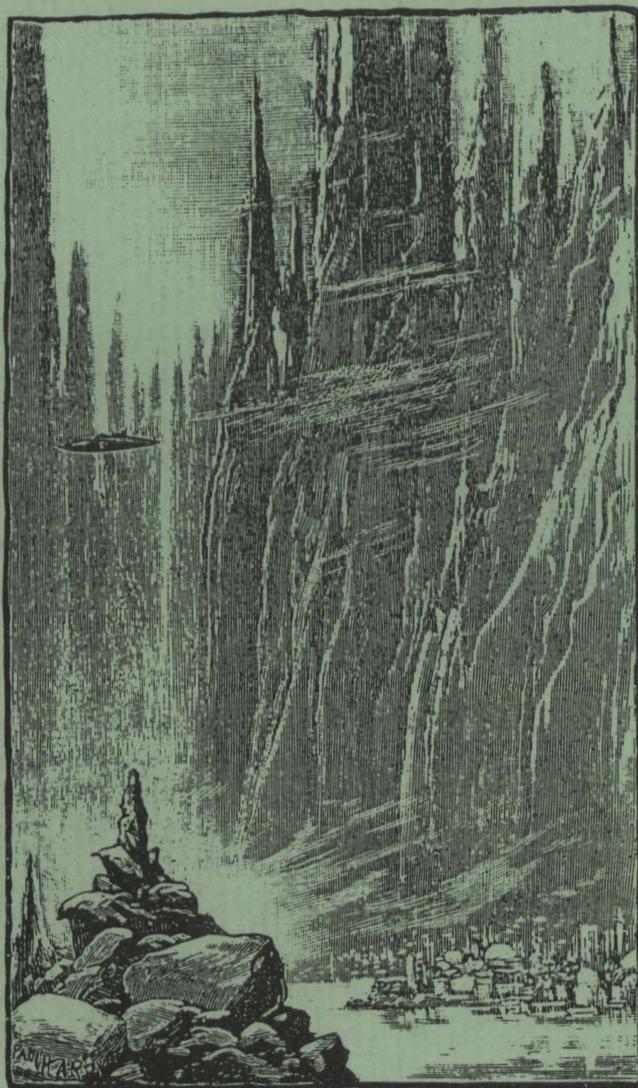


Common Ground



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Studies at the Fringe of Human Experience

Common Ground

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Firstly, a word of explanation as to why it has been over six months since CG6. Simply, I have been very busy writing a book, one of the first two of a series being published jointly by ASSAP and Thorsons, the leading paranormal publishers in the country. The subject is The Evidence for the Visions of the Virgin Mary and it will be out in August or September this year. The three months plus that I spent researching and writing it left no time for any other interests, and CG was among those that suffered. Of course, this delay in no way affects the number of issues you will receive on your subscription.

At last, CG is beginning to look a little less like Hansard. You may have noticed that (at the cost of some extra hours cutting and pasting) the print is larger than previously. This should please a number of readers who, like me, do not have the eyesight of a golden eagle, and have said so! Similarly, the cover illustration should prove the harbinger of more interesting insides to come.

A pleasing trend is apparent in this issue: intelligent, penetrating articles are turning up from people I don't really know, and opening up new lines of approach. Please persist with this, all of you, and also bear in mind that, in the next couple of issues, I would like to present major articles on psychic and spiritual healing, and on altered states of consciousness. Whatever you send, please try to get it typed, though!

Finally, to the inevitable matter of money, and the renewal of subscriptions. Recently, I have spent a considerable amount of money (some mine, some an indefinite loan from a generous benefactor) on various kinds of advertising) but to very little avail: overall, the number of subs has dropped more sharply than I would have liked. I am not asking for donations (unless you happen to be feeling especially generous) but it would help if those of you who are due to renew your subs, who will find a cross on this little line _____ could do so as soon as possible. Similarly please see details of back issues on page 13; these are expensive to reprint, and your interest would be appreciated.

The next issue will be with you as soon as I have time - probably in June. It will contain an article by Manfred Cassirer on Wm. Stainton Moses, a research project on astrology introduced by Jenny Randles, a look at recent trends and publications in the Earth Mysteries field by Chris Ashton (editor of Quicksilver Messenger), and Kevin McClure on Satan, Possession, Exorcism, Possession and the Paranormal. Satan, Possession, Exorcism and the Paranormal. And More Besides, including more letters, if only you'd send them!

Physical Mediumship makes its Spirit Return

by Alan Cleaver

Physical mediumship is back. In Britain two mediums have so far been discovered capable of this fascinating facet of Spiritualism, which includes the materialisation and dematerialisation of objects, levitation of objects, survival evidence, Super ESP, and various other phenomena. I am confident that many more mediums will be discovered in the next few years who will have this talent; indeed, another has surfaced while preparing this article.

The last time physical mediumship was with us - it died out in the 1950's - the public and researchers made rather a hash of things. Researchers went to bizarre lengths to check the mediums' claims, but rarely succeeded in proving or disproving anything. Often, what they did to the medium in the name of science was nothing short of disgusting. Society reacted by reviving the centuries old Witchcraft Act and, with a mentality equivalent to that of the operators of the ducking stool, sentenced medium Helen Duncan to prison. Mrs Duncan was killed due, almost certainly, to the Police raid on her seance at Nottingham in 1956. Now, both Mrs Duncan and physical phenomena have returned. (Ironically, one of the sitters in the Leicester circle, through which Mrs Duncan apparently speaks is an ex-policeman, and the seance room is barely 100 yards from a Police Station.) Whatever the outcome of the claims made by today's physical mediums, I hope researchers and the rest of society have grown up enough to react sensibly.

London physical medium Paul McElhoney will sit with a circle of people in a dark room and enter into trance. A wise, old guide, 'Ceros', then apparently takes over Paul's physical body and talks through him giving survival evidence and philosophy. That is typical trance mediumship, but Ceros also materialises objects - most frequently flowers - to the sitters. These 'apports' apparently come from his mouth (indeed, sometimes the light is momentarily switched on to show the flower coming from Paul's mouth) but some objects are obviously too large to have materialised in this manner. Searches of Paul, the other sitters, and the seance room have so far failed to reveal evidence of fraud.

Rita Gould's physical mediumship is altogether different. She has developed incredibly quickly during the last 18 months, sitting in a circle with three other people. Rita had little contact with Spiritualism until two years ago. Before then she was a director of Leicester's Haymarket Theatre - she comes from a theatrical family. Her husband, Stephen, is one of the other sitters; he is a manager of the local Walkers Crisps factory. The other sitters are Barry Jeffery, the ex-policeman, and his wife Pat who works part-time at a local florist. Pat and Barry are ardent Spiritualists but still retain a level-headed approach. Rita is not a Spiritualist - she's Roman Catholic. Stephen is Jewish by birth.

Development is so fast there is no such thing as a typical seance. Something new is tried almost every night, but let me describe what a sitter might expect. The inner circle (Rita, Stephen, Barry and Pat) start by communicating with the spirits by table-tilting. The outer circle (the regular spirit communicators) may ask for the candle to be blown out. In pitch darkness they can now communicate with raps. The table may be levitated and/or turned upside-down. Eventually, something may be heard to fall on the table. The candle is relit and there, on the table, is an apport - commonly some sweets. Strangely, food apported in this manner often does not have any taste or smell until several hours later.

The sitters are asked to move back to the edge of the room. A tambourine placed on the table is levitated and shaken around the room. Rita may, during this time, go into trance. Then the trumpet is asked for. The luminous strips on each end of the aluminium cone allows sitters to see it levitate around the room, often at speed. Then a voice is heard booming from the trumpet. Perhaps it is Helen Duncan, the dead physical medium, or Russell, a nine-year-old boy who died of cancer twenty years ago. He still acts like a nine-year-old boy for recognition purposes. Many other visitors will also speak, including famous people, or relatives of sitters visiting the circle. Footsteps may also be heard as spirits claim they are going to 'walk' round the room. These may be the patter of a child's footsteps, or the crashing of powerful Red Indian feet. The room has occasionally literally shaken even though it has a concrete floor. Then the voices may experiment not using the trumpet but speaking independently ' in mid-air'. The visitors say 'goodbye' and the trumpet crashes to the floor. Rita comes out of trance and does not remember anything that happened during the seance.

It was intriguing that Helen Duncan was claiming to be speaking through the circle because one of her daughters, Gena Brealey, is alive and living in Luton. Since conversations can be held with the dead in this group, would Gena recognise her own mother? Would she say it was not her mother and denounce Rita as a fraud? Could Helen answer detailed questions from Gena about her life on earth?

Gena was convinced almost immediately. "There can be no doubt", she told me, "it is my mother". And I was convinced. Gena was not just saying this because she was too scared to denounce Rita, or because she was too emotionally upset. Since then other people, complete strangers to Rita, have been to the seance, and have spoken to their 'dead' relatives. Each person has left convinced; and often with their view of reality completely shattered!

I think it is important to take a few steps back, to try to examine what is really happening during these seances. Some questions need to be tackled. Have they genuinely contacted another reality to a degree where you can hold conversations with its inhabitants? Why the incredibly fast development? Why Rita Gould as the medium? It may help to study physical mediums with the eye of a researcher into all anomalous phenomena, and not just that of a psychical researcher.

Two years ago, a short time before her physical phenomena started in force, Rita had a close encounter with a UFO. A researcher said to me a few weeks before 'Psychic News' discovered Rita, " Have you noticed how people who have been abducted by a UFO suddenly become super-psychics?"

I think a serious study of this question ought to be made, but I hope the information doesn't get into the wrong hands, or I can see the popular authors having a field day. To be more correct, Rita had a close encounter with a UFO, and a 15-minute time loss.

Another factor I think should be included in our examination is this: a short time after the encounter with the UFO, Rita met 'The Bunnyman' - a half human/half rabbit alien animal, normally spotted in more southern parts of Britain. Rita did not realise at the time it was the Bunnyman, until two years later when reading a book on alien animals. Until then she thought of him as just a deformed human being; he had long grey ears and a tail. The Bunnyman got down on one knee and begged Rita for help. " Please pray for me," he said. One of the other two witnesses spoke to the creature for about twenty minutes. In the summer of this year Rita was apparently attacked by a Man in Black.

I believe these 'strange' events are all related to her physical mediumship. The question now is, did she become a physical medium because she had a close encounter with a UFO, or did she have the experience because she is a physical medium? If her energies had not been channelled into the physical mediumship, would she now be having regular CE3's ? (Close encounters of the third kind.)

But back to the physical mediumship. Is it genuine? My answer is an unequivocal 'Yes'. Experienced investigators of the paranormal will realise, of course, that the question of what is genuine and what is fraud is far too complex to be answered so simply, but if the enquirer means, " Have you found any evidence of fraud?", then I can report that I have seen none, nor seen anything to make me even suspicious. You could spend 100 years trying to answer the fraud/genuine question (some have) and still get nowhere, so I think a new approach is needed, where the question is side-stepped.

It is important to realise from the outset that the circle members are living in an unique paradigm: one entirely different to that to which the outsider is accustomed. The members of the circle have grown up with the phenomena, and since they know they are not cheating their acceptance of them is, quite naturally, total. You will not find them questioning each other or being suspicious of each other when apports are received in pitch darkness because they 'know' they are not doing it, so therefore it must be genuine. Outsiders must realise this is their paradigm, and it is useless to try and alter or argue with it. If, therefore, one of the communicators states something known to Rita it may well be accepted by the rest of the circle as 'highly evidential', if it is unknown to the communicator. Of course, the outsider may regard this as bordering on the absolutely naive, but it is a perfect example of the group's total acceptance of the spirit world. The communicators will also relay information that is unknown to the group in the same tone - which can be considered as 'highly evidential' by the outsider. There is really very little difference between the evidential value of information in either case - it is dependent totally on whose paradigm you happen to be in at the time.

The communicators have consistently exhibited knowledge of information and events unknown to the circle members. They share an intelligence - probably based on this access to external information - far greater than the outsider can imagine. Occasionally communicators will say something to the outsider which appears not to make sense, or seems naive. It is important, indeed essential, for the outsider on these occasions to take

into account that the communicators may be basing something they say on information not yet known to himself or other members of the group.

For the future, I'm sure the phenomena will get stronger and stronger, until one day fully materialised forms are possible. I hope researchers continue to question (especially in the context of other anomalous phenomena; i.e. UFO's) but I hope a new breed of researchers will appear who, rather than repeat the last 100 years research of tying up mediums, will take a new approach. I prefer to take the attitude, "O.K. Supposing you're genuine, can you do this . . ." The experiments which fail could tell us more about the phenomena than those that succeed.

Physical mediumship is back. Don't mess it up.

AND AN UNEXPECTED SEQUEL

A few years ago, the only well-known materialisation medium in this country was Gordon Higginson. Then it was reported - by the 'Sunday People' I think - that he had been caught in deliberate fraud, using fake ectoplasm, and we have heard little of this aspect of his talents since that time.

In the 'News of the World' of 3.4.83 it is reported - by Alan Whittaker, an investigator generally sympathetic to our cause - that Paul McElhoney has come to, if anything, an even stickier end. The article is mainly about carnations - Paul's most typical apport - being found in the battery compartment of his tape recorder; I understand that other items may also be involved. Paul's response - running away from the seance, and failing to turn up to the S.A.G.B. for a scheduled sitting - only go to support the truth of the allegations.

I'll hope to print more about this in CG8, but at this stage a number of questions come to mind. Why was it, as the article reports, Gordon Higginson that suggested the exposure? Does fraud at this stage imply that McElhoney has been fraudulent throughout? Genuine mediums of the past have often been shown to have used fraud as the most dependable way of coming up with the goods week after week. Has 'Two Worlds' been publishing the imaginings of a dishonest young man, rather than the spirit messages of Wise Old Ceros? Is the 'Spiritualist of the Year' really not a Spiritualist at all? Will there be an investigation re. possible criminal deception in respect of the money charged for seances that may well have been fraudulent? If McElhoney was genuine, and has fallen prey to simple greed and over-ambition, he will have our sympathy.

But finally, and most intriguing, who are the 40,000 misguided souls who are said to have joined McElhoney's 'United World' movement? When will we learn the difference between phenomena and wisdom, and value each for what it is?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SERIOUS FAULTS

EARTH LIGHTS by Paul Devereux, Wellingborough, Turnstone Press, 1982. Illustrated. £9.95.

An extended review by Kevin McClure.

There is no doubt at all that this book is as important as the attention so far paid to it (see assorted quotes in the 'Abstracts') would seem to suggest. Paul Devereux is one of the best British writers in the paranormal field, the book reads very clearly and easily, and it looks smart; Turnstone do produce books well. The range of material presented is breathtaking, and makes the book impossible to review in a manner that can give a clear idea of all the ideas in it. Broadly speaking, it is an unusual mix of an individual's search to understand, first, one highly exotic UFO experience, and, consequently, a whole range of mysteries of the earth and air. It is perhaps Paul's personal involvement in his quest that makes the book so consistently interesting. Not all of the material is original - much play is made of the sort of piezo-electricity theories, related to seismic activity, that has been popularised in this country by Persinger and Lafreniere in their 'Space-Time Transients and Unusual Events', and there is also much of the Dragon Project, megaliths, and the possible wisdom of Neolithic Man. Paul particularly argues - and it is an original argument so far as I am aware - (to quote the blurb) that "UFO's are geophysically produced pockets of energy that are responsive to mental cues: 'planetary ectoplasm' produced in areas of geological faulting". What he means, I think, is that the stuff of UFO's is a natural, physical phenomenon, and that the shape of UFO's is also a natural, but a mental one. Super-ESP to an amazing degree; Nina Kulagina squared and redoubled, in trumps. Paul McElhoney on speed.

Certain influential members of ASSAP have, probably for very good reasons (research has to start from some premise or other, and this is at least both current and British) decided to throw considerable time and resources into research related to 'Earth Lights'. I very much hope to be able to chronicle their results in 'Common Ground', for new, original material is hard to come by at present. The success or otherwise of their work will probably constitute the most accurate judgement of Paul's theories. But I am of the opinion that there are some notable shortcomings in the book, and amid the general welter of unstinting praise, I must point out a few of these at least; those that relate to subjects about which I have actually been involved in the original research or, in the case of the Leicestershire material, where I am in a position to check up on the claims that have been made.

Most of this material falls in the seventh chapter of the book, 'UFO's as Earth Phenomena', which opens the third part, 'Towards a Synthesis'. It is in this chapter that Paul, and the geologist Paul McCartney, look to prove that areas of high UFO incidence in the U.K. - 'window areas' to use the jargon - are closely related to fault lines, and thus to seismic activity, and also to the sites of prehistoric constructions and monuments.

Four particular areas of the British Isles are singled out for attention; the Warminster area, Dyfed in South Wales, Barmouth in North Wales, and Leicestershire. It is probably worth noting that Paul was born and raised in Leicestershire, and lives in Wales. And that Warminster is the most famous UFO centre in the country. Of Warminster, I will say little. Anyone who has followed FSR, or even the popular press over the years, will be aware that the reports of UFO activity there were much less than they seemed; for anyone who still has any doubts, I would suggest reference to Ian Mrzyglod's article elsewhere in this issue, or his ongoing analysis in 'Probe'. That Paul quotes the notorious Arthur Shuttlewood, "he considered the hill to be one of the 'gateways' in the Warminster district from which UFO's issued", says little for Paul's judgement.

The Dyfed material displays only too clearly the care with which the dates supporting supposedly natural phenomena, occurring at random, have been chosen. Paul has, in other parts of the book, used cases, some hundreds of years old; here, he concentrates only on 1977. Of course, he finds many reports, but then he would; that they were mostly the product of popular fantasy and wretched investigation does not seem to matter - he is looking only for numbers of reports in an area apparently heavily faulted. To do so he has chosen the one year since the beginning of recorded history that would support his theory; I would like to see how UFO records in Dyfed look over the past 30 years; I'll bet that they are very little above average for the UK. If any other random year had been chosen, it must be said that this part of the theory would be rendered meaningless.

The same has to be said of his use of the 1904-05 material that derives almost exclusively from what was collected by Sue and I in 'Stars and Rumours of Stars', concerning anomalous light events in North Wales during the religious revival of those years; events that were very closely related to the leading evangelist, Mary Jones. If any other year had been chosen, there would be no evidence to support the theory at all. How many modern reports have there been on the coast between Barmouth and Harlech? I understand that the last seismic activity in this area had been in 1903; Paul provides no explanation as to the sudden burst of activity at the end of 1904.

But it is worse than that. Not only do the phenomena relate to only eight months in the past 75 years (what happened, - did all the faults disappear? The earth stop moving?), and not only do they not actually tie in with any seismic activity at all. The reports of the phenomena as Sue and I found and recorded them, mostly in papers and in letters from eye-witnesses to the S.P.R., bear no resemblance to any sort of 'Earth Light' observed or imagined by anyone but Paul Devereux!

The method used is that made famous by Berlitz and von Daniken; picking the scraps of evidence you want to use, and ignoring the rest. Amid daft comments like "we have here the description of the birth of a UFO" he picks out cases completely unparalleled in the UFO literature, but which appear to imply that the phenomena started at ground level. It is necessary to read the book (which I would urge everyone to do) to appreciate how irrelevant to the theory these cases are, but these are the ones the author believes help it along. The ones he ignores - the lights that appeared over the homes of those who were later to be converted, over the chapels at which Mary Jones was later to speak, the luminous arch over a mile long, the 'enormous luminous star' moving several miles in different directions in front of a number of responsible adults, the

'oval mass of grey, half open, disclosing within a kernel of white light' that hovered over two horse-drawn carriages one night near Barmouth, the lights that only appear 100 feet off the ground, show for twenty seconds, and disappear without going near the ground, the group of lights that followed a carriage for over a mile - these are far more important.

Reports concerning the lights appearing indoors at revival meetings are clearly regarded as irrelevant, as are the concurrent visions of humanoid figures and a giant made of light. How a light could have travelled across the water from Egryn to the Lleyn Peninsula also goes unexplained. Simply, no evidence is presented to even suggest that these events were, any of them, the result of underground activity; the experiments so far done with piezo-electricity bear no relation to these reports. I do not know what caused these phenomena; but at least I don't pretend.

Maybe I am a little too personally involved in assessments of the events that Paul describes as "the Barmouth flap" - so let me return to a less contentious issue. This concerns the Leicestershire material. As a source, the only one in which a wide timespan has been used, it is extremely shabby. Apart from one BUFORA report, the UFO reports used to prove that Leics UFO's appear on and around Leics fault lines have been taken from the Leicester Mercury, a boring, conservative local paper that has the resources to print only what it is told. Covering the period 1953 - 1974, the authors claim to have sorted the 'really curious' cases from the dross, leaving them 130 cases to work with. Over 22 years, I make this just under 6 cases a year. As these are completely uninvestigated cases, we might, actually, be generous in assuming that 10% of them would be genuinely unexplainable. 13 cases, perhaps; much less than one a year 'unidentified'.

Undeterred, however, all 130 cases are accepted as evidential. This amounts to just under 6 cases each year to be spread over what we are told is the "862 square mile land area of the county". The authors find that nearly 25% of the reports - under 1½ a year - fall within a 5-mile radius of an undistinguished quarried hump called Croft Hill, but conclude that there are also four or five other 'windows' in the county. Presumably, these share the other 4½ or so 'curious' reports between them.

With their customary combination of the apparently scientific and the speculatively mystical, the authors write of Croft Hill; - "There is at least one minor, local fault in the base of the hill, part of which has been uncovered by erosion to reveal a great slab of rock, so regular as to look artificial, protruding from the lower slopes. Near the foot of the hill is an ancient church dedicated to St. Michael - a dedication often associated with locations of geomantic significance." There is a photo of this "exposed fault", as well as a diagram showing supposed correlations between UFO and geophysical activity.

Mark Brown of Coalville - a highly respected UFOIN and BUFORA investigator - has researched some of the claims regarding Croft Hill. I am indebted to him for access to his findings. He took the trouble to speak to Dr. Peter Crowther of the Geological Dept. of Leicester Natural History Museum. There, working from both the latest geological survey maps of the county, and from site reports completed since, it was found that there is no fault, major or minor, in or near Croft Hill. Granite and syenite are there, certainly, but there is no fault to permit the production of visible light effects. As to the

photo, Mark suggests that this might be of "weathered beds of differing rocks". Clearly, the authors' claim that "zones of peak incidence (of UFO's) . . . are related to tectonic activity", is not helped at all by the Leicestershire material. Both cases put are actually negative, and seriously devalue the book as a whole. How much of the remainder is as bad?

It is asking a great deal of any author, to check all his sources, but a hypothesis is only as convincing as the evidence that supports it; in this case, it is clear that much of the 'UFO' evidence simply will not do. If other researchers are to base their approach on this work, they must proceed with the utmost care. Unfortunately, it does seem that other areas may be equally unsatisfactory. In the chapter titled 'The UFO Pageant' 43 supposedly evidential cases are cited by number. Some of the cases lack dates, and for some reason Joseph Smith of Mormon fame is included. But so also is the reported BVM appearance at Knock, Eire, in 1879. Paul's source for this is the book 'Passport to Magonia', by Jaques Vallee, which he quotes as gospel. Unfortunately, Vallee's own source is a single romanticised chapter in a general, unquestioning collection of BVM accounts titled 'A Woman Clothed with the Sun - Eight Great Appearances of Our Lady'. Where Vallee makes a mistake, Paul repeats it. And the unquestioning belief of the original source comes out in 'Earth Lights' as "It is an example of the proto-entity phenomenon par excellence." Actually, it never was anything of the sort.

This is a good read, stimulating and entertaining. Many of the ideas are interesting, and worthy of discussion. But the research is clearly much less than adequate, and the conclusions consequently open to attack and ridicule. I would not like to see ASSA place too many of its eggs in such an ill-woven basket.

Author Seeks Material

Among the subscribers to CG are most of the leading figures in research in this country, and many abroad as well. While writing my 'Visions of the Virgin' book I have found the help of other researchers to be invaluable. Consequently, any reader is invited to send in details of any research or writing with which they are seeking help - in a few lines, if possible - and it'll be published in the next issue.

To start the ball rolling, I'd be delighted to hear from anyone with first-hand experience of supposed possession and exorcism cases said to have arisen from 'dabbling' in the occult or the paranormal. Also, any other reports of encounters with 'Satan' the 'Devil' or similar figures since 1900. Any material will be treated in confidence - please write to the usual address.

The Falklands War - Why weren't we told ? by Sid Birchby

The Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands in April 1982 was the major event of the year so far as Britain was concerned, to say nothing of the islanders; the total absence of paranormal warnings is therefore remarkable. So is the apparent lack of political foresight, of course. When I raised the question in the April 1982 'Newsletter' various readers agreed. Gef Dearn of 'Sangreal' wrote: -

"It's a curious fact that whenever something like this happens, the seers seem to have missed it. With hindsight, what about the much-heralded wide conjunction around Jupiter on March 10th, 1982? We had a very detailed letter from the Children of the Dawn in Albuquerque, with instructions on how to utilise it to restore peace on earth. There were four stages, beginning with an exorcism of all military power and ending with the final sealing. Unfortunately, it does not seem to have worked."

Two other members had heard of an invasion prediction in Old Moore's Almanack for 1982 (on sale about mid-1981). Much as we value OMA, we have to scotch the canard. There is nothing in the 1982 edition, or in the 1983 one on sale after the event, and we assume that Old Moore has nothing to say.

Rod Sorrell ('What is Divination'? - CG5, May 1982) made an I-Ching reading on the day of invasion (2.4.82) and predicted that Britain would lose the Falklands. Attempts to regain them would fail. Mrs. Thatcher or the government would resign, and Britain would have to agree terms with Argentina. He qualified his reading by saying it related to the situation as at invasion day, but it has proved to be wrong in every detail. One must respect his forecast, but if that is the best that the I-Ching can do, the state of divination must be pretty dire. A computer simulation could have done as much.

And possibly did! Considering that the invasion took the Cabinet by surprise (or so we are told) the Task Force was mobilised so rapidly that one can only assume a contingency-plan for all the necessary movements of troops, materials and weapons, shiprequisitions and submarine patrols. By comparison with the bicycle-age mobilisation of the REF in 1939, the dispatch of the Task Force within a few days can only have been made possible by means of an instant print-out from an existing computer programme.

Does this mean that computer prediction worked better than divination? Well, only just. It very nearly failed. Many lives were lost and much damage was done to the Task Force for reasons outside computer capability. For if its programme said that certain things had been done, it would proceed on that assumption., whereas we now hear of serious defects in the naval defences, such as the use of inflammable alloys on 'Galahad', polythene clothing that melted on its wearers, and (above all) very few anti-Exocet systems. No doubt these shortcomings were due to penny-pinching, but it's doubtful that a computer would have been programmed to allow for that, and consequently its recommended tactics were seriously in error.

The British advantage was restored by several other factors, also non-computable, such as superior officer/men interaction ('morale') and technical competence. For instance, the modern British fighting unit encourages a football-team level of group action, and is composed of professionals. Its Argentinian counterpart consisted of an elite officer caste of great competence, backed-up very poorly by conscripts, treated almost like peons, who were expected to service and operate high-tech. weapon systems. Consequently, although there were sufficient Exocet missiles to wipe out the Task Force, many were wasted due to wrong fusing beforehand. It's an axiom of war that a good professional force will always beat a conscript one up to a high ratio of numbers, but such a ratio can rarely be computed in advance.

If we examine the record of mundane and paranormal forecasting in earlier times of national crisis, namely before the two World Wars, we see a similar pattern of non-predictable influences. As Kevin McClure has shown ('The 1939 No-War Prophecies' - CG6, September 1982) the British Spiritualist press repeatedly said that there would be no war until war broke out - and did not the 'Daily Express' do the same? After the event, both press media were equally reluctant to admit error, with the notable exception of the editor of 'Psychic News', and the line taken was that the forces of evil were bent on war, despite the efforts of politicians and Red Indian guides. We have less information on the pre-1914 situation (Editor's note - I've actually covered this in a recent article in 'The Unexplained' - there was no prophecy) except that there seems to have been a similar inability to face the inevitable.

Before both wars, however, there was a lead-in period of many years when the risk of a war with Germany became more apparent to all thinking persons, and it does not seem surprising that a few forecasts, oracular or mundane, were accurate. There is a maxim that divination is reliable in inverse ratio to the diviner's involvement, and few European diviners, in those two periods, could have detached themselves sufficiently to give an impartial forecast. Yet there was no lead-in to the Falklands campaign. Most people in Britain hardly knew where the islands were: somewhere near the Shetlands, perhaps? So we need to look at the way divination works - if it does.

Alas, the philosophy of science is poorly equipped to consider that the future may, in some way, exist and be perceived now, in the present. The accepted laws of physics and logic cannot accept such an idea; hence, any quasi-scientific enquiry comes to a point where a non-rational process must be assumed. This is the Leap into the Void, after Reason has taken us to the limits of what is known and we have to make an intuitive jump. Alternatively, a fudge factor.

The edge of the divination-cliff is soon reached, since the final datum is that an oracle is a superhuman revelation spoken through the mouth of a human being. Therefore, we cannot say how the vision of the future crosses the Void, but we can investigate how the prophets say that they do. By current theory, what anyone says depends on a complex mind/body interaction. Sense impressions reach the brain via neural paths operating on a binary pulse/no-pulse system. The brain is two-lobed, and so is the body. Hence there is, in theory, a compatible binary line-of-transmission between what a diviner senses and what he says about it, and we might expect an Aristotelian Yes/No sensory system to be the basic human mode of thinking, with little regard to the possibility of Maybe. We know that most problems do have a possible third answer, but we very rarely accept the implications.

BACK ISSUES

With the reprinting of issues 2 and 3, long out of print, all the issues from 1 to 6 are now available. Between them, they constitute one of the finest collections of material on the paranormal in recent years. In the hope that new subscribers will wish to catch up with the set, the six are being offered (U.K. only) at the special price of £5. Single issues are £1. Brief details of the major articles in each issue are as follows; -

No. 1. Sue Blackmore on Hallucinations and Illusions, Hilary Evans taking apart the Welsh Triangle, Jenny Randles on the 'Alien Contact' family and poltergeists, and Alan Cleaver on the problems of the EVP.

No. 2. Michael Goss on questions raised by the Yorkshire Ripper trial, the use of computers in storing and organising research and archive material, Glossolalia and Xenolalia, Kevin McClure on theories of interference by UFO occupants, and questions of Ethics in Investigation.

No. 3. Paul Screeton on the myth of the Strategic Reserve of Steam Trains, the CSICOP controversy, the Incidence of Coincidence by Jenny Randles, the Editor asking what is wrong with ouija boards, G.W. Lambert on the Geography of English Ghosts, and Nigel Watson on the amazing 1909 Airship Scare.

No. 4. Dr. Vernon Harrison's major article 'Credo' on Survival and Super-ESP, Janet & Colin Bord on the Bigfoot/UFO interface, John Rimmer on publicity-seeking by witnesses, Alun Virgin on Ouija and possession, and Bob Gilbert making a mockery of 'Holy Blood, Holy Grail.'

No. 5. Rod Sorrell on divination and the I - Ching, Mark Moravec on Psiufo phenomena, Magda Graham on pagan occultism, and Jenny Randles reporting on the ongoing research project into coincidences.

No. 6. Tony Ortzen on Katie King, Paul Screeton - Alan Garner and the Shamanistic process, Michael Goss on Children and the Paranormal, Kevin McClure on the 1939 No-War Prophecies, Locating Ghosts, and an update on the Spiricom controversy by Alex Macrae.

Also, copies of the second issue of 'End Times Bulletin' (now dormant for a couple of years till there is a wider public interest in predictions of the end of the world) are available at 50p each (\$2 abroad).

Copies of 'Stars and Rumours of Stars' by Kevin & Sue McClure are available at £1 each. This is a 36-page collation and survey of the astonishing reports of paranormal events in the Barmouth area of North Wales in 1904 and 1905, and is the source used by Paul Devereux in his book 'Earth Lights' and by D. Scott Rogo in 'Miracles'.

For all of the above please make cheques and P.O.'s payable to 'Common Ground', and send to 14, Northford Road, Knighton, Leicester.

LETTERS

From Robert Anton Wilson:

I would like to suggest that most research and speculation about "out of body experience" is confused by starting from the assumption that consciousness is normally "in" the body. It is possible that consciousness is not "in" the body but only appears so by the same type of misperception which makes the earth appear flat. It might be worthwhile to consider the position of those who claim that consciousness never has been "in" the body.

Hindus and Buddhists claim that the sense of consciousness "in" the body is an illusion (Maya). They assert that this is not a philosophical deduction but a matter of experience. The aim of their yogas and meditation techniques is simply to break the conditioning which causes us to perceive consciousness "in" the body. As Sensaki Roshi expressed it, with unusual clarity, Little Mind appears to be "in" the body, while Big Mind is everywhere. The purpose of Zen is to achieve the change in perception whereby Little Mind is seen to be a social illusion and Big Mind is seen as the only mind there is.

In the West such historical figures as Plotinus, Giordano Bruno, Jacob Bohme and Mary Baker Eddy also concluded, through experience of altered perception, that Little Mind "in" the body is a misperception and Big Mind everywhere is a correct perception.

In modern physics the same position (one mind everywhere) has been deduced as the logical consequence of quantum mechanics by Erwin Schrodinger in Mind and Matter, by David Bohm in Wholeness and the Implicate Order, and by Fritjof Capra in The Tao of Physics.

If this model is correct, then so-called OBE's are just a transitional stage between the socially conditioned illusion of consciousness "in" the body and the awakening to consciousness everywhere. In this transition, certain habits carry over from the social conditioning, and the person imagines that "little mind" (the body ego) is travelling in Euclidean space. The tunnel image is, then, the most convenient metaphor for what is happening, since it derives from the birth process in which the imprinting of the local social ego began.

Meditation on the demonstrations of post-Einstein physics, which indicate that both Euclidean space and linear time are social inventions, should make it plausible that the body-ego (inside that imaginary space and time) is also a social invention.

The following is part of a letter that resulted from some comments I made about Sai Baba in a recent abstract.

From Donald Brooks:

Things that make him different for me are that: -

(a) He is not out after your money like many of the gurus seem to be. I went to a seminar at Battersea Town Hall some months ago and there was no entrance fee, no collection, no mention of money. They fed us with Indian or western food and drink as preferred, about 500

of us, all free. There were talks by intelligent people who had met and talked with him, film shows and singing and dancing, etc. All most interesting.

(b) He does not advise long periods of meditation, etc, or any special techniques. Just says we must get on with living in love, righteousness and truth to the best of our ability, and that service to our fellows is the highest good.

(c) He does not seek publicity; they even had to get special permission from him to hold the seminar.

(d) The young people and children who are his followers seem quite exceptionally nice for this day and age!

He has opened up a number of large colleges in India and is planning to, or has opened, others in 13 other countries in the world, all to spread his methods and teachings. I think he just materialises the money; if so, God knows what it will do to the world economy.

With regard to the sacred ash which he produces, I sprinkled some round the room when we held our first healing meeting here. Several people remarked on the wonderful peaceful atmosphere, and they did not know that the particular room had been the site of much pain and strife until a few weeks before, so I felt the claim that it removes 'bad vibrations' was valid; I have not tried taking it internally yet; I suppose that I am still a bit sceptical about it.

A friend told me that an Indian girl in his office who had a great admiration for Sai Baba went out to India and eventually managed to get an audience with him during which he talked about all her friends and relatives by name and obviously knew everything about her, and her ambitions and past life. He seems to be able to communicate with anyone from any part of the world in their own language, according to what people say. I do feel that he may well be the teacher for the Aquarian Age as Jesus was for the Piscean Age, but I am trying to keep an open mind about it until I get more evidence myself. I agree that some of the miracles seem rather pointless but one of the speakers at the seminar reckoned that a ring which Baba had materialised for him had saved his life in a fall from the top of a ladder. There is also a well-authenticated case in which he brought a man back to life and health after the body had begun to decompose. He did this at the request of the man's wife and daughter.

He seems to get some very intelligent and sincere people speaking for him, and most claim that there is a tremendous feeling of love in his presence. Also, apparently, Kirlian photographs show a quite exceptional aura.



The Bright Idea from Nowhere

by Francis Mitchell

" Every one who has done any kind of creative work has experienced, in a greater or less degree, the state of mind in which, after long labour, truth or beauty appears, or seems to appear, in a sudden glory - it may be only about some small matter, or it may be about the universe. The experience is, at the moment, very convincing; doubt may come later, but at the time there is utter certainty. I think most of the best creative work, in art, in science, in literature, and in philosophy, has been the result of such a moment. Whether it comes to others as to me, I cannot say . . . "

The quote is from Bertrand Russell, the sceptical atheist and mathematical logician. Although officially anti-mystic, he does seem to have had a soft spot for Plotinus and Spinoza; maybe this is why.

After Archimedes and Newton, the best-known scientific insight of this kind came to the French mathematician Henri Poincare while he was investigating the Fuchsian Functions. Poincare interrupted his studies to go on a geological trip and found himself getting a dramatic revelation about the Fuchsian Functions in the middle of stepping on a bus. There are plenty of other examples; see Arthur Koestler's book, 'The Act of Creation'. These insights occur in the 'hard sciences' as well as the arts, fields in which the results must be checked by logic and experiment and must not be merely arbitrary.

But the process seems to lack a rational basis; it is difficult to eliminate the suspicion that original creation arises by chance. Not a new theory, this; in Handel's time it was applied by composing music to the throw of dice. Now people programme computers to do this, and David Bowie writes songs this way, by piecing newspaper cuttings together. You can judge the results for yourself. Not all creative people have agreed with such efforts. In Gulliver's voyage to Laputa, Jonathan Swift satirises exactly this. The Laputan Academy has built a machine for constructing random phrases, which they plan to put together into an encyclopedia.

Of course luck can play a part in discovery, and there are bright ideas which lead nowhere as well, but this can't be the whole story. There are the weeks of preparation described by some of Koestler's subjects. As Louis Pasteur said: " Chance favours the prepared mind."

What exactly is an idea, and how do you get a new one? There are several ancient, but still coherent theories which influence our present thinking even though large parts of them have been abandoned by the modern outlook.

Plato decided that ideas had an existence of their own, that they were even more real than material objects. Plato was a follower of Pythagoras, who regarded numbers as the reality underlying the universe. Mathematical concepts do seem to have an existence of their own. Modern mathematicians regard this existence as metaphorical, but in practise they still treat their ideas as Platonic realities.

But in Plato's view, ideas were eternal and you couldn't create them. In the 'Meno' he depicts Socrates getting a slave boy to work at geometry. Since the slave is too ignorant to know any geometry from this world, reasons Socrates, he must have remembered it from before he was born. We all know this kind of insight can feel like remembering a previously forgotten fact; perhaps both processes work through a similar network of associations using a similar mechanism. Giordano Bruno later tried to develop a system to improve the memory, in the belief that one would then recall this hidden knowledge.

Aristotle didn't believe ideas actually existed in their own right.; he thought they were put together from observation. To interpret the world around us, we need a faculty called Common Sense, originally a sixth sense which allowed us to correlate the data from the other five. For truly abstract ideas we used Nous, which in Aristotle means the perceptive, even intuitive faculty of the mind. Nous is one of those untranslatable Greek words whose meaning varies between different philosophers. For Anaxagoras, Nous had meant something more akin to the mind of God.

These theories were brought together in the early centuries A.D. as Neoplatonism, which was in effect a religion. God, Nous, and the World-Soul became a theological trinity, and abstract ideas definitely existed on a higher plane of existence in the mind of God. If you wanted to get hold of a previously undiscovered idea, your best bet was to try to attain unity with the Divine Mind like Plotinus, by ascending out of the body to the mystical realm where these rarified entities were to be found.

This outlook was adopted by Christian and Moslem theologians to form a Western mystical tradition, which lasted to modern times until it was overthrown by the Reformation and the scientific revolution. Perhaps when present-day seekers turn to occultism, they are trying to recover a part of Christian belief which they sense is missing.

The Medieval church was liberal enough to credit pagans such as Aristotle with divine inspiration; after all, Moses had been a Jew. Later on, the Jesuits favoured Confucius, which is how Kung Fu-Tzu got a Latin name.

But supposing you didn't have the asceticism considered necessary to become a proper mystic? Suppose you wanted a short-cut to greater wisdom? You might attempt to summon one of the intermediary spirits who were said to inhabit those ethereal realms, maybe a daemon like the one Socrates had; or in Latin, a genius, an indwelling creative spirit which could sort out bright ideas for you and stick them in the back of your mind, same as a genie or jinnee. Nowadays we give the credit to the individual unconscious, but it still seems as if some external intelligence has worked out the answer for us while we occupy our minds with something entirely different.

A Bright Idea from Sheffield

by Michele Clare

The daemons of the old religion became the demons of the new, and if you achieved something really clever during the Dark Ages – such as arithmetic with long division – you might easily be accused of Satanic complicity. Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake as late as 1600 when his memory system was denounced as a form of sorcery. But if you were Dr. Faustus and fed up with Aristotle, you might even consider the loss of your soul a worthwhile investment in the cause of education. I suspect that today's Faustus would try to contact a UFO for his advanced knowledge.

Or could the person with the bright ideas himself be superhuman? "There are gods and men and beings like Pythagoras," said his Greek disciples. We have transferred the word 'genius' to the talented individual now, and it's the nearest thing we have to deification. Maybe such people come to us in UFO's? "Einstein was probably one of them", suggests an American officer in 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind.'

The bright idea from nowhere is surrounded with emotionally charged values, which we express as best we can in the symbolism of the age in which we live. We have substituted spacemen for angels and outer space for inner space. We credit our intuitions to clairvoyance rather than Nous. And because some aspects of science have given it a poor public image, we have abandoned the Greek view that God was a mathematician, and forgotten its significance.

The interaction of emotion and belief has always been difficult for us to handle, and it has often got in the way of scientific insight. We know the danger of facts being embellished in an emotionally satisfying direction. But there could be a second danger. Our emotions probably fiddle the data in order to express themselves in metaphor. By taking the symbolism literally, whether we accept or reject it, we ignore the metaphor – and the message. We may be missing some equally impressive phenomenon which is profoundly misunderstood but undeniably real.

A non-binary thinker might have a better view across the Void. We tend – and so do our computers – to become dogmatic; to reach decisions by means of a pyramid of earlier ones which have discarded third-options. An intelligent squid, for example, with a 5-lobed brain and 10 limbs, might think otherwise, and possibly we do at rare times think in a more-than-binary fashion, and leap across the Void.



I think I may safely say that the most perplexing problem that faces researchers into the paranormal is the lack of repeatability of results. One may hear remarkable claims of consistent psychic activity occurring around a certain person, or one may even be involved personally in experiments indicating psychic activity, but . . . the moment an external scientific research team enters the scene the phenomena immediately, mysteriously disappear. Why is it that confirmation of paranormal activity is so elusive?

In my experience, confirmation of any paranormal phenomenon is like running around in a desert full of mirages – the land around is dotted with oases full of palm trees, but the moment one gets near they vanish into thin air. Is it because there was nothing there in the first place, or could there be another reason? I would like to speculate on another possible cause for the wealth of recorded phenomena, and the dearth of solid, substantial evidence.

There are three possible options: –

- a/. Psychic powers are restricted to a small number of talented people (or entities).
- b/. No-one is psychic, phenomena are caused by fraud, misinterpretation, coincidence etc.
- c/. We all have psychic powers, all the time.

Most people seem to consider that a/. is the most likely option, but consider for a while what would occur if option c/. were the truth.

Consider for example the ability to be lucky and pick the right teams to win the football pools. One person's win is another person's loss. If you win some extra money it is only meaningful if you have more than your neighbour. If all your neighbours also win the pools then your win becomes pointless. In order to obtain a meaningful advantage through psychic powers you would have to suppress the ability of all the people around you. But the people around would also be doing the same thing and would be trying to suppress your powers. It would be very pleasant at times to read other peoples' minds to obtain useful information. However, it would not be so pleasant to have all and sundry tuning in to your private thoughts. If any person could reliably use telepathy, he would probably be the most unpopular person on earth.

Superficially it seems quite pleasant to have mediums, clairvoyants, telepaths, metalbenders, etc. as entertainers. It is still quite acceptable when these people correctly tell you that Great Aunt Agatha said that you put red roses on her grave. If, however, one of these people suddenly developed the ability to predict trends on the stock exchange or to manipulate guided missiles, then it would affect every one of us and upset the stability of our environment. Minor, unimportant activities, such as the ability to bend forks would not be seen as a threat to other people, so long as it did not occur too frequently or reliably. The occasional mysterious event is quite welcome. Everyone likes to read about good ghost stories, but no-one would like the ghosts to become too prolific.

Reviews

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH: a Guide to its History, Principles and Practices. Edited for the S.P.R. by Ivor Grattan-Guinness. Wellingborough, The Aquarian Press, 1982.

Reviewed by Dr. E.J. Dingwall.

Although the title of this book states that it is a guide to the history and other aspects of psychical research it is not easy to discover to whom it is addressed. Indeed, after reading it the mystery of its purpose seems to deepen, but first let us examine the form and scope of our guide.

The work is divided into five parts. The first, after an introduction, has four historical sketches of psychical research in Britain, Europe, Russia and the United States. Latin America has apparently been overlooked, since the list of organisations in Part 5 omits Andrade's Instituto Brasileiro and there is scant if any mention paid to the work of such persons as Xavier, Gasparetto or Peixoto. The section by Mr. Fraser Nicol is noteworthy for its insistence on the facts relating to the founding of the SPR and the demolition of the myth so long cultivated by the Society's officials that this was accomplished by a group of scholars and scientists, a tale described by Mr. Nicol elsewhere as "turning historical truth upside down and inside out". In his treatment of Europe Mr. Gruber has done his best in the less than five pages allotted to him but clearly this was barely sufficient. The sections dealing with Russia and the United States are so short that their value is slight, although Dr. Mauskopf states that his account deals with the work of the American SPR.

Part 2 deals with "the Range of Psychical Phenomena" and comprises 12 sections in which the various types of phenomena are briefly described, such as telepathy, apparitions, poltergeists, out-of-body experiences, healing and psychic photography. Part 3, in 10 sections, passes in review what are called "Aspects of Psychical Research", in which methods of investigation are described and the use of statistics, computers and other aids are touched upon. The part ends with two very odd sections on the relation of ethics to psychical research, and methods through which it can be taught. As an example the text gives a list of questions set for students doing 'General Studies' at a university, although from the nature of the questions it is impossible even to guess the reasons for putting them, and on what the expectation is based that anyone but an expert with years of experience would even attempt to reply to them.

In the fourth part of 8 sections the relation of psychical research to other subjects is considered. Thus its connection with psychology, psychiatry, physics and subjects as diverse as astrology, ufology, dowsing, religion and the place of the media are all briefly discussed, and the authors of each section, having presumably done what was expected of them, leave the reader with a short but well-chosen glossary of terms. This is followed by a list of international organisations (in which by the way the Institute of Psychophysical Research at Oxford is omitted) and some editorial notes on the contributors who, we are assured on the blurb, are leading authorities in the field, a claim which to some might seem a little surprising.

Would the result be that we would all reach a sort of psychic stalemate? Suppose a group of people managed to discover how to levitate tables. That is quite acceptable. They then go on to levitate other objects and then develop the technique to levitate themselves, so that they no longer need to use cars (Scientifically there is not much difference between lifting a table and lifting a person). They now have considerable advantage over other people. At some stage in this process if my theory is correct, other people will use their psychic powers to ground the levitators. They may be found guilty of fraud or their sanity will be questioned. They will find that the tables will perform marvellously when there are no outsiders present but will stay firmly on the ground whenever external investigators enter the room.

If my theory is correct, then I can make certain predictions as to the nature of people likely to experience paranormal phenomena, and the nature of people who will never experience psychic phenomena: -

- 1/. People who regularly experience phenomena will have one or more of these characteristics: -
 - a/. They do not readily divulge their experiences to investigators.
 - b/. They have some history of mental instability.
 - c/. They can be proved to benefit financially from disclosure of their psychic powers.
 - d/. Other people believe they are the sort of person who would be guilty of fraud.
- 2/. People who are very unlikely to experience paranormal phenomena: -
 - a/. People with some standing in the community, e.g. doctors, lecturers, etc.
 - b/. People who would efficiently record any unusual activity and would publicise any such events.
 - c/. People with a reputation above question.

I am not for one minute suggesting that people who claim to be psychics are mentally unstable or fraudulent. I am just saying that for the sake of our society's balance it is necessary that we should be able to find an excuse to disbelieve their claims. In other societies different rules apply. The witch doctor can perform magic, but the ordinary person cannot.

The theory that we are all part of a psychic stalemate can explain a great many of the most confusing problems. I find that it is a useful model for predicting experimental results, but I must admit that I find it difficult to accept its revolutionary implications.

As stated at the beginning of this review, it is not easy to discover to what class of reader this book is addressed. The general reader who is, as the saying goes, 'interested in the subject' can hardly be expected to read, let alone understand some of the sections, while the expert will learn little that he does not already know. As might be expected, some sections are of much greater value than others. Those by Fraser Nicol, Susan Blackmore, E. Wookey, Alan Mayne and R. Broughton, who deal with the history of psychical research in Britain, CORE's, hypnosis, statistics and the use of the computer respectively are to be especially commended, whilst other sections should have been entrusted to more experienced hands.

Perhaps the best and most useful feature of this book is what is wrongly termed the 'bibliographies' following each section. These are really lists of references to the subjects being treated and provide an excellent source from which the material has been gathered. For modern work these references will be found of considerable value, though a few may regret the absence of some of the great classics of psychical research such as Portmore's Studies in Psychical Research (1897), and his two following works The Naturalisation of the Supernatural (1908) and The Newer Spiritualism (1910) all three of which draw largely on the work of the SPR.

The Editor has clearly taken great trouble in the preparation and proof reading of the book, and any serious factual errors seem to be minimal, although what may be printers' errors are unfortunate, such as Lambroso, Tyrell and Gilbert, and Portmore's death being given as 1950.

SOUL SEARCH: Spiritual Growth through a Knowledge of Past Lifetimes. By Glenn Williston and Judith Johnstone, Wellingborough, Turnstone Press, 1983.

Not a favourite subject of mine, this - nor of anyone even mildly obsessed with the presentation of evidence - this is one of the more complete and literate books from the "welfare through regression" camp. Literate, in that it is well written and organised, with some consideration for giving the process a historical and religious context. Complete, in that it puts forward the supposed need for the practise of 'Soul Search', the method of it, its advantages, and a number of examples of how it functions, and the effects that it can have. I suspect that belief and anticipation must, unavoidably, play an important part in the process, but this is an increasingly popular subject, and Soul Search is a relatively sensible guide from which to work. KM.

LIVING WONDERS: Mysteries and Curiosities of the Animal Kingdom. By John Michell and Robert J.M. Rickard, London, Thames & Hudson, 1982. £8.95.
Reviewed by Kevin McClure.

A good Fortean book is like an unexpected mirror. It is not there all the while but surprises us from time to time, showing us what we miss behind and above and around us, out of the range of our conventional vision. And it is also a mirror that tells true, and does not distort.

On these terms, Living Wonders is a particularly fine Fortean book, and a real luxury in the proper sense of the word. It is by no means necessary to mankind's continuing existence that we should know the intimate details of what the authors call 'Cryptobiology', a heading that covers such wonders as the Kraken, Life after Extinction, Neo-Dinosaurs, Rains of Fish and Reptiles and Seeds and Vegetables, Toads in Solid Rock, Calculating Horses, Cats with Wings, Animal Providers, Canine Loyalty, Avian Abductions, Suicides and Hitch-Hikers, Animal Councils and Law Courts and Armies and Mass Panics and Wakes and Funerals, Monkey Chains and Rat Kings and far more besides. But it is marvellous that Michell and Rickard should have troubled to collate such a wealth of obscure and intriguing knowledge and experience, and have presented it in such a pleasing manner.

Anyone who has read the authors' previous best-seller Phenomena will know what is going on here. This is rescue archaeology on items of knowledge that could so easily be lost because they seem so ephemeral but which, when presented en masse, display a significance as a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. This effect is enhanced by the consistently high standard of illustration.

It would be a mistake to imagine that any of this has much to do with the paranormal. What it is about is the wonders of nature - not supernatural, or un-nature. Indeed, the lesson for all of us is that if things as extraordinary as are recorded here can happen in the animal kingdom - rarely, admittedly, but they happen nonetheless - then it is the more likely that what we now assume to be paranormal events will probably turn out to have a natural explanation in the end. But despite this, the book has all the qualities that went to make Phenomena such a success, with an added degree of specialisation that makes it all the more satisfying.

Far too often, I read that some book or other, for which the reviewer has paid absolutely nothing and which is often of marginal value, must find its way on to the readers bookshelf. You don't have to have this book to be a competent paranormal researcher, but if you have even a passing interest in the anomalous, find delight in the peculiar, or just want to inform and enjoy yourself at the same time, you could hardly do better than buy Living Wonders.

THE MAGIC TAROT: Vehicle of Eternal Wisdom, by
Frederic Lionel. London, Routledge and Kegan
Paul, 1982. £8.95.

Reviewed by Dr. Susan Blackmore.

'The Magic Tarot' is an attractively presented little book translated from the French and with the bonus of a pack of 22 newly designed cards. If you enjoy meandering explorations among different symbolisms and ancient mythology then you will probably enjoy the book, but it is not an easy read, and is often frustratingly confusing. It is certainly not a book to recommend to anyone new to the Tarot. Lionel seems to assume that his readers already know what the Tarot is, how the pack of cards is made up and how it is used, as well as something about mythology, numerology and alchemy.

Lionel argues, as have many before him, that modern cards do not do justice to the original ancient symbolism and that we can only understand the Tarot fully by returning to it. To this end he designed his new cards. Many others have also felt compelled to produce new designs - Aleister Crowley's powerful, even frightening cards are probably the best known - but I can't help feeling that their value is often greatest for the designer himself. I would certainly rather have Waite's familiar and friendly, if symbolically inaccurate, cards than the columns of esoteric symbols we are offered here, though doubtless others will disagree with me.

Lionel also introduces a new dual numbering system. Each of the 22 trumps is numbered as a stage on the path, as well as keeping its traditional number. His choice of order set me thinking, and does have points to commend it, but to me most of the attributions seem quite arbitrary. One could just as well defend any card as fitting number 1 as 'Temperance'. But perhaps my main criticism is that it is unnecessary. Ultimately everyone takes his own path and the traditional order provides a sound structure to be used in a different way by every student of the Tarot.

When I was first introduced to the Tarot 12 years ago (and by none other than Kevin McClure!) I was urged not to read any books on the subject. I was told to learn from the cards themselves, to build my own associations, find my own path and ultimately make my own pack. Unlike Lionel I never did the latter, but he has not convinced me that everyone shouldn't do it for himself. I believe the Tarot may be a 'vehicle of eternal wisdom', but if so it is its own best guide. Don't let me put you off this book just because it isn't to my taste. You may find interesting new connections, and thoughts worth meditating on, but it has certainly failed to change my long-held belief that the cards themselves can teach us far more than any book can.

A GUIDEBOOK TO ARTHURIAN BRITAIN by Geoffrey
Ashe. Wellingborough, Aquarian Press, 1983.
Price £4.50.

Well up to the author's usual impeccable standard, this is a delightful, accessible and encouraging book, cataloguing alphabetically, by geographical location, the multitude of places in the British Isles associated with Arthur and the Arthurian legends. Both a field guide and a cracking fireside read, my only quibble is that the line drawings, which are vague and less than helpful, could well have given way to more of the excellent photos. Highly recommended. KM.

The Actor's Dog by Hilary Evans

An actor takes his dog with him to a rehearsal. The play is an old-fashioned melodrama, our hero gets to be attacked by a band of brigands. The dog snarls and growls at the assailants: he has been conditioned to respond to a specific stimulus - 'Master's being attacked!' - in a specific manner, and he is reacting in the only way he can. He cannot conceive that, on this occasion, a wider frame of reference is involved.

We humans are in danger of being caught in the same reductionist pitfall if, confronted by the UFO phenomenon, we allow ourselves to be triggered into a conventional human response. Fortunately, we are better off than the actor's dog, for we are capable of conceiving that what we perceive may be only partial, contained within a wider frame of reference, even though we can only speculate as to what may lie beyond our human scope.

This analogy is drawn by French author Bertrand Méheust in the concluding pages of his Science Fiction of Soucoupes Volantes, one of the most penetrating - as it is also one of the most provocative - volumes in the UFO literature. Méheust, for one, is in no danger of being tempted into reductionism; for him the UFO phenomenon prefigures an enlargement of our experience, an extension of our knowledge, a deepening of our awareness.

Méheust is a wild man with wild ideas. But he is also a Frenchman and shares the hard-headed practicality of his race. So he isn't going to impose his ideas on the rest of us unless he can quote chapter and verse in their support. So don't worry: speculative though it may be in its overall concept, this is a solid, down-to-earth piece of research, combining a profound acquaintance with the literature of science-fiction with a no less thorough knowledge of the UFO case-log, and the references are there for us to check.

Consequently, when he asserts that science-fiction and ufology have more in common than meets the eye, he can make his assertion good, which is just as well, because a claim like that is likely to make him persona distinctly non grata with SF buffs and ufologists alike. The SF buffs on the whole don't want to know about UFO's which are so much more unbelievable than their own carefully worked-out fantasies. The ufologists can't understand why the SF authors are still playing make-believe games when reality is hovering over their front lawn.

By way of illustrating the sort of thing that fills Meheust's pages, here are two first-hand encounters with anomalous flying objects: -

" See it? Felt it is more the word. It came along over the hill, and quick as an arrow it swooped down till I thought it would have crushed me. But all of a sudden it seemed to see this very tree beneath which I'm standing, and like a dart it turns and whizzes away . . . it seemed to be alive and thinking . . . There wasn't a sound; it came swooping over the village, gave a kind of dull flash, then it was gone, melted into the night as it were. But it came again - a big flat thing, just like a sheet of paper, only it was fifty yards and more across in both directions and thicker. There it was, like a platform hung in the sky, for when it had shot up some hundreds of feet it came to a stand-still, and hung there, like a great square patch of cloud, without so much as a movement. The dog seemed to have scared it, and it waited till there wasn't so much as a murmur, then it dropped like a stone, leaned to one side, and came swooping round again over the oak, over my head, and across the chimneys of the houses till I thought it would have knocked them all to the ground. Then, with a flash the same as it gave before, it was gone."

" I saw it about 70 metres away, manoeuvring for about 90 seconds in all kinds of strange and varied positions. It moved in total silence, floating slowly at about 100 metres altitude. Suddenly it started to drop with an oscillating movement, and I could see it turn on its side. Abruptly it shot like an arrow to one side, so fast that it vanished from my sight, only to surprise me by reappearing lower down, where it came to a sudden stop, swinging from one side to the other. For about four seconds it hung completely motionless in the air, silent but with a slight vibration. Then suddenly it shuddered two or three times, made a right angle turn and disappeared like a flash."

Of course, you guessed that one of those is fiction, the other one fact. But you may be surprised to learn that the first extract, from a story by Captain Brereton, dates from as early as 1911, exactly 60 years before the second sighting was reported by a respectable businessman in Argentina.

Up to a point, both the SF buffs and the ufologists can derive some comfort from Meheust's findings. Imitation is said to be flattery at its most sincere and here, it would seem, is Nature imitating Art and flattering the SF writer in the process. The ufologist may feel dismayed to find his witness describing his alleged encounter in terms so closely reminiscent of fiction, but at least he can be grateful for one of the most significant clues to have come his way in decades of trying to solve the UFO mystery.

But what, having got such a clue, is he to do with it? Meheust's thesis is this: that the accounts given by many UFO witnesses, and especially those who have witnessed abductions, can be paralleled, not simply in general outline but in petty detail, by episodes in science-fiction adventure stories, many of them written a long time ago and in a foreign language.

Coincidence, naturally, is the first explanation to come to our mind. But while one case, maybe two or three, might be thus written off, coincidence can hardly be stretched to accommodate Meheust's entire dossier. So what else is on offer?

Another of his 'matches' concerns a French pulp fiction story of the twenties which matches in uncanny detail an abduction case from Brazil in the seventies. To account for the match, one could formulate some such theory as the following. The Brazilian has read the original story and, for some psychological reason of his own, is retelling it as though it happened to him in real life.

Plausible and possible, yes. Just. True, the original story was written back in the 1920's and is a little crude by today's standards - but the translator may have felt that a Brazilian reader wouldn't be too demanding. True, the witness is illiterate - but perhaps some kind friend may have read it aloud to him. True, the witness claims it was a real experience - but he could be deceiving himself, even lying. True, the witness has no back history of such behaviour - but there's always a first time, isn't there? True, he earned himself nothing but ridicule by claiming to have had the experience - but then maybe things didn't turn out the way he'd hoped, perhaps he'd looked for fame and fortune as the result of his story . . .

Not very convincing, I think you'll agree.

Try again . . . Maybe the French SF writer, back there in the 1920's, had an experience similar to that of the Brazilian peasant decades later but, fearing ridicule, and being a writer and seeing the chance of making a few francs, he cast his account as fiction. That makes a kind of sense. Ah, but does it make sense to suppose that dozens of French writers were having such experiences and concealing them in the same way at the same time?

And so, indefatigably sceptical, we work our way through the various rationalisations open to us, considering any scenario that may save us having to face up to the ultimately inescapable fact; that, in Meheust's words, both the writer and the contactee 'are nourishing themselves at the same spring'.

Alvin Lawson, as we know, has recently offered us a suggestion as to what that spring may be. (See Magonia Issue 10). He hypothesises that abduction witnesses are unconsciously re-living their repressed birth trauma experiences. And of course it is well known that all writers of fiction are in fact working out their own personal hang-ups in the persona of their characters . . . Such notions as Lawson's aren't the kind that ufologists are apt to hug warmly to their bosoms, but Lawson backs his hypothesis with as much supportive evidence as Meheust does, and it isn't easy to meet it with total rejection. When Lawson and Meheust met at the recent Salzburg conference, it was at once apparent that their ideas could tie in together, and both in turn could slot in with other hypotheses that are being kicked around, such as Vallee's control-system suggestion, Malcolm Scott's 'protection is the name of the game' formula for witness motivation, and my own mimetic projection model.

Meheust's findings do not support any one particular theory as to what may be the ultimate stimulus for UFO accounts, whether real or fictional. What they do require is that any explanation must be capable of accounting for these disconcerting parallels. Clearly, something very odd is going on. Meheust's book challenges us to do better than the actor's dog, and to be prepared to think in terms of a wider frame of reference than was dreamed of by the ufologists of twenty years ago.

Abstracts & Journal Listings

Aquarian Arrow No. 14. Usual well-written collection of Thelemic quality in-jokes. Some sensible stuff if you can work out what is going on; I have trouble, and I haven't missed an issue yet! 95p from BCM - OPAL, London WC1N 3XX.

Ancient Skills and Wisdom Review. No. 17. To be 'The Shaman' from the next issue. Paul Screeton's perceptive journalism focussed in a wide range of reviews and commentaries. Of 'Earth Lights' he says it is "brilliant" and "a giant step for ufology." I guess you can't win 'em all!

The Cauldron. No.28. A duplicated, practical pagan journal, sensibly written and compiled. Includes Guy Ragland Phillips on 'Phallic Altars'. 4 issues for £1.20p from Myrddin, c/o Groesfordd, Lluwyndrain, Llanfyrnach, Dyfed, SA35 0AS.

The Christian Parapsychologist. December 1982. As sound and sane a journal as any in the field. Leslie Price reporting on the U.S.A. conferences of the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship (like a wetter Wrekin Trust) and the Academy of Religion and Psychical Research (to me, more impressive, but fearfully earnest) Hugh Corbett on Triune Man, letters on exorcism, leys and levitation, informative reviews, and the Editor's invaluable update on recent publications and events. Only 60p from CFPSS, St. Mary Abchurch, Abchurch Lane, London, EC4N 7BA.

Earthlink. October 1982. Like a more adult 'Magic Saucer' covering both UFO's and New Age, this is a most odd combination of research reports, historical material, and seemingly absurd and naive contactee claims. Neatly done, though, and good value at 75p from 16, Raydons Road, Dagenham, Essex.

Earthquest News. No.1. under this title. An extremely worthy successor to and replacement for 'The Supernaturalist', this is another first-rate production by Andy Collins, who must be the key figure in belief-oriented investigation in the paranormal field in this country (I think I might have invented a category there - you can pick up the same sort of idea in Alan Cleaver's recent contributions to CG). Anyway, this handsome (CG style) journal includes Essex Fumas, an Astrological Jinx, King Arthur's Cross (fascinating), notes on the 'Stone Tape' theory (it would be nice if the BBC would repeat the original, wouldn't it?), and an illustrative, complex account of a haunting. Andy reviews 'Earth Lights', and concludes that it "comes closer to the truth about UFO's than any of the hundred or so books on the topic I possess." I think 'Earthquest' is excellent, and essential for a balanced view of research in the U.K. It costs £3.00 for four issues from Andy Collins at 19, St. David's Way, Wickford, Essex, SS11 8EX.

Flying Saucer Review. Vol.28. No.1. As boring as ever, full of foreign and historical cases, plus Leonard Strickfield on retrievals (again - are we really meant to believe this stuff without any sound proof?). The issue is only enlivened by an utterly irrelevant but rather good article by Nigel Watson, 'Are the UFO-nauts Fowl Plotters?' It is so out of place in its drab surroundings that its very publication is virtually Fortean! FSR costs £1.15p from FSR Publications Ltd, West Malling, Maidstone, Kent, ME19 6JZ.

Fortean Times. No.38. Brilliant as ever, though the lead article, 'Psychometry of Cattle Mutilation' seems to lack a certain appeal (I never have been able to see the attraction in this gruesome and self-indulgent subject). However, the rest is marvellous, with full reports on the latest EVM sightings in France and Yugoslavia, a synchronistic adventure involving clowns (beautifully written), Spontaneous Human Combustion, a Talking Toilet, Holes in Heads, Doc Shiels, Loren Coleman, cartoons, fish falls and ball lightning. Oh yes, and Bob Rickard thinks 'Earth Lights' is "the most solid and literally down to earth contribution to understanding the UFO enigma for a long time." Over 60 pages each issue, professionally typeset and printed. Sample issue a measly £1.25 from BM-Fortean Times, London, WC1N 3XX.

Lantern. No.39. Another classy mix of local East Anglian reports - Suffolk Witch Bottles, and a mysterious hum at Worlingham, Suffolk. Of interest anywhere - I think there might be some useful examples for ASSAP's Project Albion here, as well, from a thriving and well-established local group. 'Lantern' costs £1.50 for four issues from Ivan Bunn, 3, Dunwich Way, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft, Suffolk.

The Ley Hunter. No.94. Solvent at last, thanks to the sort of house-keeping that Margaret Thatcher would have been proud of, and the sort of support from readers that never ceases to amaze all of us. TLH seems to be moving more clearly towards the special areas it best serves; the real, practical earth mysteries. Here, Philip Heselton reporting on Moot '82, some fascinating historical and dowsing work on the area round Ludlow, the Argyllshire Serpent Mound, Turf Sundials, and a host of regular features by leading names in the EM field. A 3-issue sub. is £3.75 from P.O.Box 13, Welshpool, Powys, Wales.

Magic Saucer. No.23 & No.24. Farewell Magic Saucer! Just one of the recent departures (New Times and Sangreal have gone the same way). Personally, I never had much time for this mix of naive, Shuttlewood-style ufology, kids' wishful thinking, spirit contactees, and new age speculation, but it's a loss to us all when any independent magazine falls by the wayside. It isn't quite clear why MS came to an end, but I hope that Crystal Hogben, who proved herself an able and imaginative editor, will find a new venture soon. Try writing to her at 8, Ely Close, Halberley Estate, Kidderminster, Wores. I'm sure these and the back issues will be collectors' items in years to come.

Magonia. No.10. The utterly vital and indispensable 'Alvin Lawson - Birth Trauma' special issue, relevant to the investigation of almost any form of spontaneous phenomena. In my view, a far likelier explanation for exotic UFO experiences than two bits of underground rock rubbing together! No well-dressed paranormalist should be seen without this issue. 4-issue sub. only £2 from John Rimmer, 64, Alric Avenue, New Malden, Surrey.

Northern UFO News. No.100. A giant step upmarket for what till now has been one of the archetypal duplicated UFO mags. Now in neat A5 litho, with a smart and distinctive cover, this will further enhance the standing of its editor, Jenny Randles. If you subscribe to this and to 'Probe' Report, you'll miss very little of importance in British ufology. £4.20p for six issues from Jenny at 9, Crossfield Road, Somerville, Wallasey, Wirral.

Probe Report. Vol. 3. Nos. 2 & 3. Without doubt, the best UFO journal that graces my letterbox, these two issues are excellent. The first contains long and sensible replies to Hilary Evans' 'Balls of Light' extravaganza, the end of the 'Mystery Circles' affair, Geoff Bird on Adamski and Klarer, and Ian Mrzyglod on Warminster. The second contains a stunningly honest and valuable account of apparent MIB/Conspiracy activity against the Swindon group, SCUFORI; Martin Shipp's article is fascinating. It is absurd that 'Probe' is scraping along to survive. Mind you, it does have Jenny Randles reviewing 'Earth Lights', saying that it is a book that "actually solves a part of the whole UFO mystery." For a large, smart magazine, it is cheap at £3.40p for four issues from Ian Mrzyglod at 16, Marigold Walk, Ashton, Bristol, BS3 2PD.

Psychic News. Weekly, at 18p ordered from your newsagents. Most of the last few months has really been news, with less of the 'Coronation Street star has psychic gerbil' material that so often appeared in the past. Mind you, the physical mediums seem to have gone very quiet lately. Highspot recently has been the photos on the cover of the issue dated 18.12.82, showing PN staff 'floating' a table some way off the ground, and 'crawling' up a door (the table, not the staff). I don't doubt the genuineness of the photos or the participants, or the ability of many people to produce similar results in the right circumstances; it is a lesson to all of us. Just so long, that is, as those involved in such entertainments remember that it was all being done over a century ago, that it has nothing to do with survival, and that it doesn't equip them to lead us into a New Age full of UFO's, treasure, and amiable megaliths!

The Quicksilver Messenger. No.7. The South coast earth mysteries journal, and markedly improved, in my opinion. 'The Fountain Project', concerned with improving the quality of life and health in Brighton by coordinating thought, intent, and the landscape, Paul Screeton on an 'Eccentric Antiquarian' (no, not Paul Screeton), an interview with Paul Devereux, a guide to Megalithic Portugal, and the excellent Nigel Pennick (whose book 'Hitler's Secret Sciences' that I've just read beats all the other Nazi/Occult books hollow). £M is well worth £1 from Chris Ashton, Garden Flat, 46, Vere Road, Brighton, Sussex.

Reincarnation Report. Vol.1. No.2. Much-advertised, this is just American nonsense, full of speculative articles and numerous adverts that seem likely only to appeal to elderly trance mediums who think they are Edgar Cayce, or the sort of stoned pixies who generally seem to sustain this dreadful standard of publication. Best ignored, but available for £12.50p for 12 issues from Box 15, Twickenham, Middlesex.

Sangreal. Vol.5. No.4. A sad farewell, this, as it has been a fine journal of the more complex twists of the Western Mystery Tradition. A bit poetic, this last issue, but if you want to know how to Form a Golem, this is for you. The editors think their work is over, though I can't imagine they're right, but as back issues are still available you may wish to write to Sally and Gef Stuart Dearn at 1, St. Martin's Court, Chickereil Road, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 0BN.

The Templar. Nos. 2 & 3. The poshest of Nigel Pennick's many publications under the 'Institute of Geomantic Research' head. Far too many individual items to list, but send for a sample copy if you are looking for intelligently written items on geomancy, archaeology, sacred architecture, history, anarchy, earth mysteries, or more or less any other aspect of the field. £3.25p for a 4-issue sub. from the IGR at 142, Pheasant Rise, Bar Hill, Cambridge, CB3 8SD.

The Warminster History

by Ian Mrzyglod

"The brilliant aeroform glittered like a jewel, splendid in its magnificence as it silently glided across the star-spotted heavens, carving out a weaving path which seemed to be in order to dodge the distant suns. For what seemed an eternity, the celestial sky-chariot performed such enigmatic manoeuvres that the watchers on the hill couldn't even utter the words of wonderment that their startled faces so surely displayed. The alien visitor then vanished behind some high clouds and did not return again that night to dazzle us further."

Such is a typical paragraph any reader could find on picking up any of the books penned by Warminster's resident author on the most baffling of mysteries - UFO's. Of course, these highly descriptive words are recounting the adventures of an ordinary satellite, arcing across the sky as so many do each night. Yet, if one stands at Cradle Hill, Warminster, the satellite becomes no longer an ordinary astronomical observation of a piece of very man-made hardware, but instead is transformed into a sighting of an alien spaceship. Or at least, that used to be the case during the years when Warminster became famous for its UFO's, and attracted visitors from many different countries. The works of Arthur Shuttlewood, a reporter who turned his talents towards documenting the antics of the nocturnal lights, were just about the only sources that any interested reporter, researcher or other interested party could obtain information from. And so, accounts of everyday events were distorted into tales of wonderment that intrigued the world, and marked the little Wiltshire town permanently on the map as a UFO haven.

To attribute all the Warminster paraphernalia to Shuttlewood alone is slightly unfair. He had a good number of interested parties in the town who helped no end in perpetuating the myths. Of course, Arthur Shuttlewood was not involved with the cult movements and societies that moved in, but fed off them for information and publicity for his works. The groups would interpret aircraft, flares, stars and satellites, among other natural lights, as UFO's, and supply information about them to Shuttlewood, who indiscriminately included them in the pages of such books as Warnings from Flying Friends (Portway Press 1968) and UFO's - Key to the New Age (Regency Press 1971). These two books highlight gross misinterpretations (as do the other four) that formed the basis of the Warminster THING legend, which has persisted from the mid-1960's to the present day.

For something like this to ever occur, there must be a stimulus or event that triggered the whole thing off, and this still causes researchers great concern. It is quite reasonable, in fact extremely necessary, to dismiss practically every report as either fabricated, grossly distorted or innocently misinterpreted; yet for a series of independent events to occur almost simultaneously in a small area of Wiltshire does not immediately suggest a hoax. Indeed, perhaps the first to experience the antics of the THING (as it was so cutely named in later months) were the Army, who are stationed there; they heard loud crashing sounds almost like explosions, yet found no signs of damage afterwards. On Christmas Eve, 1964, tiles on numerous houses became dislodged for no apparent reason, and family pets were also found dead, from no immediately apparent cause. All these events signalled the start of the myriad reports to come, and it must be accepted, even by down-to-earth, sceptical minds, that something strange did happen at the beginning.

One day, maybe these stories and events will be explained, but at present they remain a thorn in the side of the researchers who are trying to explain away the Warminster legend. Actual sightings of UFO's predate the publication of any reports, and certainly the famous Gordon Faulkner photograph, as used on the first book by Shuttlewood The Warminster Mystery (Spearman 1967) was taken in August 1965.

However, from then on the whole thing got out of hand, and the hilltops became haunts for every fun-loving hoaxer and outlandish cult-member who cared to venture up to the top. During the summer months of the later 1960's, the fields became clustered with tents as people flocked to see something spectacular. And down in the town of Warminster, others made preparations to make sure that they did.

With so many eager eyes trained skyward, it was so easy to convince the watchers that they were witnessing UFO events and not seeing ordinary aircraft lights. It was also easy to convince them that an electric lightbulb suspended from the tail of a plastic kite was in fact an alien visitor flying low in his scoutcraft. This author, on one memorable occasion, even saw a family from the North of England remain insistent that a train disappearing into a tunnel as seen from Cradle Hill was definitely a 'mother ship' complete with portholes.

Thus, the stories were reported back to Shuttlewood, and the not so critical UFO magazine editors, and more 'authentic sightings' found their way to the public's notice. The unfortunate thing here is that among all the rubbish that was being circulated were undoubtedly one or two sightings that were perhaps genuine, but were lost to ufology due to the vast amount of suspect information. There were no real investigators in Warminster during the span of years when things were apparently 'active', just UFO 'clubs' and fringe societies that offered prayer to the visitors from space. Consequently, not one report that emanated from the town could ever be used as solid evidence in any statistics. Most ufologists were wary of the goings-on and left well alone, but the popular press latched on to the stories and made interesting copy from them, which gave Warminster more authenticity.

So everyone was feeding off each other. The UFO groups needed material for their magazines, as did the press. (Not to mention a certain author of books). People needed entertaining by strange lights in the sky. So it was in the interest of all concerned to perpetuate

the myths of UFO's haunting the skies, both to satisfy the hundreds of visitors, and to fill up magazines which would bring in sought-after cash. This author was present when the founder and editor of a small Warminster organisation's publication attempted to convince a group of people that there was a gravitational anomaly present on Cradle Hill. After talking at length one night about his personal experiences in signalling to UFO's, he told everyone there to stand on tiptoe and to take note of how heavy they felt. As soon as the long trek down from the copse to the famous White Gates was over (the usual skywatch point) he repeated the exercise, and all present remarked on how much heavier they felt the second time. The proponent put it down to a gravitational anomaly, and not to the fact that they all had tired legs after a long walk downhill. This highlights the calibre of work that was being conducted on those bleak hilltops over a decade ago.

Arthur Shuttlewood was never out to fool people into seeing things that weren't there just so he could earn more from book sales. His need was different. He wanted people to share something with him, namely his experiences which were highly subjective and/or imaginative in nature, and he did not want people to go home disappointed. He would talk to people and tell them all about Warminster, and exclaim with glee when a satellite came over, informing them that they were seeing a UFO. He never intended to 'con' any of these people, because he believed in what he was saying, as he does to this day. Sadly, there were plenty of others who knew what they were after.

Looking back on the whole story, it is easier now to smile and be thankful that everything has left Warminster, including the UFO's (if they were ever there anyway). Once again the hilltops are deserted save for the exceptional occasion when a few old hands wish to reminisce, and one or two people make the effort. The signs of the old days are still there for us all to see - such as the notches in the gatepost that marked the names of societies and groups that made the pilgrimage there years ago. The graffiti on the field barn is still there with the drawings of flying saucers and aged slogans.

In retrospect, how can one define Warminster's significance in UFO history? Did it achieve anything? How can any such achievement be quantified? Warminster certainly brought UFO's to the public in a big way, but was it the right way? There are so many questions that could be analysed, but it will need time to analyse and assess it properly. Right now, an investigation (or re-investigation) is being conducted that might come up with some answers. But until then, all that can be said is that Warminster's UFO's existed for some, and the remains of that era, that chapter of ufology, are still there on those hilltops to remind us of days gone by.

The following is not a paid ad. - I don't accept 'em! Rather, it is a bold venture by a CG reader, which we're happy to publicise.

ILLUMINATION BOOKS is a new mail-order service specialising in books (both hard and softcover) under the broad heading of Fortean/UFO's/ Psychic/Earth Mysteries. A catalogue will be available at the end of March or early in April. Prospective customers may obtain a catalogue by simply writing to me or telephoning. Speedy service guaranteed. The address is 194, Station Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7TE. Phone 021-444-6188.

CLOSING REMARKS

In the editorial of the latest 'Northern UFO News' Jenny Randles puts precise figures to the decline in UFO reports that we have known about for some time; -

" Total case numbers have steadily declined since 1977, time of the last great British wave. NUFON figures show: 1977 (332); 1978 (273); 1979 (156); 1980 (84); 1981 (68); and 1982 (just 38)."

For the major fully competent investigation network in the North and Midlands to produce such figures is remarkable; yet they are supported by similar figures and comments from all over the world. Publications that a few years ago had trouble keeping abreast of events are now, without exception, struggling: several have already ceased publication. For no immediately apparent reason the most intriguing and informing type of paranormal event has become a rarity. 'High strangeness' cases on which we once chose to concentrate our limited resources, are now virtually unheard of.

I would be delighted to print in CG8 a selection of ideas and arguments as to why this dramatic decline has occurred. Please find time to put your thoughts into order and send in a letter. Personally, I wonder if we may, by achieving increasingly high standards of investigation, have actually made the business of reporting an event, particularly a falsified or dubious one, altogether like very unrewarding, hard work. If so, the concern for improvements in investigation during the past decade has been well worth the effort. However, that is not the point that I wish to make here. Instead, on the assumption (arguably true) that those who involve themselves in paranormal research generally do so because they enjoy it (I'm quite sure they don't do it for the money!), I would like to consider what we researchers and investigators are now doing with the time that we have to spare. Or, to put it in a less pleasant way, how we are getting our kicks now the UFO's have gone.

A number of us - myself included - have shifted over to various kinds of 'historical' research. Not necessarily distant history, but more making use of the material so far collected in a number of different areas of the subject, material that has often been neglected since it was first recorded. The forthcoming ASSAP/Thorsons " The Evidence For . . ." series will present much of the best of such research over the next couple of years.

Other investigators, including, unfortunately, the best in Northern Ireland and the Midlands, have chosen to withdraw from active work in the field. Of course, there are many different reasons behind their decisions, but I am sure that not all would have done so had there still been some apparent point in continuing as investigators. This may be a particularly honest line to have taken, by people who place a high value on their time and energy. But then, there are also others who have chosen to persist with the sort of UFO cases still coming to hand, though the cases may be such as they would have judged insignificant five years ago. Sadly, the results are no more important now than they would have been, despite the expertise used in the investigation.

At this stage, I would like to point out that what you are reading is an editorial comment, my own personal opinion. Not that of ASSAP, or representing any other individual. And as you might expect following such a remark, I am about to become involved in some strong criticism. For there are other individuals and groups, many of the highest standing in the paranormal research field in this country in the recent past, who in their desire to find mysteries and wonders - if you like, to continue getting the kick that undoubtedly comes from investigating a major case - have started to go off at some very strange tangents. Crudely expressed, these tangents fall under two, often related headings: -

creating your own phenomena, and,

creating, or making up, history.

We are not necessarily talking about deliberate deceit here though sometimes, faced with books like The Janos People (Frank Johnson, Spearman, 1980) and The Green Stone (Graham Phillips and Martin Keatman, Spearman, 1983) we are left with a choice between that and believing far more than logic or reason give us any cause to, for both are sadly lacking in evidence.

It does seem that certain basic, pointless physical phenomena, the drawing-room equivalent of scrunching paper-clips, are beginning to occur on both sides of the Atlantic, though under less than experimental conditions. This is interesting, as is the possible occurrence of ectoplasmic and apport events. However, all seem to be devoid of the seeming spiritual significance sometimes attributed to them. I have no doubt that these phenomena are inextricably linked at their inception to those who report them to us.

Similarly, there is good and convincing evidence that our ancestors possessed a greater and more sophisticated knowledge of measurement, calculation and observational science than they have till recently been credited with. This enabled them to build with some accuracy, to a degree that intrigues many of us now. I accept that some of the sites they built in this country have been aligned with each other - chance does not explain the evidence capably presented at length by writers like John Michell and Paul Devereux. However, the purpose, design and reason behind the vast ley network said to exist still totally baffles me, and it has to be said that Stonehenge and the Rollright Stones are hardly St. Pauls, Chartres, or even the Pyramids. The alignments may be great, but as buildings and architecture stone circles and stone huts are not exactly the height of sophistication. If much 'knowledge' has been 'lost', it must have gone long before these dull and winky edifices were constructed. Paul Devereux's optimistic picture (see Earth Lights reviewed elsewhere) of this part of the past as a repository of great wisdom does not ring true to me. The lessons of history are best learned by viewing history as a whole, not just picking out one phase, and setting it up as a golden age, isolated from those times before and after.

The lessons of history can also be applied to the parlour tricks of the resurgence of physical phenomena: they led nowhere between 1860 and 1930, even when opened to proper investigation. I don't suppose that they will lead anywhere this time, either. But it is when these two strains, two tangents are combined, that the real trouble seems to

start, and the really wild ideas begin to take over. I have already mentioned The Green Stone, which will be reviewed at length in CG8. Even before its publication it has, by its nature, had a considerable effect. In this racy and well-written tale historical non-facts are matched with pseudo-clairvoyance to help find artefacts for which there is no historical record and no verified provenance. Immense supposedly psychic battles are fought with a possibly imaginary group of black magicians at sites of geomantic significance, without the slightest shred of evidence being presented to support any of the claims, and without even the barest attempt to obtain informed judgements, on the artefacts in particular. These ideas have proved very influential, and this 'method' of research has attracted a number of adherents. Numbers of hitherto intelligent researchers, not satisfied with believing that they can create UFO events by thinking hard while watching machines crush rocks in laboratories, are out and about in the country, playing dungeons and dragons on the instructions of others who believe that they are some sort of chosen race, aided by intergalactic beings in battles that make Dr. Strange look like Dixon of Dock Green.

Of course, there is method and reason behind what these people are doing: they are not stupid, far from it. But it does seem that some confusion has arisen from the very natural, very addictive wish to deal with paranormal phenomena, particularly in the context of the increasing popularity of 'New Age' hopes and beliefs among many researchers. While I doubt the involvement with unlearned black magicians and so on, it may well be that some of these individuals are psychic, can create whirlwinds and lightning - and can create fear. That is entirely their business - their problem, even.

My complaint, however, is that I am blown if I can see what any of this has to do with the 'scientific study of anomalous phenomena'. And my hope - and that of others within ASSAP too, I suspect - is that these excellent people will soon return to assist in that laborious, but in the end more significant quest.

Kevin McClure