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Paranormal Review

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WAS IT SEEN IN A DREAM?

Occultists at War

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NEW BOOK ON WWI MEDIUMSHIP

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INSIDE THE SPONTANEOUS CASES COMMITTEE

Bulletin Métapsychique

EXPLORING FRENCH PARAPSYCHOLOGY

FIRST WORLD WAR
CENTENARY SPECIAL

[PART II]

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The Society for Psychical Research

The purpose of the Society is to advance the understanding of events and abilities commonly described as 'psychic' or 'paranormal', without prejudice and in a scientific manner. The Society does this by promoting and supporting important research and by publishing scholarly reports of a high standard. It acts as a forum for debate by organising educational activities and by disseminating information about current developments. For further details and to renew or apply for membership please visit the website:

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WWI and the Paranormal

After ten years at the helm of the *Paranormal Review*, Dr Nicola Holt is stepping down to spend more time with her family. But because she is not a politician, she really is going to be spending more time with her family – one which has recently increased in size. I am sure you will all join me in congratulating her on the birth of Daisy, as well as thanking her for all that she has done for the *Review*.

You will, no doubt, note a few changes around the magazine and I hope that you will all bear with me as I settle into my new post. As this year is the hundredth anniversary of the First World War, which regrettably was not the war to end all wars, I am going to be marking the occasion with two special issues on the subject, suitably enough, of WWI and the paranormal.

The response to my call for papers has been tremendous and I am delighted to introduce some new authors to the magazine whose contributions I am sure you will find as fascinating as I have done. Prof. Mulacz examines the event that started it all off, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, with consideration of a possibly precognitive dream and the stacking up of coincidences that put victim and assassin in the same place at the same time. Dr Alison Butler has drawn on the war issues of the *Occult Review* to build a fascinating picture of the discussions, theories, predictions of Britain's occultists. With so many young men dying in all those corners of a 'foreign field', Spiritualism found itself having to meet a new demand for news of the other side. What is not often appreciated is the extent to which traditional Christian faith saw this as a challenge and Dr Francis Young details the reaction of the Catholic and Protestant Churches. Lucy Harris looks at the beliefs, often labelled as superstitious, of the soldiers at the front. Michael Tymn tells us about his new book, *Dead Men Talking*, featuring contemporary accounts of purported communication with soldiers killed in action, and publishers White Crow have kindly provided us with an excerpt.

As a nice little anomaly of my own, a patriotic WWI postcard fell out of an old copy of an Asterix comic (in German) in my wife's library as we moved some books. It says 'For King and Empire' over a portrait of Lord Kitchener. On the back, a certain Boyce of Battersea Park writes in French to a lady in Paris, dated 29 December 1916. My wife had not bought it. None of us know where it came from, but there it is.

For some time, the *Paranormal Review* has had full colour covers, providing the opportunity for something more eye-catching on the front. However, choosing an image was a challenge. In looking through old photographs, contemporary painting and the propaganda posters of the period, one is struck by the extreme contrast between the initial enthusiasm for the war and sense of patriotic duty that motivated the volunteers, and the utter horror of the new industrialised battlefield. Pride and sorrow for such bravery and waste catch in the throat like poison gas. Added to that is the additional difficulty of finding something touching upon what we could call the 'paranormal'. In such alien landscapes of unimaginable carnage, one hardly needs to seek for that which was beyond the 'normal'. Then simply getting hold of a high-quality image of such illustrations of the paranormal as there are turned into a wild goose chase. In the end, I chose Futurist C.R.W. Nevinson's *Bursting Shell* (1915); a cyclone of exploding light shattering the darkness of some war-torn town with the terrible mystery of modern warfare.

Thankfully, it is not all doom and gloom. Alan Murdie introduces us to the work of the SPR's Spontaneous Cases Committee. Dr Renaud Evrard presents an overview of the IMI's important periodical, the *Bulletin Métapsychique*. And to wrap up, we have the latest line-up for this year's SPR conference.

Finally, the *Paranormal Review* bills itself as the magazine of the SPR. What does that mean? What should it mean? You are the Society. Send me your suggestions, news items, letters, accounts of personal experiences, articles, photographs, etc. Take part in this magazine and make it your own, and together we may make some astounding discoveries.

Dr Leo Ruickbie
Editor

editorial

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