

## **The Alister Hardy Trust Members' Day**

**ONLINE Saturday 16th October 2021 10.30am – 4.00pm**

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10.45 – 12.30

### **The 2021 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture**

**Dr Steve Taylor**

#### ***Extraordinary Awakenings - Spiritual Transformation in the Midst of Suffering***

Dr Steve Taylor is a senior lecturer in psychology at Leeds Beckett University, Chair of the Transpersonal Psychology section of the British Psychological Society and a prolific author on psychology and spirituality.

For the last 15 years, in his role as a transpersonal psychologist, Steve Taylor has been researching cases of spontaneous spiritual awakening that occur in the midst of intense psychological turmoil. In times of bereavement, serious illness, addiction, deep depression, and intense stress, a miraculous transformation sometimes occurs: the death of an old identity and the birth of a new, spiritually-awakened Self.

Steve will share some examples from his new book *Extraordinary Awakenings* and explain the reasons why intense suffering can bring about spiritual awakening. He will also explain what we can learn from the phenomenon and teach some principles that can apply to our own spiritual development. Steve will also read one or two poems, and lead a short meditation.



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12.30 – 13.30 LUNCH

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## **Afternoon Programme**

***Research Updates: Presentations by researchers linked to the  
Alister Hardy Trust***

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13.30

### **Geoffrey Ahern**



Geoffrey Ahern is in the middle of writing the full report of much earlier research into the Alister Hardy Trust archive. In the later 1980s he recruited a team of volunteers and they successfully devised and applied a method for structural analysis of its accounts of transcendent awareness. The research design centres on whether its described patterns comprise a core or cores, what (if any) it or they seem to consist of, and what the outcomes tell us.

Before taking up the research again he was working over a decade for environmental and social sustainability: this was through being a fellow/honorary lecturer in two business schools, teaching sustainability to executives from around the world, co-founding sustainability groups, organisational consultancy, and publications. Earlier he contracted with multinational companies as an external, APECS accredited executive coach with a systemic/psychodynamic Tavistock Centre approach and ethical code.

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14.00

## Mara Steenhuisen



Mara Steenhuisen is a PhD student at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Lampeter, Wales with a BHealth in pain management (2005, research on chronic pain management and altered states of consciousness to alleviate pain) and an MA (2016) awarded from the Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture.

Her thesis focuses on the orbs phenomenon. Orbs are understood as bright patches of light that predominantly emerge in digital imaging since digital photography reached global consumer markets. The orbs phenomenon, however, encompasses much more.

Her current research approaches the reported spiritual experiences with anomalous lights, notably those that are described as orbs by the experiencers and which often occur over a longer period of time. They are generally perceived as spiritually enriching.

This presentation highlights experiences based on a preliminary exploration of the RERC archive relating specifically to written accounts of orbs in the context of life-changing events. Further, it suggests consideration of orbs within a wider framework of a sensate and enduring presence which may involve their being recorded on film or digitally as a photographic presence.

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14.30

## Mike Rush



Mike Rush's presentation will introduce the concept of spiritual crisis, also known as spiritual emergency, and the work of the UK Spiritual Crisis Network (SCN). Although the majority of spiritual experiences are benign, even blissful, a minority can cause concern or distress. These experiences can also overlap with, or be misdiagnosed as, various mental health issues.

The SCN provides information and support to people affected by spiritual crisis, including experiencers, carers, and therapists. Mike's first research study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the SCN's work by surveying those who have previously contacted the SCN for support. Did they find contacting the SCN helpful or unhelpful, and why?

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15.00

## Marianne Rankin



Marianne is nearing completion of a PhD on Researching the Fruits of Experience in the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre Archive and her presentation will give an overview of her work.

Her first research question asks, “What, in the RERC Archive, are the ‘fruits’ of RSEs in terms of inner transformation, changes in religious and spiritual attitude and outward behaviour?” In view of today’s more secular society, the second research question became, “Is the designation ‘Intense Experience’ as expounded by Wesley J. Wildman in his *Religious and Spiritual Experiences* (2011) helpful when evaluating RSEs, particularly those of people who do not consider themselves religious?”.

The third research question is “Can the hypothesis that a turn from self-centredness to altruism is the dominant category underlying the variety of fruits of experience, be supported through analysis of the RERC Archive?” Marianne will give an indication of the methods and outcome of her research.

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The afternoon will end with further questions or comments for the speakers.

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## REGISTRATION

It is important to RSVP to Mike Rush, who will forward a Zoom invitation nearer to the time.

[mikerush@virginmedia.com](mailto:mikerush@virginmedia.com)

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Further enquiries to Marianne Rankin (AHT Director of Communications)  
[marianne.rankin@studyspiritualexperiences.org](mailto:marianne.rankin@studyspiritualexperiences.org)

OR

Andy Burns (AHT Honorary Secretary)  
[andy.burns@studyspiritualexperiences.org](mailto:andy.burns@studyspiritualexperiences.org)

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