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Rupert Sheldrake
on Unexplained
Animal Powers

Human–Animal
Communication

Animals in the
Séance Room

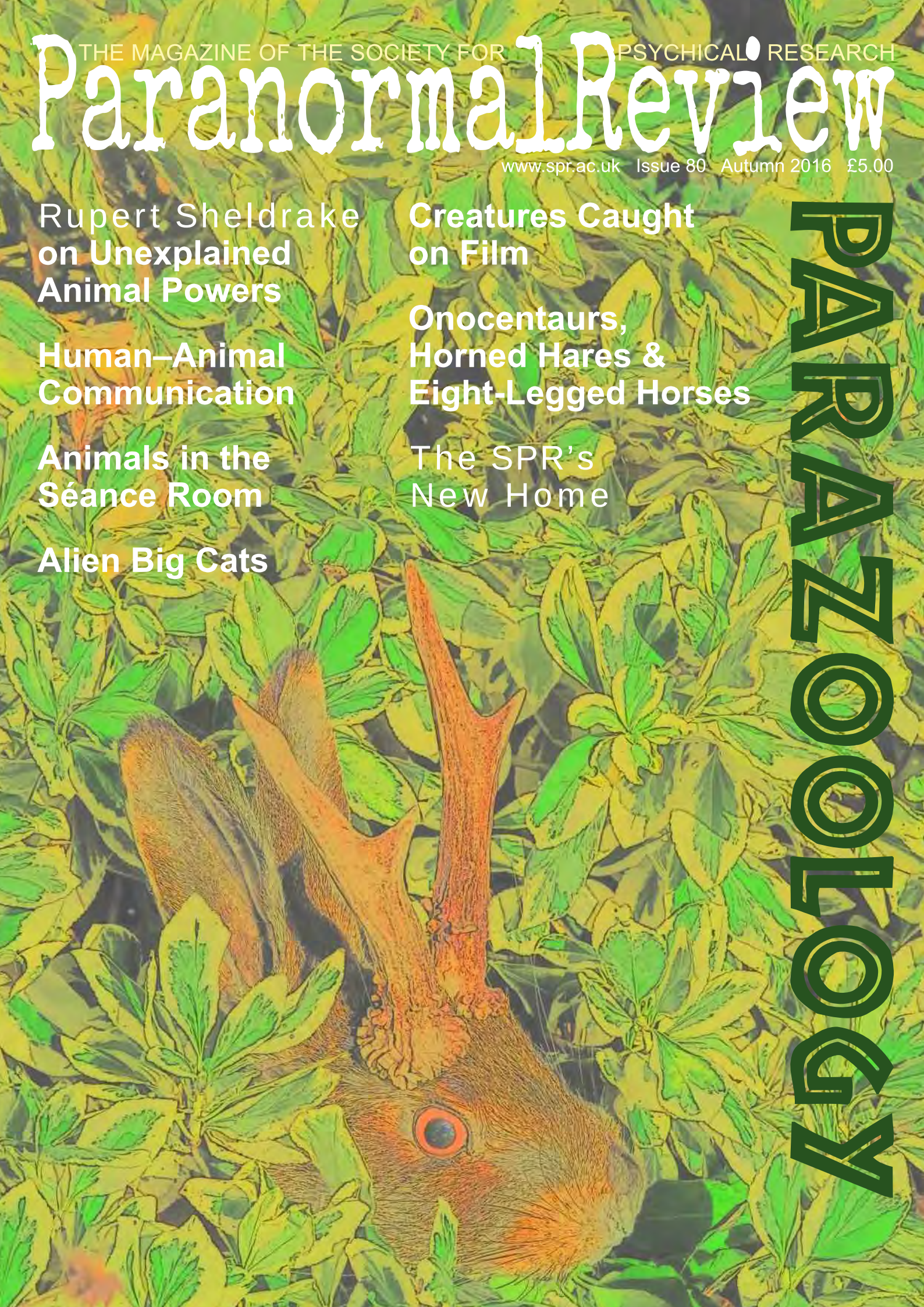
Alien Big Cats

Creatures Caught
on Film

Onocentaurs,
Horned Hares &
Eight-Legged Horses

The SPR's
New Home

PARAZOOLOGY



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PARAZOOLOGY

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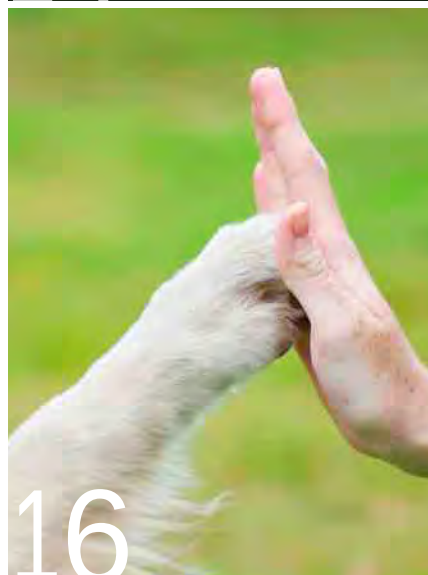
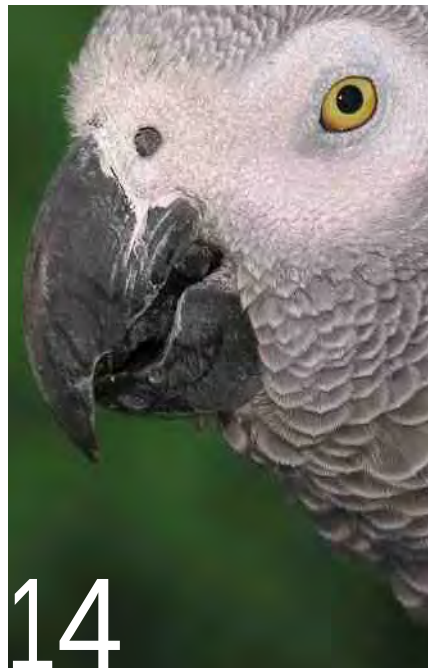
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Cover: *Lepus Cornutus* 1 © Leo Ruickbie. This Page: Grey Parrot CC 3.0 L. Miguel Bugallo Sanchez; Fake 'Mermaid', 1923. Dog's Paw © Shutterstock. Opposite: Bust of D.D. Hume in the SPR Library © Leo Ruickbie; Lajos Pap, c.1935, courtesy of the College of Psychic Studies.

Human–Animal Communication Research

DEBORAH
ERICKSON



There are several examples in the non-human animal world of selected individuals possessing advanced skills to communicate verbally with humans. Alex the grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) exhibited cognitive capacities comparable to marine animals, such as bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), Bonobo apes (*Pan Paniscus*), and sometimes four to six-year-old children. 'Of particular interest is that his [Alex's] abilities are inferred not from operant tasks common in animal research, but from vocal responses to vocal questions; that is, he demonstrates intriguing communicative parallels with young humans, despite his phylogenetic distance.' [1] Without training and on his own initiative, Alex also appeared to transfer his ability to use 'none' to comment on the absence of an attribute (different/same or smaller/bigger) to the absence of a specific quantity, as in zero.

The bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) is known for a high level of language competency. Herman's study proposed that the dolphin's cognitive structures for the interpretation and manipulation of auditory information are highly developed. The study included an exploration of the dolphin's specializations in auditory information processing, language comprehension, sentence understanding (relational sentences, structurally novel sentences, co-joined sentences), and generalization and representation of meaning. 'Overall, the positive findings on the ability to process and manipulate auditory materials complexly is in keeping with the expectations based on the extensive auditory and sound

production specializations of the dolphin, and concomitant developments in auditory cortex.' [2]

For over 120 years a small group of scientists has been investigating telepathy, often obtaining significant results. In 1985, a meta-analysis covering twenty-eight parapsychological studies showed a hit rate of 37 per cent. A leading member of the Committee for Scientific Inquiry performed a meta-analysis of the same data and also found that the odds against chance were extremely high. [3] Quantum physics research of the last twenty years has discovered that physical objects are not as separate as we once thought they were. At the quantum particle level, all separateness disappears and everything is connected. Schrödinger and Born described this process as entanglement. [4] However, Einstein more descriptively called it 'spukhafte Fernwirkung' or 'spooky action at a distance'. [5] He believed that quantum entanglement would someday be seen as a mathematical error in calculation.

Instead, scientists continue to be baffled by repeated discoveries at the subatomic level that simply do not subscribe to the previously-known laws of physics. 'Reality is woven from strange, "holistic" threads that aren't located precisely in space or time. Tug on a dangling loose end from this fabric of reality, and the whole cloth twitches, instantly, throughout all space and time.' [6]

Animal telepathy was first written about by William J. Long, who was a minister and well-known naturalist of the early twentieth century. He accepted animal telepathy

as 'a natural gift or faculty of the animal mind, which is largely unconscious, and it is from the animal mind that we inherit it [...] that the animals inherit this power of silent communication over great distances is occasionally manifest even among our half-natural domestic creatures.' [7]

A small group of scientists conducted psi research with kittens (*Felis catus*) beginning in the 1950s and continuing through the focused period of experimental parapsychology research in the 1960s and 1970s. Exploratory trial results showed above-chance scoring, but only for some of the kittens; one of the best-scoring kittens had a close relationship to Osiris and his family. Another series of trials using an independent experimenter showed no positive deviation from chance, and the electric shock trials showed a significant psi-missing effect – in other words, obtaining scores significantly below chance levels. [8]

Long's writings were the inspiration for animal telepathy studies by Sheldrake. [9] Several thousand people wrote to Sheldrake reporting the remarkable telepathic behavior of their pets, particularly dogs, that seemed to know when their owners were coming home. A detailed study completed with a domestic dog named Jaytee and his guardian showed positive results of the animal's behaviour prior to the guardian arriving home. [10]

Wiseman, Smith and Milton disputed Sheldrake's results with a supposedly similar study with the same animal, guardian and methods. [11] However, Sheldrake criticized the Wiseman study, citing a flawed use of criterion and data

plotting.[12] Wiseman, Smith and Milton countered with a defence of their version of the study. However, in a later interview Wiseman admitted, 'It depends how the data is collected, so I don't think there's any debate, but the patterning in my studies are the same as the patterning in Rupert's studies. That's not up for grabs. That's fine. It's how it's interpreted.'[13] Clearly, controversy surrounding parapsychology research is never far behind a published study that supports a psi hypothesis.

In a later study, Sheldrake and Smart tested another return-anticipating Rhodesian Ridgeback dog named Kane. In nine out of ten videotaped trials, Kane spent most of his time looking out of a front window when his owner was on her way home. He anticipated his guardian's arrival more than ten minutes in advance, even if she returned in an unfamiliar vehicle, taxi, when the people at home did not expect her, or when she set off for home at randomly-selected times. Sheldrake explained, 'If the possibility of telepathy is admitted, then the simplest explanation is that the dogs are responding to their owners directly. The problem with this suggestion is that some people reject the very possibility of telepathy on theoretical grounds. And even among those who regard the existence of telepathy as a question to be answered empirically rather than theoretically, no one knows how it might work.'[14]

One of the most unusual communications received by Sheldrake was one written by Aimee Morgana, guardian of a (then) ten-year-old African grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) named N'kisi. N'kisi was reported to respond to Morgana's thoughts and intentions in a direct manner that appeared to be telepathic in nature. Morgana reported that

N'kisi had awakened her by commenting on the actions in her dreams.[15]

More recently, Dutton and Williams published an exhaustive meta-analysis review of animal psi research that explored two main threads.[16] The first was experimental research that has been generally conducted within a classical conditioning paradigm: animals can be trained to respond to a stimulus and a baseline response is measured that 'has tended to explain animal psi as an evolutionarily adaptive process of information transmission'. The second is animal fieldwork, which recognizes the importance of the human-animal relationship for the occurrence of psi. They argued that 'the evidence suggests that animal psi may function as an expression of relationship or "resonance" between individuals.' Taken as a whole, the authors concluded that animal psi research evidence reveals a small psi effect that is not easily replicable, subject to fluctuations, decline effects, and an unclear source. Like humans, animals appear to vary in terms of possible psi ability, and the research indicates the central importance of the experimenter-participant relationship. However, from a conventional research perspective, the relationship between the experimenter and animal participant is considered to be a potentially confounding factor.

In other recent research, Erickson conducted fifty telepathic animal communication sessions with human guardians and their canines.[17] The guardian/canine teams were in thirty-six different cities from Erickson and the guardian was on the telephone for the session, which was recorded. Five standard questions were asked of all dogs, then the session was opened to the guardian's questions, which were

not known by Erickson in advance of the session. After the session, the guardians received a link to the recording and a web survey form that included all of the questions asked and all of the answers received from canine, then independently ranked the accuracy of the information telepathically received during the session. Using a ranking scale of 1 (entirely inaccurate) to 6 (entirely accurate), the guardians' average accuracy ranking across all fifty sessions was 5.12.

A follow-up research project with a similar design was conducted with therapy horses (*Equus caballus*) who worked with PTSD-diagnosed military veterans. The veterans submitted their questions ahead of the session and received a written report of the communication session with their horse. The veterans' average ranking of the usefulness of the information received telepathically from the horses was 4.9; the horses' guardians' average ranking was 5.75.[18] Clearly, telepathic interspecies communication as explored by Long and more recently by Sheldrake and Erickson is appropriate for continued structured research.

Animals can keep people connected to their feelings, without which there is no real meaning in life. When people remain connected to their emotions, they will not lose their way in the mental abstractions and technological innovations that attempt to consume the focus of their lives. Still deeply connected to nature and their natural place in the universe, animals have a great deal to teach people. 'The animals have lifted a veil and made a connection with us in that place where we are all one. The animals are calling us to council.'[19] Ψ

NOTES

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10th Issue

PR80 is the tenth issue of the new-look *Paranormal Review*. Since 2014, the Editor, Dr Leo Ruickbie, has published a total of 123 articles in 402 pages, covering subjects as diverse as physical mediumship and the problems of time and consciousness.

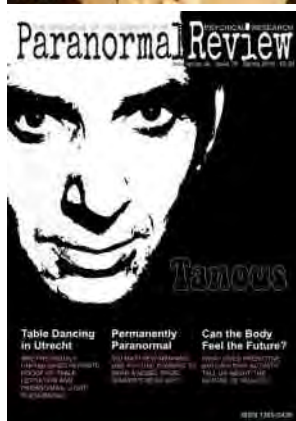
Illustration has become a key point of the new magazine. Imagery has been drawn from medieval woodcuts, painting, modern art, archival photographs and specially commissioned photography to create a distinctive look for the magazine. Dr Ruickbie took the photographs used on four of the covers: the SPR's annual report on fire for PR72; Helen Duncan's ectoplasm for PR74; controversial medium Kai Mügge for PR75; and *Lepus cornutus* for PR80.

Initial reactions in 2014 were encouraging. Dr Carlos Alvarado, Dr Richard Broughton, Prof. Bernard Carr, Gerd Hövelmann, Drs Wim Kramer, Dr Hugh Pincott, Dr Tom Ruffles, Dr Zofia Weaver, Dr Melvyn Willin and many others all sent supportive messages.

Reactions continue to be encouraging. On 14 September 2016, Sharon Hill, creator of the sceptical website Doubtful News, said of the last issue:

A good read, full of interesting ideas. I like this magazine because of the quality of the content and that it's done by the SPR [...] This issue provides a thoughtful [take] on today's paranormal (parapsychological) topics for even the skeptically-minded. (<https://idoubtit.wordpress.com/>)

However, none of this would have been possible without the first-rate contributions from investigators, scholars and scientists across the world. Many, if not most of them, are members of the Society, which testifies to the wide experience and high level of expertise that constitutes the SPR membership.



Letters

Send your letters to Dr Leo Ruickbie at The Society for Psychical Research, 1 Vernon Mews, London W14 9RL, or paranormalreview@spr.ac.uk

A Coincidence

You may be interested in a minor coincidence connected with the last issue of the *Paranormal Review* (or not, but I'll tell you it anyway). I have just returned from a cruise to Portugal. Specifically, I visited Porto (and was very taken with it).

Unfortunately, my mother-in-law, who was with us ended up with a chest infection and is now in hospital. My wife was saying, 'I don't know why this has happened, but I expect there is some reason for it' (in other words, why us?).

I may have mentioned that somehow I seem to get 'messages' in the media (print or broadcast). I happened to glance at the bottom of the front cover of the magazine you sent me [PR79]. Next to the blurb about me is another blurb entitled 'Placebos in Porto'.

I have a thing about placebos and had a paper published with a colleague in the *British Medical Journal* a few years ago and make mention of them on various medical forums frequently. For a strange reason this comforts me.

Dr Ian Rubenstein

Photography Competition

Win the chance to shoot the next cover! A new photography competition will be announced in 2017 in the *Paranormal Review*.

contributors



Richard S. Broughton

Dr Richard S. Broughton is Hon. Treasurer of the SPR. Retired from formal academic duties, he is a Visiting Research Fellow in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Northampton and a member of the Centre for the Study of Anomalous Psychological Processes. Dr Broughton's career began with PhD studies under Prof. John Beloff in the 1970s and he was later President and long-time Board member of the Parapsychological Association.



Deborah Erickson

Dr Deborah Erickson, PhD, is an independent parapsychological researcher with a thirty-year career in technology management. Her MBA concentrated on technology, while her PhD is in psychology with a focus on consciousness and spirituality. She is Honorary Website Manager for the Society for Psychical Research, as well as a Reiki Master and Healing Touch for Animals practitioner. See www.deborahericksonphd.com



Edina Eszenyi

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Alexander Hay

Dr Alexander Hay lectures in journalism at Southampton Solent University, and has a wide range of research interests. As part of a broader study into cultural studies and the history of the press, he has researched cryptozoology and other 'Fortean' subjects, and how they are interpreted by both the media and the public.



Brandon Hodge

Brandon Hodge is a collector, historian and occult researcher. He curates the world's largest collection of planchettes and automatic writing devices (www.mysteriousplanchette.com) and travels the world documenting séance artefacts and lecturing on Spiritualism history. He is also the official Historian of the Talking Board Historical Society (tbhs.org). He is always interested to hear from readers with further information, contact: brandon@mysteriousplanchette.com.



John Poynton

Prof. John Poynton, OMS, is an emeritus professor of biology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a scientific research associate of London's Natural History Museum, and a Scientific Fellow of the Zoological Society of London. He has published extensively in the fields of biogeography, taxonomy, ecology, evolution, philosophy of science, and parapsychology or psychical research. Currently, he is the President of the Society for Psychical Research.



Leslie Price

Leslie Price has been archivist of the College of Psychic Studies since 2013, having originally worked there as librarian from 1968-9. He is an honorary member of the SPR and has served variously as Librarian, a member of the Library Committee, Book Review Editor and as a member of Council. He was secretary of the first SPR annual conference in 1976. In January 2017 he will resume editorship of *Psypioneer*, the free online journal.



Leo Ruickbie

Dr Leo Ruickbie, BA (Hons), MA, PhD, AKC (Associate of King's College), was awarded a PhD for his thesis on the sociology of contemporary witchcraft. He is the author of five books to date, most recently *A Brief Guide to the Supernatural*, *A Brief Guide to Ghost Hunting* and *The Impossible Zoo*. He is a member of the Royal Historical Society, the Parapsychological Association, and a council member of the Gesellschaft für Anomalistik. See www.ruickbie.com.



Rupert Sheldrake

Dr Rupert Sheldrake, PhD, has been the Director of the Perrott-Warrick Project, a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, and a Research Fellow of the Royal Society. He is currently a Fellow of the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Petaluma, California. Much of his research on unexplained powers of animals and of people is summarized in *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home*, and *Other Unexplained Powers of Animals*, and others. See www.sheldrake.org.



Zofia Weaver

Dr Zofia Weaver has a background in linguistics and is a Council member of the Society for Psychical Research. Her Polish connections mean that she has access to sources never published in English and she concentrates her research on the contribution made to the field by famous Polish psychics, such as the clairvoyant Stefan Ossowiecki and the physical medium Franek Kluski, the subject of her recent book *Other Realities?* (2015).



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Melvyn Willin

Dr Melvyn Willin has doctorates in paramusicology from Sheffield and witchcraft from Bristol. He is the Honorary Archives Officer of the SPR and has published several books, including *Music, Witchcraft and the Paranormal* and *Ghosts Caught on Film*. Research includes Perrott-Warrick scholarships for the study of Near Death Experiences from the perspective of music; the efficacy of witchcraft spells; and paranormal demonstrations within the martial arts.

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