

LIGHTS IN THE BASEMENT

by Anne and John Spencer

This case (given the pseudonym Pinewood) has been going on for several years. Reports have already appeared in *ASSAP News*, including an incident involving photographs of a mysterious light phenomenon. The authors now introduce the background and latest reports on this fascinating case.

On 1 June 1996 ASSAP members returned to the community centre known in *ASSAP News* as 'Pinewood'. Fifteen people took part in the overnight watches. We had been there some time ago and wanted to repeat the studies again (see box).

The background to the case includes happenings in many parts of the building. Objects are known to have been moved about mysteriously in the office and in the main hall and its side room; some of these have been witnessed by visitors including the local policeman. Knocking and tapping sounds have been heard in the bar and snooker room. In the basement are rooms set aside for weight training and, on occasion, noises from these weights have been heard by people upstairs while the basement has been unoccupied.

Workers in the building feel different 'presences' around the building. One in particular they found quite disturbing, others not so troublesome, just known to be there. One of these has been given the name 'Russell', descriptive of his manifestations. A well-known medium, Eddie Burks, visited the centre with a film crew working for Discovery and he told us of his impressions. He claimed to feel the presence of different ghosts; one in particular he was sure was distressed and needed help.

While the crew was trying to film Burks in trance, three bulbs on the professional lighting rig all blew. The cameraman commented that he had never seen that happen before. All equipment had been working prior to that point.

The vigil itself was divided into five watches with the groups changing places, giving everyone a chance to visit all the areas of interest. We asked that all watchers keep notes throughout the night. The night, we must admit, was less eventful than others but some interesting points arose.

We feel the vigil went well in terms of organisation. All participants moved to their sites and settled down quickly. One or two noises were made, for instance the front door was shut noisily on occasion and one member sat on the weights, causing a noise to echo through the building. But because these were written into the notes we were able to match them with some of the noises that were reported by other members. Strangely, though the noises were very loud, some members did not report hearing anything, perhaps they knew that they were not 'paranormal' and did not report them for that reason.

Some interesting events were reported from the snooker room. Tim Harper on the second watch team noted knocks or bangs coming from an area near the cupboards. And on the last watch of the evening thuds were also heard from this area by John, P and D. On a previous vigil Anne and P heard tapping sounds, which were unresponsive to our own 'reply' tapping. On that same, earlier, vigil Anne, John and Chris heard some very loud bangs which seemed to emanate from the cupboard and for which no cause was found. We have verified that this was not known to the team on watch this time.

In the basement room used for weight training we have, in the past, found it quite 'atmospheric'. John, Phil and Chris reported they definitely 'felt' something there. We had noticed a strange light effect that seemed to respond when Anne shone an infra-red beam into the area. We had wondered if this was caused by an 'after-image'. We therefore repeated the experiment and found no such responsive behaviour was evident. At first this was disappointing, but on reflection we are led to discount the idea of after-image as this should have recurred.

A vigiler had reported in his notes that he had, while in a basement room, been hit on the head by a swinging bar. We telephoned him and asked him to describe the event. He said he had been sitting in the dark when he felt something hit his head giving him quite a shock. When the light was put on he noticed the bar hanging behind him, and it was this that had hit him. Reflecting on the occurrence he realised that he had been sitting with his head very close to the bar without knowing it was there and felt that a slight movement of his head would cause him to bump against it. He therefore no longer felt it to be paranormal. But later that night, during the last watch, Anne and Adam in the same room noticed that the punch bag was swinging, and each was sure that they had not touched it.

Simon was brave enough to spend some time watching the boilers in an area described by P as 'scary, scary, SCARY'. This was very useful as he was able to write down the times the boiler started up. Also, he realised that the noises produced by the boiler could easily be described as similar to maniacal laughter, with a little imaginative licence.

Overall it was an interesting night though nothing specifically or definitely paranormal was encountered, but enough to keep us interested.

Those present were: Adam Bailey, Elvie Baker, Paul Chambers, Simon Earwicker, Timothy Harper, Mike Lewis, Lee Norton, Paul Rogers, Anne Spencer, John Spencer, Chris Walton, Phil Walton, P & D (centre management).

CASE BACKGROUND

ASSAP has been involved in several vigils at the centre, in co-operation with other groups. Some particularly noteworthy light phenomena have been reported in *ASSAP News* and are quoted here as background for members who have recently joined.

28 April 1995 (from *ASSAP News 56* by Chris Walton)

After two team members became spooked in the cellar area, Phil, John and I decided to spend a while there by ourselves. Everybody else remained upstairs. Between 01:30 and 01:40 things started to happen. All of us could hear occasional noises at the far end of the room. Then we felt a build-up of the atmosphere almost as if an electrical storm was forming at the far end of the room. A noise was heard and an area approximately 1.5m off the ground and 2m from the back wall began emitting short bursts or pulses of orange light from within the central area, before moving at speed towards us. John, Phil and I all shouted 'now' at the same time before rushing the object. I took a series of photographs while moving towards the object. The flash failed as I took one shot, and the picture revealed two orange-coloured streaks of light.

26 August 1995 (from *ASSAP News 57* by Phil Walton)

After about 15 minutes I observed a small light rather like a firefly in motion, only dimmer, darting backwards and forwards at the far end of the room. [...] I asked if anyone was noticing anything (deliberately vague to avoid leading anyone) and I had my observations confirmed by the other three. This continued for approximately 15 minutes, when I felt that the intensity, atmosphere and general anxiety of the group had risen to a level that warranted my calling for backup.

I reached across in the dark to where I thought the walkie-talkie was and, as I stretched, the lights jumped from the far end to about 50cm from my nose. I started at first, then abandoned the walkie-talkie and just watched as the faint light now played and danced on the outside of a dumbbell that was on the weights stand in front of me. The incandescence darted and spread further and further over the surface of the weights and started to migrate down the stand itself. The best description of the lights I can give is that they were points of white with other colours. These colours (blue, red, orange, green) were very faint and seemed to merge. [...] An electrostatic meter was present during these events but registered nothing. It was shown to be in good working order when tested at the time.