-point articles, reviews, letters, etc. \$9 for one year from, The Editor, 228, East 71st. Street, New York, NY 10021.

Sangreal. "Journal of the Mysteries in Britain". Natural Magic, Atlantis, earth mysteries, poetry, reviews, and more. An intelligent, warm journal, well-produced and edited. Quarterly, 75p from BM Sangreal, London, WC1N 3XX.

The Serpent. Another Occult/Magic magazine, recently published. Cheap and informative, and containing spells and rituals that appear coherent and reasonable. 60p. an issue from The Serpent, 21, Hollyford, Billericay, Essex.

Soluna. "For todays explorers of consciousness." An emphasis on healing, holistics, and new age consciousness, with a 'New Life Diary' supplement, well-compiled, of courses, fayres, lectures, resources and more. Nicely presented, 80p an issue, bi-monthly, or £4.80p.a. from Soluna Publications, Rosewood House, Lydbrook, Forest of Dean, Glos.

The Supernaturalist. Anyone who knows Andy Collins through his extensive work with UFOIN and Parasearch will welcome the return of his enthusiasm and energy to the publications field. Strangely, perhaps even unnaturally, silent since the difficult and unfortunate demise of 'Strange Phenomena', Andy has started producing a voluminous (64pp), handsome, illustrated journal which seems to be written entirely by Andy himself. The first issue shows great promise for the future (see abstracts). Hopefully quarterly, £1.50p an issue from Andy at 19, St. David's Way, Wickford, Essex.

Sut Anubis. A pleasant, original journal of magick and related subjects, with an emphasis on the work of Aleister Crowley. Available from an excellent book and equipment shop (who give first-rate prices for secondhand books!) Occultique, 73, Kettering Road, Northampton. 75p a copy, £2.75p.a. Quarterly.

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We have carried journal listings in each of the previous issues of CG. So far we have listed some 58 journals, with brief details. We are abstracting from all these each quarter as appears relevant, and each year will carry a full listing of all those still in publication. We very much welcome magazines and journals for listing, though we cannot, for financial reasons, promise to exchange in all cases. Please send any items to Kevin McClure.

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There are not many events to report on or inform about - ASSAP hopes to have a series of major symposia in the early months of 1982, but we have no details as yet. However, the SPR and BUFORA continue to hold worthwhile and well-presented meetings at Kensington Central Library, the SPR at 6.30pm, and BUFORA at 7.00pm.

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BUFORA. 5.12.81. AGM, followed by two films reviewing Space Flight.  
9.1.82. Omar Fowler, Chairman of SIGAP, presents a talk about cases investigated by that group over the past 15 years, with tapes & illustrations.  
6.2.82. Bob Morrell, of NUFOIS, on Substance and Shadow in the ETH, looking at historical aspects, and where the material draws on myth or reality.

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S.P.R. 8.12.81. Joseph Friedman, Psychotherapist, on 'ESP in Dream Groups'.  
14.1.82. (not as previously advertised) Manfred Cassirer speaking about 'Apparitions: Creatures of the Mind ?'  
11.2.81. Peter Fenwick, Neuro-physiologist at St.Thomas' Hospital on 'The Physiology of Psi.'



# The Incidence of Coincidence

A RESEARCH PROPOSAL by JENNY RANGLES

For some years now I have been intrigued by the question of personal coincidences; apparently meaningless conjunctions of relatively minor incidents, which on the face of it seem totally inconsequential. It probably began for me with an experience when I was 13 and at school in Manchester.

I had unfortunately had my bicycle stolen from the school. As I had a couple of miles to travel to where I lived, I rather missed it, but the Police offered me little hope of its recovery. Then three or four days later I went to visit some relatives, who lived a couple of miles away from me and in the opposite direction to the school. Imagine my disbelief when parked outside the house next door was my bike! The thief, by an incredible coincidence, had gone to visit some relatives of his who just happened to live there! Of course, this may have been, and probably was, no more than that - just a coincidence. But it remains possible that somehow I was engineered to be in the right place at the right time because of my need. I certainly could not have afforded a new cycle.

I believe that a detailed study of this strange branch of the paranormal might provide us with important clues about the nature of reality. Why should I think that? Well, most people will say they are not psychic and yet, I have found, the experience of odd coincidences is remarkably commonplace. I feel this may be because the coincidence is a kind of first order manifestation of psychic awareness (for want of more apt terminology). It seems able to filter through even the stiffest consciousness barriers of the hardened sceptic.

Certainly I do not regard myself as particularly psychic. The experiences I have had in this area are few and minor. Yet coincidences seem to force themselves upon me - I often find it impossible to escape from them. So much so that I am now fairly convinced that there is much more to this problem than random linkings of past events. Now that I actively seek them out I find them with almost alarming regularity.

There are two real categories of coincidence. One concerns random (or apparently random) world events. For example, between August 12 and 14 1981, there were three serious accidents off the British coast involving forms of 'hovering' air transport (two helicopters and a jet foil). 'Accidents come in threes' is one of those old sayings which does seem (for some reason) to have a basis in truth. But I think it might need to be extended to 'coincidences come in threes'.

In 'UFO's - A British Viewpoint', Peter Warrington and I refer to a series of coincidences he and I underwent in our time spent with the contactee Gary. In 'Alien Contact' I describe more recent examples from my personal experience. Now I think the time has come for me to rationalise these things into a proper research study, I will give a more detailed example of the personal coincidence syndrome, which 'coincidentally' happened to me just an hour before I write these lines. Had I left it any longer to record these things the experience would probably have slipped my memory, because the details are so trivial. I am sure this must happen to others, and for that reason I would ask you to keep a diary of coincidental things that happen to you.

On August 17 1981 I had an early morning dream which I recalled on waking (get yourself into the habit of remembering your dreams if you want a quick inroad to apparently psychic experience). It involved me walking along a line of blue seats or benches, hearing a 'tick-tock' sound, feeling frightened and backing off. In my dream Paul bravely ventured in (subconsciously I obviously rate his courage highly!) and picked up a suitcase under the bench. He opened it and pulled out an alarm clock, immediately showing my fears of a bomb to be groundless. This small part of a larger dream seemed silly and meaningless, and would certainly never have been recalled had I not made the effort.

At tea-time that day I was in the kitchen making a meal. The T.V. set had just been switched on in the other room, and I was only semi-aware that a quiz show of some kind was on. I was not listening and at the time did not realise that it was a brand new Granada T.V. quiz played among schools. For some reason my mind did focus on a snatch of conversation from the announcer (what psychologists call the 'cocktail party effect', since we are apparently able to pick out a relevant piece of conversation from a morass of noise at a function like a cocktail party). I heard the announcer say the name "Phil Collins", whom I knew to be a member of a rock group called 'Genesis' (whom I enjoyed, but was no particular fan of). In seconds I realised my error. I had instead heard him say the name 'Peel College', which was one of the competing teams (the other being Morecambe High School). I thought no more of it, seeing the phonetic similarity, and dismissing my misperception. The competitors continued to answer some geographical question or other - it was a general knowledge quiz - but imagine my amazement when to introduce the next question a video of Phil Collins came up on the screen, performing some song or other. I watched the remainder of the quiz and confirmed that there were no other questions like this - indeed, no others about pop music.

Somewhat intrigued I sat down for a moment and thought about coincidences, and for no apparent reason the memory of my odd dream came back (at this stage of course it was just that, and I had no reason to suspect it could possibly be anything else). At that instant - believe it or not - the presenter asked the question, "What is the meaning of the word 'Oneiromancy'?" . . . . the answer, which no team knew, was 'telling the future by means of a dream!' I thought this little more than interesting until the T.V. news came on immediately after the quiz. It would be fair to say I was now expecting something, but I had no idea what. No major news story correlated but then, right at the end, almost as an afterthought, I was treated to the sight of a line of blue benches at Old Trafford Cricket Ground, where I had worked for a brief spell some years ago. A test match had been in progress, and these seats had been cleared of spectators because a bomb had allegedly been placed beneath them. It turned out to be a hoax, and the game was not stopped.

These are three typical and seemingly pointless coincidences . . . which had only one real effect. They led to me writing this article!

Since the phenomenon is cross-disciplinary, and probably of interest to a good few readers, I would like to propose a study. I would certainly be interested to hear from you with your own records of 'coincidence', and if you begin to keep a diary of personal and other instances who knows what we might turn up? If the response merits it, I will endeavour to produce a progress report for CG in due course.

As Jenny has made clear in the preceding article, one of the reasons why so little serious attention has been paid to coincidence, personal premonition, and synchronicity, is that it so often relates to facts and events that are either entirely personal, or at best are meaningful to only a small group of people. Were Jenny not well-known to many of us, we would take little notice of her own particular experiences, and in consequence would quite probably miss something of value. This is not an area in which research is going to provide absolute proof, but rather one where the collection of personal and anecdotal material may eventually establish a pattern by consensus, by the sheer weight of repeating evidence. I would strongly encourage this type of research, because it is almost totally based in anomalous human experience, and is well suited to the style and aims of CG.

I came across the following account (or, at least, across its writer) in the course of business - selling sixties 'underground' magazines and ephemera. The writer wishes to be anonymous, because, and I will vouch for this, there are some crazy Sid Vicious fans who could take his ideas all too seriously, and look for revenge where revenge is probably wholly inappropriate. Though, as Erich von D. might say, who can be sure?

## Did I kill Sid Vicious?

"The future of writing is to see how close you can come to making it happen"

William Burroughs.

I became interested in rocker/poetess Patti Smith, and was collecting poems, articles and records relating to her work. I sent off for a list of old magazines and newspapers, and it came back a few days later with a few hand-written words saying sorry, most of the magazines were pre-Patti Smith, but that there was an old Pink Floyd tape, with about 10 minutes of music recorded by Patti Smith and Pink Floyd's drummer, Nick Mason; it was said to have been recorded in Paris in 1968. My curiosity was aroused for a few reasons, but primarily because Patti Smith hadn't released her first record till 1974.

A biographer has written of Patti . . . "She was a frail skinny kid knocked about by tuberculosis, and after a bout of scarlet fever suffered uncontrollable hallucination. She seems to have grown up in a world of fantasy and fear, and as a child she used to write down her dreams(!)" I decided to do a little research to place the origins of the tape. Patti had worked in a toy factory, and with the savings from the job made her first visit to Paris with her sister Linda. One of the marvellous family trees by rock journalist Pete Frame says it was during May 1969 that she made this first visit to Paris, and this has since been confirmed in a private letter from Patti's mother. Although the two sisters had intended to stay a few weeks, they remained in Paris for over two months. Whilst in Paris, Patti repeatedly went to see Jean Luc Goddard's film, 'One Plus One' (later to be known as 'Sympathy for the Devil', because of the extended studio sequence of the Rolling Stones). I can understand this; whilst I was in Paris two years ago I was able, in one night, to see three Beatles' films and three others.

While in Paris, Patti Smith dreamed of the death of the lead guitarist of the Rolling Stones, Brian Jones, shortly before it happened. It may have been helped along by her tendency to hallucinate, but Patti recalled that in her dream Mick Jagger and Keith Richard were talking to each other in a 'strange language', about a ritual which reminded her of voodoo. Anita Pallenberg was there in the dream, nervously clutching her hands. Patti kept asking everyone "Where's Brian?", "Where'd Brian go?". The answers came in silence, or in quips of "Never mind". She saw Brian pass by "in his giant picture hat, like a Victorian duchess. The dream was like a Renoir painting in a bizarre Victorian scene." Shortly afterwards, Patti read about the death of Brian Jones.

Some time ago, I'd been listening to many of the National Lampoon's satire and parody records, and I started to consider the possibility of producing a similar collection about the media successes of that period, punk rock, and power-pop. My mind enjoyed this challenge, and within a few days I had completed some songs and sketches on the theme. And, too, had drafted a news story about "another rock casualty - Sex Pistol, Sid Vicious". It was such a clear dream or vision - call it what you will.

I'd forgotten all about this piece of work until a few months ago, whilst rummaging through a carrier bag full of assorted writings, I saw the news story I'd written, and felt that I may have been in some way responsible for the death of Sid Vicious. When I then saw this further quote from William Burroughs, I realised the dangers of writing anything at all . . .

"If I really knew how to write, I could write something that someone would read, and it would kill them . . . ."

And as for whether Patti Smith and Nick Mason ever did record together, or when? I never did find that out.

## A LETTER FROM JOHN KEEL

Thanks very much for putting me on the mailing list for 'Common Ground'. I enjoyed no.2. and I wish we had comparable journals here in the U.S.A. Unfortunately, the American publications have long been mired in the UFO myths and dwell endlessly on the manufactured controversies of shriveled minds. The current 'lull' has reduced the UFO field to a handful of diehard crackpot types who snipe at each other in what might be called a battle of wits. So American ufology is a kind of Laurel and Hardy pie throwing contest, completely lacking serious intent or rational content.

There can only be one real question in ufology. All others are superfluous, frivolous and unnecessary. We must ask why specific people in specific geographical locations within a specific time frame undergo specific alterations of consciousness while experiencing stimulation of their perceptive processes from an unknown source? All of the world's religions have tried to deal with this question for thousands of years. When science becomes a religion, or acquires religious-like characteristics, it is scientism-I didn't coin this word - you'll find it in most dictionaries. American ufologists have been practicing scientism, not science. I have never pretended to be a scientist and I have always clearly identified my methodology as journalistic rather than scientific. The scientist counts the angels dancing on the pin head. The journalist studies the pin.

I wish you luck with 'Common Ground' and hope you can continue to stimulate thought without falling prey to the little green man syndrome!

Best,  
John Keel.

One of the most impressive collections of research in the field of anomalous experience and its social effects must be that of the British Airship reports of 1909 and 1913. Gathered by Carl Grove, John Hind, Dirk van der Werff, and the newest inhabitant of 'Magonia', Nigel Watson, and largely compiled and organised by the latter, it is both lengthy and fascinating. We must hope that in due course some bold and imaginative publisher will find his or her way to its being presented in full to a wider audience. For now, we will have to make do with . . . . .

## Phantom Airships over Britain in 1909, and their Impact on Society.

by Nigel Watson

At the beginning of the twentieth century Britain ruled its vast Empire from a solid fortress-like position, due to its geographical isolation and powerful navy. In contrast, at the turn of the century, Germany increasingly became aware of its lack of opportunity for international expansion, and its lack of security. To put it simply, Germany saw England as the barrier to any realistic attempt at material and spiritual domination of the world. Hence, Germany began an aggressive naval building programme in an attempt to upset the international status quo. Not surprisingly, the British government and public felt justifiably concerned about these developments. Furthermore, the development by Count Zeppelin of huge airships meant that the moat-like barrier surrounding Britain could be bridged by a military weapon which could circumvent the awesome power of the Royal Navy. Indeed, when fully tested the Zeppelin could, according to the prophets of doom spy upon, or even bomb, Britain, with impunity.

It is with this background in mind that we can see why the wave of sightings of mysterious 'airships' over Britain in 1909, usually interpreted by observers as being of German origin, had such importance to, and impact upon the British public, and to a lesser extent the British Government.

The sighting which brought the phantom airship to public attention in Britain was made by Police Constable Kettle. He said that, on 23.3.09., "I was on duty in Cromwell Road, Peterborough, and was coming out of Cobden Street into that thoroughfare when I heard what I took to be a motor car, which I judged was some 400 yards distant. It was 5.15 a.m. and still quite dark. I walked along Cromwell Road, expecting to see the lights of an approaching car, but none appeared. Still I could hear the steady buzz of a high-power engine, and suddenly it struck me that the sound was coming, not along the surface of the road, but from above! I looked up, and my eye was at once attracted by a powerful light, which I should judge to be 1200 feet above the earth. Outlined against the stars was a dark body." P.C. Kettle asserted that the aerial object flew at a tremendous speed, and as it disappeared into the northwest, the rattle of its engines gradually grew fainter and fainter. (1).

When sightings of a similar nature became increasingly more common and reached a peak in mid-May, some sections of the press took the opportunity to examine P.C. Kettle's sighting in more detail. Not everybody was inclined to believe in the hypothesis that the Germans were conducting a covert spying mission over Britain as a preliminary to an invasion. Indeed, some newspapers were very sceptical about the validity of the observations reported, and felt that the public imagination had been gripped by a silly and irrational panic generated by a fear of German imperialism. Thus, we can see why the 'Peterborough Citizen' newspaper published an interview with a Peterborough police officer who had an explanation for P.C. Kettle's bizarre sighting experience. The officer told the 'Peterborough Citizen' reporter that, "You may have noticed that for some days and nights before P.C. Kettle's vision there was a very fine kite flying over the neighbourhood of Cobden Street."

"Yes, I did notice it", replied the reporter obligingly, "but I did not think of the thing in connection with the airship."

"Well, that kite would be moored at night, and have a chinese lantern attached to it," explained the officer.

"Which explains the brilliant tail lights!" exclaimed the reporter. "Precisely".

"But how about the airship going at a tremendous pace?" asked the reporter. "Oh, that was a little poetic touch on Kettle's part for the benefit of you interviewers. He did not officially report that, and the wind driving the kite would give the impression of movement."

However, the reporter was yet to be totally convinced, and he wanted to know, "How do you get over the whirring and beating of engines?"

"Oh, that," the nonchalant officer was prepared for this question and as he moved away he casually noted that this, "was the motor which goes all night in the Cooperative Bakery in Cobden Street!"

A mystery is solved! P.C. Kettle saw a kite with a chinese lantern attached, and the wind and the local Cooperative Bakery conspired to make it appear like a noisy airship tearing across the sky in the service of the German military. But if Kettle's sighting was so easily explained why did it take the might of the Peterborough Constabulary five weeks to come up with this solution? Also, why didn't residents of the area see this ubiquitous kite and tell Kettle and the Press about it? Probably, the Peterborough Police Force didn't like the idea that their P.C. Kettle had triggered off a nationwide phantom airship panic, and felt that a mundane explanation for his observation might salvage their reputation at the expense of Kettle's.

The wave of sightings which followed Kettle's in May were 'solved' by an whole host of, often, imaginative explanations, though many of these were more bizarre than the actual sightings themselves! But we do have to admit that many of the sightings can be explained in mundane terms. One such case is the Major Mayfield Affair.

He wrote to a London newspaper from his home, The House, Pinchbeck Road, Spalding, explaining to readers that . . .

"While motoring home from Crowland along the banks of Cowbit Wash I was surprised and somewhat alarmed to hear a peculiar whirring in the air - very low down. I thought it was a flock of wild ducks, which frequent this part of the fens. But this illusion was quickly disposed of as I then saw a strong powerful light and a big black object just overhead, and distinctly heard men talking in a strong guttural tone. It passed over Cowbit Wash, and then across the shipping in the River Welland in a line for Cowbirne, towards the Wash. My object in writing is to ask if some inquiry could not be made by the Government?"

Superficially, Major Mayfield's testimony seems quite intriguing, especially since he claimed to see the structure of the airship and actually heard the guttural tones of its occupants. A reporter, however, discovered that no Major Mayfield lived in Spalding. Instead it was found that a well-known character in the district called Samuel Mayfield, who often attached the label 'General' to his name, lived at the address given. Unfortunately for the pro-airship lobby, he resided in a workhouse, and he was not capable of writing. (3). Apparently, someone had distorted his name in order to deliver to the world a piece of satirical correspondence.

Not long afterwards 'Mayfield' wrote another letter which showed his concern about the threat of invasion. This was his story; -

Crossing from Hamburg on Saturday night, my interest and suspicions were aroused by hearing sounds of what I judged to be subterranean excavation while passing over one of the shallows to the north-west of the Netherland coast. The sounds, possibly those of mining drills, were quite audible, as the sea was quiet and calm. This information I volunteer in order that the Government may make inquiries into the matter. Such an invasion would undoubtedly be more to be feared than any which might be attempted by aid of either marine or aerial navigation. (4).

The threat from the air was nothing compared to this new threat exposed by Mayfield, but not many people were prepared to accept such a far-fetched story. After this letter Mayfield seems to have had enough fun, and no more was heard from him.

In the first few days of May the airship sightings centred on the east coast of England, where the threat of invasion was felt most acutely. There is not enough room here to detail every sighting, but one notable observation was made by Mr.C.W. Allen and 2 friends. On the 13th May they were driving to Market Harborough at night when they were startled by a loud bang followed by a 'tock, tock, tock' sound emanating from the sky. Looking up, they saw a torpedo-shaped object which had lights attached to its front and rear. It seemed to be going at a steady rate of 20m.p.h.. and was about 500 to 600 feet up. The most interesting part of their sighting is the detail that they claimed to see men on a platform beneath the 100 foot long craft. Eventually it disappeared in the direction of Peterborough. (5).

On the same day, Royal servants at Sandringham claimed that they had seen an airship hovering over the estate. (6). But the most fascinating incident was alleged to have occurred in the middle of Ham Common, London. Mr.Bond and a Mr.Grahame were walking along when the latter gentleman stopped to take a stone out of his shoe. It was then that they heard a soft buzzing sound. They turned and saw an airship close to the ground, which contained a clean-shaven man who looked like a Yankee, and a German-looking man who was smoking a calabash pipe. The Yankee swung a searchlight in their direction several times, causing them to be blinded temporarily by the glare. Despite this Mr. Grahame said, "They were on the ground quite close to us, and I went right up to them. The German spoke first. He said, "I-am-sorry. Have-you-any-tobacco?" I just happened to have an ounce or two in my pouch, and I gave it to him, saying, "Here is my pouch. Help yourself." Mr. Grahame said the craft looked like a collection of big cigar boxes, it seemed to be about 200 to 250 feet long, and carried three propellers. The occupants were contained in a kind of steel wire cage, and in front of them was a row of handles. In support of Mr. Grahame, the other witness said that the "German gentleman had a cap and a beard, and a map in front of him. It was fastened on a board, and there were red discs as though they had been stuck into the map with pins."

Then, according to Mr. Grahame, "We saw the tall man pull one of the levers down - just like a beer engine, only thinner - and then he switched the light

off, and the aeroplane went without either of the men saying goodbye. It disappeared in 10 seconds, and was gone before we could see where it had gone to. It was a very dark night. (7).

Like contemporary UFO close encounter stories, the incident reported by Mr. Grahame and Mr. Bond certainly is of an eccentric nature, equal to the imagination of the mysterious Major Mayfield. However, this was not the only encounter with occupants of the airships. Only five days later, an elderly man called Mr. C. Lethbridge said he saw them carrying out their dubious activities on the summit of Caerphilly Mountain, Wales.

He had been presenting his Punch-and-Judy show in Senyhenydd and was returning to his home in Cardiff. The time was 11p.m. when he saw 20 or 30 yards away a long tube-shaped contraption lying next to the roadside. Beside it stood two military-looking men, who wore thick fur coats and fur caps. On hearing the noisy rattle of his spring-cart the gentlemen quickly picked up something from the road and began to speak fast and furiously in a language Mr. Lethbridge did not understand. This bizarre scenario scared the witness, but at this moment he said that, 'The long thing on the ground rose up slowly, I was standing still at the time, quite amazed, and when it was hanging a few feet off the ground the men jumped into a little carriage suspended from it, and gradually the whole thing rose into the air in a zig-zag fashion. When they had cleared the telegraph wires that pass over the mountain two lights like electric lamps shone out and the thing went higher into the air and sailed away toward Cardiff.'

Only two hours later at 1.15a.m. on the 19th May, a sighting of an airship was made by several workers on the Queen Alexandra Dock, Cardiff. The cigar-shaped apparition carried two lights, and travelled at a fast speed from the direction of Newport and curved over the docks, finally disappearing in the direction of Weston. Men working on loading the steamer 'Arndale' said, "The night was clear, and the airship could be distinctly seen, and the whirring of its motor was heard by us all". (8).

On the afternoon of the 19th May, Mr. Lethbridge took members of the press to the spot where he had encountered the airship. There they found a 45 foot long gash in the ground, 'as though a ploughshare had been drawn across it', and evidence of the grass having recently been trampled was found. A lot of rubbish was found in the form of a mass of pulpy paper, and scraps of strong blue paper which bore figures and letters upon them. Strwn amongst this were slips of newspapers which had references to the German Army, to airships, and to the Wright Brothers. To add to the puzzle the mystified searchers also found the lid of a tin box which had protected some metal polish paste, and strangest of all a chain and small plug attached to a red label was discovered. The red label had a French message on it which caused some to believe that this had been part of an explosive mechanism, although the Michelin Tyre Company later revealed that it was nothing more than a device for fitting valve caps to tyre inflators. (9). People at the time who believed that the witnesses actually were seeing airships, and not the products of hoaxers or simple mis-interpretation, had several ideas about the origin of the airship.

The optimistic opinion was that the craft had been built secretly by the British Government, or that a private inventor had perfected an aerial vehicle. It was considered in one quarter that an aeroplane had been secretly constructed in a shed in Yarmouth, another quarter believed that it came from the factory of a motor car manufacturer in the Birmingham district.

The more pessimistic believed the airship emanated from Germany, one person even speculated that the airship seen over the Cardiff area was being launched from a steamer positioned in the Bristol Channel. (10). Another person, called Dr. M.B. Boyd claimed that he had invented the airship which Mr. Lethbridge had seen. He said, "The form of construction of my ship is known to very few people besides myself, and they are all pledged to secrecy. The ship is 120 feet long and 300 horse power: unlike the usual airship it has no car suspended from the envelope . . . . I can carry three men and enough petrol (600 gallons) to last 1,400 miles." It seems that Dr. Boyd's invention never emerged from its shroud of secrecy, and so we can only conclude that he was a bit of a fibber. (11). Aeronautical experts were not inclined to believe in the existence of the airship. Mr. Percival Spencer pointed out that the searchlights carried by the airship would be prohibitively heavy due to the weight of the batteries involved. The secretary of the Aero Club, Mr. H.E. Perrin, observed that the relatively rapid ascent of Mr. Lethbridge's airship was remarkable especially since he saw no ballast thrown out of the craft, and none was found in the area of the event. (12,13).

Since the aeronautical experts were rather tight-lipped, the newspapers turned to a more vocal type of expert who had another solution worthy of exposure to the public. Several psychologists were consulted; one claimed that, 'hallucination by suggestion is indicated . . . So many stories of airships are going about that it is quite possible that people of unstable mentality might build in their minds from some suggestively similar but commonplace sight the vision of an airship.' (14).

The overwhelming majority of people had the notion that the German Government was responsible for the wave of sightings. This hypothesis like all the others could not be proven, and little solid evidence existed to support such a view. Circumstantially the German Government seemed the most obvious culprit, and for this reason the Anglo-German cold war became even more frosty. The extent of the poor relations between these two nations can be seen in this terse statement by Herr Dernburg, the father of the German Colonial Secretary. 'While Germans may shrug their shoulders at the symptoms recently manifested of the state of the British mind towards Germany, namely, the invasion scare, and the stories of 40,000 spies disguised as waiters, of vessels cruising off the mouth of the Humber, and of a mysterious airship hovering over England at night - these are most serious factors in the situation, for when an external incident, exciting the popular imagination, occurs, even a peace-loving government may be driven to the most fateful decisions.' (15)

To conclude, we can see that the British 1909 phantom airship wave has certain parallels with the contemporary UFO experience. On an aggregate level we can see that both emerged during a period of cold war and general international tension. Along with such tensions we have similar psychological explanations for such sightings, and the testimony of experts that such craft cannot be built by the existing technology of man. Out of the woodwork came (and come) jokers with kites, experimental hoaxers, and people with a vast spectrum of explanations. In the same way rumours of secret or friendly Government or private inventors were (and are) alleged to be responsible for airships and today's (true) UFO's: as were (and are) foreign Governments and individuals who, perhaps, are not so friendly. In the 1909 wave the idea that the Germans were responsible for the phantom airships permeated most of the discussion on the subject just as the extraterrestrial hypothesis (E.T.H.) permeates speculation on the subject of UFO's. Most intriguingly of all the alleged behaviour of the airships and their occupants are very similar to the behaviour of modern day UFO's and their occupants. Such parallels as the cigar-shape, powerful lights or searchlights, tremendous speeds, eccentric motions, elusiveness, etc., can be observed in the sighting reports of both

airships and UFO's. Such interconnections could very well be meaningful and important, but they should not be interpreted as confirming the existence of an extramundane phenomena which spans cultural, temporal, and geographical boundaries. Only when we have a firm grasp of the unique, particular, and different reported events of such historical waves, can we then proceed to make hypotheses about general patterns which might illuminate our conception of the UFO situation and related matters. Unfortunately, our prejudices concerning the nature of modern-day UFO's can make our historical research biased to such an extent that it is meaningless. The 'God was an Ancient Astronaut' brigade are a sad example of where such speculation leads us, and this path should be avoided at all costs. (16).

Lastly, it is worthwhile to note that the British 1909 sightings had a direct political bearing which led people to see the German threat in a tangible manner. The U.S.A. 1947 sightings and those that followed could have similarly presented the American people with 'evidence' of the Russian menace but, ultimately, the sightings were seen in the context of the E.T.H. and a witting and unwitting trust was put in celestial salvation from nuclear devastation, rather than in terrestrial confrontation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO Carl Grove, John Hind, and Dirk van der Werff, who supplied the results of their newspaper research.

As the first in what we hope will be a series of regular features of this kind, we are happy to present an in-depth review of VANISHINGS, by Michael Harrison, New English Library (paperback), pp xiii + 177, £1.25. Published 1981.

The reviewer is John Grant, who has edited Aries 1 (1979), coedited with Colin Wilson The Book of Time (1980), and The Directory of Possibilities (1981) and, most recently, written A Directory of Discarded Ideas, to be published by the Ashgrove Press in November 1981.

## The FLIGHT of REASON

JOHN GRANT

Long years ago I can remember reading, all goggle-eyed and gullible as only an adolescent can be, a scuffed paperback of Frank Edwards', 'Stranger Than Science'. The years passed and my tastes grew a little more sophisticated, until I realised that Edwards' wonder tales were in fact less strange than science fiction, let alone science. I entered publishing and in due course commissioned one or two books in the field of the paranormal notably, in this context, Paul Begg's refreshingly sceptical 'Into Thin Air', which concerns itself with 'mysterious disappearances'.

So it was with some interest that I turned to Vanishings. Michael Harrison is the author of the bestselling 'Fire From Heaven', about spontaneous human combustion; while not a very good book, it does have its moments. Vanishings, however, does not. It follows unashamedly in the Frank Edwards tradition, so that while reading it one has the uncomfortable feeling that one is undergoing a time-slip: this is surely a book of the 1950s, not of the 1980s.

Whereas other books on Fortean phenomena today either (a) like Fort himself sit on the fence about the absolute truth of the events they report, or (b) at least pretend to be critical about the quality of the evidence (a few, indeed, genuinely are critical), Vanishings goes right against the trend. In fact, it is almost as if Harrison were undertaking some sort of crusade to rescue discredited reports from the litterbins. For example, the supposed vanishing of Gallatin farmer David Lang (1880) is pugnaciously presented as proven fact. The three virtually identical tales of boys sent out into the dark and snow for water, Never to Return (1878, 1889, 1909), are produced: Harrison mentions Begg's (fairly reasonable) conclusion that, as the tales are so similar, all three are probably myths then goes on to assert that it is their very similarities which render the stories almost certainly valid! In fact, in recent correspondence Begg has mentioned to me that he has traced the first account to an old Ambrose Bierce story, and the second to a newspaper hoax (there is no birth record of the third boy). In fact, it is worth noting (as Harrison does not) that in the late 19th century the metropolitan U.S. newspapers made much use of 'fillers' from freelance reporters in the sticks: "Widow Strangles Parrot in Gopher Gulch", and so on. Since not much tended to happen in Gopher Gulch, several freelancers got in to the habit of inventing stories in order to ensure a steady income: best known was a certain Joe Mulholland, whose tales became prized as masterpieces of imagination. A surprising number of the vanishings recorded here (including Lang and the first two boys) date from this period, and are reported from 'out of town'.

There are more hoary old classics. The account of Flight 19 agrees more with Berlitz than with the report of the official inquiry (Kusche is not quoted, Begg is quoted, but seriously out of context.) Springheeled Jack makes his appearance: no mention is made of the fact that he might not have been a

supernatural being. James Worson, the running shoemaker, is noted - again, apparently, an indisputable fact.

Some events which seem to have perfectly simple explanations are, we are told, indubitably "mysteries". Did you know that, during the fall of Berlin, Hitler's (female) cook stepped into a bomb-shattered building, Never to be Seen Again? (In common with many other women in that unhappy time, I'd suggest.) In a chapter devoted to the association of strange mists and clouds with disappearances, one little section begins: ". . . one of the best-attested disappearances may well have been accompanied . . . by the Cloud, that no-one, save the two victims, witnessed." Or it may well not have been. Donald Crowhurst, the lone yachtsman, didn't go mad because he was mentally unstable, but because he knew he was going to be "Snatched" (Harrison's capitalisation). "Snatched", too, were the "lost colonists" of Roanoke: no mention is made of the fact that they were without supplies from August 1587 until August 1590, and that they left a message as to where they were departing for. In an extract from General Sir Ian Hamilton's report on the missing Norfolks the words "Nothing more was seen or heard of any of them" are italicised, as if they might not simply mean that the Norfolks advanced into the fighting, and presumably were slaughtered.

In the search to make the explicable mysterious, Harrison seems to forget that human beings have minds. Oh yes, the people most likely to be "Snatched" are those under severe emotional strain (such as otherwise might, say, make them run away). Interesting here is the tale of Miss Valsa Matthai who, clad as for summer, went out into a blizzardy night Never to be Seen Again: anyone who has had any contact with the mentally ill will find nothing strange about this tale, but Harrison inexorably grinds on with cries of "definitely paranormal!" Or take the cases of people who are at one moment in (say) the Euston Road, and nine months later in Australia, with no memory of the intervening period. These people are not simply amnesiacs, of course: they have been "Snatched", and returned.

Some of Harrison's anecdotes are less easily explained, but it hardly seems worth the effort because so little data is given. Often the reported events are undated, and in most cases sources are not given (often even for direct quotes), so that one has no way of knowing if the event was recorded in 'The Times' or in 'Punch', in 1880 or 1980. Such cynicism will, of course, have little effect on Harrison, since time and time again he refers denigratingly to the "Doubters" and the "Scoffers" of "Science" who might confess to doubts about such sturdily authenticated tales as that of David Lang.

He does, however, try to find patterns in the disappearances he records. For example, August is a particularly popular month for the "Snatchers": it struck me that, by curious coincidence, August is smack in the middle of the Silly Season. Hilly, Forested terrain and the wilds of the remote oceans are prime "Snatching" grounds, too (Harrison suggests that the Bermuda Triangle should really be considered as being the entire North Atlantic up to the latitude of Oslo). He suggests that the "Snatchers" go for people with certain names: e.g., Martin. Checking surnames alone, and using the telephone directory for Exeter & East Devon, I concluded that about 0.3% of the U.K. population has the surname Martin. But this is a far smaller percentage than that of "vanished Martins" to "vanished everyone else", I hear you cry. Yes, indeed; but once you've adjusted for surnames so unusual that it would be surprising if anyone bearing them were to be involved in a vanishing (e.g. McClure), and bearing in mind that you can't have fractions of people, you end up with a figure that is quite reasonable - especially since you can, according to Harrison's rules, count in all the Martens and Martyns, too.

The list of howlers and arrant gullibilities in this book is virtually endless. Arrhenius' panspermic hypothesis is referred to as if it were part of modern orthodox science, which it isn't (will the know-all who shouted "Hoyle & Wickramasinghe" please leave the room?). Reference is made to the mysterious fact that, in one event, two loud cracks of thunder were not followed by flashes of lightning. Unsubstantiated tales of falling fish are swallowed hook, line and sinker - and without documentation. The overlords of "Science" are out to "Get" anyone who doesn't believe in everything recorded by Frank Edwards.

Let us be charitable, and assume that Harrison hurried the writing of this book, having been given an impossible deadline by his publishers (who, to their shame, have failed to include an index, and whose proofreaders should be shot - see page 118, for example). Even so, this is an unmitigatedly bad book. It does a disservice to everyone: to the layman, who could do without this new garbage-heap of misinformation being tumbled over him; to the serious researcher into the unexplained, who is bound to find her or himself 'tarred with the same brush' and, blast it, most of all to me who, for the purposes of writing this essay, has had to read 60,000 words or so of this tosh.

And near the end of the book we find, "What, then, have we found so far to enable us to understand a little more of what is still unexplained . . . ? If not much, at least a great deal more than previous researchers have detected."

I suggest that Lawrence Kusche and Paul Begg ought to get their libel writs in the post.

## Flower Power

The installation of Tony Ortzen as the new Editor of Psychic News has been followed by some interesting and exciting changes. The launch of ASSAP was covered in great detail, and Alan Cleaver, the ASSAP Secretary, has joined the paper as a reporter, which should enable CG to bring you some fascinating insights into British Spiritualism.

The first of these, also covered in the pages of PN on several occasions recently, is the dramatic and comprehensive claims made for the materialisation mediumship of the young Liverpool medium, Paul McElhoney. If true - and both Alan, and Tony Ortzen himself have gone into print to declare that they are - they must represent the most remarkable physical mediumship seen in this country in the past 40 years. PN of 22.8.81 tells of "A stream of dazzling white ectoplasm", that "had gushed from Paul's mouth, and lay at his feet", and also of a rose and stem, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long, apparently apported from a source beyond the seance room.

PN of 31.10.81, in an article written by Alan Cleaver goes considerably further - it would seem that Paul's mediumship is constantly developing. By pictures of an apported model of Cologne Cathedral, which weighs 10 ounces, and a selection of the 28 Tiger Lily flowers said to have appeared in a similar way, Alan tells of conversing with Paul's guide, Ceros, and of the way in which the items were received. PN of 7.11.81 tells of Alan receiving a yellow rose directly from Paul's mouth at a more recent seance. Alan writes to me that the flowers are preserved in crystals; "He's fantastic and, I'm sure, genuine".

Paul is sitting in private only, and seemingly only for a sympathetic, if intelligent, public; in small numbers, in private homes. I imply no criticism - that is his right. He would already seem to have submitted himself to considerable indignities to prevent fraud, and if he wishes to sit for Psychic News rather than for James Randi, so be it. Only one small point worries me a little, and that is the news that his guide, Ceros, is apparently to take over the philosophical mantle of Silver Birch in 'Two Worlds'. Perhaps I am too much the sceptic, but the timing, and the coincidence, and the blaze of publicity, may appear a little too good to be true.

## So what is wrong with ouija boards?

'Crusade', 'Buzz', and 'Family' are the three magazines of professional quality produced by the intelligent end of the Evangelical Christian movement in the U.K. 'Crusade' is the most 'establishment' of them, 'Buzz' the most extreme, and 'Family' the most easily understood, being aimed at the market its name suggests. I found all three of great interest when I first bought them, and still find that they stimulate me, if only, sometimes, to anger!

The October issues of 'Family' and 'Buzz' both carry articles about the paranormal, to link with Hallowe'en. One is by John Allan, the other about him, based on his recent book, 'Mysteries. A book of beliefs', published by Lion at £3.95. To his great credit John, an Oxford philosophy graduate, a teacher, and Training Director with British Youth for Christ, avoids the usual equation between 'The Occult' and madness or death, so often presented as established fact in such contexts. While he clearly accepts that the "demonic realm" can make "unmistakeable inroads into the personality", he is not out to terrify. "Many Christian books are written in such a sensational way that they can feed a latent interest rather than kill it. Far better to distract attention, if you can, into a totally different area of interest." Some of what he says about our subject makes sense, too, and shows some acquaintance with its personalities . . . . "Occult dabbling has led to no great advances for the human race, and little personal happiness. The lives of occultists through the centuries have demonstrated a remarkable similarity: marriage break-ups, dependency on alcohol, drug addiction, squalid fraud and pretence. There is little real glamour in this subject, and a tremendous amount of misery".

Displaying considerably less knowledge - though presumably having a public appeal strong enough to procure funds - are double-page adverts from the Scripture Union that appear in all three magazines. Over a photo of a group of bemused adolescents there appears in large black letters, the legend, "WHAT'S WRONG WITH OUIJA BOARDS?" The advert goes on to say . . . .

"Young people are into clairvoyancy, ESP and UFO's, spiritualism and telepathy, astrology and black magic. During school lunch hours, children openly play with tarot cards and ouija boards. Some can even study the occult in class.

These are normal, ordinary kids, with many other, healthier interests. They live in your town, your village, your city, in your street, your road, in your block of flats, your terrace of houses, next door, or even in your own home. They are your friends, your children, the children of your friends, your brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews.

They don't know the dangers they run. And they don't know Jesus Christ. Maybe, influenced by von Daniken, they believe he's a space traveller. Or they believe in a theory of evolution which leaves no room for God and His creativity. That man is an accident. That there really is no point to life - except what you can get out of it. So they look for excitement - in things like the occult."

I don't intend to get involved in arguments over beliefs - or to query why evolution should present a similar threat to the occult. Maybe we deserve this sort of out-of-hand dismissal for taking charismatic phenomena like speaking in tongues as a mere area for research, ignoring its supposedly spiritual meaning. But I cannot help but feel that the writers who make such generalised and unevidenced attacks on an area of human experience and interest about which they clearly know so little, should be taken to task. We have to research, argue, evidence, and illustrate our cases - why should we not expect them to evidence theirs - especially when, in most of the Ouija accounts, they show every sign of being an established and identifiable myth, seldom given specific names or dates. I, at least, intend to seek such proof.

# LETTERS

From Bob Morrell.

Although 'Common Ground' has devoted considerable space to the newly-formed Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena, this is easily understood, as the journal may well become a 'journal of record' for the association without, it is asserted, 'losing its editorial independence'. This may well be, but what is rather harder to understand is why this new and untested body should receive unqualified support in the publications of the Northern UFO Network. But perhaps not, for the editor (who is also secretary) of NUFON has been invited to become co-ordinator for an investigations network ASSAP proposes to establish, and she has indicated a willingness to accept.

The ASSAP network will not restrict itself to ufology, but as the only real investigative networks covering some of the fields ASSAP is interested in are ufological, mainly the national groupings around BUFORA and UFOIN, which are increasingly drawing together, and that of Contact UK, which seems to wish to remain aloof, to which should be added the various local groups throughout the country, it would seem essential that ASSAP bring these within its orbit, and the NUFON/UFOIN secretary acknowledges that the ASSAP network "will be built around and use already existent investigators and groups." Now NUFON and UFOIN have not been consulted on this, and it is assumed by the secretary that "everyone should support ASSAP." As a UFOIN member I beg to differ, and suggest that although we are told that UFOIN would not lose its independence, nor would any group, the situation spelled out argues to the contrary, and what all UFOIN (and NUFON) members must ask is whether their secretary can remain so when openly pledged to work as a network organiser in another organisation, and one which upholds ideas to which some of us have strong objections. Speaking for my own group, NUFOIS, we would withdraw from NUFON and resign from UFOIN if the secretary retained her positions while working for ASSAP.

To better understand the issues we feel to be involved here it is essential to take a look at current trends in ufology as a whole. The present situation is rather different from that which prevailed some years ago. No longer do serious ufologists believe as a matter of course that flying saucers manned by hordes of assorted odd-looking entities are zipping around our atmosphere picking up the odd human or two for 'research' purposes. Certainly the extra-terrestrial hypothesis has its outspoken supporters, and remains a reasonable possibility, but the heady old ETH atmosphere has gone, and the 'nuts and bolts' approach should no longer be identified with the hypothesis as a matter of course; rather, it represents the attitude of mind of those dedicated to a strictly scientific approach to the subject. We are now far more concerned with the physics of ball-lightning and human physiology, to mention two subjects, than the supposed propulsion system of flying saucers, or whether the United States government has a collection of crashed saucers stashed away and the deceased occupants refrigerated. Attempts to extract secret files on UFO's from the U.S. government has produced material of only marginal interest, and certainly none that supports ideas about ufonauts on ice.

What the current trend in ufology indicates is that we are seeing in the subject a growing specialisation, a trend ufology shares with most other branches of research. Specialisation breeds restriction, with the researcher knowing an awful lot about a particular aspect of ufology, and this is often expressed in such a way that many others do not really know what he is getting at. Specialisation also tends to breed a lack of understanding on the part of those unfamiliar with the specialist's specific field of interest.

Those who have met with this type of thing in academic circles will be aware that individual researchers in the same department often cannot understand their colleagues material even though they work in the same field! Obviously, then, if the trend continues to develop ufology will tend to contract further. There will be greater emphasis on minuteae, particularly as more and more facets within the subject are identified and placed within their respective investigatory and research classificatory systems. The present developments have been refreshing and have paid dividends, for more and more sightings are being explained, while we can advance theoretical models into which to slot many of the cases which still remain enigmatic.

The foregoing observations should be contrasted directly with the scope ASSAP has set itself. No one can deny that the coverage is wide, some might even say vast. ASSAP pays a grudging lip service to specialisation, but from its published particulars it is reasonably clear that it dislikes it intensely, one is almost tempted to say fears it. We are told that a multi-disciplinary approach is the aim, and events it organises will have an interdisciplinary bias. Now sentiments like this sound nice, and appear eminently reasonable, but are they really practical or realistic other than in a strictly superficial manner?

To tackle this point in specific rather than general terms I would cite my own particular ufological interests. Primarily I am interested in two aspects of ufology, bioluminescence and angel hair, so called. Both entail me in extensive reading, some experimental work, field observation, and fairly extensive correspondence. The type of material I am using rarely ever finds reference in ufological literature, and even in the scientific disciplines I take in is itself largely within an area of research not exactly popular. The net result of this is that if I were to utilise the language of the subject, which would be familiar to fellow-specialists, the average ufologist would in all probability be left cold, or wondering why such seemingly incomprehensible material was allowed to take up space in journals. We may glibly speak or write of encouraging an inter-disciplinary approach, but the reality is that the divisions which arise will do so because the subject matter is so complex and, as I have found, is very difficult to translate into terminology of which everyone will readily grasp the meaning. Kevin McClure has in fact given substance to this himself when in a review of the contents of the June, 1981, 'SPR Journal', he refers to it printing two "complex, highly technical pieces", which he could not understand, and so asks how many others are able to. Reduced to popular terminology these papers could well lose both their impact and importance, and thus a multi-, or interdisciplinary approach might well be dangerous. In fact I strongly suspect that the employment of such fine-sounding terminology simply conceals the fact that what we really require is for more people to grasp the technicalities of a greater number of specialist subjects, but I doubt that this is any longer a realistic possibility.

So what can ASSAP offer me? I am uninterested in most so-called phenomena, having neither the time, finance, or inclination to immerse myself into the complexities that are involved in the basic research. I have a general interest in ufology as a whole, but this does not extend to wishing to make it dominant. I am attracted to some narrow aspects of the subject, mainly because they involve questions with which I am professionally familiar, but in researching these I require published material from often obscure technical journals which have absolutely no specific relationship to ufology as a subject. Hence, would I expect the back-up facilities promised by ASSAP to provide me with papers on the mammulae employed by spiders in the spinning process, or the distribution patterns for certain species of fungi? I seriously doubt that ASSAP would be willing to spend the considerable sums required to get this material, so if it cannot supply it what point is there in joining? I can well imagine the reaction of an ASSAP librarian to a

request for the loan of a rare treatise on the Linyphiidae; perhaps the response would be a tarty suggestion that I contact the British Arachnological Society, but I am already a member of that body so I would already have approached them. It may be that ASSAP could ultimately provide all those detailed sighting reports I wish to consult, for application to BUFORA, MUFON, Contact UK, NIGAP, and the ultra celebrated Centre for UFO Studies have been to date an utter waste of postage.

Perhaps most ufologists have, like me, undergone an evolution in their attitude to ufology and the aspects that interest them. For my own part I started with an interest in the extra-terrestrial hypothesis, which was supplemented with a desire to undertake investigative work. However, over the past two or three years this has given way to the research aspect of the subject, limited to the two areas already mentioned. In the course of this it has become increasingly clear just how inadequate much investigative work has been, and just how little use has been made of the existing codex of reports, inadequate in detail as most are.

Looking at ASSAP's publicity handout is reminiscent of the material issued by the literary and philosophical societies so beloved of the Victorians. They sought to cover a vast range of phenomena, using the term broadly, but those that survived to the present (Leicester and Whitby are examples), did so by developing a degree of specialisation in subject material. Perhaps there is a lesson for ASSAP in this, perhaps not; but to my mind at least ASSAP is in essence turning its back on what may well be the most promising development within ufology, and if such be the case in other obscure phenomenal subjects it covers, on them also, which is the trend towards specialisation. This produces problems, and these I have already hinted at, but it also produces answers, and that basically is the reason for any research. One can envisage a role for the populariser, or an individual like the late Joseph McCabe, who was able to paint an overall picture of science and its implications for popular consumption, and if this is all ASSAP manages then it will have made a limited contribution to knowledge, but it would seem that ASSAP entertains a grander vision, but in the last analysis whether this vision is really realistic is another matter, and the final answer must await the passage of time.

Reading ASSAP's publicity handout along with the enthusiastic burbling of UFOIN's secretary, which reminds one of a baby with a new toy, gives the distinct impression of a body flitting around like a moth before a candle. Plans there are in plenty, while targets loom large, but will all the talk about an interdisciplinary approach amount to any more than discussing in popular terms, perhaps with a dash of impressive-sounding terminology, ideas which have a mystical attraction to certain individuals? Does ASSAP really want the mystery stripped away and the bare bones revealed, or is the mystery the essence of ASSAP as it is of so many bodies in ufology? The indignation that is so often expressed amongst practitioners of the paranormal and some ufologists when anyone has the temerity to hit pet notions in a highly destructive manner suggests that all too many have no desire to arrive at the truth, but prefer an atmosphere in which mystery and imagination run riot. If anyone doubts this they have only to turn to the issues of the now defunct journal 'Alpha' to see the truly bitter condemnation made of people like Randi and Hansel, or some ufological journals to see the very real hatred some ufologists have for debunkers. Reading this type of thing, and Paul Devereux provides a good example in part, in his letter in CG2, suggests to me that ASSAP's role may be little more than providing material to strengthen the faith of believers, as does the SPK to so many Spiritualists.

From Ivor Snook. (Somewhat abridged, with the writer's permission).

I was very interested in Jenny Randles' article in your first issue. I am not very well informed about UFO phenomena, but I do find it rather difficult to envisage how they could contain a 'spirit' element of the same nature as that which seems to be involved in ghost and poltergeist occurrences. However, Jenny did say she would like to hear from readers who would like to work with her on the question. I would like to do this, but firstly only from the ghost/poltergeist aspect.

A poltergeist case which greatly interested me occurred in a council flat some years ago. Speaking from memory, I think it was a boy, or boys, who were the epicentre (channel) in this one. It began with knockings, followed by scraping sounds, then a rendering of the Dead March. Later there were much louder crashing noises. At one time the wife made contact with the entity by a system of knocks, and by a system of knocks indicating letters of the alphabet, obtained the following story. The poltergeist represented some miners killed during a pit disaster, and ended by calling for help. This story was greeted with great scepticism, and although it was agreed that there had been a pit disaster in the vicinity sometime previously, nothing else seems to have been done about it.

However, let us take a look at it from this point of view. A group of miners are killed in a pit disaster of some kind. Their spirits remain in the area of their death, not knowing what has happened to them. After a long period they begin to realise something of their predicament and begin to feel that they must get help, or at least make their situation known. By some means they discover the boy through whom they can achieve psychokinetic effects. However, they cannot show themselves, they cannot speak, they cannot write notes. So what can they do? Well, they do a little mime. They make the noise of striking a pick against a coal or rock face. They make the noise of scraping away the bits which have been dislodged. Perhaps they think that any human will recognise the significance of those sounds, but no-one shows any interest. Then they think they will let the humans know that they are dead. So they contrive a rendering of the Dead March. This also fails. In fact the investigators call this a macabre and ill-natured thing to do. Then they realise that someone is making knocking noises, to which they respond, and with great hopes tell their story and ask for help. But no help comes. I do feel very sad and sympathetic on behalf of those entities, seeking help which is not given to them. However, after a number of other occurrences the phenomena, as so often happens, cease to occur for no apparent reason.

In the foregoing example I have postulated the possible existence of 'trapped souls'. In ghost cases the most usual description is the apparition of a form closely relating to a human being. In poltergeist cases, although the psychokinetic effects are most prominent there are practically always one or more effects suggesting a human connection, such as response to knocks, speech or voices, or bodylike apparitions. Upon enquiry in the neighbourhood these effects are usually thought to correspond to a person who died in the premises some time previously.

I will try to put forward a composite picture of a poltergeist occurrence from start to finish, based on the assumption that a spirit is the prime source. First it must be realised that if a spirit is involved, and if it is actually connected with some person who previously died in the premises, then it has been there during all the intervening period. At first it does not realise that life has changed for it in any way. It may try to make contact with persons in the house, but probably only causes them to feel cold and scared. It now begins to feel a strong desire to make contact with the human

world. Sooner or later it becomes aware of a source of power in the house, which it can make use of. By means of this power source it begins to psychokinetically cause small objects to move about, pebbles to fly through the air, etc. This causes much perturbation to the humans, but no contact. It steps up its actions. Soon the house is like a beehive, people coming and going continually, some studying the psychology of the family, some making endless notes about everything they see, hear, or feel, others measuring this, that or the other, or taking photographs, or using electrical gadgets, and so on. But amongst all that is going on, no-one at all is really trying to contact the spirit, and find out what it wants.

Usually it appears to gain in power now. Possibly with practice it is becoming more adept, possibly as the child epicentre approaches the peak of puberty the power increases; perhaps emotional disturbance of other members of the family in some way adds to the power. And we cannot rule out the possibility that amongst all the investigators present there may be one who gives out psychic support, or that the commotion, efforts, thoughts of so many people may itself be drawn upon. Perhaps, as the spirit makes more and more demonstrations and still no-one makes any effort to achieve contact, it gets exasperated and tries to produce bigger and more impressive phenomena, such as levitation of persons, overturning large objects, tearing items out of the wall, etc. However, the occurrence of these more impressive phenomena is often followed by a lull, and their gradual diminution and cessation. Why this happens it is difficult to say, but perhaps by now the child epicentre has passed the peak time and power has diminished, or perhaps because the spirit has decided its efforts are useless, or because it has found its own way out of its predicament.

Obviously, if there is a spirit cause for the phenomena, it will be present in the house right up to the last one taking place. But what then? It is quite possible that the spirit will revert to the situation it was in before the phenomena began; that it will still be in the house, but inactive and unremarked. This could well be the result of our failing to make contact with it while the opportunity was there, and could mean that it may re-activate at some time in the future when circumstances allow. Actually, I do not think this is likely to be the case. I think that the spirit will actually have made its transition to the spirit world just about or soon after the time of the cessation of the phenomena. I am inclined to think that in some manner the actual process of investigation helps the spirit to understand its circumstances. It may be because it begins to visualise the human world, and realises that it belongs there no longer, or even that it telepathically picks up ideas from the minds of the family or the investigators, out of which it pieces together a new understanding which in turn enables it to complete its transition.

All in all, it has been a lengthy and unsatisfactory procedure for the humans, causing distress to those involved, and leaving the investigators no further ahead in their endeavours.



For our 'expert advice' contribution this issue we are pleased to be able to present an unpublished piece by that elder statesman of psychical research, Guy Lambert. The implications of his comments have relevance to many areas of case investigation, and I am happy that, at the grand age of 93, his expertise can still be of assistance to others. We are indebted to Leslie Price of the S.P.R., and to Lady Drew, the author's daughter, for their help in arranging for the article's appearance here.

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH GHOSTS

by G. W. Lambert

In an article, 'The Geography of London Ghosts' (S.P.R. Journal, Vol.40, pp. 397 - 409) I gave reasons for thinking that the flooding of London underground rivers is a frequent cause of disturbances in houses overhead, giving rise to the impression that 'ghostly phenomena' are taking place. Since then (1960) there has been a considerable increase in the number of places where the construction of motorways, fly-overs, and by-passes has taken place in nearly every part of the country, and the accompanying provision of new or larger parking areas, and service areas covered with concrete. This development has resulted in a much quicker run-off of storm water in such places, and the disturbance, in some cases, of the buildings in the neighbourhood the cause of which is not detected, and is attributed to 'psychic' agency by collectors of ghost stories: e.g. 'Our Haunted Kingdom' by Andrew Green (Fontana Collins 1974) who gives a useful list of other books on the subject (pp. 332-3).

A good example of the kind of road development I have in mind is to be found in the neighbourhood of Brentwood in Essex, where there has been a good deal of road engineering in recent years, as can be seen from an up-to-date motorists' map of the county. Andrew Green (op. cit.) gives the following Brentwood cases of haunting -

Fountain Head, Brentwood, p.89.  
Golden Fleece, Brentwood, p.90.  
High Street, Brentwood, p.91.  
Moat House Motel, p.93.  
Swan Inn, Brentwood, p.97.  
Warley Lea Farm, Nr. Brentwood, p.97.  
White Hart, Brentwood, p.99.

Brentwood is at the top of a steep incline, and storm water runs off with considerable force in most directions. There has been a great increase in the area of hard road surface required for the approach for the Brentwood by-pass and parking of cars at the Motel, where there are some old buildings as well as new. There is a resulting increase in the rate of run-off of storm water, and interference with the foundations of adjoining buildings, mostly timber-framed. This increase would account for the poltergeist type of phenomena observed and these, in turn, would cause some persons present to see phantasms of supposed agents, or to infer their existence to account for the noises and movement of objects observed.

## CLOSING REMARKS

In recent years there has also been a great increase in the laden weight of lorries bringing goods from the continent, and the 'hammering' of the roads has increased in severity to the detriment of buildings nearby. If it is a fact that water in motion is a primary cause of haunting phenomena, that should be reflected in the geographical distribution of cases on the map. We can now leave the example of Brentwood, and turn to the country at large. Haunted places are distributed about England in a manner that suggests that local conditions have an important influence on their occurrence, and that they are not, as is generally supposed, of a retrocognitive character determined by events in the past history of the inhabitants. Take, for instance, the case of the River Wye, which is well known to be a powerful stream, and its affluents. It furnishes an example of a 'clutch' of haunted places near Weobley in Herefordshire (Haunted Britain, Hippisley Cox, p.93.) and, lower down, about 2½ miles below Ross, a haunted bridge. This last observation illustrates the fact that haunts are not confined to dwelling-houses, but include cases of bridges and wells and other non-residential places, such as watermills, with no house attached. Bridges and mills are both exposed to severe shocks at the water line from timber being swept down at times of flood, and persons crossing at such times may well have been unaware of the cause of the disturbances, and have had visual impressions of ghostly intruders.

Another river less well known for its powerful stream is the River Stour, in Suffolk and Essex. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names, the word 'stour' probably means 'strong and powerful river', and it is probably no accident that in its catchment area there are Borley and Polstead, both notable haunted sites. Two other powerful streams are the Trent and the Tyne. To the Trent one may reasonably attribute the haunting of Epworth Rectory, the home of the Wesley family (HB. p.132), and to the Tyne the poltergeist outbreak at Willington Mill (HB. p.138), both to be found in most histories of the subject. Lastly, I would draw attention to the list of haunted places given by Hippisley Cox in Devonshire (HB. Map 3). By a traveller from Crediton to Bideford on the north coast they are reached in the following order -

Copplestone.  
Downe St. Mary.  
Stopgate Cross.  
Lapford.  
Blackditch Cross.  
Wembworthy.  
Basford Moor.  
Allan's Week.  
Torrington.  
Weare Gifford Hall.  
Bideford. (HB. Map 3).

It will be found that all these places are in the catchment areas of the rivers Taw and Ye, which bring down powerful floods from Dartmoor in stormy weather, through the places mentioned. This evidence, chiming in as it does with the evidence from the Trent, the Tyne, and the Wye, seems to furnish a more likely explanation of the hauntings than stories obtained from local residents about local worthies of long ago. It also helps one to understand the veneration paid to springs and wells in many parts of the country.

My first, happy, duty this issue is to welcome the multitude of new readers and subscribers who are receiving CG after including our sub. with their ASSAP membership. We very much hope that you will enjoy and, perhaps, learn from what we have to offer. Sooner or later, we will also hope that your contributions will take their place in our pages; what is in this issue is fairly typical of the sort of balance and approach that I, at least, feel suits the magazine, and while it may seem to be almost too wide-ranging, it is to link the various facets of a vast research field that we started in the first place. It is, again, worth pointing out that though we are from this issue working with the close cooperation and support of ASSAP, we are happy to receive contributions from anyone, anywhere; there is no control or limitation on the Editor, and I wouldn't have it any other way! I see CG providing a forum to link together the scattered membership of ASSAP (which is very much a national organisation), to share their ideas and researches. Additionally, as ASSAP is providing a considerable boost to our fortunes, I also hope that the existing CG readership will come to regard joining ASSAP as both logical and advantageous, if we can present a case to prove that.

This seems to bring me to the point I would particularly like to discuss in the closing remarks this issue. ASSAP has made a very promising start in many ways - the applications for membership are flooding in, along with the money (including some remarkable donations) without which ASSAP simply will not be able to function; it probably won't ever (see Letters) be able to buy Bob Morrell obscure books about spiders, but there is much it can do. The launch, and attendant publicity, went smoothly and effectively, and it seems that the administration of ASSAP will be a model of its kind; this is not surprising - it has a high proportion of competent businessmen for an organisation in this field, and it is vital that business sense be brought to bear to make the Association function to its fullest potential. All the basics have gone right so far, because great care has been taken with them.

Where difficulties have arisen, however, is over the relationship with British ufology, as many of our readers will be only too aware. Ufology is the only subject within the research field claimed by ASSAP which already has an extensive, if loose and often self-defeating investigation network already established. ASSAP has been seen as wishing to take over both the function and the functionaries, and considerable resentment has resulted, not all of it without justification. The most probable explanation for this is a sheer lack

of forethought in the constant bustle that attended the birth of ASSAP, and it appears that the good offices of a number of sane and reasonable people will bring these problems to a sensible resolution; there is great promise for the future of British ufology at present, and nothing must be done to put it at risk.

Yet, once we have sorted out our various internal problems over issues of demarcation and priority, there are still massive problems ahead. There is no doubt that within a few months ASSAP will have an investigation network, which may or may not deal on its own with UFO reports, but which will clearly have to handle a vast range of anomalous, imaginary, and unprecedented reports. It will be a daunting task to train individuals to cope with the material that, if ASSAP succeeds, will come their way, and would-be investigators will need to expect a considerable expenditure of time and effort in attaining the high standards of investigation that the Association is going to demand.

Beyond this point, when we are all poised, ready to go, setting up a two-way traffic with public opinion, hoping for reports to come to us, and our own, sensible, reasoned interpretations to be returned to the media, as well as to the individuals who have made their reports to us, there lies the greatest gulf that we, whether in ASSAP or not, are going to have to cross. As yet, no research or investigation organisation operating in the anomalous/paranormal phenomena field in this country has contrived to establish any meaningful degree of public or media credibility. Not even the S.P.R. - most certainly not any of the UFO groups - despite tremendous efforts and in the case of the S.P.R. considerable historical and academic standing, have been able to become newsworthy in their own right, or to publish on any scale a book which represents its own work and achievements, or imparts its valuable experience to a wide public. When the media requires commentary on the field in which ASSAP intends to work, it goes to individuals such as Colin Wilson or Lord Clancarty. They have their various relative merits, but do not represent a body of experience that does certainly exist.

At a very early stage ASSAP, which, whatever anyone's reservations, is the only group that is going to be able to represent us and our work on a national scale in the foreseeable future, is going to have to concern itself with the issues of credibility and image, and to set targets as to how it is to put itself in a position of responsibility where it will be consulted as a matter of course. And all the individuals involved are going to have to bear this in mind too, from the very beginning; a serious mistake at this stage could sentence yet another excellent, combined effort to an outer darkness that is already crowded with groups and individuals that have not judged their actions, their opinions, or just their public communications, quite right.