**Science Festivals**

Science Festivals give the Network an opportunity to showcase ideas and research that go beyond materialist orthodoxy. The whole consciousness area is a fertile one, and we have in the past had three two-hour programmes at the Edinburgh Science Festival and one day in 2006 and the British Association (now the British Science Association). In the case of the Edinburgh events, the Festival was able to pay the expenses of speakers, so there was no cost to the Network. For the BA, there was a cost involved, so I remember we had to obtain some sponsorship. This particular meeting created a huge furore in the press, having featured Rupert Sheldrake, Peter Fenwick, Deborah Delanoy and I think Chris French. Heavyweight materialist scientists such as Peter Atkins, Lord Winston and Sir Walter Bodmer weighed in and criticised the BA for even putting the session on. Interestingly, the row was almost identical to a BA meeting of 1878, organised by Alfred Russel Wallace and featuring Sir William Crookes on telepathy. The Network itself did not really benefit from this publicity either way, as it was not mentioned in the articles. The office has a copy of these.

On the Edinburgh front, the meetings were broadly devoted to consciousness, near death experiences and OBEs. We had Peter Fenwick, Pim van Lommel, Max Velmans (I think), Bob Morris, Chris French and Olaf Blanke from Switzerland (and myself). The panels were always balanced in terms of having sceptical representation. As far as I remember, we also had Keith Ward talking about science and religion. The Edinburgh Science Festival always vetoed Rupert Sheldrake - i.e. their scientific committee and fear for their reputation prevailed. Incidentally, this was before the publication of Iain McGilchrist’s book, so we never featured him although he has spoken widely in such contexts. In addition, we always had a list of people added to our mailing list.

Going forward, we could identify speakers from our Speaker Service to put forward for such events and make sure that we had some literature available for people to pick up. This is where a bookmark as well as a new leaflet would come in useful. Our broad area would still be consciousness and the interface between science and spirituality.

It is also worth noting that there are a number of ostensible public bodies for the public understanding of science. Most of these are informed by materialist orthodoxy and some are allied to quack busting activities in complementary medicine. In other words, there is a strong political undercurrent. Until recently, Richard Dawkins occupied the chair in the public understanding of science at Oxford.

Looking at the page of the British Science Association, there is a link to the UK Science Festivals Association, and it is apparent that this field has undergone a real explosion in the last few years. Here are the 45 links!

* [TechFest (Aberdeen](http://www.techfestsetpoint.org.uk/tis/))
* [Amazed By Science (Cheshire)](http://amazedbyscience.co.uk/)
* [Bangor Science Festival](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/bangorsciencefestival2014/)
* [The Big Bang Fair](http://www.thebigbangfair.co.uk/)
* [Bollington Festival](http://www.bollingtonfestival.org.uk/festival-groups/bollington-festival-science-group)
* [Bournemouth Science Festival](https://microsites.bournemouth.ac.uk/festival-of-learning/)
* [Bradford Science Festival](http://bsf.studioofthings.com/)
* [Bridgwater Science Festival](http://bridgwaterscience.com/)
* [Brighton Science Festival](http://www.brightonscience.com/)
* [Bristol Festival of Nature](http://www.bnhc.org.uk/festival-of-nature/)
* [British Science Festival](http://www.britishsciencefestival.org/)
* [Caithness International Science Festival](http://www.science03.org/)
* [Cambridge Science Festival](http://www.sciencefestival.cam.ac.uk/)
* [Cardiff Science Festival](http://cardiffsciencefestival.co.uk/)
* [Celebrate Science (Durham)](https://www.dur.ac.uk/celebrate.science/)
* [Cheltenham Science Festival](http://www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/science)
* [Dunbar Science Festival](http://dunbarscifest.org.uk/)
* [Dundee Science Festival](http://www.dundeesciencefestival.org/)
* [Edinburgh International Science Festival](http://www.sciencefestival.co.uk/)
* [Einstein's Garden at Green Man Festival](http://www.greenman.net/area/einsteins-garden)
* [ESRC Festival of Social Science](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/festival/)
* [Glasgow Science Festival](http://www.glasgowsciencefestival.org.uk/)
* [Hull Science Festival](http://www2.hull.ac.uk/science/sciencefestival.aspx)
* [Imperial Festival](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/festival) (London)
* [Jimmy's Farm Science Festival](http://jimmysfarm.com/event/science-nature-festival-2015/)
* [Kensington and Chelsea Celebration of Science](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/leisureandlibraries/events/celebrationofscience2014.aspx)
* [Lancashire Science Festival](http://www.lancashiresciencefestival.co.uk/)
* [Leeds Festival of Science](http://www.stem.leeds.ac.uk/news-events/lfos/)
* [Liverpool Festival of Science and Technology](http://ljmu.ac.uk/NewsUpdate/index_99767.htm)
* [London Science Festival](http://londonsciencefestival.com/)
* [Lyme Regis Fossil Festival](http://fossilfestival.com/)
* [Manchester Science Festival](http://www.manchestersciencefestival.com/)
* [Midlothian Science Festival](http://midlothiansciencefestival.com/)
* [Moray Science Festival](http://www.moray.uhi.ac.uk/moray-science-festival)
* [Northern Ireland Science Festival](http://www.nisciencefestival.com/)
* [Otley Science Festival](http://otleysciencefestival.co.uk/%20)
* [Oxfordshire Science Festival](http://www.oxfordshiresciencefestival.com/)
* [Pint of Science](http://pintofscience.com/)
* [Royal Holloway Science Festival](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/science/sciencefestival/home.aspx) (London)
* [Science in Norwich](http://soin.org.uk/2015/02/science-in-norwich-day-2015/)
* [Sheffield Festival of Science and Engineering](http://www.scienceweeksy.org.uk/)
* [Shuffle Festival](http://www.shufflefestival.com/) (London)
* [Sidmouth Science Festival](http://www.sidmouthsciencefestival.org/)
* [SMASHFest](http://www.smashfestuk.com/) (London)
* [Winchester Science Festival](http://winchesterscifest.org/#about)

It is clearly impractical for the Network to be represented at all these venues, so we should make a selection, partly based on the presence of local groups, whose members could interact with such festivals. This might suggest:

Brighton

Bristol

Cambridge – March

Cheltenham - June

Cardiff

Edinburgh – April

London, Imperial (perhaps also worth looking at others)

Manchester

Winchester

Looking through the talks at this year's Cambridge Festival, I note Dr Jane Aspell from the Department of Psychology at Ruskin Anglia University talking about neuroscientific explanations of OBEs, i.e. ‘how the brain creates the experience of one's self inhabiting a body.’ This festival seems to consist only of talks rather than more extended events.

**Action**

* Agree speakers to be put forward - all
* Check with speakers – EB
* Check dates for submission of proposals
* Make sure leaflet and SMN information is available at the time

**Sample Links**

**Science Festivals Alliance – [www.sciencefestivals.org](http://www.sciencefestivals.org)**

This is a U.S.-based organisation with about 50 members.

**UK Science Festivals Network –** [**www.sciencefestivals.uk**](http://www.sciencefestivals.uk)

**Cambridge, March –** [**www.sciencefestival.cam.ac.uk**](http://www.sciencefestival.cam.ac.uk)

**Edinburgh, April –** [**www.sciencefestival.co.uk**](http://www.sciencefestival.co.uk)

**Cheltenham, -** [**www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/science**](http://www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/science)

**BA -**