

Publisher

The Society for Psychical Research
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Subscriptions

Paranormal Review is sent free to members of the Society for Psychical Research. It is also available to non-members for a yearly subscription of £20.00, including post and packing in the UK. Contact secretary@spr.ac.uk

Back Issues

Members have access to previous editions of the *Psi Researcher* and *Paranormal Review* via the online library. Some back issues are also available for purchase at £5.00 per copy, including post and packing within the UK (outside the UK additional postage costs apply). Contact secretary@spr.ac.uk

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Features, articles, letters, experiences, notices, reports and reviews should be sent by email to Dr Leo Ruickbie at paranormalreview@spr.ac.uk. Material can also be posted to the Editor at 1 Vernon Mews, London W14 0RL. Please mark envelopes 'Paranormal Review'. Full submission guidelines can be found on the SPR website at www.spr.ac.uk under 'publications'.

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Printed in Great Britain by

Premier Print, London

The Society for Psychical Research

The SPR was the first organisation established to examine allegedly paranormal phenomena using scientific principles. Our aim is to learn more about events and abilities commonly described as 'psychic' or 'paranormal' by supporting research, sharing information and encouraging debate. The SPR is a Registered Charity, established in 1882.

Membership

The SPR welcomes members of the general public, as well as students and researchers in all disciplines, to join. Membership does not imply acceptance of any particular opinion concerning the nature or reality of the phenomena examined, and the Society holds no corporate views. The minimum age for joining is 16, with reduced subscriptions for students, couples and senior citizens. To renew or apply for membership please visit the website at www.spr.ac.uk, telephone the Secretary, Peter Johnson, on 020 7937 8984, or email secretary@spr.ac.uk.

ISSN: 1369-0426

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Is there such a thing as 'parazology'? We have cryptozoology, of course, but the subject of anomalous animals seems so much bigger than those that are merely 'hidden'. I was inspired to develop this themed issue after working on my book *The Impossible Zoo: An Encyclopedia of Fabulous Beasts and Mythical Monsters*, released in September this year. There are many books on this subject, but I found that few of them went back to the sources, as any good historian should, to discover the origins of these ideas.

What could have been another piece of popular light reading turned into a history of science project. The old familiar monsters – dragons, unicorns and so on – all led back to humanity's emerging attempts to describe the natural world. The names that peppered my bibliography were not those of J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling, but Carolus Linnaeus and Pliny the Elder.

I knew many other people were working in this field and taking a multitude of paths through it. The Society's Website Manager, Dr Deborah Erickson, presented her research into possibly psychic animal-human communication at last year's joint SPR/PA conference in Greenwich. Dr Rupert Sheldrake is already well known for



his work in this area. I invited them to contribute and put out a call for papers.

The results can be found in this issue. Drs Sheldrake and Erickson both summarize their researches into the possible psychic abilities of animals. Dr Zofia Weaver takes us on another journey, looking at the animal materializations that allegedly occurred during séances held by Franek Kluski. Dr Melvyn Willin considers other materializations: those allegedly caught on film. Dr Alexander Hay examines a typical cryptozoological theme – the so-called 'Alien Big Cats' – and unravels the social complexities at play. Dr Edina Eszenyi takes us further back into the past with an examination of the textual life of the little-known onocentaur in the sixteenth century. Finally, I bring the subject to a close with a few odd occurrences of the sort that used to be routinely reported in the publications of the SPR.

We see that 'parazology', like the terms 'paranormal' and 'parapsychology', is not about what lies beyond zoology, physical reality, or psychology, but what lies beyond what is accepted or acceptable. It takes us back to the founding statement of our Society to examine the evidence without prejudice in the true spirit of scientific enquiry. ♀

editorial

Dr Leo Ruickbie
Editor