

THE SCOLE EXPERIMENT. DEFINITIVE PROOF OF AN AFTERLIFE?

Encounters and Enigmas magazines. 2007

'It is entirely possible that behind the perception of our senses, worlds are hidden of which we are unaware.'

Albert Einstein.

The Scole Experiment is widely regarded as one of the most successful paranormal experiments ever conducted involving communication with the dead.

What makes the Scole Experiment so different from conventional spirit communication using mediums is the remarkable range of physical evidence produced.

This included astonishing photographic and video material, numerous 'apports' or objects materialized into the séance room out of nowhere, the levitation of objects, spirit hands physically interacting with observers and spirit voices communicating directly from a point in space and not via a medium.

Additionally verification of the Scole claims involved numerous scientific observers who were invited to scrutinize sessions and a professional magician. The highly respected Society for Psychical Research in London also conducted a lengthy investigation and published a report. To date no one has found any evidence that what occurred during the Scole experiment is anything but genuine.

So it appears that the question now arising from the Scole Experiment is not whether hoaxing was involved but the far more important issue of whether it provides conclusive evidence for the survival of human consciousness after death?

(Journalistic note: To avoid the cumbersome – purported or alleged spirits - all the time in this article I will condense this to just using the word spirits. With the understanding that this is the terminology used by the Scole researchers and SPR. Obviously this remains a hypothesis and not a proven fact.)

BACKGROUND

The Scole Experimental Group (SEG) consisted of four core members Robin and Sandra Foy and Alan and Diana Bylett who were the mediums. The experiments took place in a converted cellar in the Foy's beautiful 17th century farmhouse

located in the sleepy village of Scole in northeast England. I first visited this house and met the SEG last year as part of a documentary series I am making for American television exploring the evidence for life after death.

(See documentary section on site)

This cellar, affectionately called the 'Scole Hole,' is about five meters by ten and is painted a deep midnight blue. During sessions the two couples would sit around a circular wooden table upon which was placed various crystals. All sessions were conducted in complete darkness and in an effort to deflect possible accusations of hoaxing, participants would wear luminous armbands so visitors could observe their movements.

Beginning in 1993 all four members embarked on a five-year experiment using a revolutionary kind of 'physical mediumship', which succeeded in producing tangible objects from the spirit world.

The SEG believe they were guided to this particular house by spiritual intelligence. They were later informed by spirit entities that the location of the house was a significant factor in helping build a bridge between the living and the dead. They were also informed that the ability to create this bridge was assisted by something referred to as 'creative energy'. Their spirit communicators told them this was a blending of three different types of energy, which the 'spirit team' could manipulate to produce the desired results.

Foy describes the spirit team as comprising 'thousands of minds' that exist in another dimension of reality normally invisible to the senses. Members of this team of discarnate beings were dedicated to assisting in the experiments from the 'other side'. Unlike traditional spiritualist séances where mediums were reportedly able to exude ectoplasm during séances, the spirit team's ability to manipulate 'creative energy' precluded this necessity. This spared the mediums considerable duress since traditionally mediums are completely exhausted by the experience. During the Scole Experiments the Byletts would go into trance, spirits would communicate through them and later they would emerge without being physically depleted but without any memory of what had transpired.

Robin Foy, a huge bear of a man who radiates warmth and integrity, has been investigating psychic phenomena for over thirty years. He explains the motivation of the Scole Experiments. "What we wanted to do was to provide physical evidence for other people to witness, which would provide actual proof of life after death that could be studied scientifically. In short we wanted to prove beyond any doubt that life goes on beyond death."

For Robin and the other members of the SEG belief in life after death is not a matter of faith. "When people ask me do I believe in an after life I say no. I don't believe. I know. It's not about faith it's about evidence."

Although the Foyes and Byletts were experienced in conducting mediumistic

sessions, it took the group meeting twice-a-week for a year before any significant results were obtained.

Then in October 1993 the SEG's perseverance began to pay off as they witnessed the first of a series of extraordinary paranormal phenomena. Whilst seated around the table a coin was 'apported' out of thin air and materialized on the table. Robin summarizes the astonishing range of phenomena that they continued to experience. "After the first apport," he states. "We began to witness a variety of lights that would dart around the room. We called these 'spirit lights'. Next we had objects levitated and floated around the room. Then a large number of objects were apported into the Scole Hole. We had independent voices which we called energy voices. These emanated from mid-air. This was followed by two-way communications of spirit people who were actually present in the room. We had two way vocal communications with various personalities in the 'spirit team' and various communications through a simple very cheap tape recorder, using only the amplifier in the recorder. And finally we had two way conversations with other realms and areas of existence by using a special device, called the 'Germanium Receptor,' which we were shown how to build by the spirit team."

In short the SEG had hit the jackpot. Never before in the history of paranormal exploration had so many types of phenomena been so successfully and repeatably produced.

Once a connection had been made between the living and the dead it was possible to communicate regularly with a wide range of spiritual personalities. There was a core group of personalities who appeared in nearly every session and others who communicated occasionally. One entity called Manu was described as a 'powerful guide' and the 'gatekeeper'. He would come through initially welcome the group and then 'go behind the scenes' to 'blend the energies' so the communications could commence.

Other personalities included Edward Matthews, who told the group he had been a scientist during his earthly life and who had taken it upon himself to assist in the technical aspects of facilitating communications from the spirit world.

Other personalities who appeared frequently included Patrick McKenna, who had formerly been a priest in Ireland when alive, Raji an Indian Guide and former soldier, Emily Bradshaw, who the Foys described as a 'stern character, a little bit like a school mistress' and John Paxton. Paxton was described as a 'gentle and evolved spirit being', who could only communicate to the group when no visitors were present. The SEG claimed this was necessary to overcome the difficulties of Paxton communicating from 'one of the higher spiritual planes'. One of Emily Bradshaw's functions was to pass on information and messages to visitors from deceased friends and relatives who were now in the

spirit world. This information would often contain personal information known only by the visitors and therefore impossible to fabricate.

Some of the spirit personalities were able to demonstrate a phenomenon called 'extended voice'. Instead of using the voices of the mediums to communicate with the group it was possible to project their voices from any point in space. Thus it appeared as if his voice was coming out of mid-air. All sessions were recorded and the SEG accumulated over one thousand hours of material.

Due to the fact the communications continued over a five-year period, the group became very attached to these regularly appearing spirit personalities. "Emily Bradshaw became particularly dear to us," explains Robin Foy. "Out of the thousand hours of recordings she featured in many hundreds. So like many of the other personalities she became like a dear friend or part of the family,"

When I interviewed the SEG the idea of regularly communicating with the dead and considering them as family was still rather shocking. But Robin Foy assured me that it was just a question of getting to know what was possible with spirit communication. "You get completely used to it," he explained. "Talking to someone who is deceased becomes a natural thing. It's the same as you and me talking right now. There is no difference except the fact we are aware they are no longer in this world."

INVESTIGATIONS INTO SCOLE.

One of the unique aspects of the Scole Experiments was the willingness of the SEG to allow independent scientific investigators to take part in sessions and to design experiments that could help excluded the possibility of fraud.

The late Montague Keen, who had been a member of the Society of Psychical Research (SPR) since the 1940s played one of the most active roles in investigating Scole and attended 28 sessions. He co-authored a 350-page report on it for the SPR along with Dr David Fontana a professor of psychology and the late D Arthur Ellison who was an Emeritus professor of Electrical Engineering.

Additionally the SEG allowed a number of other scientists and non-scientific visitors to take part in the Scole sessions including the internationally renowned biochemist and author Dr. Rupert Sheldrake. All the scientific investigators witnessed a wide range of phenomena and none could find a shred of evidence of fraud.

'SPIRIT LIGHTS'

One of the most spectacular aspects of the physical phenomena witnessed at

Scoles were the so-called Spirit Lights. Most of the visitors would see these lights that would appear fairly quickly after a session began. "The lights were animated and appeared intelligently directed," stated Keen who had frequently witnessed the phenomenon. "I say intelligent because they would respond to our wishes whether expressed verbally or just in our minds." The lights were luminous orbs the size of a small coin that would fly around the room performing aerial acrobatics. They often move so fast that they appeared as streaks of light. They would stop, hover and land on objects. Occasionally when someone touched a light they would receive a tiny electric shock.

Keen noted that it was not possible for these lights to have been faked since they were able to pass through solid objects such as a table. On one occasion a visiting scientist Dr Graton Guinness in an effort to check if the lights were attached to any wires cupped his hand around one. "It buzzed around angrily inside his hand for a while until he released it," stated Keen. "It indicated to him and everyone present that nothing physical could explain their movement." Dr Fontana describes the sensation of a light entering his chest. He said it was like a butterfly fluttering around inside him. Keen admitted that the source of the lights was mystery. "We were told, however, that they were animated spirits or discarnate entities that were not yet fully formed." The SEG were able to capture the movement of these lights on video.

DEMATERIALIZATIONS OF SOLID OBJECTS.

Montague Keen along with Dr Fontana and Dr Ellison witnessed what Keen describes as one of the most dramatic and definitive demonstrations of paranormal phenomena he had ever experienced. During one session with the SEG the three investigators watched as a Spirit Light settled on top of a crystal placed on the table. "The crystal was then levitated," stated Keen. "We could see it glowing as it floated. It was then lowered into a semi-transparent bowl that was sitting on the table in front of me." One of the spirit personalities then instructed Dr Ellison to pick up the crystal and inspect it. He did this and then placed the crystal, which was glowing from the 'Spirit light' inside it, back into the bowl. He was then told to pick it up again. "This time when his hand closed to pick it up his fingers passed straight through the formerly solid object." He stated. "We could still see the object as if it was solid but somehow its solidity was gone leaving a perfect non-material representation. "When told to pick it up again they discovered that the crystal had now recovered its solidity" This remarkable demonstration was repeated so both Keen and Fontana could experience the dematerialization for themselves. "Now this dumfounded Dr Ellison," recalled Keen. "He had been investigating the paranormal for years and at last had an experience that finally convinced him that this was real since there was absolutely no way it could have been faked."

The Spirit Team told Robin Foy that the non-material essence of the crystal was something distinct from the physical object and that what had occurred was an analogous to the process to death. "They told us that this is similar to

what happens to us when we pass into the spirit world," he stated. "Our physical body stays behind, but the essence of ourselves remains exactly the same and can be witnessed under certain conditions by other people."

SPIRIT MATERIALIZATIONS.

Montague Keen also frequently witnessed the materialization of spirit forms. These were visible in outline and illuminated by the glowing orbs of light. "They looked like angelic forms," recalled Keen. "They clearly had some physical substance, because frequently they would sweep up against us and it felt like touching a piece of cotton wool. The forms varied. Some were shadowy and insubstantial and you could almost see through them."

On several occasions a apparently solid spirit hand would materialize in front of the visitors. This happened when Dr Sheldrake was present. " There was this glowing disembodied hand floating around in the room," he stated. " I joked later it was just like something out of the movie the Adam's family. During the session when I expressed my surprise at seeing a disembodied hand, the voice of Mrs. Bradshaw replied saying 'It's not disembodied.' To which I replied 'Do you mean that the rest of the body is invisible?' and she said 'Precisely'. She then asked me if I wanted to touch it, so I requested 'hand would you touch me so I can feel what you are like? It then came round and tapped me on the shoulder."

Keen describes how the hand grasped him and stroked his hand. "There was enough light so I could see the fingernails. It was a male hand and for about three minutes it was caressing me. I found it far from spooky, in fact it was a rather wonderful experience."

THE PHOTGRAPHIC EVIDENCE.

The first of the photographic evidence was produced after the Spirit Team had instructed the SEG to bring in a camera loaded with film. The SEG then witnessed the camera being levitated around the room and they could hear the camera's shutter clicking and the film being advanced as exposures were made. When the film was later developed, despite the fact everything happened in complete darkness, the SEG discovered a set of eleven remarkable images. One of the images was of St Paul's Cathedral in London, apparently during the Blitz. Another was of the front page of a British Newspaper called the Daily Mirror. The SEG speculated that these images were actual memories of one of the spirits who lived in London during this period.

When Keen was told that the SEG were able to obtain paranormal photographs, he devised an experiment to obtain photographs that would aim to eliminate the possibility of fraud. They eventually came up with a procedure in which factory sealed rolls of 35 mm Polaroid film was brought to the sessions by

investigators. They were then placed inside a specially constructed wooded security box, which was padlocked and then held firmly by an investigator during the entire session. Spirits would then work on the film directly, no camera being necessary. Immediately after a sitting was completed the film was developed in a special instant processor supplied by Polaroid. This way any results could immediately be viewed. And the results were truly staggering. Often the entire length of the film was covered with hand written poems, symbols, diagrams and other cryptic communications in a variety of different languages. Much of Keen's energies went into deciphering many of the obscure references. But why would spirits choose to communicate in such a cryptic manner? Keen speculated that the more difficult the problem posed by the messages the more evidential it became. "If someone like Napoleon came through and said - I can prove I am Napolian I was married to Josephine. Well everyone knows that. On the other hand if they claim to be someone and there's absolutely no trace of that person then this is not evidential either. If the communicators want to prove the existence of the afterlife they have to find some way to get round this dilemma. So they have to provide information that is not readily available in the public domain, which shows some sign of intelligence and is related to them in some way."

After much investigation Keen and his fellow investigators were entirely satisfied that the images on the film had been produced by paranormal means.

One of the most remarkable films produced under these controlled conditions appeared after the SEG had requested from the Spirit Team how they could improve the quality of the communications. The strip of Kodachrome film contained a diagram of an electrical circuit. This information was given to Dr Ellison, who was a professor of electrical engineering, to help him improve the performance of an electrical device he had started to construct. The device utilized the element Germanium, a substance used in semi-conductor research before silicon chips. The initials on the film were later discovered to be an identical match to those of the famous American inventor Thomas Alva Edison.

The SEG also managed to capture a number of remarkable images on video despite the taping occurring in complete darkness. Some of the images are very strange. On one tape a bubble appears against an abstract background in which a clearly discernable human face appears. In another pyramids can be seen. In a tape made on October 1998 a weird alien looking face appears. The SEG nick-named this entity 'blue' and thought it was some kind of 'inter-dimensional' being.

The success of the Scole Experiments brought new demands for further tightly controlled experiments. Montague Keen and other researchers had this in mind when on November 23 1998 Robin Foy made a general announcement stating that all future Scole Sessions were to be terminated. The explanation for why the experiments had to stop was as remarkable as the evidence they had collected.

Foy explained that the opening of an 'inter-dimensional doorway' that had been

created to assist in the experiments was causing serious space-time problems and that experimenters from the future had been attracted to this doorway. He explained, "We were told that since the interference was contrary to the strict laws of space and time, it must not be allowed to continue." The SEG felt duty bound to comply and the five years of experiments came to an abrupt end.

The Scole Experiments produced an amazing wealth of paranormal material that for many is conclusive evidence for life after death. And it's encouraging to discover that the Foy's have found a different couple of mediums who they intend to work with to set up a whole series of new experiments.

All of the people involved with Scole have been deeply impacted by their experiences. For the core group of the SEG perhaps their greatest discovery is how the evidence they produced confirms their belief that the spirit world is the most important reality. As Sandra Foy states: "The spirit world is our true home. I don't think that our earthly life is the real world at all. I think we come here to gain experience but when we shake off our physical bodies we return home because we are always spirit and so the spirit world is where we belong."