

January/February 1988

The British & Irish

SKEPTIC

Volume II, Number 1

Geller's Sailboat

Knock: Some new evidence

Manchester Skeptics Meeting

Magicians, Mediums & Psychics

The 'Alternative'

THE BRITISH & IRISH SKEPTIC

Editor: Wendy M. Grossman

Editorial Board: Toby Howard, Peter O'Hara, Karl Sabbagh

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IRISH COMMITTEE

Chairman: Peter O'Hara

Members: Frank Chambers, Michael Farragher, Jacqueline Helme, Johanne Powell

MANCHESTER COMMITTEE

Convenors: Toby Howard, Martin Bridgstock

VIDEO/AUDIO LIBRARY

Video and audio tapes are available on loan from: Toby Howard, 49 Whitegate Park, Flixton, Manchester M31 3LN, to paid subscribers only. New additions are: "Is There Anybody There," a 90-minute documentary on why people believe in the paranormal, produced by Karl Sabbagh (InCA) for Channel 4, broadcast October 31, 1987; audio tapes of the 6 November Dublin meeting with Karl Sabbagh. Also available: Geller on the Wogan show; BBC documentary on the Spiritualist Association: Mark Plummer (CSICOP's Executive Director) interviewed on the Gay Byrne radio show; Denys Parsons and others debating the subject of dowsing on BBC Scotland.

E-MAIL

The skeptics' e-mail network is coordinated by Toby Howard (UK/Europe) and Jim Lippard (USA/Canada). Submissions: skeptics@BCO-MULTICS.ARPA (USA/Canada); skeptics@UK.AC.MAN.CS.CGU (Europe). Administrivia: skeptics-request@BCO-MULTICS.ARPA (USA/Canada); skeptics-request@UK.AC.MAN.CS.CGU (UK).

PROMETHEUS BOOKS

UK Distributor: Michael Hutchinson, 10 Crescent View, Loughton, Essex, IG10 4PZ.

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HITS & MISSES

CSICOP CONFERENCES

CSICOP announced two conferences in its latest edition of its in-house newsletter Skeptical Briefs. The first will be held in Chicago in November, 1988. Details will be forthcoming in the Skeptical Inquirer. The second will be the first-ever European Conference, and will be held in West Germany on May 5-6, 1989. GWUP, the West German skeptics' group, will be hosting the European Conference, and they have written to ask for suggestions regarding topics, speakers, etc. (See also European Report.)

PSYCHIC INVESTIGATION

Toby Howard writes from Manchester:

"The Metaphysical and Psychic Research Group is seeking would-be psychic sleuths to form a "Bureau of Psychic Investigation." The idea is to solve crimes using the psychic senses. Would this include crimes committed paranormally? Crooked psychics could use teleportation to shoplift without even going out!"

SHEFFIELD R.I.P.

Chris Wright writes from Sheffield that he attended two meetings of the Sheffield Society for Research into the Paranormal:

"The meeting on December 2nd was going to be a talk on UFOs; unfortunately the speaker was unable to come that night. The evening was therefore an informal one with the main theme ESP. The members of the society seem to have a range of points of view about the paranormal from the mild believer to the skeptic. I thought it would be unfair to the members if I tried to form an opinion from this one meeting, so I went along to the next one on January 6.

"This time it was the UFO talk. The speaker was Mr Philip Mantle and he gave a fairly general talk on what people mean by UFOs. On speaking to him afterwards, I found he was far more skeptical than his talk would have suggested.

Chris Wright also sent a copy of UFO Brigantia, which he got from Philip Mantle at the meeting.

Philip Mantle, and Andy Roberts, editor of UFO Brigantia, have set up a UFO hotline at 0924 444049, according to an article from

Yorkshire Life, November 1987. The article notes, "if you have any experiences or sightings of the following: ghostlights, spooklights, UFOs, fairies, or poltergeist phenomena, they want to hear from you."

MAGONIA CONFERENCE

The independent UFO journal Magonia has announced their intention to hold a 20th Anniversary Conference. Proposed dates are either May or August Bank Holiday, 1988. A letter was included with their latest issue asking for comments and suggestions...

SPIRITS ON THE DOLE-UPDATE

Toby Howard writes: "Disembodied spirit entities who are considering writing a novel would do well to avoid using Bournemouth "psychic" Peter Froude (Hits & Misses, B&IS I.6) as their penman. Psychic News reports that Mr Froude has had his weekly £40 Enterprise Allowance grant suspended for non-compliance with with regulations. Will his spirit novel The Demoniac ever materialise?"

GELLER'S EFFECT

It was reported in the September, 1987, New Zealand Skeptic that the Geller Effect is not working quite as well in New Zealand as Geller's publishers would like: "The Auckland agent for the publisher of Geller's autobiography reports that only four copies of the book have sold in New Zealand this year."

ASSAP MEDIA SERVICE

The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP), whose activities we wrote up in Hits & Misses in our last issue (B&IS I.6), have, according to Psychic News, begun a media information service. The article says, "Mediascene will cover all aspects of the paranormal, including UFOs and the mystery of stone circles. When inquiries about Spiritualism are received, Mediascene will refer the callers to [Psychic News], the Spiritualists' National Union, Spiritualist Association of Great Britain or other responsible bodies."

SPECIAL REPORT: Manchester Meeting

Wendy M. Grossman

GHOSTBUSTERS MOVE IN

SOUTH MANCHESTER
4. XII 11 87 R. R. R.

FLYING saucers beware! The Skeptical Movement is coming to Manchester complete with ghost-busting expertise.

The Manchester Skeptics group is holding its inaugural meeting on Wednesday 9 December.

Clearyvants, drawers and the like, are invited to come forward

and large rewards are offered to anyone who can demonstrate paranormal abilities in controlled settings.

A daunting challenge, since nobody so far has been able to overcome the rigorous tests set by the Skeptics.

Dr Martin Bridgstock, a visiting lecturer from Australia, will introduce the meeting.

"Creation science is very weak in this country, but I am amazed at the number of clairvoyants, psychics and astrologers there are.

"At the very least there should be a group prepared to test and evaluate the claims of these people," he said.

A professional magician will be present to demonstrate how easily

people can be fooled by clever illusion.

A video will also be shown of some sensational studies of faith-healing frauds in the USA.

The Skeptics are a world-wide movement who want to found a local group in Manchester.

The meeting will be held at The Friend's Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester at 7.30pm.

The first skeptics' meeting ever to be held in Manchester took place on Wednesday, 9 December, 1987, at the Friends' Meeting Hall. Organised by Toby Howard and Martin Bridgstock, the meeting attracted nearly eighty people, most of them from the Manchester area. Out-of-town visitors included Redge Lewis from South Devon, and Michael Hutchinson and Lewis Jones from London.

Advance press coverage was excellent (see Skeptics in the News, this issue, for some of the press write-ups), and both BBC Radio Manchester and one of the local stations ran interviews with Toby Howard in the last couple of days before the meeting.

Michael Hutchinson had brought a tape of an American TV special magician and CSICOP Founding Fellow James Randi had made, and this played while people filtered into the hall and found seats.

The meeting proper began with a talk by Martin Bridgstock, a lecturer in sociology on loan to the UK from his home in Australia, where he has been a prominent anti-creationist campaigner. Bridgstock stressed that being a skeptic is a questioning rather than a negative position, and talked about the various sums of money on offer around the world to those who can prove they have paranormal powers. A notepad was provided for those at the meeting who wished to be tested.

Magician Frank Koval then did a brief demonstration of the art of misdirection, and then showed a tape of Uri Geller, pointing out where Geller was distracting attention from his activities.

Finally, a tape was shown of James Randi's exposé of Peter Popoff on the

Johnny Carson show in March, 1986. After this, there was a tea break, and lively discussions ensued.

I myself was approached by a number of people of various persuasions: a local UFO group wanted to show me books of top-secret documents which, they said, proved there was a government cover-up. How could I explain it? I said I was not an expert on UFOs. A woman approached me with the story of having seen Jesus Christ in person over her back fence one night; the apparition had made an instant convert to Christianity of her neighbor. And a palmist seized my hand and read my palm: I was married, he said (was my husband around anywhere?), I had had difficulty in childbirth, I kept close ties with my family, that is, he hastened to add, my parents. He seemed fascinated by the length of one of the lines on my palm, but unfortunately did not explain what the extraordinary length meant. He said I would have a further romance after my husband. I am not married, have never been pregnant, and never see any of my relatives. I think this was probably the least successful reading I have ever had of any kind. On the other hand, it was free, and I suppose in this, as in other things, you get what you pay for.

After the meeting was reconvened, there was a short period for questions and answers.

The meeting broke up early to comply with the Friends' regulations, but was dubbed a great success by all those who attended. A further organizational meeting is planned for those who indicated interest in forming a regional committee. We wish them the best of luck and look forward to receiving reports of their future activities.

TAPE LIBRARY

Toby Howard reports from Manchester that the tape collection is growing steadily. He lists the following tapes available on loan to paid subscribers to the B&IS:

Audio: Mark Plummer on the Gay Byrne show; LBC Nightline: Brian Inglis on Dreams; LBC Nightline: Christian Dion; LBC Nightline: Timothy Good & Jenny Randles on UFO cover-ups; Everyman: documentary on astrology (BBC 1); Newnight: spontaneous human combustion (BBC 2); Jimmy Mack programme on BBC Scotland: debate on dowsing with Denys Parsons and others; Manchester Skeptics Meetings, including Martin Bridgstock on being a skeptic.

Video: Uri Geller on the Wogan show; Uri Geller on the Late, Late Show; Viewpoint 87: Thy Will be Done (documentary on US and UK television Christian fundamentalism); Panorama documentary on Scientology; "Is There Anybody There?" Karl Sabbagh's documentary on the paranormal (Channel 4, 31 October 1987), together with Karl Sabbagh answering the critics on Right to Reply; BBC documentary on the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain.

To borrow any of these tapes or to contribute tapes to the collection, please contact Toby directly at 49, Whitegate Park, Flixton, Manchester, M31 3LN.

PUBLICATIONS

Michael Hutchinson and Janet Bord both wrote in with copies of two advertisements which have recently appeared in the Bookseller magazine, among other places, both from Lennard Publishing. The first is for a book entitled Astrology--the Evidence of Science. Written by Percy Seymour, this book is claimed to demolish the case against astrology. The advertisement reads in part, "Taking up the challenge of such sceptics as Patrick Moore and Heather Couper, Seymour adds to his own testimony that of Eysenck, Ptolemy, Lyall Watson, Copernicus, Chaucer, Carl Sagan and Shakespeare to present the most exciting and controversial scientific case of recent years."

The second book is entitled Realize Your Psychic Power. Its author, Abbe Gail, is described as follows: "For 5 years she had a top rated phone-in show in Hollywood--"My Psychic Universe"--and worked with the Los

Angeles Police Department, who relied on her gifts to locate missing kidnap victims. In 1986 she returned to London to continue her work with psychic energy in Britain." The ad concludes, "This is the essential handbook of the resources of the mind."

SCOTTISH GHOSTS

Steuart Campbell writes from Edinburgh that the Scottish Tourist Board has published an A4 booklet entitled "Scotland's Ghosts." According to Steuart, "It lists 67 allegedly haunted places for tourists to visit (although one of them, the County Hountel in Dumfries, is actually closed). The introduction claims that 'spirits' are 'tortured souls' who return to the ancient places! Although the list is sometimes cautious enough to use phrases like 'reputed to be...' and 'it is said that...', at other times it gullibly reports what is believed as if it were true."

Both Steuart and Stephen Moreton have had letters published in the Scotsman complaining about this form of exploitation of 'Scotland's assets,' and pointing out that the burden of proof is not on skeptics, but rather on those who claim that ghosts exist.

ELECTION RETURNS

Last summer, Stephen Cox of Reading sent a collection of predictions about the 1987 British general elections (see pp 20-1, this issue). In a recent letter, he points out: "Re specific predictions; Jonathon Carver (Today's astrologer) predicted an Alliance win in the Slough constituency for our General Election. I said no chance. It was the only seat in Berkshire where the Alliance came third, arguably the worst result in the county. Given that of the 650 constituencies he only made a prediction in one, he really ought to have got it right..."

Thanks to Stephen for a truly enormous batch of clippings.

HUBBARD BIOGRAPHIES

Two biographies have been published, one in the US, and one in the UK, both after considerable, reported legal harassment by the Church of Scientology. Bare-Faced Messiah, by Russell Miller, is published by Michael

Joseph, and concentrates mainly on Hubbard's life story, with relatively few details of the inner workings of the Church of Scientology. Messiah or Madman, by Bent Corydon and L. Ron Hubbard, Jr., concentrates primarily on the reported inner workings of the Church. The Sunday Times ran three extracts of Miller's book, and a review; reviews of one or both books have appeared in the New Scientist (reviewer: Dick Kovan) and Nature (reviewer: Martin Gardner).

GELLER STRIKES AGAIN

Toby Howard writes: "Peripatetic skeptics will be delighted to hear that jet lag may soon be a thing of the past, thanks to the tireless research efforts of Uri Geller. Interviewed in Business Traveller magazine, Uri says he hopes to have ready by 1990 a wristwatch which will "stop the extra low frequency waves from entering the body." This, he explains, will prevent jet lag. Uri's passport lists his profession as "lecturer/writer." Skeptics might possibly be able to supply more apt descriptions.

DORIS COLLINS AND THE SUN

The Sun ran another one of its extravaganzas on January 15. Readers were instructed to "Dim the lights and sit on a comfortable chair at a table. Open the Sun at this page and lay it out in front of you. Then ON THE DOT OF 8pm, look deeply into the eyes of the picture on the left..." We will run a more complete report in our next issue. Thanks to J. Alan Remfry for sending in the clippings.

ALLERGY HOAX

The Times and a few other papers reported that writer Caroline Richmond had written a spoof on the arguments against food additives and sent it to an organisation called "Action Against Allergy." The report, purportedly issued by the Dye Related Allergies Bureau (DRAB), said, among other things, that: "Clothes are brighter than ever before, which accounts for the epidemic of obesity, malaise, flatulence, irritability, lethargy, indigestion, headache, dyspepsia, tiredness, and constipation."

Writing in the British Medical Journal, 19-26 December 1987, Richmond notes: "I had not expected DRAB to be taken seriously and now have qualms about what I have done. I have learnt--and I suspect most doctors know this already--that there are quite a number of people out there who want to hear bad news and are vulnerable to every kind of charlatan. Most of them are middle class women who would be described as educated but have no knowledge of human biology or other aspects of everyday science."

LIFE IN SURREY...

Reader Paul Quincey sent clippings from the Richmond and Kingston local Guardian. Self-styled "ghostbuster" Stephen Alexandre investigated Richmond Theatre as the latest in a series of haunted theatres. He receives messages via automatic writing. The message which appeared "scrawled" on his pad read, "Before you leave this theatre you will be..."

Meanwhile there has been a psychic health and fitness festival in Surbiton in December, which was disrupted as "local Christians formed a picket line outside."

YETI

The Yeti has been in the news again, with articles appearing in the New Scientist, the Sunday Express and the International Herald Tribune.

Frank Chambers, of Co. Mayo, sent in the clipping from the International Herald Tribune dated 11 November about a debate over some photographs alleged to be of the Yeti. According to the article, English physicist Anthony B. Wooldridge claimed to have encountered a Yeti in the Himalayas in 1986. Wooldridge's evidence "consists of two sets of photographs taken on March 6, 1986...One photo shows fresh tracks in snow made by enormous feet with widely splayed big toes. The other, taken from a distance of 450 feet through a wide-angle lens, shows a silhouette of a vaguely human figure...Although the photograph is sharp and well exposed, the figure in question is so distant that an enlargement of the image reveals little detail." Frank Chambers comments: "Next time use a telephoto lens!"

According to the Sunday Express on December 20, however, the yeti has been

seen, filmed, and shown on Russian television by "zoologist Mrs M. Bykova."

The New Scientist article, on the other hand, reviews a century of reported yeti sightings and says, "There can be little doubt...that the yeti is currently Nepal's number one foreign currency earner." The article goes on to review the possible candidates for "perpetrators of the yeti's tracks."

In a letter to the Scotsman, James Pringle explained that in his visits to Tibet, he found that local village people "utterly dismissed contemporary stories of sightings as the product of over-fertile imaginations [while] Chinese Communist Party cadres interviewed in the region almost to a man believed...in the existence of the Yeti."

TIME-LIFE

The Time-Life book series Mysteries of the Unknown is now available in the UK. According to their full-colour brochure, the series "promises you an astonishing exploration of a wide spectrum of unexplained phenomena." Among the phenomena: the psychic arms race (Moscow is ahead!), Gerard Croiset's psychic powers, the "Bermuda Triangle", Stonehenge, Nostradamus, UFOs, and so on and on. They don't say how many volumes are in the series, but each costs £12.95 plus £1.95 postage and packing until June 30, 1988. And if you reply within seven days (this brochure came in a copy of the Listener), you can have a free gift! Yes, you can own your very own set of ESP cards...

THE OPEN CENTRE

"What is the Open Centre?" their brochure asks. It then proceeds to answer: "We are a well established Growth Centre providing a variety of different therapies within the broad spectrum of the Humanistic Psychology Movement. We offer both groups and individual sessions.

"We run as a collective..."

The therapies they offer are: Body-oriented therapy; Primal Integration and Bodywork; Transactional Analysis; Encounter and Awareness; Bioenergetics and Psychodrama; the Feldenkrais Method and Gentle Dance; Gestalt and Intuitive Massage. From the brochure, "Primal Integration is a

process which helps to heal splits in one's being and resolve blocks to one's doing...I draw on...various forms of bodywork--'intuitive' bodywork, massage, Pulsing (a rhythmic form) and Postural Integration (deep tissue work)." On Bioenergetics and Psychodrama, "My basic training in helping people through crisis was nine years as an international household removals contractor..."

EXORCISM AT SEA

Several newspapers carried the story of the haunted Bridlington trawler. According to the Daily Telegraph on December 15, "The Rev Thomas Willis, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Sowerby, and the exorcist of buildings to the Diocese of York, was called in to perform the ceremony by a Department of Employment clerk who queried why the trawler's crew were claiming benefit when they should have been out fishing."

Before the exorcism: "the 65ft Bridlington trawler Pickering skippered by Mr Derek Gates was haunted...the steering regularly went haywire, sending them round in circles. The radar system would go wrong, always at 1:30am and at sea.

"Lights would go on and off and the cabins were freezing even when the heating was on. A ghostly figure had also been seen on deck."

After: "Mr Gates...said "the atmosphere had 'changed overnight'...and that he and his crew were now landing healthy catches."

The Guardian report included the additional information that "Mr Willis...was appointed an official exorcist in 1972 by the then Archbishop of York, Dr Donald Coggan... The vicar researched the ship's history and found that a human spirit, rather than the ghost of a vengeful mackerel or cod, might genuinely be responsible."

According to the Guardian, "Mr Willis, who said that he believed the spirit was now at peace, has been thanked by the Pickering's owners, the Bridlington Trawler Co., for being 'most helpful'."

SAGAN

In an article, "Red star Gorbachev, who wants to go to Mars, gets only Iowa," published on 11 December, Guardian reporter Michael White described Carl Sagan as "the American dissident and sage...the popular astrologer." Um...

EUROPEAN REPORT

CSICOP EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

Amardeo Sarma writes from West Germany:

"...one of the 1989 CSICOP conferences is to be held near Munich in Germany. The German organisation GWUP (previously ASUPO) will host the conference. We are very keen to coordinate the topics and the conference with the other European national groups. The conference is planned for May 5th and 6th 1989 with some social programme offered on the 4th and a meeting of the national (mainly European) groups on Sunday, the 7th of May. Please let me know if the date suits you and whether you wish to contribute in any way. The conference venue is Bad Tölz near Munich. We are also open to suggestions regarding topics and other items..."

We will be glad to pass along any of our readers' suggestions to Amardeo.

NETHERLANDS

Bert van Gelder, secretary to the new Dutch group writes from Utrecht:

"We gave our committee the legal form of a so-called 'Stichting' (=Foundation) and called it 'SKEPSIS'. Professor emeritus in the field of Astronomy of Utrecht University, Cees de Jager, is chairperson and I, a sociologist and student-counsellor in the University of Amsterdam, am secretary. The Board consists of 15 men and only one woman.

"We called ourselves a foundation for the scientific research of 'paranormal phenomena' and not of 'claims of the paranormal' not to alienate people beforehand and not to confirm the connotation that the word 'SKEPSIS' has already for true believers.

"We got much press coverage: from the beginning of October on De Jager was interviewed at least three times a week; he was on radio (not yet on TV) and about 350 people wrote us about the foundation..."

"Our primary aims are editing a quarterly called 'SKEPTER' (chief-editor: Marcel Hulspas) and granting to the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (=Royal Library) the full set of Skeptical Inquirers and a subscription to the future volumes besides a selection of important books in the field of our objectives. This is because nowhere in Dutch libraries (nor bookshops) you can find good scientific books about paranormal research and paranormal phenomena and only one library

(the Department of Psychology of the University of Amsterdam) has a subscription to the Skeptical Inquirer."

J.W. Nienhuys has written from Waalre enclosing translations of the press write-ups of the foundation of SKEPSIS, and has very kindly agreed to keep us informed of the contents of Skepter, when publication begins.

Nienhuys translates an article published on 10 October and entitled "Dutch skeptics unite in crusade against the paranormal." Journalist Felix Eigenraam says: "A few years ago, a Dutch group was almost established. Because of the untimely death of the originator of that plan, Telegraaf journalist and skeptic Piet Hein Hoebens, this did not happen. But now, thanks to the missionary activity of [Paul] Kurtz and [Mark] Plummer, it is going to happen. A quick poll among subscribers present [at the meeting on October 8] showed that there was enough interest to start a committee.

"The Dutch committee will closely monitor paranormal claims in their country (like the 12 other committees in other countries), examine them carefully, and wherever possible refute them."

SPAIN

Luis Alfonso Gamez Dominguez writes from Bilbao: "Geller was in Spain for a couple of days, bending spoons, transmitting numbers telepathically, etc. His visit did not raise the excitement expected by those who brought him; they did not allow Felix [Ares de Blas] and me to attend a television program when Geller was interviewed. The press clippings which I enclose with this letter and the copy of the press release which we prepared will give you an idea of what happened."

"...I agree completely that we need to ensure that all the European groups work together. I think the biggest problem will consist in convincing our colleagues in all countries that we must establish continental coordination and that this can work for everyone..."

Luis Alfonso adds that ARP, the Spanish group, was legally constituted in March, and that since October they have been getting numerous enquiries about ARP and the skeptical movement in general. A national meeting is planned for 5 December in Madrid.

BALANCE SHEET

(All figures in Irish punts and rounded off to the nearest whole punt.)

INCOME

Subscriptions	IR£1113.00
Donations	42.00
<u>Renewals for 1988</u>	<u>42.00</u>
TOTAL	1197.00

EXPENSES

Paper & supplies	358.00
Postage	288.00
Printing	281.00
Bank charges	6.00
<u>Irish public meeting</u>	<u>40.00</u>
TOTAL	973.00

Current balance on 26/I/88 224.00

We are grateful to the British Committee (the CSICP), who paid for printing and posting the first issue, which went out to all of the nearly 500 UK and Irish subscribers and ex-subscribers to the Skeptical Inquirer. A major expense in 1987 was sending CSICOP 40 copies of each issue to distribute to the other national and regional skeptics' groups; as of this issue (II.1), we are changing our policy. From now on, we will be sending a maximum of 8 pages per issue, consisting of a selection of the most newsworthy and timely items from our pages. This will reduce our costs; however it should be noted that that won't mean the B&IS will turn a profit. What it will mean is that those working on it who are out of pocket on postage, phone bills, etc., may be reimbursed. It is for these reasons that it was decided at the B&IS Board meeting on November 7, 1987, that the subscription rates for 1988 would remain the same as they were for 1987.

A word about printing: we are keeping our costs semi-reasonable by using one home-owned photocopier to print the B&IS. With every psychic force in the UK and Ireland focused on this one copier, it is only natural that it breaks down routinely during the production of each issue, sometimes more than once. It is for this reason, and time pressures, that copies are not always perfect. We would be grateful for alternative suggestions, such as the names and addresses of inexpensive but reliable commercial printers.

Thanks to everyone who renewed early.

WHAT IT COSTS:

THE HALLOWE'EN SPIRIT

- £500 buys you your own crystal ball. Instructions supplied but no earthly guarantees. Mysteries, 9 Monmouth St, London WC2.
- £100 will bring palmist Philena to your Hallowe'en party to read the fate and fortunes of your friends (01-602 4724).
- £8 is the fee for finding out who and what you were in your previous life on earth. Paul Murray knows it all (03552-47213).
- £7.50 buys a half-hour's worth of messages from those in the World Beyond. Spiritualist Association of Great Britain, 33 Belgrave Sq, London SW1 (01-235 3351).
- £2.95 buys you a real four-leaf clover. Occult Shop, 194 Lockhurst Lane, Coventry.
- 45p buys the loaf of bread African mystic Madam Buya needs to rid you of a curse. No charge, but donations welcome (01-231 7364).

A MIRACLE FOR YOU — RIGHT ON THIS PAGE!

**This £100.00
Diamond & Ruby
Miracle Crucifix —
yours FREE!**

(We only ask for a token of £17 to cover costs of flying in the Crucifix from Lourdes and making contact with you through this Special Notice)

We trust you. Keep the Crucifix — and when you hit the **MONEY JACKPOT** and enjoy cash galore... we hope you will send a "thank you" gift of a few pounds or any small amount you can afford.



GELLER'S BOAT

Frank Koval

Uri Geller was at it again last summer. The first I heard of it was in an ITV commercial which was broadcast on Sunday, August 23. The advertisement urged us to buy the Sun news(?)paper for the following week. The main bait used was that they would be launching "the psychic sensation of the century." [See B&IS I.6 for a review of the Sun articles.]

The following day I broke the habit of a lifetime and bought a copy of the tabloid. I could not resist finding out what Uri was up to this time.

I was quite disappointed to discover that Geller would be simply re-running some of his old routines:

"This week Uri Geller will take to the skies in a hot air balloon to radiate a beam of concentrated psychic energy across the land." (Even I could forecast a lot of hot air--but would there be any psychic energy?)

"Spoons and forks will bend, broken clocks will tick again and objects will leap off shelves." (Quite likely, but the question is who will do the bending, mending, and throwing?)

"Geller will also try to will millions of people to recreate a simple sketch to prove the power of his mind."

Now, this last sentence triggered me into action. I decided to make my own prediction of what Geller would choose to draw. I made five simple sketches and pinned my faith on Geller's choosing one of these. I then sent them to the Editor of the Daily Mail with a covering letter saying what I was up to. As I slid the envelope into the postbox near my house, I suddenly realised that I had put all my eggs into one basket. Still, it was done.

As the week went by, I kept wondering if my sketches had been enough. Should I have submitted ten or twenty? Anyway, my drawings were:

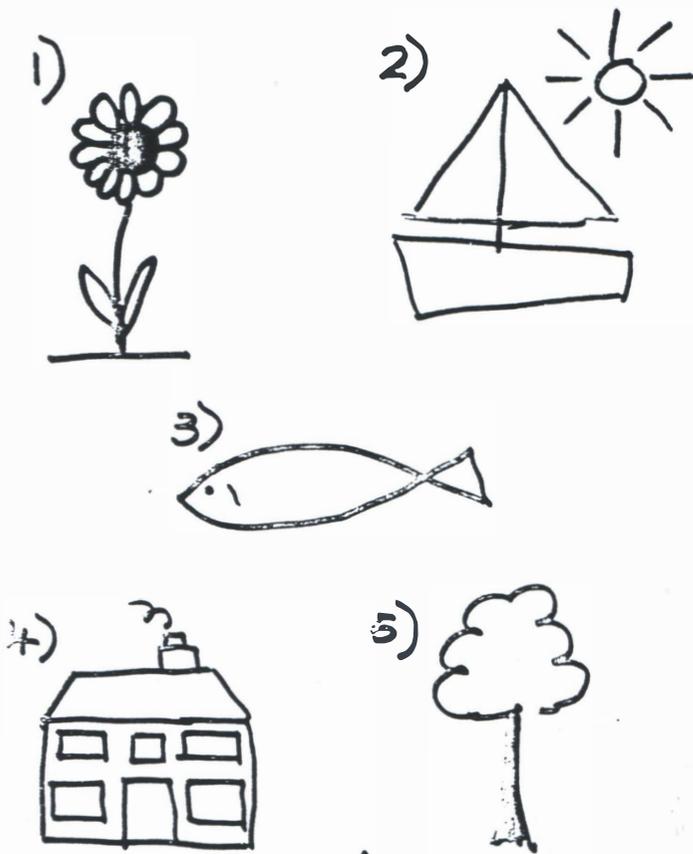
1. a flower,
2. a sailboat with sun,
3. a fish,
4. a house, and
5. a tree.

When Tuesday came, the Sun's major article on Geller told how he had invited journalist Neil Wallis to draw a simple sketch and hide it from Geller. Uri duly reproduced Wallis's drawing and it turned out to be--wait for it--a tree! This was my drawing number 5 and so this subject was unlikely to be chosen for Uri's pen in the main experiment in the hot air balloon later that week. So, I now had only one chance in four of being anywhere near right.

Wednesday's Sun (this research was beginning to cost a fortune) told me that the experiment would begin at 3 pm the following day. I decided that it would be unwise to hold my breath while waiting.

Thursday morning's paper kindly provided us with a blank box in which to draw the picture that Uri would transmit to us. He was going to busy that afternoon. Think of his heavy schedule. At 3 pm, and for five whole minutes, he would be using his psychic powers to bend our keys or spoons.

Then, promptly at 3.05 pm he would suddenly switch his attention to transmitting the drawing. This would end after five minutes. At 3.10, with Uri still hoping to be fresh, we had to put our "spoons, keys, broken radios, watches, clocks and shavers" on a picture of Uri Geller printed on page 17 of that day's Sun. At 3.15, Geller's ordeal would be over.



*Frank Koval
Aug 24, 1987
(copy)*

We were also invited to call the Sun to bend the ears about all the wonderful things that had happened. I have no doubt that all their telephone lines were jammed that afternoon. As P.T. Barnum acutely observed: "There's one born every minute."

One thing that had not been predicted by Geiler was that the hot air balloon could not be used that day. As a matter of fact, a forecast of gale-force winds over Ilkley Moor would be a cinch for a Northerner like myself. So, a helicopter was used for the "psychic sensation of the Century."

I had to keep buying the Sun until Thursday, September 3, when they finally had finished sorting the drawings that had been sent in by more than 2,500 people.

Uri's doodle was revealed. Asked how he came to do that particular drawing, he said: "During the experiment we flew over a lake and I saw boats and sailboats. Three things flashed through my mind--a fish, a Red

Indian's head, and finally that boat. So I drew the boat. It was as random as that."

Note that, in saying this, Geiler had covered my drawing number 3--the fish! And the sailboat that he finally settled on was my drawing number 2. A direct hit! It was even complete with a drawing of the sun. In his case, the sun was drawn on the left--in mine, it was on the right.

How on earth did that Red Indian get into the picture as a possible subject for his drawing? Oh yes, all those spiritualists out there would be attracted to this experiment, and they were bound to draw their own personal spirit guides!

TV investigator Roger Cook was entrusted with opening Uri's drawing so that it could be compared with the pictures sent in by readers. Some 230 people sent in passable drawings of sailboats. Mr Cook commented: "I met Uri Geiler years and years ago, but I still find the whole thing baffling. It certainly takes an awful lot of explaining."

Not so, really. I had simply drawn stereotypes that most people resort to when asked to do a drawing under these conditions. Uri had just done the same.

The Daily Mail? They never replied to any of my letters to them. So much for the British press when it comes to this sort of occult twaddle!

The worst part of the fortnight (apart from purchasing all those Suns) was the ribbing I received from friends expressing surprise at my choice of newspaper. I was particularly castigated by one down-and-out in a pub for reading such a rag. He was brandishing a copy of the superior Daily Express in a particularly menacing manner. Me? I really read the Daily Telegraph.

How Sun readers matched Uri Geller's brainwave

J.FOSTER: Pitsmoor	S.BRUCE: Dorset	E.NUGHES: Liverpool	P.ROBB: Glasgow	S.WHITING: Newbury

WHAT A YACHT WE GOT!

Family hit the target 3 times

Thousands receive psychic picture

SPEAK to a lot of psychic readers: The Sun's got an amazing number of you received a mental picture of a yacht... in the picture in the great experiment. Let your own picture be revealed... the picture in the picture of the...

MAGICIANS, MEDIUMS & PSYCHICS

by David Alexander

I have been reading a new book from Prometheus Press entitled A Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology, edited by Paul Kurtz. It is an excellent introduction to the paranormal scene, with articles pro and con.

One article that deserves more than passing comment is by John Beloff, former president of the Parapsychology Association. To bolster and illustrate his article, Beloff resurrects the hoary specter of Eusapia Palladino, the medium (1854-1918), and uses her as an example of a "real psychic" done wrong by the scientific establishment. This article is an excellent example of the parapsychologists' inability to address the historical record, their highly selective reporting of facts, and a complete ignoring of events before and after the example given.

Much of John Beloff's information about Palladino comes from Hereward Carrington. Since he is pivotal in all of this, let us examine both the medium and her messenger and see what Beloff has left out that bears heavily on our ability to analyse this case objectively.

Eusapia Palladino first came to the attention of the spiritualist community by a letter to the Spiritualist from a Signor Damiani, an Italian then living in England. Eusapia, then known as Sapia Padalino, was a 16-year-old girl who could do the usual run of mediumistic stunts: raps, table levitations, etc. She had come from a very poor family living on the outskirts of Naples. Married very young to a travelling magician, she was now living on her own in the city. She was described as eating with her fingers, not being clean in her person or dress, and associating with characters of 'low standards'. It was also noted that objects disappeared from the rooms where she had sat, and did not reappear.

Eusapia was, above all, a lusty, quick-witted peasant who knew she was onto a good thing. As I have indicated in previous writings, sex and the séance room are no strangers to one another. It has been reported several times that Eusapia would go to bed with sitters she happened to fancy. Since this time period is known for its puritanical attitude towards sex, you can imagine the heady atmosphere she must have created in and out of the séance room. It has also been reported that Eusapia always got along better with men than with women. Small wonder.

Add to the highly charged sexual atmosphere prevalent in the séance room the fact that, like so many other mediums before and since, Eusapia controlled the circumstances of her séances: the lighting, placement of chairs, etc. She became so restless before the production of phenomena that it was generally impossible to know if her hands and feet were properly controlled. That she was exposed many times, thoroughly and without question, is a matter of solid historical fact.

Hereward Carrington is another odd bird in the history of parapsychology. Beloff uses much of Carrington's material in coming to his conclusions. It is important to examine Carrington's background before we are willing to believe too much from him. He was once described as an individual who managed to make his living by playing both sides of the street. Early on, his attitude was that while there is a large percentage of fraud in the psychic world, there were some genuine paranormal phenomena happening. Carrington developed a following that felt duty-bound to buy his books and attend his lectures.

Palladino had been thoroughly exposed and discredited by the British master magician J.N. Maskelyne, magician and psychic trickery

David Alexander has been a professional magician and a private investigator. Currently a publisher and editor, he recently edited James Randi's new book The Faith-Healers. He is a Special Consultant to the Committee for Scientific Examination of Religion (CSER), and has participated in several major investigations of faith-healers.

expert Joseph Rinn, and Dr. Richard Hodgson, but was able to reestablish herself with the British Society for Psychical Research by pleading the necessity of cheating so as not to disappoint expectant sitters.

The Fielding Report, which Mr Beloff suggests as mandatory reading for any would-be member of the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), was written after a series of séances with Palladino in Naples (1908), two years before she went to America with Carrington. It is important to note that Carrington was one of the three people taking part in this investigation. While Mr Beloff notes in his article that the results were published in the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, Carrington also sold an article to McClure's magazine.

An ulterior motive for Carrington's praise and support of Palladino was forthcoming in 1909, when it was learned that he had signed a deal for her to tour the United States, with him as her manager. There was also a contract with McClure's magazine that meant extra dollars for Carrington. We are talking substantial sums of money. Palladino was being paid \$80 a séance by Carrington, who was in turn charging \$50 per séance per sitter with a supposed maximum of seven sitters per séance. Remember, this was all in 1910 dollars, when \$25 a week would get you a room and three meals a day in the best hotel. Carrington also admitted, in a letter to J. Rinn, that members of the American Society for Psychical Research contributed excess sums to help defray the out-of-pocket expenses he would incur when the séances were held for scientific purposes.

The newspapers covered it all, and the demand for Eusapia was very high. So great a demand, that Carrington precluded any thought of inviting scientific investigators to attend her séances for quite some time.

Finally, Eusapia was exposed again. Carrington's attitude is best summed up by a small headline over his letter to the New York Times, May 13, 1910:

HERWARD CARRINGTON, THE MEDIUM'S MANAGER, WOULD BOLSTER UP PALLADINO'S CASE, ADMITS SHE CHEATED BUT CONTENDS THAT THE COMMITTEE OF PROFESSORS OUGHT NOT TO HAVE ALLOWED HER TO CHEAT.

Both Carrington and Beloff freely admit that Palladino would cheat if she had the opportunity. The logic here seemed to be: "If she was caught, that is when she cheated. If

she wasn't caught cheating, then the phenomena were genuine." One of the things that Beloff neglected to mention in his article was the opportunity Palladino had to prove herself genuine and earn \$2000 at the same time. Joseph Rinn offered \$1000 to see Palladino produce psychic phenomena under test conditions that would preclude her cheating. She refused his conditions, saying they had been tried on her and she had nearly died.

After some negotiations modifying the conditions, Palladino agreed to be tied, but the method and direction of the tying was of her design and to be at her direction. She promised nothing under those circumstances, but offered to try. The test was to take place in the New York Times building on May 22, 1910, but Palladino refused to perform under the agreed-upon test conditions, and made new demands. She refused to have Professor Jastrow on the examining committee; demanded that spirit raps count as phenomena (these are unbelievably easy to create by moving one's hands on a tabletop in a particular manner); and demanded that instead of her feet and hands being securely tied, she should have at least one foot of slack in the binding cords. She also insisted that the \$1000 be forfeit if she produced even one of the supposed psychic phenomena. She also demanded that three strangers to the examining committee be included at the table.

It was obvious that Palladino did not want a scientific examination of any sort. Rinn then upped the reward to \$2000 if she would cause a small block of wood or a pencil to levitate for a few moments. (Remember, she was famous for "levitating" her sitting table countless times.) Naturally, she refused. The papers were full of this story, and even though the publicity was negative, the demand for her séances remained heavy. Until, that is, Rinn publicized the method by which people could effectively control her hands and feet. The papers printed this information and the phenomena dried up. Carrington and Palladino had to fold their tent and close up shop. That was the end of Palladino. She returned to Italy and died in 1918.

In 1921 Harry Houdini obtained a signed and witnessed statement regarding Hereward Carrington from Francis Martinka, the famous dealer in magical apparatus. During the time that Carrington was managing Palladino and having his argument with Joe Rinn, he was buying luminous paint from Martinka's magic supply house. Rinn always wondered what sort of explanation Carrington would give for such a purchase, as luminous paint was only sold

by Martinka to crooked mediums.

Much has been said by Beloff and others of various mediums' ability to produce phenomena under what they consider test conditions. I would refer the interested reader to the Tarbell Course in Magic, Vol 2, for "Dr. Edward Saint's Spirit Séance." Saint, who acted as Mrs Houdini's manager, was quite a character, sporting a monocle, waxed beard, and cane. He devised a method that needed no outside help and would allow a medium to produce psychic lights and spirit raps at various points in a room while the medium's arms, hands, and legs were under complete control by four members of the audience. As with most trickery of this type, the method is extremely simple, and I estimate it would cost under five dollars to put together. As it is apt of a series of books that are near and dear to the heart of any worthwhile magician, it would not serve well to expose it here. Suffice it to say, it will work and is quite effective.

In his article, Beloff calls attention to Palladino's ability to issue a cold breeze from a scar on her forehead. While this stunt fooled scientists for 25 years, Joe Rinn and James Keillogg discovered that she produced it by blowing upward and deflecting the air with her fingers, held over her face. A simple trick, but obviously very effective.

Carrington was aware that Rinn, in 1903, had publicized the fact that no medium could defeat the condition of being bound with a spool of thread. The ability to slip out of ropes and chains was well known to magicians and mediums, but the same principles used to escape from those bonds could not be used with simple thread. That Carrington knew this is without question, as he called attention to it in his book, The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism. Carrington also stated in this book, "We must assure ourselves that the conditions of the experiment render fraud a physical impossibility, before we assume that the phenomena observed are the result of supernatural force."

Obviously he did not follow his own advice with Eusapia Palladino. Indeed, as was reported in the Brooklyn Standard Union of January 6, 1913, Carrington admitted that he was sorry he had used the breeze from the scar as part of the proof of the existence of paranormal phenomena, confessed that she was a fraud, and further admitted that 98% of so-called mediumistic manifestations are fraudulent.

As the years passed, Carrington continued to make a living from the public's ongoing

belief in the paranormal. In August of 1925, he sponsored a convention at the Hotel Astor in New York City, where he presented a number of known psychic fakes, including Khaidah, an Egyptian who had, in 1906, freely admitted in print that he was a fake.

I think the case is quite clear that Carrington cannot be taken seriously as an objective observer of the paranormal. His writing is self-serving and highly biased. As for Palladino, the record clearly shows she was a fraud and a fake. If she was genuine on occasion, as some claim, she never permitted herself to be tested under circumstances that would preclude trickery and prove those claims. Her entire life gives a lie to her having any sort of gift or paranormal ability.

Beloff's conclusion states that we skeptics can always rely on one supreme ally: the poverty of the human imagination. He is wrong there, too. It is exactly that imagination, so malleable in the conditions of the séance room, that allows frauds like Palladino to succeed with the simplest of methods. The sitters may have an experience, but not for the reasons they are led to believe.

Further Reading

Collier's Weekly, May 4, 1910 and the American Review of Reviews, July, 1910, for articles by Professor Jastrow.

Sixty Years of Psychical Research by Joseph Rinn.

The Spiritualists, by Ruth Brandon.

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Advertisement in Body Mail Spirit Magazine (Jan/Feb 1987)

KNOCK: some new evidence

David Berman

In an article published in The Freethinker (October 1979, and the B&IS I.1), I argued that the 1879 apparition at Knock, Co. Mayo, was most probably brought about by a magic lantern. This conclusion was reached largely by an analysis of the depositions of the witnesses, and particularly of the variants in the two printed versions of these depositions in the Weekly News of 21 and 28 February 1880 and The Apparition and Miracles at Knock by John Macphilpin (Dublin, 1880). Since that article, new evidence has come from two sources which corroborates the lantern hypothesis. First, those familiar with optical equipment have tried to show that a magic lantern of the time could, given the physical conditions, have produced an effect similar to that described by the witnesses (in particular, see the television documentary on the paranormal, "Is There Anybody There?," Channel 4, 31 October 1987).

But why, it has often been asked, would someone have perpetrated such a bizarre hoax? Where is the motive? Who is the culprit? Clearly, one needs to find someone who would have 1) benefited from the hoax, 2) had access to the church or schoolhouse, 3) had an insider's intimacy with the village of Knock, and 4) had the ability to have acquired the magic lantern and engineer the hoax.

The person who best meets conditions 2-4 was the parish priest of Knock, Archdeacon Bartholomew Cavanagh. And it is clear from the new evidence, which I shall be presenting here, that he also meets condition 1. For he needed just such an event to bolster his authority in the parish, authority which had been dramatically undermined only two months before the apparition. This comes out in a confidential intelligence report to the Irish Chief Secretary of a meeting at Knock on 1 June 1879. The document is among the State Papers in Dublin Castle; it is headed "confi-

dential" and dated "3rd June 1879." As it has never (as far as I am aware) been quoted or even mentioned, I reproduce it here nearly in full:

All the men, about 300 who marched to Knock, on that day assembled at a place called Baring-Carrol and proceeded thence in fours.

They were profusely decorated with green sashes, rosettes, ribbons and laurel branches and leaves. They were commanded by J.W. Nally, suspect, Bailia, John O'Kane, suspect, of this town, and P.J. Gordon, Bootmaker, who lives here also. Another man who was introduced as a W. Jones of Dublin had a command, but he was actually a person named Sheridan, who is a native of Bohold in this district. All these men addressed the people assembled on the occasion who numbered about 1500. Sheridan was the first who delivered a speech. He said: Father Cavanagh (P.P.) had endeavoured to stamp them as blackguards, he had done everything to brand them (cries down with him--cut off his supplies). He should not trample on the people who hoped to benefit their Country. He had referred to one man by name (Shame, and nine cheers for O'Kane) and said that he was actually drawing money and purchasing arms--The only motive is the common benefit of our Country, that, by banding themselves together against the tyrant Landlords. There were police present: let them hear a sample of their ideas. Let them openly declare their determination to stand and die together. They were threatened with setters (the Constabulary, in allusion to the formation of a barrack at Knock) but they should be no longer lukewarm or cowardly, but proclaim in daylight what was required.

O'Kane next spoke: Father Cavanagh had made a wanton attack upon him who wished to see his Country free. It was said they were fenians--if that means haters of British Rule they were all fenians. Did Father Cavanagh wish to be reconciled to British Rule? Who made their Country a desert? Would they be reconciled? (three cheers for the Julius) They should wait for their opportunity. England was as hostile as of old, the fair fields of Ireland are converted into bullock pastures. He had promises from America--if they work together they would work out the freedom of their Country. When England would be engaged by Russia it would then be the time. He did not want to conceal that when the opportunity offered it would be embraced.

No police station was required at Knock: it would be an outrage to bring those ruffians--the police--amongst the people, it would not deter them to do their duty. They should resist the invaders and drive them into the Atlantic. His line was chalked and he'd not depart from it. Gordon directed the people to pay no rent without getting an abatement.

If the landlords resisted they'd make the tenants not pay.

A Resolution was then put forward by Sheridan in which it was proposed that Noian Farrell's Tenants (in this district) should hold out against their tyrant landlord, the scoundrel who would crowd the workhouses of their saxon enemies and their Gaois--that they should stand together.

Having had to wait to receive the notes taken at the meeting by the Kilmagh Constabulary, I was unable to report until today

J.C. Carter

(Dublin, Castle, State Papers Office, C.S.O.R.P.--1879-9632.)

David Berman is a lecturer in philosophy at Trinity College, Dublin. His forthcoming history of atheism in Britain is due to be published shortly.

Plainly, Archdeacon Cavanagh had endangered his prestige in the area by championing the landlords and attacking the local Fenian or Land League leaders. He would surely have been alarmed by the "cries down with him--cut off his supplies." And I should point out that this report was taken very seriously in Dublin Castle; for an official, probably the Attorney General, has annotated it with words: "Very bad, I assume the words can be proved. E.G., 20/6/79." Co. Mayo was, it would seem, in the grips of a "conspiracy against all landed property which widely exists there." These are the words of Lord Mayo, the Lieutenant for the County, in a letter (also unnoticed) to the Chief Secretary, dated 26 September 1879. Speaking of the "alarming state" of Mayo, he continues:

...I have no hesitation in saying that as soon as agents are instructed or allowed by their employers to insist upon the payment of rents--whether in the whole or in part--many districts will be violently disturbed, and not only property, but life will be seriously endangered.

Threatening notices are posted everywhere, and on all estates however moderately rented and where all rights of property are most leniently exercised, the tenantry are, through fear of assassination, prevented paying their rents when ready and willing to do so...

...it is to communism alone the present state of things in that country is to be attributed, and this communism is the consequence of the violent agitation raised and maintained for their own political purposes by a few demagogues--of whom one is a Justice of the Peace--who are constantly inciting the tenantry to resistance of all authority, and all rights of property...

I find it impossible to understand why there is such a total absence of the military, not alone in Mayo but in the whole of the province of Connaught: surely there is no part of Ireland where at this moment a military force is as necessary as it is in Mayo...

(Dublin Castle, State Papers Office, C.S.O.R.P.--1880-580.)

Property and authority were under fire in Mayo in 1879. Hence it seems plausible that Archdeacon Cavanagh, whose own authority and livelihood were especially threatened in June of that year, should look for a way to reestablish his position which would also strike a blow for the forces of law and property and against the subversive Fenians and Land Leaguers. There is a long tradition, possibly going back to Plato, of deceiving the vulgar in the interest of some (supposed) higher good. And I should point out that in the 1870's apparitions were featured in the Irish Catholic periodicals--for example, various numbers of the Illustrated Monitor, Dublin, for the year 1875. It is surely plausible, then, that the recently-denounced Archdeacon Cavanagh should consider engineering an apparition by means of a magic lantern for certain higher goods. But was it likely? That is, was Archdeacon Cavanagh capable of subordinating truth to some other ideal?

Consider the following account of Sister M.F. Cusack, a nun who worked in Knock in

the early 1880's. Initially, as she tells us in The Story of my Life (London, 1891), she was "full of enthusiasm" for the apparition; but she "soon found cause to cool down":

While I was in the church one day I saw a bright light above the altar, and all the people were exclaiming, "There it is! there it is! Now we have seen it for ourselves." I was somewhat impressed myself, and hoped that at last I had seen a supernatural sight, even if it was only a bright light. I was kneeling when I first saw the light, but when I rose up from my knees the light disappeared. I at once knelt down again, and lo, the light shone once more as bright as ever. I tried this experiment several times, and was then convinced that it was some reflection. I had made up my mind to investigate everything thoroughly when I came to Knock, though my prejudices were in favour of believing everything. I now went near the altar, and at once found out the cause of what seemed supernatural. It was simply a very large glass stone, which had caught the reflection of the setting sun.

I dared not touch anything about the shrine, so I went at once to Father Cavanagh, whose house was quite near, and asked him to come and remove the "vision", for I thought it was dreadful to have the people deceived. But to my amazement--and I must admit also to my indignation--he would not remove it. This made me very sceptical as far as he was concerned (pp268-9).

From this circumstantial account I take it that Archdeacon Cavanagh was capable of deceiving the people for what he probably considered some higher good--whether guarding private property and public order, or increasing religious devotion. I should also mention that the question of such deception is still a matter of debate; for consider those who sanction deceiving terminally ill patients about their illnesses, or governments' falsifying information in the interests of national security, or parents' telling wise lies to children about Santa Claus.

Although I have claimed that Cavanagh engineered the apparition, I am not claiming that he actually operated the magic lantern. I take it that he hired the lantern, but it may have been operated by someone else in Knock, under Cavanagh's supervision. There is a letter in the Tuam diocesan archive from a Michael McConneil, from Belfast, who says that a friend of his called Constable McDermott, who had been stationed at Knock, had told him that the apparition had been produced by a magic lantern operated by a Protestant policeman stationed at Knock. (See Catherine Rynne's Knock: 1879-1979, Dublin, 1979, pp67-70.) This, of course, is hearsay, as is the statement I heard nearly eight years ago from a senior member of the Irish judiciary, to the effect that a solicitor of his acquaintance told him that his grandfather hired a magic lantern to Archdeacon Cavanagh during the week in question.

Such oral information is unlikely to persuade believers, but it is worth preserving, if only because it may lead to the discovery of hard evidence in, for example, a letter or diary.

There is some hard evidence (long known) that makes sense within the case I am making, namely, the striking fact that although Cavanagh was within five minutes' walking distance of the apparition, he refused to see it when asked by his housekeeper, Mary McLoughlin, the first to observe the apparition. Later, Cavanagh is reported to have consoled himself that: "If I had seen it...many things would have been said that cannot now be advanced with any fair show of reason or probability on their side." (Weekly News, 14 February 1880.) I take Cavanagh's absence from the apparition to be nearly as striking (and suspicious) as the disappearance of the original manuscript depositions. My explanation for his absence is that he was implicated, and that his post factum statement suggests his implication. The pattern is not unfamiliar to psychologists: in short, the original cause is transformed into an excuse or consolation.

A similar reversal of cause and effect is also evident, I think, in "a vivid local memory, passed down in the family of [Patrick Walsh] one of the...eyewitnesses to the apparition," according to which there was a meeting of Whiteboys, to which young Walsh came:

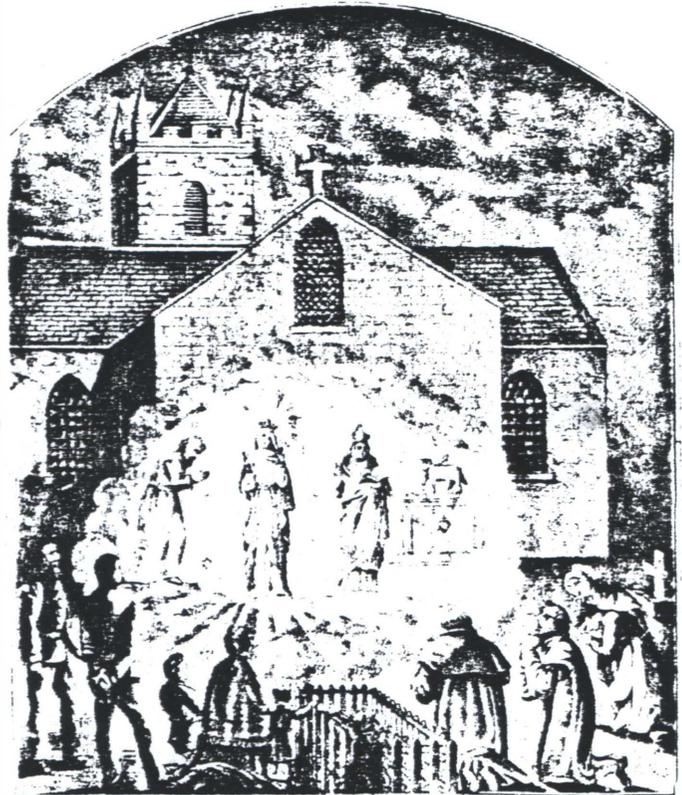
...Later, Patrick Walsh apoikised to Archdeacon Cavanagh for hearing him denounced at this meeting which he attended. The people felt that the priest was so devoted to Our Lady that she protected him from the Whiteboys and those like them (Knock: 1879-1979, p 83).

In William Coyne's Venerable Archdeacon Cavanagh (Roscommon, 1953), there is an even more dramatic story (again unsubstantiated) about a secret society that had determined to punish Cavanagh for "preaching caution and restraint to his flock."

At length it was resolved...to have his ears cut off...However, before the date fixed for the sacreligious act the extraordinary events of the 21 August 1879 (the apparition) had occurred at Knock. There was a complete change...even the hardest of hearts...regarded it as a direct sign through Our Lady that a crime of the kind contemplated was a desecration... (pp 82-4).

Here again we have, I think, a reversal of cause and effect; that is, we are able to see what Archdeacon Cavanagh originally intended to achieve by his hoax. He wanted the appearance of the Virgin Mary to "bring about a complete change...even in the hardest of hearts;" just as he wished to make his flock ashamed at having heard and supported his denunciation at the 1 June 1879 meeting.

I am grateful to Dr William Vaughan for drawing my attention to the June 1879 item in the State Papers Office, Dublin Castle, and to Professor William Lyons for commenting on an earlier version of this paper.



THE APPARITION AT KNOCK CO MAYO.

ALL IRELAND AUGUST 21ST 1879. EVE OF THE OCTAVE OF THE ASSUMPTION. MARY'S LURES HAVE BEEN EFFECTED THREE SINCE THE ABOVE OCCURRENCE. THE NEW WAS TAKEN IN THE SPOT BY WOODS AND SUBMITTED TO AND APPROVED BY THE SEVERAL BISHOPS AND THE BISHOP

STAR 23 I 88

ALIENS

ARE THEY HERE NOW?



STAR NEWS
SPECIAL
PAGES 4 and 5

GUARDIAN 5 XI 87
Snake's prank

A PYTHON snake, left unattended in a Bremen flat while its owner went away for the weekend, turned on a bath tap and flooded homes below, police said yesterday. —Reuter.

STAR SUNDAY SPORT 11/X/87

ROYAL SHOCKER

DI THE TARGET



A CRACK terrorist group is plotting to kidnap Princess Diana, according to an American clairvoyant with an uncanny track record of premonitions.

She says Di will be drugged and bundled away to a secret location while demands are made for her release.

Miss Brenda Elliot, who forecast Hurricane David before it hit New York in 1979, had arranged to travel to London during the week to inform Scotland Yard of her fears.

But she injured her foot and had to cancel her London hotel booking.

But a Scotland Yard spokesman said: "If this lady contacts us we would be obliged to pass on her information to our royalty and diplomatic protection unit."

Miss Elliot, a 34-year-old New Yorker, said: "It just suddenly came to me like a movie before my eyes.

"I saw the princess in

a room surrounded by six people dressed in combat uniforms. One of the men had a black patch over his eye.

"The princess was gagged, appeared to be drugged, and was very distressed.

"She was wearing a scarf on her head, a red tank top, jeans and loafers. She was tied up."

Miss Elliot added: "There is no indication of exactly when this will happen or how it will end, but I have complete faith in my premonitions."

"Some people might not think I am dealing with a full deck, but plenty of people will testify to my accuracy."

Miss Elliot had been booked into the Kensington Palace Hotel and her flight had been arranged, all at her own expense.

She said: "I injured my foot and was advised to cancel the trip. I will be laid up for several weeks, but I will pass on whatever I can to the police in London.

"I am a great admirer of your royal family and I would hate anything to happen to any of them.

"I suppose if my prediction comes true then I can provide as full a description as possible of the people involved and where the princess is being held."

Clairvoyant 'sees' princess in hands of kidnap gang

ANDY AND DI WILL ELOPE!

IF YOU think psychics are crackers, you ain't seen nothing yet!

Here's what top American mediums claim will happen before Christmas:

- Princess Diana and Prince Andrew will jet off to the Caribbean together for an illicit, intimate holiday.
- White House aides will discover that Russian spies have inserted radio transmitters inside live rats to spy on President Reagan.

● Former Marine Prince Edward will prove his courage by catching and tossing away a live grenade thrown at The Queen.

● Jane Fonda will become the world's first female film star in space.

● A vicious terrorist gang will kidnap Princess Stephanie of Monaco. She will join the gang and get thrown in jail after a spectacular shoot-out with police.

● A nine-year-old Washington farm boy will be discovered looking after an injured Yeti in his father's barn.

● Actress Shirley MacLaine will announce that she has been in regular contact with an alien.

SUNDAY PRESS (DUBLIN) 15 X 11 87

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Split in U2 says Zak



■ ZAK MARTIN... all you want to know for 1988.

BY RICHIE TAYLOR
"ARTISTIC differences will lead to U2 losing one of their number in the year ahead, a member of the group will also become involved in a public controversy of a sexual nature." These are just some of Zak Martin's predictions for 1988.

One of the world's foremost psychics, Zak founded the London Psychic Centre in 1980 before coming home to Dublin in 1986 to open his Psychic & Holistic Health Centre in Rathmines. His predictions and psychokinetic (mind over matter) demonstrations have been digested at length by the British press and he holds that "there is a hidden power within us which can be used for healing and the like".

He has on occasion used his special powers to assist police forces with missing persons and murder cases. He has accurately predicted world events including the election of Jimmy Carter in 1977 and the winner of the Grand National seven times in succession.

In 1988, Zak foresees economic recovery in Ireland culminating in a period of prosperity on a par with the Sixties. Also on his calendar are a telecommunications strike (mid 88) and a well-organised prison outbreak that will cause serious embarrassment to the government.

Politically, he envisages Sinn Fein, despite current adverse feeling, becoming a major force in Irish politics. He sees a deterioration of relations between Ireland and the UK — and there may be moves, by the UK government, to restrict the activities or movements of Irish nationals living in or travelling to Britain.

With Fianna Fail he sees a

serious rift developing within the party early in the New Year, leading to the resignation of a leading party member, and ultimately... to a more permanent division within Fianna Fail".

In Britain he foresees the rift between Charles and Diana becoming more acute, "with the possible involvement by one of the couple, of a third party. The health of the Queen is at present, and will increasingly become, a cause for concern".

Britain will also make moves towards the reintroduction of capital punishment. Labour will regain much of its lost support, a museum or art gallery will be destroyed by fire and a passenger plane will crash-land off the English coast.

On a worldwide scale he predicts that the new US president will be a "salesman with medical connections". Michael Jackson will form a deep relationship and possibly announce his intention to marry.

Zak also foresees a huge fire in Hong Kong and several important breakthroughs in the battle against AIDS.

To date his predictions have had a high success rate and in 1987 he predicted the death of Rita Hayworth, the controversy surrounding presidential candidate Gary Hart, a coach crash near Leeds and the prison unrest in France, the UK, and Mexico.

Psychic Jim Elliott reveals his PREDICTIONS

NEWS EDITOR SUE BLACKMALL

CHARLES will be the target of an assassination attempt — that's one terrifying pre-psyche Jim Elliott has made for the future.

Intelligence powers have been taken seriously by police in the Major murder victims, says the attempt will be made will only be "slightly harmed".

Of the prediction is that the murder attempt will be in the summer of 1988. But I have a strong feeling it will be in the autumn. The Prince has his 40th birthday in November in a month that Prince Charles WILL NEVER BE KING.

It is the UNCLE who will kill. But I would advise you to be very careful with the police. They are certainly there to kill you.

There will be a major change in the summer. Jim said he was going to the States to see the President. He will be there for a long time. He will be there for a long time. He will be there for a long time.

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FOR 1988

IT'S a New Year and time for new ideas — so we'd like to hear your New Year resolutions.

There's bound to be lots of plans to give you, but do you have any unusual resolutions you're determined to stick to?

So — we know our readers won't let us down and we can expect some outrageous promises.

Send to Resolutions, Sunday Sport, 50 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED and include your name and address.

WE'VE given you the professional eye on the future — now it's YOUR turn. We want to hear what YOU predict for 1988.

Who do you think will be making the news and where do you think it will happen?

Your predictions can be serious or humorous — just make 'em lively! We'll print the best in every issue — that's one forecast you can rely on.

Send to Predictions, Sunday Sport, 50 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED and include your name and address.



IN TROUBLE Margaret Thatcher



FINISHED Tom Jones



VISIONS Jim Elliott



RESANE Michael Jackson

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IN DANGER an assassin is set to get Prince Charles

DUBLIN EVENING PRESS 1988 forecast: Thatcher to take off

Mrs. Thatcher's ambition of carrying off the Nobel peace prize and establishing herself as the undisputed leader of the world, could take a giant leap forward in 1988 when she makes the announcement of the century.

According to those highly-rated forecasters of events — the American tabloid press — it will be the British Prime Minister's duty to reveal the incredible proof that other civilisations exist in space and that even she could face some cosmic opposition. However, it is by no means clear that even the scientific community will be enough to stall the popular newspaper headlines from the other spot-making story of the year.

For the first time since Henry VIII sent Catherine of Aragon packing in 1533, the English Establishment will be to be a royal divorce with Prince Charles bidding goodbye to his beloved Diana who will sail off into the Los Angeles sunset to launch her new career as a fashion designer. Indeed, the responsibility of the royal separation is one of the top things that the US tabloid press seem to agree upon in their

aid competitiveness for news of the most astonishing predictions.

The National Inquirer, which scooped the world in 1987 with its pictures of a smiling Donna Rice perched on Gary Hart's knees, believes that in 1988 northern California (and hopefully not the Princess of Wales) will be wiped out by a massive earthquake. But none of this will matter to Californians much since Aids will have been replaced by a new mysterious skin disease which will have almost everyone here coming out in unsightly black blotches.

If there is time, however, to put these disasters aside for a few moments and concentrate on political leadership in the post-Reagan era, then the Gary Hart affair could prove tame stuff. At least one of the 1988 presidential hopefuls will apparently drop out of the race for the White House after a magazine runs a picture of him dressed as a woman.

Perhaps, they already know something which the Washington Post has discovered but will not publish (like the list of Mr Hart's mistresses), out of respect for readers.

It will be hard, how-



Mrs Thatcher

Watch out here's our next PM!

JEFFREY ARCHER went jogging yesterday — but wouldn't say if he was in the running for a top Tory slot again.

One man who's sure he is, though, is clairvoyant Stephen Alexander, who predicts he will be the next Prime Minister.

Mr Alexander says he forecast the liberal cause victory of the former Tory Party chairman and millionaire author last week.

He also claims he predicted the record £500,000 damages award against the Star newspaper.

Mr Alexander, 40, from Sudbury, Suffolk, said yesterday: "Mrs Thatcher has always backed him and believed in his innocence."

By MARK NICHOLS

Popular

"She'll step down in favour of the next winning the next election. By then, she'll have health problems."

He added that Mr Archer would have to resign as Premier after a couple of years because of a political or financial scandal — "not necessarily involving him, but people around him".

Mr Alexander said: "My prediction for Jeffrey is very strong. He'll be a popular Prime Minister in five years, and very much in Mrs Thatcher's mould."

He said Mr Archer would be given a junior Cabinet post next Spring, but would have to win a by-election first.

Mr Alexander says his skills as a clairvoyant have been called upon by police in the Yorkshire Ripper and Moors murder inquiries.

Sunday Mirror 26 VII 87

STATE of the ART

IMPORTANT NOTICE

That there be no misunderstanding—Be it distinctly understood that all effects described in this catalogue are accomplished by normal means, and are entirely divorced from any supernatural or supernormal powers; that any items listed as 'lucky pieces' are sold merely as curios without any claim to mysterious or lucky powers; that all apparatus and effects are sold with the distinct understanding that they will be used for magical and entertainment purposes only.

Thus the catalogue of Nelson Enterprises, "Largest Exclusive Manufacturer of Mental Equipment in the World." Here was the place to get your talismans, lodestones, Ouija boards, ritual crucifix candles, seals from the book of Moses, John the Conqueror Root, and even souvenir gazing crystals. All items were priced by the dozen, some per hundred and per thousand. Mr Nelson also offered horoscopes and zodiacal charts, assorted readings (\$5.50 per package of 1000), graphology charts, a diploma conferring the Honorary Degree of Master Mentalist (no yearly dues), and "valuable books you should own", again at quantity prices, and including such gems as "Six Lessons in Crystal Gazing," "Key to Numerology," "The Book of Forbidden Knowledge," and "Are you Mediumistic?" for resale to the adoring public for whatever the traffic would bear. For those who "desire to make their own alleged Lucky Talismans, seals, scrolls, and charms," he had sheets of Genuine Virgin Parchment Paper, 8 x 5 1/4 inches, three for a dollar. And he would even help you get into the mail order business with an eight-page catalogue of Occult Books and Psychic Aids, available at \$22.50 per thousand. All items could be personalized with your imprint for a slight extra charge.

Nelson himself had much success with his World Famous Enchanted Talking Teakettle, which answered questions put to it by the credulous who applied the spout to their ears. He also conducted for seven years a radio programme called "Voice of Destiny" on which, as "Dr Korda RaMayne," he did nothing but answer listeners' questions sent in by mail. That was in Detroit: if you lived more than a few hundred miles away, you could buy his how-to book and try to sell yourself with the same act to your local station.

Frank Chambers

"Personal instruction in ALL phases of Mentalism" was "available on an hourly basis, appointments made by mail." Apparently he didn't accept appointments made by telepathy. He recognized that reporters are busy, overworked people, and accordingly offered a "Brand New Series of publicity stories and press notices for the mentalist."

Getting down to professional effects available from his catalogue (but only after you had sent in your card where you swore not to divulge, etc.) there was "Do the Dead Return?" described as a lecture-demonstration of which "only a few will realize its true possibilities and turn them into major profits." "How to Book Your Attraction (Live like a millionaire aboard some of the world's most luxurious cruise ships and get paid for it)," and "Answers to Questions (The lack of knowledge of how to answer questions has proved the only stumbling block to many performers and now we offer to the profession (only) the real secret of answering questions of ANY and ALL TYPES that may be submitted by the audience)." There was the "New Secret Invention (just a flick of the magic switch and you have instant secret communication between two persons: new transistorized version, price on request)." There was "The Mystery of the Gyration Tables (Manuscript Tells All, No Stooze or Confederates)." There was "Confessions of a Medium, a Thoroughly Accurate Exposé of the INNER working and LIFE-GUARDED secrets of the medium, psychic and healer, including sample ads to run in the local paper, advice on bleeding suckers for money, and an explanation of how anyone can get a certificate which makes them immune from Police Interference: limited edition, deluxe book only \$5.00. Sold with the distinct understanding that any information derived from this exposé will be used for legitimate purposes only, or for the reader's protection from Grafting Mediums." Even in 1959, \$5.00 wasn't very much to pay for a hard-back book, so if you had sent for a copy you shouldn't have been too surprised to receive

(cont. on p 24)

TELEPATHY: a mechanism?

Gordon Gray

An old claim about telepathy is that it is due to electromagnetic radiation (the old "wireless" analogy). Nonetheless, one avenue of approach to the question in this form has not, to my knowledge, ever been followed: a thorough examination of possible receivers and/or transmitters in the living organism. If such can be found, we must seek a reason why it is such a rare phenomenon that its very existence can be in dispute. The problem is comparable to one that has often occurred in particle physics when a new particle has been postulated to account for certain anomalies, and later been proven to exist after the most rigorously painstaking and costly research.

Such transmission from one brain to another would, in telecommunication terminology, come under the headings of interference and crosstalk, which are detrimental to communication. In this context, the brain is a computing system making swift decisions for survival, so must be protected against such effects. We already know that signals in the brain are carried by chemical transmitter substances, very many of which are produced in other parts of the body for quite different functions. If, as can happen in certain diseases, those produced in the Soma (the rest of the body) become mixed with the same substances from the brain, the results can be disastrous, whether in the Soma or in the brain. Hence there is a system which chemically isolates the two, known as the "Blood-Brain Barrier," which has been evolved by natural selection to minimise such effects. As we know from pathology it is not an absolute guarantee against their occurrence, but it usually works very well.

Telepathy, if it is physically real, must be met by a corresponding defense, hence must be exceptional and erratic like pathological phenomena.

The question posed here is: is there a structure in the living organism that could receive/radiate electromagnetic energy, and under certain exceptional conditions interfere with the normal signalling processes of the brain? A possible candidate for this is in the membrane that surrounds every living cell and through which it interfaces with the world outside it. Briefly, this is a "forest" of sub-microscopic "aerials," lipid molecules, each with a carboxyl charge-bearing structure facing inwards or outwards. The size of this "aerial" is such that it would be tuned to radiation, not in the radio frequencies, but in the gamma radiation band, more penetrating than X-rays.

So, we have a possible aerial, but we need a "detector." This is where the carboxyl ends come into play. For taken all together in the double membrane, they comprise the two electrodes of a capacitor, which is moreover an electrolytic capacitor having another special property: it is a rectifier of alternating voltages, so, under the right circumstances it could be a detector of gamma-ray patterns.

Under normal resting conditions, all living cells are held at a constant voltage across the membrane by means of a chemical mechanism known as an ion-pump. The voltage may vary from one cell type to another but normally remains constant. There is no way radiant energy can affect this steady potential without destroying the cell. There are two important exceptions to this behaviour in nerve-cells and muscle fibres. In the resting state these are also constant, but when actively pulsing, the membrane potential swiftly reverses and more slowly recovers. Immediately after firing, the cell cannot be retriggered, but as the "ion-pump" restores the resting state, the old potential difference builds up. At a certain point in this build-up, the ability to accept a further trigger is

(Chambers, cont.)

a mimeographed, typed manuscript of 50 pages. Yes, I am sorry to have to tell you that Mr Nelson has long since "passed over," as we in the trade say. Who took over his lucrative business I have been unable to ascertain.

A large section of this remarkable omnium gatherum was given over to what were euphemistically described as "Spook Show Supplies," with the usual caveat that these goodies were not intended for use to fool or mislead. Here we find "Floating Spirit Faces," and "Instantaneous Ghost," ectoplasm, collapsible reaching rods, luminous hands, luminous paints ("guaranteed non-injurious"), and an "Astral Light," a luminous circle which seems to recede into the distance as it gets smaller and smaller.

I can't leave the subject without mentioning "The Art of Cold Reading" (you need not be the seventh son of a seventh son or be born with a 'veil over your eyes' to be a successful so-called clairvoyant or private reader! No sir--such ability is not inborn--it is achieved!" This book is "not a rehash of the other textbooks, but new and more comprehensive enlightenment on the subject." 'Cold reading' is the ability to tell an individual things about himself which the performer has no way of knowing beforehand. It is accomplished partly by using what psychologists call "the fallacy of personal verification" (that is, telling the sucker what everyone likes to hear about himself) and partly by adroit comments posed in a questioning way, to which the innocent responds with positive or negative grunts or body language, thus giving the Swami more material to test.

All this was on offer twenty-five years ago, including the transistorised "New Secret Invention." Who is purveyor to the trade today? If no one else is serving the market, where are our faith healers getting their radio gimmicks? Perhaps Mr Nelson was able to take it with him, and is in fact filling orders from wherever he now resides.

NELSON ENTERPRISES, COLUMBUS, OHIO

Genuine Gazing Crystals

Czechoslovakia and Japan, these crystals represent the best quality currently available, and at these low prices. No flat bases.

Suitable for professional use, or re-sale, available in the following sizes. The sizes indicate the diameter of the crystals.

60MM or 2 3/8", each	\$ 4.50
65MM or 2 1/2", each	5.50
70MM or 2 3/4", each	6.50
80MM or 3 1/4", each	12.50
115MM or 4 3/8", each	27.50

All crystals F.O.B. Columbus, Ohio

Due to unsettled world conditions, changing tariffs, etc., these prices are subject to fluctuations, and prices cannot be guaranteed. If and when the market permits lower prices, you will be given the benefit of any price change. Our stocks are ample, but do not permit large quantity orders until a more even flow of merchandise is assured us.



(Gray, cont.)

The British & Irish Skeptic

restored, but in the nerve cell, or "neuron," the speed of transmission is at first slower if for any reason a second trigger is accepted during the recovery. As the build-up proceeds, the transmission speed of an accepted signal would rise towards the normal level. Hence, any pattern imposed on gamma radiation incident on the neuron membrane could be rectified during this period of reduced velocity (relative refractory period), hence could alter the times at which some elements of an otherwise normal signal pattern arrived at the next stage in the network. Any "telepathic" pattern imposed on the firings of recovering cells would appear as subtle super-impositions on the normal patterns. As only a small fraction of the total population of neurons are in the r.r.p.'s at any moment and the earliest pulses would be too weak to trigger following neurons in the network, this effect of another or even the same brain must be minimal but real.

The "engineering" advantage of "All-or-none" signals in the nervous system is to minimise the very phenomenon of telepathy.

This argument is based on "classical" physical theory, still valid in most engineering applications, which must be considered in physiological problems. However, in the present context, we are concerned with molecular, i.e. sub-cellular, structures. At this level, quantum effects loom largely, and these render telepathy even more tenuous. Nevertheless, as anyone having heard "ghostly" conversations on the telephone knows, neither interference nor "crosstalk" can be eliminated absolutely in practice. Hence, as materialists we are bound in the present state of knowledge to admit the likelihood that, however tenuous, some such effect may exist. But we must be just as certain that it can only be an exceptionally tenuous phenomenon.

This caution, however, leaves us open to consideration of the consequences of such communication, tenuous as it probably is. Only living brains could communicate in this way, usually with badly garbled messages, snatches of longer, more comprehensible ones. Nevertheless, given its reality as a phenomenon, it does directly imply the existence of what is in effect a collective consciousness and a collective, immortal memory. The postulate of reincarnation, which is in any case a logical absurdity, self-contradictory, is redundant in the context of a collective memory, even a very tenuous one.

THE PRESS GALLERY

The Guardian seems to vary wildly between writing critical articles about such subjects as Esalen (18 November) or superstition (30 December) and publishing articles, mostly by Jillie Collings, which seem almost to be glowing advertisements for various alternative therapies. To hand are: "Going crystal gazing in the body's inner space," (7 January), which is about "new discoveries in Kirlian photography and crystal energies;" "Pinning hopes on the needles" (by Andrew Moncur), about the use of acupuncture in treating animals, which recounts the successes of Mrs Trixie Williams; and "A sole purpose" (Jillie Collings, 5 November), about Metamorphics.

Metamorphics, Collings tells us, derives from Reflexology. She writes of Reflexology: "Consistent therapy has been found to have remarkable effects on illnesses ranging from arthritis, migraine, constipation, ulcers and kidney infections to angina and bronchitis." She goes on: "Metamorphics goes much deeper and poses the question: what happens if the energy appears to have been blocked right from the moment of birth or even before as in the case of some physical and mental handicaps, such as Down's Syndrome? This seemingly preposterous concept does not seem too far-fetched when it is viewed from the vantage point of modern scientific thought, which contends that where there is matter of any kind there is elementary consciousness and as such it may be influenced." She retails Robert St John's research in the field and his conclusions: "the practice was so simple he knew that it could be learned in half an hour, and thereafter teaching families to massage each other's feet became an integral part of the Metamorphics doctrine."

It seems a pity that the Guardian does not apply the same critical skills to reports of success with alternative therapies which they bring to their analyses of Margaret Thatcher's policies.

The South Wales Echo seems to have been fascinated by Operation Deepscan: of all the press reports, theirs seems to have been the most comprehensive of anywhere outside of Scotland. Since then, they have quoted bookmakers' odds as 150-1 against Chris Bonington (who is wagering £10) finding the yeti. And they, among other papers, told the story (on 30 December) of the scientists trying to trap spirits trapped in the walls of pubs...

The (Scottish) Sunday Express has been running a series of UFO stories. Published under the byline of Ralph Barker, the articles are introduced: "...UFOs have fascinated and baffled for hundreds of years, with reported sightings all over the world. But are they really fact or fantasy? The Sunday Express has been talking to eyewitnesses whose experiences are thrilling, compelling, disturbing--and hard to refute." Cases covered so far include the Todmorden case (when policeman Alan Godfrey reputedly saw a UFO in Yorkshire) and the case of a UFO reputedly seen by two teenage girls outside of Leeds.

Further articles from the Sunday Express include a report of an astrology conference held at the end of November, an article about the use of faith healers by local health authorities in Brighton and North London, and "Bio-Harmony" compound, which allegedly slows ageing.

The Independent reported another UFO story on 1 January, when eight policemen are supposed to have seen a UFO flying over London. "News of the sighting put the Aetherius Society on full alert at its headquarters, a converted shop in Fulham Road..." Dr Richard Laurence, the society's secretary is quoted: "Patrick Moore says it's just Jupiter...I've been on TV with him. As I said to him then, I wouldn't talk about astronomy because I don't know enough about it and he doesn't know anything about flying saucers and should keep quiet about them... We don't think it's strange or eccentric to believe in flying saucers. On the contrary, we think it's eccentric to disbelieve."

The newspaper also reported: Kasparov has lost the mind-reader who claims to be behind his success, the effects ghost stories can have on house sales; research into near-death experiences. And in an article balancing the claims of materialism and religion, William Rees-Mogg sums up: "Nature abhors a vacuum; science abhors a miracle."

The London Evening Standard also varies--they ran a small write-up about the formation of the Irish Skeptics (see B&IS I.5). More recently they've been reporting skeptically on Conan Foods, a body-building diet which they say, "is big business. It not only sells on the basis of being able to turn mice into men, it also exploits the health craze by purporting to be totally natural." And on 18 December

they reported that an unnamed "medium from Tower Hamlets communicates with [Lord Lucan] in the South of France where he's apparently working in a vineyard."

The Observer seems to have it in for Shirley MacLaine, with a short, slightly sarcastic piece about MacLaine's tours of historic sites in between bouts of filming (6 December) followed by a longer piece on trance channeling (10 January). "Channellers," reports Michael Pye, "have new consciousness and new Porches both; they are upwardly mobile, with spirit guides (enough for Doonesbury to mock poor Boopsie, whose ancient Egyptian warlord helps her fight for parking spaces at the mall). And they are not sad spiritualists, harrassing the beloved dead in suburban front rooms; they are executive class, with bright Pentecostal eyes."

Pye goes on to report on attending a session with Serge Grandbois of Quebec. He points out that "Sarah Grey Thomason, an American linguist, found the entranced always use what they already consciously know, nothing more." About Serge and his channeling, Pye says, "this is ego as religion, origins remade in line with aspirations, with the added twist wrong, in channelers' terms, to be sick or hurt. It is your fault."

"There are hundreds of thousands of these people across America--Yuppie fundamentalists with nobody to suggest they owe a duty of compassion. Shirley MacLaine and her chums may turn out to be the nice ones."

Meanwhile, the Sunday Telegraph ran a full-page piece "More things in heaven and earth..." (27 December) in which Daniel Farson recounts his experiences of ghosts. Farson notes that "The most common apparitions are monks...and ladies dressed in grey." He concludes there must be a physical explanation for this--although he draws no conclusions from his having seen his own ghost--a monk--in the middle of the night when he was in bed asleep. Farson tells of meeting the Ghost Club, and quotes Nancy Astor: "The trouble with ghosts is that their appearances are against them."

Celebrity magazine ran a two-part series of which we have part two, "BUNKUM!" (3-9 December), a review of the Enfield poltergeist case. SPR member Peter Hallsan is quoted as disagreeing with Maurice Grosse's interpretation of events. Hallsan is quoted extensively. Some samples: "...in all the cases

I have investigated, there does tend to be a logical explanation...I believe the girl was playacting." This skeptical article was coupled with a short piece about a haunted bar in Florida, and accompanied by a promise: "Next week: Exorcist forced to retreat when attacked by flying jar of coffee!"

The Sunday Times ran an interesting piece (no date) "When to be naughty as well as nice," an analysis of what sells tabloid newspapers. The article quotes a Mori poll which showed that in "social classes C1 and C2...one in three don't read any paper at all. The rest read four papers; overwhelmingly The Sun (20%) or the Mirror (18%), otherwise the Mail and Express (each 11%). Reporter Brian MacArthur's conclusion: "Successful tabloids thrive on failures to live up to the Ten Commandments. That is why they are read and bought in their millions."

On December 11, in "It's those Martians again" Charles Brenner comments on American tabloids, pointing out their fondness for UFOs and aliens: "Among headlines of the past three months: 'Aliens helped write the constitution', 'Airforce captures UFO', 'I was pregnant with alien baby' and 'Space alien bodies found on Mount Everest'. But nothing could compete with the News's scoop on the secret Soviet discovery of those long-suspected links between UFOs, Atlantis, the Abominable Snowman and the Bermuda triangle."

The Yorkshire Evening Post seems to be full of small, odd items. In "It Happened To Me," a section which pays £1 for such stories, we find that Russell Grant got it right: "My YEP stars said yesterday I should beware accidents with electrical appliances. Last week I had two small shocks from my electric typewriter and yesterday, when the iron felt funny, I found loose wires inside it" (20 October).

The Post also ran an article on an ex-speedway rider who, as "The Man in the Iron Mask," rides his motorcycle blindfolded (iron mask and black hood, inspected by the public) and avoids people wandering at will in and out of his path. On 18 November, the Post tells of "unemployed warehouse manager David Barclay [who] has used a series of disturbing psychic experiences to launch himself on a new career as an author."

"His first book about the supernatural goes on sale tomorrow. Fatima--A Close Encounter of the Worst Kind? looks at how the paranormal might provide an explanation...

SKEPTICS in the NEWS

Evening Chronicle, Oldham Nov 30, 1987

In the middle . . .

IT'S A SHAME, but I don't get as much loony mail as I used to.

Many a dull morning has been brightened up by the news that the world was going to end in a plague of boils a week next Tuesday, or that little green men were controlling the climate from a hole in Mount Everest. Actually I made those up, but you get the idea.

What's worse, I'm now getting mail from people who claim to be decidedly anti-loony.

The latest is from the Skeptical movement, whose members might not be able to spell but are nonetheless determined to pour cold water on the claims of flying-saucer believers, clairvoyants, Christian fundamentalists, and so on.

The movement, already strong in America (of course), Australia and, for some reason, Sweden, is coming to Britain and intends to start a Manchester group with an inaugural meeting at the Friends' Meeting House in Mount Street, Manchester, on December 9, (though there is no connection with the Society of Friends).

The first session will hear from an Australian lecturer keen to disprove the claim of the creation science people — you know, the misguided types who believe the Bible can be taught as a science subject.

Also on the bill are a computer researcher from Manchester worried about the increasing claims of psychics and clairvoyants, and professional magician Frank Koval, who will show just how far tricks can take one down the path of fooling some of the people all of the time . . .

With the loonies on one side and the anti-loonies on the other, it's a good job most of us in the middle are reasonably sane and take both sides with a pinch of salt . . . or two.

The Messenger Friday December 4th 1987 - Page 5

Would you believe it?

A GROUP of local 'disbelievers' will hold a meeting at the Friends' Meeting House in the city's Mount Street next Wednesday - to form a society.

The aim is to found a local 'Skeptical Society' to investigate

claims of the paranormal such as UFO sightings, telepathy, poltergeists, clairvoyance and metal-bending.

Beginning at 7.30pm, the meeting will be introduced by visiting lecturer Dr Martin Bridgstock.



THE MESSENGER 41 XII 87

CALLING all poltergeists, clairvoyants, telepathists, UFO spotters and potential Uri Gellers!

The Manchester Skeptics group is holding its inaugural meeting at The Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester at 7.30pm on Wednesday.

The Skeptics want clairvoyants, dowzers and the like, from Stockport and the rest of Greater Manchester, to come forward for testing to see if their claims are true. Large rewards have been offered for anyone able to demonstrate paranormal abilities in controlled settings.

Thousands of pounds can be won, but so far nobody has been able to demonstrate the validity of their claim beyond reasonable doubt.

The meeting will be introduced by Dr Martin Bridgstock, a visiting lecturer from Australia who has been involved in the paranormal and it's claims for many years.

Also speaking will be Toby Howard, a computer researcher at Manchester University, who said of a recent psychic fair he attended: "I saw nothing to convince me that there were any people with special powers."

And a demonstration of how vulnerable people are to clever misdirection will be undertaken by professional magician Frank Koval.

Sceptic says it

SO-CALLED myth exploders held their inaugural meeting in Manchester recently. I refer to the Skeptical Society, whose mission seems to be exposing clairvoyants and psychics. That is along with stories concerning UFO sightings, healers and metal benders.

Apparently leading lights of the Manchester branch are lecturers and researchers at the city's university.

Toby Howard, a university computer researcher, told a local paper he attended a psychic fair in the city.

"Nearly all the people there seemed sincere," he commented. "But I saw nothing to convince me that there were any people with special powers."

And he is quite right . . . in a sense. For there is nothing special about the gifts of clairvoyance and healing, to name but two.

Psychic faculties are quite normal; there is nothing supernatural at all about them. They are of nature, not above nature.

Frankly, I get increasingly weary of Doubting Thomases who take delight in pouring scorn upon the paranormal.

A medium's role is very simple: to prove to the bereaved and lost that physical death is *not* the end.

Similarly a spirit healer's task is to try and restore harmony to the ill in mind and body, be it twisted limbs or a sorely troubled mind.

Let the Skeptics say what they want, for we have more important work to do, namely proving to a materialistic world that our time on earth is but naught compared to the infinity which awaits all — both sceptic and believer.

PSYCHIC NEWS 16.11.87

Manchester Metro News Friday, December 4, 1987

Spotlight on paranormal

TELEPATHY, poltergeists, clairvoyance and UFO sightings are just a few of the subjects which will come under the microscope in Manchester next week.

For the very first meeting of the city's Skeptics group — a society which will investigate claims of the paranormal — is to be held on Wednesday.

Toby Howard, a computer researcher at the University of Manchester, is the prime mover behind the Manchester society.

He told *Metro News*: "The Skeptics are a world wide movement with strong established groups in the United States.

"There has been some interest in the movement in Britain in the last five to six years, but I believe this is the first group in the Manchester area."

He claims that while the Skep-

By Chris Southern

tical movement is open minded towards paranormal phenomena, they believe claims should be carefully tested.

"I would be delighted to discover for instance that someone could actually communicate with the dead, but there is no evidence that this can be done."

Toby, who is hoping that between 100 and 200 people will attend the first meeting at the Friends' Meeting House in Mount Street, on December 9, at 7.30 pm, says:

"I would like to publicise the fact that there are people who are looking at these things in a rational way and if anyone is interested in investigating the paranormal or in meeting people with similar interests they are very welcome to come along."

He is especially interested in the claims of clairvoyants and psychics to predict the future.

He recently attended a psychic fair in Manchester. "Nearly all the people seemed very sincere, but I saw nothing to convince me that there were any people with special power. But since they were charging about £6 for a 10-minute consultation I'd like to see a careful checking of their abilities under controlled conditions."

The meeting will be attended by guest speaker Dr Martin Bridgstock, a visiting lecturer from America, and by professional magician Frank Koval who will demonstrate just how vulnerable human beings are to clever misdirection.

There will also be a video tape of some sensational studies in the US of faith-healing frauds.

Manchester Evening News Monday, December 7, 1987

Mind out, there's a Skeptic about!

By Peter Sharples

THE myth-exploders are coming to Manchester.

Their mission. To boldly go to any lengths to expose crackpot clairvoyants and so-called psychics.

And to shoot down in flames any hoary old stories of UFO sightings, "miracle" faith-healers and metal-benders.

The Skeptical Society aim to expose once and for all the charlatans who make money out of superstition.

Leading lights of the local Skeptical movement are lecturers and researchers at Manchester University. They will hold an inaugural meeting at

the Friends' Meeting House, in Mount Street, Manchester, on Wednesday.

Toby Howard, a university computer researcher, who recently attended a psychic fair in the city said: "Nearly all the people there seemed sincere, but I saw nothing to convince me that there were any people with special powers."

● Sceptics who may be tempted not to take the aims of the Skeptical Movement seriously because of the strange way they spell their name, should bear in mind that the movement has its origins in the United States, where they spell differently.

Toby Howard's PSYCHIC DIARY

In recent years, popular ideas about the paranormal have undergone a subtle, but very important transformation. The emergence of the "New Age" has brought about a kind of grand unification of many of the fringe and paranormal interests traditionally labelled "occult." Along with this regrouping has come an extraordinary growth in recognition and respectability, and, more dangerously, a shift in what is popularly regarded as scientific fact. Certainly New Age thinking embodies what many would consider laudable ideals--positive lifestyles, self-help and development, environmental awareness--but on the other hand it carries along with it many of the irrational trappings of its predecessors. Think of any occult/fringe subject, and the chances are that it will slide smoothly into the New Ager's world-view and vocabulary. One of the characteristics of the New Age is its diversity, and many of the traditional follies find themselves re-expressed in the new system. Spiritualism casts off its dusty doily image and becomes channelling--Red Indian spirit guides and all; energies supposed to radiate from the fingers of natural healers now come from hi-tech pocket-sized electronic devices. One of Britain's largest and most well-organised sources of New Age paraphernalia is Brighton's "Unicorn Place" (39, Duke Street, Brighton, BN1 1AG). Within the pages of its mail-order catalogue New Agers can find just about all the gadgetry they need. All the more popular forms of "New Age science" are collected and presented as a complete package. For New Agers there is an implicit continuity: once they accept the truth of, say, pendulum dowsing, the rest follows--palmistry, phrenology, pyramid power, crystal power, channelling. All are valid, everything is proven. So, after this onslaught of all things fringe, it comes as something of a surprise when the order form rather grudgingly announces, "'The Unicorn Place' claims no mystical, medical or esoteric powers with any of our advertised products." What a letdown!

The subject of "anomalous phenomena" is one which stirs the passions in many free-thinkers and skeptics. Two publications which approach the subject in strikingly different ways are Fortean Times and Science Frontiers. Fortean Times (96, Mansfield Road, London NW3 2HX) is a quarterly publication edited by Bob Rickard, also responsible for the recent Brooke Bond 'Paranormal' card

series (see B&IS 1.2). Each issue is crammed with reports (often highly anecdotal) from around the world of unusual, bizarre, and frequently hilarious happenings. Typical topics include rains of fish, spiders, and winkles, "faces" in the sky, humans with horns, feral children, strange coincidences, exploding chickens... The secret is not to take it all too seriously--FT is often infuriating, but always entertaining. Along similar lines, but much more restrained, is the work of William Coriiss, whose bimonthly Science Frontiers (Sourcebook Project, P.O. Box 107, Glen Arm, MD 21057, USA) newsletter is full of strange reports mostly culled from respectable scientific journals such as Nature. Mr Coriiss is an archetypal free-thinker; while he sometimes juxtaposes respectable scientific reports with wild speculations, he more often presents his data without comment, leaving the ball squarely in the reader's court. Can explanations be found within established scientific knowledge for strange occurrences such as earth noises, flashes in the sky, rains of objects, marine phosphorescence? Or must we declare them "paranormal," invoking alien visitations, mystical powers, and the rest? Whatever one's outlook, Science Frontiers is a fascinating record of reliably reported phenomena, whose very strangeness shows just how much there still is to understand and discover.

Spirits whose talents lie on the musical side should contact medium Rosemary Brown (see B&IS 1.4, "Mark Plummer on Gay Byrne"), who is recording a new LP. In the past, Ms Brown has been the channel for "new" works by decomposed composers such as Chopin, Liszt, and Beethoven. Other posthumous collaborators have included Einstein, Shaw, Russell, and Jung, and she claims to have recently met Gershwin and John Lennon. Extraordinary, but that is not all; as Ms Brown says, "they have instruments on the other side we have never seen."

Have you ever been intrigued by coincidences? Thanks to Prediction's "Occult Question Time" page I can reveal their true significance at last. They are, and I quote, "psychic signposts along life's highway. They show the beholder that they are on the right path towards evolution and that they are in harmony generally with the universe." Not a lot of people know that...

THE 'ALTERNATIVE' IN ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

MICHAEL HEAP

I was interested to read that Toby Howard attended this year's Alternative Medicine Exhibition in London (B&IS I.5). My wife and I visited the 1985 event. I recall the sunny July day in affluent Kensington. Actually, it was the same day as Bob Geldof's 'Live Aid' concert on behalf of Africa's starving and famine-stricken millions. As we approached the opulent Exhibition Centre, a young man thrust a leaflet into my hand. It said, 'We are suffering a health crisis of enormous and growing proportions,' and attributed this to our diet and farming methods. Thus warned, we quickened our pace, and soon found ourselves ascending the richly carpeted stairway leading to the exhibition halls.

There were two exhibition areas, huge rooms lined with stall upon stall--171 of them--displaying every conceivable aid to good health to go unreported in the most comprehensive medical textbook. There were phials and boxes of potions and pills, elixirs and vitamins, exotic perfumes, mechanical contraptions and electronic apparatus, precious stones and crystals, all overseen by healthy, smiling, confident Experts.

I was interested in hypnosis, for which there were a number of Experts. The first Expert I saw was Europe's Leading Hypnotist. I have seen Europe's Leading Hypnotist a number of times. On this occasion, he was a man called David Canova. I must confess I had never heard of him. He sold videotapes to stop you from smoking and wetting your bed, to improve your sports performance, pass your exams, and so on. His leaflet said his methods were used by the ancient Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, amongst others. 'It is as NATURAL as life itself.' In fact, nearly every stall I went to impressed on me that the medicines or methods were NATURAL. So here was my first clue about alternative therapies--they are all NATURAL. But I was confused about what NATURAL meant.

Europe's Leading Hypnotist gave me a second clue as to the nature of alternative therapies: many of them are associated with, or actually named after, some rare and extraordinary person. So we have: the Feldenkrais method, the Alexander technique, Rolfing, Shirley Price aromatherapy, the Proudfoot Hypnosis Centre, the Matthew Manning

Centre, and the McTimoney Chiropractors. Sometimes we were favoured by having the person present in the flesh. Mr Proudfoot was there. His credentials for this form of beatification included his having been a Member of Parliament--Conservative, of course. A lady called Ursula Markham sat serenely, as befits someone who is a 'clairvoyant and hypnotherapist.' Not only could you buy her book, but you could have it autographed. Two ladies, strikingly similar in appearance but unrelated, offered a combination of spiritual healing and psychotherapy called 'soul directed therapy.' In their information sheet they ask, 'But does the patient become dependent on the two therapists? At £90 a session it's essential they learn to help themselves.' I'm sure these two ladies know all about helping themselves. In the leaflet on 'The Magic Story of Pelgar Herbs' we read of how the herbs are grown and gathered by the shores of the Mediterranean under the supervision of herbalist Franco di Zancariny. We are told that 'Franco, being an artist, then retires from the world for a few weeks while he is combining them together. (Sometimes he emerges with a white beard.) But the highest accolade must surely go to Dr Edward Bach of Bach Flower Remedies[®]. Dr Bach discovered his remedies by working himself into a particular 'negative state of mind' or physical complaint and then wandering off down the fields and lanes until he found a flower which immediately alleviated his mental or physical suffering. Remedies for 'all known negative states of mind from which mankind can suffer' were thus discovered. There are thirty-eight of these, and as they include the tribulations of puberty and the menopause, Dr Bach's achievement must be considered quite extraordinary.

And here we have another clue. All these alternative therapies promised you so much more than conventional medicine. 'Open the windows of your mind.' 'Develop latent talents and gifts.' 'Move through life with ease.' 'Look and feel younger and more attractive.' 'Become a God incarnate within the physical body.' Our old family doctor wouldn't have stood a chance here. Dear, kind, gentle Dr Walker--'Try some of these pills, love, they might make you feel a bit better.' None of that here!

Michael Heap is Principal Clinical Psychologist at Middlewood Hospital, Sheffield, a lecturer in psychology at the University of Sheffield, and Honorary Secretary of the British Society for Experimental and Clinical Hypnosis.

You see, Dr Walter didn't treat THE WHOLE PERSON. All the experts at the exhibition said 'WE TREAT THE WHOLE PERSON.' This declaration was usually made in reverential tones with a solemn nod of the head. 'WE TREAT THE WHOLE PERSON.' said the lady in charge of the Reflexology stall, nodding beautifully. I asked her if there was any evidence that all the organs of the body are connected to the feet. She said they aren't those sort of connections. I persevered. 'Are there any predictions your theory makes which can be replicated by others?' She said 'I've told you, WE TREAT THE WHOLE PERSON; you can't replicate A WHOLE PERSON.' Ah, the power of words! 'Food for thought,' she added, as I gave my feet a puzzled stare.

'You can change your mind and improve your life' with NATURAL subliminal perception.' Not only that, but you can alleviate your depression, increase your memory capacity, develop your psychic abilities and improve your 10-pin bowling by listening to the appropriate subliminal perception tape. The messages are masked by the sound of waves. Naively I asked the Expert, a young, fast-talking Australian, if it would make more sense to be able to hear what was being said. He replied 'No, the messages go to your subconscious mind. As you're talking to me, all the noise around you is being registered in your subconscious mind. If I were to deeply hypnotise you, your subconscious mind would recall everything you're not listening to.' I ventured to ask how the user can be sure the message is really on the tape. 'If you put the tape on an oscilloscope, you'll see the noise up here and the message down there,' he said, wagging his finger in the empty air around him. I could have listened to this young man for hours. His pamphlet contained endorsements by two Experts. One, Professor Philip A. Hansen, Ed.D. of California State University, is quoted as saying that the subliminal programmes 'are a very powerful tool using high level research and State of the Art technology.' There is a photograph of Professor Hansen in front of a microphone, presumably uttering these very words.

I remember as a student researching subliminal perception and having a hard time attempting (and indeed failing) to detect its microscopic effect (if, indeed, there is an effect at all) on human experience and behaviour. And this was another thing that struck me about alternative medicine. Either the ideas are contrary to all the available scienti-

fic knowledge or when the wretched scientists bother to investigate them the effects are minimal or non-existent. Take biofeedback, for example, on which there were several Experts at the exhibition. Isn't it just like a scientist to come up with the discovery that, more often than not, false feedback is just as effective as true feedback or no feedback at all? In other words, people relax regardless of whether the apparatus is working or not. Are the practitioners at all influenced by the objective evidence? Perhaps the comment of the Kirlian photographer gives an indication. To my enquiry, 'What kind of energy is it that you photograph?' he replied, 'It's electromagnetic energy--but it's not recognised by scientists.' 'Not recognised by scientists': is that, I wonder, a subtle selling point--like 'It's not available on the National Health' or, for that matter, 'It's a NATURAL remedy'? And what exactly is the meaning of NATURAL? Well, I picked up a pamphlet by the Natural Medicine Society entitled 'The Threat to Natural Medicines.' The pamphlet voices the Society's disapproval of Government intentions to make NATURAL medicines subject to the same scrutiny for safety and efficacy as I suppose you could say--UNNATURAL medicines. Medicines which are NATURAL, it is argued, have been proved to be harmless and efficacious by their usage over the centuries. Is, therefore, the real meaning that a NATURAL remedy is one that does not require any confirmation of its safety or validity?

So, my search for the alternative IN alternative medicine ends with my wondering if there is an alternative TO alternative medicine. Perhaps it would have been useful to have had a 172nd stall. One where, before reaching for their wallets, cheque books, or Access cards, people are asked to consider whether they really need any of the pills, potions, supplements, contraptions, and assorted paraphernalia being peddled in the name of good health. Instead, they might be encouraged to really take responsibility for their health and well-being, rather than to believe that these are things to be entrusted, for a fee, to self-styled experts: to adhere to a healthy diet, take simple, regular exercise, avoid cigarettes and alcohol, put time aside for relaxation, recreation, and socialising, and so on. Perhaps also to recognise how fortunate we in the West are to be able to even contemplate such luxuries as the alternative medicine industry offers us, and how in reality most of our ailments and complaints are as nothing compared to the daily suffering and misery of many of our fellow beings.

REVIEWS

MEDIA

WITCHCRAFT, THE BBC, AND RESPONSIBILITY

Michael Hutchinson

"Open to Question", BBC 2, October, 1987;
"Network", BBC, November 17, 1987.

With such interviewees as Arthur Scargill, Peter Tatchell, and a leading member of the Freemasons, BBC 2's Open to Question—in which a young audience asks the questions—tends to be controversial. Producer Stewart Lamont admits that the programme is 'a forum for discussing...controversial ideas.' But having two witches on the programme led to its being the main subject of another BBC programme, Network.

According to Anna Ford, co-presenter of Network, the accusation was made that the witches managed to 'bewitch their young audience, guilefully deflecting their questions and charming their way through the confrontation.' Reverend David Makepeace said that it was 'dangerous to youngsters and—whatever the Radio Times billing may have said about Halloween being a harmless festival—irresponsible of the BBC.'

Unfortunately, I only saw the last five to ten minutes of the original interview, which was about thirty-five minutes long. I was especially interested because I have met the witches, Janet and Stewart Farrar, and have read Stewart's book What Witches Do.

Reverend Makepeace was allowed to 'make a film' lasting three or four minutes in which he made his protest. As may be expected, his film took the Christian view that anything other than Christianity was wrong and must be dabbling with the devil. He included comments from a psychiatrist who has dealt with patients supposedly disturbed by involvement in the occult. Also interviewed was a woman who had been in a coven for ten years. She spoke of seeing a man drop dead after being cursed and of being frightened to leave the coven.

Network includes the participation of a studio audience, two members of which were in the original programme and asked the Farrars questions. The first quoted a passage

from Deuteronomy in which divination and witchcraft were forbidden. Stewart Farrar replied that he thought this was simply the priests of the time not wanting any competition. Makepeace accused the Farrars of neatly side-stepping the question and subsequently falsely equating biblical prophecy with occult divination, asking the viewer 'Do you know the difference?' No, Reverend, I don't. And my dictionary was no help either. Of 'divination' it said: 'insight into or discovery of unknown or future by supernatural means; skillful forecast; good guess.' (I especially like the last two!) Of 'prophecy': 'Faculty of a prophet; prophetic utterance; foretelling of future events.'

The second questioner asked the Farrars if they identify their religion today with Canaanite worship of Baal and Ashteroth. That they didn't upset both the questioner and the Reverend Makepeace, who seem too prejudiced to accept that any form of witchcraft can have good intentions.

Even Stewart Lamont agreed that these two questions had not been answered. But perhaps he, too, is prejudiced, as I know that he was once—and may still be—a part-time preacher. He worked for some time in the Religious department of the BBC in Scotland. However, Lamont did defend the Farrars to some extent, saying that he didn't believe they were Satanists; that they represent something that would be better described in his vocabulary as 'Druidic' religion or old pagan Celtic rites, people who cast spells and really work nature magic; they really worship Mother Earth, and that's the kind of religion they put across, not this satanic rite which substitutes the devil for God and is an upside-down version of orthodox religion.

The attacks on the Farrars were made on religious and not rational grounds. There are two types of witchcraft, called 'white' (or 'right-handed') and 'black' (or 'left-handed').

White witchcraft (or Wicca—the craft of the wise) is quite harmless, being practised by sincere people with good intentions. It has done far less harm than probably any other religion in the world. That they believe in paranormal phenomena such as tarot card reading, astrology, fortune telling, astral projection, etc., is in my view Wicca's only drawback. My knowledge of white witchcraft leads me to accept that its basic beliefs in a higher being are as logical as those of any other religion. White witches do not worship the devil, although their 'god' is a horned god. Horns were only associated with the devil by the Christian church in the Middle

Ages, so that it could then say, 'Look, those heathens are worshipping a horned god, and as the devil has horns, they are worshipping the devil.' A good reason to hang or burn someone, no doubt.

Those who involve themselves in black witchcraft are dangerous, but not due to any supernatural 'power'. They are people prepared to do anything evil in their belief that the devil will give them power and riches.

None of this was taken into consideration in the criticism of the Farrars. It was not made clear whether the woman in Makepeace's film was involved in white or black witchcraft. If she had been in a black coven, then she would have had every reason to have been frightened of its members. I doubt, though, that a white coven would have been intimidating to any rational person. As they also believe that an evil spell rebounds on the spell-maker, it is silly to suggest that it was a white coven which 'cursed' someone. (Of course, I am not accepting that this happened as reported. I want more proof than someone's word.) It was somewhat amusing to hear this woman admit to belief in God's love and, in the same breath, accuse the Farrars of deceiving themselves in their beliefs. Her reason? That there are only two powers, one is God's and one is Satan's.

It is easy to see how accused witches were persecuted in the Middle Ages by the attitude of one young member of Network's studio audience who was convinced that the Farrars 'weren't honest people, they weren't true.' How she knows the Farrars were dishonest, I don't know. Could it again be prejudice? Although a skeptic, I support the appearance of white witches on Open to Question, especially the Farrars, whom I like and who I believe want only to help people with their craft. A proper understanding of witchcraft is to be encouraged, for sound knowledge is not a dangerous thing. Witches' beliefs in paranormal phenomena should be dealt with scientifically in the same way as claims by other so-called psychics, and not by someone with a prejudiced, opposing religious belief.

Recommended reading

What Witches Do, Stewart Farrar, London, 1971. Good insight into the beliefs and ceremonies of a white witch. Farrar does admit to making some mistakes in this book, a commendable action.

The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, Rossell Hope Robbins, Newnes,

1984. A non-sensational, matter-of-fact history. Eight Sabbats for Witches, Janet and Stewart Farrar, Robert Hale, 1981.

The Life and Times of a Modern Witch, Piatkus, 1987.

Michael Hutchinson is the UK distributor for Prometheus Books.

KILROY ON UFO'S

Steuart Campbell

"Kilroy," BBC 1, 9.20-10.0 am, 26 November, 1987.

On 26 November 1987 the BBC's 'Kilroy' programme dealt with the subject of UFOs. It was a ramblin, sometimes confused debate involving people who had made UFO reports, UFO investigators, authors of UFO books and a few sceptics (although no 'informed' sceptics). The prime sceptic seemed to be Adrian Berry, science correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, but he suffered from ignorance of the subject. At one point, he attributed the object in the Day film (a 'glow' moving slowly along above a line of trees) to a meteorite! This was rightly scorned by others, although no one explained that the object had been identified as the surplus fuel being burned off by an F-111 fighter which later crashed. Presenter Robert Kilroy-Silk kept asking UFO-reporters whether they believed they had seen a 'UFO' without once airing the distinction between what a person reports and the interpretations put upon that report by them and others. Jenny Randies of BUFORA did point out that reports could be explained by all sorts of phenomena but alleged that about one in ten defeated all attempts at explanation (of course she is ignoring my explanations). There was an interesting comment from Ralph Noyes (ex-MOD) who expressed the view that if there was an official 'cover-up' it was to conceal the fact that government agencies cannot explain all the reports. I have been saying this for years.

Steuart Campbell is a science writer living in Edinburgh, and a former investigator for BUFORA.

RADIO SPIRITS

Andrew Tomlinson

"Soundings: The Medium and the Message,"
 BBC Radio 4, Sunday 22 November, 1987.
 Presenter, Trevor Barnes; Editor, David
 Coombs; Researcher, Amanda Hancock.

On Sunday 22nd November, BBC Radio 4 broadcast a documentary which had as its basis an analysis of a performance by one of Britain's most popular clairvoyants, Doris Collins. It was thus unfortunate that 'The Medium and the Message,' part of the 'Soundings' series, was flawed. Presented by Trevor Barnes, it was a hotch-potch of ideas. Its half hour contained far too many brief snippets from interviews with far too many people to provide coherent analysis.

Much of the programme was a merry-go-round of claim and counterclaim concerning the moral ethics of spiritualism from the standpoint of the Christian religion. Their view was provided by the Rev. Clive Calver, General Secretary of the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain. Added to this were the arguments of Canon Michael Perry, Archdeacon of Durham, who is both a member of the council of the Society for Psychical Research and chairman of the Churches Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies. He explained that the psychic phenomenon "certainly exists" but, believing no one was 100% successful, was "very cautious of public psychics."

The ubiquitous Brian Inglis was also involved. Asked why psychic power had not been used to discover the remedy for all known disease, he replied, "Partly because we're not that good at it, and partly because science has blocked it."

By far a more interesting and palpable feature was provided by the recordings of Doris Collins on stage at Southend. These were scrutinized by David Berglas.

The brief extracts presented left one in no doubt of Ms Collins' ability to entertain. With verve and enthusiasm, she exposed dramatic tales from the lives of her audience.

What was also clear was her use of 'cold reading.' Mr Berglas explained this entails fishing for information, changing or improving its presentation, then throwing it back. Combined with an ability to make a few inspired guesses, cold reading can, if timed correctly, deceive an audience. Doris Collins' timing was impeccable.

Her technique was openly demonstrated by a conversation with one elderly lady:

D.C.: I have a gentleman here with you. He said to me "I shared your life!"

Lady: Yes.

D.C.: "And I loved you so much."

Lady: Yes.

D.C.: He said to me "You know it was better for me to go first."

Lady: Yes.

D.C.: He said "Will you tell her I couldn't have managed without her."

Lady: No.

D.C.: He said "I wasn't the easiest you know."

Lady: No.

D.C.: He said "In fact I was very difficult."

Lady: Yes...that's true.

D.C.: Did you nearly leave him?

Lady: Yes...yes.

D.C.: I'm trying to be careful.

Lady: Yes.

D.C.: 'Cos he said "She nearly ran away twice."

Lady: Yes...that's true...although I wouldn't have done, not really.

D.C.: Well, you tried!

(Applause)

In a similar fashion, she steered a conversation to seemingly reveal a lady's brother-in-law had been "mentally disturbed." This was only after the lady had volunteered that the brother-in-law had committed suicide, having made previous attempts to take his life.

Not all Doris Collins' attempts at apparent psychic contact were as impressive. She could only muster a nonchalant "No" from a teenager every time she asked if the phrase "you are standing at the crossroads" meant anything. This failure was unlucky, for as David Berglas pointed out, "it's impossible not to be at the crossroads when you're a teenager."

Although it was not obvious from the few Southend recordings included, Doris Collins had apparently been wrong a large percentage of the time. This fact was put to her towards the end of the programme by Mr Berglas. "I wouldn't agree," she defended herself, "what a lot of rot you are talking...that's journalism!"

BOOKS

ANSWERS WITHIN...

Wendy M. Grossman

The Straight Dope, by Cecil Adams, Ballantine, 1986. 416 pp. \$3.95*.

According to the book review which originally drew The Straight Dope to my attention, Cecil Adams is a man few have ever met with a mind like the Encyclopedia Britannica. His column appears in a small host of "alternative" newspapers in a number of cities, most notably Chicago and Baltimore. Readers send in questions, and Adams answers them. Questions about anything: the best way to get rid of cockroaches (original question and four field reports from "The Teeming Millions," as Adams dubs his readers), why there is no Channel One on American televisions (standard is two to thirteen), how do they measure snow, do cats have navels, how do the stripes get into toothpaste, what would happen if every person in China climbed up on a chair and then all jumped off at exactly the same moment, can man live by bread alone and if so for how long, why water doesn't remove the fiery effect of hot spices...

Adams answers all these and more in a lively, aggressive style. For example, in answer to the last question named above: "If you had been paying attention in sixth-grade science class like you should've, Bobo, you would already know the answer to this question, which can be summed up thusly: oil and water don't mix."

But the insults work, or at least they don't offend this reader, the range of questions and answers is fascinating, and he prints replies attacking his answers and rebuts them thoroughly.

A few of his entries deal with the paranormal: spontaneous human combustion, Carter's UFO, vampires, dowsing, and the like. In the Carter case, he quotes Robert Sheaffer, "independent researcher for the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal." His answer on the subject of spontaneous human combustion is a little disappointing, but the hard-cover version of this book was published in 1984, and the subject was only dealt with in the Summer 1987 issue of The Skeptical Inquirer. His entry on vampires lists the proper methods for killing them in the various countries which they inhabit.

All in all, the book is entertaining, lively, and informative...and unavailable in the UK. However, do not despair! If readers indicate interest, we are prepared to try importing a few copies. It's worth it.

Wendy M. Grossman is a folksinger and writer, and editor of the B&IS.

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LETTERS

[We welcome letters from our readers. All letters received are fair game for quotation and/or publication unless specifically labelled private. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.]

DOONESBURY...

I am enclosing a set of Doonesbury cartoons from the Guardian which were published this past August...I think they do belong in the Skeptic's files, if they are not there already.

The set of cartoons is not actually complete. I couldn't resist keeping the first of the series where Lord Hunk-Ra is introduced as "very good-looking both on and off the field of battle." After he is "slain, ignominiously by a treacherous manservant, 21,000 years later Hunk-Ra, like so many of his peers from ancient civilizations, surfaces in California." Having lived in California (Berkeley) in the '60's, I can believe it.

I have also kept back the strip in which Boopsie explains what will happen when the harmonic convergence comes. "There are," she says, "supposed to be two strong possibilities. The first is a new age of insight and understanding, of mass unification of divine and earth-plane selves. The other possibility is nuclear annihilation." And she adds, "Either way, there will probably be a crafts fair." I remember those from California, too.

I am a great fan of Boopsie and her past lives. As a specialist in ancient art, I am particularly interested in what she has to say about her earliest incarnations. In one strip last March she informs B.D., her boyfriend, that "a few lives after my incarnation as a Hittite concubine, I became a fresco painter at the Minoan palace at Zakro." Now, this is very interesting.

Since the context suggests that Boopsie was female in her Minoan life, although she doesn't actually say so, she provides us with evidence for the employment of women in major Minoan crafts and this would quite nicely account for the particularly large number of women represented in Minoan wall painting (as compared with Egyptian, for instance) and the pacific nature and delicate handling of the subject matter. Boopsie's evidence should lead to new and important approaches to the study of Minoan painting.

Perhaps more exciting is Boopsie's revelations about her life as a courtier to Queen Nefertiti in the same strip. This was, she tells B.D., the first time "I began to see the importance of a sense of self-esteem." She illustrates her new awareness by saying to Nefertiti, "Pull in that tush, Majesty. That's it. Feel the burn." This, as I am sure you cannot fail to see, is a statement which may revolutionize Old Testament studies. For Boopsie is here giving us evidence that the Hebrew captivity and most likely the Exodus took place in the 18th Dynasty under Akhnaton rather than, as many believe, in the 19th under Merenptah, the 14th son of Rameses the Great. For there is clearly no way, except through the influence of Moses as an intimate of the royal family that courtiers like Boopsie's Egyptian incarnation Boopshepsut could have learned to use a Yiddish expression (see L. Rosten, The Joys of Yiddish, p 413).

I must admit I would not mind having a chat with Boopsie myself as I'm having some problems understanding the nature of the Celtic deities I am currently studying and she might be able to give me help.

Marjorie Mackintosh

KNOCK

In reply to Steuart Campbells' further comments regarding Knock, I plead that some confusion is inevitable when an honest inquirer faces widely divergent theories. Nicholas Humphrey and his team seem convinced that Archdeacon Cavanagh was so worried about his political reputation that he acquired a magic lantern and worked out how to use a shaving mirror or the like to project lantern slides on the church gable for a couple of hours. Steuart Campbell puts forward dazzling arguments for an astronomical mirage, followed by later reflections of the planet Jupiter on the same church gable.

I doubted that a mirage on a church gable should be a unique event in a single Irish village because I have not found reports of any similar 'mirages' on any of the hundreds of church or house gables in Ireland, or even elsewhere. Moreover the common agreement of a number of witnesses that the apparitions were of the Virgin Mary, Joseph, and St. John, with an altar and a lamb, argues against a mirage and even a theory of group hallucination superimposed on a mirage seems far-fetched. Again, the

evidence that there were halos and orbs of light on the evening of 21 August 1879, as well as on 6 January and 9 February 1880, suggests that a combination of mirage and reflections of the planet Jupiter would indeed make this church gable unique.

Admittedly the static nature of the images makes the magic lantern theory more attractive. Most reports of visions of the Virgin Mary, even into modern times (as at Medjugorje) involve an apparently living, moving figure. The Knock tableau seems unique, and the only comparable static apparitions since 1879 would appear to be 1) the vision of the Virgin hovering over a Catholic church in Belfast, seen by a British soldier on a dark night in 1969, and 2) the nightly appearances of an apparition of the Virgin in Cairo between April 1968 and May 1971 in the sky over the Coptic Orthodox church of St. Mary. The latter church was said to be on the route of the flight into Egypt, and the apparition was seen by large crowds of Christians, Jews and Moslems, estimated, at the peak, at 250,000 nightly.

However, there is not the slightest evidence to suggest that Archdeacon Cavanagh was capable of a magic lantern fraud, and it is improbable that a travelling showman could have perpetrated a magic lantern show in the church without the knowledge of the Archdeacon. Collusion with the Archdeacon is also improbable. Strangers are always noticed in a small Irish village, and the installation and removal of such apparatus would surely have been observed by a churchwarden, cleaner, or daily worshippers. As the church then lacked electricity, the only light source for a magic lantern would be

kerosene or acetylene, and even if these sustained a bright picture for over two hours, there would surely have been some suspicious smell or other evidence in the church. In a previous communication (Reviews, B&IS I.6) I cited the difficulty of the Archdeacon being able to visit and leave the church unobserved and be back at home with an alibi (so to speak) when his housekeeper returned.

Validation of the magic lantern theory would require tracing actual magic lantern slides of the period which coincided with the reports of the visionary tableau of 1879. Even so, there is no apparent motive connected with the Archdeacon. His political views did not incur enmity in his parish, and while he did not approve of the Fenians, he treated them kindly when they came to him for charity. There is general agreement that Cavanagh was a saintly man, loved to the end of his life by his flock. Whatever his politics, he had no need to seek approval from the villages since he already had it. Cavanagh himself was reputed to have seen visions of the Virgin Mary, and during his last illness he was found to be habitually wearing a hair shirt. It would be wholly out of character for such a man to plan or execute a single pious fraud of such magnitude as the apparitions after twelve years in the parish.

Under the circumstances, both the astronomical mirage and magic lantern theories are at present interesting and ingenious speculations only, without a shred of supporting evidence. And they cannot both be right.

Leslie Shepard

PREDICTIONS '88

...I have had a late prediction flash--Prince Charles will grow an extra toe, be elected President of the United States, and win three Olympic gold medals.

Paul Quincey

...Delighted to see my predictions in the latest edition of the magazine--I have in preparation the aforementioned Geller magnetic tie but I've yet to test its compass-bending properties. Suffice it to say that I'll send it to the winner of the predictions.

J. Alan Remfry

RENDLESHAM

...I disagree with Leslie Shepard about InCA's presentation of the alleged UFO incident at Rendlesham; it was not 'brilliant.' According to Nicholas Humphrey, the object was a combination of the light from Orford Ness lighthouse and the various lights of a police patrol car (this ignores the fact that there were two separate sightings). My article 'Throwing Light on Rendlesham,' showing how the second light could not have been that of Orford Ness (and how it must have been from a more distant light vessel), was published in Magonia 21 (Dec, 1985). Ian Ridpath and I have since discussed the case in recent issues of the Skeptical Inquirer. While the Orford Ness hypothesis came via Ridpath, the patrol car lights hypothesis was entirely Humphrey's own idea; Ridpath's doubts about it were ignored (as were my own views). In fact the police were not called to the forest until the day after the first report of an object with red and blue lights. This is an

example of debunking at any price, a tendency also exhibited in Humphrey's treatment of the Knock apparition (rightly condemned by Shepard).

Frank Chambers has the wrong distinction between the sceptic and the debunker. A sceptic questions the truth of certain claims while a debunker exposes false claims (COD). Consequently, a debunker must first be a sceptic. But not all sceptics are debunkers; it is clear that many sceptics never come to any conclusions and cannot decide what is false. Others (like Humphrey) come to the wrong conclusions...

Steuart Campbell

DIVINE CREATIONISM

[Colin Wood responds to A.T. Symon's review (B&IS 1.6).]

'Divine Creationism' is based upon research into the origins and original meaning of the early Genesis texts of the Bible...particularly the 'Adam and Eve' narrative. This research demonstrates that the 'Adam and Eve' source material initially related to human sexuality and the unique ability of our species to be able to reject the act of sexual intercourse even when subjected to optimum sexual stimulation and temptation in the most conducive of environments. The fact that this material became distorted into its Biblical form is interesting to trace, but not my worry. It is a matter for the 'Church' to concern itself with.

The outcome of this research is relevant with regard to the fact that according to United Nations' predictions world, human population is expected to double to 10 billion within 40 years...should the AIDS virus allow. Either

scenario will lead to horrific social implications, if allowed to develop.

...The evolutionary model does not offer an explanation of how and where this parapsychological quality to our constitution occurs. Indeed as readers of the B&IS are probably aware, the fossil record is testament against evolution as being the explanation of our place on Earth. Life follows no-life abruptly. Vertebrates follow invertebrates suddenly. Species after species is found in the fossil record, complete, intact and true with no transitional stages being evident leading to the earliest example of that species. The evolutionary fraternity do NOT deny that this, and only this, is what the fossil record offers.

It is the same with 'modern man' who is suddenly (in geological terms) found worldwide with distinct physiological and anatomical features.

It is the same with Neanderthal Man. A.T. Symon is mistaken when he states that Neanderthal Man evolved. The process is assumed. The evidence is lacking. Neanderthal Man was as Neanderthal in features at the end of his 100,000 year reign as he was when first apparent in the fossil record.

This led me to seek a new explanation of our place, presence and purpose on Planet Earth...which I offer with 'Divine Creationism'...though the essence of the concept seems lost with the review offered by A.T. Symon.

Colin Wood

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[More from Lake Okeechobee]

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Redge Lewis

Ghost haunts kit

An evil computer terminal which has killed three operators in Chile is to be exorcised by a local priest in Valparaiso.

The voodoo terminal which was part of a 14m installation for a clearing bank even "made a workman faint" when he tried to un-plug it.

One of the deaths was originally attributed to a "massive stroke" while another was recorded as death by "unknown causes". A third operator is in a coma.

Reporting the first ever possessed computer, America's national weekly tabloid the *Weekly World News* tells how bank staff now

refuse to work near the jinxed machine.

A spokesman for the bank explained that since no one will now go near it "we have to get it exorcised or face a multi-million pound bill to replace the entire system."

But the *Weekly World News* can still not repeat its scoop of last year when it revealed a Chinese computer developer was killed by a "jealous" machine.

The AI computer electrocuted its builder after "it discovered he had made a mark-two version" of its circuits and aimed to phase it out.



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Astrology The Evidence of Science

Percy Seymour

Demolishes the case against astrology

Orthodox science has always held that astrology cannot work. Now, for the first time, a scientist argues that it does. Dr Percy Seymour, who sprang to international prominence in 1984 with his revelations on the astrology of the Star of Bethlehem, unveils in full his breakthrough discoveries on the scientific principles behind astrology.

He shows that there is a logical and consistent relationship between heredity, personality and temperament and the state of the cosmos at the moment of birth. His theory incorporates the latest advances in astronomy, space science, solar physics, geomagnetism and biology. It leads us to see the misunderstood magnetic lines of force of the sun and the earth as a complex musical instrument, one on which the gravitational pull of the planets plays a different symphony for every individual.

Taking up the challenge of such sceptics as Patrick Moore and Heather Couper, Seymour adds to his own testimony that of Eysenck, Ptolemy, Lyall Watson, Copernicus, Chaucer, Carl Sagan and Shakespeare to present the most exciting and controversial scientific case of recent years.

Dr Seymour is principal lecturer in astronomy at Plymouth Polytechnic and Director of the William Day Planetarium. He was born in Kimberley, South Africa and took an early interest in astronomy as a result of the very clear skies at the edge of the veldt where he grew up.



The Loch Eil Nessie hunt

PENSIONER Stanley Robinson, 73, of Sheffield plans to look for the Loch Ness monster next summer — in Loch Eil, near Fort William.

He claims he first saw "Nessie" in Loch Eil in 1955 and is convinced that the creature uses rivers and waterways to swim from loch to loch.

SOUTH WALES ECHO 6X1 87

Mind games grip the West Coast

From Alex Brummer in Washington

Californians' quest for beautiful brains to match their bodies is attracting the attention of federal health authorities, who profess themselves frankly bemused by this latest manifestation of the "New Age" phenomenon.

Throughout the Golden State, young Californians are taking to "brain building" with the same enthusiasm that they took to the aerobic studios and Nautilus body-building machines in the early 1980s. People are abandoning their exercise benches for relaxing beanbag chairs and a brain tune-up complete with padded earphones and 3D-like goggles.

With the help of a series of devices such as the Synchro-Energiser — which uses high frequency lights and sounds to bring clients into a meditative

trance — clubs and clinics across the state have begun the awesome task of enhancing brainpower.

According to a survey of the thus latest fad by California magazine, chronicler of all that is trendy on the West Coast, brain building has caught on like wildfire.

The Institute of Delhypnotherapy in Northern California reports that some 3,500 people have journeyed to their centre for Synchro-Energizing sessions.

At the Altered States Float Centre in West Hollywood, the owners have installed a MindGym at which adherents can watch their brain patterns of spin around on a Graham Potentializer encompassed in a two-volt electromagnetic field.

"We've gone from drugs to meditation devices in the perennial quest for increasing the

mind's capacities," Mr Denis Gorges, a self-styled bio-medical researcher, told the magazine.

He says that he has sold some 6,000 of his devices at \$6,500 apiece since 1985, and includes among his fans the singer Carly Simon, the actress Ally Sheedy, and rock star Tina Turner.

Mr Gorges' innovations in the area of brainpower, including devices such as the Endomax, which claims to "stimulate brain growth"; and the BioRest, which pumps low voltage into the brain, are said to be doing a roaring trade. Among the benefits claimed by all those involved are deeper relaxation, improved memory, lesser drug use, increased intelligence, and even expansion of brain cells and tissues.

The Food and Drug Administration in Washington, whose job it is to monitor all equip-

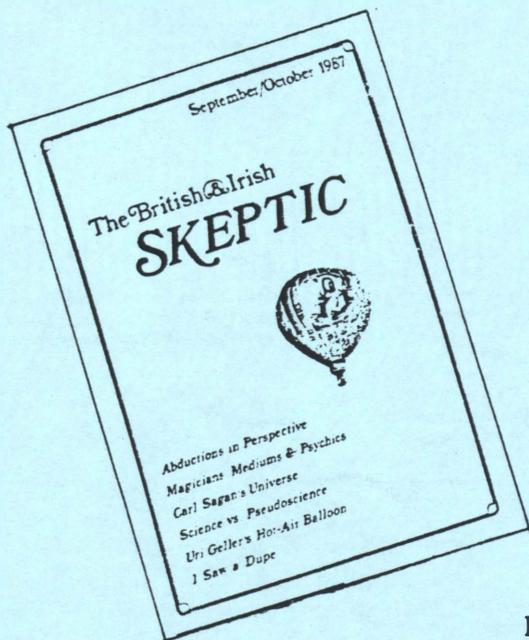
ment which purports to have a medical purpose, seems less impressed.

"We have never approved one of these devices," a spokesman, Mr David Duarte, said yesterday.

The FDA said that should the devices cross the state line in California, by means of newspaper advertisements, broadcasts or other means or should there be complaints, then it would be required to launch an investigation, and could ban further distribution of the devices.

However, by the time that the federal bureaucracy catches up with "brain building", California is likely to be populated with a new super-clever generation which will not only have the brainpower to outwit its pursuers, but will also put an end, once and for all, to the "air head" canard.

THE GUARDIAN 29/12/87



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THE *British & Irish* SKEPTIC

A Publication Dedicated to Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal

This is the complimentary edition of the bimonthly magazine the British & Irish Skeptic, Volume II, Number 1, January/February 1988, which is sent to all skeptical groups as part of the CSICOP-sponsored newsletter exchange. We apologize, but we cannot afford to send out copies of our full 40-page magazine in the quantities required. Our January/February issue contains the following articles: "Magicians, Mediums & Psychics," by David Alexander; "State of the Art: Nelson's Emporium," by Frank Chambers; "Geller's Boat," by Frank Koval; "The Knock Apparition: some new evidence," by David Berman; plus our regular columns, "Hits & Misses," "The Press Gallery," "Toby Howard's Psychic Diary," Reviews, Letters, etc. Editor: Wendy M. Grossman. Editorial Board Members: Toby Howard, Peter O'Hara, Karl Sabbagh. Subscriptions to the B&IS are available from PO Box 20, Blackrock, Co. Dublin at the following rates per year (six issues): £9.50/IR£10 or foreign exchange equivalent. We accept checks in any currency. Please add the equivalent of £2 per year for airmail.

PSYCHIC INVESTIGATION

Toby Howard writes from Manchester:

"The Metaphysical and Psychic Research Group is seeking would-be psychic sleuths to form a "Bureau of Psychic Investigation." The idea is to solve crimes using the psychic senses. Would this include crimes committed paranormally? Crooked psychics could use teleportation to shoplift without even going out!"

SHEFFIELD R.I.P.

Chris Wright writes from Sheffield that he attended two meetings of the Sheffield Society for Research into the Paranormal:

"The meeting on December 2nd was going to be a talk on UFOs; unfortunately the speaker was unable to come that night. The evening was therefore an informal one with the main theme ESP. The members of the society seem to have a range of points of view about the paranormal from the mild believer to the skeptic. I thought it would be unfair to the members if I tried to form an opinion from this one meeting, so I went along to the next one on January 6.

"This time it was the UFO talk. The speaker was Mr Philip Mantle and he gave a fairly general talk on what people mean by UFOs. On speaking to him afterwards, I found he was far more skeptical than his talk would have suggested.

Chris Wright also sent a copy of UFO Brigantia, which he got from Philip Mantle at the meeting.

Philip Mantle, and Andy Roberts, editor of UFO Brigantia, have set up a UFO hotline at

0924 444049, according to an article from Yorkshire Life, November 1987. The article notes, "if you have any experiences or sightings of the following: ghostlights, spooklights, UFOs, fairies, or poltergeist phenomena, they want to hear from you."

MAGONIA CONFERENCE

The independent UFO journal Magonia has announced their intention to hold a 20th Anniversary Conference. Proposed dates are either May or August Bank Holiday, 1988. A letter was included with their latest issue asking for comments and suggestions...

SPIRITS ON THE DOLE--UPDATE

Toby Howard writes: "Disembodied spirit entities who are considering writing a novel would do well to avoid using Bournemouth "psychic" Peter Froude (Hits & Misses, B&IS I.6) as their penman. Psychic News reports that Mr Froude has had his weekly £40 Enterprise Allowance grant suspended for non-compliance with regulations. Will his spirit novel The Demoniac ever materialise?"

GELLER'S EFFECT

It was reported in the September, 1987, New Zealand Skeptic that the Geller Effect is not working quite as well in New Zealand as Geller's publishers would like: "The Auckland agent for the publisher of Geller's autobiography reports that only four copies of the book have sold in New Zealand this year."

ASSAP MEDIA SERVICE

The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP), whose activities we wrote up in Hits & Misses in our last issue (B&IS 1.6), have, according to Psychic News, begun a media information service. The article says, "Mediascene will cover all aspects of the paranormal, including UFOs and the mystery of stone circles. When inquiries about Spiritualism are received, Mediascene will refer the callers to [Psychic News], the Spiritualists' National Union, Spiritualist Association of Great Britain or other responsible bodies."

TAPE LIBRARY

Toby Howard reports from Manchester that the tape collection is growing steadily. He lists the following tapes available on loan to paid subscribers to the B&IS:

Audio: Mark Plummer on the Gay Byrne show; LBC Nightline: Brian Inglis on Dreams; LBC Nightline: Christian Dion; LBC Nightline: Timothy Good & Jenny Randies on UFO cover-ups; Everyman: documentary on astrology (BBC 1); Newsnight: spontaneous human combustion (BBC 2); Jimmy Mack programme on BBC Scotiand: debate on dowsing with Denys Parsons and others; Manchester Skeptics Meetings, including Martin Bridgstock on being a skeptic.

Video: Uri Geller on the Wogan show; Uri Geller on the Late, Late Show; Viewpoint 87: Thy Will be Done (documentary on US and UK television Christian fundamentalism); Panorama documentary on Scientology; "Is There Anybody There?" Karl Sabbagh's documentary on the paranormal (Channel 4, 31 October 1987), together with Karl Sabbagh answering the critics on Right to Reply; BBC documentary on the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain.

To borrow any of these tapes or to contribute tapes to the collection, please contact Toby directly at 49, Whitegate Park, Flixton, Manchester, M31 3LN.

PUBLICATIONS

Michael Hutchinson and Janet Bord both wrote in with copies of two advertisements which have recently appeared in the Bookseller magazine, among other places, both from Lennard Publishing. The first is for a book entitled Astrology--the Evidence of

Science. Written by Percy Seymour, this book is claimed to demoiish the case against astrology. The advertisement reads in part, "Taking up the challenge of such sceptics as Patrick Moore and Heather Couper, Seymour adds to his own testimony that of Eysenck, Ptolemy, Lyail Watson, Copernicus, Chaucer, Carl Sagan and Shakespeare to present the most exciting and controversial scientific case of recent years."

The second book is entitled Realize Your Psychic Power. Its author, Abbe Gail, is described as follows: "For 5 years she had a top rated phone-in show in Hollywood--"My Psychic Universe"--and worked with the Los Angeles Police Department, who relied on her gifts to locate missing kidnap victims. In 1986 she returned to London to continue her work with psychic energy in Britain." The ad conciuudes, "This is the essential handbook of the resources of the mind."

SCOTTISH GHOSTS

Steuart Campbell writes from Edinburgh that the Scottish Tourist Board has published an A4 booklet entitled "Scotland's Ghosts." According to Steuart, "It lists 67 allegedly haunted places for tourists to visit (although one of them, the County Hountel in Dumfries, is actually closed). The introduction claims that 'spirits' are 'tortured souls' who return to the ancient places! Although the list is sometimes cautious enough to use phrases like 'reputed to be...' and 'it is said that...', at other times it gullibly reports what is believed as if it were true."

Both Steuart and Stephen Moreton have had letters published in the Scotsman complaining about this form of exploitation of 'Scotland's assets,' and pointing out that the burden of proof is not on skeptics, but rather on those who claim that ghosts exist.

ELECTION RETURNS

Last summer, Stephen Cox of Reading sent a collection of predictions about the 1987 British general elections (see pp 20-1, this issue). In a recent letter, he points out: "Re specific predictions; Jonathon Carver (Today's astrologer) predicted an Alliance win in the Slough constituency for our General Election. I said no chance. It was the only seat in Berkshire where the Alliance came third, arguably the worst result in the county. Given that of the 650 constituencies he only made a

EUROPEAN REPORT

CSICOP EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

Amardeo Sarma writes from West Germany: "...one of the 1989 CSICOP conferences is to be held near Munich in Germany. The German organisation GWUP (previously ASUPO) will host the conference. We are very keen to coordinate the topics and the conference with the other European national groups. The conference is planned for May 5th and 6th 1989 with some social programme offered on the 4th and a meeting of the national (mainly European) groups on Sunday, the 7th of May. Please let me know if the date suits you and whether you wish to contribute in any way. The conference venue is Bad Tölz near Munich. We are also open to suggestions regarding topics and other items..."

We will be glad to pass along any of our readers' suggestions to Amardeo.

NETHERLANDS

Bert van Gelder, secretary to the new Dutch group writes from Utrecht:

"We gave our committee the legal form of a so-called 'Stichting' (=Foundation) and called it 'SKEPSIS'. Professor emeritus in the field of Astronomy of Utrecht University, Cees de Jager, is chairperson and I, a sociologist and student-counsellor in the University of Amsterdam, am secretary. The Board consists of 15 men and only one woman.

"We called ourselves a foundation for the scientific research of 'paranormal phenomena' and not of 'claims of the paranormal' not to alienate people beforehand and not to confirm the connotation that the word 'SKEPSIS' has already for true believers.

"We got much press coverage: from the beginning of October on De Jager was interviewed at least three times a week; he was on radio (not yet on TV) and about 350 people wrote us about the foundation..."

"Our primary aims are editing a quarterly called 'SKEPTER' (chief-editor: Marcel Hulspas) and granting to the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (=Royal Library) the full set of Skeptical Inquirers and a subscription to the future volumes besides a selection of important books in the field of our objectives. This is because nowhere in Dutch libraries (nor bookshops) you can find good scientific books about paranormal research and paranormal phenomena and only one library

(the Department of Psychology of the University of Amsterdam) has a subscription to the Skeptical Inquirer."

J.W. Nienhuys has written from Waalre enclosing translations of the press write-ups of the foundation of SKEPSIS, and has very kindly agreed to keep us informed of the contents of Skepter, when publication begins.

Nienhuys translates an article published on 10 October and entitled "Dutch skeptics unite in crusade against the paranormal." Journalist Felix Eigenraam says: "A few years ago, a Dutch group was almost established. Because of the untimely death of the originator of that plan, Telegraaf journalist and skeptic Piet Hein Hoebens, this did not happen. But now, thanks to the missionary activity of [Paul] Kurtz and [Mark] Plummer, it is going to happen. A quick poll among subscribers present [at the meeting on October 8] showed that there was enough interest to start a committee.

"The Dutch committee will closely monitor paranormal claims in their country (like the 12 other committees in other countries), examine them carefully, and wherever possible refute them."

SPAIN

Luis Alfonso Gamez Dominguez writes from Bilbao: "Gelier was in Spain for a couple of days, bending spoons, transmitting numbers telepathically, etc. His visit did not raise the excitement expected by those who brought him; they did not allow Felix [Ares de Blas] and me to attend a television program when Gelier was interviewed. The press clippings which I enclose with this letter and the copy of the press release which we prepared will give you an idea of what happened."

"...I agree completely that we need to ensure that all the European groups work together. I think the biggest problem will consist in convincing our colleagues in all countries that we must establish continental coordination and that this can work for everyone..."

Luis Alfonso adds that ARP, the Spanish group, was legally constituted in March, and that since October they have been getting numerous enquiries about ARP and the skeptical movement in general. A national meeting is planned for 5 December in Madrid.

Ghost haunts kit

An evil computer terminal which has killed three operators in Chile is to be exorcised by a local priest in Valparaiso.

The voodoo terminal which was part of a 14m installation for a clearing bank even "made a workman faint" when he tried to un-plug it.

One of the deaths was originally attributed to a "massive stroke" while another was recorded as death by "unknown causes". A third operator is in a coma.

Reporting the first ever possessed computer, America's national weekly tabloid the *Weekly World News* tells how bank staff now

refuse to work near the jinxed machine.

A spokesman for the bank explained that since no one will now go near it "we have to get it exorcised or face a multi-million pound bill to replace the entire system."

But the *Weekly World News* can still not repeat its scoop of last year when it revealed a Chinese computer developer was killed by a "jealous" machine.

The AI computer electrocuted its builder after "it discovered" he had made a mark-two version" of its circuits and aimed to phase it out.



'Once we shot anybody we didn't like — now we just put them in front of a vdu'

Realize your Psychic Power

Abbe Gail

"I know you have psychic powers and I am going to help you find them" — Abbe Gail

With this book, you will be able to realize your psychic power just as Abbe Gail has done. Based upon her own experience as a leading psychic and drawing upon her case histories, she has evolved a no-nonsense series of questions, exercises and examples to bring out the psychic potential of everyone.

Will psychic energy enrich my life?

Abbe Gail's answer is an unqualified YES and her book will lead you to find your own personal answers to many other questions including:

What can I do with my psychic power?

Can I ever know about life after death?

Can psychic energy affect my sex life?

After working in show business as a writer and as a performer with amongst other people Benny Hill, Tommy Cooper, Noel Coward, Terry Thomas and Arthur Askey, Abbe Gail felt she had to devote all her time to her gift.

For 5 years she had a top rated phone-in show in Hollywood — *My Psychic Universe* — and worked with the Los Angeles Police Department, who relied on her gifts to locate missing kidnap victims. In 1985 she returned to London to continue her work with psychic energy in Britain. This is the essential handbook of the resources of the mind.



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Astrology The Evidence of Science

Percy Seymour

Demolishes the case against astrology

Orthodox science has always held that astrology cannot work. Now, for the first time, a scientist argues that it does. Dr Percy Seymour, who sprang to international prominence in 1954 with his revelation on the astrology of the Star of Bethlehem, unfolds in full his breakthrough discoveries on the scientific principles behind astrology.

He shows that there is a logical and consistent relationship between heredity, personality and temperament and the state of the cosmos at the moment of birth. His theory incorporates the latest advances in astronomy, space science, solar physics, geomagnetism and biology. It leads us to see the misunderstood magnetic lines of force of the sun and the earth as a complex musical instrument, one on which the gravitational pull of the planets plays a different symphony for every individual.

Taking up the challenge of such sceptics as Patrick Moore and Heather Couper, Seymour adds to his own testimony that of Eysenck, Ptolemy, Lyall Watson, Copernicus, Chaucer, Carl Sagan and Shakespeare to present the most exciting and controversial scientific case of recent years.

Dr Seymour is principal lecturer in astronomy at Plymouth Polytechnic and Director of the William Day Planetarium. He was born in Kimberley, South Africa and took an early interest in astronomy as a result of the very clear skies at the edge of the veldt where he grew up.



The Loch Eil Nessie hunt

PENSIONER Stanley Robinson, 73, of Sheffield plans to look for the Loch Ness monster next summer — in Loch Eil, near Fort William.

He claims he first saw "Nessie" in Loch Eil in 1955 and is convinced that the creature uses rivers and waterways to swim from loch to loch.

SOUTH WALES ECHO 6X/87

Mind games grip the West Coast

From Alex Brummer in Washington

Californians' quest for beautiful brains to match their bodies is attracting the attention of federal health authorities, who profess themselves frankly bemused by this latest manifestation of the "New Age" phenomenon.

Throughout the Golden State, young Californians are taking to "brain building" with the same enthusiasm that they took to the aerobic studios and Nautilus body-building machines in the early 1980s. People are abandoning their exercise benches for relaxing beach chairs and a brain tune-up complete with padded earphones and 3D-like goggles.

With the help of a series of devices such as the Synchro-Energiser — which uses high frequency lights and sounds to bring clients into a meditative

trance — clubs and clinics across the state have begun the awesome task of enhancing brainpower.

According to a survey of the this latest fad by California magazine, chronicler of all that is trendy or the West Coast, brain building has caught on like wildfire.

The Institute of DeHypnototherapy in Northern California reports that some 3,500 people have journeyed to their centre for Synchro-Energising sessions.

At the Altered States Float Centre in West Hollywood, the owners have installed a MindGym at which adherents can watch their brain patterns or spin around on a Graham Potentializer encompassed in a two-volt electromagnetic field.

"We've gone from drugs to meditation devices in the perennial quest for increasing the

mind's capacities," Mr Denis Gorges, a self-styled bio-medical researcher, told the magazine.

He says that he has sold some 6,000 of his devices at \$6,500 apiece since 1985, and includes among his fans the singer Carly Simon, the actress Ally Sheedy, and rock star Tina Turner.

Mr Gorges' innovations in the area of brainpower, including devices such as the Endomax, which claims to "stimulate brain growth", and the BioRest, which pumps low voltage into the brain, are said to be doing a roaring trade. Among the benefits claimed by all those involved are deeper relaxation, improved memory, lesser drug use, increased intelligence, and even expansion of brain cells and tissues.

The Food and Drug Administration in Washington, whose job it is to monitor all equip-

ment which purports to have a medical purpose, seems less impressed.

"We have never approved one of these devices," a spokesman, Mr David Duarte, said yesterday.

The FDA said that should the devices cross the state line in California, by means of newspaper advertisements, broadcasts or other means, that it would be required to launch an investigation, and could ban further distribution of the devices.

However, by the time that the federal bureaucracy catches up with "brain building", California is likely to be populated with a new super-clever generation which will not only have the brainpower to outwit its pursuers, but will also put an end, once and for all, to the "air head" canard.

SPECIAL REPORT: Manchester Meeting

Wendy M. Grossman

GHOSTBUSTERS MOVE IN

SOUTH MANCHESTER
H. XII
BY WENDY M. GROSSMAN

FLYING saucers beware! The Skeptical Movement is coming to Manchester complete with ghost-busting expertise.

The Manchester Skeptics group is holding its inaugural meeting on Wednesday 9 December.

Cleiryants, drawers and the like, are invited to come forward

and large rewards are offered to anyone who can demonstrate paranormal abilities in controlled settings.

A daunting challenge, since nobody so far has been able to overcome the rigorous tests set by the Skeptics.

Dr Martin Bridgstock, a visiting lecturer from Australia, will introduce the meeting.

"Creation science is very weak in this country, but I am amazed at the number of clairvoyants, psychics and astrologers there are."

"At the very least there should be a group prepared to test and evaluate the claims of these people," he said.

A professional magician will be present to demonstrate how easily

people can be fooled by clever illusion.

A video will also be shown of some sensational studies of Faith-healing frauds in the USA.

The Skeptics are a world-wide movement who want to found a local group in Manchester.

The meeting will be held at The Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester at 7.30pm.

The first skeptics' meeting ever to be held in Manchester took place on Wednesday, 9 December, 1987, at the Friends' Meeting Hall. Organised by Toby Howard and Martin Bridgstock, the meeting attracted nearly eighty people, most of them from the Manchester area. Out-of-town visitors included Redge Lewis from South Devon, and Michael Hutchinson and Lewis Jones from London.

Advance press coverage was excellent (see Skeptics in the News, this issue, for some of the press write-ups), and both BBC Radio Manchester and one of the local stations ran interviews with Toby Howard in the last couple of days before the meeting.

Michael Hutchinson had brought a tape of an American TV special magician and CSICOP Founding Fellow James Randi had made, and this played while people filtered into the hall and found seats.

The meeting proper began with a talk by Martin Bridgstock, a lecturer in sociology on loan to the UK from his home in Australia, where he has been a prominent anti-creationist campaigner. Bridgstock stressed that being a skeptic is a questioning rather than a negative position, and talked about the various sums of money on offer around the world to those who can prove they have paranormal powers. A notepad was provided for those at the meeting who wished to be tested.

Magician Frank Koval then did a brief demonstration of the art of misdirection, and then showed a tape of Uri Geller, pointing out where Geller was distracting attention from his activities.

Finally, a tape was shown of James Randi's exposé of Peter Popoff on the

Johnny Carson show in March, 1986. After this, there was a tea break, and lively discussions ensued.

I myself was approached by a number of people of various persuasions: a local UFO group wanted to show me books of top-secret documents which, they said, proved there was a government cover-up. How could I explain it? I said I was not an expert on UFOs. A woman approached me with the story of having seen Jesus Christ in person over her back fence one night: the apparition had made an instant convert to Christianity of her neighbor. And a palmist seized my hand and read my palm: I was married, he said (was my husband around anywhere?), I had had difficulty in childbirth, I kept close ties with my family, that is, he hastened to add, my parents. He seemed fascinated by the length of one of the lines on my palm, but unfortunately did not explain what the extraordinary length meant. He said I would have a further romance after my husband. I am not married, have never been pregnant, and never see any of my relatives. I think this was probably the least successful reading I have ever had of any kind. On the other hand, it was free, and I suppose in this, as in other things, you get what you pay for.

After the meeting was reconvened, there was a short period for questions and answers.

The meeting broke up early to comply with the Friends' regulations, but was dubbed a great success by all those who attended. A further organizational meeting is planned for those who indicated interest in forming a regional committee. We wish them the best of luck and look forward to receiving reports of their future activities.

prediction in one, he really ought to have got it right..."

Thanks to Stephen for a truly enormous batch of clippings.

HUBBARD BIOGRAPHIES

Two biographies have been published, one in the US, and one in the UK, both after considerable, reported legal harassment by the Church of Scientology. Bare-Faced Messiah, by Russell Miller, is published by Michael Joseph, and concentrates mainly on Hubbard's life story, with relatively few details of the inner workings of the Church of Scientology. Messiah or Madman, by Bent Corydon and L. Ron Hubbard, Jr., concentrates primarily on the reported inner workings of the Church. The Sunday Times ran three extracts of Miller's book, and a review; reviews of one or both books have appeared in the New Scientist (reviewer: Dick Kovan) and Nature (reviewer: Martin Gardner).

GELLER STRIKES AGAIN

Toby Howard writes: "Peripatetic skeptics will be delighted to hear that jet lag may soon be a thing of the past, thanks to the tireless research efforts of Uri Geller. Interviewed in Business Traveller magazine, Uri says he hopes to have ready by 1990 a wristwatch which will "stop the extra low frequency waves from entering the body." This, he explains, will prevent jet lag. Uri's passport lists his profession as "lecturer/writer." Skeptics might possibly be able to supply more apt descriptions.

DORIS COLLINS AND THE SUN

The Sun ran another one of its extravaganzas on January 15. Readers were instructed to "Dim the lights and sit on a comfortable chair at a table. Open the Sun at this page and lay it out in front of you. Then ON THE DOT OF 8pm, look deeply into the eyes of the picture on the left..." We will run a more complete report in our next issue. Thanks to J. Alan Remfry for sending in the clippings.

ALLERGY HOAX

The Times and a few other papers

reported that writer Caroline Richmond had written a spoof on the arguments against food additives and sent it to an organisation called "Action Against Allergy." The report, purportedly issued by the Dye Related Allergies Bureau (DRAB), said, among other things, that: "Clothes are brighter than ever before, which accounts for the epidemic of obesity, malaise, flatulence, irritability, lethargy, indigestion, headache, dyspepsia, tiredness, and constipation."

Writing in the British Medical Journal, 19-26 December 1987, Richmond notes: "I had not expected DRAB to be taken seriously and now have qualms about what I have done. I have learnt--and I suspect most doctors know this already--that there are quite a number of people out there who want to hear bad news and are vulnerable to every kind of charlatan. Most of them are middle class women who would be described as educated but have no knowledge of human biology or other aspects of everyday science."

LIFE IN SURREY...

Reader Paul Quincey sent clippings from the Richmond and Kingston local Guardian. Self-styled "ghostbuster" Stephen Alexandre investigated Richmond Theatre as the latest in a series of haunted theatres. He receives messages via automatic writing. The message which appeared "scrawled" on his pad read, "Before you leave this theatre you will be..."

Meanwhile there has been a psychic health and fitness festival in Surbiton in December, which was disrupted as "local Christians formed a picket line outside."

YETI

The Yeti has been in the news again, with articles appearing in the New Scientist, the Sunday Express and the International Herald Tribune.

Frank Chambers, of Co. Mayo, sent in the clipping from the International Herald Tribune dated 11 November about a debate over some photographs alleged to be of the Yeti. According to the article, English physicist Anthony B. Wooldridge claimed to have encountered a Yeti in the Himalayas in 1986. Wooldridge's evidence "consists of two sets of photographs taken on March 6, 1986...One photo shows fresh tracks in snow made by enormous feet with widely splayed big toes. The other, taken from a distance of 450 feet

through a wide-angle lens, shows a silhouette of a vaguely human figure...Although the photograph is sharp and well exposed, the figure in question is so distant that an enlargement of the image reveals little detail." Frank Chambers comments: "Next time use a telephoto lens!"

According to the Sunday Express on December 20, however, the yeti has been seen, filmed, and shown on Russian television by "zoologist Mrs M. Bykova."

The New Scientist article, on the other hand, reviews a century of reported yeti sightings and says, "There can be little doubt...that the yeti is currently Nepal's number one foreign currency earner." The article goes on to review the possible candidates for "perpetrators of the yeti's tracks."

In a letter to the Scotsman, James Pringle explained that in his visits to Tibet, he found that local village people "utterly dismissed contemporary stories of sightings as the product of over-fertile imaginations [while] Chinese Communist Party cadres interviewed in the region almost to a man believed...in the existence of the Yeti."

TIME-LIFE

The Time-Life book series Mysteries of the Unknown is now available in the UK. According to their full-colour brochure, the series "promises you an astonishing exploration of a wide spectrum of unexplained phenomena." Among the phenomena: the psychic arms race (Moscow is ahead!), Gerard Croiset's psychic powers, the "Bermuda Triangle", Stonehenge, Nostradamus, UFOs, and so on and on. They don't say how many volumes are in the series, but each costs £12.95 plus £1.95 postage and packing until June 30, 1988. And if you reply within seven days (this brochure came in a copy of the Listener), you can have a free gift! Yes, you can own your very own set of ESP cards...

THE OPEN CENTRE

"What is the Open Centre?" their brochure asks. It then proceeds to answer: "We are a well established Growth Centre providing a variety of different therapies within the broad spectrum of the Humanistic Psychology Movement. We offer both groups and individual sessions.

"We run as a collective..."

The therapies they offer: Body-oriented therapy; Primal Integration and Bodywork; Transactional Analysis; Encounter and Awareness; Bioenergetics and Psychodrama; the Feldenkrais Method and Gentle Dance; Gestalt and Intuitive Massage. From the brochure, "Primal Integration is a process which helps to heal splits in one's being and resolve blocks to one's doing...I draw on...various forms of bodywork--'intuitive' bodywork, massage, Pulsing (a rhythmic form) and Postural Integration (deep tissue work)." On Bioenergetics and Psychodrama, "My basic training in helping people through crisis was nine years as an international household removals contractor..."

EXORCISM AT SEA

Several papers carried the story of the haunted Bridlington trawler. The Daily Telegraph said, "The Rev Thomas Willis...the exorcist of buildings to the Diocese of York, was called in to perform the ceremony by a Department of Employment clerk who queried why the trawler's crew were claiming benefit when they should have been out fishing."

Before the exorcism: "the 65ft Bridlington trawler Pickering skippered by Mr Derek Gates was haunted...the steering regularly went haywire, sending them round in circles. The radar system would go wrong, always at 1:30am and at sea.

"Lights would go on and off and the cabins were freezing even when the heating was on. A ghostly figure had also been seen on deck."

After: "Mr Gates...said "the atmosphere had 'changed overnight'...and that he and his crew were now landing healthy catches."

The Guardian added that "Mr Willis...was appointed an official exorcist in 1972 by the then Archbishop of York, Dr Donald Coggan... The vicar researched the ship's history and found that a human spirit, rather than the ghost of a vengeful mackerel or cod, might genuinely be responsible."

"...Mr Willis, who said that he believed the spirit was now at peace, has been thanked by the Pickering's owners, the Bridlington Trawler Co., for being 'most helpful'."

SAGAN

In "Red star Gorbachev, who wants to go to Mars, gets only Iowa," (11/XII), Guardian reporter Michael White described Carl Sagan as "the American dissident and sage...the popular astrologer." Um...

Toby Howard's PSYCHIC DIARY

In recent years, popular ideas about the paranormal have undergone a subtle, but very important transformation. The emergence of the "New Age" has brought about a kind of grand unification of many of the fringe and paranormal interests traditionally labelled "occult." Along with this regrouping has come an extraordinary growth in recognition and respectability, and, more dangerously, a shift in what is popularly regarded as scientific fact. Certainly New Age thinking embodies what many would consider laudable ideals--positive lifestyles, self-help and development, environmental awareness--but on the other hand it carries along with it many of the irrational trappings of its predecessors. Think of any occult/fringe subject, and the chances are that it will slide smoothly into the New Ager's world-view and vocabulary. One of the characteristics of the New Age is its diversity, and many of the traditional follies find themselves re-expressed in the new system. Spiritualism casts off its dusty doily image and becomes channeling--Red Indian spirit guides and all; energies supposed to radiate from the fingers of natural healers now come from hi-tech pocket-sized electronic devices. One of Britain's largest and most well-organised sources of New Age paraphernalia is Brighton's "Unicorn Place" (39, Duke Street, Brighton, BN1 1AG). Within the pages of its mail-order catalogue New Agers can find just about all the gadgetry they need. All the more popular forms of "New Age science" are collected and presented as a complete package. For New Agers there is an implicit continuity: once they accept the truth of, say, pendulum dowsing, the rest follows--palmistry, phrenology, pyramid power, crystal power, channeling. All are valid, everything is proven. So, after this onslaught of all things fringe, it comes as something of a surprise when the order form rather grudgingly announces, "'The Unicorn Place' claims no mystical, medical or esoteric powers with any of our advertised products." What a letdown!

The subject of "anomalous phenomena" is one which stirs the passions in many free-thinkers and skeptics. Two publications which approach the subject in strikingly different ways are Fortean Times and Science Frontiers. Fortean Times (96, Mansfield Road, London NW3 2HX) is a quarterly publication edited by Bob Rickard, also responsible for the recent Brooke Bond 'Paranormal' card

series (see B&IS 1.2). Each issue is crammed with reports (often highly anecdotal) from around the world of unusual, bizarre, and frequently hilarious happenings. Typical topics include rains of fish, spiders, and winkles, "faces" in the sky, humans with horns, feral children, strange coincidences, exploding chickens... The secret is not to take it all too seriously--FT is often infuriating, but always entertaining. Along similar lines, but much more restrained, is the work of William Corliss, whose bimonthly Science Frontiers (Sourcebook Project, P.O. Box 107, Glen Arm, MD 21057, USA) newsletter is full of strange reports mostly culled from respectable scientific journals such as Nature. Mr Corliss is an archetypal free-thinker; while he sometimes juxtaposes respectable scientific reports with wild speculations, he more often presents his data without comment, leaving the ball squarely in the reader's court. Can explanations be found within established scientific knowledge for strange occurrences such as earth noises, flashes in the sky, rains of objects, marine phosphorescence? Or must we declare them "paranormal," invoking alien visitations, mystical powers, and the rest? Whatever one's outlook, Science Frontiers is a fascinating record of reliably reported phenomena, whose very strangeness shows just how much there still is to understand and discover.

Spirits whose talents lie on the musical side should contact medium Rosemary Brown (see B&IS 1.4, "Mark Plummer on Gay Byrne"), who is recording a new LP. In the past, Ms Brown has been the channel for "new" works by decomposed composers such as Chopin, Liszt, and Beethoven. Other posthumous collaborators have included Einstein, Shaw, Russell, and Jung, and she claims to have recently met Gershwin and John Lennon. Extraordinary, but that is not all; as Ms Brown says, "they have instruments on the other side we have never seen."

Have you ever been intrigued by coincidences? Thanks to Prediction's "Occult Question Time" page I can reveal their true significance at last. They are, and I quote, "psychic signposts along life's highway. They show the beholder that they are on the right path towards evolution and that they are in harmony generally with the universe." Not a lot of people know that...



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