

By Jenny Randles
Beyond Explanation?
Phantoms of the Soap Operas

With Paul Fuller
Crop Circles: A Mystery Solved

With Peter Hough
Death by Supernatural Causes?
Scary Stories
Looking for the Aliens

By Peter Hough
Witchcraft: A Strange Conflict

SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION

Jenny Randles
and Peter Hough



1992

BANTAM BOOKS

302 PAGES

TORONTO • NEW YORK • LONDON • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND

SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION
A BANTAM BOOK : 0 553 40653 1

Originally published in Great Britain by Robert Hale Ltd

PRINTING HISTORY

Robert Hale edition published 1992
Bantam Books edition published 1993

Copyright © Jenny Randles and Peter Hough 1992

The right of Jenny Randles and Peter Hough to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Conditions of sale

1. This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.
2. This book is sold subject to the Standard Conditions of Sale of Net Books and may not be re-sold in the UK below the net price fixed by the publishers for the book.

Set in 10/11pt Linotype Plantin by Kestrel Data, Exeter

Bantam Books are published by Transworld Publishers Ltd,
61-63 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, London W5 5SA,
in Australia by Transworld Publishers (Australia) Pty Ltd,
15-25 Helles Avenue, Moorebank, NSW 2170,
and in New Zealand by Transworld Publishers (NZ) Ltd,
3 William Pickering Drive, Albany, Auckland.

Made and printed in Great Britain by
Cox & Wyman Ltd, Reading, Berks.

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	7
<i>Prologue</i>	9
<i>Introduction</i>	11
PART ONE: <i>The Evidence</i>	
1 A History of Incineration	17
2 The Burnings at Sowerby Bridge	34
3 Heated Exchanges	37
4 Q.E.D.	45
5 The Truth About Mary Reeser	66
6 A Fireman's Story	83
7 A Blazing Row	91
8 A Rather Unusual Death	101
9 A Fireman's Investigation	112
10 Who Flamed Roberta Rabbit?	123
11 The Survivors	131
PART TWO: <i>The Theories</i>	
12 Chemical Reactions	149
13 A Shocking Suggestion	158
14 Bolts From the Blue	171
15 Balls of Fire	183
16 May the Force be Within You?	207
17 The Kundalini Fire	228

CONCLUSIONS

18 Fire Patterns	237
------------------	-----

REFERENCES

Case Abstracts: An SHC Database	249
Sources	283
Figs	288
Acknowledgements	291
Index	293

List of Illustrations

- 1 Senior Divisional Officer Tony McMunn
- 2 Hargreave Terrace and 45 Wakefield Road, homes of the Kirby sisters
- 3 Entry in the Sowerby Bridge cemetery register, 1899
- 4 The mysterious death of a vagrant
- 5 The 'classic' case of Mary Reeser
- 6 Tony McMunn's inauguration into the SHC controversy
- 7 'Hunt the body'
- 8 Scene of a fire death in the Midlands, 1980
- 9 Jack Angel, survivor of one of the most famous cases of SHC
- 10 Dr Terence Meaden, meteorologist and physicist
- 11 The gruesome results of fire on a human body
- 12 Head cremator, Peter Thornley, operating one of the 5 cremators at Overdale
- 13 After cremation the bones are pounded into ash

Picture Credits

Tony McMunn: 1, 6, 7, 8. *Halifax Evening Courier*: 2, 3. Birmingham Fire Brigade: 4. St Petersburg Police Department: 5. *That's Incredible*, CBS Television: 9. Jenny Randles: 10, 11. Peter Hough: 12, 13.