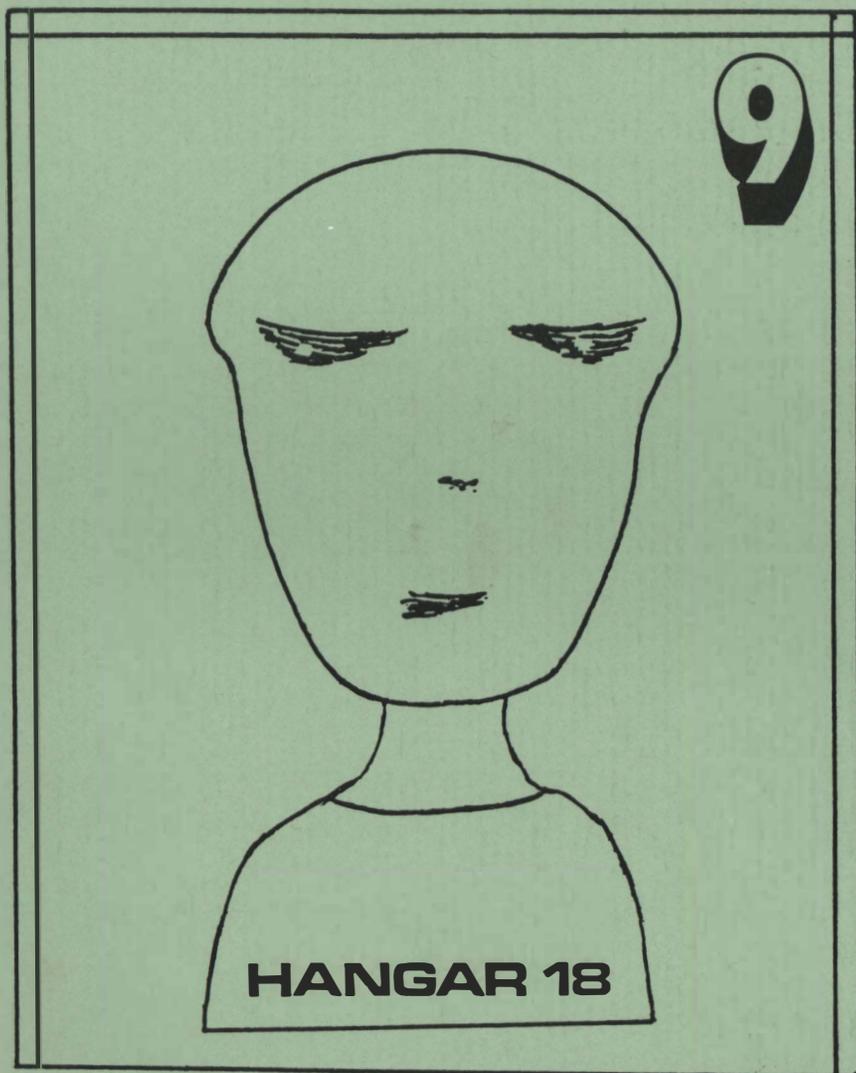


COMMON GROUND



**The Radical Journal of
the Paranormal**

COMMON GROUND

Nine

As most of our readers will know, this issue of 'Common Ground' is appearing simultaneously with CG8. You wait 8 months, and suddenly you're spoiled for choice! If you've read that issue, you'll know the production problems we've had: now, it looks as if there will be unavoidable delay at our usually marvellous printers as well. Once again, sorry to have kept you waiting.

The possibly physical, material nature of non-human entities is certainly one of the most important issues we have to deal with. A large proportion of CG9 is devoted to one major article about the Hangar 18 mythos, which we are particularly pleased to print. Its tone and use of evidence lay down clear challenges to those who believe in the pickled alien legends. If there is viable evidence to contradict Mr. Nickell, I hope it will be made available for publication in CG10.

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'Common Ground - Studies at the Fringe of Human Experience' is published by Kevin & Sue McClure, 56, Ring Road, Leicester, England. For subscription rates, etc. please see the enclosed insert.

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The "Hangar 18" tales - a folkloristic approach

by Joe Nickell

It is a bizarre story, surfacing in 1950, of how flying saucers crashed in the American Southwest, were retrieved by the United States Air Force, and their preserved little humanoid occupants secretly stored at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. It has been the subject of several magazine articles and books, as well as the recent motion picture, *Hangar 18*, after the (nonexistent) building supposed to house the pickled aliens.

Over the past few years, Leonard Stringfield, a public relations man - both for a chemical company and for a UFO organisation - has collected a number of such 'crash/retrieval syndrome' stories (as he calls them). In a booklet published in 1981, [1] Stringfield relates nine 'firsthand' cases and fourteen 'new leads, or other pertinent material'. As an example of one of his 'firsthand' sources (all his sources, Stringfield says, have insisted on anonymity) is an unnamed "member of a group of 25 pilots" who he claims approached him after he gave a talk on UFOs at a September 1977 meeting of the Cincinnati Chapter of World Wings. The man led Stringfield to a back room with a large map, and, as Stringfield relates:

Staring at the map, he said bluntly, "I have seen the bodies." Still looking at the map, and noting my protracted silence he pointed vaguely to an area inside the State of Arizona. "There's approximately where the saucer crashed", he said. "It was in a desert area, but I don't know the exact location. I'm almost positive it happened in 1953".

The pilot was my first encounter with a first hand witness. As he stood at the map with a straight-on glance, he impressed me as a person who is sincere and forthright, possessing a no-nonsense character. "I saw the bodies at Wright-Patterson", he said. "I was in the right place at the right time when the crates arrived at night by DC-7"

Stringfield continues:

As we lingered at the map he recalled that he had stood inside a hangar at a distance of about 12 feet, peering at five crates on a fork-lift. In his judgement the crates appeared to be hastily constructed and were made of wood. In three of these, little humanoids appearing to be 4 feet tall, were lying unshrouded on a fabric, which he explained prevented freeze burn from the dry ice packed beneath. As a number of Air Police stood silent guard nearby the crates, he managed to get a reasonably good but brief glimpse of the humanoid features. He recalls that their heads were hairless and narrow, and by human standards were disproportionately large, with skin that looked brown under the hangar lights above. The eyes seemed to be open, the mouth small, and nose, if any, was indistinct. The arms were positioned down alongside their bodies, but the hands and feet, he said, were indistinct. When asked about their attire, he said

they appeared to be wearing tight-fitting dark suits, and, because of the revealing suit, there was one surprising feature. One of the humanoids appeared to him to be female. He said, "Either one of the aliens had an extremely muscular chest or the bumps were a female's breasts." Later he learned from one of the crew members, with whom he bunked at the barracks, that the body of one of the aliens was believed to be that of a female.

Stringfield concludes the account:

My informant also heard from the crew member that one of the entities was still alive aboard the craft when the US military team arrived. Attempts were made to save its life with oxygen, but they were unsuccessful.

Another issue, an important one: How was the military able to track the crash? Said my informant: The crew member told him that the UFO was picked up by special tracking equipment at Mt. Palomar in California. My informant claimed that he had later heard a report that the retrieved craft, found intact, was also sent to Wright-Patterson. He had no more details as to when or by what means. [2]

It is not crucial to our purposes here - which is to consider such stories from a folkloristic point of view - to determine whether an individual narrative (such as the above is true, or whether behind such narratives is one gleanable kernel of truth. But we might note that many of the more responsible UFO researchers (not only the adamant disbelievers) are skeptical of the "crash/retrieval" stories.

For example, longtime UFO researcher George W Early considered three issues that bear on the question of whether or not the stories are true. He asked whether it was possible to transport a saucer (even the smallest one reported) by road, rail or air in the late 40's or early 50's; he asked who would have performed the alleged autopsies, and where; and he considered whether informants would really have anything to fear by revealing what they claim to know. These questions Early's logical arguments answer negatively. [3] Moreover (as we shall see) several of the stories have turned out to be hoaxes.

A folklorist approach seems warranted because the prototypical story possesses the qualities usually associated with "true folklore" - namely that

(1) Its content is oral (usually verbal), or custom-related or material; (2) it is traditional in form and transmission; (3) it exists in different versions; (4) it is usually anonymous; (5) it tends to become formularized. [4]

Specifically, the crash/retrieval stories seem to function as 'belief tales'. [5] It has even been plausibly argued that the broader category of UFO phenomena "constitutes a modern-day myth couched in space-technology symbols" and that

Submyths are identified in the mythology, such as the belief that national authorities have information on UFOs which they are keeping from the public; that mankind is some sort of genetic experiment manipulated by aliens; that ancient mythologies reveal the presence of aliens; that they are time travellers from the future; that they inhabit parallel universes or different space-time continua. [6]

Although any of several different approaches could be taken to the crash/retrieval narratives (an interesting one would be William Hugh Jansen's esoteric-exoteric approach [7]), what I wish to do here is to approach the tales in terms of their folkloric analogues. To keep the chronology as fluid as possible, I have refrained from interjecting superfluous 'pointing hands'. I think the relevance of the examples as to motifs and evolving type will be obvious.

We might profitably begin with the infamous Moon Hoax, perpetrated in 1835 by the New York Sun. In a series of articles, reporter Richard Locke described life on the moon - supposedly observed by the great British astronomer, Sir John Herschel, through a new telescope. The articles were accompanied by drawings of apelike beings who

averaged four feet in height, were covered, except on the face, with short and glossy copper-coloured hair, and had wings composed of thin membranes . . . Our further observation of the habits of these creatures, who were of both sexes, led to results so very remarkable, that I prefer they should first be laid before the public in Dr. Herschel's own work . . . [8]

Half a century later, a June 1884 issue of the Nebraska Nugget ran a story about four cowboys who allegedly witnessed the crash of a cylindrical object and found "fragments of cog wheels and other pieces of machinery" glowing with intense heat. States UFO researcher Jerome Clarke:

It is almost certainly a hoax, concocted like so many others which appeared in 19th century newspapers, at a time when America's tall tale tradition was very much alive . . . the Nugget's evident uncertainty about the chief "witness's" name - it refers to him variously as Ellis, Wilks, Willis and Williamson - tips us off that the story is not all it appears to be. [9]

Next, during the "airship wave" hysteria of 1896-97 (long before the Wrights flew at Kitty Hawk in December 1903), a "phantom airship" was reportedly observed on numerous occasions across the United States - beginning in California and eventually spreading to "virtually every state east of the Rocky Mountains." [10] Although this phenomenon of the "phantom" craft may have actually been due to the "passage of a tripleheaded bolide that had crossed the night sky with majestic slowness several weeks previously" (previous to November 17, 1896 - the date of the first reported sighting), many persons had obviously believed a San Francisco attorney who "disclosed" that his "client" had invented "the world's first practical airship", and was no doubt conducting nocturnal test flights [11]

The last report of the airship was in June of 1897, but from July to August it was witnessed over Sweden and Norway, then Ontario, Canada, and (as a "balloon" with an "electric" glow) over Ustyug, Russia. Obviously, however, there must have been more than a single "airship" if we are to believe that one crashed at Aurora, Texas, on April 17, 1897. According to a story submitted to the Dallas Morning News, the "ship" had struck Judge J S Proctor's (nonexistent) windmill and exploded. The Aurora townsfolk reportedly found papers amongst the wreckage (with an indecipherable writing) along with the horribly disfigured body of the 'Martian' pilot, who, after the debris had been cleared up, was given a Christian burial at noon in the local Masonic cemetery. (In recent years the story was branded a hoax and supposedly traced to an Iowa telegrapher.) [12]

a 1937 science-fiction story by R De Witt Miller described much earlier visitations. His "Within the Pyramid" involved the discovery of subterranean chambers in South America containing the "living dead" bodies of four ancient astronauts, each encased in a translucent sarcophagus. (An astonishingly similar story was related as true by Erich von Daniken - of Charlots of the Gods? fame, who told the National Enquirer in 1979 that he knew the location of the underground chambers and would, that summer lead an expedition to bring back the ultimate proof. [13] On October 30, 1938, the Martians crash-landed in rural New Jersey, the octopus-like monsters spewing forth destruction from their heat rays. Panic set in:

Thousands wept, prayed, closed their windows to shut out poison gas, or fled from their homes expecting the world to end. Phone lines were tied up for hours. The panic was from coast to coast, but the greatest hysteria was in the southern states among the poorly educated. [14]

This Halloween invasion was, of course, only the famous stunt broadcast, Orson Welles' radio version of H G Wells' The War of the Worlds. But in less than a decade, strange new visitations would allegedly be made. The modern wave of UFO reports began on June 24, 1947, when a civilian pilot named Kenneth Arnold was flying near Mt. Ranier, Washington State. Arnold reported seeing a group of unidentified objects in a line, flying "like pie-plates skipping over the water". The press coined the term 'flying saucer' and soon the presumed spaceships were being seen everywhere. [15] Arnold was later to write a pamphlet and a number of articles discussing his own earlier saucer experience along with what he considered additional evidence of extraterrestrial visitations. As one piece of 'evidence', Arnold cited the 14-inch-tall mummified man discovered in the Rocky Mountains in 1932 [16].

Jacques Vallee, in "A Century of UFO Landings" [17], lists no fewer than nine saucer landings for 1947, from June 10 to August 14. All but two of these were American and one was the infamous Maury Island hoax in which two Puget Sound harbour patrolmen took photos of six UFOs. They also retrieved chunks of metal spewed out by one of the craft which had seemed temporarily disabled. Soon they claimed to have had encounters with mysterious persons who warned them to forget what they had seen. This "first, possibly second-best, and the dirtiest hoax in UFO history" was soon acknowledged by the pair. [18]

Since Vallee is only listing UFO landings, he omits several other 1947 reports including a rash of American sightings that prompted Edward J Ruppelt (former head of the Air Force's Project Blue Book, a UFO investigation) to state: "The week of July 4, 1947, set a record for reports that was not broken until 1952" [19]. One 'saucer' was photographed, but it was later determined to have been a weather balloon.

The Roswell Incident - which tells "the never before published, fully documented story of a manned UFO landing in New Mexico" - relates 14 sightings reported in or near that state between June 25 and July 2, 1947. Then on July 8 came a bizarre and unauthorised press-release from a young but eager public information officer at the Roswell Army Air Base:

The many rumours regarding the flying disc became a reality yesterday when the intelligence office of the 509th Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force, Roswell Army Air Field, was fortunate enough to gain possession of a disc through the cooperation of one of the local ranchers and the sheriff's office of Chavez County.

The flying object landed on a ranch near Roswell sometime last week. Not having phone facilities, the rancher stored the disc until such time as he was able to contact the sheriff's office, who in turn notified Major Jesse A Marcel of the 509th Bomb Group Intelligence Office.

Action was immediately taken, and the disc was picked up at the rancher's home. It was inspected at the Roswell Army Air Field and subsequently loaned by Major Marcel to higher headquarters. [20]

The young officer was reprimanded, and soon new information was released: the saucer had been a weather balloon. The Fort Worth Star-Telegram published a photograph of two amused officers posing with the 'wreckage' - some flexible silvery-looking material [21]. The Air Force first identified the weather device as a 'Rawin sonde' (a polyethylene balloon with a two-pound instrument package) and then corrected that to a 'Rawin target' (a radar target formed of foiled paper stapled to a balsa frame and carried aloft by a cluster of balloons). The two authors of **The Roswell Incident** (William L Moore and the author of **The Bermuda Triangle**, Charles Berlitz) consider this a "cover story" which was "hastily contrived" [22]. They argue that the original wreckage (from a crashed saucer) had been flown to Carswell Air Force Base and then on to Wright-Patterson Field, while wreckage of a Rawin device was "hastily substituted" - apparently so that the news photographers could be fooled and the public kept from learning the fearful truth [23].

The July 9 Rosewell Daily Record - which carried the news that the 'saucer' was a balloon - also featured an interview with the rancher, William Brazel, who had reported the odd debris to the Rosewell sheriff's office. Brazel stated, "I am sure that what I found was not any weather observation balloon . . . [It wasn't.] But if I find anything else besides a bomb, they are going to have a hard time getting me to say anything about it." [24]

Moore and Berlitz interviewed the aging former Roswell staff officer, Major (now Lieutenant Colonel, retired) Jesse A Marcel, who was in charge of intelligence at Roswell at the time of the incident. Marcel insisted the debris - which he described as in copious quantity - "certainly wasn't anything built by us and it most certainly wasn't any weather balloon." He described

small beams about three eighths or half an inch square with some sort of hieroglyphics on them that nobody could decipher. These looked something like balsa wood, and were of about the same weight, except that they were not wood at all. They were very hard, although flexible, and would not burn. There was a great deal of an unusual parchment-like substance which was brown in colour and extremely strong, and with a great number of small pieces of metal like tinfoil, except that it wasn't tinfoil.

He stated that the pieces of metal were "so thin, just like the tinfoil in a pack of cigarettes," and added:

It was possible to flex this stuff back and forth, even to wrinkle it, but you could not put a crease in it that would stay nor could you dent it at all. I would almost have to describe it as a metal with plastic properties.

Again, Marcel stated:

One of the other fellows, Cavitt, I think, found a black, metallic-looking box several inches square. As there was no apparent way to open this, and since it didn't appear to be an instrument package of any sort (it was too very light-weight), we threw it in with the rest of the stuff. [25]

Rancher Brazel's son described materials similar to those seen by Major Marcel, referring to "wooden-like particles . . . like balsa wood in weight, but a bit darker in colour and much harder." As to the foil, "You could wrinkle it and lay it back down and it immediately returned to its original shape." And there had been "some thread-like material . . . not large enough to call it string." He adds, "None of this stuff had an exactly natural appearance about it, it was more like something synthetic now that I think about it." He said that the pieces of 'material' he had seen did not have any markings on them, but that his father had referred to "figures". (His sister used the word "designs".) The son of a man who had interviewed rancher Brazel described similar debris. [26]

It certainly seems remarkable that 1947-model saucers would be constructed of materials so similar to those of a weather target (again, not a balloon) - materials resembling balsa, foil and string. If so they seem to have been surprisingly flimsy! - by our pathetically terrestrial standards, of course.

In any case, citing vague rumours of a saucer alleged to have crashed approximately 125 miles west of Brazel's ranch, Berlitz and Moore postulate an "explosion on board the stricken saucer". Presumably this caused debris to fall at the first location while the craft itself crashed at the second site. [27]

To continue our chronology, in 1950 Frank Scully published his Behind the Flying Saucers which told of three "spacecraft" that had crashed - one near Phoenix, Arizona, and the other two in the vicinity of Aztec, New Mexico. A total of 34 little humanoids were recovered, ranging in size from 36 to 42 inches tall, and dressed in blue uniforms.

The little men, Scully said, were being studied at undisclosed locations along with several items found on board the craft, including an "unknown" metal and booklets written in a pictorial script which government experts were attempting to decipher. Alas, in September 1952, True magazine exposed the story as a hoax. Scully's chief source was a friend named Silas M Newton who in turn had obtained the story from a mysterious 'Dr. Gee'. Although Scully described the latter as "the top magnetic research specialist in the United States", he turned out to be one Leo A GeBauer, proprietor of a Phoenix radio and TV parts business [28].

Then, one night in 1953, three men burst into the offices of the Atlanta Constitution carrying the small corpse of a strange, manlike creature. The men had seen, they claimed, a red flying saucer parked in the road ahead of their speeding car. Three small 'humanoids' were scrambling to get into the spacecraft but the driver skidded into one and killed it. The other two little fellows made it into the craft (which began to turn blue) and sped (up, up, and) away. Needless to say, the story created a sensation until it was learned that the creature was actually a monkey whose tail had been cut off and whose body had been shaved! The hoax had resulted from a \$10 bet. (However, a judge later fined the mischief-maker four times his winnings.) [29]

According to UFO sceptic Kevin D Randle,

Between 1950 and 1974, further rumors of the "little bodies" surfaced periodically, only to be swatted by careful researchers. In almost every case, the rumors were traced to Scully's book and Newton's claims. [30]

In 1974, Robert Carr claimed he had talked with several people who had seen the little creatures secretly stored at Wright-Patterson. Carr, who once wrote space stories and worked for Walt Disney Studios as a film research director, was at the time generating publicity for 'Operation Lure' - a scheme to attract UFOs to land by building a saucer greeting station atop an Arizona mountain. Carr - apparently basing his information on the discredited Scully book - claimed one of the saucers had crashed at Aztec, New Mexico. [31] (The year before Carr made his claims, there had been a brief revival of the 1897 Aurora crashed 'airship' story, reportedly attracting some 3000 persons to the site, many with metal detectors. Three elderly residents - aged 78, 91, and 98 - claimed parents or friends had visited the site of the 'explosion' and told them about it. However, further investigation tended to re-confirm the tale as a hoax. [32])

In 1977 Leonard Stringfield began to apply his public-relations talents to the crash/retrieval rumours. His book, Situation Red, cried cover-up, while he observed that a "UFO occupant - humanoid or bestial, found dead or captured alive - would constitute the final proof of the UFO's extraterrestrial origin". [33]

Stringfield presented a signed statement by a pseudonymous engineer, "Fritz Werner", who claimed that "during a special assignment with the US Air Force on May 21, 1953, I assisted in the investigation of a crashed unknown object in the vicinity of Kingman, Arizona." [32] But Jerome Clark points out suspicious 'coincidences' between the "Werner" and Scully stories. As he says:

- 1) Two of Scully's fictitious crashed saucers came down near proving grounds in the South-west. Werner's saucer did too;
- 2) In one of Scully's cases researchers were dispatched from Phoenix, Arizona, to study the crashed vehicle. So where the specialists in Werner's story;
- 3) Scully's saucers appeared to be composed of an aluminium-like substance, as did Werner's;
- 4) Inside one of Scully's craft were two "bucket seats" in front of "instruments and displays"; and
- 5) The skin of Scully's humanoids was "charred a very dark chocolate color . . . [apparently] as a result of [terrestrial] air rushing through that broken porthole window." Werner's humanoids' skin was "dark brown. This may have been caused by exposure to our atmosphere." [35]

From the more recent publication by Stringfield (mentioned earlier), we learn that the crash/retrieval cases continue to proliferate. Anonymous informants supposedly claim to have witnessed (or have seen a film of) crashed saucers, and/or little bodies, on various occasions between 1952 and 1973. One saw nine bodies, about four feet tall, "preserved in deep freeze conditions" at Wright-Patterson. Another saw only four bodies there, and they were about a foot taller and were "badly burned" (like Scully's creatures). Yet another 'source' was taken blindfolded (in 1973) through an underground corridor to a room where he saw "specialists" viewing 3-foot-tall alien corpses "stretched out on a table." And so on.

One "noted doctor" (alas also anonymous) claimed to have autopsied "an alien being in the early 1950's," but was not only disconcertingly vague about the date but also about the internal organs, if any. However he did supply several details of the creatures appearance: it had an oversized head - oversized in relation to its four foot, three-eighths-inch height. The skin was "NOT green (as Stringfield emphasises) but greyish. The eyes were "mongoloid in appearance" and there was only a "wrinkle-like fold" for the mouth. The arms were overly long; there was no thumb; the legs were short and thin. The sexual organs (this was a male specimen) were said to be "atrophied". [36]

As Stringfield says he learned from one informant,

During the Vietnam crisis, during [informant] JK's tenure of service, five crashes of UFOs occurred between 1966-1968 in the Tri-State area of Ohio, Indiana (near Evansville), and Kentucky. There was one known incident of a retrieval of three alien bodies. During this alleged incident, there occurred a skirmish with the alien forces by our military units . . . The location or time of these incidents were [sic] not disclosed. [37]

But UFO sceptic Robert Scheaffer zeroes in on a statement by 'JK' that "since 1948 secret information concerning UFO activity involving the US military has been contained in a computer center at Wright-Patterson. Scheaffer (a systems analyst) says:

That statement alone refutes JK's claims about seeing nine dead aliens in deep-freeze. Given the utterly primitive state of computer technology in 1948, it was almost impossible to store any significant amount of information. The miniscule memory capacities of those ancient vacuum-tube machines made it more likely that data would be carved into stone tablets than kept in the computer. By projecting today's technology back to 1948, JK demonstrates his ability to describe things that plainly do not exist. [38]

In 1980 there surfaced several photographs purported to show the little bodies. Investigators concluded one set of these was almost certainly of "a rhesus monkey killed in a V-2 rocket test" 30 years earlier. The other set was traced to a publication that, says Jerome Clark, "routinely prints absurd fiction as 'documented fact'" and to a 1977 issue of a sister publication that had featured one of the photos on its cover next to the heading, "EXCLUSIVE PROOF POSITIVE: SPACE ALIEN DISCOVERED BENEATH THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING!" During the controversy over the photos two rival UFO groups were up in arms, and the conspiracy-minded Stringfield (who had been taken in by one set of photographs) could not "help but wonder if somebody in a powerful position pressed the 'silence' button." "In intelligence circles," he said, "they call it disinformation."

Clark, on the other hand, thought it merely the act of "a hoaxer with a cruel sense of humor." He added, "It's time to close the book on this embarrassing episode before all ufology succumbs to a case of terminal silliness." [39]

In summary, we have a body of 'belief tales' that exhibit the qualities of 'true folklore'. Most notably, perhaps, they exist in different versions and have seemingly become rather formularized. There is a prototype of the narratives in the crashed Aurora 'airship' story (determined to have been a hoax), and that tale in turns has analogous forms dating from much earlier.

We note from Stringfield's The UFO Crash/Retrieval Syndrome that the descriptions of the occupants are tending towards standardization - namely toward diminutive 'humanoids' with oversized heads. The mythological implication of this seems to be that the 'aliens' are 'time-travellers'. In effect they are us as it is assumed we will be in our distant evolutionary future. But Jacques Valle criticizes those who

want to concentrate on the "real ones", the little dwarves with oversized heads that they believe are consistent with biology in the sense of advanced evolution. The idea that intellectual differences are due to the size and weight of the brain is silly. Asian races have a larger brain than the white race. The white race has a statistically larger brain than the black race, but there is no significant psychological difference. We know dumb Chinese and we know bright black people and there is no real evidence pointing to an evolution of the weight of the brain or size of the head as related to intelligence. There is no real evidence that the size of the brain is still increasing and that the next step of the evolution is somebody with a large head. [40]

Another implication of the mythology is, of course, that "we are not alone" - the message of the movie Close Encounters. Whether or not that is so, it seems we must look beyond Hangar 18 to find out.

NOTES

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Letters

It is a pity that this issue has been so long in appearing: some of the flavour and immediacy of the response to my less than favourable review of Paul Devereux's **Earth Lights** has faded now. It is a pity because the response from some quarters - from the author himself, and from a couple of those who appear to regard him as, if not precisely the Messiah, something pretty darned close - was remarkable. There was nothing of reason, argument about facts, or discussion of what I at least regarded as a largely objective series of comments.

Instead, it was pretty much simple abuse, on a sort of 'those who are not with us are against us' basis: suddenly, **Earth Lights**, rather than being an intriguing and imaginative discussion of a theory that has a clear, if limited, validity, had become a holy book, written by a man who had conducted fieldwork at his "own expense, in his own time, often in dreadful weather". Or, to put it in the great man's own words, "Your 3-month effort on your BVM book is a joke compared to the effort some of us are putting into primary research". Primary research is, presumably, communing with old rocks all over the countryside, sometimes measuring their radiation, sometimes measuring the distance between them, and sometimes (oh what heartlessness) taking them home to be squashed. Research it certainly is, and I don't doubt it takes time and effort. So does the research done by all of us. But we do it all of our own free will, and it is by our results that we must expect to be judged, not by the wear on our wellies.

In the end, after turning down material that was personally abusive, two letters, as follow, state the case in wholehearted, if somewhat less than factual terms. At the time of writing, in early December, there is no sign of the emergence of the "reply" which Paul Devereux sent me details of in early July. I very much hope it is published, because it is only then that a meaningful discussion can commence. Till then I stand by every word of 'Serious Faults'.

From Paul Devereux:

With regard to Kevin McClure's review and various comments in CG7: I would like readers to note that I will be answering the charges made Item for Item in a booklet called **A Defence of, and Further Evidence For, the Earth Lights Theory of UFO Propagation**. This will be issued free to ASSAP members and readers of TLH. To anyone else it will cost 50p. As the title suggests, I will defend the theory, using Kevin's 'Serious Faults'

review as a basis for dispelling misconceptions and then go on to outline the subsequent research that has taken place on the theory since the publication of **Earth Lights**. The booklet should appear during the course of the winter, as the production of such a publication will be single-handed and will have to be fitted in whenever I can afford the time in an exceptionally busy timetable between now and the end of January 1984.

For now I will only say that Kevin was perfectly entitled to write his review, but I have been offended that he chose to put a 'secret snoop' to check out my work, and that he peppered the rest of CG7 with comments that were variously sarcastic, ignorant and prejudiced regarding the earth lights theory.

I'm disappointed that Kevin should assume that I'm trying to foist dubious evidence on people. That he can assume that I made any geological statements in **Earth Lights** without authority from geologists amazes me. About eight years work in all went into **Earth Lights**, and nothing in there is put in lightly. There will be errors, of course, but most books can't avoid that. But in the whole of Kevin's review only one item is valid, and that, as shall be seen, actually strengthens the earth lights case.

Some of Kevin's comments in CG7 are totally unacceptable, and I will be explaining to him, and the world in general, why he had best not bring such a mental attitude with him when dealing with me, during the course of lectures and articles over the rest of this year and in the above mentioned booklet.

I regret that a researcher cannot spread his findings before his peers without these sort of attitudes emerging. But whatever, sceptics of the earth light theory should know that it has now gone beyond mere speculation and that, at the very least, some UFO events will have to be viewed as having some sort of geological connection from now on.

From Caroline Wise:

As for the specific points you want covered, your view of the Leicestershire research is erroneous, as future statements by Paul Devereux will make clear. He has gone to the trouble of checking with the geologist who gave the information. All statements made concerning this came from official sources, and further samples have been brought from Croft Hill to London for analysis

Since **Earth Lights** was written new geological data has become available. Paul has been able to put the Welsh connection beyond and question and this material will be announced at a later date. At the same time practical experiments have been conducted and the production of light from rock clarifies any doubts anyone has in this area.

It is hardly apposite for you to refer to the amount of work you put in on CG, though, when you are so cavalier about the much more considerable work of others. Not only does P. D. get a magazine out (700 copies), but answers over one hundred letters a week on the subject. He is also extremely critical of phenomena before accepting them, be it leys or otherwise, and is the first to say if the research does not back up an idea. He most certainly is not in the business of making things fit his theory or seeing things that are not there, as he has been accused. As I said before, he is trying hard to find some answers and surely we should be supporting, not knocking, so please, LEY OFF!

My first letter to you was not, in fact, intended for publication. However, as you were "only doing your duty" in pointing out "the weaknesses" in **Earth Lights** I'm sure you will want to publish the two paragraphs (or more?) of this new letter covering the Leicestershire and Wales points.

Some Further Comments on the 'Earth Lights' debate.

From Jenny Randles

I would like to respond to two matters connected with UFOs discussed in the current issue of **COMMON GROUND** (CG7).

Firstly, I would say that your review of Paul Devereux's book Earthlights was most interesting. I am sure it will provoke considerable response from Paul, in view of the number of endless letters he, Peter Warrington and I have exchanged since we mentioned (just mentioned) the book in our article "The Neglected Science of UFOs", published in New Scientist in February. And that mention, we thought, was in a favourable context. I hate to think what your mostly unfavourable comments will generate!

However, you do seem to recognise that Earthlights has a singular importance for one very basic reason. It proposes a testable hypothesis; in ufology that is like gold-dust! You do seem to mildly rebuke several ufologists for their praise of the concept, including myself whose quote (from a review in Probe Report) is really given rather out of context! It creates the impression that I wholeheartedly support the earthlights theory, without reservation, which is really not true. Elsewhere in my review I do bring out similar objections to your own regarding the data used to build a statistical proof of the UFO / fault-lines correlation. What is more, I recognise that much work needs to be done to try to establish such proof . . . which is why I am willing to support Project GAIA (see below).

Quite apart from Paul's work I have long moved towards the conclusion that there are two essentially different UFO enigmas. One of these is a subjectively flavoured and percipient-orientated phenomenon which overlaps markedly with other kinds of apparitional situations. It has a significant symptom pointing it out which I have begun to call the 'Oz Factor' (see June, Probe Report, and my forthcoming book UFO Reality). Indeed I have named this particular aspect of UFO and apparitional phenomena the Quasi-Conscious Experience.

For that is how it behaves. This kind of UFO is wholly different from the orange balls of light that whiz about the sky, or other light phenomena that hover above reservoirs. In UFOs; a British Viewpoint (written several years ago now) Peter Warrington and I were already distinguishing these from other types of UFO by calling them UAPs (Unidentified Atmospheric Phenomena). It has already been apparent to me that they are natural, physical phenomena of some description.

That these UAPs might be connected with fault-lines is not surprising. French researchers such as Lagarde offered data that suggested this years ago. The ideas of Persinger and Lafreniere merely use this to postulate one specific possibility (that a piezo-electric effect might be induced into the atmosphere by slipping rocks, and thus ionise the gases). Before Earthlights had appeared I had written my book The Pennine UFO Mystery, and this is based on many years investigation by the local group with which I am involved (MUFORA). The book attempts to show why there does seem to be good evidence for a natural atmospheric phenomena repeatedly manifesting in the Pennine Hills. By coincidence (or by simple fact) the results of our study very broadly supported Persinger's ideas - to the point that there was, in my view, very little room for doubt that, in the Pennines at least, there is a natural UAP that is connected with the geology of the area. It may not be all that is there, although it is all that we have good scientific evidence for. Persinger's ideas of piezo-electricity might be the culprit. Or it might be another tectonic mechanism. Paul Devereux in fact strongly urges that we not presume that piezo-electricity is wholly to blame, and indeed there are very good geophysical reasons why the piezo-electrical effect might not be feasible as a UAP generator. However, what the facts appear to be telling us is that a natural phenomenon related to geology is involved. That is the message of Earthlights which is significant, and our job is to work with facts deduced or discovered experimentally and set up a workable theory to explain them. We have never had such a luxury in our subject before. Now that we do let us not waste the opportunity by arguing about faults and errors in methodology. They exist, true enough, but they do not mask the fundamental point... which is, I think, so strongly evident that it can withstand practical mistakes to some degree.

I would ask you to remember that The Pennine UFO Mystery is totally independent of Earthlights. The only part written after I saw any of Paul's works were a couple of references to add the name Devereux to the index, as I was somewhat embarrassed that he did not figure in it! In many senses my book is very different from Paul's. It covers a far broader scope, and is more inductive than scientifically deductive, but it does reach a number of (hopefully demonstrated) conclusions that offer support to the earthlights hypothesis. And this mutual support tends to indicate that there is something there.

Bearing these facts in mind it does seem to me well worth the effort to try to find probative scientific evidence that we can mould into a scientifically accepted theory. That is the basis of Project GAIA. The Paul Devereux elements of this project are calculated to test the theory that a psychokinetically controllable energy is emitted by fault-lines. Whether this will be provable remains to be seen. My responsibility within the project is wholly different. I am coordinating a programme to try to eradicate the errors that were so cogently laid out in COMMON GROUND and which most certainly have been recognised, both by Paul Devereux and myself.

My aspect of GAIA is to try to find a statistical correlation between unexplained UAP reports and geological features. Initially this will be a solid proof of the fault-line correlation. Ultimately it will hope to discover finer points. Of course, if the correlation is disproven, that will be just as valuable, although the evidence at this time suggests it probably will not be disproven, or certainly that it is well worth searching for positive correlation.

All the problems that exist must be ironed out. How to use only unexplained data. How to geographically relate a poorly located sky phenomenon to a fault under the surface. How to produce a homogenous collection of data, minimising factors such as population density and investigator placement. And so on. We have thoughts about this. But we would like more.

Any reader of Earthlights who found fault in the statistical methods is asked to write to me and suggest how they would overcome these problems. And I would also like to hear from anyone willing to take part in this experiment, for understandably the support is going more to the aspects of GAIA that involve monitoring programmes at stone circles, or psychokinetic trials beside rock-crushing machines. The data collection and statistical correlation work is less glamorous, but no less important. Indeed in my view it is fundamental to all the other (more speculative) phases of the GAIA scheme. So is you think you can help, let me know. And if there are statisticians out there particularly then speak up!

The other point I will briefly comment on is the problem of the sudden dramatic fall in UFO reports. It is a global problem, we should not forget that. And so at the root there must be a significant factor. There are few obvious ones, and the conspicuous lack of manifestation by some extra-global phenomenon which is independent of social cultures (how to avoid not saying ETH, eh?) is actually fairly credible in the light of the situation. Alternatively we might propose some sort of mass cultural change that has suddenly made UFOs less palatable. That this would occur so similarly at the same time everywhere (as it appears) may well be feasible but is perhaps no less incredible than the suggestion that we are merely in a trough in the UFO cycle, where the UFO is seen to be some external phenomenon (external to cultural needs, that is). Alternatively it might be said that the movies Close Encounters and the like have super-saturated society with alien imagery and given us a kind of culture shock which takes away the need to have UFOs. I doubt that, but it may have created apathy in reporting them.

There are a number of side issues which undoubtedly contribute to the decline. The parallel with the economic recession must be noticed. When people have less money they cannot spend so much on chasing UFOs. This means our investigation groups dwindle in size (and they have dramatically). This means in turn the collection of new cases is much less efficient. Add this to our improved standards of work, where investigators specialise more and do not chase after cases (consciously seeking as many lights in the sky as they can find) and we may have part of the truth, but not all of it.

On Christmas Eve I did a Womans' Hour programme on the radio. I gave out my address. Not so long ago this would have resulted in hundreds of UFO sightings considering the audience figures for the programme. The true response was a measly ten letters. This staggered the BBC, but is highly indicative of the demise of the UFO. And yet the Ministry of Defence figures for reported UFO sightings have not fallen, but risen! That, to me is the most interesting statistic of the lot!

From Jerold R. Johnson

Thank you for the issues of *Common Ground* you sent following the termination of *End Times Bulletin*. I read them thoroughly and found the contents most interesting. As a radio amateur, electronic experimenter and builder of radio communications equipment, I was especially attracted by the article on 'Spiricom' in CG5 by Alan Cleaver, and CG6 by Alexander Macrea. Mr Macrea's report is sufficiently detailed for me to deduce how the ghostly voices are made to come out of the 'Spiricom' receiver, and why the transmitting apparatus is so elaborate.

I submit that nothing in the report is inconsistent with, and all information suggests, an accomplice located somewhere with a second radio transmitter. This may be at a considerable distance, or nearby utilizing very low power, and still the voice would be understandable 'in behind' the signal from the primary transmitter, which Mr Macrea was shown. The necessity for modulating this primary transmitter with a set of audio tones is simply a way to hide the beat note that occurs when two signals are being received at very nearly the same frequency. It would be a simple matter for technically knowledgeable and equipped investigators (I would recommend radio amateurs) to expose what is going on here. I detect that Mr Macrea was not fooled, although his report seems curiously polite for one who has "glimpse[d] the 'hand' of a producer". Perhaps he is cautious only because he was unable to understand fully the mechanics of the production, or maybe the Metascience people took him out to dinner.

I have read other reports of persons using home-made radio apparatus to receive messages from what they describe usually as 'space brothers'. The 'message' content turns out always to be insubstantial, and the 'communication' easily duplicatable by almost any pair of radio amateurs who would be so inclined to spend their time. We also have, from time to time, the elaborate prankster who broadcasts his 'message' to a non-critical audience (the message sometimes appearing in print in respectable journals). Such activities are not unknown in your country; witness KLEE television. I personally find communicating with living persons world-wide sufficiently interesting to keep me out of mischief, though I admit there would be no eager market for expensive tape recordings of my 'ham radio' conversations.

I am enclosing an article that appeared covering this subject in a leading US amateur radio magazine. 'Spiricom' again convinces me that P T Barnum was right.

Reviews

The Loch Ness Mystery Solved. By Ronald Binns with R J Bell. Shepton Mallet, Open Books, 1983. £7.95. Reviewed by Douglas Payne

Half a century has elapsed since a Scottish water bailiff-cum-part-time reporter for the *Inverness Courier* filed a story describing the sighting of an unidentified creature thrashing about in the waters of Loch Ness, a legend which has provoked sustained controversy among both paranormalists and orthodox scientists, as well as stimulating enormous research and investigation efforts by individuals and organisations alike.

These last fifty years have seen a succession of investigative exercises aimed at demonstrating beyond a reasonable doubt the existence of an animal which, in the event, has consistently proved to be so elusive as to render the best, not to mention most expensive, efforts futile, and to reduce even the most enthusiastic and dedicated investigators to a state of abject despair.

The fascinating story of the search for the Loch Ness monster is told in this book and with all the well known, and lesser known events characterising the saga clearly, concisely, and above all critically described. It is the book's strength that it is extremely well documented. Thus it includes a thorough-going analysis of Alex Campbell's famous newspaper report of May 1933, and subsequent events, including a remarkable land sighting the same year, and also the first photograph. By the end of 1933 the creature's immortality was assured, although its popularity waxed and waned somewhat over the years, until the 1960's which saw the Tim Dinsdale movie-film, and the formation of the Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau. This ushered in a decade of rigorous and systematic observation of the Loch motivated essentially by the need for good movie film of the animal, without which, it was believed, the fruitless controversy over the creature's existence would go on indefinitely. The Bureau folded after ten years without achieving that goal. As time went on investigations grew more elaborate and technologically complex, using such equipment as gyrocopters, submarines and dirigibles. For a while the results of the underwater photography and sonar scans seemed to offer the promise of definitive evidence, but underwater photographs proved to be no less ambiguous and problematical than those obtained on the surface, and sonar scans were host to all kinds of technical and interpretational problems. The results of all this activity were to engender deep feelings of frustration and hopelessness on the part of many investigators, interspersed sporadically with brief periods of elation during those times of apparent breakthrough.

Apart from describing the history of the phenomenon, the book has two main themes. The first is that the monster is a twentieth century phenomenon with a firm starting point of 1933. To support that contention the few pre-1933 reports are critically examined, especially those often claimed by popular writers to establish a tradition of Loch Ness sightings. In this connection the much quoted St Columba confrontation is carefully examined, and found to be subject to interpretation and wishful thinking. Abundant negative evidence is also supplied. This turns upon absence of mention of the monster by people who might be expected to say something about it - the owners and occupiers of the Loch-side Urquhart Castle since at least the thirteenth century; the road-builders, both military and civil, as early as 1732; the Caledonian Canal builders around 1820; the Victorian tourists from about 1840; famous visitors such as Dr Johnson and Boswell, Daniel Defoe, Robert Burns, and Aleister Crowley; staff of the Research Department of the Royal Geographical Society who investigated the Loch's geography and natural history during 1903 and 1904. The list goes on and on. The point seems adequately made that the tradition of Loch Ness being a home for monsters is false.

The second theme concerns the frailty of the evidence which has been collected over the last fifty years. Photographs, often indistinct, always ambiguous and open to interpretation; movie film, remarkably scarce considering the intense surveillance between 1962 - 1972 and subject to the same reservations as the photographs; sonar scans, again inconclusive; and finally a mass of eye-witness testimony. In the absence of definitive photographic evidence the authors rightly suggest that the eye-witness testimony constitutes the backbone of the case. They offer a battery of unmysterious explanations for eye-witness claims - mirages, misperceptions of natural effects, objects and animals, together with personal factors such as witness fatigue, excitement and expectation, and overall a cultural milieu where the monster has been defined, described and legitimised, and where sightings are socially acceptable and media-rewarded. Believers will no doubt dismiss such explanations as trite and grossly inadequate without fully appreciating the psychological factors that can be operating on a witness at the moment of a monster sighting. The appearance of an unrecognised object, often at some distance from the observer and across a relatively featureless expanse of water, through mist or heat haze, possibly from a moving car, usually by someone unfamiliar with the

local fauna, particularly otters and deer, unfamiliar with the deceptive appearance of boat wakes and floating logs, or fish and bird disturbance, all bound up within the culturally demanding expectation of seeing 'Nessie' and it is not surprising that another monster sighting is born. The finishing touches are provided by memory distortion, wishful thinking, hyperbole and sympathetic promptings by monster enthusiasts.

It is to the book's credit that fraud and hoaxes, although mentioned, play little part in accounting for monster sightings - the authors consider most reports to be sincere. Nevertheless it is to be expected that believers will be left unsatisfied and unmoved by these kinds of explanations, and they will certainly do little to diminish popular interest in the phenomenon. The ever-present need for the marvellous and the fantastic or the merely anomalous would seem to preclude these more mundane possibilities. Although not explicitly made, this book presents us with a choice. Do we accept as more probable the likelihood that the witness, in being subject to conditions conducive to spurious monster sightings, have been simply mistaken or extravagant in their reports, or do we accept as more probable the likelihood of the existence in Loch Ness of an unknown animal whose ancestry fails even to exhibit a convincing pedigree, and for which hard evidence has failed to materialise even after years of diligent investigation?

An Illuminated I Ching. Judy Fox, Karen Hughes and John Tampion. Neville Spearman, Suffolk. 1982. £8.50, 152 pp. Reviewed by Susan Blackmore

This is a simple introductory book to the I Ching. It has very brief, though interesting, chapters on the history and philosophy of the Oracle of Change and describes how to use the coin, but not the more complicated yarrow stalk, method of consulting the Oracle.

Its main claim to differ from any of the other books of this type are the 'illuminations'. The I Ching basically consists of 64 hexagrams, each made of six broken or unbroken lines, or two trigrams of three lines each. In this book each of the eight trigrams, such as wind, lake or earth, has been given a simple diagrammatic representation. For each hexagram there is then superimposed the two trigram designs within a circle denoting heaven and a square denoting earth. In addition some are given another image to reflect the meaning of the hexagram, again within the circle and square. They are pleasant natural scenes, mostly based simply on the traditional symbolism of the text.

The authors claimed intention is to tempt the reader into a fuller study of the I Ching. Certainly only the most superficial version is given here. What I am not sure of is whether the pictures will actually help someone who first meets the I Ching. As in the pictures of the Tarot they may provide an easier image to remember, but in simplifying the wisdom to one image the original meaning may be obscured, rather than elucidated.

I can only say that this is an attractive addition to the many simple books on the I Ching, but it is not a book for someone who wants to study the Oracle at all deeply.

Psychic Healing - An expose of an occult phenomenon. John Weldon and Zola Levitt. Moody Press (USA), 1983.

Reviewed by Kevin McClure.

Yes, the approach of this book is given away by its title: it's an evangelical fundamentalist treatment of yet another of 'our' subjects. Yet, if we are to look at this in terms of 'us' and 'them', it must be admitted that 'their' use of 'our' material is often very impressive. This is not surprising - Weldon and Levitt are the best writers in their field, and have previously proved how knowledgeable they are in books such as *Is there Life after Death*, and *Close Encounters, a Better Explanation*. These are very different from the ignorant ravings put out by British writers such as Anderson and Tarleton.

Neither healing nor diagnosis by apparently paranormal means are in any way denied, which I find very interesting. A reasonably wide survey of the evidence for psychic-related healing is presented, and credit is given where due for real achievement. Radionics, psychic surgery, and the work of Edgar Cayce receive detailed treatment, based accurately on original source material. To this point the case for the phenomenon is convincingly made.

However there has, of course, to be a twist, and its nature is made obvious by chapter headings like 'The Healers and their Power Source', 'Spirit Powers at Work: an Analysis' and 'Demoniac Diagnosis'. It seems that by the power invested in them by their faith, the authors are able to ascertain that the source of all this healing and helping is Satanic because, I think, it is not performed by people who share the authors' beliefs. On such rocks does reason run firmly aground.

This is a well written and thought-provoking book. If you can ignore the tortured conclusions, it provides some worthwhile evidence for our case!

The Ley Hunter's Manual; a Guide to Early Tracks. By Alfred Watkins, with an introduction by John Michell. Turnstone Press. Pbk., £2.95. Reviewed by Caroline Wise.

From the man who started the ball rolling, with an introduction from the man who gave it momentum, we have an essential book for the ley-hunting enthusiast.

It is well illustrated with photos and drawings, and gives detailed descriptions of what to look for when plotting leys. But this is much more than a 'dry' text book. Watkins' gentle and friendly style brings the past alive and gives a new picture of our ancestors and the land. It also gives me the urge to get off my backside and go out into the country and look for clues; and walk, where still possible, along the tracks. This is what Watkins' Old Straight Track Club did, and it's far healthier than stooping over O.S. maps with a ruler and then driving to the sites by a very unstraight route.

Although I'm sure most Earth Mysteries addicts will want to have the old pioneer's work in their bookcases, I really hope that books like this get to a wider audience, as it's exciting to have newcomers, and this is one of the best books for a beginner.

The Golden Dawn - Twilight of the Magicians. R A Gilbert. Aquarian, 1983. £3.95

Reviewed by Kevin McClure.

Those of you acquainted with Bob Gilbert's reviews will know that he is both incisive and informed, and will not readily tolerate nonsense. Consequently his treatment of the Golden Dawn is not only unusually honest, but succeeds in putting the whole business into proportion.

In an entertaining, literate book, full of fascinating detail and original research, the author makes it clear that in its time the G.D. was a small and widely ignored organisation, often visited, supported and joined by minds of the quality of Yeats and Arthur Machen, but never run or really characterised by them. Its membership was limited in both number and background, most members being, it seems, highly self-opinionated, and of independent means at least.

The precise detail of practise and liturgy has been published before, though probably not with quite such clarity, particularly with regard to the dubious provenance of both the organisation and its ritual. Previously, most commentators have rendered the G.D. as important both in the history of magic and the 'occult' in general. Here, the ghost of 'importance' is laid once and for all.

While the behavior and development of the G.D. is fascinating in its own right, it must be seen more as a psychological phenomenon than any other. In the last event, as researchers concerned with the incidence of events, we must look at the record of the Golden Dawn and ask the key question, "Can practical magic produce tangible, physical results?" The answer must, on this evidence, be "Probably not".

The Traveller's Guide to the Astral Plane. Steve Richards. Aquarian, 1983, £3.95.

Reviewed by Kevin McClure.

I'm sorry, Thorson's, but how much more of this can we stand? Here, under the subtitle "The Secret Realms Beyond the Body and How to Reach Them", Richards rehashes the work of a number of other writers on the subject of OOB's, adds some Dion Fortune and lashings of Plutarch (what?), a chapter on Swedenborg, another on 'Astral Sex', and presumably expects the whole to exceed the sum of its parts.

It doesn't. As a result of simple errors like completely ignoring the work of Dr Sue Blackmore, who must now be arguably the leading commentator on OOB's, the author's naivete remains unbounded. Considering that the objective evidence for any out-of-the-body-experience being more than purely subjective and mental is more or less zilch, it is remarkable that such vacuous imaginings persistently find themselves in the catalogues of otherwise respectable publishers.

One day we ought to take action against one of these authors under the Trades Descriptions Act. Then we'll see how far they can really travel.

The Role of Logic in Psychical Research by Dr J E Best

We today tend to see only legend in the reputed experiment of Galileo at Pisa. As we know, it was to study motion under gravity by dropping different heavy bodies from the tower - yet even as mere story it carries import to make it a divide in the history of thought. The time was the end of the 16th. century. Since the ancient Greeks and until then, the view of learning had been that the nature of the real world can be sufficiently understood by no more than thinking about it. From then on the emphasis was increasingly to discover the world by actually enquiring of it. This was the experimental method; and the moral of Pisa is that purely abstract thought, granted its value, can nevertheless be greatly liable to error.

The lesson is one deeply imprinted upon the scientific mind; but with the swing of the pendulum, and even if it may be caricature to put it so, scientific enquiry of recent centuries has been marked out by enormous experimental endeavour unbalanced by any special effort of fundamental thought. I speak of caricature because in some respects the picture is far from the truth. The two recent outstanding achievements of physical science found in the relativistic and quantum viewpoints, owe much to careful thinking at a fundamental level.

By a strange irony Aristotle, who was much at fault at this level and when he laid down the dynamics that Galileo so portentously overturned, had realised the essential need of positive care in scientific thinking. This led him to his rules of logic: the rules by which conclusions can be drawn in a contradiction-free fashion.

It is undoubtedly a fact that in the field of physics the present century is characterised by a greater reliance upon logic as a fundamental guide. Earlier - and despite the fusion of mathematical logic by Galileo into physical thinking - the need for this guide had not been particularly felt. So very much was achievable simply by positing mechanical models to represent the ultimate aspects of nature that at root levels logic scarcely possesses a role. Science had become in these terms the science of commonsense.

It cannot be emphasised enough that such commonsense science contains yawning pitfalls when it is pressed beyond its natural limits. The possible falsities it presents for the unwary are entirely comparable with those of Aristotle's - at the time - plainly commonsense laws of motion. When present day commonsense science is applied to explain the ordinary human fact of knowledge by sense perception it runs into catastrophic contradiction. It flatly denies there can be any such knowledge. The confusion stems from its hidden assumptions.

While in its own context it may seem naturally right, even robust, as a reality - and judged in a wider context - it is only a piece of uncritical speculation: not - like the outstanding examples we have noted in recent physics - a theory forced and primarily directed at root level by the necessity of logic. Theories need to be under constraint by logic to conform to experience even in the process of their formulation. By contrast speculative modes of theorising have too greatly and almost exclusively tended to dominate the human mind throughout the ages. Nature tends subtly to elude them.

From its title this article purports to be upon issues of psychical research. So far I have ventured little beyond the field of physics: yet I think the point I am making will be clear. If the approach of commonsense science to so slight a human issue as knowledge by the physical senses is fraught with contradictions and confusion, what hope is there for useful results with a like approach to the far less ordinary issues of the psychic?

So there arises the question: failing commonsense ideas is there a logic which can serve as a more sure guide in the scientific study of psychical phenomena?

I answer the question in the affirmative - though in the present article it is possible to give no more than a sketch of it. It is a logic which is not well-known. Equally its significance is at present little realised, indeed scarcely at all. This statement may sound strange when I add how its elements were first worked out by Plato. On the other hand a knowledge of attendant circumstances enables one to see that after all it is not truly strange. Plato wrote on numerous subjects; at the same time he did not address himself solely and specifically to the task of writing down his most mature and deepest reflections. In them in fact he set the example - unfortunately little followed over the ages - of the way, eschewing speculation, that ultimate issues are to be seen; but to know them fully it is necessary to consult also such accounts as exist by other writers. Thus while all such writings have been known to classical scholars, their significance was not perceived: and for the very good reason that classical scholars are not normally trained philosophers. Then again, professional philosophers are not ordinarily Greek scholars. I am much indebted to the work of Professor G. C. Field - both as an expert in the ancient Greek texts and as a modern philosopher - in focusing attention upon these special elements of Plato's thinking. On the present subject I will outline the logic of Plato's thought in modern language.

It consists in an analysis of event sequences taken entirely at large. Plato clearly observed two possibilities as to the individual events of any such series. Either there must exist a rational relation between such events, or there must not. If no rational relation exists then the sequence is purely random; and it is not amenable to any description of the kind we now term a law of nature. Since totally random - and by that fact intrinsically unexplainable - sequences do not seem primarily to represent the human experience of events, Plato concentrated upon the condition of an existent rational relation - and thus upon intrinsically understandable sequences. He then showed - and this is at the heart of his logic - that the fact of such a rational relation attaching to a series entails a term in the logic beyond the term that is represented by the sum of the events themselves. The entailed term is necessarily devoid of form - form having the meaning of mode of manifestation - in precisely the sense that any of the individual events can possess form. Since the term is necessarily entailed as it is a reality present in the situation that is as real as the events themselves. On the other hand, devoid of form in the way that it is, it is an intangible.

Leaving the logic of event sequences at this point I would like to turn to some essential aspects of modern theory in physics - because of the remarkable illumination they cast upon Plato's intangible term. I have in mind those developments of quantum theory started when in 1928 Dirac successfully brought to bear considerations of relativistic correctness upon wave mechanics; the wave mechanics that for the previous three years had been taking a highly effective and totally different new view of the physical world. A major upshot of Dirac's efforts - apart from the logical necessity of regarding the material order in terms of both matter and anti-matter - was a theory of the physics of the vacuum. Hitherto the absolute void was looked upon as totally null, so that it made no sense to speak of its physics. Now it was apparent from the Dirac mathematics that material particles could be spontaneously created in the absolute void, given that they were created in matter-antimatter pairs. For example such creative activity could produce and take the form of electron-anti-electron (positron) pairs. Necessary to the creation was the presence, ubiquitous to space, of energy in the sense that Einstein meant when in 1905 he first propounded his relativity theory. In this sense, energy - despite its mysterious formlessness - was to be held as real as matter; and within physics these new ideas have opened up vast fields of explanation and understanding where the previous commonsense classical physics remained sterile. They bear a striking similarity in logical character to the event-sequence analysis deriving from Plato. In each discipline there is the term which is the form of the activity, and beyond this there is an associated intangible term not characterisable by any form of the first. Modern physics thus parallels in its logical structure the general logic of event sequences - which indeed it must be found to do if it is not to be logically false. Moreover it is clear that in circumstances which are purely physical the necessary and intangible term of event-sequence logic is identically the Einstein energy in the Dirac context.

Plato's analysis was of course not limited to the circumstances of pure physics; and it included the possible activity of interposing mind. In it he gave a special name to the necessary entailed term. He called it psyche. This naming, despite the everyday usage of his times, was - it is evident - only meant by him as a technical and non-committal nomenclature: because it is evident that in specific circumstances he sought to discover the significance then to be attached to it. What we see is that Plato's term psyche embraces at large both the case when mind is present, as an interposing factor, to events, as well as that when mind is strictly excluded. Moreover, since Plato's psyche, as we have seen, reduces to the physical energy in purely physical circumstances it is a very reasonable suggestion that psyche at large is energy like in nature.

Accepting this suggestion it seems that the event sequence logic holds out usefully a way of approach to all those issues of human experience that in any shape or form involve the activity of mind.

For instance, the long standing problem of mind-matter interaction received solution. If mind (represented by psyche) can act like physical energy it can create force fields to interact with nervous tissue of the brain and body - and by reciprocity it can thus be influenced by bodily events.

Viewed, moreover, in the light of this logic, human survival and communication from survival personalities becomes in fundamental terms a natural possibility, rather than the baffling mystery seen so commonly by the scientific explorer.

I suggest that just as the infusion of logic at root level has vitalised physics this century almost beyond recognition, so it can do the same for understanding in the psychic field.

Locating Ghosts

Part II Equipment

by Tony Booth

In Common Ground 6 we discussed the immense difficulties in finding a suitably active location for investigating ghost phenomenon. In closing I remarked how in a whole series of problems the researcher can expect to encounter. For those who have remained sufficiently patient and curious let us now examine the complexities of preparing the site, and more specifically, the equipment involved.

It is a fact that in order for us to research the location of active phenomena we need, as parapsychologists, to use the scientific method. Equally, it is true that mere observation alone is insufficient in the mechanics of recording evidence. However, it is untrue to say that a thoroughly professional paranormal investigation cannot be carried out using a small budget and good common sense. Most of us do not have the ready availability of complex electronics and sufficient financial resources and so I feel it would be unwise and unpractical to commence paranormal research on this level. Rather I think it should be based on the premise that with a little thought and preparation 'anyone' can set out to research a reported case - and the more active investigators there are the more likely we will succeed in eventually understanding the nature, behaviour and cause of ghost phenomenon.

With this in mind I trust you will forgive generalisations used during the course of this article. Though all 'haunting' cases are different there are certain similarities, and for the purpose of simplicity I shall assume the case under investigation is taking place inside a building, and being investigated by a team rather than a single investigator.

The very first step in any preparatory stage of a research project should be to visit the building in full daylight. At this point you are able to do two essential things - interview witnesses (which we shall deal with in a later article) and record fully the construction and situation of the building. For this purpose the two main items in an investigator's kit are needed - a notepad and pencil. Take your time to ensure an accurate diagram of the interior is drawn, as this will be used to plan the placement of the equipment and investigators later; it will also aid your analysis of results following the completion of the research project. Take special care in marking radiators, water pipes and sink units on the diagram; if possible include the pipes that may run along the inside of a wall. Also mark down power-points, electrical appliances, ventilators and so on, as these may be the source of unaccountable 'sounds' recorded during the investigation.

It is always advisable to take a number of photographs, also, at this stage to act as a 'controlled' record of the interior. As the investigation is likely to be conducted during the night these photographs are a useful if not essential detail in pre-research. They can, for example, detail areas where reflections from flash-units occur, these often being misinterpreted as paranormal phenomena in investigation analysis. For best results use a 35mm camera with manual control.

On the actual investigation the equipment used can be simple but effective, after all we are only attempting to record any unexpected visual or auditory occurrences. The first step once inside the building is to ensure that it is secure, i.e. that should anyone either enter or the building the research team knows about it. To do this a simple method is to sprinkle powder (e.g. talc) across doorways and along window-frames - should anyone enter through these the powder will be disturbed. Another method would be to tie fine cotton thread across entrance paths - the cotton would be broken should anyone pass through them.

Of course there is a problem with the aforementioned methods, and that is that the research team would only become aware that there had been intruders 'after' the investigation, or whenever they checked the entrance routes. For this reason I would opt for one of the many infra-red alarm systems now available in commercial electronics shops. These can be purchased quite cheaply and will ensure complete security during the project. An infra-red beam can be tracked around the complete circumference of the interior, and if anyone steps in its path, a buzzer will sound to warn the team of intruders,

Of course an essential part of the investigators equipment are thermometers for recording the rise and fall in temperature, and there are several to choose from on today's market. Standard mercury thermometers are not sufficiently accurate or quick to record sharp differences and so we should look towards chemical, electronic or battery types - all these can be purchased at a reasonable cost. These need to be placed in several areas of the room, and a control-record should be taken prior to the investigation. When taking observations from a thermometer near a window expect it to give a lower temperature than one placed in the centre of the room.

For recording sound we need a tape recorder and this may well be the most expensive portion of the investigators budget; but, as I have already stated, it doesn't 'need' to be. Cassette recorders are rarely of any use, as they tend to be somewhat short in running-time, and are often unpredictably temperamental. Reel-to-reel recorders should therefore be used in preference. To buy new, these can cost anything from £200 to £1000, but with the advent of cassette recorders in the commercial market, people are now selling their old reel-to-reel models quite cheaply and I have rarely paid more than £30 for a machine of this type that is in sound working condition. Using maximum track tape and a adequate recording head, a machine can be left running for about twelve hours on one tape - more than enough for the average investigation. When buying these remember you are likely to require more than one machine, depending on the size of the research-project area.

Naturally, in using tape-recorders we also need microphones, and unless you are an electronics buff you are likely to find the multitude of types available both confusing and complicated. Since it is the microphone that directs the amount of sound collected it is essential that you buy and use the correct type. It is best to stay clear of directional, boom or condenser types, as these only record small amounts of sound: i.e. sound specific to one area, and not sounds from a range of areas. The easy method would be to inform an electronics dealer what your requirements are, and he will advise you on the best buy.

Another method is to ask a friendly electronics buff to build one for you. Hi-fi speakers are easily and cheaply adaptable, and using collect-on plates will pick up the sound of a pin dropping from thirty feet away. If you are able to do this, make sure a damper is placed to eliminate radio frequencies, as these can be picked up on high power microphones.

The next pieces of equipment required are cameras. Once again, in order to cover a large area, we need more than one. The amount spent on such items can again build up to a few hundred pounds. Some investigators have even gone to extremes and used infra-red video cameras costing thousands of pounds, and while they are very useful, they do exceed the needs of the investigator. Suitable 35mm cameras are more than sufficient, and often more reliable; and once again they can be purchased second-hand at a reasonable price. As most projects are conducted during the hours of darkness and indoors, automatic flash units should be used or, preferably, infra-red film - to use this all you require is a minimum of light or infra-red light sources.

These days many 35mm cameras are fitted with automatic wind-on mechanisms, which are needed if several cameras are to be operated, usually from tripods and at a distance away from the investigators. To do this 'dummy' cords are needed to set them off, and these can be purchased from any good camera shop. Ensure that when you lace the cameras they cover the entire area of the investigation site.

Because investigators usually operate in teams (for reasons we shall discuss in a later article) and sometimes need to cover more than one room, we need also a method of communication; the last thing needed in a project of this nature is the sound of heavy feet moving from room to room as investigators move around. Intercom systems are easily set up for this purpose, the type depending largely on the amount remaining in your budget. Wireless walkie-talkies are undoubtedly the best, but can be quite expensive, and remember you will also need to obtain a licence to operate these. Corded intercom systems can be used to good effect, and, in an emergency, should you only have a limited amount to spend, a child's corded telephone purchased for about £5 can be used; it may not look very professional, but it serves the purpose.

Another essential tool in the ghost-hunter's box is a torch, as most investigative work will be in near total darkness. When choosing a torch look out for one that is strong and sturdy, so that should you accidentally drop it, it will remain in working order. Try to find one that switches on and off quietly, for it will be used while tape-recorders are running; and, most important of all, one that gives a good, broad beam of light.

That, in essence, is all the investigator requires to complete a thorough paranormal research project into ghost phenomena. With these items available and suitably placed he has the means of recording any psychic activity that occurs within a period of time. He does not need, as many would have stated, immense amounts of electronic equipment, the cost of which can turn most people away from the idea of researching ghosts. We don't require a mobile laboratory of science, just an interested researcher and sufficient equipment to observe and record unexpected movements and sounds.

Experience in the art of investigation will enable a researcher of ghosts to modify and improve equipment used in specific cases, but technology has yet to extend through the barrier that separates the scientist and the parapsychologist; simply, we have not yet isolated the form of energy used in psychic phenomena and so we cannot create a machine designed to record its effects. Instead we must use what is presently available, and that means using standard equipment like tape-recorders which were designed to pick up sound in general, or cameras which record visual effects and images in general. Ghosts, as has been said previously, are frustratingly unpredictable, and often find means of evading the ear of a tape recorder or the eye of a camera, while remaining in view to the human observer. Until technology catches up with the needs of the parapsychologist the work of ghost hunters will remain a cat and mouse game. But just occasionally someone succeeds in catching the 'mouse' in front of the camera, and that makes it all worthwhile.

The Matter of ASSAP

by Hugh Pincott

A quarter of a century ago there were persistent reports of ghosts in various places; apparitions seen by unconnected people over long periods of time. Sporadic sightings of unidentified flying objects littered the columns of national and local newspapers. The Loch Ness Monster had been established as a controversial enigma for three decades. Odd stories were associated with certain localities. Spirituallist mediums provided tantalising snippets of evidence for life after death, and the Church continued to promote the miracles of Jesus as articles of faith.

Hearsay traditions, superstitions, old wives' tales, dubious visual phenomena, people's say-so, and take-it-or-leave-it religious beliefs. These were hardly admissible as firm evidence for a young scientist like myself, broadly grounded in chemistry, physics and biology, who had never personally had the slightest anomalous experience in his life.

Yet if the quality of the evidence was flimsy and ambivalent, its sheer volume and ubiquity could not be ignored. Should a large slice of the population be condemned as demented and deluded for having experiences they could not explain? Should hundreds of millions of people - including pillars of society like doctors, teachers, bank managers, hard-headed businessmen, rock stars and royalty - be dismissed and derided as cranks because, on Sunday they publicly paraded their belief in the supernatural?

I did not think so. Nor do I believe we were justified in separating the world's experiences into two water-tight compartments: natural and supernatural; material and immaterial. For me it was all one and the same universe, even if we were not at present able to explain fully those aspects we could not pin down and dissect under the microscope. But how could these two ends of the spectrum of reality be reconciled? Where was the bridge between the ineffable experience of the mystic and the bottles of reagents in the chemist's laboratory? If there was such a bridge, how and where would I find it?

Popular books were largely of the "Gosh, really?" type, and most newspaper articles were hardly calculated to inspire the average searcher after Truth. Having said this, I first became aware of the Society for Psychical Research from an article in the Sunday Mirror in the mid-sixties, and followed its affairs quite closely from that date. I did not join the SPR until 1971 because their image was such that I felt they would not want anyone as ill-qualified as me in their ranks. I was pleasantly surprised though, when my application for membership was accepted. By then a Chartered Chemist, this and other qualifications in other branches of science were distinct advantages in reading the published research papers, many of which were quite technical in their content and presentation. The SPR strove for academic excellence (as its leaders interpreted that concept) in the range of anomalies it was founded to study.

Other specialist bodies also existed. Over the past two decades, for example, the British UFO Research Association (BUFORA) has also established a formidable reputation as Britain's premier organisation for research and investigation into the UFO phenomenon.

Academic excellence and intellectual rigour are objectives to be pursued and cherished, but I believe they represent only part of the effective scientific study of anomalies. If hunted for respectability's sake alone with the myopic obsession of the zealot, many significant dimensions will go unobserved, latent talent will waste away, and the great wide world will still remain in unblissful ignorance.

Some believe ASSAP was founded by a breakaway group of SPR dissidents. Not so, for informal thoughts had been exchanged for some years between students of many anomalies. Inevitably ASSAP would have come into being at some time. Yes, a disagreement over some of the SPR's administrative policies did give impetus to the Association's foundation sooner rather than later, but it is significant that many of ASSAP's forty or so founders never were or would have been SPR members. Equally, many of us remain members of that Society and other specialist bodies.

Like several well-established research organisations, ASSAP is a forum for informed debate and has no collective views or opinions on the matter studied. But it is different in four distinctly important ways.

First, no other national body gives such wide consideration to the entire range of anomaly studies. This is not to suggest that all phenomena are necessarily connected with one another, though some undoubtedly are. A deliberately broad view has identified common factors between hauntings, UFO sightings, alien animals, religious visions, and elements of the physical environment. Such conjunction has already astounded several researchers who had specialised narrowly. But ASSAP's activities cater equally for those whose interests are confined to one specific field, as well as for those who span subject boundaries.

So ASSAP's approach is scientific and multidisciplinary, taking note of all opinion, belief and experience, but without any dogmatic assertion. Implicit in all this is the need for concerted investigation and research to build up a store of information for future workers. ASSAP also recognises that its members may also belong to other specialist groups, so subscriptions ought to be kept as low as possible.

Thomas Gray puts my second point most succinctly:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Let us look at it another way. Corner shops in their own way perform equally as vital a service to the community as do department stores. It is the same with scholarship, but here this principle is less well recognised. Science is defined as any activity directed towards understanding any phenomenon or process in nature. Laboratory synthesis or analysis reflects only a small part

of its purpose. Anomaly studies are perhaps unusual in being a field of scientific enquiry where a self-taught, intelligent amateur working in a spare bedroom can advance knowledge and understanding just as much as a professor in a university department equipped with expensive apparatus. Both approaches are important and vitally needed, but the architects of ASSAP believe that these must be brought back into balance by providing new encouragement and support for the part-time, independent researcher of limited means.

Such support can take several forms: apparatus can be lent, experimental know-how made available, or the results of past research provided for scrutiny. But it goes a lot further than this. A great deal of talent exists, much of which is latent, and could be harnessed for the benefit of our studies. And talent is not, by definition, restricted to intellectual acumen or penetrating insight in the conventionally accepted meaning. Many people interested in making sense of anomalies do not always possess the highest qualifications in the narrowest meaning of the word, yet the knowledge, experience and ability they do have could be of immense value and should be brought into action. Housewives taking minutes of meetings, plumbers and carpenters creating equipment, typists compiling research records, and grandmothers helping with general administration. All these working with and alongside professors, doctors, physicists, and psychologists.

Among our membership we have this talent of untapped resources which must be integrated with, and brought to assist, the traditional concept of 'scientific' endeavour. When the Association was being formed we considered several possible names before deciding on ASSAP. One of these was 'NETWORK' because it epitomised the essence of the new organisation - a cooperative team of linked researchers providing mutual support, each benefitting from an effort put in somewhere else by someone else. Hence, we take great pains to ensure as far as possible and practicable that ASSAP activity is devolved regionally throughout Britain, avoiding the London bias that so often dominates other bodies.

Third, we come to the need for public access to informed opinion on all aspects of anomalous phenomena. There are thousands of people today in the same position I was twenty-five years ago, looking for a source of facts, guidance, even explanation concerning the reports of strange events that continue to perplex us. Apart from the aspects of continuing research, many would find useful a summary of up-to-date knowledge and critical assessment on occurrences such as poltergeists or UFOs. One of ASSAP's most tangible public achievements to date is the sponsorship with Aquarian Press of precisely that. A series of books on "The Evidence For . . ." [specific anomalies]. This provision of objective information for the public at large will be maintained in our programme of external events.

With some notable exceptions, the press and other media are not the most enlightened reporters and commentators on anomalous events, so we shall continue to provide access to spokesmen and researchers on specialised topics for their reference. What concerns us is that these should be the best available, and we shall recommend them whether they are members of ASSAP or not. The provision of speakers to other societies, clubs, schools and so on is also important and effective. It is already clear from my mail that people generally appreciate being able to contact a group of level-headed people, broadly informed on all aspects of the anomalous, without any specific creed or dogmatic bias.

Finally, it is all very well being able to dispense general information, but many join an association like ours in the hope of improving their knowledge and developing various skills. Several want to be involved more deeply. That is why education and training are very significant dimensions in the Association's affairs, and are taken most seriously. Specific assistance is always available on request, especially tuition for members who want to learn about any aspect of our studies. But it is with the provision of lectures, seminars and workshops by acknowledged specialists that people learn to best advantage, and this activity will be enhanced as we proceed.

All this is fine in theory, but will it be translated fully into practice? Two things concern me.

We remain committed to the concepts of members' involvement, and strong regional centres outside London, yet there seems some reluctance to make this a reality. One lady resigned recently because, she told me, no activities were organised in her area. We would gladly oblige, I replied, and offered to arrange meetings with visiting speakers, but did point out that this could not be done by remote control. When I suggested she contact some other local members and book a hall, her interest evaporated rapidly. While we stress this point about 'active membership' and 'involvement', we must of course beware of overdoing it. People have other commitments, and may not wish or be able to take an active role. One of our first members wrote to me apologetically saying she hoped we would excuse her for not investigating too many cases because she was 93, and bedridden! In all this there is a middle way.

Then again we need help from time to time and invite volunteers through ASSAP NEWS. Rarely does anyone reply, but when we ask specific persons they are most happy to assist, so why this general shyness? Communication is a two-way phenomenon: not everything can or should be done on a positive reaction from more of our members.

So, twentyfive years on the reports of anomalous phenomena are still as persistent, puzzling and plentiful. But now there is an organisation fully equipped to tackle them. An organisation having wide terms of reference, that uses the talents and abilities of all its members in a cooperative team effort, ensuring that both they and the general public are given the best possible information and knowledge. How well we succeed in explaining some of those more mysterious aspects of our universe will depend upon all of us working together intelligently, consciously, and with a purpose that has already been defined clearly.



CLOSING REMARKS

This is the last 'Common Ground' that will appear in the present format, and you may have noticed that the legend "ASSAP Journal of record" has disappeared from the title page. I want CG to develop and mature, and this seems to be the right time for a change.

When CG started, the intention was that it should exist as a means of communication between serious researchers and investigators in all areas of the paranormal, seeking out the 'common ground' between methodology, experience, and conclusions. I only envisaged a circulation of a hundred or so, but then ASSAP started, expecting great things and needing a journal. CG was the natural choice, and suddenly the subscriptions came pouring in with the membership applications. It was a very exciting time.

Since then, there have been both successes and disappointments. CG has appeared less often than I'd have liked, but it's unpaid, often laborious work producing a magazine, and I've got three kids and a time-consuming job. I've learned, to my cost, that paid advertising is an utter, and expensive waste of time, and have come to despair of ever finding a way to significantly increase circulation (someone told me jumping up and down would help, but I couldn't see any difference). Consequently, finances teeter along and typesetting, while labour-saving and something I intend to stick with puts us, I think, firmly into the red overall.

However, the sheer range and quality of articles and other items offered for publication make it all worthwhile, along with the keen and intelligent responses to what we publish. With the end of 'The Unexplained' the world is again full of writers about the paranormal dying to find an outlet for their work, and much of that work is first-rate. I am only regretful that so much has to be turned away, but CG has established itself as an intelligent reporter of paranormal research, as a purveyor of original and thoughtful material, and I am well pleased by that.

Successes and disappointments, too, with regard to ASSAP. It seems that none of us has been able to overcome the essential apathy of those who, in their tens of thousands, purchased 'The Unexplained' weekly, without fail, for more than two years. There seemed to be a place for a modern, imaginative, open-membership research organisation based on scientific principles. The cost of membership was set low, the original publicity material was appealing and impressive. We should, surely, have been able to find a thousand readers of 'The Unexplained' willing, eager even, to turn passive, informed interest into active involvement.

Sadly, that did not happen. While I am sure that even now it is not too late to build on what we have achieved, to campaign, to re-launch even, it appears that at the time of writing the tendency of the membership level is towards shrinkage rather than growth. It is all deeply disappointing, and poor reward for the amounts of time, effort and money put selflessly into ASSAP by many individuals.

But personally, while I stand completely by the original principles and aims of ASSAP, I no longer ^{see} fulfilling its potential as ASSAP's journal of record. To do so, it would have to represent the views of those who have, by virtue of the small size of the ASSAP pond, begun to look like relatively big fish. And those views seem to me to be markedly out of line with what we originally hoped to achieve.

Superstition is the enemy of objective scientific investigation of paranormal events and abilities, and a terrible confusion seems to have arisen between anomalous events, and the places at which they are said to occur. The places have become more important than the events, and both have become more important than determined investigation of the events, which should surely be our priority. If I had one wish to be granted me, it would be to banish the concept and description 'Sacred Site' from anomaly research. Might not some people be happier as Druids than as ASSAP investigators?

Writing my remarkably unavailable book in the ASSAP/Aquarian series, The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary has taught me several lessons. Some of them are concerned with future intentions to write books that earn money as well as respect, and have no place here. But I have met with some surprises. So far as I know the book is the only non-Catholic account of the BVM visions currently in print in English: though it is primarily narrative it has conclusions, and these are critical, even sceptical. Yet I have found that Catholics, particularly learned ones, have liked the book, and accepted my reasoning, if not all of my judgements.

The criticisms I have had - some in strong terms - have come from the same sort of individuals I mentioned earlier, concerned that I have not regarded the BVM as an archetype, as a modern misinterpretation of an ancient and recurring presence. I am told that what I have missed is that the BVM is really the Great Goddess, from which I can only conclude that those who commend Her to me might well be regarded as pagans, an attitude of mind unlikely to be conducive to rational and objective investigation and assessment. As you might expect, this has only reinforced my doubts about the attitudes currently prevalent in ASSAP, and made more plain the clear divergence in ways of thinking.

The idea behind the ASSAP/Aquarian books is an excellent one, assessing in a thorough and controlled way "The Evidence For . . ." one particular subject or another. It is being pursued with further books by first-rate writers, and it is an approach that will prevail in 'Common Ground' in future. More information will be found on the enclosed insert, giving details of the phenomena we will deal with in the next issue or two.

For now, I hope you will accept this editorial not as a point of separation from ASSAP, but as an expression of considerable concern; a counter-claim against those who wish to use an organisation of great potential to fulfil their own, nationalistic, pseudo-mystical needs. A step back towards the determined investigation of real, observed and observable phenomena, of both the present and the past, towards the search for evidence, and for answers.

Kevin McClure