



**ON THE EDGE OF TIME:
The Mystery of Time Slips
By Tim Swartz**

Time is a funny thing. There never seems to be enough -- yet there is an infinite amount. Time slips through moment upon second into eternity past; yet present, to begin the future.

Time is thought to be unstoppable in its relentless push towards the future. Humans perceive themselves as bound up in time as an insect in amber. Forever imprisoned and forced to reconcile with the regularity and inevitability of change. The past is gone -- the present, fleeting -- and the future is unknown. Or is it?

If a Merseyside policeman by the name of Frank was asked, he may have an entirely different opinion on the subject of time.

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in July of 1996, Frank and his wife, Carol was visiting Liverpool's Bold Street area for some shopping. At Central Station, the pair split up; Carol went to Dillons Bookshop and Frank went to HMV to look for a CD he wanted. As he walked up the incline near the Lyceum Post Office/Café building that lead onto Bold Street, Frank suddenly noticed he had entered a strange "oasis of quietness."

Suddenly, a small box van that looked like something out of the 1950s sped across his path, honking

its horn as it narrowly missed him. Frank noticed the name on the van's side: "Caplan's." When he looked down, the confused policeman saw that he was unexpectedly standing in the road. The off-duty policeman crossed the road and saw that Dillons Book Store now had "Cripps" over its entrances. More confused, he looked in to see not books, but women's handbags and shoes.

Looking around, Frank realized people were dressed in clothes that appeared to be from the 1940s. Suddenly, he spotted a young girl in her early 20's dressed in a lime-coloured sleeveless top. The handbag she was carrying had a popular brand name on it, which reassured the policeman that maybe he was still partly in 1996. It was a paradox, but he was relieved, and he followed the girl into Cripps.

As the pair went inside, Frank watched in amazement as the interior of the building completely changed in a flash to that of Dillons Bookshop of 1996. The girl turned to leave and Frank lightly grasped the girl's arm to attract attention and said, "Did you see that?"

She replied, "Yeah! I thought it was a clothes shop. I was going to look around, but it's a bookshop."

It was later determined that Cripps and Caplan's were businesses based in Liverpool during the 1950s. Whether these businesses were based in the locations specified in the story has not been confirmed. 1

Frank's experience is not that unusual in the realm of strange phenomenon. There is even a name given to such events -- time slips.

A time slip is an event where it appears that some other era has briefly intruded on the present. A time slip seems to be spontaneous in nature and localization, but there are places on the planet that seem to be more prone than others to time slip

events. As well, some people may be more inclined to experience time slips than others. If time then is the unmovable force that physicists say it is, why do some people have experiences that seem to flaunt this concept?



THE NATURE OF TIME

Much of ancient Greek philosophy was concerned with understanding the concept of eternity, and the subject of time is central to all the world's religions and cultures. Can the flow of time be stopped or slowed? Certainly some mystics thought so. Angelus Silesius, a 17th-century philosopher and poet, thought the flow of time could be suspended by mental powers:

**Time is of your own making;
its clock ticks in your head.
The moment you stop thought
time too stops dead.**

The line between science and mysticism sometimes grows thin. Today physicists would agree that time is one of the strangest properties of our universe. In fact, there is a story circulating among scientists of an immigrant to America who has lost his watch. He walks up to a man on a New York street and asks, "Please, Sir, what is time?" The scientist replies, "I'm sorry, you'll have to ask a philosopher. I'm just a physicist."

Time travel, according to modern scientific theory, may still be beyond our grasp. Yet for a number of people who have had unusual time slip experiences, time may be easier to circumnavigate than expected.

A classic example of a time slip can be seen in a note from Lyn in Australia. Lyn had read the book, *Time Travel: A How-To Insiders Guide*, (Global Communications, 1999) and thought her experience was similar to others featured in the book.

In 1997 Lyn lived in a small outback town that was built in 1947 and had changed little since that time.

"I was driving toward the main intersection of the town, when suddenly I felt a change in the air. It wasn't the classic colder feeling, but a change, like a shift in atmosphere. The air felt denser somehow. As I slowed at the intersection, I seemed to be suddenly transported back in time to approximately 1950. The road was dirt, the trees were gone and coming toward me to cross the intersection was an old black car, something like a Vanguard or old FJ Holden. As the car passed through the intersection the driver was looking back at me in total astonishment before he accelerated. From what I could see he was dressed in similar 1950s fashion, complete with hat.

"This whole episode lasted perhaps 20 seconds and was repeated at least 5 times during my time there, always at the exact spot. I tried to make out the registration plate number but the car was covered in dust."

Lyn wondered if there is someone out there still living who remembers seeing a strange sight at the intersection back in the 50s...of a weird car with a bug-eyed woman at the wheel.

2 Derek E. tells another interesting time slip story. When he was a child, his father was a taxi driver in Glasgow, Scotland. One day in the late 1960s, Derek's father was driving in the north of the city along Maryhill Road near Queen's Cross, one of the older parts of town and once its own separate community outside the city.

"One minute it was now," Derek wrote, "cars, buses, modern clothes, tarmac roads etc. - and the next thing my dad knew he was in some earlier time. It was certainly pre-Victorian given the clothes he described people wearing, horses, rough road, lower buildings, people in rough clothes and bonnets etc. It lasted as long as it took him to be aware of it and then it vanished and he was back in 'now.'"

Derek also reported that in the 1980's, he and his wife were on a driving holiday in the North York Moors in England. They went to a tiny coastal village called Staithes, which had a steep winding and narrowing road down to the harbour, with the entrance to the houses and narrow footway at a higher level of three or four feet.

"We parked at the top of the village, hamlet really, where the tourist buses and cars had to stop and made our way down on foot. What I remember is a brilliantly sunny day with lots of other people around, but as we made our way down, it just suddenly seemed as if no one else were there but my wife and me. An old woman appeared on the footway opposite us. It became cooler and duller. She asked, in what seemed to me an old-fashioned and very polite way, what year it was. Now lots of old people get confused and it could have been that, but what I remember vividly is her black clothes - handmade, rough and with hand-sewn buttons - really big compared with modern ones. Her shoes were very old fashioned with much higher and chunkier heels than you'd see an

older person wearing nowadays. In the time it took me to turn to my wife and say, 'Did you see that?' she was gone. The sun was back and so were all the people. My wife had also seen the same old woman and felt the same chill." 3

Derek's experience seems strikingly similar to traditional ghost stories. Many ghost sightings are readily explained as individuals who appear out of their normal location or time; but often the ghost also seems to change the surroundings of the witness, giving the impression of a time slip. What is open to question is whether these are glimpses into another time or does the witness or the ghost actually travel in time? Perhaps it is simply different sides of the same coin.

Martin Jeffrey, co-editor with Louise Jeffrey of the website www.mysterymag.com, speculates that time slips can be recreated or induced using a "trigger factor," which "...occurs when one is interested in his surroundings but is not concentrating on them; a slip occurs at a precise place and moment and the witness is thrust seemingly into another time."

Jeffrey cites the case of Alice Pollock, who at Leeds Castle in Kent "experienced what could be called a 'classic' time slip. Alice was experimenting in Henry VIII's rooms by touching objects in an attempt to experience events from another time. After a period of receiving no impressions whatsoever, the room suddenly changed. It lost its modern, comfortable appearance to become cold and bare. The carpet had disappeared and there were now logs burning on the fire. A tall woman in a white dress was walking up and down the room; her face seemed to be in deep concentration. Not long after, the room returned to its original state.

Later research found that the rooms had been the prison of Queen Joan of

Navarre, Henry V's stepmother, who had been accused of witchcraft by her husband. 4

It could be that the witness triggers time slips, whether they blank their mind at a precise moment and the slip occurs, or the witness touches something that holds the memory of a previous time.

"The simplest explanation is probably the psychometric hypothesis," noted Colin Wilson and John Grant in *The Directory of Possibilities*. "In the mid-nineteenth century, Dr. Joseph Rodes Buchanan of the Covington Medical Institute performed experiments that convinced him that certain of his students could hold letters in their hands and accurately describe the character of the writer. He became convinced that all objects carry their 'history' photographed in them. Buchanan wrote: 'The past is entombed in the present. The discoveries of psychometry will enable us to explore the history of Man as those of geology enable us to explore the history of Earth.' Clearly, psychometry may be seen as a form of time slip."

CLASSIC TIME SLIPS

The classic of time slip tales occurred in August 1901, when two Englishwomen on holiday, Annie Moberly, Principal of St. Hugh's College in Oxford and Dr. Eleanor Frances Jourdain, visited Paris. After a short stay in the capital, they went on to Versailles.

After visiting the palace they began searching for the Petit Trianon but became lost. As they wandered the grounds, both women began to feel strange, as if a heavy mood was oppressing their spirits. Two men dressed in "long greyish-green coats with small three-cornered hats" suddenly appeared and directed the women to the Petit Trianon. They strolled up to an isolated cottage where a woman and a 12- or 13-year-old girl were standing at the

doorway, both wearing white kerchiefs fastened under their bodices. The woman was standing at the top of the steps, holding a jug and leaning slightly forwards, while the girl stood beneath her, looking up at her and stretching out her empty hands.

"She might have been just going to take the jug or have just given it up I remember that both seemed to pause for an instant, as in a motion picture," Dr. Jourdain would later write.

The two Oxford ladies went on their way and soon reached a pavilion that stood in the middle of an enclosure. The place had an unusual air about it and the atmosphere was depressing and unpleasant. A man was sitting outside the pavilion, his face repulsively disfigured by smallpox, wearing a coat and a straw hat. He seemed not to notice the two women; at any rate, he paid no attention to them.

The Englishwomen walked on in silence and after a while reached a small country house with shuttered windows and terraces on either side. A lady was sitting on the lawn with her back to the house. She held a large sheet of paper or cardboard in her hand and seemed to be working at or looking at a drawing. She wore a summer dress with a long bodice and a very full, apparently short skirt, which was extremely unusual. She had a pale green fichu or kerchief draped around her shoulders, and a large white hat covered her fair hair.

At the end of the terraces was a second house. As the two women drew near, a door suddenly flew open and slammed shut again. A young man with the demeanour of a servant, but not wearing livery, came out. As the two Englishwomen thought they had trespassed on private property, they followed the man toward the Petit Trianon. Quite unexpectedly, from one moment to

the next, they found themselves in the middle of a crowd--apparently a wedding party--all dressed in the fashions of 1901.

On their return to England, Annie Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain discussed their trip and began to wonder about their experiences at the Petit Trianon. The two began to wonder if they had somehow seen the ghost of Marie Antoinette, or rather, if they had somehow telepathically entered into one of the Queen's memories left behind in that location. As if to confirm their suspicion, Moberly came across a picture of Marie Antoinette drawn by the artist Wertmüller. To her astonishment it depicted the same sketching woman she had seen near the Petit Trianon. Even the clothes were the same.

Intrigued by the growing mystery, Jourdain returned to Versailles in January 1902 and discovered that she was unable to retrace their earlier steps. The grounds seemed mysteriously altered. She then learned that on October 5, 1789 Marie Antoinette had been sitting at the Petit Trianon when she first learned that a mob from Paris was marching towards the palace gates. Jourdain and Moberly decided that Marie Antoinette's memory of this terrifying moment must have somehow lingered and persisted through the years, and it was into this memory that they had inadvertently stumbled. 5

NATURES TIME MACHINE



What can be concluded then from these anecdotal tales? Did these people actually travel, albeit briefly, into the past to glimpse scenes that once were? Or were they caught up in a form of haunting where, like an old movie, they saw a scene that had somehow been implanted in a location and allowed to "play back" again for those sensitive enough to pick up the lingering impressions? However, if time slips are a form of haunting, what explanation can be offered to the experience of a Mr. Squirrel, who in 1973 went into a stationer's shop in Great Yarmouth to buy some envelopes. He was served by a woman in Edwardian dress and bought three dozen envelopes for a shilling. He noticed that the building was extremely silent -- there was no traffic noise. On visiting the shop three weeks later, he found it completely changed and modernized; the assistant, an elderly lady, denied that there had been any other assistant in the shop the previous week. Even though the envelopes disintegrated quickly, Mr. Squirrel was able to track down the manufacturers, who said that such envelopes had ceased to be manufactured fifteen years before. 6

How can a haunting produce such physical evidence?

Time slips are "often accompanied by feelings of depression, eeriness and a marked sense of silence, deeper than normally experienced," posits author Andrew Mackenzie in his book *Adventures in Time: Encounters With the Past*, drawing this conclusion based on the Versailles time slip accounts as well as his own interviews with people who have experienced the phenomenon.

"It is interesting to note that on August 10, 1901, the day of Annie Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain's experience, electrical storms were recorded over Europe and the atmosphere was heavy with electricity. Could this have led to an

alteration in the local temporal field around Versailles?"

Perhaps there is a natural phenomenon that under the right conditions and location can produce briefly a doorway to another time and place. Even though this may sound outrageous, this natural "time machine" could show that modern concepts and perceptions of time need to be seriously reconsidered. It may be that the past and even the future might be closer than thought with current scientific theories. With the right frame of mind and the right natural conditions, the barriers of time and space that have traditionally kept mankind locked into place may finally be broken, allowing the mysteries of the world and the universe to be finally revealed.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Swartz is an Emmy-Award winning television producer and the author of such books as: ***The Lost Journals of Nikola Tesla***, ***Time Travel: A How-To Insiders Guide***, and ***Teleportation: From Star Trek to Tesla***. Tim Swartz is also the editor of Conspiracy Journal, a popular e-mail newsletter of conspiracies, UFOs, the paranormal and anything else weird and strange.

Endnotes:

1 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/alabaster/A684821>

2 E-mailed to author

3 E-mailed to author

4 www.mysterymag.com

5 An adventure (London, 1911), *The Ghosts of the Trianon*, Edited by Michael H. Coleman, Published 1988 by Aquarian

6 *The Directory of Possibilities*, edited by Colin Wilson and John Grant, published 1981 by Webb & Bower

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