

'Up to 85 per cent of people may be clairvoyant' says a researcher. Dr Chris Roe places a pair of enormous fluffy earphones over the head of a blonde 20-year-old woman. He carefully slices a ping-pong ball in half and tapes each piece over her eyes. Then he switches on a red light that bathes the woman in an eerie glow, and leaves the room. After a few moments, a low hum begins to fill the laboratory and the woman begins smiling sweetly to herself as images of distant locations start to pass through her mind. She says she can sense a group of trees and a babbling brook full of boulders.

Standing on a boulder is her friend Jack. He's waving at her and smiling. She begins to describe the location to Dr Roe.

Half a mile away, her friend Jack is, indeed, standing on a boulder in a stream.

Somehow, the woman has been able to "see" Jack in her mind's eye, even though all of conventional science - and common sense - says it is impossible.

Is this simply a bizarre coincidence?

Or could it be proof that we all possess psychic powers of the type popularised in such films as *Minority Report*?

That is what Dr Roe is investigating. A parapsychologist based at the University of Northampton, he is examining whether it could indeed be possible to project your "mind's eye" to a distant location and observe what is going on - even if that place is hundreds of miles away.

And though the research is not yet complete, the results have been tantalising.

His early findings suggest that up to 85 per cent of people may possess some form of clairvoyance - the ability to "remote view".

And he believes that with only a modicum of training we can all sharpen our psychic skills.

"Our results are significant," says Dr Roe.

"They suggest that remote viewing, or clairvoyance, is something that should be taken seriously."

It would be easy to dismiss such claims as laughable, were it not for the fact that an increasing number of scientists are taking them seriously.

While Dr Roe's work may appear controversial, he is starting to garner the support of eminent academics such as Professor Brian Josephson, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist from Cambridge University, who says: "The experiments have been designed to rule out luck and chance. I consider the evidence for remote viewing to be pretty clear-cut."

The military is also taking a keen interest. The Ministry of Defence takes the phenomena

seriously enough to have commissioned its own research.

Documents only recently released under the Freedom of Information Act detail a series of experiments on psychic phenomena.

Unfortunately, the actual details of the experiments that were carried out - and what the conclusions were - are still classified, and intriguingly the MoD refuses to say whether they were a success.

They claim that releasing such details would imperil the defence of the nation, and what little information has been released is described as "poor quality" by Dr Roe.

"Their analysis of the data is quite frankly, woeful," he says.

But the very existence of such files suggests that the military are taking the possibility of psychic phenomena seriously.

In fact, most existing scientific knowledge on clairvoyance is based on other recently declassified military research undertaken in America during the Cold War.

During the Sixties and Seventies, paranoia gripped the US military establishment.

Strange rumours began circulating that the Russians had found a way of harnessing psychic powers and begun wielding them as weapons.

Psychic skills such as telekinesis - the ability to move objects or control machines using nothing more than the power of the mind - were apparently being taught to soldiers in elite combat units.

They were also said to be using clairvoyants to gather intelligence from top-secret American bases.

If true, the American's believed, it would mean that the Russians could discover their most important secrets and even control the minds of their Generals.

So in the early Seventies, the US military began its own top-secret research to try to close the "psychic intelligence gap" with the Russians.

The CIA later joined them in a series of covert research projects that were given suitably innocuous titles such as Sun Streak, Grill Flame and Star Gate.

These were designed to track down the most gifted psychics in the U.S., unravel the mysteries of their powers and then find ways of teaching these skills to ordinary soldiers and agents.

The aim was to produce a new breed of "super-soldier" capable of controlling matter with their minds and gathering intelligence from afar.

But some in the military wanted to go even further.

The US Navy wanted to send confidential orders to their nuclear submarines using telepathy, which would be impossible for even the most sophisticated enemy listening devices to intercept.

And Major General Albert N. Stubblebine III, commanding officer of the US Army Intelligence and Security Command, suggested that one day soldiers might even be able to "walk through walls", using psychic powers to overcome the physical boundary.

And if that wasn't enough, researchers at Princeton University (where Einstein was once based) and Stanford were similarly tasked with investigating the paranormal.

Scientists at Stanford quickly focused on the use of clairvoyance, known as remote viewing in technical parlance, as the most militarily useful psychic skill.

Very soon, Stanford played host to more than a dozen psychic spies, whose paranormal skills were once demonstrated to President Jimmy Carter.

The remote viewers used a deceptively simple method based on what is known as the Ganzfeld technique to help "see" deep into enemy territory.

They induced an altered state of consciousness by seating themselves in a sound-proof room and wearing earphones playing white noise.

Pingpong balls sliced in half were placed over their eyes to obscure vision. The whole room was then bathed in soft red light.

The map coordinates of the "target" location would be written on a piece of paper, placed in an envelope and handed to the viewer.

He would be allowed to touch the envelope but forbidden to open it. Alternatively, pictures of the target location would be sealed in the envelope.

The remote viewers would then slip into a light meditative trance and their "mind's eye" would be drawn to the target location.

Pictures, feelings and impressions would then drift into their minds from the target, which might be located thousands of miles away.

To an outsider, this approach might appear to produce only hopelessly vague results that were no better than guesswork.

But the scientists investigating remote viewing found them to be surprisingly accurate, giving military intelligence a small but significant advantage over their cold war enemies.

Joe McMoneagle was one such "psychic spy". Given the codename "Remote Viewer No 1", his

primary role was to use remote viewing to look inside Russian military bases and gather intelligence.

McMoneagle was recruited from US Army intelligence in Vietnam because of his amazing ability to survive while on reconnaissance missions behind enemy lines against seemingly impossible odds.

His commanding officers thought he was either amazingly lucky, psychic - or a double agent.

On his return home, he was tested for his remote-viewing skills at Stanford and found to have psychic gifts.

He went on to spend the next 20 years tracking Russian nuclear warheads and gathering intelligence.

His work eventually earned him the Legion of Merit, America's highest military non-combat medal.

"My success rate was around 28 per cent," says McMoneagle.

"That may not sound very good, but we were brought in to deal with the hopeless cases.

"Our information was then cross-checked with any other available intelligence to build up an overall picture. We proved to be quite useful 'spies'."

Word of America's experiments with the paranormal spread to the UK and while the military were sceptical, the Metropolitan Police spotted an intriguing possibility.

Could psychic powers be harnessed to help solve crimes?

They soon had their answer when a woman named Nella Jones came to their attention, claiming that she could help locate a priceless Vermeer painting, called The Guitar Player, that had been stolen from Kenwood House in North London in 1974.

Nella told the police that she had been ironing some clothes and idly watching the television when her mind suddenly focused on the whereabouts of the painting.

She hurriedly sketched it out and took it to the police, who were understandably sceptical.

But having nothing else to go on they followed the lead. The painting was eventually recovered from St Bartholomew's churchyard as a result of the information she gave them.

Again, it would be easy to dismiss Nella's guidance to the police as just blind luck.

Easy, that is, if she hadn't spent the following 20 years helping them ensnare murderers and other serious offenders.

"Nella gave invaluable assistance on a number of murders," says Detective Chief Inspector Arnie Cooke. "Her evidence was not the type you can put before a jury. But senior investigating officers have got to take people like her on board and accept what they are saying."

In fact, so useful was Nella to Scotland Yard that in 1993 they publicly thanked her and senior officers hosted a dinner in her honour.

Scotland Yard later wrote to her, saying: "Some police officers may have seemed sceptical of your abilities ... but it is a mark of those abilities that police turn to you time and time again."

Such anecdotes are all very well but there is statistical evidence, too, that proves that psychic skills are a useful tool for law enforcement agencies and the military.

In 1995, the US Congress asked two independent scientists to assess whether the \$20 million that the government had spent on psychic research had produced anything of value. And the conclusions proved to be somewhat unexpected.

Professor Jessica Utts, a statistician from the University of California, discovered that remote viewers were correct 34 per cent of the time, a figure way beyond what chance guessing would allow.

She says: "Using the standards applied to any other area of science, you have to conclude that certain psychic phenomena, such as remote viewing, have been well established.

"The results are not due to chance or flaws in the experiments."

Of course, this doesn't wash with sceptical scientists.

Professor Richard Wiseman, a psychologist at the University of Hertfordshire, refuses to believe in remote viewing.

He says: "I agree that by the standards of any other area of science that remote viewing is proven, but begs the question: do we need higher standards of evidence when we study the paranormal? I think we do.

"If I said that there is a red car outside my house, you would probably believe me.

"But if I said that a UFO had just landed, you'd probably want a lot more evidence.

"Because remote viewing is such an outlandish claim that will revolutionise the world, we need overwhelming evidence before we draw any conclusions. Right now we don't have that evidence."

Back at the University of Northampton, Dr Chris Roe hopes he can provide such proof one way or the other.

Next month, he will embark on a series of experiments that will be more rigorous than any so far attempted.

They will rule out fluke positive results and any unconscious biases held by anyone involved with the experiments.

And if that wasn't enough, he then plans to embark on research into an even more outlandish field: whether it is possible to remote view through time.

In other words, he will investigate whether it is possible for remote viewers not only to observe distant locations, but also to see what will happen at that place at a predetermined time in the future.

"Time does not seem to be a barrier to remote viewing," says Dr Roe, matter of factly.

Certainly, only time will tell whether he has been cruelly deluded, or has glimpsed a very intriguing future.