

Local Group News

Friends of the **SMN, Auckland LEO HOBBS +64 9 478 7809**

The subject of our December meeting, the final for 2000, was a reading by David Bell and Stuart Manins of the poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, "That Nature is a Heraclitian Fire and Of The Comfort of The Resurrection". The reading was interspersed with lively discussion of possible interpretations of Hopkins' words, metaphors, and constructions, some of which we found difficult, but there was no doubt as to the importance for him of Hopkins' faith in the significance of the resurrection.

We began the New Year with two meetings on Esoteric Healing, led by JENNY NEVE. Jenny is a member of an Esoteric Healing group formed in New Zealand about 9 years ago. The group has studied the books of Alice A Bailey where the author gives instruction in esoteric healing, instruction which she claims to have received telepathically from a contemporary Tibetan mentor, Djwal Khul. The group has used a practice of joint meditation and visualisation to strengthen links and to develop the "group soul" which then becomes an essential factor in healing. At our March meeting Jenny gave us an outline of the concepts such as energy pathways, on which this approach to healing is based, and the procedure for a healing session was demonstrated. While many SMN members will be familiar with this subject, this is not the case for our Auckland group. We will continue to learn more at our April meeting.

Swiss Group

KURT DRESSLER +41 1 9800886

Kurt Dressler reports: November 26th th the group met at **Crêt-Bérard** near Lake Geneva. Theme of the meeting: *Science and Spirit - The integration of scientific, paranormal and spiritual experience into an undivided world view.* Talks were presented by HARALD WALACH (SMN, Freiburg University, D) on *ij Magic of Signs - A Nonlocal Interpretation of Homoeopathy*, and by BARBARA JAECKLI and PETER BINZ on *Communication in Encounters between Humans and Animals*.

Harald's talk on his remarkable new ideas was based on his very recent articles in *J. Scientific Exploration* and in *British Homoeopathic Journal*. Among homoeopaths the common idea about a working hypothesis for homoeopathic effects seems to be that during the potentisation process "information" or "energy" is being preserved or even enhanced in homoeopathic remedies. The organism is said to be able to pick up this information, which in turn will stimulate the organism into a self-healing response. According to this view the decisive element of homoeopathic therapy is the remedy which locally contains and conveys this information. Harald questions this view for empirical and theoretical reasons. Empirical research has shown a repetitive pattern, in fundamental and clinical research alike: There are many anomalies in high-dilution research and clinical homoeopathic trials which will set any observing researcher thinking. But no single paradigm has proved stable enough in order to produce repeatable results independent of the researcher. Harald concludes that the database is too weak and contradictory to substantiate a local interpretation of homoeopathy, in which the remedy would be endowed with causal-informational content. He proposes a non-local interpretation to understand the anomalies along the lines of connectedness, magic of signs, and semiotics of synchronicity.

A summary of the presentation by Barbara Jaeckli and Peter Binz will appear as an article in the next issue.

Cambridge Group

JOHN ROBERTS 01954 782032, HAZEL GUEST 01223 369148

John Roberts writes: In December (2000), we experimented by meeting at Dry Drayton as, unfortunately, Hazel Guest was committed elsewhere on the only date we could arrange to intercept RONALD RUSSELL (a former local member now living in New Galloway) on a visit to the area. This visit had been partly to talk to a different meeting on canals but he was also able to talk to us on the subject of his recent book *The Vast Enquiring Soul : Explorations into the Further Reaches of Consciousness* (Hampton Roads, Charlottesville VA, 2000).

The collection of material in the book includes numerous accounts of: distant healing, near-death and out-of-body experiences, communication with the non-embodied and phenomena such as remote viewing that challenge our everyday perceptions of what is possible in space and time. Our speaker emphasized that the underlying thread was to point to the need to go beyond the common scientific view of consciousness as something that came out of neural activity. Accordingly, as any one of these areas could easily consume a whole meeting, a few selected examples were chosen with the intention of provoking discussion. One of the most remarkable accounts was of the remote viewer Joe McMoneagle who, when asked whether the situation of demonstrating in public was a distraction, replied that he overcame this by looking ahead in time as well and performing his tasks in his hotel, the night before. In the ensuing discussion, several examples were offered by those attending including the remarkable case, described by Charles Tart, of the lady who, while undergoing surgery and experiencing extreme loss of brain function, was apparently able to witness the tools and procedures in the operating theatre.

We returned to Hazel's for our next meeting (January , 2001) for discussion by MICHAEL LANGFORD of "Is the 'miraculous' a coherent concept ?" explored in part of his forthcoming book: *A Liberal Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, Ashgate to be published in September, 2001).

Empirical, theoretical and semantic issues were explored, the notions of 'rare', 'paranormal' and 'miraculous', although overlapping, being not identical. Some time was spent on Hume's definition of 'miracle', which effectively ruled out the possibility of miracle because of the way he defined the term, and because of his (outdated) view of what constituted a 'law of nature'. Aquinas' view was arguably more coherent, especially in distinguishing a 'loose' sense (namely, something amazing) and a 'strict' sense, indicating an event that would necessarily be incompatible with a 'naturalistic' interpretation. Nevertheless, Hume's claim that (alleged) miracles could not be used as a rational basis for any religious system was upheld. It might be plausible to believe that miracles sometimes happened, if one already believed in a transcendent deity, but it would not be rational to hold that there was such a deity because of the occurrence of (alleged) miracles. It would always be possible to interpret surprising events without recourse to such a concept. Of special interest was Aquinas' claim that 'miracles', in terms of the 'strict' definition, were events 'within nature', which (according to Aquinas) meant that creation was not (in the 'strict' sense) a 'miracle'. This was because it was the setting up of nature rather than an event within it. Michael then argued that on this view, if there were a unique 'incarnation' in Jesus, this too would not be an event 'within nature', since it would not depend on any particular event 'within nature'. A male virgin birth, for example, would be a miracle, in Aquinas' 'strict' sense of the term. It would not, however, guarantee that the baby born was 'the unique image of God', while the absence of such a claim would not prove that a baby was not 'the unique image of God'. Therefore, although the virgin birth could be called an ancillary belief, that has traditionally been associated with the incarnation, and would, in itself, warrant the term 'miracle', it is neither sufficient nor necessary for belief in what Christians have usually meant by the

incarnation. A varied discussion followed which threw up new credibility riddles from both individual experiences and alleged scientific observations.

Chilterns Group

ELAINE HADFIELD 01442 864613, MIKE REVELEY 01442 258309

Elaine Hadfield writes: Our last meeting of 2000 was held at the home of Mike and Rachel Rogers, who provided seasonal refreshments and warm hospitality.

ANNE SILK and MIKE ROGERS spoke to us of the latest research findings in some of their fields of interest viz. allergic response to thiomersal preservatives in some vaccines, and crop circles respectively on this occasion, and these stimulated lively discussions.

In January we met at the home of Ann Flower where a participatory evening of healing and psychometry took place. Rodney Hale brought instruments to measure changes, if any, in the electrical/magnetic environment during the different activities. The psychometry appeared to yield some very good results and it was felt that another session in the future should take place with a planned programme designed to have a more quantitative approach to the success outcomes. Nevertheless this was a most interesting and sociable evening-it was very well attended and there were several new members.

The March meeting was held at the home of Colin Thomas in Rickmansworth where Colin and Starrs' warm hospitality and lovely refreshments were most appreciated. Our Speaker on this occasion was HERMINA STAFFORD, a member of our Group, who gave us a talk about Life Skills with particular reference to spiritual goals and values (as well as mental and physical ones) which are not always incorporated and explored when this subject is addressed. A lively question period and stimulating discussion followed the talk which was well attended and it all provided much food for thought.

Guildford Group - DIANA CLIFT 01483 417922

Diana Clift writes: We were scheduled to have Professor Peter Stewart to talk to us for our January meeting on 'Remote perception' but unfortunately he had to cancel for health reasons. However, he has promised to come next January! We were very lucky that JENNY EALES and CHRIS PETTIT were willing and able to take over the evening and the theme at very short notice. Jenny, a practising medium, gave us a demonstration of clairvoyance selecting members of the group and describing events in their lives, past and future, while Chris spoke of his experiences in healing work, when he often experiences the symptoms of his patients. We finished the evening with a psychometric exercise. Several objects (brought by participants but not necessarily belonging to them) were numbered and arranged on a table for everyone who chose to handle and jot down their immediate impressions about the owners. On the whole we weren't very good at this, but there were one or two that were surprisingly accurate.

Our March meeting brought visitors from all over the South of England, including the Isle of Wight. The big draw was RUPERT SHELDRAKE and this was his only lecture in England this year so we were very honoured. He talked about his continuing researches on the psychic powers of animals and humans and it was absolutely spellbinding. He finished with a remarkable piece of video footage of an African Grey parrot in the USA which accurately described randomly selected pictures while his owner was looking at them in another room!!! Apparently in 35 out of 50 trials he was correct.

We are indebted to Bronwen Astor for hosting our events at her home in Godalming but Bronwen is expecting to move house later this year so we expect our July meeting to be the last at Tuesley Manor, but check with me (Diana Clift).

Future events include Professor Vic Mansfield (24th May), Carolyn Eley (18th July), and Paul Devereux (14th November). For details, check the Local Group Calendar.

North London Group

RUPERT KINGLAKE TOWER: 0207 435 9730

Rupert writes: Regrettably, Geoff Boltwood had to cancel our February 21st meeting at the last minute for personal reasons. He hopes to be able to re-schedule in the near future. However, Peter Fenwick gave a thrilling talk to a large gathering of members on March 21st entitled "Does the Near Death Experience (NDE) Prove the Existence of the Soul?" Peter began by reviewing the historical and recent literature on NDEs, and then discussed with us the results of a 1990 Western study where 500 NDEs were selected, of whom some 400 have now replied, where irrespective of gender, age, religious belief, and cause of NDE (i.e. illness, surgical operation, childbirth, heart attack, accident, suicide etc.), there was a shared experience of specific NDE phenomena. These comprised of the following factors, in the order in which they were experienced:

(1) Peace and calm (2) Out of Body Experience (OBE) (3) Dark Tunnel (4) White or golden Light. Inexpressible Joy and Love (5) A Being of Light (6) Pastoral setting. Flowers, Colours, Birdsong (7) Meeting with Friends and Relatives (8) Life Review, surrounded by Universal Love (9) Barrier/Decision to return (10) Deep personal Transformation.

Peter explored the current theories that attempt to explain the NDE. He exposed the weaknesses of Brain-Mind Identity theory and Dualistic theories, assessed the "half-way" explanations offered by Penrose's Quantum Gravity theory and Sheldrake's Morphic Resonance theory, but felt that a theory of Pan-Psychism, or Universal Consciousness, was the closest theory as yet which could encompass a full explanation of NDE phenomena. There is also the interesting variable of Culture - Eastern NDE phenomena seem to differ in part from those experienced in the West.

The NDE continues to fuel the Mind vs. Brain debate. Peter reminded us that the brain is known to cease functioning 10 seconds after the heart has stopped beating. The nagging question is how do people recall NDEs when memory has died? The argument that the NDE is recalled when memory is reactivated is both questionable and unsubstantiated. Peter asserted that the problem lies with our current scientific tools of measurement, which are not so much wrong, but just partial. We need to find an appropriate scientific measure that is sensitive to Consciousness - and possibly another kind of Consciousness to observe its measurement. A new Dutch study, which used a similar methodological approach to Peter's project, has sampled 300 NDE cases with coronary heart disease, and is soon to be published in the Lancet. This may shed some light on this fascinating aspect of Consciousness. This was a riveting evening which was enjoyed greatly by all, and gave much further food for thought.

Scottish Group - DAVID LORIMER 01333-340490

David Lorimer writes: The Edinburgh Group suffered a cancellation due to heavy snow in February, when GORDON STRACHAN was to speak - here we had our electricity off for over two days, eight foot drifts and several trees blown down by icy gale force winds. Gordon is rescheduled for June. In April we had CHRIS THOMSON to speak about Opening the Inner Senses. He gave us a vivid account of some of the key aspects of his own life journey, stressing that this opening implied an all-round development including body, mind, emotions and spirit. He gave examples of how the inner senses work and forecast that we would in the end become more telepathic and that this would have a profound effect on science and society. We had an interesting discussion about the value of being in relation to action, drawing on Taoist ideas of inner harmony being radiated outwards. We reaffirmed

the value of the individual whether or not they act but felt that action at all levels was required.

Isle of Wight Group

**SONIA BEWICK 01983 868919, or RICHARD PARAMOR 01983 761396,
email littlehatch@hotmail.com)**

Such has been the much increased recent activity of our group that we have decided to hold all our meetings at the Riverside Centre in Newport, rather than in the limited accommodation of private homes. Our 2001 programme has been planned to include alternately Guest Speaker evenings and Video/Discussion evenings. Amongst the speakers for 2001 are JULIAN CANDY, DIANA CLIFT, MONTAGUE KEEN and - hopefully (all our fingers are crossed) DAVID FONTANA.

During past months we have enjoyed a talk by Barbara Wrigley about Magnetic Energy, which began with a mind-opening exercise requiring each member of the group to write down his or her definition of energy. Initially Barbara spoke in depth of her experiences of the energies which she had found in different disciplines, and how she used such energies, and then expanded the programme into a question and answer session so that she could better elucidate the topic. The talk was followed by the reading of the written definitions from the start of the evening, which in turn lead to a discussion about the various understandings (and misunderstandings) of the term 'energy'

Dr. JEAN HARDY visited the Island from Devon and spoke to us about Creation Spirituality and Greenspirit. The talk explored different ways of seeing, and living in, our world. It reflected the fact that more and more people realise we cannot continue using the earth and her creatures as if we owned them, despoiling life on earth and enlarging inequalities between rich and poor. Space prevents the full report which this talk deserves, but Dr. Hardy's talk considered new insights from ecology, psychology and the physical sciences, linking the latest Western knowledge and understanding to traditional wisdoms drawn from the religions of indigenous people, and concluded that we need a profound shift in thinking and feeling to convert the present over-consumption to a simpler, more compassionate way of living on earth.

A video evening included the Dr. LEONARD SHLAIN lecture from the year 2000 Mystics & Scientists Conference entitled 'The Alphabet versus the Goddess' which suggests a comparison between linear visual input and pictorial linear input; equates them with left -v- right brain function, and then correlates them to masculine v feminine dominance &/or tendencies in religious doctrines. The discussion which followed included a good deal of disagreement with the conclusions of Dr. Shlain, with a general feeling that perhaps, as there were so many possible exceptions to Dr. Shlain's examples, his arguments although feasible were not proven.

Another video evening included the Dr. Peter Fenwick lecture from the 1997 Mystics & Scientists Conference entitled 'Science, Reality and the Nature of Transcendence' which called for science to take a greater note of transcendent experiences, with discrimination being needed in assessing the relationship between mysticism and psychosis. A very full discussion followed with several members outlining briefly their own transcendent experiences. The discussion became very broad based but highlighted and applauded the fact that 'matters of the mind' were now more accessible to people in general, particularly through the popular media, and were taking increased importance in scientific studies. This reflected the sentiments of Dr. Fenwick in his talk four years earlier when he spoke of 21st century science taking into serious consideration consciousness and transcendence.

Finally may we extend a welcome to member of other groups who might be holidaying on or otherwise visiting the Isle of Wight. The venue for our meetings is very central to the whole Island. Call us for directions.

Wessex Group - JULIAN CANDY 01703 844149

JULIAN CANDY writes: Over the past few months the Group, meeting in Liz Kramers' beautiful studio, has enjoyed talks by a series of guest speakers: in September MICHAEL BEESLEY on *Stilling with Adolescent*; in NOVEMBER CHRIS CLARKE on *The Spiritual Implications of Physics*; in January ROGER WOOLGER on *Other Worlds and Multi-dimensional Consciousness*; in March ALAN WATKINS on *The Science and Heart of Human Experience*. At our next meeting in May, CRAWFORD KNOX (not really an outside speaker, but a lively and very loyal group member!) will be talking on *Understanding the Relation of the Divine and the World*. Perhaps the increasing numbers attending each meeting witnesses both the growth of the Network and the appeal of the speakers.

We plan to continue meeting generally on the second Friday of the month, and probably over the next few months to alternate invited speakers with internally generated discussions. Many thanks to Liz for hosting us in such conducive surroundings!

If you live within reach of Alresford and are not receiving mailings, please contact me as above or at juliancandy@compuserve.com.

Yorkshire Group

- MAX PAYNE 0114 230 4194, MIKE BROWN 01423 879038

Mike Brown writes: The meeting in Sheffield was hosted and chaired by the Max Payne. He particularly welcomed the SMN Chairman, CHRIS CLARKE and members who were new to the Yorkshire Branch. The meeting was well attended, and some compression of the seating was required!

The three speakers, MIKE BROWN, Dr. CHRIS LYONS, and JANINE EDGE (SMN Trustee) were allocated 45 Minutes each, after which the audience joined in with comments, questions and discussion.

Where's the Bridge That Will Link Science and Consciousness?

Mike Brown reviewed the prospects of bridging science and consciousness. He spent some time describing the enormous difficulties faced by people working on this quest, both using classical science and quantum mechanics.. After contrasting the physical laws, operative at different physical scales, namely at scales of superstrings, human beings, and the cosmos respectively, he posed a series of questions about consciousness that remain outstanding. These appear in a draft paper that was circulated at the meeting and can be accessed on the Internet at: - <http://www.hg29hh.freemove.co.uk/smnycons.htm>

These questions naturally raised metaphysical issues and Mike referred to the talk that followed, which dealt with consciousness from a metaphysical standpoint. In conclusion he suggested that consciousness remains an enigma to science and added that there is no scientific textbook that contains even a symbol for consciousness or for mind. Construction of the bridge between the two fields of study has progressed no further than surveying potential foundations. Finding an explanation of consciousness was a challenge that had attracted the attention of some of the most eminent scientists, but if the ruthless objectivity of science had been the basis of its success, what kind of changes in methodology, he asked, could make it relevant to subjective experience.

The Mind-Body Problem and the Metaphysical Assumptions of Science

Chris Lyons looked at the difficulties posed by the metaphysical assumptions of science for a solution to the mind-body problem. He began by pointing out that consciousness on the one hand was a first person phenomenon, describable only from within, whilst on the other it had physical correlates susceptible to third person, scientific investigation, and that any adequate theory must be able to take account of both of these aspects.

He continued by arguing that the criticisms of the scientific approaches to consciousness were principally philosophical ones; how consciousness could possibly arise from insensate matter, and then went on to explore our current ideas of the nature of matter, suggesting that in collapsing Cartesian dualism to materialistic monism we had arrived at a concept of matter which was incapable of explaining consciousness.

He then went on to argue that Whitehead's philosophical ideas, which had recently been reformulated as pan-experientialism, both allowed a solution to the mind-body problem, and were regarded by certain physicists (Shimony, Penrose) as being consistent with quantum theory.

Chris concluded by raising two questions for debate: 1) Do you agree that an ontological theory must be 'realistic' and 'naturalistic'?

2) What do you think would be the practical effect if the consensus scientific worldview were to be changed from materialism to something along the lines of pan-experientialism?

Observation on Performing Musicians using EEG monitors and Biofeedback.

Janine Edge described her research on performing musicians conducted jointly with Imperial College, London (Professor John Gruzelier) and The Royal School of Music. One aspect of this involved the young musicians being monitored by EEG machines. These provided the musicians with neurofeedback information so they could know how successful they were being in bringing their brain frequencies within certain target bands. The aim was to ascertain whether these brain states enabled the musicians to enhance their musical performance.

They were all asked individually to recount their experiences and observations, using semi-structured interviews. These were analysed using the methodology of existential-phenomenology and this formed the basis of an MSC thesis.

Janine saw this form of research as also providing insights into the mind-body relationship.