

The Andover Case : A Responsive Rapping Poltergeist

by BARRIE G. COLVIN

Abstract

An investigation into alleged poltergeist activity has been carried out at a house in Andover, Hampshire. The principal phenomenon was that of rapping sounds which, by means of a code, could produce meaningful messages. Attempts were made to exclude natural causes, including the transfer of the raps to objects which were under the close scrutiny of the observers. Effects were recorded which bear similarities to other rapping cases.

Introduction

Rapping poltergeists have been reported and closely investigated from very early times (Gauld & Cornell, 1979). The Andover case is an example of alleged poltergeist activity in which the main reported phenomena consisted of rapping sounds of an intelligent nature emanating from various locations in response to questions posed by a number of persons. The case dates from 1974 when the author made nine visits to the house in question from 28 April to 10 June of that year. Full notes were made at the time of the investigation and a full report was written shortly afterwards. A brief summary of the principal observations was presented earlier (Colvin, 1977).

The details of the investigation were not previously submitted for publication due to strict personal assurances given to the family concerned at the time of the investigation. Even ten years after the events, the family upheld their concern that publication should not take place, even in a form which would largely retain their anonymity. However, since over 30 years has now passed, and the family moved from the dwelling many years ago, it was felt that the details of this case could now be published. Pseudonyms have been used throughout.

Background

The series of incidents, which form the subject of this report, took place at a Council-owned house at Andover in Hampshire. The house was built in the 1960s when Andover became part of the London overspill plan. It was situated at 25 Collingwood Walk on the Admirals Way housing estate.

At the time of the investigation the house was occupied by a Mr and Mrs Andrews and

their family. They had lived there for 5 years and had never experienced any strange or mysterious happenings prior to the outbreak of events in 1974. I was first made aware of the various phenomena on 27th April 1974 following the publication of a story surrounding the events in a local newspaper (Anon, 1974).

The newspaper article described the occurrence of peculiar rapping sounds, which were causing the Andrews family some anxiety. The sounds emanated from the wall adjacent to the bed of one of the young girls and a code had been developed by the family in order to communicate with the entity. An exploratory visit was made to the house on 28th April 1974 where I met the family and heard their individual accounts of the experiences.

The family consists of the two parents, Mr P. Andrews (Mr A) and Mrs P. Andrews (Mrs A), as well as their six children - Maria (aged 20), Kevin (19), Gary (17), Steven (15), Theresa (12) and Mark (10). The family was an apparently happy one and indications were in evidence that they enjoyed their home, having taken trouble to ensure that it was pleasantly decorated, clean and bright.



The house itself consisted of ground floor accommodation comprising a relatively spacious lounge, dining room, kitchen, hallway and a WC. The main door to the house faced east and No.25 was one of a long line of terraced houses. At intervals, there was a gap between houses, this area forming a 2.4 metre wide passageway between various streets within the housing estate. However, there was always a room above the passageway as shown in Fig 1. The ground floor end wall of No 25 Collingwood Walk, which faced north, formed one side of an alleyway, the other side being formed by the end wall of No. 26 Collingwood Walk. The first floor area consisted of a landing, stair well, boiler cupboard, airing cupboard, bathroom/WC and four bedrooms including one which was situated directly over the alley-way. Theresa shared this bedroom

with her elder sister, Maria. There were two single beds in the room as well as a wardrobe. Theresa occupied the bed adjacent to the partition wall, the other side of which resided the neighbours in No.26. Since Theresa featured heavily in this case, it is perhaps worth pointing out that she was a very shy but pleasant girl, of small build, almost frail but otherwise physically sound. When relaxed, she was usually placid and rather unemotional. There was a feeling of loneliness with her and, although she was attractive, her friends were few. Maria, however, was quite lively, had a wide circle of friends, including a caring, handsome, boyfriend.



First Interview

During my first visit to the house on Sunday, 28th April 1974, a brief history of the phenomena was described. The meeting was held in the lounge and, as well as myself, all members of the family were present.

It was clear to me that the family appeared to be reticent in coming forth with details at first, perhaps as a result of not fully understanding my own motives. I explained that I would give them an explanation as to why I was there and what I was hoping to achieve. I pointed out that firstly I would be trying to determine whether there was a normal, logical explanation for the phenomena. In doing so, I carefully explained that historically many supposed paranormal events were found to have normal explanations when properly investigated. I detailed some of my investigations into Spiritualist circles with emphasis on the careful nature of the investigations and

the conclusion that many cases did not stand up to scientific scrutiny.

I further explained that I would hope to be able to properly assess the nature of the tapping sounds and, if necessary, bring in specialists with experience in dealing with matters of this type.

I was fully aware of the fact that the family may simply be hoping that someone is capable of eliminating these knocking sounds. Consequently, I explained that I had close links with the Spiritualist movement and with certain church practitioners who had shown great success in eliminating the presence of unusual phenomena. I then summarised the situation as I saw it, making it quite clear that I was interested in the scientific objectivity of such phenomena, and therefore had an interest in extending, rather than reducing, the period over which the strange occurrences manifest themselves. However, I reiterated the fact that at any time I would be happy to bring in a specialist with a view to eradicating these effects.

I then asked Mr A. to give me a brief summary of events leading up to the present day. The following account summarises the information received from various members of the family, some of whom found it more difficult to discuss the events than others.

The sounds were first heard by Theresa and Maria during the Easter weekend. The two girls explained that light tapping sounds were first heard when they lay quietly in bed on Good Friday, 12 April. At first they thought that the sounds were being made by someone next door, especially since the tapping sounds always emanated from the wall adjacent to Theresa's bed. However, the girls soon became convinced that this was not the real explanation because they obtained knocking replies to questions which Theresa whispered so softly that her sister Maria, lying in the adjacent bed, could hardly hear. They felt that in these circumstances no one in the adjacent house could have heard them talking. Maria and Theresa explained that at first they were not at all troubled by these events, which occurred nightly. In fact, they positively enjoyed the experience and looked forward to going to bed each

evening.

A typical procedure would involve Theresa and Maria asking questions such as "Is anybody there?". A very definite single knock was heard, followed by silence. Theresa remembers that she started asking this question in a very low voice and still got a positive answer. Even when she whispered a question, so quietly that she could hardly hear it herself, the knocking sound replied instantly and positively. The two girls became intrigued by these events and very soon developed a code whereby a question would be asked and a yes/no answer given. One knock was taken to indicate yes and two knocks indicated no. If the answer was not known, the girls requested that three knocks should be given. It was not long before the whole family were asking questions and the coded communication was improved in the following manner: the girls asked questions, which required an answer that was somewhat fuller than yes/no. It required words and sentences, which could be tapped out according to the position of the letters in the alphabet. For example, the letter E would be represented by five knocks, the letter M by thirteen knocks etc. In this way, long sentences were spelled out, sometimes taking several minutes to accomplish.



Before long, a standard procedure had been adopted whereby various members of the family would sit in the bedroom, Theresa would lie on her bed, and questions would be asked. In order for rapping sounds to be produced they found that it was usually essential for Theresa to lie on the bed. If she stood up they would not obtain raps. On some occasions the whole family would be involved and they all regarded these events as inexplicable but interesting and good-natured. Initially, there

was never any occult or sinister interpretation placed upon these events and all family members regarded the sessions as a sort of game. It became normal practise for Theresa and Maria to communicate with the source of the rapping sounds whenever they retired to bed. In this way a happy rapport was established between the *entity* and the girls. Examples of their communication are given below:

Apparently, a few days earlier, Theresa had asked the *entity* "What is your name?"

Five knocks were counted and appeared to come from the wall, very close to Theresa's head as she lay on her bed.

Theresa asked, "Is that E?"

A single knock was heard, indicating *Yes*.

Theresa asked for the next letter.

Eighteen knocks were given and Theresa asked if the letter was *R*.

The entity knocked once, again indicating that this was correct.

In this way, the rapping continued and the entity indicated that its name was Eric.

Theresa then asked whether Eric had a surname, which was answered in the affirmative. This was then followed by a series of raps, which indicated that the full name was Eric Waters.

It was not long before the whole family was engaged in a question and answer session with Eric with questions such as:

Are you living or are you dead?

Why are you here?

When did you die?

How did you die?

Where are you?

Which football team is going to win the F. A. Cup final?

No matter what question was asked, a reply was usually forthcoming and was always understood by the whole family. Mr A informed me that he placed bets on the horses based upon information given by Eric. The eldest son, Kevin, explained that Eric had told him that Leeds United football team would win the F.A League competition and that Liverpool would win the F.A. Cup. At this stage, the events, which took place in the bedroom, were regarded as a strange game for which no one could offer an explanation. Neighbours would call in to

witness the events and several visits were made by local clergy and the police. Theresa's room was sprinkled with Holy Water and a cross was placed on her windowsill. A medium from the local Andover Spiritualist Church paid a visit and explained that the house was haunted by the spirit of a young boy whose body was buried under the floorboards. According to her, the spirit of the boy was trying to take over the personality of Theresa. It was explained to Theresa that she must remain mentally strong to resist the effects of the unwanted spirit. Needless to say, these revelations were of great concern to the family and over a period of time the atmosphere during communication sessions became somewhat less jovial.

Visit on Tuesday, 30 April 1974

I had received a phone call from Mr A at about 8.15 pm on 29 April 1974. He described how the family had been kept awake all night by the rapping entity, Eric. The knocking sounds had been much louder than normal and, despite numerous requests, would not abate. This had disturbed the family, who for the first time felt that Eric was purposely attempting to frighten them. No amount of pleading would get the loud rapping sounds to subside.

I arrived at Collingwood Walk at 2.30 pm on 30 April 1974 and was met by Mr and Mrs A who appeared to be in a totally different mood compared with two days earlier. Mr A in particular looked tired and irritable. They invited me into the house and described the events of the previous evening.

It was a normal, fairly quiet evening when at about 6.30 pm knocking sounds were heard upstairs when all members of the family, including Theresa, were still downstairs. The first sounds were not gentle, as was normally the case, but began with a heavy, single bang. After a period of about 20 seconds, a series of loud rapping sounds was heard, after which Kevin and Gary raced upstairs. They reported that the sounds came from the same wall next to Theresa's bed. When Kevin asked: "Is that you, Eric?" a very loud thud was heard which shocked everyone.

Mr A invited me to hear the knocking sounds, which had been occurring every evening. He suggested that I return later when Theresa would be ready for bed. I agreed to return at 8.30 pm.

At the agreed time I visited the Andrews family and found that all members were noticeably uneasy in their attitude. There was no sign of the normal, light-hearted exchanges, with Mr A explaining that he was concerned that Eric might be in the same sort of mood that he had been in the previous evening. I sat in the lounge with Mr and Mrs A for about an hour whilst Theresa and Maria, upstairs, attempted to make contact with Eric. I could hear them asking "Are you there, Eric?" "Do you want to talk to us, Eric?"

After a while, we could all hear gentle knocking sounds which appeared to emanate from upstairs. Mrs A went up to join the girls and was soon heard to be joining in with the questions. I recall her asking: "Do you have a message for downstairs?" This was followed by a very emphatic, single loud bang. For about 20 minutes I remained downstairs listening to the exchanges and discussing the possible explanations with Mr A. He suggested that I might wish to join the others in Theresa's bedroom to witness the events first hand. He explained, however, that they had noticed that whenever anyone new entered the bedroom the rapping sounds would abate, at least for a while. He therefore made the suggestion that I slowly ascend the stairs and initially stand outside the bedroom.

I did exactly as Mr A suggested and actually stood at the top of the stairs, a very short distance from the bedroom entrance. From here it was possible to hear all conversations as well as the rapping sounds. The questions and answers continued without falter when Mrs A asked: "Eric, is it alright for Barrie to come into the room?" Again, a loud single knock was heard. Following this, I slowly walked into the bedroom and stood beside the headboard end of Theresa's bed. Theresa was lying on top of her bed and Maria too was lying on her bed with a light cover over her body. The rapping sounds continued and ap-

peared to come from the centre of the wall adjacent to the bed. Eric was asked how old he would have been if he had still been alive. There followed a very long series of raps, which began in a slow, clear manner. They then became more hurried and finally petered out altogether. During this time I was able to place my hands on the wall by stretching over Theresa's bed. It was possible to feel the vibration of the wall, but not possible to determine whether the knocking sounds were being generated next door. After about 15 minutes, Mrs A asked Theresa whether she was tired. She replied that she was, following which Mrs A suggested that we all retire to bed and get a good night's sleep. Mrs A said in a soft voice:

"Goodnight Eric"

A very soft but definite single rap was heard.

I left the bedroom and rejoined Mr A in the lounge downstairs. He had been listening to the session and immediately asked the straightforward question:

"What do you think is going on?"

We had a long discussion about the whole subject of poltergeist activity and I explained that although we don't yet understand the full meaning of these messages, it is my considered opinion that the source of these rappings is not, as suggested by the Spiritualist medium, due to a ghost of a departed person. It is more likely to be due to an unknown energy, which is probably associated with the particular psychological dynamics present in the house at this time.

I recounted to him the case of Virginia Campbell (Owen, A.R.G. 1964) who had been at the centre of similar activities in Scotland some years ago. Virginia never came to any harm and went on to live a normal life. The poltergeist manifestations were short-lived but nevertheless mysterious occurrences, but they had no long-lasting adverse effect upon Virginia. Mr A was clearly relieved to hear this and thanked me for coming to visit them. I left and promised to give him a call soon.

Visit on Thursday, 2 May 1974

Having thought deeply about the rapping sounds that I had witnessed on my previous visit, I discussed the situation with Mr and Mrs A and asked whether they would be willing to help me carry out a few

tests with a view to learning more about the rapping phenomenon. In particular, I felt that it would be most useful to attempt to control the position of the raps. It was clear to all that the rapping sounds were usually heard on the wall adjacent to Theresa's bed. Since this wall was the partitioning wall between their house and that of their neighbour, it could always be argued that someone was tapping normally on the wall in No.26 Collingwood Walk.

I had previously gained the opinion that replies to questions were particularly clear when Mrs A asked the questions. Both parents agreed that this was the case and so it was decided that we would try to contact Eric again and ask him to tap out his messages in another part of the bedroom.

I walked upstairs to the bedroom, closely followed by Mrs A and Theresa. I felt that it would be useful to attempt to move the position of the raps to another hard surface such as the headboard of the bed. Theresa took up her position on top of the bed, in full view of Mrs A and myself. I stood beside Theresa's bed, close to the window, and Mrs A sat on the end of Maria's bed. We all remained silent for several minutes, after which Mrs A said:

"Eric, are you there?"

There was no clear rap, but we all heard a strange scratching sound coming from a position on the wall just above Theresa's head. It lasted for about 10 seconds.

Mrs A repeated the question but this time there was no answer at all. After about 20 minutes of failure to communicate, Theresa stated that Eric wasn't there and that we should leave it for now. At that point a loud double knock was heard on the wall.

Mrs A again asked whether Eric was there and a clear single rap was heard, again coming from the same wall. Mrs A asked whether he liked giving us messages. Again, a single rather loud rap was heard.

After several minutes of similar activity, Mrs A asked Eric if he would try to knock on the headboard of Theresa's bed. He indicated in the usual manner that he would.

Mrs A then said:

"Eric, please try to knock on the headboard"

This was followed by a very soft tap, which was heard by us all. I was at that point standing very close indeed to the headboard, with my ear about 15 cm from it. As Mrs A repeated the request, I put my hand on the headboard to see whether I could feel any vibration. Eric rapped progressively louder on the headboard and I could clearly feel the vibration. I noted, however, that on each occasion the onset of the vibration appeared to be slightly before the moment when we heard the rapping sound. It is possible that this effect was purely subjective but real enough for me to make a note of it.

By this time we all felt that Eric was cooperating well and we decided to move the raps to other places in the bedroom. I asked Mrs A to continue her dialogue with Eric with a view to producing the raps on the metal frame of the bed. After some delay, this was achieved and for several minutes we obtained raps from that area. It was noticeable that the sound of the rap was quite different to what we had become used to. The rapping sound appeared to be of a higher frequency than that produced on either the wall or the wooden bed head.

We continued asking questions for a further 20 minutes, after which time the raps were becoming very soft indeed. Theresa said that she was now very tired and wished to go to bed so the current, rather successful episode was concluded.

Visit on Sunday, 5 May 1974

Mr A phoned the previous evening to say that things had become very unnerving due to the loudness of the rapping sounds. Several people had gathered around the house and knocking sounds could be heard for some distance down the street. Being such a densely populated housing estate, word soon got around and many people had come to see what was happening.

When I arrived on the morning of 5 May, the whole family was sitting in the lounge. They recounted the events of the previous evening, which started as normal with Theresa asking some questions about Eric's life here on earth. The rapping sounds were very clear and answers were

given as normal, sometimes with a touch of humour. She has received messages that Eric's bones were definitely underneath the house and that he wanted someone to dig below the floor of the lounge and retrieve them. The bones could then be taken to a graveyard and buried in an appropriate place. When Kevin started asking questions, the rapping sounds ceased for a while – in the region of half an hour. Kevin then started a different format of questioning:

"Are you there, Eric?"

(No answer)

"I think you've gone away"

(No answer)

"I don't think you ever really existed"

This was followed by a single, very loud bang.

"Eric, I don't believe that you were ever a real person"

Another single loud bang followed

"I think you're a liar, Eric"

This was followed by a long series of very loud thuds, almost as if Eric was now feeling upset. After a brief pause of about 30 seconds, the loud knockings began again. They would then stop for a while before commencing again even louder. This went on for about an hour and there appeared to be no way to stop the knocking sounds. Following a gap of about an hour, the events continued in this manner until the early hours of the morning. Even when they had finally ceased, each member of the family was prevented from sleeping due to the anticipation of further knocking noises.

The family gave a joint account of the episode, which had clearly affected them all. They woke up early in anticipation of my visit. Within several minutes Mrs A had asked me to find someone who could help in removing the offending entity so that they could return to their normal lives. Whilst I sat with the parents in the lounge, Theresa and Kevin were trying to make contact with Eric in the usual bedroom. I could hear Theresa asking in a very quiet voice:

"Are you there, Eric?"

There was no reply.

Kevin, who clearly felt that he knew how to get Eric to respond, then shouted:

"Eric I think you're a bloody great liar !"

Immediately we could all hear a loud

knock. Everyone raced upstairs to join Theresa and Kevin in the bedroom. I recall that Theresa was looking very shocked and by now rather tearful.

Kevin continued, "You are, Eric, you're a liar and you are not underneath the house".

The response was a long series of very loud knocks. Mrs A said that she was not staying and went back downstairs. I gently moved towards Theresa's bed and was able to ascertain that the knocking sounds came from the wooden headboard of the bed. The headboard was a simple wooden structure composed of two main uprights and a top horizontal batton screwed to the uprights. The space between the uprights consisted of eight pieces of thin wooden rod in the shape of four crosses. These were designed to give additional rigidity to the bed head.

I placed my left hand on the horizontal upper section of the headboard and was clearly able to feel the vibration of the wood at the precise moment that a loud rapping sound was heard. At this point, Theresa was lying on her bed, there was no significant movement from anyone else in the room and the ambient light conditions were good. Kevin continued with his rather pointed remarks and Eric continued to produce a very loud series of replies. By this time the communication was good with very few errors being made in determining the letters being spelt out by Eric.

Visit on Tuesday, 7 May 1974

I had planned to visit the house with a well-known Spiritualist colleague, a Mr Gordon Higginson, from the Arthur Findlay College at Stansted Mounfitchet. He had expressed great interest in the case and felt that he could help provide some missing information regarding the personality of Eric. More importantly, he felt that he could probably make contact with Eric, and by means of mental communication, to end the disruptive nature of the phenomena. I had been working closely with Mr Higginson and had been regularly attending his séances at Stansted Hall. Although my current interest was in his apparent mental mediumship abilities, particularly with regard to shedding light on Eric, my interest in the past resulted from his claims to be

able to produce full physical materialisations. I had been present at such a séance two months earlier, together with an SPR colleague, Brigadier Frank Spedding. I believe that Mr Higginson was becoming aware of my doubts regarding the physical mediumship. It was for that reason, I believe, that at the last moment he decided not to visit the Andover house as planned.

Nevertheless, I again visited the Andrews family on a day when Kevin had taken it upon himself to purposely upset Eric as he had done in the past. Whilst this process led to nervous feelings within the family, it did have the positive effect of giving rise to significant knocking sounds which on this visit could be heard for some distance. As I arrived I noted that about twenty people had gathered in the passageway directly below Theresa's bedroom. Kevin and Theresa were in the bedroom and Kevin was shouting at Eric in a similar manner to that of the previous week. The banging sounds were quite deafening and were coming from the vicinity of the wall next to Theresa's bed. I placed my hand on the wall and could feel the vibration of it. I returned to the small gathering of people outside and we all placed our hands on the outside surface of the wall of No 25, at ground level in the passageway. The vibration was felt by everyone and the knocking sound was again very loud, although not as loud as in Theresa's bedroom. I walked from the alleyway towards the back of the house and continued in the northwesterly direction towards the next street. Whilst standing in Byng Walk, a full 50 yards from the alleyway, I could still hear the rapping sounds. They lasted for a full half hour after which, to everyone's relief, they stopped suddenly and were not heard again that day.

Visit on Saturday, 11 May 1974

Mr A had informed me that there had been no further activity for several days. Nevertheless, I decided to visit the family again, partly to gain some feel for how they were now coping. We had a long conversation regarding the possible reasons for the manifestations and the family agreed that no harm had come to anyone. Indeed, we all recognised that Eric was just a typical poltergeist who was having

some fun and would probably retreat to his proper place in due course.

During a telephone conversation on 21 May, I was informed by Mr A that things had been relatively quiet for about two weeks. There had been a few occasions, just as Theresa was about to fall asleep, when she heard some soft raps. He informed me that she had asked Eric to try to guess a number that she was thinking of. Apparently, Eric managed to guess correctly on every occasion. This fact reminded me of the ad-hoc tests carried out during the investigation of the Derrygonnelly case (Barrett W F, 1911). On the basis that the information reported was correct, it would be important to put the claim to the test. Consequently, we made an arrangement to perform this test in the near future.

Visit on Thursday, 23 May 1974

Mr A telephoned to say that Eric had been responding well to questions put to him by Theresa. They had reverted to the relaxed, friendly manner of communication ensuring that Kevin was not allowed to cause a disturbance as he had done in the past. Mr A felt that there was sufficient cooperation to allow us to perform the test and I arrived at their home at about 1:30 pm. Having prepared a total of 40 shuffled cards, each one depicting a number from 1 to 10 (i.e. 4 sets), I carried out several runs in the following manner:

Theresa was lying on her bed; face down, with her head turned slightly towards the wall. Mrs A and Kevin sat on Maria's bed and I stood close to the window, facing Theresa. I picked a card at random and showed it to everyone in the room, including Theresa, without actually stating what the number was. I held it up so that it faced the wall and asked Eric to tap out the number of the card. Four slow but definite raps were heard to come from the wall. The last rap was louder than the others. After the fourth rap, I continued to hold the card in place in case any further raps were forthcoming. When it was clear that the rapping had finished, I confirmed to Eric that the answer was correct. This procedure was repeated five times and on each occasion Eric produced the correct number of raps. The tests were then con-

tinued in a slightly different manner. I picked a card out of the pack and, ensuring that Theresa was facing the wall; looked at the number in such a manner that no one else in the room could see it. Again I held it up, facing the wall and asked Eric to tap out the number. In one series of 7 tests, all calls were correct. However, in another set of 10 tests, two numbers were incorrect, each being one short of the required value. As a final test, I repeated the procedure but in this case I didn't look at the cards before holding them up to the wall. In this set, again two numbers were wrong out of a total of ten.

By this time I had become certain that whatever was responsible for the rapping sounds, they were not coming from someone on the other side of the wall. The fact that these number tests had been largely successful, and that the raps had been produced during previous visits on surfaces other than the wall, led to the conclusion that the occupants of No 26 Collingwood Walk were not responsible. I was aware that the rapping phenomena were rather similar to those apparently produced by the Fox sisters (Buescher, 2004), with the obvious connection between the rapping phenomena and the popular interpretation of spirit involvement. For this reason, and bearing in mind the clear cooperation currently being achieved with Eric, I felt that we should try to obtain information, which on the basis of a discarnate entity hypothesis, would be verifiable through historical records.

With all participants still in the room, Eric was asked rather simple questions about his family, his mother's name, his date of birth etc. Although clear rapping sounds were obtained in answer to our various questions, many of the answers were simply given as three knocks, indicating that he did not know the answer. When asked how long ago he died, a very long series of raps were produced which became almost inaudible for a period and impossible to count with any accuracy. Despite an apparent willingness to produce raps in reply to our questions, we were unable to find out much about Eric and concluded that he seemed to know very little about his life. We did however ask him whether we could attempt to photograph him and a very definite single rap was

heard. Following some discussion amongst ourselves, it was decided that I should return at a later date with the express objective of trying to capture an image on film.

Visit on Friday, 7 June 1974

During this visit I was accompanied by Dr Reinhart Schiffauer (RS), a Senior Scientist at the Egham Research Laboratories in Surrey. I had known RS for about a year and felt that he could be relied upon to approach the subject in an objective manner. He had already explained to me that he had no experience of paranormal events and regarded himself as an "open-minded sceptic". In view of the fact that Eric had confirmed his desire to help us with producing photographs, RS had sourced the necessary cameras and films.

The procedure started in the normal manner with Theresa lying on her bed. Also present in the bedroom were myself, RS, Mr A and Mrs A.

Mrs A, who seemed to have developed a rapport with Eric, asked if he was there. One knock indicated that he was. There was soon a healthy dialogue going on, probably as good as has ever been the case. When I asked if Theresa needed to be present in order for rapping sounds to be forthcoming, Eric answered no (two knocks). I asked him to knock loudly and he replied with a very soft tap. This was repeated. Theresa suggested that I ask him to knock softly. He replied with a loud, emphatic knock, almost in a playful mood. He apparently had little concept of time and often, when asked about a specific time period, had difficulty tapping out the requisite number of raps. However, when a long series of raps was required, it was of interest to note that, as in previous sessions, the last knock in the series was usually emphasised. For example, when I asked him how long ago he died, there was a rapid series of knocks, which towards the end became more precise and ended with a forceful knock to apparently indicate that it was the last one.

During this visit we attempted to take a photograph of Eric, based on the notion that he would be able to help us determine the correct positioning of the camera by knocking appropriately. We used high-

speed black and white film as well as colour infrared film. All photographs were taken during the daytime with the bedroom curtains open, both with and without infrared flash. I wondered whether Eric could actually see us and immediately heard a strong emphatic "yes" in the form of a single rap. Eric was asked to rap whenever the camera was pointing in the right direction. Using this method, Eric was found to be particularly cooperative and a number of photographs were taken. On many occasions the relevant point of interest was on the bedroom wall close to the headboard of the bed. Despite taking many photos under a variety of conditions, we were unable to capture anything unusual on the film.

A more successful experiment involved the tapping out of numbers, which were held up. Theresa was ready for bed and lay underneath the bed-covers. As before, the cards with the numbers 1 to 10 were used. They were shuffled and the top card taken and held up in the room. At this stage no effort was made to conceal the number from those present in the room. When asked to tap out the first number, six clear raps were heard. This corresponded to the number on the card. It is interesting to note that the raps were relatively quiet but were tapped out slowly and purposefully as though with great concentration. A second card was held up and again the correct number of raps (four) was forthcoming.

Again on this occasion, Eric wished to provide a rather complex and detailed message. This involved a significant time period over which complete sentences were spelled out, one letter at a time. Having left the bedroom to speak with Mr A downstairs, Theresa and Mrs A were left alone in the bedroom. We had left the tape recorder unattended but still running in Theresa's bedroom. Mrs A had asked Eric if he had a further message for them. A single knock indicated that he had. She asked for the first letter to be knocked (9 knocks, indicating "I") and continued to obtain a full sentence:

" I am here to rest and stop my bones from rotting."

It should be noted that following each

set of knocks, during which Mrs A had mentally counted through the alphabet, she would state the relevant letter in order for Eric to affirm that it was correctly identified. He would knock once in affirmation and twice to indicate that it was wrongly determined by her. In those instances where she incorrectly stated a wrong letter, post examination of the tape recording indicates that Eric had knocked the correct number of times but that Mrs A had incorrectly counted through the alphabet.

During the course of this message, several significant points were noticed. Firstly, it was confirmed that the quality of the knocks was very good – this has been noticed before when Mrs A and Theresa were alone together. Secondly, there are several instances where Mrs A had called out a particular letter of the alphabet, which was wrong. Eric would knock twice to indicate that fact. On one occasion, for example, Eric tapped out 20 raps in a row. Mrs A asked "S?" There were two loud knocks to indicate "No". Just at the precise moment when Mrs A asked "T?" Eric produced one loud rap to indicate that "T" was the correct letter. It is as if Eric was aware of what Mrs A was about to say. This phenomenon was noticed on several occasions. Halfway through the above message, having heard from downstairs the rapping phenomena were now in full flow, RS and I slowly crept upstairs and entered the bedroom, trying as much as possible to minimise interference with the successful proceedings. We were able to get very close to the point where the raps were coming from. However, the point of origin appeared to vary slightly and as it did so the subjective nature of the rapping sounds also changed. Further attempts were made to take photographs, this time using the camera belonging to RS. Very little cooperation was forthcoming from Eric and after repeated requests for help in directing the camera, all to no avail, we decided to pack up our equipment and leave the family to prepare for bed.

The following day I asked RS to summarise his feelings about the visit, which he did in a letter to me, dated 9 June 1974. In his letter RS states:

"I visited this house together with Dr Barrie

Colvin to witness some strange 'tapping' sounds which were believed to be caused by supernatural phenomena. It appeared that in some previous sessions this entity had identified itself by the name of Eric – this name was used throughout this session.

The persons present were: Barrie and myself, a young girl, age 13, named Theresa (this girl seemed to be essential to any messages) and her parents. The session took place in Theresa's bedroom. If anyone asked questions the answers were given as tapping sounds. A single knock meant 'yes', a double knock 'no' and a triple, 'I don't know'. Everybody asked some questions, most of which were answered. If no answer occurred Theresa usually repeated the question and got an answer.

During one brief period when Theresa left the room no answers were obtained at all. After she returned, the tapping, after questions, continued.

The knocks varied in location (between several positions on the bedroom walls and the bedpost) as well as intensity. from soft to loud.

Finally, a message was received where letters were tapped out like one knock = A, 2 knocks = B etc. The questions about the next letter or next word were asked by Theresa's mother or by Theresa. They said the letter in question and either got a 'yes' (one knock) or a 'no' (2 knocks). Sometimes a letter had to be repeated since the knocks occurred too rapidly to count. Finally the message read:

'I am here to rest and stop my bones from rotting'

and verified several times by 'yes' knocks.

This was more or less the end of the session, the entity would not answer any specific question as to where the bones were exactly, what to do with them etc.

I recorded the whole session on audiocassette. We also tried to take infrared photographs of 'Eric', asking several times specifically where to point the camera. The film was developed the next day and did not show any unusual features.

The constant changing of the tapping around the room makes me think that the

occurrence was genuine, whatever it was, and that the room was not rigged in any way. (We checked for wires, hollow spots etc and did not find any evidence of fraud).

The fact that Theresa's presence appeared to be necessary for any tapping indicates that the girl's mind was somehow involved in this phenomena. I have no material or scientific explanation for what happened.

(Signed) Reinhart Schiffauer

(The original letter is in the SPR archives)

Visit on Monday, 10 June 1974

My final visit to the house followed a telephone conversation with Mr A in which he stated that it was becoming very difficult to get a response from Eric. There had only been a couple of very soft knocks over the past two days. Mr A felt that during the particularly good session on the previous Friday, Eric had communicated his thoughts and no longer felt the need to continually spell out the same message time after time.

I arrived at 7:30 pm and spent some time in the lounge with Mr and Mrs A. Gary and Theresa were upstairs trying to get a response from Eric but with no success. I joined them, followed shortly afterwards by Mrs A. She took control of the questions and spoke in a familiar tone:

"Eric, are you there?" No answer.

"Eric, have you got a message for us?" No answer.

After about 15 minutes of questioning, Theresa announced that Eric had gone and gone forever. She explained that she simply felt, and was quite sure, that Eric had passed on his message and no longer needed to say anything to us. A discussion took place as to who Eric could have been and whether his bones would ever be found underneath the house. The general feeling amongst the family members was that at some stage in the future the bones would be discovered proving that Eric was a real person. I put to the family that in my view the rapping sounds were probably not coming from a discarnate entity at all, despite the fact that Eric purported to be the intelligence behind the rappings sounds. They made it quite clear that they thought

my interpretation was incorrect but nevertheless were happy to accept that we would probably never know for certain.

The Search for Eric

In an attempt to determine whether a discarnate entity by the name of Eric Waters could be invoked to explain the rapping sounds, a number of interviews were conducted in the area around Andover.

The surname of Waters is relatively common in Andover, most of them being derived from two separate families within the town.

A visit to Mr Charles Waters of Finkley Down Farm, Andover and his son Mr H Waters confirmed no recollection of an Eric in the family.

Mr C Waters of London Road was interviewed. He remembered most people in the family back to about 1900 (he was 86 years old) but there was no recollection of an Eric Waters. He stated, however, that the Waters' farm at one time extended to the site of the current "Twinings" tea factory on the A3093 road, about 200 metres from the Council house in question.

A visit to Mr P H Davis of Tollgate Road, Andover (a local historian) was made. He had drawn up a family tree for the larger of the two Waters families, dating back to the late 17th Century. However, there was no record of an Eric.

A Mr H J Smallbones of The Drove, Andover explained that he once owned the land on which the house at Collingwood Walk now stands. It was used as a caravan site from 1946 to 1960 and before that was waste ground used occasionally by travelling gypsies.

Mr E Waters of Batchelors Barn Road, Andover was the eldest member of the other main Waters family. He could not recall an Eric Waters and further enquiries with other members of his family were also unsuccessful.

A visit was made to Mr M Loveridge of Highlands Road, Andover. He is a well-known historian and author of several

books on the history of Andover. He stated that there is a record of someone having been murdered, by hanging at Drunken Tree Drove around 1890. The Drunken Tree itself, where the hanging took place, was close to the Twinings tea factory in the close vicinity of Collingwood Walk. Apparently, the murdered person's name was never recorded.

The editor of the local newspaper, was approached for assistance in trying to find Eric. He published an article in the Southern Evening Echo (Earney H W, 1974) and asked for information relating to a possible Eric Waters. However, nothing was forthcoming.

An examination of the local "Register of Births and Deaths" from 1837 onwards found no reference to Eric Waters. However, in this period two boys were born who were un-named at the time of entry. The first was born to a Mr and Mrs A Waters in June 1878, the second to Mr and Mrs S Waters of New Street, Andover in 1897.

Following this investigation, it had to be concluded that there was no reference to an Eric Waters in the Andover area.

Discussion

I had no preconceived ideas before entering the house on 28th April 1974 but I was fully aware of the possible methods of producing effects of this type by normal means. For this reason it was important and ultimately significant that the rapping sounds be made to emanate from objects other than the partitioning wall between the Andrews home and their neighbours at No.26. On the basis that one's conclusions about any unusual event are bound to be affected by one's own personal involvement, I have often reflected on the experience of feeling the tapping sounds emanating from the headboard of the bed whilst I placed my hand lightly upon it. The vibration that could be felt, and which was almost synchronised with the audible tapping sound, led me to conclude that the rapping sounds were produced in a manner, which

I could not explain, by normal means.

The nature of the sounds shows similarities with other cases cited in the literature. Particular comparisons can be drawn with the case of Karin (Wijk H, 1905) a twenty year old, delicately formed girl who was at the centre of outbreaks in southern Sweden in the late 1890's. Often raps would be heard whilst Karin was at the point of dozing off and communication was effected by means of a code. As with Theresa, sometimes the raps obeyed the commands of the questioner and on other occasions, as though out of defiance, the opposite of what had been asked took place. The intensity of the raps varied widely in both cases. On occasions, the raps could hardly be heard but at other times the intensity was immense. In the case of Eric, some of the loudest raps were heard during the daytime, in conditions of high ambient light. However, this was never the case with Karin. Another marked difference between the two cases is that the Andover case always involved rapping or scratching sounds only. The Karin case also involved the visual appearance of "a peculiar kind of radiance in the room" on two occasions when sitting in the dark.

The ease with which meaningful communication was possible in the Andover case is relatively uncommon, although somewhat similar events were described in the Cideville case of 1850 (Lang A, 1904). A marked resemblance is evident in the manner in which the raps were delivered. It is recorded that when asked a certain question "eight raps were heard, the last more distinct than the others, apparently to make one understand that it was the last". This same effect was often witnessed in the Andover case.

The series of tests carried out with cards were rather few in number but tended to indicate that there was a significant degree of success. The results were generally correct or, if not, very close to the correct answer. These tests show marked similarities with the Derrygonnelly case (Barrett, 1911) where the correct number of raps was given, even when no words were spoken at all. Professor Barrett stated that "To avoid any error or delu-

sion on my part, I put my hands in the side pockets of my overcoat and asked it to knock the number of fingers I had open. It correctly did so. Then, with a different number of fingers open each time, the experiment was repeated four times in succession, and four times I obtained absolutely the correct number of raps."

I referred earlier to the apparent ability of Eric to have advanced knowledge of the letter of the alphabet that Mrs A was about to call out. He also tapped out the answer to a question, which had not yet been finished. This was a relatively common occurrence during long periods of messages, where Mrs A did not always correctly determine the letter being rapped out. In all instances that were tape-recorded, it has been checked that Eric always tapped out the correct letter, but it was not always correctly identified at first. This aspect of the case is similar to reported events at the McCardle case (Flammarion, C 1924) where raps "were often given before the question was quite finished".

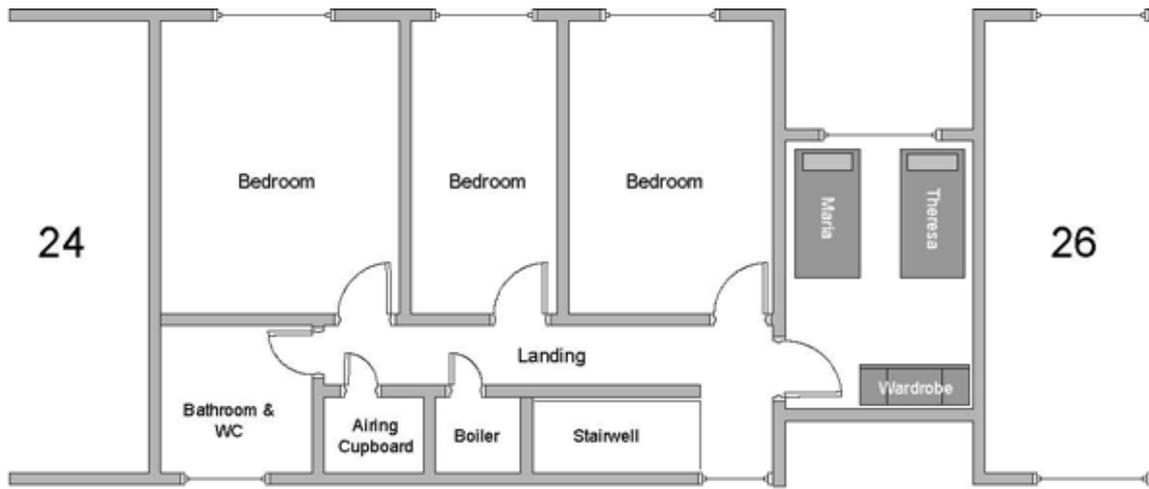
With regard to predictions, there is no clear evidence that Eric was able to significantly predict the outcome of future events. Mr A's experience with gambling on the horses had some successes but there were also failures, details of which were difficult to determine. The predictions about the football results were in fact correct but it is felt that the FA League result could have been guessed at that time by any knowledgeable football supporter. Similarly, the question regarding the FA Cup winner was asked on or around 28th April 1974 and the cup final was held less than a week later. The result was as predicted, with Liverpool beating Newcastle, 3-0. However, this apparent prediction could not be regarded as significant.

In summary, it can be concluded that the Andrews family, Reinhart Schiffauer and myself were unable to determine a natural cause for the rapping sounds at Collingwood Walk. I was particularly intrigued by the vibrations, which could be felt at the time of the rappings and the relative ease with which the sounds could be produced on various items of furniture in good daylight conditions. As far as I am

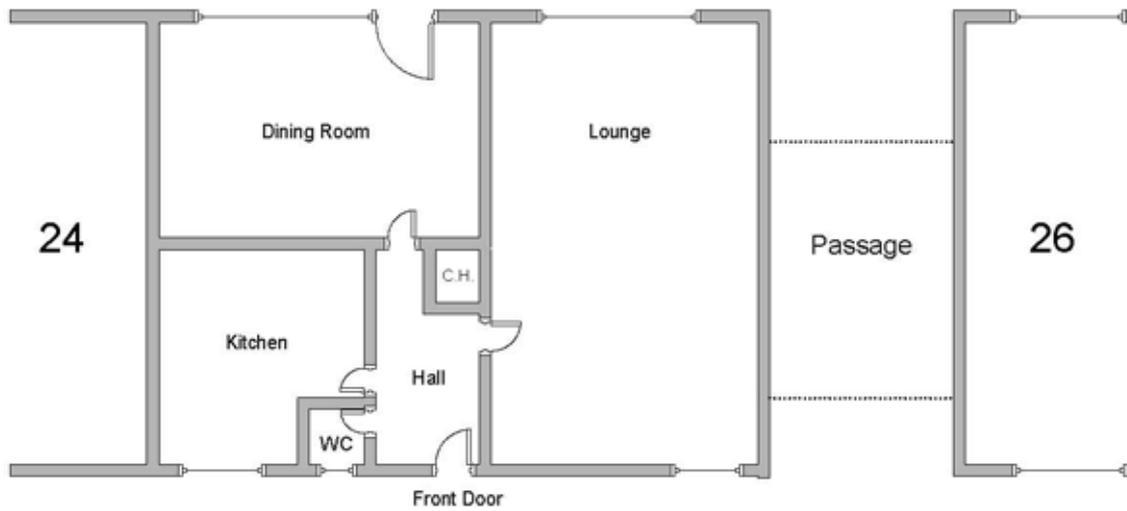
aware, no further rapping sounds were heard at Collingwood Walk after my last visit.

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First Floor



Ground Floor



Plan View of 25 Collingwood Walk, Andover