



DID BRIGADIER KENNETH H. TRESEDER, HIS WIFE ENA MILDRED, AND AN AMERICAN COLLEAGUE MEET AND TALK TO AN APPARITION OF AN EARLY 19TH CENTURY SCOTTISH LADY IN 1950?

BY ROBERT A. CHARMAN

INTRODUCTION

Despite centuries of speculation and thousands of reported experiences of seeing a ghost or an apparition, the question as to whether they exist in their own right, or are involuntary hallucinations created by the brain of the viewer and projected into their surroundings, remains unresolved. What can be said with certainty is that many people have had the experience of ‘seeing a ghost’, sometimes more than once. While the terms ‘ghost’ and ‘apparition’ are often used interchangeably, in practice they refer to different sets of experiences. The term ‘ghost’ tends to refer to repetitive appearances in a particular place, known as a ‘haunt’. If ‘seen’, they may appear semi-transparent, rather like a window reflection, or solid and three-dimensional, blocking out the background. Ghosts tend to be categorized as the spirit of a dead person who once lived in the building or area they now haunt. The term ‘apparition’ tends to refer to an apparently three-dimensional normal person who unexpectedly appears, remains present for a short period, then disappears. They look, act, and sometimes sound like a person the ‘viewer’ once knew, often a family member or friend, and their appearance is often a harbinger of news that they are very ill or have died (Wilson, 1995). Sometimes, however, as in the following case, the apparition is completely unknown and from a very different generation.

The ‘Girl from Scotland’

During her discussion concerning the mental nature of time, the writer Joan Forman quotes instances where people appear to personally experience events of the past or future. Such experiences, classified by Forman (1978) as ‘time slips’, seem to imply that time has more accessible ‘dimensions’ than the present moment. She was particularly impressed by the following case of a group encounter with the past as recounted by Brigadier K. H. Treseder, and quotes his letter in full (Forman, 1978, pp. 36–38, see below).

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The time was late winter 1950; the place a valley behind the city of Oslo running down to towards the Oslo Fjord. The occasion a small skiing party composed of staff from the British and American embassies in the city, their wives, and one or two friends, a group numbering eight persons in all. The Brigadier's graphic description of what took place that afternoon is quoted as follows:

There had been a light snow and a good frost the night before, so conditions were likely to be excellent. We accepted an invitation to ski, and a party of eight met shortly after midday and went some 8 kilometres outside Oslo to a place where the road runs near the top of a ridge and parallel with the valley below. We later learned that the occupants of the farmhouse owned the land stretching down to the stream at the bottom of the valley.

There was about three feet of snow over the whole country, and sure enough the top few centimetres were like salt. We had a marvellous time climbing and running down over exciting terrains. The evenings come early in Scandinavia in winter, so after about three hours we made our way back to the three cars which had been left about two hundred yards from the farm. The road was dead straight and it was possible to see at least half a kilometre each way and the light was excellent. There was no house other than the farm nor any cover on either side of the road. Everything was covered by a blanket of snow.

My American friend and I had walked on ahead and arrived back at the cars before the others: I skied up to my car, stuck my sticks on the roof and bent down to unlatch my skis, whilst bending down I was addressed in English by a female voice with a pronounced Scottish accent "Have you been skiing over my land?" I straightened up and before me stood a tall old lady dressed in a brown, herringbone tweed skirt, much as was worn by ladies at the turn of the century as a riding habit. She had a long skirt to just above her ankles, laced boots, and a jacket with pleats down the front (which used to be known as a Norfolk jacket) buttoned up nearly to her throat, and on her head a flat, round cap made of the same material as the suit. She undoubtedly was a lady and she was undoubtedly very cross. I replied that if indeed she owned the land stretching from where we stood down to the bottom of the valley, I had been skiing on her land. Whilst I was talking to her my American friend and my wife joined in the conversation.

She then proceeded to give the three a "thorough ticking-off". She positively would NOT have it! she said. They were trespassers. She did not allow people on her land. They were to go away at once and were certainly not to come again. Some very sharp comment on the nature of modern manners was then added for good measure. The two men apologized and said that they were only doing what everyone else did in Norway in winter, in that they had left their cars on the road while they skied cross the country. They again said that they were sorry they had trespassed, and the lady turned from them. At that point the offending skiers also turned to answer a question called out from one of the other skiers as to "what was going on?". The Brigadier's letter then continues:

The old lady didn't like us skiing over her land," said my wife.
"Which old lady?" she was asked.

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"The old lady on the road here" she replied, turning back to point to her. But the road was empty. The time which had elapsed between turning away and back again was not more than a quarter of a minute; the farm was a good 200 yards away; three of us had seen and spoken to the old lady, and now she was nowhere to be seen.

My wife said "Where can she have gone? She was only telling us off not ten seconds ago."

We all walked out into the middle of the road and looked in every direction. No one in sight, everywhere was just fresh snow. It was then that my wife said "Did you notice what funny, old-fashioned clothes she had on? They went out before World War 1. We have been here three years now, and it is the first time I have seen an outfit comparable to that one."

We all agreed that there was something out of the ordinary here, not only the clothes, but the fact that she had taken exception to our skiing over her land. Holidays and sport are very important to the Norwegians, and one is free to go where one will, especially when snow is on the ground.

"I wonder" said someone, "if you have been talking to a ghost."

We laughed at this, but the idea took hold. Had we been talking to a ghost? We told the story to a Norwegian friend. He was most interested and offered to go and visit the farm to find out if anyone answering to our description lived there or nearby. He found that the family at the farm consisted of a young couple with two small children. There was no old lady living there, nor did they know of anyone answering to her description. In the course of conversation, it came out that the farmland, extending into the valley, had been in their family for several generations, and the man's great grandfather had married a girl from Scotland. Unfortunately, he knew nothing about her, and he didn't have a photograph. Our friend thanked the farmer, and asked, on our behalf, if he would have any objection to our skiing in the valley. He didn't and we went back twice there to ski that winter. We were now convinced we had met the 'Girl from Scotland' but never saw her again. Perhaps she knew we had permission now.

At the time of this experience Colonel Kenneth Hugh Treseder, OBE, MiD, Royal Corps of Signals, then in his mid-forties and married to Ena Mildred Hall-Dare, was an attaché to the British Embassy, Oslo. In 1945 he was Mentioned in Despatches (MiD) for "gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe". On his retirement from the army in 1952 he was granted the rank of Honorary Brigadier and listed under that rank. If their experience occurred as described, it was probably the subject of much discussion amongst British and American Embassy staff at the time, as well as friends and relatives.

In her Acknowledgements and Introduction to her book, Forman (1978) thanks the various academics she interviewed as to the nature of time, as well as editors of newspapers and journals who published her appeal for experience of time slips and the BBC for letting her broadcast an appeal. This would have been in the early/mid-1970s. Forman includes a bibliography and a short list of journal and newspaper publications, but does not reference the source of any time slip account unless to say they were included in a particular book. There is no record of Treseder publishing an account of this experience, but it may be in a pre-digitized publication and someone sent a copy to Forman. Alternatively, and

now in his early seventies, he may have written direct to Forman in response to her appeal as she says that it “came from a senior Army officer”. This appears to be the only published account, and there is no known correspondence either corroborating or refuting Treseder’s account.

DISCUSSION

Treseder’s letter seems to carry all the hallmarks of an authentic experience and is referred to by Forman on several occasions when discussing retrocognition, defined here as direct, personal, knowledge of past events that could not have been learned or inferred by normal means. According to mainstream science and psychology, retrocognition thus defined is not possible. Past events are accessible indirectly only in terms of historical record, interpretation of historical objects, and imaginative reconstruction. Someone who is physically dead, and as far as we know non-existent, cannot meet, see, and verbally interact with someone living in the present. Yet, according to Treseder’s account, we are faced with the possibility that this apparent impossibility has occurred. If accepted as a genuine group experience, this carries considerable implications concerning the nature of mind and, when in a proposed psi state of mind, its direct access to time past, as here, and time future.

Assuming that around 1900 the ‘Girl from Scotland’ was an ‘old lady’ in her sixties, and had died by 1920, that leaves a gap of some 30 years before her brief appearance in 1950. During that pre-1950 period she does not seem to have been mentioned publicly as appearing to anyone skiing in the valley owned by her family, despite the annual annoyance of skiers trespassing across family land. After this one appearance there does not seem to be any record of her appearing to anyone else, nor is there mention of the farmhouse being haunted. Assuming, as it seems to have appeared once only, this was an apparition of the Scottish girl his great grandfather had married, which would account for her accent, where was she between her death and her 1950 appearance, and where is she now? Like all ghosts and apparitions, she was perceived as dressed in clothes appropriate to her apparent age and social period.

As far as Treseder, his wife, and his unnamed American Embassy colleague were concerned they were in an everyday, practical, post-skiing frame of mind in familiar circumstances. As they experienced it, they saw her with their physical eyes, heard her strong Scottish accent through their physical ears, understood what she said, and politely voiced their apologies. She completely dominated the interaction and, as far as they knew, they saw her and heard her in the same way as they saw and heard each other. She stood in front of them as a three-dimensional human figure reflecting light and shadow in the same way as they did, obscuring the snow behind her. One moment she was there and they were talking to her, and the next moment she was not there. But this phenomenon is not possible, as people and clothes are composed of physical matter, and there is no known way by which physical matter can just materialize and dematerialize.

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An alternative explanation, advocated by Green and McCreery (1975) with regard to seeing an apparition, is to say that, despite being occupied by putting their sticks on the roof rack and bending down to unstrap their skis, their three minds somehow united to create a hallucinatory figure of a Scottish woman dressed in 19th century clothes projected onto the snow in front of them. They then created the ensuing dialogue, with her speaking in a Scottish accent together with their individual responses, and then spontaneously de-hallucinated her as she and they turned away, leaving them back in everyday reality again wondering where she had gone. While Green and McCreery's (1975) hallucinatory theory may well apply to brain-generated hallucinations experienced by one person, it does seem very unlikely that the brains of three people skiing in Norway would, by chance, generate the same hallucination of seeing and speaking to an elderly Scottish woman dressed in early 19th century costume in hallucinatory unison.

If psi, in terms of extrasensory perception (ESP), is accepted as a genuine mental faculty, then another possibility is that they had seen and interacted with her during a shared, extrasensory, psi episode. Anecdotal accounts of non-sensory derived information obtained through telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition, known collectively as ESP (see: Feather & Schmicker, 2005; Mayer, 2007; Rhine, 1961), together with experimental evidence for ESP/psi (e.g., Broderick & Goertzel, 2015; Cardena, 2018; Vernon, 2021) present a strong case for the existence of psi as a non-sensory-based system. This faculty appears able to convey information to a conscious level when the mind transitions from sensory input awareness only to non-sensory psi mind awareness. Psi implies the existence of a mental reality in which moments of past and future are somehow accessible when in the psi mindset but not the sensory-based mindset. Assuming this possibility, the question with regard to their experience is why did Treseder, his wife, and American colleague see the 'Girl from Scotland' but the others did not, and why then?

The answer may lie in the place memory hypothesis. This proposes that a particular location in space can hold, as if mentally impregnated, a psychic retention of an intense emotional state experienced when occupying that space. This psychic retention over time remains even if the physical circumstances at that location change. This retention can be sensed when in the mental reality of the psi mind, sometimes as an unusual sensation, and/or a sudden mental fear, or sometimes cognitively as in this case, but is not accessible to the sensory mind dependent on sensory input. This hypothesis receives possible support by two such experiences recounted by Wilson (1995, pp. 115–117), as summarized here.

The site of the Levant Mine disaster

In the summer of 1971, Bob Bootle, a BBC producer of science documentaries, and his wife, Val, were walking across the rugged north Cornish coast near Hayle with Edward Wigley, a local schoolteacher. They had noticed several old

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tin mine workings, but as they walked they were becoming somewhat hot and disorientated. As Bob was walking across a wide, shallow dip in the path, he suddenly felt powerful gooseflesh sensations together with a feeling of intense chill at complete odds with the hot sunshine that faded away as he walked on. Curious, as it was so unexpected, he stopped and then retraced his steps back to the shallow dip, where the same very strong sensations and feeling of chill returned and then faded again when he moved away. Without telling her why, he then asked Val, who had been walking slightly apart from him, to walk back and across the same dip in the path and then return. To her surprise she reported similar sensations that faded away as she walked on. When they told Wigley he said that over the years many other walkers had reported similar experiences when walking across this shallow depression. He then told them that their sensations had occurred when they had unknowingly walked directly over the site of the great Levant Mine disaster of 1919. A shaft had broken and 31 miners in the cage plunged 1,600 ft to their death, and 12 were seriously injured. It had taken four very difficult and traumatic days to recover the bodies and injured miners, and the decision was taken to fill the mine in.

The site of the Lusitania sinking

When Midland company director Alexander (Alex) Gracie was 20 years old he was an officer cadet aboard the Merchant Navy ship *Poplar Branch*. In about 1920 he was on the bridge with the captain and chief officer as they were sailing off southern Ireland. Suddenly, as recounted by his widow (slightly abbreviated here):

Alex (who had never been ill in his life) felt extremely ill and depressed and convinced he was about to die. Then the captain said "God, I feel terrible. I think I'm going to die" and the chief said "So do I sir". Alex did not say anything but happened to glance at his watch. After a moment or two everyone felt normal again with the captain and chief saying how very odd as they left the bridge. As soon as Alex was relieved of his spell on watch he back charted the course and speed of the ship to the spot at sea when these strange feelings had occurred. On his return to Liverpool, he asked a friend in the shipping office if there was any known significance to that spot, and found that they had passed over the exact location of the wreck of the passenger liner *Lusitania*. (O'Reilly, 1994, pp. 6–7)

The *Lusitania* was sunk by a German torpedo on the 7th May 1915, with the loss of 1,797 passengers, crew, and stowaways. While the exact location of the wreck was not known until 1935, it seems that the *Poplar Branch* had passed through the surface location of the tragedy where the terror and death by drowning of hundreds of people had occurred.

A group psi experience?

Given the strength of her outrage at their trespass, although there is no corroborating public mention, it seems likely that during her lifetime this

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Scottish wife, who strongly resented anyone skiing on family land, had said so very forcibly over the years to many skiers when they returned to this same convenient spot by the side of the road to remove their skis. Feeling mentally tired after three hours of vigorous skiing and happening to be standing on this same spot, first Treseder, and then his wife and American colleague may, unknowingly, have momentarily entered a psi state of mind that may have been induced by tiredness, in which, as if in everyday reality, they saw and experienced her angry confrontation expressed in terms she had used many times before. When they turned away to answer a call from their friends as to 'what was going on' they returned to sensory reality again. Now back in their normal state of mind they were naturally baffled by her appearance and disappearance because this psi experience had felt so real. This hypothesis might explain why the other five skiers saw the three of them grouped as if talking to someone they could not see, and called to ask what was going on. They were in neither the right spot nor frame of mind as they walked back towards their cars. This place memory hypothesis may explain why, in psi cognition, ghosts and apparitions are seen wearing the clothes they would have been wearing at the time.

In contrast to the above, the explanation that accords with mainstream physics and psychology is that the experience never occurred as it was not possible. For some unexplained reason, Treseder, and by implication his wife and American colleague, must have deliberately made up this story.

Concluding remarks

Which explanation for Treseder's account is considered most probable depends upon what is considered to be the limits of the possible. As the apparition could not have been a living body wearing physical clothes that suddenly appeared and then disappeared, the choice lies between a synchronized group hallucination generated by their three brains acting in concert, a fictional story agreed upon by all three participants, or a group psi experience. If a synchronized, brain-generated group hallucination involving vision and dialogue is rejected as very unlikely, this leaves a choice between a deliberate hoax or a group psi experience. If the former is considered more unlikely, as there seems no motivation to construct such an elaborate hoax, this leaves a group psi experience as the most likely explanation. Their 'seeing a ghost', as Treseder describes their experience, was a group psi mind experience as the senses cannot detect what is not physically present.

In this case, and accepting the place memory hypothesis that a localized psychic retention of an emotionally intense experience is possible, Treseder, his wife, and his American colleague happened to be standing in that location when they experienced a transient psi state of mind in which they saw, heard, and responded to the Scottish woman as in real life. If, as here, this is considered to be the most probable explanation, then Brigadier Kenneth Treseder, his wife

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Ena Mildred, and an American Embassy colleague did ‘meet and talk to an apparition of an early 19th century Scottish lady in 1950’.

Corresponding author

ROBERT A. CHARMAN

Email: bigbobcharman@yahoo.co.uk

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