

PSICAN Document
Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society

The Ghosts and Hauntings
Research Society Ghost Research
Course Document

v.2.1h

Authored, Collected and Compiled by
Matthew James Didier
Founder of the GHRS and current chair of PSICAN

Proofed and Co-Authored by Sue Darroch
Founder and Director of ParaResearchers and current co-chair of PSICAN

Copy Edited by John Robert Colombo

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(I'd mention CSICOP and, some of their members here because, despite some growlings, their thoughts and work have indeed, steered me in directions but – nah...)

Special thanks to Kyle Upton and his cohorts, Mark, Sonja, Chris, Megan and Steve for being very helpful and accommodating at Fort George those many nights... with the prospect of more to come. Also to our dear friend and someone whose been of great help both in the field and with sage advice, Ashley. I would be remiss to forget to also thank David LeFort and Joanne Didier for their assistance and advice in the psychical realms.

Also, a weird thank you to people like Mick Foley who taught me a few tips on how to write things that could be seen as very dry in a slightly better style... I hope.

One of the most important groups of people to thank are the witnesses and other reporters who have taken the time to let us know about their experiences and about the "haunted locations" in and around the province and the world... **Without them, there would be no GHRs at all!**

Of course, I must give a very special thanks to my bastion of sanity and partner in life and in study, Sue Darroch who's an inspiration on many levels and someone who can be counted on no matter what the situation. Truly, I am a better man and a better researcher for being in her company. Je t'aime, mon cher!

There are, of course, in this documents omissions, mistakes and other gaffs. I'm sure, in the revisions, there will be additions and changes. To those I missed saying thanks to and for those that find those problems mentioned above, I do apologise and ask you to forgive my many errors.

Matthew James Didier – November 2003

Dedications and an apology...

This book is dedicated to several people...

Firstly, to Alec A. Demeter... for instilling a sense of logic, science and critical thought into his little girl that shaped her vision and helped hone the visions of her significant other.

Secondly, to all the witnesses and “experiencers” without whom, we’d have little or nothing to work with. The true backbones of this study are those brave souls who came forth to say that they experienced something extraordinary.

Thirdly, to those recent and past investigators and researchers who, despite giggles, arguments, finger-pointing and a general mistrust by many of those who look into the paranormal, persevere and continue to move the study and knowledge forward.

Last, to you, the person who’s taking the time to read this. To some of you, you may wish to shred this book after you’re finished, as it does not hold up to what you feel (or know) to be “true” about the study. Others may glance through and simply hope for something “creepy” or a quick-thrill. Others still may read and absorb and adopt some of the methods and thoughts... Provided you get something for your efforts and maybe, if nothing else, a fresh perspective on things, I thank you too... Hopefully, it will allow you (or someone you talk to) to present new ideas and information from which we all can learn.

After all, we’re all students.

The Apology...

This book, in many ways, is Ontario, Canada-centric. In other words, a lot of the “for instances” and references may be Ontarian in origin. Forgive this... it’s because the book was written in Ontario by an Ontarian... and was originally just for the Toronto and Ontario Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society. Needless to say, it’s been adopted (and adapted where possible) to be a more “cover-all”. I thank you in advance for your patience and understanding.

Preface...

The Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society reared its head to the world in general in October of 1997. It was started by yours truly as an “online” venture (i.e. on the World Wide Web) for people, like myself, who might be looking for the odd Canadian “true ghost story” on the web. I figured, in all honesty, about two hundred or three hundred visitors a year. You can only imagine my shock when within the first two months, I had over a thousand hits.

The nature of the site changed, and after a time I started accepting reports and doing investigations of sites. I had made a conscious decision to do my new found work concentrating on the history, folklore, and legends first, and then add the first-hand accounts. A good mix, but even this was to be amended over time.

Because I had chosen to do this more as a “reporter” than as a “believer,” state of thought (I often said that I thought it wasn’t my place to preach belief or disbelief to readers), I garnered interest from a chap in Utah (U.S.) who wanted to do the same sort of site in that part of the country. That’s when the Toronto Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society became just the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society and from there it blossomed.

Soon we had a GHRS in Utah, Great Britain, California, British Columbia, Virginia, Quebec, Western New York and the list did indeed go on... Some of these GHRS sites folded or stopped being active, others sprang up and others still were re-vitalized with new directors.

Next, the group as a whole started realising that a lot of the “evidence” and “proof” that was online via other groups was... well... questionable.

That’s when the individual groups started doing something that really made us all get a kind of black eye in the “ghost hunter” community. We started asking, “Why?”

This may not seem too terrible, but think of it this way... Most people assume that ghosts are the spirits of the dead. It’s a good thought and seems to be held up by a lot of witness testimony, but as it’s a belief, it can make you an unwelcome guest when you ask, “Why does that **have** to be the truth? How do we know for sure?”

Now, the groups still concentrate on the history, legends, myths, and first-hand accounts but mixed a good amount of actual research and science into the recipe for the sites!

Within our investigations, in essence, we look at the phenomena much more so than the ‘spiritual hypothesis’. In other words, we look for the “apparition”, not the “spirit”. We look into the phantom footsteps that are heard, not the “ghost”. As we don’t preach “belief” or “disbelief” in ghostly matters and don’t follow a single hypothesis when it comes to the concepts of what is or is not a “ghost”, we can concentrate on what the witnesses report as phenomena and look for answers or concepts based on that.

All the GHRS sites are different and some espouse differing opinions, but the nice thing is none of us “preach” and we do try to hear all sides of any argument.

Now, hundreds of thousands of legitimate visitors later and almost a decade of feeling our way through how to do our own research and revising and teaching ourselves new and better methods, I'm finally whacking out on the old keyboard this "hard copy" of how we look into ghosts and hauntings with a few thoughts tossed in for good measure.

I promise to keep it as "readable" and interesting as possible (no dry text book here!) If you're serious about looking into this study, I hope this text acts simply as a tool... Something to get you started. You can and are welcome to "Adopt – Adapt – Improve" on the methods here or ignore them completely. As I said, we're still learning and probably always will be. This, like any other manual of its type, is a "living document" and should grow, expand and be changed as need be.

I do hope that with or without the GHRS, you will look into your "local haunts," and in the process learn a little bit about the history and how things are perceived along the way.

This "hobby" of mine has been a cornucopia of experiences, but in honesty the ones that will remain in my head without referring to my notes will be the people I've met, the history I've learned, and the overall experience of working towards a better understanding of a mystery.

Unlike some authors I don't claim to have any answers for you. You will not "discover" the secrets of ghosts and hauntings from me. This document does not promise to show you how to "see a ghost" or the like, but hopefully, you'll glean some ideas of how to look into the study, and maybe come up with some good data and amazing hypotheses of your own.

I do hope you enjoy this offering and I hope it's helpful, entertaining, and a "good read" all around.

Matthew James Didier

P.S – Regular readers of the site know this, but for those new to my writing, you'll note that sceptic is spelt, more often than not, with a "c" and not a "k." British/Canadian spelling is with a "c" so I tend to use this version as I'm based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. You'll find "k"s with sceptic when I'm quoting an American source.

Side Note for Online Viewers: I've noticed that a lot of our work and notes are being reproduced and used by others' (including in published works online and in print) without proper credit or any sort of "nod" that our work has contributed to the efforts of these others. More so for the people that assisted us, those pioneers of paranormal studies, as well as the effort put forward by members of the GHRS that I respectfully request that should you use any portion of this document in reference of as a whole that you do give the GHRS, Sue Darroch and Matthew Didier proper credit and/ or acknowledgement. Thank you in advance.

Table of Contents

i:	Introduction to This Document	7
ii:	Easy Question: What is a ghost?	8
iii:	Sorting the Paranormal from the Supernatural from the “Will to Believe”	11
iv:	The Need to Perform!	12
v:	I’m After a Ghost! Where Do I Go?	18
vi:	How to be an Expert!	27
vii:	Okay, After All that Reading... Starting the Research!	32
viii:	We’ve Got the History, Now What?	38
ix:	Picking and Building My Team	40
x:	Equipment and Uses...	41
xi:	Presenting Your Findings	51
xii:	Is That Cool? The Safe and Ethical Ghost Researcher	52
xiii:	Resources/Bibliography	55

Appendix

Please Note: The articles below have been taken verbatim from our websites.

a-i:	Article : Research by Proclamation	(p.57)
a-ii:	Article : Orbs and Mists	(p.60)
a-iii:	Article : Fame and Success	(p.71)
a-iv:	Article : EMF Detectors	(p.74)
a-v:	Article : EVP “How To”...	(p.77)
a-vi:	Article : A Look At Ghosts and History	(p.85)
a-vii:	Article : Notes from Our Original Online Course	(p.86)
a-viii:	Comment : Spiritual/Religious Comments (Protection?)	(p.97)
a-ix:	Article : Ghost Classifications (For Data Collection)	(p.94)
a-x:	Sample Form : Team Release Form	(p.104)
a-xi:	Sample Form : Data Collection (On Site) Form	(p.105)
a-xii:	Plea for Help : Usual shilling for cash	(p.106)

Introduction

THIS DOCUMENT WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO CAPTURE PROOF OF GHOSTS!

Nope. It won't. However, it will give you ideas on some tested, tried, and true data collection methods. If I or anyone in our group (or anyone on the planet, for that matter) had all the perfect answers, this wouldn't be a study of the unknown.

THIS DOCUMENT WILL TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT A GHOST IS!

Sorry, no again. Ghosts have never even been "proven" to exist. I'm afraid it's all speculation, hypotheses, and theorem right now. Granted, many people might read this and heartily disagree, but if you're one of these people, ask yourself if your "answer" based on hard fact, personal experience with excellent clinical evidence, repeatable and undeniable scientific experimentation, or if it is based on your testimony, faith and personal experience, with little or questionable evidence? Truth to tell we don't know what a "ghost" is... only what constitutes "ghostly activity" within the popular definitions.

THIS DOCUMENT WILL SHOW YOU WHERE TO SEE A GHOST!

Not a chance. I do make suggestions, but I know people in the field of paranormal research who have spent years in some places (or one place) and experienced nothing. Seeing a ghost is like seeing a wild black bear. There are good places to go and look for them, but no guarantees that the day or time you're looking for them that they'll be there.

THIS DOCUMENT WILL ALLOW YOU TO DO A PERFECT GHOST INVESTIGATION!

I wish! I think it's a good document, and our notes and ideas are sound, but we're not perfect and we don't have all the answers. Like any good resource I invite you to read it, take from it that which is useful, and hopefully it will be helpful to you. Adopt, adapt and improve! This is just the way "we" at the Toronto and Ontario Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society do things, and even then not all of us follow every rule to the letter. We do bend, move and play with ideas depending on the situation and circumstance. We are not the "end-all-of-be-alls" in the field of ghost research, but it has been suggested that we do a good job or... so we're told.

THIS DOCUMENT WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO MAKE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN THE FAST-PACED, HIGH-ACTION WORLD OF GHOST RESEARCH!

Nope. In fact, the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Societies are big money pits. We don't get paid and don't ask to be either. Heck, any money that usually does come in barely pays for a month or two of our webserver! This is not our "profession" but we do try to be "professional" in our activities.

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There! Just wanted to make sure that everyone reading this thing is on the same page. Basically, there are no guarantees in this document. No promises of fabulous success and no tales of saying how this is the only way to do things. It's here for your enjoyment and hopefully after you've read through it, it will help you with studying the subject at hand.

Easy Question: What is a Ghost?

We all know what a ghost is, right?

- A ghost is the disembodied spirit of a dead person walking the Earth.
- An energy manifestation of a past person or other being projected to the living.
- A hallucination seen or experienced by those wanting to believe in such things.
- A demonic entity on Earth as a minion of the devil.
- An angel or watcher keeping track of the living.
- The soul or spirit of someone who passed on and hasn't moved on.
- None of the above.
- All of the above.
- No one knows 100% for sure. In fact, no one has proven ghosts even exist.

Despite what some may think or believe, it's that last answer that is indeed correct. The rest, regardless, is a case of belief and faith... or disbelief and lack of faith.

The only thing that no one will argue with is the following statement: "Weird things happen that seem to defy normal logic."

Not a comforting truism to those of us studying the phenomenon.

Experience has told me that you can get a whole room full of learned, well-studied people, and ask if they believe in ghosts... If they all say "yes," ask the question, "Then what is a ghost?" You'll suddenly have a room filled with preachers and pontificators with their own views on what a ghost is.

Before even going into this, let's look at ghosts in general... What constitutes "ghostly activity"?

- Apparitions or "seen" ghosts
- Poltergeists or "heard and felt" ghosts

Fair enough... so these two things are the same, right? I mean, they're ghosts, right?

Oops. Maybe not...

I would put it to the lay person that this is the equivalent of lumping an ostrich, a bear, an elephant, and a mouse into the same category of "animal" and, therefore, all these other silly people looking into these "animals" separately are wasting time as they're all the same...

It seems pretty obvious that maybe we "researchers" are lumping things into a convenient grouping that indeed may not even come close to being correct. There are too many differences between the categories within the "lump" to be considered "the same" or possibly even "similar."

For simplicity's sake, we at the Toronto and Ontario GHRS use the Society for Psychological Research's groupings for ghosts... pretty much like the "selections" above.

For us, ghosts come in two main groupings...

Apparitions

This is the classic ghost type. That which is seen... the ghostly lady, man or child... or animal. Something a witness sees.

Poltergeist

That which is not seen, but is heard, felt, or moves items. Not necessarily just the furniture-tossing, china-breaking things we've heard about, but the "phantom footsteps" or "whispering voices" too.

From there, it can be broken down further...

Historical Repeater: Phenomena that seems to follow a pattern that a now deceased or removed person might have done. Footsteps to a door, the door opening... things like this.

Sentient Anomaly: Phenomena that seems to be aware of its surroundings and of the people or things it's now attempting to interact with.

Free-Form Apparition: An apparition that is not immediately discernable as person, place, or thing. Things like "blobs" or geometric shaped objects that are seen.

Free-Form Poltergeist: Poltergeist phenomena seemingly running amok. No real purpose or method in its actions.

...and the list goes on. These simple categories and sub-categories will assist most people in qualifying what they are looking at or into. (See the article in the appendix about complete classifications.)

What causes these anomalies is a far more difficult question to answer. Many believe that they know or have this answer, but to them I always pose this question: "What evidence do you have to prove this to me?"

So far, it comes down to faith either in a belief system or in the findings of someone which is tantamount to his or her own witness testimony.

There's nothing wrong with this, but a researcher must stay truly open-minded... a term that's misused by many.

"Open-minded" does not simply mean open to the possibility of the existence of the paranormal or things "spiritual," but also open-minded to the concept that these things do not and cannot exist without prejudice and without favouritism.

All of us have a concept, pet hypothesis, or idea about what a ghost is, but as researchers, we must be open to all possibilities and other hypotheses... even if there are those that don't allow for the existence of ghosts and hauntings.

If you're really going to look into this you must put aside all preconditioning, personal ideas and hypotheses and work hard to look at things on a case-to-case basis. Be your own devil's advocate.

As you will see in the next section, if you go into a site with the idea that, indeed, you're going to find the spirit of a dead person, chances are you'll experience the spirit of a dead person. This is not, as some say, "positive thinking bringing positive results" but it's a case of preconditioning your psyche to believe that everything you'll experience is truly of a ghostly nature. Therefore, everything that won't be easily explained away will become a manifestation of ghostly stuff above and beyond comprehension, and if, goodness forbid, someone comes and debunks it beyond doubt, you may end up looking pretty silly.

To quote parapsychologist Loyd Auerbach: "If you were to attend the annual Parapsychological Association Convention, or sit in on a discussion of experiments with parapsychologists, you would learn (quickly) that parapsychologists are their own best (or worst, depending on how you look at it) critics and watchdogs."

It's more than vital that you stay with what you learn, experience, and can find out rather than be led to believe certain situations because the "vox populi" says so.

Sorting the Paranormal from the Supernatural from the “Will to Believe”

When looking into reports of “ghostly activity” or of the paranormal, a good researcher must always act in a very particular way.

The first thing is, in the vast majority of cases, the witness or the “reporter” of the phenomena believes in what he or she is telling you without question... even if, to you, it seems to be very unbelievable and highly unlikely. Conversely, sometimes reports that seem highly plausible to you will end up not standing up too well to scrutiny. You have to understand that regardless of the story you’re hearing, you must be understanding and accept it without prejudice. You must be totally objective.

When hearing a case, never dismiss it without a lot of research or work looking at it from the “true believers” point of view and the “non-believers” point of view.

One of the best (and most fun) things a good researcher can do prior to hearing any report is to familiarize him or herself with urban legends or, ghost stories that don’t stand up too well and have already been more or less debunked.

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Case in point

Most people have heard the legend of the school bus that stalls on a railroad crossing just in time for a tragic accident to occur that decimates the lives of many young children in the bus. The “ghostly” aspect of this tale then states that if you take your car to these sites, put it in neutral, and park on the tracks, ghostly hands will push the car to safety. Even more startling, if you spread powder across the rear bumper of the car, little handprints will show up proving that ghostly children are pushing you to safety.

This report has been retold to the Ontario and Toronto GHRS as being a true ‘event’ at railway crossings in Burlington, Scarborough, and Port Perry.

Trouble is, it’s not true at all. It is an urban legend that started in San Antonio, Texas, U.S. Heck, this Texan version even adds, with some credibility, the “fact” that the local streets near the scene of the tragic accident are named after the children who perished in the wreck.

It is true that in one area, near a train crossing in San Antonio, there are streets named Allen, Cindy Sue, Laura Lee, Nancy Carole, and Richey Otis... these are the names of the local developer’s grandchildren... not the names of accident victims.

Also, it is true at this Texas site cars do seem to be “pushed” uphill and off the tracks. This is another version of a popular phenomena called Gravity Hills. There’s nothing really mystical about them, they’re optical illusions, and although the cars seem to be defying gravity, they’re actually travelling downhill.

What’s more interesting is that, indeed, there was an accident involving a bus and school children that does match-up with the story... It happened in 1938 in Salt Lake City, Utah... and at that location there are no known reports of stalled cars getting ghostly help crossing the tracks. The stories (and/or the ghosts) seem to have migrated for the sake of convenience to the San Antonio area to match the Gravity Hill and to give this optical phenomenon a little extra oomph.

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Finding information about a lot of urban legends is not as difficult as one might think. There are plenty of excellent books on the subject, and on the World Wide Web. The website "Snopes" at <http://www.snopes.com/> is an invaluable resource for these tales... some of which smack with a bit of truth, and some which don't.

Researchers will find that a lot of the "ghostly" reports they read are "standard stories" from places that the "reporters" or "witnesses" know that had "*things-a-happenin' there*" (phenomena occurring) based on local legends, rumour, and gossip.

Sometimes, these places may yield things, and other times they show a legend that has taken on a life of its own.

We, in the Toronto and Ontario GHRs as of 2003, have heard of no less than seven different locations of abandoned houses where a violent and bloody mass murder took place (usually involving a parent who goes mad and kills all the inhabitants of the house in some manner... usually a gruesome one) and yet we are unable to find a single newspaper or other report about this crime. Stranger still, sometimes these stories feature the murderer continuing to live out his or her life in the house (post-crime) and that's who is supposed to be the resident ghost!

It's a safe bet that in the Province of Ontario, Canada, and in most places on the globe, a crime like that would not go unnoticed by the police or the media. It is highly doubtful that a 'mass murderer' would be allowed to continue living at the scene of the crime without some sort of retribution.

In all of these seven houses, we were unable to find a single report in the papers or by the police of the alleged dastardly crimes.

Worse yet, when you think about it... What if some ghost-hunter decided to "stake out" one of these homes? They report the myth/legend they'd been told and, lo and behold, the house is indeed not truly and completely abandoned. It may be the former home of someone's grandparent or other beloved family member and had simply been left to the elements for reasons other than a crime or other passing. How would the family left behind take to their kin's homestead now being a "featured" haunt with a faux, horrible crime story attached to it online?

It is vitally important that when looking into a "haunt" you do your best to find out the facts and, as pointed out above, possibly the lack of facts surrounding a story before proceeding in any direction.

One way to help you out looking into reports of this nature is how the stories about the place originally were circulated. Often times these stories revolve around "drinking spots" for under-agers. You know, a bunch of kids sneak off to X place and start drinking. It never fails, they start swapping stories and fables... maybe even dares. Sometimes in some places, these "tales" at the drinking spot really do become legends and are passed down from one group of teens to the next. Embellishments are made here and there to make the story far more spooky.

Now, the above notes are fine when dealing with reports that begin with "I heard of this house where..." but what about when it's a case of "This happened to me..."?

Witness testimony makes up the lion's share of workable data to the ghost researcher and, as stated above, whether your personal inclination is to believe what you hear or disbelieve it, you must stay neutral and objective.

Can you say that an event didn't happen as the witness stated it? Can you say with absolute certainty you know what the witness experienced was? How does the witness feel about the event?

Witnesses usually come in two distinct types. There are ones who believe what happened to them is "supernatural" in origin and are looking for confirmation or support in that belief. Then there are witnesses who are really hoping that you can put their minds at ease by offering a good and "natural" reason for their episode.

Regardless, you must take the witnesses' feelings into consideration and their safety and security should always be your number-one concern.

I often say that "the 'living' must come first" in the investigations of ghosts and this is extremely true... Whether it's a person indirectly involved with the phenomena (like the cases preceding this) or a witness who wants information and/or assurance.

Some may take on the attitude of "the study must come first" and I suppose that's one way to look at things. In the grander view of the study, if you trod on the feelings and morality of one case, it's highly unlikely more people will offer you the chance to look into other cases. When hearing things like this, one has to wonder how that person would feel if their family or themselves were being "subjected" to the scrutiny of "would-be" ghost hunters. Empathy is a very important tool in the ghost researcher's arsenal.

The next thing to consider with a witness is whether they really are looking for someone to poke and prod their experience in the name of research. If so, do they want or are they willing to have their names or information made public? Usually the answer is no, so we must all make sure that we keep our notes and information from a witness secure and never publish anything about their experiences without their permission.

Just because the witness does not want his or her experience made public, it is not a sure sign of a falsehood on the witness's part. Believe it or not, there are many people on this planet who do not believe in ghosts and will openly mock and ridicule someone who publicly says 'They're real and I've seen one!'

- - -

When looking at the testimony of a ghostly experience, one should work very hard to rule out (or rule in) "natural causation" of the phenomena.

I live very near a streetcar track in Toronto. If my testimony about a ghost in my house is top-heavy with poltergeist phenomena, which mostly revolves around small items moving or falling, it's up to the researcher listening to my story to take into account that these large, electric vehicles might be causing vibrations in my home.

This seems daunting or may seem to you to need really good seismic equipment to verify this, but in this case, it's pretty easy to figure out without too much trouble.

One question would sum up whether or not you can add “streetcar vibrations” to the list of possible natural causation...

“What times do these poltergeist occurrences usually happen?”

Since the streetcars for the most part stop running at about two o’clock in the morning, if my answer is “Strictly between five in the morning and two in the morning,” then this must be taken into account. It does not, by a long shot, mean you’ve solved the case, just that you have a good possibility of the origins of the phenomena. You may be able to rule that to be one of, if not *‘the’* cause of the “ghostly” phenomena, or you might end up ruling it out completely.

Reminder: There is no such thing as a “closed case” unless you completely find a natural causation or you do the incredible and prove that ghosts, without question, exist.

Other natural events that can be perceived as “supernatural” are found every day. Over the last few years, effects like “Standing Sound Waves” and “Infrasound” have proven to have effects on people and the environment in general.

These two effects which are (more-or-less) based on ELF (extra-low frequency) sounds have been shown to cause items to vibrate and move and people to hallucinate or have physical manifestations of something not quite right.

The latter is important as the human mind is a very powerful thing, and can make the body do some pretty neat stuff unconsciously.

The body, when sensing danger, will automatically increase the flow of blood to the various parts of itself to prepare for the “fight or flee” instinct we all have. This causes the heart to beat faster, the hair on your arms and neck to feel like it’s standing on end, sweating, dry mouth, and your skin to tense up. In some situations it will cause nausea and dizziness. There are also studies to show that our sense of hearing, smell, and vision improve (become more sensitive) during these moments. These are not conscious efforts on anyone’s part it’s all the natural defense mechanisms within the human body... You sense trouble and your body is getting ready to battle the trouble or run from it.

Now, here’s where a little psychology comes into play...

If there’s no visible reason for this reaction (like the emission of very low sound), our brains are “hard-wired” to ensure we have a reason.

As silly as it sounds, let me put it this way...

For some of you, as a child on a particular night in December, your family all go to bed at the same time. Upon awakening, you find loads of gifts and toys have been wrapped and neatly deposited around a tree. Again, as a child, it seems to be the work of a magical creature in a sleigh that popped down a chimney to do this and there are countless reports of children who swear that, indeed, St. Nick was seen by them doing this wonderful deed!

Better yet, for kids this is re-established by the fact that all the adults and media support this phenomenon ergo: It must be true!

Well, take this to a new level...

You're standing in an old house or some place odd. You get a weird feeling and something is telling you there's more here than meets the eye... Call it a "vibe" or something... Well, we all know (do we?) that it's entirely possible that some sort of paranormal being could be causing this sensation... Maybe the site we're at lends itself to this because we know a "ghost story" or two about it. Maybe the people we're with or who own the place have shared a report or two.

Your brain, perceiving danger starts the body through the "fight-or-flee" process and you're now exhibiting the standard physical traits... problem is, there's nothing "tangible" to relate it to. No easy spotted draughts or some person nearby to give you an "excuse" for what you're feeling.

At this point, it has been proven that people can hallucinate, or at least think they "know" the causation for their physical situation.

They think it's a ghost that's causing the issue, ergo: They experience a ghost.

Of course, like the Santa concept, this hallucination is indeed validated by their peers and the media, making the experience perfectly acceptable to the brain... believe it or not.

Humans are hard-wired to think that anything that cannot be readily explained must be "supernatural" in origin and therefore we can, do, and will jump to conclusions, and our own brains are more than happy to take us the rest of the way.

The thing to remember for a researcher is no matter how "false" you think their experience was, to the witness it was real, and unless you can prove without a shadow of a doubt that this was a "natural" rather than "supernatural" experience, it's best to keep a very open mind and look into all possibilities.

Another "natural" one we see on a very regular basis is a typical report that would go something like this:

"I was resting on my couch when, all of a sudden I felt as if I wasn't alone... It was like there was a weight on my chest, and it was difficult to move or breathe. I couldn't even talk or make a noise! Then, I saw the ghost!"

The best question for a researcher to ask in this situation is the following:

"Was this the only experience with a ghost you've had in this location?"

If the answer is a "yes" or a qualified "yes," then you might want to look into something called sleep paralysis or the hypnopompic or hypnagogic states.

Basically, the witness is in a state of a waking dream almost... between deep (or REM) sleep and being fully awake. They are only marginally aware of their immediate environment, and again the psyche comes into play.

As they are unable to move (being literally half-asleep) and their respiratory and other functions still in (more or less) sleep mode, their brain starts saying, "Something's wrong!" Our own mind reaches into its file of "weird things that might cause this" and gives the witness a reason. In this case a ghost. This is often used to explain phenomena called "Old Hag" and has been reasoned to possibly account for the more natural explanation for the reports of demonic entities such as the "succubus" and "incubus."

Lastly, few would-be ghost-hunters are aware of the work of Dr. Michael Persinger that has been re-created by the more "pro-paranormal" group, Project Hessdalen (Erland Strands work within Østfold University College in Norway). These studies demonstrate that high electro-magnetic fields will indeed play havoc with the brain's temporal lobe, and therefore cause hallucinations. In other words, all those would-be ghost-hunters running about with EMF detectors claiming spikes and sharp rises in EM fields at haunted locations (as opposed to proving that they've indeed found a ghost) are actually re-enforcing the idea that people are not seeing or experiencing ghosts at the location, but are in fact hallucinating. This is a fact of some humour to those so-called sceptics who are enjoying the work of these folks to prove that all ghost witnesses are, indeed, a little bonkers at times.

Note: January 15th, 2005: Recently, it was announced that scientists from Uppsala and Lund universities in Sweden had run the same experiments as Dr. Persinger and their findings were not at all the same. This has led to a re-evaluation of these experiments and more thought about temporal lobe hallucinations and electro-magnetic fields. Although the new studies should not cause one to completely dismiss Dr. Persinger's findings, it should be followed and studied to see if, indeed, Dr. Persinger's theories do in fact hold up to scrutiny. For now, it's a "working theory" but obviously, further study is needed.

Is the above a "cover-all" answer? Are any of these really "perfect"?

In some cases, maybe... in the rest, not at all.

How do these "natural causations" explain apparitions seen by more than one witness? If sleep paralysis explains the one sighting, what about a different report from an earlier time at the same location?

Again, until there is "perfect evidence" one way or another, there is no such thing as a closed case.

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Of course, another thing that should be covered here is other more "normal" things that people think are "paranormal" in nature. These are pretty simple, but some people will jump at these things thinking they are quite abnormal, but they may prove to be quite mundane.

For example, strange knocking or "raps," does the place this is happening in have radiators? Is it possible this honestly is just a house settling or other wooden parts of a building contracting and expanding with temperature changes?

Scratching and the like, mice? Other animal sounds either within or on the immediate outside of the place?

Cold spots/warm spots, forced air-conditioning vents? Drafts? Windows nearby that might be allowing warm sunlight into the room at certain times? Hot or cold water pipes?

Strange lights and shadows, where is the nearest light source? Is it possible that these are “normal” lights from a hallway where someone may have been walking through? Outside light sources from cars or other buildings?

I know, these all seem mundane, but it’s up to you as a researcher to see if you can source out any normal causation that explains these “anomalies” that are often reported as “ghostly” in origin.

Keep in mind, even if you do find that some (or all) of the reported phenomena (like these examples) are completely “normal” rather than “paranormal” it doesn’t preclude the concept of the place being haunted. Again, you must look at all the reports and data to draw any possible likely hypothesis as to causation. Just because “strange lights” bounce through a room and you find that they are indeed, car headlights, does it explain other things that may be going on?

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So, the researcher must, before looking into a case, deal with the possible causation, and then define what might be “normal” versus “paranormal.”

Some things lend themselves nicely to simple explanation. It’s the rest that make this study much more interesting.

After all, let’s say you find a place that has dozens of reports and many witnesses saying they have experienced things there over a long time. Is it possible, when looking at what a “ghost” might be, that so many people have gone to this site expecting to experience something that, much like a “tulpa” they have created the manifestation themselves? It’s there, it’s somewhat tangible, but it originates in the minds of the many witnesses.

And remember, regardless, some witnesses do not want to hear you tell them that maybe their grandma didn’t come to visit them that cold and lonely night... and why should you tell them that, really? Provided that they aren’t being bankrupted by charlatans and aren’t hurting themselves or others, it’s not our job to say what is right and wrong without enormous amount of data and a darn good reason.

Food for thought.

The Need to Perform!

One thing most people notice with ghost investigators, or more prominently, self-proclaimed ghost-hunters, is beyond the “will to believe,” their “*need to perform.*”

For lack of a better term, it's a little like saying, “*I see dead people everywhere! They're coming out of the walls!*”

Some researchers assume, incorrectly, that whenever they go to a site or do an investigation, then *something must happen.* The concept of saying, “I went to X place and nothing happened” is alien to them.

Believe it or not, it is possible for a researcher to spend years in a place that generated loads of reports and find bupkes... neither natural phenomena that can be mistaken nor indeed, any phenomena outside the norm.

Yet there are some researchers and investigators who, no matter where they go, find loads of data... even if that data is questionable.

One of the funniest things read on a message board (which one and the name of the author elude me) was a list of things to do to “aid” in an investigation. She included ideas like the following: “Before taking a picture, try to kick up lots of dust. Ghosts hate this and will appear for your pictures in the form of orbs.”

Think about all the “true ghost stories” you've ever heard. How many have reported phenomena every hour of every day of the year? It's not unusual to need to spend days, possibly months or years, at a site, and even then there are no guarantees that you will experience anything yourself. If only there was “regularly scheduled ghostly phenomena” this study would be much easier.

Are We Truly Anti-Psychic?

The Ghosts and Hauntings Research Societies sometimes get pegged as being anti-psychic because we do a couple of things.

First, we don't automatically accept the idea of psychic contact with the undead because as stated we're not sure that's what a ghost is. Sorry.

Second, we've found that, although certainly not in all cases, many psychics have the *need to perform* more so than many ghost-hunters. It's almost as though they seem to feel the need to show that they are indeed “tuned in” to the spiritual world by showing us their many talents at finding said spirits.

Okay, I know... it's very cynical to say that last thing, but it has often been our experience that this can be the case, and when in discussions with psychics we trust and have worked with in the past, it has been “confirmed” that the pressure on some psychical researchers will cause them to “extend” themselves beyond what may be actually in the environment they're looking into. Don't get us wrong, we have and will continue on occasion to work with psychics, but we do try to keep things fairly grounded...

Oops, best explain that last bit too...

When we go out with a psychic or sensitive, we make sure that he or she understands that there is no pressure to find things or contact anything. They simply must “go” with their feelings and ideas. Secondly, we try very hard to keep the history of a site (not just the “past” of the place, but also what the recently reported phenomena was) away from them to allow for pure thoughts and “readings” to come through.

It’s very interesting from a research point of view to see what their feelings/readings are in conjunction with what the history (past) and reported phenomena has been.

Something to consider... If you put anyone, psychic or not, in a haunted place and tell him or her that X spot is really active, chances are, the person find X spot really active... be it legitimate experience or perceived.

Effectively and logically, since people who are not reported to be psychic have indeed found and experienced things “ghostly” when doing an investigation, a psychic may be a little “icing on the cake” but it shouldn’t be an absolute necessity to find phenomena.

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So, in this short chapter, it is sometimes as important to say, “We found nothing here after X amount of work doing Y data collections” as it is to tell the world that ghosts were literally crawling up your leg and biting you in the... well, you get the idea.

Remember... It’s not a closed case, it’s just you saying, “Not while I was there... this time.”

I'm After a Ghost! Where Do I Go?

This may come as a shock to some people, but without question if you want to see a ghost and start off in the wonderful world of ghost research, you might want to start off by going to a reportedly haunted location.

I know, seems basic and common sense, doesn't it? Well, to some, it isn't.

Some folks assume certain structures or areas lend themselves, without dint of witness testimony or historical reports of phenomena, to ghostly activity.

Abandoned homes, cemeteries, old tunnels, and the like are all spaces that have become the ripened fields for would-be ghost investigators, despite that fact that most of these places do not hold up too well to a true researcher's scrutiny.

First thing is, there is no such thing as a "completely abandoned property." All property is owned by someone, regardless as to the state it's in. Even open spaces and parks in Ontario and Canada are owned by the public or Crown and therefore, permission to be there after normal hours or circumstances must be obtained.

Also, because a place has a "creepy" atmosphere or has been abandoned does not at all mean that ghostly phenomenon is an absolute on (or in) the site.

The long and the short of it is breaking into an empty place in search of ghosts is still (even if the place is no longer being used by anyone) breaking and entering and can result in criminal prosecution. Another important fact too is many of these places may be unsafe. Ask yourself if an accident causing bodily harm and an arrest is worth it?

Not to mention the effect this sort of thing has on other groups and researchers. Think about it... When a ghost-hunter gets arrested at a site, do the police say, "Aha! It was those particular people who did this!" or do they say, "Aha! Them ghost-hunters did this!"

To the average person (who do make up the majority of society - sorry to point out) one "ghost-hunter" is another "ghost researcher" is another "ghost whacko."

When you see the names Auerbach, Holzer, Taylor, Gill and Oster, Price, The Warrens, the Owens and Fodor, do you say, "Wow, there's a list of different people looking into the paranormal who are all divergent and different from each other and responsible for their own actions!" or do you (who we hope is a ghost enthusiast) say, "There's a list of people that look into ghosts."

Some people think that the average person would know the difference between these folks.

You see, when someone gets a bad taste put in their mouth because of some "ghost-hunter," it's unlikely that he or she will welcome others with the same interest to look into the site.

Next, although cemeteries seem to be a folkloric hotbed of paranormal events, when you really look into historical and documented reports of “ghostly activity,” cemeteries are actually not at all well represented with tales of ghosts and hauntings.

Most often, ghostly phenomena takes place where the person the ghost is thought to represent lived, worked, played, or died... not where the person was interred.

In fact, when we look at the total number of Ontario cemeteries that have “historic” accounts of ghostly activity (in other words, not where would-be ghost hunters dodged into one night and decided it was haunted after their arrival), we find the total number to be under ten sites (currently, a total of five)... this is out of thousands.

Still, I never dissuade people from touring or visiting cemeteries, as they are wonderful places to reflect on life and to study history and society.

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So, when we remove these places, what are we left with?

Actually, quite a few sites...

There is a plethora of places that people can visit that have good and substantial witness testimony of ghostly activities taking place.

Historic sites and homes, museums, and other “open to the public” places are more than accessible to the average ghost enthusiast who wants to get started... except... It’s a given that if you walk up to these sites and say, “Hi! I’m a ghost-hunter and I wanna come in and see your ghosts. Can I come in after dark and spend the night?” you won’t get very far.

First things first. There is no serious data to show that ghostly activity only happens at night. In fact, in some of the best locations in the Province of Ontario (like Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake or Ireland House in Burlington) have many experiences that were reported during daylight hours. Why not initially approach people then? There’s no harm (as a matter fact, only “good” can truly come from this) to go to these sites, during normal hours, pay the normal fee to enter, take the scheduled tour and get some of the historical background this way. Don’t show up with a whack of equipment and a massive team. On an initial visit, a small group and nothing but cameras and a pad and pen will be fine.

After the tour, say to your guide something like “So, I’m interested... a place like this must have a ghost story or two?” and let the guide tell you “what” or “if” anything’s going on. Sometimes, guides and interpreters at sites have insights that you may not be able to get any other way. At one site we were told that the location’s management stayed away from “ghost stories” as they didn’t want to associate “old buildings” with ghosts to the general public.

Initially you may not think that this is important, but it is valuable information, as now we know how to approach the management if we want to go back into the site for a thorough look around.

We would promise (and keep this promise) not to sensationalize the ghost stories, not to downplay the history or the importance of the site, and of course, not to publish anything on our website without the management's approval.

You will always catch more flies with honey.

Sometimes, when doing this, you may get very lucky (as we have on many occasions) and find that the staff and possibly the management are indeed friendly to the idea of people looking into their possible ghosts. It's rare, but it happens.

One thing to remember in this scenario is that the people who manage these sites and museums are historians first, as in many ways, so should you be. You must let them know that you are interested in the history, and what the site represents, as it is as important to your data as it is to anything else.

Once a good working relationship has been established, and after a few visits, you will probably find that mentioning or asking outright to do some work "after hours" will not be shot down as quickly as one might think.

It's only after you've established this relationship that coming in with more equipment, and maybe a team might be acceptable. In fact, the most common concern we've had with the few places we currently use as "labs" (haunted locations that allow us to do some work when they can) is don't use equipment that might mark up the floor and avoid using very bright lights.

Remember, always be respectful, use common sense, and courtesy. You will always do better than the thrill-seeking, break-and-enter artists who are out there.

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The next avenue for places to study is, of course, places that are submitted or told to you by witnesses.

No word of a lie here, but according to our statistics at the Toronto and Ontario GHRS, 96% of all our reports we get in about private businesses or dwellings are from the past.

E-mails start with lines such as...

"When I was a kid..."

"We used to live/work in..."

"In 1959, I lived/worked in..."

"I heard of a friend who lived/worked in..."

These cases, although great for our database and for statistical purposes, are next to impossible to look into. You really can't go up to a door, knock on it and tell the recent owners or tenants, "Hi, someone who lived here seven years ago saw a ghost. Can I come in?" Again, this is not going to work at all well.

Therefore, you have to find the current owners or tenants of a site.

Next, you have to look at their reports and gauge how you want to go in.

What does the reporter/witness/experiencer want from you?

In the witness report, does the person allude to what they're after from a visit with you? The Ghosts and Hauntings Research Societies (all of them) do not clear homes or offer to "bust ghosts." We don't do that. (Hence, nothing in this booklet will help with this side of things.)

We do have an online page for people to read that are interested in this at <http://www.torontoghosts.org/clear.htm>

PLEASE NOTE: We have heard tragic stories of people paying "house clearers" hundreds and even thousands of dollars. PLEASE recommend to anyone interested in trying to "rid themselves" of a ghost to look for people who might help them without charge. There are groups who will assist without money being involved and no one should be "paying" for such a service... Whether you believe in 'house clearings' or not, people should not be spending money on this sort of thing.

What we do is attempt to look for "natural" or "normal" causation and a historical background of the site we're looking into (as best we can), and if the researcher feels that something "supernatural" or "paranormal" is occurring, we then work our way into "data capture" mode to try and chronicle, collect, analyze, and understand what's going on.

We're not out to convert "believers" into "non-believers," nor do we try to do the opposite. We simply look into our own findings and do our best to try to understand and assist *where possible*.

So, as stated earlier when your witness approaches you, do they want you to "debunk" (find "normal" or "natural" causation to the phenomena), or do they want you to support their paranormal experience and reinforce their views on the "unknown"?

Either way, you should figure out which and try to stay neutral and work towards the end of data collection while staying empathetic to the witness.

What is the dynamic of the reporter?

In some cases, people report things for various reasons that may go against the grain of an investigator.

You may hear (or read) obvious cries for attention, people using the "ghost" as something to be blamed for other issues ongoing within the site and/or, in rare case, obvious hoaxery.

We have had a couple of cases that we investigated where the ghost was being blamed for the misfortunes of families. The ghost, in these cases, was used to explain the tension and problems leading up to and including family break-ups and other nastiness. Although, there may be a grain of truth to this, if the phenomena "started" after the initial tensions, and if things have gone really bad, and then the phenomena dissipates after the issues have come to a head, one might suspect possible PK phenomena. (PK = psycho-kinesis – someone so troubled that somehow, his or her own "energy" is causing the manifestations outwardly but without direct physical connection to it.) It is possible

that, in the heat of the troubles, the witnesses are pushing blame off onto something “supernatural” to help shield themselves from possible blame.

In one case that I looked into that I do not believe was a “hoax” was the report of a child who was seeing a ghost and being kept up at night. When we visited, we were told (after asking the parents) that the child in question, who was in the home at the time of our visit and very energetic and rambunctious, was kept away from media influences like horror films and that sort of thing that might have made these thoughts cross his mind.

While looking around the home, we found the video library filled with tapes from Goosebumps (a children’s horror-based TV series) to tapes of movies like Amityville Horror on the rack.

We also found out that this ghost visited him late at night and frightened him into the bed of his parents.

Again, after some Q&A we discovered that this started when the child was given his own room for the first time, and was no longer sleeping where he used to... in his parent’s room.

Add to this that the child was also diagnosed as hyperactive, which was being addressed by the use of medication. Although not a big factor, this combined with the above made us wonder about the total validity of the “ghost” in question.

Lastly, we spoke to the boy. He was far more concerned when speaking to us that the dinosaurs in the closet might be ready to come out than he was of any ghost that he had seen.

There is little doubt that the parents (and possibly the kid) did believe in their ghost and maybe, there was something there (PK phenomena again?), but our advice when we found out that the parents were active in their local church was to have their cleric bless the home. It seems to have worked as we never heard back from them. We can only assume that our suggestion was of some relief... even if it was a “supernatural” working answer or a magic placebo.

Lastly, there are the reports that come in from “teenaged drinking spots” or the like.

One way to see if a case you are looking at is coming from one of these sites is the more elaborate the situation, the less likely the validity in the case. Again, I caution the researcher not to discount anything, as there may always be a vein of truth, but none the less, when you hear a report like...

“If you stand in the middle of the field with an empty bucket on your head, spin around three times and sing “Oh Canada” at the top of your lungs, the ghost of the murdered girl will appear to you!”

As weird as the above sounds, we’ve heard similar things to that.

There are two lines of thought about reports like this.

The first one is that this is one of those teenaged urban-legends started when a thought like “Gee, I wonder if I can make my friends look like gits!” occurs to someone and he or she makes up this sort of legend on the spot and, whammo! It takes hold. Now, some time after this it’s become part of the local folklore.

The second one is that this was a legitimate situation and it’s just been added to and added to over time (like a broken telephone) until we have what we’re told now.

Again, these aren’t too difficult to track down after a simple search through books, or via the web, on the history or folklore of the area. Try to find the earliest reported incident on the site, and see if there’s anything that seems a little more realistic other than standing with a bucket on your head singing the national anthem.

Granted, if you do get a report like this, and you do decide to do the whole thing with the bucket, please video tape the event... We all need a giggle now and again.

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Another note I’d like to make in this section and bring to people’s attention is the notion of “matching the phenomena to the history” or “matching the history to the phenomena.”

It sounds like a good idea, and sometimes it is.

For example, if I’m in a century home and the report is of a woman with long, red hair, and a gingham dress, I might want to see if this apparition might match someone who once lived in the place.

The reason this sometimes isn’t such a good idea is when it’s taken to a level of obscurity in one sense or another by either researchers or witnesses.

For this example, let’s say the phenomena reported is a coffee mug being shoved across a counter. Basically, a case of light poltergeist activity. The witness, however, has experienced a loss of a dear aunt a year before and was thinking about that aunt at the time of the “mug” incident. In his or her mind this was a clear-cut case of the Aunt manifesting herself! Again, it’s not for us to say that this is absolutely not the case, but why jump to this conclusion? Has there been other phenomena reported in the place? Was it pre or post the Aunt’s death?

Another example where this can be a problem is a person in a new home experiences a free-form apparition... a “glowing ball”... in their stairwell. The person, in a rush to find “answers” to the ghost, starts digging and eventually finds that two-hundred and fifty or so years ago, there was a log cabin somewhere near or on their property. They find out that a young man passed away from a fever in this cabin. Therefore, in this witness’ mind, they cannot separate this history from the phenomena even though they may be completely unrelated.

Finding the history is always important, but as stated over and over, it may actually not be relevant to the case at hand. A good researcher, as always, shouldn’t jump to any conclusions until all the facts are in.

Let's face it... If the apparition was a bearded lady from the circus... and lo and behold, in your work you find that a circus used the space as a "resting spot" while on tour... it's a good thing to note.

On the other hand, if it's a man dressed as a blacksmith complete with hammer, but it's on the twenty-first floor of a condo, one wonders how he, especially from that period, got there.

All the information is valid and should be noted. If you think a nineteenth-century person is "haunting" a location, but the reports are ambiguous, you should not assume that everything is indeed attached to this "historical" entity.

How to be an Expert!

I am tired of people referring to me as “an expert.”

How can you possibly be an “expert” on the “unknown”? Isn’t this the point? It’s a mystery! It’s not “known”! How can I be an expert of something when there isn’t enough hard data to prove that the phenomenon exists?

I’m always sceptical about folks who bill themselves as “experts.” It tells me that they have “lily pads” that are probably completely unearned. The term “lily pad” used here was coined by Karl Pflock, the Ufologist, who characterized those “preachers” of the paranormal as “big bull frogs” sitting on their “lily pads” croaking loudly about their pet theorems and greatness ... in other words, they love their own lily pad!

One can be an “expert” on local folklore, photography (not “ghost photography” but simply the mechanics of taking pictures) and the like, as these are areas where there is hard data to study and learn from... but an expert on ghosts?

I guess one could become “learned” about ghostly phenomena, but even then I want to see why they feel this way.

March 2005 Update: A new friend of mine, Dr. Darryll Walsh, also struggles with the term “expert” when people use it in regards to his knowledge of the paranormal. He suggested an excellent alternative word if people must label us... “Authority”. Personally, I could accept being called an “Authority” on ghosts and hauntings... despite this still seeming somewhat egotistical!

One thing I look for is whether or not they know of the work that is being done and has been done in the past.

A few people (including some latter authors) feel that since we have yet to “prove” the existence of ghosts, what’s the point of studying the “old school” paranormal investigators and researchers. If they didn’t get it right then, why look at it now?

Well, why not about to learn from those mistakes (and about the things that did work) in the past?

A good researcher in my eyes, has read or acknowledges the work not only of those new Internet bastions of ghostly “study,” but the achievements of people like Nandor Fodor, Harry Price, The Society for Psychical Research, George and Iris Owen, William Crookes... the list does go on.

I often warn people that this does not mean being a “ghost researcher” means spending the rest of your life sitting in libraries or being able to “drop names” and experiments to impress, but to be aware of the marvelous work that has been done by people in the past.

The study of ghostly phenomena is not a new one, although every researcher can bring new things to it.

It is at the researcher's own peril to deny or to ignore the work of others. In one case, a recent book out of Canada has the "investigator" of twenty-one years' experience decrying all other researchers as not doing good work (as, of course, he has) while he uses his pendulum (basically, an Ouija variation) and an EMF detector to find his ghosts.

Had he spent even half an hour doing research, he might have noticed that these two items have been proven time and time again by both sceptical groups and "pro-paranormal" groups to have major problems in safe data collection and findings.

Granted, this fellow was "right" and we all are "wrong"... despite multiple problems with his data and horrendous historical errors in his findings. I'm sure that these were just darned "inconvenient facts" to him as they didn't support his own pet theorem.

I guess, while "bashing" this, I should mention anyone doing this should also have a very thick skin. As stated earlier and above, people's views on the paranormal are based mostly on "belief" and "faith" making it a very volatile subject for some. In the above case, I'm sure this fellow feels *his* work is far superior in findings and *proof* than *anyone* else's, and I'm equally sure he'd be appalled at someone like me questioning him. He would be (and might be) likely to scream about me from the mountaintops (as many have) that I am useless and worthless, and a few other choice comments.

There are so-called-sceptics or, as they've been called, "sceptdebunkers". These folks seem more interested in auto-debunking rather than in "doubting" or "questioning". This is a "word" coined by another Ufologist, Stanton Friedman, but I've adjusted the spelling a little. He uses "skeptidebunker". Such a person will shout, scream, and more or less bash any or all work (regardless) that looks into the paranormal. They see it as a waste of time and energy and leading people into ridiculous beliefs and silly backward thoughts.

In one case, our associates at ParaResearchers spoke at a meeting of one of these groups about ParaResearchers' successful debunking of the "ghost lights" at Port Perry's Ghost Road. One would assume they'd be congratulated by the sceptics for bringing "truth" and doing excellent work within the realms of science, and luckily, for the most part they were... except for the fact that two members of this group insulted the speaker and more-or-less pooped on the data. Why? Well, during the speech, the ParaResearcher investigator made a mistake and said "refraction" instead of "reflection" at one point while discussing the way the light travelled along some slick hydro wires. Egads! A slip of the tongue? Unforgivable! (This came despite the online document on their studies that was, indeed, correct.)

The next fellow, after the speech, asked the researcher where they'd heard of the ghost lights.

The answer was, "It's a well-known legend and is in a few different books."

His response:

"Oh, you mean the books that nutcases buy."

Nice.

Through my own life experience, it seems that some folks just want to fight. They need an enemy, and when one is looking into a topic that can be seen as “on the fringe,” there’s ample room for some of these folks to pick fights... even when sometimes they shouldn’t.

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Now, these so-called-sceptics are more or less, to quote Richard Hall, “highly opinionated, ill-informed, data-deniers.”

Too many people in paranormal research are truly “armchair critics” and have very little actual research or investigation under their belts.

One of the largest of these groups is the Committee for Scientific Investigations of Claims of the Paranormal, or CSICOP. CSICOP often tosses the following quote out: “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.”

It’s a fair quote, often attributed to the late astronomer Carl Sagan, but in fact, it was said by the late Marcello Truzzi who, unlike most of CSICOP’s membership, was an *actual* sceptic. In fact, Truzzi co-founded CSICOP, and quit after it became more a group of “deniers” than of “doubters.” Sceptdebunkers of the first order.

Truzzi often said he wished he’d never said that quote. In his eyes, any claim requires evidence.

Funny enough, Sagan, who was a fellow of CSICOP, flip-flopped on the paranormal a few times (he switched from ‘believer’ to ‘non-believer’ and back again a few times). He did indeed say “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.” Although whether or not Sagan coined the phrase, or “borrowed” it from old Charlie Chan movies, is in question.

Anyway, I digress.

As a perfect example of CSICOP’s wonderful work at investigation, one of their hierarchy went on a national radio program bragging that he’d visited over twenty haunted locations in New Mexico and proclaimed them all “not haunted”. He did this marvelous work in less than three days. Again, one would seem to believe that the investigative method he used probably wasn’t terribly thorough and he was just enjoying shouting down the believers.

It’s not just the sceptdebunkers who are guilty of shouting down views... obviously.

I have personally become very unpopular with more than a few people because I dare to question long-held beliefs about ghostly things.

My personal quote is, “I believe in ghostly phenomena. As to causation, my jury’s out.”

In other words, to date I’ve experienced weird things that I can’t account for logically, but so far nothing has come up to me, tapped me on the shoulder, and said, “Hello, I’m a ghost and I am...”

I am a “sceptic” who leans with empathy to the side of the believers... at least when it comes to the phenomenon itself.

I am a sceptic because I will not allow myself to be swayed by pontificators and preachers of the “ghostly” faith. I won’t say, “This is fact!” simply because “X” person says so or because the *vox populi* says so... I will always ask for evidence, data, and make my decisions based on that.

Hence some people get really mad at me because they’ll ask questions like, “Have you ever experienced the spirit of a dead person?” and I’ll respond, “Not that I know of.”

I believe that all good researchers should stay in the middle. Sure, it’s not safe as the sceptdebunkers will hate you as vehemently as the true believers, but it will allow for a truly open mind when it comes to looking at the data at hand.

The arguments I always hear are things like this:

“But everyone knows that...”

“Well, I know for sure because I believe...”

“But I read that...”

Or sadly, more often than not, I hear...

“I saw a television show that...”

I always say the same thing: “Where’s the evidence?”

This doesn’t mean I close my mind and say it’s all one way or the other. Quite the contrary! I listen to *all* sides and disseminate my own thoughts on it all... Not just the bits that support my own (or someone else’s) pet hypotheses.

For example, the much-vaunted (even by myself!) Society for Psychical Research based in England decided in the 1930s that pretty much all “ghostly activity” was based firmly in psychokinesis. To be honest, I don’t know if this is a sound argument. I won’t say it’s nonsense, but by the same token I won’t accept it “as is” either.

Granted, it was this hypothesis that led to the excellent work of George and Iris Owen with the Toronto Society for Psychical Research and New Horizons with efforts like the Philip Experiments (or the Philip Phenomena – I’d go into this in greater detail but it’s a long story and well worth looking into for all ghost researchers! Please, take some time to look up and find out about these experiments) as well as meshing nicely with other paranormal schools of thought and even the more “mystical” events and occurrences in and around the planet.

The biggest piece of advice I can give anyone is read and ask why.

This does not mean simply reading the first few sentences of an article or the headline only. It means read thoroughly, even when you’re not impressed by the article or its author. Everything from CSICOP articles to “ghostly authors” like Hans Holzer are all very valid references for a real researcher.

Television programs for the most part can be useful, but be wary. The “mass media” is out to sell soap. I’ve watched too many programs that barely scratch the surface of the history or validation of the phenomena in order to give the viewer a “cheap thrill” or “big bang.”

A perfect example that even “sucked in” yours truly was multiple television shows that sported the stories and evidence of a mansion/plantation called The Myrtles in Louisiana.

The story’s a good one. Basically, it starts pre-emancipation with a slave/plantation owner having an affair with one of his slaves. “Chloe” is her name in all the reports. Chloe then, for various reasons, tries to poison the wife of this fellow, and instead, poisons the plantation owner’s children and as well as his wife. Chloe is executed for the crime.

Now her ghost wanders the plantation (as do the kids she murdered by accident), and we have a photograph of her apparent apparition beside the home and the children sitting on the roof, as well as a handprint on an old mirror that cannot be “washed off.”

Good story. I’m sure most of us have heard it.

Thanks to the work of the research team at the Virginia Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society, we now know it’s almost 100% bunk. Yes, the photo exists... It does seem to show the apparitions mentioned above. (See <http://www.myrtlesplantation.com/> for information and to see the picture.)

But, here’s something you won’t hear on TV. Let me quote directly the Virginia Ghosts & Hauntings Research Society’s study at http://www.viriniaghasts.com/myrtles_hoax.php

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The Myrtles wasn't known to be haunted until the 1970s - all of the ghost stories originate around this time period. One of the ladies I talked to her family lived there from the time the Stirlings sold it in the late 1880 till 1955 and she never heard and stories of ghosts. Today she still lives on part of the original Myrtles property she inherited.

A copy of all the slave holders David Bradford and Clark Woodrooff (which I got at the courthouse) have no mention of a slave named Chloe.

The courthouse records also indicate that Sarah and the two children did die but not from poison but from yellow fever all within a years time. Sarah dying first.

The only murder to ever take place at the Myrtles was that of William Winter. The true account can be found in a local paper of the day. William was called out onto the side gallery and when he got out there he was hit by a single shotgun blast to the chest and he fell dead right there. Never did he make his way back up the stairs and die at his wife's feet.

The famous mirror - that mirror was never in the house until it was remodeled in the late 1970's.

Nothing in the home today is original except one small piece in the dinning room that was sent back years latter from the Woodrooff family

The reason none of the tour guides wanted to talk about the ghosts is because the Louisiana Historical Society has gotten on them (reprimanded them) several times about talking about the ghost on day tours. If they get caught they can lose their statues with the state. That is why they do the weekend mystery tours.

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So is the Myrtle's haunted? Maybe... Maybe all those folks that enter the site have "produced" the phenomena themselves via PK. Maybe it's not "Chloe" but someone else. Maybe it is a hoax. It'd be nice if those TV programs at least gave the public a chance to see *all* the information and not just the juicy bits.

It doesn't matter... The television programs that I've seen that feature the Myrtles only talk about Chloe and her ghost.

Simple rule... Don't take a television program's word for anything. Do your own research.

After all, despite what you may have heard, it was a television program in the late 1980s that told all of us that "orb," "mist" and "vortex" photos were all ghostly in nature... Recent evidence to the contrary...

The Internet has also provided a plethora of sources and "experts" on ghostly activity. Back in 1997 when the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society was put online, there were scant few groups or people on the dreaded Internet doing the "ghostly thing." Since then, thousands have popped up via the World Wide Web and most of them, you'll be glad to know, are "experts." After all, they *know* the answers! I caution anyone against using Internet "ghost groups" as a resource.

Have they hopped on one belief? If so, why? What is their evidence and work? Simply whipping about to many different "haunts" or spending a long time at a single "haunt" is not an indication of knowledge or working towards answers.

Also, seeing a "professional" and well-designed site is not guarantee that the content isn't garbage.

The long and the short of it is, read through and use common sense. On the Internet, there's good and bad and I doubt any researcher worth his or her salt will say that the majority are wonderful sources of enlightened and educated information.

Hey, even we're not perfect!

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Many people, myself included, see the study of ghostly phenomena as a science in many ways... Thank goodness that medical "science" isn't subjected to as many so-called experts as the study of the paranormal or we'd all be dead.

"It's okay, I've read a few headlines, visited some websites, heard a few radio programs and saw a special starring Jonathon Frakes on TV! I'm an expert now! I'm ready to go! I can perform your heart surgery for you!"

Oh... before continuing on... I do want to address one point.

We (the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Societies) are not “professional ghost researchers” as professionalism entails being paid for the work. We are amateurs who act “professionally”... or at least we try. This is very important when it comes to dealing with discussions or, more realistically, arguments.

One of the most important lines I’ve heard in regard to debating paranormal phenomena comes again, more or less, from Stanton Friedman. If you must argue the points, attack the data, not the person.

When a debate about the paranormal devolves into a situation where the parties get to the point of “Well, you’re stupid and dumb and you smell bad!” or otherwise swerve from the topic at hand, the discussion is over. In my opinion and that of many others, the first party to resort to these arguments has lost... They started attacking the person, not the data.

To use three of Mr. Friedman’s lines about poor arguments...

“Don’t bother me with the facts, my mind is made up.”

“If one can’t attack the data, attack the people. It is easier.”

“Do one’s research by proclamation rather than investigation. It is much easier and nobody will know the difference anyway.”

For those aficionados of our message board, have a look at the e-mail address I personally use on it.

inconvenientfacts@torontoghosts.org

It’s from the title of a Karl Pflock book... It’s called Roswell - Inconvenient Facts and the Will to Believe and is about how no matter what evidence is brought forward, people like to put on their blinders and ignore the *facts* in preference of their *will to believe*.

It’s been said that people always say they want *The Truth* and *Facts* but the evidence seems to be that people want *Their Version of the Truth* and *Their Facts* that support their beliefs only. Rare is it to find someone who truly accepts all possibilities and all evidence.

You should keep in mind, it works both ways... Sceptdebunkers and True-Believers both are guilty of pontification and ignoring things in their quest to be seen as “experts” and to support their own pet hypothesis.

A good researcher must remove all blinders and see all sides of any argument.

Okay, After All that Reading... Starting the Research!

Okay you've found your place. You have your report. Good news! This is where the document becomes "How To Research Ghosts"!

So we know the place we're looking into regardless of whether it's going to end up as an "on-site" visit. This would depend on permission and it being "okay" with all parties involved. We must try to get a little information on the place.

First of all this should be the job of one or two researchers... not the whole team. This is because if it does become an on-site situation. You don't want everyone "matching" the history to the phenomena completely... It may skew peoples views, and what might have been reported as a "free-form" situation is now in the person's eyes definitely related to "what they know."

So, how do you get this information?

Well, historic sites and museums are usually great because they have and will share their historic information on their site. Although these are always great spots to "cut your teeth" so to speak, they can have drawbacks, as most "ghost enthusiasts" already (probably) know the ghost stories attached to the site. But still there are things that can be found out that may be of interest.

For an example of the above, at Fort York I had a witness report she was "not sure" if she saw a ghost or "someone else" at the venerable old fort, as the "man" she saw couldn't be an American or British soldier from the War of 1812. She questioned what or who she saw because "he" was wearing a decidedly "green coat" instead of the traditional "redcoat" or "bluecoat" she *knew* soldiers wore, even though the hat and all matched the historic period nicely in her eyes.

It was fun for me to introduce them to the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles, which were a group of soldiers during the War of 1812 who were indeed stationed at times in the fort. They wore very similar uniforms to the British regiment - the 95th Rifles... which included a distinctly green tunic.

As shown above, it's important when looking into historic sites and museums to tour during the day and ask the staff to learn about the history. It will help you to appreciate the range of the possible situations and go a long way to the establishment of a relationship with the site. Also, it lends itself nicely to developing a better line of communication with staff at the location for possible questions and interviews.

Homes and private sites can be a lot trickier. First of all, rental units (apartments and the like) are the single most difficult locations to get documentation about. Most of the records will be in the possession of the building management, and, it's unlikely they want to be known as the "haunted place." Usually they aren't too helpful.

Land or house ownership, on the other hand, is much easier. Local municipal offices, record offices, and in some cases land registrar offices will usually offer (for a small fee) a list of the previous owners of a site.

From there, a trip to the local library or archives might yield more information on the people you are looking into.

Another good trick is to do a good, old-fashioned websearch on the Internet.

There are a lot of public census records and newspaper archives online, and a search may offer information about the people at hand.

For example, if you know that you want to find out about John Smyth who lived or whatever at that site between 1869 to 1887 and the location is in Aurora... Search for the key words...

John Smyth 1869 1887 Aurora

Maybe add Ontario (if it is, indeed, that Aurora) if you need to refine the search.

Next, you may want to see if there's an Aurora Historical Society or Association. A new web search will usually find this...

Aurora Historical

If they have nothing on their websites, e-mail them and ask. Again, I'd suggest *not* saying, "Hello, I'm a ghost person! Send me info!" as that will probably close that door very quickly.

"Hi, I'm doing background work on a property and wondered if you had any information about John Smyth who lived/worked/whatever at X place. Can you help me?"

That should do it.

Once you've done all you can do historically, see if in your neutral, non-biased, researcher's view has any bearing on the reported phenomenon.

Regardless, the notes you have gathered will be of use... if for nothing else to say, "I doubt it's that person from history because..."

It is important to remember that the witness may be able to give you some information but remember to ask... Where did they acquire the information? If it's from a neighbour or some other source that's based mostly on hearsay, don't discount it, but double-check it using more conventional means.

Also, oddly enough, it's sometimes up to the researcher to become a bit of a savant about architecture. Many times when histories of buildings are skewed or being stated mostly from hearsay, it's up to you to spot when and why certain parts of the building are there.

Don't giggle, but in more than one building that has served as a type of hospital and/or a medical building, we've been told about "*body chutes*." These are strange little doors that look like mail slots leading to a basement. These doors almost always, somehow, get the legend attached to them of being a place where *dead bodies* (for whatever reason) *were deposited to slide* (one has to assume) *into the basement*.

A simple understanding of architecture and history can clear this mystery up fairly quickly.

You see, bodies, as a general rule, were treated with some respect by most folks and were not dumped into a chute.

Now what are these chutes? Well again, as an ace researcher, you know that it wasn't that long ago that coal was used to heat most buildings. In fact, it's not unusual to find *coal chutes* in any building dating from the latter 1800s through the early 1900s.

This was so that coal could be delivered to a basement (likely location of a boiler for heating) without bothering the people inside.

One place where people were showing me the "*body chute*," which had been an integral part of their "ghost story," I pointed out the door of the chute and, stamped in metal, were the words "Dominion Coal."

They were so happy I'd discovered this fact that they went and found another ghost hunter who instead published the information about the coal chute as being a "*body chute*"... completely ignoring my findings and reinforcing their original story involving those bodies being slid into the basement. For them it was another inconvenient fact removed by finding the right people (less likely to look too hard into things) to talk to about their pet story.

Then there's the "crematoriums" that seem to be in every abandoned hospital. Although an incinerator is not out of the question, neither were other reasons for hospitals to have big smoke stacks in certain buildings. To source these out, grabbing floor plans or blueprints from libraries and archives can assist in getting this information straight. Out of the three "crematoriums" we have been told about (usually with the idea that "living as well as dead" patients were "tossed" into them); two were laundry buildings and boilers and one was not related to the hospital at all but part of an old Ontario Hydro Electric building.

A simple way to guess the age of a home is to look for the chimney. Very old homes (from the early 1900s and before) will likely have more than one chimney, usually not terribly close to each other. Remember, before natural gas was pumped into homes and electricity, heating and cooking would have been done in a hearth.

At one Ontario home we visited, the people who invited us to visit told us their home was the "original" homestead in the area. It was a bungalow with no chimneys and no body... er, I mean... coal chutes. Meanwhile, across the street, were two Victorian-style homes, very "well aged" with multiple chimneys.

You should, if possible, get to know the history of the neighbourhood where a "haunt" is reported and a reasonable idea of certain types of architecture to assist in doing a "quick" view idea of the history. To be able to recognize Georgian from Edwardian from Victorian architecture will honestly serve you well.

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To address another point here, I often get asked this question:

Does a real-estate agent *have* to tell you if a house is reported to be haunted before you put in an offer or purchase it?

This is a grey area. In some cases, I've heard "yes" but it seems to be up to the ethics of the agent. If you want to know about the home you're buying and have "suspicions," the jargon to use and the question to ask is, "Is this house stigmatized?"

There are special courses for real-estate agents to take to help them learn to sell homes that are "haunted" or where an awful event has taken place (such as a murder). Homes with these histories are called "stigmatized" in the real-estate world.

If the price or location seem too good to be true or, even if you don't feel "right" about the place, there's no harm in asking and, at that point, you have asked a direct question which does have an affect on the home's value. The agent must be as honest as possible about it.

We've Got the History, Now What?

Okay you've got your notes, you (and maybe one other person) are armed with the witness testimony and if possible a history of the site.

Well, it seems obvious that you're going to ask if you can come to have a look.

Assuming the "people that need to be" (current tenant or management) are okay with your visit, then here's the first question. What might you find there?

This is an excellent and almost too common sense question to put here, but let's look at the facts.

If you know that it's a large site (say a big home, almost a mansion) and there's phenomena reported at various locations with varying regularity, then two people and a camera won't probably be enough to do a proper job.

If it's a three-room bungalow with only sounds happening once every blue moon, then rushing over with fifteen people in tow, and a Buick loaded with equipment, is going to be extreme overkill.

Here are the basic questions to ask to help you plan the investigation...

#1: How frequent is the phenomena?

Let's face it... If the phenomenon is a one-shot deal (it's only happened once to one person), then rushing over right away might be a touch premature. If it happens all the time, but only at dusk, then timing is obviously crucial.

#2: Who has experienced the phenomena?

This is a good one too. In a house of six people, has only one person experienced anything? Again, it's not to say that this one person is not experiencing anything, but the dynamic of the others in the house may make a thorough investigation tricky if they think the one witness is... well... y'know.

Also, in this line of question, you might discover that one witness is a "centre" or a focal point for the phenomena. Again, it could lead you to other questions and theories.

#3: How big is the site?

Covered already... This is for getting your team and its size organized.

#4: What does the witness think is the causation for the phenomena?

This question will tell you a number of things. As a good researcher, when asked what a ghost is, the proper answer, in our humble opinion, should always be, "I don't know." If the witness holds a certain belief, it can let you in on what might be happening. For example, some Christian sects (such as the Seventh Day Adventists) see all "ghostly" activity, regardless, as demonic in nature. Again, as a good researcher who's open to all

interpretations of the data, when you hear “demon” or “minion of Satan,” you might want to also look into an “evil” manifestation as being slightly less evil and cover all your bases.

This is just one of a plethora of possibilities, but when a witness proclaims belief or disbelief in any areas, it may help you interpret his or her testimony by seeing it through your own eyes.

Remember, one person’s “demon” is another’s “angel,” and yet another’s “ghost.”

Truth, again, is... no one knows for sure and it comes down to faith and/or belief. Best if you can understand the witness’ viewpoint before going further.

Also, on the point of “perception,” I’d like to bring back something that is a favourite from our online course...

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At Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, a person is walking by a raised canon bastion when suddenly a red-coated soldier appears to rise from the ground and advances towards the "victim" with his musket in hand!

SOME people would say, "Aha! You disturbed the dead and he was going to ATTACK you! Lucky you got away! See, he ROSE from his grave and came after you!"

Poppycock.

Doing a bit of research (thanks to a previously well written ghost book about the fort), we would know that the ghost of this soldier has been seen, and to a degree, explained. We know that a soldier had frozen to death at his post in the early nineteenth century. Back then this bastion was "flush" with the ground and only during the rebuilding of the fort was a mound mistakenly put in this bastion. Since then, the soldier is seen (only from the waist up), still marching his post. This is DEFINITELY a historical repeater, and isn't even aware of the topographical changes in the fort!

Ergo: The soldier most likely didn't "rise" from the ground, he simply hit the crest of the hill from the opposite side. As for his musket, well, believe it or not, soldiers (especially on guard), carried weapons!

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So, in simplicity, those are the “basic four” questions.

They will get you started on the road to the next task.

Picking and Building My Team

First rule of ghost investigation on-site: Never go alone!

Not only is this for data purposes, but safety as well. If something should go wrong or you need assistance, a partner on site should always be within quick eyesight and earshot of your location.

Aside from the obvious, another detail that will determine your team's size will be how many people will be allowed to go to the site to perform the work. Even at larger spaces, for reason of insurance and safety, some sites will set a limit (or *gently* suggest one) and it's important that you do not try to "sneak in" some extra bodies. Again, you've have an agreement with the folks there and you want to keep any promises. Remember, "bending" those promises may jeopardize your chances of returning to the site to continue your work.

Next thing is, if you're serious about this (and one should be... *nota bella*: One should always take the study, the phenomena, and witness seriously, but never take themselves (egos) too seriously. It is a hobby and should be fun, but at the same time it's a serious bit of work that if done with respect and professionalism, could be very rewarding... but a good giggle does take the edge off certain situations!).

Where was I? If you're serious, your team should be split into groups of at least two if not more depending on the size of the site you're looking into.

This is because, should any of your team actually encounter something, it's best to have an extra set of eyes to see whatever it is as opposed to a single witness. Aside from this in certain aspects of your equipment to rule out any issues, you should have a person to "witness" certain procedures. (We'll cover those later on.)

Next thing is teams always work better if it's understood there is a team leader and that person takes control of folks at the site. (There is no "I" in "team," but there is an "m" and an "e"!)

The team leader should break the team into smaller groups (of at least two) and assign locations and jobs. The leader should be aware of the people on his or her teams strengths and weaknesses in determining these jobs and locations.

For example, if there's a "technophobe" on a team (someone who can't cope with high-tech equipment), try to give him or her a "pen-and-paper" job and act as a simple witness. If they're really bad, put them in charge of dispensing equipment.

If there's someone in the team that has admitted being very afraid of things, keep him or her in well lit, less "frightening" locations when possible.

The real problem is when you have one or more "goofballs" that are being a little too silly for the investigation's own good. You know the ones. They start off with the old "flashlight under the chin" gimmick going, "Oooo! I'm a scary ghost!" and you can see that they take this job about as serious as someone trying to scalp Carrot Top tickets. With folks like this I do one of two things. I put them in place that I know through

gathering the witness testimony are not “hot spots” for phenomena (very low activity) that are away from the other teams. Sometimes, for my own amusement, I’ll make sure these folks and the “terribly frightened” folks are together in these areas as they seem to bounce off each other well.

Before anyone thinks that’s mean of me, remember, if someone has volunteered to come out with us, I have asked the person if they’re serious and that he or she is aware that they’re heading to a reportedly haunted location. If a person’s fear of ghosts is so terrible that it’s borderlining on paralyzing, than why did they come? If they’re going to act like idiots, again, why did they come when they know that we’re being serious?

I have sent folks like this home on a couple of occasions as well. I’d rather end up with a smaller team that functions rather than with a large team of very distracted people.

The nicest thing about being in the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society is I know that all the researchers and investigators are trained and know what the gig entails. If you’re doing this outside a big group or on your own, you may have to suss out your team yourself.

Even within some groups I’ve worked with, I find it amazing how many people are “chomping at the bit” to get into the field. They write e-mails and what-not asking “When? When? When?” and, when the time does come and I tell them we have a date and time, “Oh, I’m sorry. I’m sorting my sock-drawer that day. Can you do it another time?”

Arrgh!

First of all, getting permission to be at a site is usually a tricky situation. You’ve managed to get this person(s) to allow you to do this. It looks really bad when you have to call and say, “I’m sorry. One of my team is sorting their sock-drawer. Can we book another time?”

If someone has to “miss the boat”, than guess what? Yup, they missed the boat!

Psychic Investigators on your team...

If you’re reading this and consider yourself a “psychic” or “sensitive,” then forgive this section and read it thoroughly before burning this, tearing it up, or sending a nasty e-mail to the author.

I’m not a personal fan of psychical investigation. (Egads! I’ve said it!)

It’s not a disbelief in psychics or anything like that. It’s because determining who is a “real” or “reliable” psychic and sensitive is next to impossible. It’s pretty much *caveat emptor* (buyer beware) with this sort of thing with you accepting the person as such.

In my experience, I’ve only ever met one (out of hundreds) of psychics whom I truly believe was a complete fraud. Most of the people I’ve known, if their “accuracy” has been questionable, were not hoaxing as much as wishful thinking. Their “will to believe” their own abilities and their enthusiasm to help overshadow the fact that possibly they’re not helping us at all.

Also, many psychics will, if allowed, lead a team on an on-site investigation unwittingly. Many of them, while walking about a site, will elude to certain spots or areas being active which can then make a team concentrate on them a little too much. Imagine (and this has happened to us) that a team of twelve is at a large site. Because the psychic has pointed at one spot as a “hot spot” for data collection, ten of your twelve people fixate on that spot and the majority of your equipment is swung over to it. Meanwhile, the two “dissenters” actually do have something incredible happen, but have no equipment, and only two of them are witnesses to it. You won’t be too happy, will you?

When I have worked (successfully) with psychical investigators, I’ve tried to do the following.

- 1 I’ve tried to keep as much history about the site away from the investigators to get their pure feelings without them being led by these notes.
- 2 I’ve not told them where most of the activity has been reported. I let them tell me what they think.
- 3 I let them “walk about” the place without the team as a whole to gather their ideas without sharing them with everyone to avoid “fixations” by the other team members.
- 4 I ask them to write down rather than vocalize their findings and feelings.

Even after all this, I ask them not to tell the team anything that might skew someone else’s findings.

Another important thing to remember when looking into psychical investigations is the “general public’s” view on this type of investigation.

To be honest, psychics and sensitives have gotten a “bad rap”, with the average person who sees them all as being “store-front gypsies” or like those “1-900 psychics.”

It is for this reason too, that I avoid using a psychical investigator without making sure that the person who is allowing us to be there is completely comfortable with it.

Now, before carrying on and before I get angry e-mails, it’s important that researchers or investigator be able to “step outside” themselves and see the world through the eyes of the average person. If you’re lucky, in terms of psychics and sensitives, most people are aware of maybe Sylvia Browne and possibly John Edwards... and this is still not the majority of people out there. Most “normal” people don’t know a psychic from a hole in the wall, so their perceptions of what a “psychic” or “psychical investigation” is all about are a bit skewed.

Hence, in the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Societies, “psychics” and “sensitives” are not a “front-line” tool within investigation, and when they are used we are very careful to try to use as many controls as possible.

As a very important note as well, we (the GHRS) never charge for our work or information and therefore will not even consider working with a psychic that wants to or tries to charge either ourselves or a witness for their efforts.

Next when looking at a site, avoid everyone in your team “clumping” together. You should get an idea of the layout and “landscape” of the place you’re heading to. This can be done with a map or floor plan. It’s best to assign “locations” to your teams and ask them to spend a little time in each area. Effectively, send one team to location A for about a half hour while another team is in location B for the same time.

To ensure no one gets jittery about being stuck anywhere, it’s best to move people every half hour or so to a new location. So the first team, after a time, goes to location B and the second team goes to location A or the like. In some locations, such as Fort George at Niagara-on-the-Lake, during investigations, it’s not unusual to have up to seven teams looking into nine locations. Again, just keep everyone moving when you can. As above, anyone who shouldn’t be doing things, leave him or here in an “important” spot... to keep that person out of trouble.

It is important for the team leader to ensure this is the case as people tend to try and “clump” in locations that are thought to be “hot spots” for activity. In doing this, other things might go missed in another location. It’s vital that your team understands this.

Now, human nature will inevitably take over and reaction and curiosity will get the better of some teams. If you’re at a site and a small team suddenly experiences something and shouts out, this will probably draw more than a few people to the area. It’s impossible to control this, so I usually let the people who attracted the attention get out what they feel they need to, give everyone a minute or two, and then send folks back to their assigned spots.

So, you’ve figured out the best number of people. You’ve assembled a team. You’ve gotten your ideas on where to situate your team. Now on to equipment and uses.

Equipment and Uses...

The most common reason for taking equipment to a reportedly haunted location falls under three categories: to document the investigation, to attempt to capture phenomena as it's happening, and to look for possible sources of phenomena.

The most common items are listed below with their effective uses.

Cameras are important. Using 35mm cameras is preferred for one reason. Having a negative and a print makes it a little easier to see if you have got legitimate phenomena or some type of developing error. Digital photography is great for a "quick take," but most sceptics will not accept any type of image taken this way as "legitimate" as it is so much easier to manipulate the image. Think of it this way... anything that has to go through a digital processor will always be questioned.

Keep in mind the fact that you may be the most honest, diligent, and trustworthy person in the universe, but hard-core sceptics and non-believers are going to tear anything you do apart. Don't get upset by this! You are going to be looking into a very controversial thing so expect some resistance and "flack." Just remember to be good natured and that for every one person who mocks, ridicules, and generally treats you poorly, there is a person who's listening to you and appreciating your work.

Polaroid cameras are also great tools and will give you instant images with a minimum of developing problems.

Video cameras are a great tool, but sometimes not too practical. Oddly enough, most people have more problems with video images being taken of their homes/places/themselves than still pictures. Also, keeping batteries charged or cameras plugged in can be difficult on the fly. However, low light video cameras hold much promise for this kind of work.

In a perfect world, you could set up a video camera on a tripod and abandon it in a room or space that's very active and let it roll. If you can get some kind of guarantee that no person interacted with the camera and it captures something, that would be far more interesting than running around with the camera taking random images.

Do's and Don'ts with Cameras in the Field

Always open film/videotapes/disposable cameras in front of at least two people to ensure that the film is fresh, factory sealed and not tampered with. Load the film in the same way.

Always use 400 or 800 speed 35mm film. It's best for low light and will work fine outdoors and in.

Do Not smoke near a camera taking an image.

Do note the atmospheric conditions while you take your picture. Is it raining? Is there a breeze kicking pollen and/or dust into the air? Is there a fog or natural mist? Is it cold enough to see your breath? Is there a forced-air vent nearby?

Always take two pictures in a short space of time in an area if possible. See if any anomalies show up on both images. (Using two types of cameras in rough time synch is even better... Say a digital and a 35mm.)

Do not try to take pictures with a still camera while moving.

Always ask the owners/tenants of any space where you are taking images, if you are allowed. Sometimes, such as in museums and historic sites, they frown on flash photography.

Update: March 2005: An important aspect of photographs I neglected to mention was that when you take a roll of film to be developed in a lab, always make sure that the lab understands that ALL images must be printed with no corrections other than moderate contrast and brightness. Most modern labs will inevitably feel that certain photos must be "mistakes" (no person or focal point or a "weird" image that can't have been taken "on purpose") so to save time and money, they won't print them. When you take your film in, simply ask the clerk you give them to that all images are to be printed (no exceptions) and that as little "error correction" be done as possible.

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Orb and Mist Photography

It seems as of late July 2002 that most organizations and researchers are now downplaying orb and mist photography in relation to ghost investigations and "proof". The reason behind this is the ease of which this type of "evidence" can be re-created (unintentionally or intentionally) via "natural" means.

In the appendix of this document is our "Final Orb and Mist" article. It should help people understand why this phenomena is no longer considered by most to be "proof positive" of paranormal manifestations.

Especially for those that want to look for "things" in cemeteries (even though we have already covered the concept that these sites are not bastions of ghostly stuff), think logically. You are going to be surrounded by possibly polished marble and granite stones. Cemeteries are landscaped and contain flowers, trees, grass, and dust. Your chances of having an amazing amount of sound echoing and particles in the air are better than average. Use your judgment before saying you've really got "something" if you decide to use a cemetery to gather electronic or recorded phenomena.

Audio Recordings are also great tools for your investigations. Again, sometimes this can be difficult to carry off.

In a perfect world, you would be using several tape recorders of varying types. Importantly, try to use recorders whose microphones extend at least three feet away from the mechanism so the mic does not pick up the grinding and whirring of the tape motor.

Many people have inquired about DAT or digital recorders. These are excellent, but they're pricey, and are not looked on with favour in the "sceptical" and "sceptdebunkers"

field because, the recordings can be modified or 'filtered' with ease to produce "favourable" results. The basic principal is that although digital equipment (camcorders, audio recorders, cameras, etc.) is excellent and easier to use, anything that must be processed through a computer first will be automatically suspect. Researching the paranormal is done much better with good old analogue equipment to avoid hassles.

There are two ways to use tape recorders...

You can record as you are walking around and chatting. This is not the best way to use these items as ambient noise and voices are likely. If you want to use a machine this way, always make sure you are using at least two audio recorders (a video camera can substitute as it records audio and video) and this way you can determine whether the noise/voice you've picked up is truly anomalous or not.

EVPs: EVP or Electronic Voice Phenomena is the supposed ability to record the voices of ghosts and/or spirits. This type of phenomena is one reason to try to capture audio but it's also good for anomalous sounds.

Brief history: Historically speaking (other than looking at the idea that Thomas Edison practically invented the phonograph desperately trying to figure out a way for the "dead" to communicate with the living), EVPs first came to the fore through Friedrich Jurgenson who, while trying to record bird songs outside his house in the 1950s, ended up having voices come over his tape as interference. Jurgenson, deciding that it might be "the voices of the dead," tried to record them in a small forest hut near his home.

The first clear EVP he recorded was a voice in German saying, "Friedle, little Friedel, can you hear me?" which apparently could not have come from a "living" person.

From that point, Jurgenson invested a lot of his time into the study of EVPs until he passed away in the late 1980s.

We, at the Toronto and Ontario GHRS, are now experimenting and doing tests with another method of EVP collection. In this, we use the "abandon-and-retrieve" method above mixed with another method.

Before starting your collection, sit down and make up ten "static" questions you would ask an "entity" (think "person") that might be a 'ghost'. Questions like, "Who are you?" or "Why are you here?"

With at least two people (one witness to observe for ambient sounds and to make sure that the data is "pure"), ask the questions aloud into the space you are using. Wait seven seconds (silence) between each question. After these ten questions, possibly ask five more specific to the possible "ghost" at the site. Things like "Is it you who's been seen at the stove working and if so, why?"

After this is completed, switch back to the abandon-and-retrieve method.

This should give a "well-rounded" idea of how or what might be an EVP and its "medium" in the purest sense of the word.

The best way to use these machines is to place a single audio recorder in an empty

room that you feel may yield activity. The first thing you will record is the date, time and location. You will then announce the time when you leave the machine alone and should anyone need to go into this room or space, he or she should announce who it is and the time to be recorded on the tape, and announce when he or she is leaving.

Recording anomalies outdoors is next to impossible. Guaranteeing that there was no ambient noise or sounds is very difficult.

Do's and Don'ts with Audio Tapes

Always use fresh, factory sealed cassettes and open them in front of at least two other people to ensure no tampering was done.

Always, when trying this, announce time, date, and location on the tape and have people announce their presence when recording.

Always note possible "natural" anomalies that may show up in the recordings. Are there other people not on the team who may intrude on the recording? Are there any nearby electronic devices that may interfere with the recording? Are there any electromagnetic devices that may play havoc with the recording heads? (Ham radios, transmitters, computers, power transformers?)

"Ghost Hunting Tools"

Many people feel that things such as an EMF detector (or "Specter Detector" as I've seen them advertised) are essential tools. Although, the GHRS owns one of these toys, there has yet to be any conclusive evidence that ghosts cause disturbances or any other changes in the standard electro-magnetic fields. On the other hand, microwave ovens, two-way radios and fluorescent lights will set an EMF detector into overdrive.

Again, at the end of this document is an article on EMF detectors and the like.

Digital and very sensitive thermometers, on the other hand, are good tools. Aside from the fact that "cold spots" (areas of a space that are colder than the ambient temperature for no known reason) might be measured and noted. If you want an accurate gauge of the temperature while taking photos, this tool may be your best friend.

There are, of course, many other great toys... night-vision glasses, thermo-cams, micro-weather stations, parabolic microphones, etc. You shouldn't break the bank for this. We prefer to use tools that most people can afford, understand, and may be able to use themselves if the non-researcher wanted to visit a haunt.

A perfect example of a useful tool for investigating that many people have in their "regular items" that we have found "by accident" is a laser pointer.

On our investigation at the Baptiste Lake Inn (Grant's Inn), I started watching what appeared to be a pillar of smoke moving in a very strange pattern in another room. This brought the attention of three other researchers (including our regular sceptic) who also saw this "thing," which can best be described as looking similar to "The Predator" from the movie with the same name in "stealth-mode."

We realized that it really couldn't be photographed (as it barely registered to your eyes), but luckily, I had a laser pointer on my keychain. We passed the laser point through the "smoke" and although it didn't physically break the beam, it did visibly dim it on the wall when it passed "through" the pillar of smoke. Using this method, we were able to ascertain that indeed, this thing was there, was real, and was moving around in the patterns we observed.

Aside from this, a laser pointer would make an excellent "signaling" device for researchers in a large area, so as of now a laser pointer is almost always a tool in our investigations, even though its use may be limited. It has been proven to us that it may be an essential item to help you out.

With some "equipment" though, you should be very cautious. Years ago, I read that the famed "ghost-hunter" Harry Price carried around either powder or white flour to scatter on floors of places that had "phantom footsteps" to see if he could catch a footprint. Well, it's an excellent theory but I don't think you'll find too many people willing to let you scatter a white powder all over their floors.

On this same idea, we carry a selection of "brass rubbing crayons" and black paper in our kits. This can be very useful for "extracting" a hard to read engraving, but again some people are not too happy about anyone putting a hard-pressure item and rubbing it against the old family tombstone, especially if it's lime and is being eroded away by time and acid rain. A useful tool, but not one we break out a whole lot.

Granted, the old SPR (and Mr. Price) did give us a great idea for a piece of equipment that isn't at all pricey and works well. All you need is a coin, a piece of paper and a pencil.

In a room that has a lot of reported poltergeist phenomena (or even one that hasn't), place the coin on the paper, draw a circle around the coin and leave the coin and paper as it is somewhere you suspect it might, by "unseen forces," be moved.

If when you return, you can say that no "human" or "animal" (or other "natural" element) has been near the place and the coin is now outside the circle on the paper, you have some interesting evidence of possible "paranormal" movement. This doesn't prove there's a ghost on the site, but it does set you up to (maybe) look into causation of this movement... All data, if properly collected, is excellent!

Basic “Kit”

Here are some basic ideas and tips to outfit yourself for an on-site, ghost investigation.

Bring extra batteries and film. If you feel you might go through three sets of batteries for your equipment, bring four. If you think you'll use four rolls of film, bring five. It's better to pack “extra” stuff like this than be forced to go without if you use up your cache, or even worse, be forced to spend late-night convenience-store prices for batteries and film should that be your only recourse.

Dress for the weather and to be seen. Again, seems simple, but here are some good tips I can impart. Regardless of what the weather may seem like or if you are doing an “indoor site,” bring extra layers of sweaters and such just in case you need to be outdoors and the temperature drops. A mini-umbrella is a good packing idea too... “just in case.” Lastly, try to make sure you're not dressed like a Ninja warrior all in black and stealthy. Not only will, as explained earlier, this make it easier for you to be seen by traffic if outdoors, but it will remove “doubt” if a photo is snapped with a “mysterious shadowy figure” in it. If you don't feel like wearing “day-glow” clothing (and I certainly can relate), then try to have something on your person that's reflective and visible. Most hardware stores sell reflective tape that you can attach to your camera bag or the like.

You will need to eat and drink. This means, pack some snack foods and some drinks with your kit. Remember, never litter on a site, but keeping a cache of small items of food and drink is important for your energy and health.

A first aid kit is your friend. This one goes without saying, but I usually add to the kit some extra tissues (for hands and noses), some basic stomach remedies and some aspirin and/or other generic pain killers for headaches. There's little worse than having a headache or an upset stomach while on site.

Three other items – something to communicate with, tell time with and good flashlights. Having a cell-phone or some way to communicate “off-site” or, at least within your team is just good common sense for your safety. Flashlights even in the daytime, are extremely useful as there are some places that may be unlit that require attention. Telling the time not only keeps you on target for start and stop times during the investigation, but allows you to note when things happened with accuracy,

The most important tools... and a couple more. Always carry a pen or pencil and a pad. It is often better for researchers on-site to write down experiences and compare notes later than to blurt them out as they happen and possibly skew someone else's view of the event. Think about it. What if one person in a small team sees a “blob of light” while the other sees a figure. Far better to try to compare this idea later than “on the fly,” lest both start seeing all kinds of things that may or may not be there.

In this line, a good pair of eyes and ears are the most important items anyone can have at an investigation. Lastly, common sense is essential, but, that goes without saying.

With your kit, the team is expected to...

Make notes about everything they experience. From “nothing here” to “I had a creepy feeling” to “I saw a full bodied apparition.” Everything, in some way, is important. Ask them to write down the time, place, and who was with them when things happened. Compare these notes after the investigation.

Take photos/recordings when possible. You never know what might happen.

Stay level-headed and avoid bad reactions. If a member of your team suddenly gets “spooked” or starts to exhibit issues that might be health related or, at least, exhibits physical issues, ask them to leave, go out, breath, and come back when they can. If they were “partnered” with someone, try to set this other person up with another group or person for the mean time.

Regardless, you are around camera equipment and you're in a private space of some sort. Curtail smoking to a “smoking area” away from the other researchers and equipment.

Quick note about Ouija, Angel Boards and using Pendulums as such...

This also appears on our website in the "House Clearing" section.

All the people we have spoken to absolutely agree on one thing... It is not a good idea to try and use Ouija boards to "communicate" with ghosts. As a general rule, Ouija seems to exasperate the problems more than solve them.

Matthew Didier, Director of the GHRS is not a believer in Ouija and said this to say:

"Regardless of my own beliefs and disbeliefs, the human mind is a powerful thing indeed. If someone wishes to believe strongly enough, almost anything will become true (if nothing else, at least to the person who believes). It has been my overwhelming experience that a Ouija session almost inevitably leads to negative results. This could in part be caused by the way in which most people pursue contact with a Ouija... usually at night, in the dark and with an emphasis on atmosphere more than on actual contact and assuming a "non-believer" says he or she are contacting nothing more than the subconscious, this situation would be ripe for the "victims" to assume that they have now a dark and demonic presence with them then the suffering, real or imagined, begins."

"Granted, if nothing else, one should remember that they are using a "paranormal communication device" that's mass-marketed by Parker Bros."

Denice Jones had this to say about Ouija:

"What can I say about them to stop people from buying them and using them? Nothing I am sure as people's curiosity with the boards are so great. Just as some people lie in this world, so do spirits! If you summon an entity you have no idea if they are who they say they are. You can get anyone or anything. They will say they are an old friend or family member to get your trust. Then after that they become more erratic and try to really scare you. By the time you realize they are not who they said they are, the more energy they are getting out of you as you are afraid of them. *Remember, fear gives out a lot of energy!*"

I've included this note to point out that, as far as the GHRS is concerned, Angel Boards, Ouija Boards and using pendulums to emulate them are not acceptable methods of investigation or data gathering within our group.

If you feel you *must* use one of these items, please make sure you've checked a few resources out and are mentally (or whatever) ready to try them. Either way, they are not recommended by our groups or by most psychics and other investigators.

Presenting Your Findings

Okay, so, now you've done an investigation and compiled data and notes. What now?

Obviously, you're going to want to share them in some forum... possibly a web site, maybe an article for a periodical or possibly you're writing a book.

First things first. Do you have permission from your original contact, witness or reporter to publish your notes? Are all the people comfortable with your work and are they okay with your publishing the findings?

Next, are you presenting "proof" or "evidence"? Have you thoroughly gone through and "debunked" yourself to avoid arguments and hassles? Is your final document based on your own theories and hypothesis as opposed to a coverall document claiming "facts" and, if so, have you made this clear?

Have you given credit to all who should be accredited for the work?

On this note, there are a couple of "legalities" to consider when presenting...

Luckily, all the "ghost groups" I know of in Ontario (currently) do not try to "copyright" reports or stories that they look into. Granted, they do copyright their work. This is important and a good idea as no one should try to claim "ownership" to a story or report except the original witness... and even then, no one should try to "copy protect" folklore and history.

We're all learning and all of us appreciate "open doors" as opposed to one-upmanship.

When the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society look into a report or undertake an investigation, we make sure that the original witness or reporter know is the story is his or her own, not ours. We're just working with our take on it and that our own work which we take pride in and is "ours" to use. If they wish to share the report elsewhere or use it beyond our group, that's absolutely fine. As I said, we in Ontario are fortunate that this seems to be a "global" opinion within the other provincial ghost investigator/research groups.

Everyone claims ownership to his or her work, but no one tries to usurp a site from anyone else.

As stated on our site a few times, to steal work from one source is plagiarism, from many, it's research, and provided proper credit is given to someone whose work you've used as a tool to help your studies, no one usually minds. Still, it is for the best to e-mail or write to someone to request the use of his or her work within your own.

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So, you have all your ducks in a row, your notes and histories are ready as is your data, you have credited all those who helped and, if you have it, looked into phenomena experienced and thought and mentioned all the possibilities... and you're open to comments and critiques. In my eyes, and many others, you're ready to publish your work!

Is That Cool? The Safe and Ethical Ghost Researcher

As covered elsewhere in this document, you must be on your “best behaviour” and using a ton of common sense while looking into the paranormal.

Here are a few things to think about...

#1: “Trespassing and break and enter... all in the name of research!”

We did cover this, but again there is no such thing as a completely abandoned property, and all places require either adherence to visiting privileges (hours of operation, fees or general permission granted to be there) or just a touch of common sense.

Getting arrested or “bending laws” to get a better story or whatever is never a good idea. Aside from the legal ramifications. Like I said earlier, it could ruin the chances of another group of investigators being able to do a bit of study there and possibly other places under the same management.

Most of us, at one time or another, have stepped over the line (yes, I’m guilty too), but in the long run it’s best to ask first and get permission. The worst anyone can say to you is “no,” and with the plethora of sites available I’m sure you can find another site to go to.

Of note, the place where I “bent the law” ended up, not too long after inviting me and another researcher in with permission and, when I ‘fessed up my wrong doing, I was told that had I been caught, it was a guarantee that we never would have been allowed in... ever. Since that time, I’ve always worked through proper channels.

#2: “They’re dead. Who cares?”

This is a line of logic I’ve heard most often from people that publish reports with full addresses and names of suspected “ghosts” or, worse yet, snap “ghostly photos” in graveyards showing stones with names visible.

This is just tacky and tasteless.

How do you know the family that is still alive is okay with you showing their family stone with a “ghost” on or near it? Maybe they’re still grieving. If you post an address, are you sure that the current tenants are cool with would-be ghost hunters coming in to say “Hello”? Are they aware that their privacy is probably going to be invaded? How about that “history” you found about the people? Are you sure it’s one-hundred per-cent fact? Are you sure that the relatives and others directly involved will be happy and all right with the treatment?

Last in this line, but certainly not least, is always keep the grieving in mind. Dealing with ghosts and ghostly phenomenon is for most people dealing with death. As stated again and again, the “living” *must* come first.

Recent tragedies and recent deaths are never a wise thing to be looking into. We at the GHRS, when receiving a report that deals with this sort of thing, usually sympathise with the reporter/witness, but then we recommend waiting an appropriate amount of time before even thinking of revisiting the case. Remember, empathy is a vitally important thing and even if one or two people directly involved are wanting your attention, it’s a given that not everyone will want a “ghost researcher” loitering around while they’re still trying to go on after something devastating.

On our message board, I asked about a place in Quebec where, even though, to the best of my knowledge, there hasn’t been any “sightings,” if there was ghostly activity reported, would

everyone be okay if I and/or another researcher looked into it? This place had last seen “use” in the 1950’s and was a park now. It’s been well over fifty years since the last reported “tragedy” on the site. The votes were about 60/40 against looking into it as the “history” of this site still affected many.

So, before you go into some things, think very hard... Is it a good idea to stir this site or story up or are the risks not worth it? After all, there are a lot of places that are “ghost friendly” that people can visit. If there’s a story or report to be told, it probably will be sooner or later, and maybe then it can be revisited.

#3: “It’s a ghost! I’ve got proof!”

Before making any statement like this, I remind the researcher to really make sure he or she covered every possible causation, natural and “supernatural”, and rule out as much as possible. A thick skin will be needed for this sort of statement, even if you feel it’s completely anomalous as many will argue that it isn’t.

#4: “That theory is wrong! Those people are nuts!”

Before making a statement like this, are you one-hundred per-cent sure? Ambrose Bierce once defined the word “positive” as “being mistaken at the top of one’s voice.”

Basically, nothing should ever be completely discounted unless you have absolute proof or empirical data to refute the idea.

As I said earlier, anyone who says, “My thoughts/ideas/pet hypothesis are better than yours!” without thorough study is nothing more than a preacher wanting to convert people to his or her faith... based on not much more than the person they think is “nuts.”

#5: “Wow! This on-site work is intense! Hang on while I have a wee nip from my flask.”

Should this even need to be mentioned? If you’re on site, narcotics and alcohol are *never* acceptable for a researcher to imbibe. Aside from the obvious, this behaviour will make a person’s judgment and testimony questionable at best. Drinking or doing anything like this on an investigation is completely unacceptable.

On this note, though, I have retired to a pub *after* an investigation and once the notes are gathered to “blow off a little steam.”

One of the most incredible moments I experienced in the field was once working with another group of “investigators” when two of their members disappeared for a little while and then suddenly resurfaced. I found out later that they went to “smoke a joint” while in the field. I never worked with those folks again. Aside from my own horror at this, imagine if the site’s management or one of our witnesses had seen this? What would they think of this team?

SOME OF THE MAJOR RULES OF THIS WORK

1. The safety and security of the witness/experiencer must always come first.
2. Keep a truly open mind. Accept all ideas and thoughts equally from the “believers” to the “non-believers” and learn as much as you can in the process.
3. Respect and empathy must always be in play on the part of the researcher. Not only to the witnesses and other people directly involved but also within their own team as well.
4. Never leave a place in worse shape than when you found it. Never litter and never be destructive.
5. If you're using somebody else's work or ideas, give proper credit where credit is due.
6. If you agree to be at a place at a certain time, do your best to be there at that time. If you've been asked to leave by a certain time, leave at that time. (It's not fair to someone to deny them the right to go home because you want “one more picture” or something.)
7. There really is no good reason to break or bend any laws in the name of research. Be safe and be legal.
8. There is no reason to “play up” the spooky side of things. I've seen a few sites and heard people recommending wearing “dark clothes” when operating at night. There is no need to be “stealthy” as much activity seems to happen regardless of the person's dress. If you dress to be seen, it's safer in general especially on roadways and in fields, and you won't be mistaken for something anomalous if someone snaps a picture of you or sees you for a brief moment.
9. A first aid kit is essential when on-site.
10. A cell-phone and/or walkie-talkie to communicate on-site will aid in normal communications as well as safety.
11. Never do anything alone and always check for your own safety before going to a site to do any work. Is the site structurally sound? Do you know the people you are meeting there well?
12. Don't let your own fears or hypotheses guide your collection of data. To make assumptions and only focus on them may mean missing significant data because it didn't jive with your pet theory. Regardless of how insignificant you think it is, it may be important later on. Make notes about everything you hear and see.
13. As above, while on investigation, never, ever drink or take narcotics.
14. Have fun, enjoy yourself and, again, take the situation, the phenomena and especially the witnesses seriously. Take yourself less seriously.

To many people, the above rules seem like simple common sense. Yet, if you visit a lot of websites of ghost groups, apparently common sense is in short supply.

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The Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society
www.ghrs.org

ParaResearchers of Ontario
www.pararesearchers.org

Article: *Research by Proclamation*

Research? Who needs research???

Toronto and Ontario GHRS – 2002

Ghosts are the spirits of the dead! Isn't that great! I can completely re-create the site and tell the researchers to stop our experiments now as it's all been answered! Now that we KNOW what a ghost is, what's the point? These reports and stories are now more of a journal... I should re-do the site to show this at ONCE!

Uh-oh... wait a second...

Apparently, there's no such thing as ghosts! Well, see! I'm glad that's all cleared up, again, now I can stop wasting my time and energy or re-label the site as a work of pure fiction.

Anyone notice the flaw here?

Yup, it's "Investigation by Proclamation." Again, using a Stanton Freidman line when it came to Sceptdebunkers and, in the above case, "Too-True Believers."

I find it very sad that BOTH of the above groups proclaim that THEY have an open mind and THEY have accepted 'the truth' (apparently, 'the truth' is out there... somewhere) and those of us who DARE question their brilliance and information... well, we're just bad or plain loopy.

"Don't trip over your open mind." - Royce J. Meyers III's Signature Line

Forgive me but to BOTH the above groups... WHAT HARD EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE TO CONVINCE ME OF YOUR "PROOF"?

One of CSICOP's credos can be easily turned against them... "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence."*

Fair enough.

Okay, what about those of us that say "Okay CSICOP, you claim ghosts don't exist. I find this to be an extraordinary claim. Where's your extraordinary evidence on all if not most cases of hauntings?"

Where's the research?

* - "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence" is a quote often falsely attributed to astronomer and friend of CSICOP, the late Carl Sagan but it was actually coined by the late Marcello Truzzi who, in hind sight, wished he'd never said it... at least, not that way. In his eyes, ALL claims need evidence regardless of how "extraordinary" they are. He was correct but Truzzi's old group, CSICOP, cling to the 'original' phrase to this day.

How about when I have asked TWO questions online...

#1: What studies have been done to correlated paranormal phenomena with high EMF readings?

Answer: None, really. In fact, as stated in our EMF editorial, the ONLY conclusive study on EMF and the paranormal was done by Dr. Michael Persinger who PROVED that high electro-magnetic energy bombarding the human brain would cause hallucinations. NEVER THE LESS, MANY people said there was LOADS of proof! Many experiments and tons of data! Truth to tell, no there really wasn't and when ASKED where these studies were... well...

Now, in fairness, there are MANY amateur ghost hunters that show, in their reports, jumps in EMF in certain 'haunted' places but they never seemed to have a 'mean' or generic EM reading BEFORE the spike, they also never seem to try to account for the spikes via 'natural' (or man made) means. Conclusion... So far, the only thing we KNOW for certain about high EMF is that it DEBUNKS most hauntings.

Next question:

#2: Aside from 'ghost hunters' going in cold (without a historical report of an experience with paranormal phenomena) how come there aren't many ghost reports from cemeteries? How come burial grounds seem to be terribly under-acknowledged as the hotbed of ghosts we are sometimes led to believe?

Again, people kept saying "But there's TONS of stories, reports and books out there!

I would ask... "Where? What are the titles? Remember, I'm looking for historical reports not cold 'ghost hunting' information."

That's when communication would usually cease.

Then, not just once, people would say "Bachelor's Grovel Bachelor's Grove!"

...and I would reply... "Okay, that's ONE in HOW MANY?"

I have to face facts... There are a total of FIVE known 'haunted' cemeteries in Ontario... and that's five in a total of thousands.

See, even the "Too-True-Believers" are as guilty of "Investigation by Proclamation" as the debunkers! Methinks we accept a little too much because "we," as believers, are EXPECTED to.

Lately, I've noticed that the already questionable 'ghost photos' containing "mists" are now, without question, being referred to as "Ectoplasm" or just "Ecto."

Really?

What is "Ectoplasm"? What is "Ecto"? What is it's chemical composition? What is the "theory" on it's origin? How much "Ecto" do you figure that average 'ghost hunter' has retrieved for analysis?

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THE MIST IS INDEED ECTO???

Apparently, "we" just do! It's faith, my friends! We should ALL have faith! Why question what is unknown?

Okay, fair enough again...

I will no longer question widely held beliefs within the world of the paranormal.

Ergo: Since I've heard more than once that paranormal phenomena does NOT exist, and this is from people better educated and older than I, it (the 'phenomena') cannot be.

Whoops, circular logic.. again.

What's the point of this rant?

It's fine and dandy to say "I think" and "I believe" and state a hypothesis or even educated conjecture but MAKE SURE that's what it is and is being read as... YOUR beliefs, YOUR hypothesis and YOUR educated conjecture... not "proof" and accepted evidence.

Isn't that why this is all about "Paranormal Study"? I guess I must have missed it when it became an exact science.

Maybe "Paranormal Study" became an exact science by proclamation only. It would be fitting, somehow.

In closing, I'm going to have to address TWO groups here...

Sceptics if you want to proclaim that 'x' phenomena or experience is spurious, then PLEASE research it and give us GOOD data and GOOD arguments. If the "proof" is presented, we (those of us who do believe) would be very open to your arguments. If you are going to throttle me with your views and non-beliefs regardless of the arguments you have, are you going to listen to my arguments or simply shout me down or dismiss me?

True Believers before you get upset with me for being a TRUE sceptic (not a sceptdebunker because, as I hope you know, I DO believe in paranormal phenomena!) remember the old adage about forcing religious beliefs down someone's throat... You may feel that you truly DO have all the answers and perhaps, for yourself, you do but HOW do you know it's right for me and what EVIDENCE (and I mean HARD evidence) are you bringing to the table? If you are going to throttle me with your views and beliefs, are you going to listen to my arguments or simply shout me down or dismiss me? Interesting how similar these two groups truly are...

*"Why investigate? CSICOP has proclaimed!"
Stanton Freidman in a letter on UFO Updates*

Editor's Change/Addition: Paranormal research ..is beset by True Believers ('They must be, therefore they are!') and True Unbelievers ('They can't be, therefore they aren't!') Rare are those who pursue evidence wherever it may lead, no matter how the results may square with their cherished hopes and dreams. Ironically, both the TBists and the TUists see themselves as champions of objective analysis and critical thinking, when in fact they are defenders of their respective faiths and, not incidentally, their egos."

- Karl Pflock in Saucer Smear

Article: *Orbs and Mists*

Orbs: It's all over but the crying or...

Why we (the Ontario and Toronto GHRs) are not accepting orb and mist photos anymore unless they meet very strict criteria...

Before I get started here, for those not in the know, "Orb Photos" and "Mist Photos" are relatively recent things being proclaimed as "ghostly phenomena" caught on film and video. For examples of these images, please go to your nearest internet capable computer and do a web search with the words "orb," "mist" and "ghosts." These images, in some cases, make up ENTIRE ghost websites and books as being "Ghostly Evidence." Below is what seems to be our final look at these two types of phenomena.*

It all started (for me) with a rant. Recently, a group of "ghost hunters" in the UK proudly proclaimed that "orbs" were the ONLY way one could photograph a ghost. Needless to say, I was not only "not amused" but almost in a high state of dudgeon.

"Oh sure!" I said aloud, "Let's toss all the images of full and partial apparitions in the dust bin! The Brown Lady of Raynham Hall, garbage! The Tulip Staircase, nonsense! What is WRONG with these people!?!"

Luckily(?) for me, in the room while I did this was Sue and my housemate who is a photographer of some note with OCA (Ontario College of Arts) experience.

The poor fellow... I turned on him as the resident (and close at hand) expert...

"Other than that ridiculous hoax with the Polaroid orbs that actually spelled out words, why do we only see this nonsense cropping up in the mid to late 90's??? Where are the orbs from the 70's??? What's changed???" I imparted rather... um... passionately.

I started my list...

"Is it the film?"

"Not really." he said.

I came back with "Yes, that's correct... why else would orbs happen on digital as well as film. So much for the film idea."

"Is it the lenses?"

"Not really," he said, "except possibly that they are made a little cheaper now."

"Would that cause orbs?" I asked.

"No, I don't think so." he informed me.

"What about the flash?" I asked...

"Yes." he said.

Sue and I were stunned.

"Of course," he told us, "flashes are now built in much closer to the lens than before."

"That would illuminate any very small particle directly in front of the lens!" As I said this, I admit... I felt a heady rush of finally fingering the problem!

These particles COULD be (and usually are)...

- Dust
- Pollen
- Rain or dew
- Snow
- Insects
- Hair
- Ash
- Other semi-microscopic particles

Then I started going through possible "torpedoes" to this great set of concepts...

"Good" 35mm cameras with flash guns... Nope, don't pass the test! New cameras (built after the mid 1990's have the gun mounted on top or JUST to the side facing towards the lens and down to avoid "red eye."

Polaroid Cameras... Still no good. The original cameras used a "flash gun" or "Flash Bar" that was mounted behind and on top of the camera BUT the 600 model and late 1990 models have the flash on top and again, slightly aimed down and towards the lens again.

"infra-red no-light" Video Cams... Nope. The infra-red bounces the rays of the light off ANY object making very small things appear "white" and bright... This would include dust, pollen and insects making them "glow" white even though they are extremely tiny.

Before this time, "flash cubes," "flash bulbs," "Flash Bars" and even the older 35mm "Flash Guns" were mounted back and away from the lens. Honest! Check it out! Grab your old unit out of the closet or keep reading and hit the sites by Dr. Bruce Maccabee and Fuji below.

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Okay, now let's address those rare "old" orb photos. On one site, I found one taken with an old Kodak 120 Instamatic camera and looked... It was highly overexposed and then I looked into it...

IF the illumination was right (say with a "sun gun" or other mass light source or with the sun directly behind the photographer and very bright) it too would be enough to cause the "orbs" to appear.

Science to the rescue!

NOW, as I was getting ready to visit Henry's Cameras here in Toronto (a well known and accepted expert group in photography) as well as penning(?) e-mails to Kodak, Nikon, Polaroid and Fuji, I saw an article by Dr. Bruce Maccabee on the web.

Dr. Maccabee is primarily a researcher in UFOlogy but one should remember... Before that awful TV show in the early 1990's with the "orbs," when paranormalists said "orb," it usually meant round balls of light in the sky... a UFO... so Dr. Maccabee, amongst others in UFOlogy, started wondering what all the hubbub was with the ghostly folk stealing their lingo.

Well, the images peaked his interest and recently, Dr. Maccabee had the same thought... Lens position with flash + particles = orbs.

If you do a search on the Internet and see the article, you'll note that Dr. Maccabee does his work well with scientific data and re-producible experiments.

[*Quick Note*] Overheard on a radio interview last year, a very large U.S. 'ghost group' said that they had "coined the word orb." I thought this rather funny as people interested in geometry and those who called round "things" orbs (such as spider webs and whatnot) for as long as Latin has been around might be amused by this claim. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, the etymology of the word "orb" is "Middle English *orbe*, orbit, from Old French, from Latin *orbis*, circle, disk, orbit."

Fuji just says no to orbs...

Next, FujiFilm (Fuji) has now put up a webpage about orbs. You can see this by going to the Fuji Camera website and looking into their FAQ (frequently asked questions) in relation to technical support with their products. They, too, have the same findings as Dr. Maccabee and our own hypothesis.

Let's kill some of the other "mythos" about orb photos while we're here though...

Orbs of different shapes, opacity and colours prove they are not all dust.

Not at all. Snow looks different than 'dust from sand' then 'dust from human skin' than 'pet dander' than pollen... you get the idea. They also will show markedly different looks/compositions depending on the particle's (whatever causes the orb's) rate of speed just like any other photo of more 'normal' things in motion. Also, Dr. Maccabee found differences between the appearance of orbs (in shape) with the shape of the lens and the shape and position of the flash.

But my photos were taken in a _____ free environment! (Dust, Pollen, Snow, etc.)

Speaking with some authority of my own here as a computer technician who was around in the late 1980's... There is no such thing as a completely 'dust free' environment except outside of the earth's atmosphere... and even then, there are random particles to find. You can come pretty close to getting rid of all the dust and whatnot from a particular spot but you'll never completely do it. Remember those whacky pictures of us techs wearing lab coats, plastic bags on our shoes, masks. etc? I did this for one year and you know what, the only thing we proved in that lab was there is no such thing as a completely dust or particle free environment. You can "seal" an environment completely (like those high-toxic disease labs) but that means in order to impress us, you'd need to be wearing a fourth level "HazMat" suit and have a 'ghostly' environment sealed as well as a high-emergency toxins lab. Even then, sorry to say, it won't be 100% perfect. Ask NASA and the CDC.

Also, certain particles can stir up and blow around a space with no more movement than a simple breath of one of the photographic team (or the photographer themselves).

But these were taken in a haunted location!

That may be true but if a pet cat wanders into a photo taken at a haunted location, is the cat a ghost? No... neither is the dust, pollen, snow, rain, ash, etc...

But I have an orb photo that I didn't use a flash on!

What light source did you use? Was there a BRIGHT source behind the camera? Sun? Flash-gun? Sun gun? Infra-red gun? Fire?

If it truly wasn't "lit" by conventional means, what are the possibilities of reflective particles in the air? In order to have a "viewable" image, some sort of light MUST be at hand. (There is no image, electronic/film/eyesight viewable in absolute darkness... either infra-red (or similar 'rays') or 'regular' light must be present.) Certain leaves, insects, dust, pollen, ash, etc. are HIGHLY reflective and could even use moonlight to cause some sort of "orb" in a photo. Again, you would have to eliminate all particles in the air, which is, honestly, a virtual impossibility.

But there are faces and shapes in my photo within the orbs...

Are you 100% sure they are clear, distinguishable faces or forms or is it a case of trying to spot something within a smudge? Sort of like seeing shapes in a cloud. I'm not saying this is the case but make sure, before you claim this, that when you look at it, can you say "No, I'm not working hard to see something that might not be there. Like seeing a face or shapes in the clouds."

Again, do not take this as me belittling your beliefs or views, just saying that there seem to be many cases where people have to CAREFULLY point out the features of a face or form to us (and many others) that they see that we missed(?). When seeing images like those mentioned at the top of this article (the Brown Lady of Raynham, for example,) it seems that indeed, sometimes, it doesn't take that much "sight work" sometimes to see something ghostly or paranormal in origin. Can 'ghosts' be stealthy? I don't see why not

but I do find many people trying very hard to place the "three dots" to create a face or see the outline of 'something' where, often, there isn't one to be seen... especially when looking into the imperfect surface of a particle causing an orb.

So, are all 'orbs' useless then?

I would certainly say NOT! But, in fact, visible orbs (or one's seen doing their thing) are a semi-common reported phenomena and that, for most of us, is very interesting. There are POSSIBILITIES (even with these) that natural phenomena can be mistaken but it's not always a given. Please, if you have SEEN an orb, send the report to your local ghost, UFO or paranormal group! Only those traditional "orb" photos that are in question here.

What about 'ecto' mists? You mentioned them at the top of this?

Yup. Again, these are a case of where some "normal" things are being taken as "paranormal."

Anyone who's spent time north of Simcoe will tell you that on semi-warm nights, weird natural 'fogs' and 'mists' do develop on lakes and streams. They can drift inland. You have to eliminate these first.

Next, people submitting pictures like these in urban exterior conditions have to do the following... Eliminate 'normal' fogs and mists, take the image in temperatures above fifteen degrees Celsius. If it is above fifteen degrees and you have eliminated hazy conditions (a quick look at the weather report can do that), you have to eliminate all smoke or pollutants. Next, you have to eliminate all chances of 'human' process... such as cigarette smoke and breath vapour. In talking with photographers, I have come to realise that hearing things like "I held my breath" or "I turned my head before taking the image" would not be satisfactory for them.

Lastly, in an internal environment, you'd have to eliminate smoke and vapour from cooking, Next, cigarette, pipe, cigar and incense smoke would have to be eliminated as possibilities. Lastly, mist and 'fog' from running hot water or showers as well as vapour from hot food and candles.

Basically, again, these conditions are next to impossible to get.

For example, on a hot summer night, a "mist" or "fog" photo taken at Sunnyside Beach... Well, you would be about 100 yards from Lakeshore Boulevard and 120 yards from the Gardiner Expressway (two major road arteries) and you're right beside Lake Ontario. There are too many naturally occurring 'possible' mists, smokes and fogs to say it's bona fide.

Next, a family picture at Christmas with no smokers and no fireplace. Hot food? Hot water? Candles?

Quickie Update: To address another thing that has come up here. One person suggested that chewing on ice would help prevent breath vapour. Again, with some experience from the RLSSC (Royal Life Saving Society of Canada) I can state that this, at best, is a 'stop-gap' measure solution. In order to completely rule out breath vapour,

you would need to reduce the temperature of you lungs to very close to freezing. The problem is, once your lungs reach a mean temperature of less than seventy-six degrees Fahrenheit, your chances of survival aren't that great and hypothermia would set in. The "chew on ice" method would only cool the mouth and possibly eliminate some breath vapour but most certainly not all. Also, in this vein, most hockey players (and environmental scientists) will tell you that "ice" can "smoke" (give off a fog) when it's temperature is greater or less than the surrounding atmosphere.

Basically, this type of phenomena (mist/fog) is a minor case of advection fog.

So, you (the Toronto and Ontario) GHRs are no longer interested in 'orb' and 'mist' pictures?

Yes and no. Not unless they meet a pretty strict set of environmental controls or physical descriptions. We are still looking for a particular type of 'orb' photo and so far, no luck.

Basically, our thought is that if an orb is indeed not a reflection or other "lens anomaly" then a picture of an orb should be able to be taken that is easily obscured by another solid object.

In other words, the orb is clearly covered by another object.

We have had people send us images *like* this but, in order to qualify this, the object and orb must be of different colours and the orb must be very solid... not semi-transparent. The most common version of the photos we've received from people that say it's obscured show either a "white" orb obscured by "white" object (in other words, it's not obscured but "blended" into the tangible object) or the orb is highly transparent and again, may be blending with the item which is actually in the background.

As for mists, it is witness testimony but we will not be posting them nor can we "authenticate" them for you unless we were there and intimately involved with the photographic process from loading film to development. Sorry.

Also, PLEASE do not send us your "orb" shots to show us how WRONG we are unless you have met all the criteria above and again, we cannot "authenticate" with the same problems as above.

Then why do so many people proclaim these things 'ghostly' in nature?

As Bertrand Russell said, "The fact that an opinion has been widely held is no evidence whatever that it is not utterly absurd." In other words, just because many people say something is so does not make it true. As proven by a film company, several photographers and a scientist above, it looks like orbs are indeed, not that spectacular.

As for the people that will and do "fight-Fight-FIGHT!" for the "truth" that orbs are ghosts, I ask them to debunk the information above BEFORE going on the attack. Also, please attack the data, not the people. I'm sure that Fuji Film is NOT out to steal your thunder.

To quote Karl Pflock now... I do have to change his first words with Orb Photo studies are "beset by True Believers ('They must be, therefore they are!') and True Unbelievers ('They can't be, therefore they aren't!') Rare are those who pursue evidence wherever it

may lead, no matter how the results may square with their cherished hopes and dreams. Ironically, both the TBists and the TUists see themselves as champions of objective analysis and critical thinking, when in fact they are defenders of their respective faiths and, not incidentally, their egos."

The only thing to note with the above quote is that as of now, the 'facts' are behind those of us who have questioned the phenomena and not those that promote the belief that orb photos are 'ghostly' in origin.

Why should I listen to a sceptic like you!?!

First off, I'm not a "sceptic" in the MODERN sense of the word. I'd consider myself a mild "Moderate Truzzian" as far as skepticism goes.*

In other words, I do believe in ghostly phenomena. I've experienced things I don't have a good answer for so I am NOT a "sceptdebunker" (combination of "Sceptic" and "Debunker"). I believe but when, in 1997, I saw the "rise" in orb photos being claimed as "ghosts," I started saying "Hey! Wait a second! That's not a real good claim of 'ghost photography'!"

Basically, and I do understand this, people WANT to believe and they WANT to believe that THEY have captured something really interesting, cool and affirming and therefore, for these people, they didn't need "scientific proof" or "rational evidence." The blob on their picture was good enough and they'll fight to the (almost) death to proclaim that their images are genuine... despite the alternative evidence.

People that believe in the paranormal often use Galileo Galilei as a reference by stating questions like 'who remembers his (Galileo's) name versus the name of the cardinals that refused to look through his telescope?'. In this case, it's those of us of the 'We Believe In Ghostly Phenomena' group that looked through the telescope despite all the ghostly 'experts' and said "But the evidence is so!" and were told, very often, that we were wrong. Now, it seems that science and the camera companies are backing us up. Granted, we still will have people that will argue but then again, we've gotten used to it.

Are these people who believe in the "photo-orb" phenomena stupid? Not at all. Are they being "fooled"? No... not really, because many 'authorities' seemed to back up their claim. It's just that in the face of the evidence, it seems that indeed, "orb photos" are not as ghostly as they might have hoped they are.

What about the "Flashlight In The Sky" Test? Y'know, put a beam of a flashlight into the air and look for particles and if none appear, it's all good!

Apparently, according to three of our photographic folks here at the GHRS, you would need two to four million candle power to produce the intensity of most of the common flashes used by cameras and then you'd still have to allow for dust, pollen, moisture and insects that might after the tests come into the frame.

Also, after speaking to an optometrist, we discovered other flaws with this. The main one would be not allowing your eyes to adjust to a bright light of such a flashlight. The average person would need to expose their eyes to the light for about three to five

minutes which, according to our expert, would damage the cornea and iris of an eye badly. Basically, the doctor we spoke to did not recommend this.

Also, you may not see particles that tiny even with a flashlight that the lens will see as the lens could be literally millimeters from the particles that produce orbs and anything that small as close to your eyes would be "focused out" by the optic nerve.

IN CONCLUSION

So, it seems that according to Fuji Film and Dr. Maccabee (using repeatable experiments) as well as some discussion with photographers, "orb photos" are not 'ghostly in nature' (unless it's ghostly dust or pollen) and "mists" (we really shouldn't call it "ecto") photos are very difficult to "authenticate."

Are they both complete write-offs? No... but one should be very careful about proclamations of "proof" and should eliminate all possibilities of the 'natural' before jumping to the 'supernatural'.

Should we STOP taking photos? NO! Look at the Brown Lady and The Tulip Staircase... It does seem that photographing a ghostly figure MIGHT be possible.

Keep taking photos but unless it's a SOLID, half-obscured behind an EASILY spotted item orb or your mist comes with a complete list of environmental controls, sorry, please don't send it to our group.

I know this will probably upset some people but in all honesty for me, it seemed a matter of time before the orb photo phenomena was to a lesser degree completely debunked.

Remember, this is ONLY one type of phenomena! Ghosts and hauntings, in my opinion, are out there but this one type has had it's day and it's time to say "Okay, let's move on."

Matthew Didier (February 6th, 2003)

* - The late Marcello Truzzi was a co-founder of the group CSICOP but dropped out when the group, in his own estimation, became more "deniers" than "doubters" and seemed to cease investigating and instead just started decrying the paranormal without proper research.

Update: January 15th, 2005: *Added idea on verifying orb photos as possible paranormal phenomena.*

From Sept./Oct. 2004 Newsletter - Stereo Cameras

The article below was in out September/October 2004 Newsletter. If you are truly interested in the orb-photo phenomena and wish to pursue it on a deeper level, the advice it offers will probably (hopefully) be useful towards your endeavours...

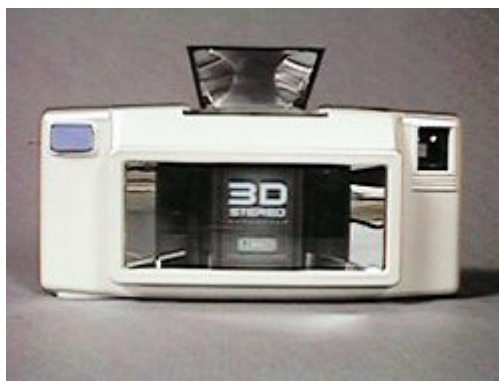
Every so often, I think everyone sees an idea or thought and says to themselves, "D'oh! Why didn't I think of that!?!?!"

Well, I am certainly not immune as proven time and time again... and although I can't give out too much, a joint project between ourselves and [ParaResearchers](#) is in the works... and it's about our least favourite issue, orbs.

Now, our [original article on "orbs"](#) stands as it is, but for those MANY that still feel there's something more than close-up particles of dust, dander... whatever near the lens and caught in the flash, along comes an idea from Dr. Charles Lietzau who is/was also looking into orbs...

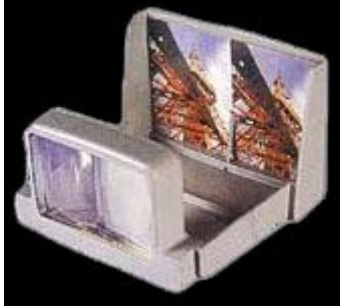
Dr. Lietzau is also of a mind of our theories (in fact, in his latest paper that contained this new concept, he does reference our article as a source for his work,) that the phenomenon is not much more than a natural occurrence being blown out of proportion by those who, for whatever reason, need to believe without much real evidence, but still did a large experimentation and took a huge amount of test photos using a piece of equipment that should have not only occurred to me, but to the elusive housemate who initially triggered our own "Eureka!" about flashes, lens distance and airborne particles... why the old housemate? Well, he actually has played (for fun and artistic reasons) with the equipment that might help people discover more about photographic orbs...

The equipment? A stereo camera.



Above: Argus Stereo Camera (thanks to [Stereoscopy.com](#))

Stereo cameras are "normal" film cameras with two lenses and (usually) a single flash. The lenses and ergo: The exposures, are slightly offset so that when viewed through certain special "viewers", make the image seem three-dimensional.



Above: Stereo Photograph Viewer... The viewer should not be used for paranormal pics.

Now, that's pretty cool, but the 3-D effect is not what makes this piece of equipment so valuable to "ghost enthusiasts", especially orb-hounds.



Above: Sample of Stereo Photograph print... No, it's not Sue in the photo.

You see, with TWO lenses and TWO exposures taken at only slightly different angles but at precisely the same time would negate some (most) airborne particles reflecting a flash.

The concept is, if one frame shows an orb and it's only an illuminated particle, the other lens either should not see the particle at all, or show it with a relatively distinct change in it's brightness.

Now, this tool would not be infallible. In fact, if a large particle was... say... three two five centimeters from the lenses, dead center, and was capture by the flash, then it MIGHT appear as a "real orb" of equal appearance in the photo. The chances, however, in this happening are somewhere between slender and none... Not impossible, but highly improbable.

Now, we have seen situations where investigators were already on this right track, but not to the same degree of preciseness. Many have mounted multiple cameras on a tripod or other contraption and attempted (sometimes successfully) to take images at the exact same moment using all the cameras. Now, this is okay, but a stereo camera, used properly, would eliminate possible time-changes during the exposures and also, if there was/is a film defect or processing problem, it would negate this too as the two images would show the problems a little better to even the untrained eye.

Now, the REALLY nice bit about this is that stereo cameras run about \$120 Canadian if you shop around so this is not a heavy-duty expensive toy.

So, in my guesstimation, if you have a stereo camera (film please... need those negatives and to be able to back-track the chemical processing) that snaps an orb on BOTH frames that appear identical and that orb IS obviously obstructed by another object (not another orb, but a chair or something like that...), then you either have a photo of a genuine anomaly or an impressive hoax.

There's MUCH more to come on this... but it will take some time... We're still slugging away with Dr. Lietzau's paper and getting ready to discuss this with our own resident experts... but it's coming!

Either way, if you're a believer in orb photos, or even a big-time ghost enthusiast, a stereo camera may not be a bad purchase for the here and now.

Article: *Fame and Success*
From ParaResearchers – Sue Darroch

"Don't confuse fame with success. Madonna is one; Helen Keller is the other." : Erma Bombeck

I've been reading and honestly ranting at poor old Matthew (Director of The GHRS) about some of the fallacies of the paranormal world. This isn't aimed at anyone in particular or even any type of paranormal research... It applies to all.

I've been horrified at the so-called "experts" and the whole media portrayal of the paranormal and I've realized that for the most part, paranormal research groups and people fall into one of the following categories...

THE THRILL SEEKERS

These people don't care about research, don't care about the science or even what may be involved historically or factually... they want a good "scare" or some sort of epiphany. This type is only out for a personal experience to laud as some tremendous breakthrough or some major 'moment' of their life. Their sites and groups are very low on actual work or content as they concentrate almost on nothing but "hunts" of various phenomena no matter where or what and with little thought to consequences or original concepts or work towards looking into an actual mystery. These people do a lot of field 'study' (if you can call it that) and little else. It's like reading or seeing half a jigsaw puzzle and they are also more likely to put wild explanations for either mundane or mistaken phenomena out for the world to see to make the find seem that more important. Bad science is usually a trademark. These folks are also 'glory hounds' trying for personal status by either supposed bravery or intelligence but sadly are only doing a tiny fraction of real work.

MEDIA CRACK WHORES (Thanks Royce)

These folks have figured out that any twit can put together a web site or proudly proclaim themselves as researchers or investigators (or hunters) based on little or no study (usually TV shows, Art Bell or maybe one book) and then proudly proclaim via their site or group that they are experts and we should only listen or look at them. They crave "Fame" (see above) more than anything else and wish to be revered as brave, smart or good leaders. These people tend to feel that their answers for any subject are the answers and actively look for and seek out media exposure with little or no merit to what they actually do or have done. These are also usually the people that more-or-less rob material from other people to bolster their sagging lack of knowledge. When and if they do research, it's stolen, shoddy or half complete. It's easily 'digestible' to the point of being dumb. They will also sell what little respect and credibility that they or others in the field have developed for a moment of fame. Yet more glory hounds here as they are hoping they will be worshipped for their "work" or abilities if indeed, they believe that these abilities exist. Sensationalism is the order of the day for this type and almost everything "they" find is an absolute coup in their respected field. They, usually, will accept the term "expert" without a hassle or a moments doubt of their own minimal abilities and the media will usually lap their nonsense up like thirsty kittens at a saucer of milk... making us all look ridiculous and demeaning us all.

PONTIFICATORS

People with their own axe to grind. These people have steadfast beliefs that they feel are absolute and we're just loopy for believing anything else. They will state that all aliens are abductors, all ghosts are demons, all orbs are ghosts, all big hairy creatures are Bigfoot and so on. They are not interested in research or experimentation or even trying to educate themselves or others. They are only interested in converting you to their beliefs. In some cases, these people seem to welcome arguments and seek them out actively and in other cases, they seem amazed that anyone would dare dispute their irrefutable evidence... even if it doesn't really exist. If they seek "fame," it's only to preach from a higher pulpit. More glory seekers here as they not only ask but more or less demand that they are worshipped and lauded from great heights as the brilliant minds that they think they are. These folks will also present silly or misleading evidence or phenomena claiming it drives home their point and no one can now argue... even if they're wrong.

OUT-AND-OUT LIARS

Okay, the hoaxers are here too but I also include any of the above people, websites or groups the pretend to be real researchers that don't. They simply give the outward illusion that they are serious and out to discover and learn but when confronted, back into one of the above categories. These people will fight to the death and turn on a dime if it suits their purpose. The glory sought by these folks is based on other peoples work and ideas and because these people usually don't have much original thought or belief, they will one minute praise "x" person's work then turn around and slam them if popular opinion or a Fox TV special (usually starring Jonathon Frakes) says their work isn't real or true or someone else's is and "x" person's work is lacking.

SOCIABLE SOCIETIES

These folks start up a group or a 'society' to research paranormal but little by little, the observer notices it has nothing to do with legitimate interest or good work but this is nothing more than a "social committee" of buddies who were looking for a way to spend boring weekends. Worse yet, this is also a way for them to form some bizarre hierarchy within this group of friends. Don't expect good work from them for these folks, if lucky, have ONE person involved that's interested and possibly educated while the rest grab hold of the coat tails and ride the silly nonsense ensuring that good work will never be done. They also use their 'group' to initiate new friends but this is again, usually part of the new hierarchy that has evolved. With the new person, an older person who was at the bottom of the ladder may now move up. Watch for dubious credentials with these folks. As stated, usually there's one person who's reasonably knowledgeable and a plethora of other folk who need a road map to discover their paranormal elbow from their paranormal rear ends. Effectively, these folks are a sewing circle of supposed 'paranormal' researchers of dubious qualities.

MEDIA-EDUCATED EXPERTS

These groups/sites/people spring up after movies like "The Blair Witch Project," "The Sixth Sense," "Signs," "Close Encounters" and "Ghost." They will also pop up only in October (Halloween) or after a television show. Sometimes, it's a case of people mimicking a popular website or another group as they feel it will garner themselves praise or prestige. They will come off as hard working investigators or researchers but sadly, their efforts are based strictly on the movie, website, book or TV show that inspired them and then they fall into one of the other categories and never progress beyond what they learned from that one source only and if questioned about another

related area, will either scoff at it, simply say "I don't know" or worse yet, attempt an answer... usually it will be wrong or based on bad statistics or worse work. On a good note, these people rarely stick around the paranormal field longer than a year or two.

MONEY-GRUBBERS

Take any of the above and add greed and the thought that good money in one form or another will come to them from their crappy efforts.

Now, as I said, these are only most of the people I've seen... Not all of them! There are many people out there thinking and working and probably the best work is unseen by people not willing to show it due to the nonsense of the people above and how the public will perceive them.

The above people truly hurt us all, good and bad researchers alike as their antics are held up by real investigators, researchers and scientists as why paranormal research is totally fringe. There is no real peer review or acceptance by most of the paranormal world, which is a pity, as until there is, we will never be taken seriously as long as the people listed above are still making the most noise.

It's sad but it's the above people and not the 'good researchers' that get noticed. I wish this would change, as there are many of us who are reading, learning, working in the field and most importantly, thinking and coming up with new ideas and challenges.

Article: *EMF Detectors*

The Great EMF "Myth"?

Matthew Didier - April 2001

For about the first two years of the GHRS, we really chomped at the bit to get an EMF detector... Yup, we wanted to suss out those magical ghostly electromagnetic fields because as we all know, obviously, ghosts produce EM fields a-plenty!

Well, leave it to me to say AFTER purchasing one in 1999 (NOT from a 'ghost site' but from a science shop)...

"Who said that ghosts produce EM fields?"

Then, after multiple "runnings about" with our acquisition, I started to realise that indeed, as far as we could tell so far, there was no correlation to ambient, non-ghostly control EMF readings then there were in 'haunted' places and, add to that, we actually had 'ghostly phenomena' happen and again, no magic EM reading jumps.

As stated ad infinitum here, TVs, microwave ovens, radios, computer monitors, fluorescent lights and many other things sure do register EM readings that are off the scale but did ghosts???

So, I started doing my homework...

It seems that the origin of electromagnetic Fields (a theory suggested by Michael Faraday in the 1830's and proven, more or less, by James Clerk Maxwell in the latter nineteenth century) and the paranormal come not from ghostly origins but from UFOlogy. Bernard Newman's "The Flying Saucer" (1950) put forward that electromagnetic energy would be a good idea to propel saucers. The human brain also has it's own emissions of extra-low-frequency (ELF) electromagnetic waves at a frequency between 1 and 30 hertz but then again, so does the planet Earth as a whole.

UFO Researcher Paul Devereux put forward that playing with the brain's EM fields would cause one to hallucinate and therefore make the person see all kinds of nifty things.

Adding to this, Dr. Michael A. Persinger has done a whammo job of lab studying folks and subjecting them to high EM levels and indeed, they did hallucinate.

Update: January 2003 I've just found out that the same experiments that Dr. Persinger completed and proved were successfully repeated by the more "pro" paranormal Project Hessdalen (Erland Strands work within Østfold University College in Norway) a year back. Therefore, a "sceptic" and a more "pro-paranormal" set of investigations has seen a correlation between electromagnetic energy on the brain's temporal lobe and hallucinations of a 'negative' type. Just FYI...

Then again, using these theories would show that everyone living in spitting distance of hydro lines or "cancer clusters" as they are known should be literally up to their armpits in ghosts and aliens... granted, only the hallucinatory type and to the best of our knowledge, they aren't. Also, I point out that if I locked you in a lab and suddenly

bombarded you with high EM and started watching you, after a time, I'm sure you'd start reacting and I bet it wouldn't be positive.

A few people have put forward the concept (with hauntings) that EMF must play some factor as lights, televisions, phones and a plethora of electrical equipment CAN be affected. I capitalize "CAN" as our data says that this is not always the case and mysterious lights going on and off as well as TVs and sundry items make up less than 25% of our submissions. Also, the majority of these cases revolve around a single light or TV or whatever and not a room full which means a massive EM flux (like that out of a Tesla coil) is not really a possibility. And as far as explaining these events without using EMF, physical energy (i.e.: The item was physically turned on or off) and generic AC/DC power surge could also explain this.

So where did the concept of EMF = Ghostly Activity spur from?

Well, other than CSICOP and like "so-called-sceptical" groups using Dr. Persinger's work to say we're all hallucinating, it seems that the REAL first account comes from the 1970's movie "The Legend of Hell House" in which a scientific researcher vows he can clear a haunted mansion by the use of this enormous machine he has set up that he says will send out an electromagnetic pulse through the home thus clearing the ghost.

Well, this wasn't terribly satisfactory so off to some fellow ghost researcher's websites. Sure, they had EMF data that seemed to show some indication of 'hauntings = high EMF readings' but when I asked for what the controls were, none seemed to be used.

So, assuming we do continue with EMF reading, how does one say there was an EMF jump when they didn't take a full set of control readings?

Next, I asked if there was any normal things that could occur to account for the elevated EMF readings. This, most of them, didn't know. Things like forced air vents, equipment that could be a few rooms away (but within spitting distance) being switched on, radios and or television monitors and the like. Again, not many answers were forthcoming.

Well, maybe the 'professional' ghost-hunters on TV could help! Well, certainly, they all had EMF equipment and all got nifty readings and they all pretty much waved their EMF detectors willy-nilly without taking "standing" readings. This is BAD as how do you know you're own movements aren't creating false readings? How do you know that you haven't passed near a power line of some sort? Again, what were the control readings???

On a recent television show, the researchers got all excited about heavy levels of increased EMF readings on a site and followed them to a door to discover the site's circuit breaker panel behind it. All caught on camera and happily shown on TV with the researchers going "Whoops!"

In one book on a scientific look at poltergeist activity we recently acquired, we noted that the researchers used the poor (read: smart) man's EMF detector on their assignments... a compass. They also said that they witnessed (and believe in) poltergeist activity in action and the compass was totally unaffected.

In Niagara Falls, Sue and I were waiting at the "Floral Clock" for a shuttle bus to

Niagara-on-the-Lake. While there, I whipped out the old EMF detector and took readings. No, it's not that the Floral Clock is a known haunt BUT it is right next to Sir Adam Beck Power Generation Stations A and B and there's a "cancer cluster" right above the site. Literally, moving less than a few feet in either direction with these cables between 30 and 50 feet above our heads, I got spikes of 3 to 6 full points and then down to regular readings! Was the Floral Clock smothered with ghosts? No, not that we could tell. Were all the tourists there hallucinating? Well, they could have been but if they were, they were VERY quiet about it.

Hopefully, soon, maybe by going through my collection of old Harry Price notes I'll find out WHEN and WHO first got us all running about with our gizmos... I really want to know if we're all desperately trying to justify someone else's hypothesis with some folks taking the hypothesis as fact without proper study.

So, seeing all this and wishing to test the theory, one has to ask, HOW do you get a stable reading?

My only answer is to keep it still, take a CAREFUL reading over a few seconds from a central point. Then, match that to readings over a course of time watching all electrical items in use and for other things that may interfere with the device. This may be very difficult.

Then, and only then would you be able to correlate EM Fields and ghosts IF something ghostly happened and your readings varied heavily.

We are currently running a series of experiments with our EMF detectors which for various reasons, I don't wish to publish right now, but hopefully it will finally be some hard data on the whole "Ghosts = EMF" routine.

I don't think we're all being duped but I do think one person a long time ago said "Hey, I bet ghosts give off a wicked EM Field!" and sadly, we all went "Cool! Let's look for ghosts using EMF Detectors!" and no one... until now... said "Wait a tic... why?"

Are there any studies, any experiments, any controlled EMF experiments on ghosts???

Honestly, not that we've found yet.

So, if you're going to start your own research, remember, a compass will do the trick detecting EM Fields and the EMF detector we bought (from a science store, not a 'ghost' outfitter) was under \$50 Canadian and when compared to a \$200+ item, it did the same job to a fraction of a single millihertz.

So, don't blow money needlessly and above all, don't assume that just because a whack of people say something is "so" makes it that way.

To use an argument paranormal researchers often use against themselves, many people assumed the world was flat and that the sun revolved around the Earth...

Save your money, make sure your readings are controlled and documented and remember, maybe you'll prove to me that EMF = Ghosts... or maybe prove to yourself, EMF does not equal Ghosts.

Article: *EVP "How To"...*

The Art of the Phantom Interview or...

"If there's a ghost in the house, could you please speak directly into the microphone?"

The art(?) of EVP or "Electronic Voice Phenomena" has really taken off over the last few years. Many websites worldwide (including our own) are actively seeking out the ability to capture what could be the voices of ghosts... or, at least, unknown speakers on tape.

This article, more or less, is kind of a "How To" document if you will and as usual, a 'caveat emptor' warning of sorts to those who wish to try their hand at capturing mysterious voices and sounds.

FIRST: The obligatory history lesson...

History

Historically speaking, (other than looking at the fact that Thomas Edison practically invented the phonograph desperately trying to figure out a way for the dead to communicate with the living,) EVPs first came to the fore through Friedrich Jurgenson who, while trying to record birdsongs outside his house in the 1950's, ended up having voices come over his tape as interference. Jurgenson, deciding that it might be "the voices of the dead" tried to record them in a small forest hut near his home.

His first clear EVP from this was a voice in German saying "Friedel, little Friedel, can you hear me?" which apparently could not have come from a "living" person.

From that point, Jurgenson invested a lot of his time into the study of EVPs until he passed away in the late 1980's.

Since then, literally THOUSANDS of researchers hit the field with tape recorder in hand trying to capture anomalous sound with mixed results and success

So, is there "something" to this? Well, let's just say that I believe that there is... actually, I believe there is more to this than "orb and mist" photos for sure!

Equipment

Strikingly enough, this does **NOT** have to set you back a ton of dough!

Basically, like all forms of data and phenomena collection, unless you are gathering for strictly self interest and don't mind an argument (see below), analog is KING!

This is NOT saying "Digital is Bad!" it's just in the grand scheme of recording either via film or tape, a digital ANYTHING comes down to "witness testimony" only once presented. With an analogue device, any phenomena captured can be scrutinized from the point of the equipment and the tape or film whereas with digital, once it is dumped from the equipment to a computer or similar source, it is

your word that indeed, there has been no tampering because, indeed, it is much easier to create a credible looking hoax with digital than it is to create a "foolproof" hoax with analog. Again, digital is FINE provided you are not going to loudly proclaim "THIS IS GENUINE!" and not expect a louder argument. The "true believers" will never *completely* argue the merits of your findings but trust us on this one, the sceptdebunkers will and they will do it loudly and with as much venom and issue as they can.

Closing: The way I say it to people is imagine you have been charged with a murder. The only evidence that you did it is a DIGITAL image from someone's camera dumped on to a computer. Would you not see the fallacy of this in your own defense?

So, basically a standard, ordinary DECENT cassette recorder is preferable. I don't recommend "mini-cassettes" too much as the recording ability on the ones under \$100.00 is sketchy and the tapes are prone to stretching and therefore contorting sounds. Also, do not purchase or acquire a machine with a built in radio as the mechanism might cause some "spill" from radio frequency onto the tape.

Marantz, Sony, General Electric, Panasonic and even good old Radio Shack (Realistic) make perfectly acceptable models of standard cassette recorders with no radio functions.

Microphones are a little trickier. You SHOULD try to find a microphone that extends at least three feet away from the tape recorder mechanism to avoid catching the "grinding" noise from the tape gears. Again, Radio Shack has some you can purchase. They (Radio Shack) are not alone. Check out the electronics stores near you as well for more options. MAKE SURE the mic you buy FITS the recorder you have or, if all else fails, get an adapter.

Next, something we've recently (Jan 2003) come up against, TRY to find "shielded" microphone cable or a mic with "shielded" cable. Radio frequencies bleed through the cord like there's no tomorrow in certain places. Two forts (Fort York and Fort Erie) we worked at experienced this problem very badly. No one needs to be straining to hear anomalies while Rush's "2112" is playing semi-audibly in the background because the local rock radio station is coming through the microphone cable.

If you can't get a "shielded" cable, you can purchase shielding separately from most good electronic stores and then do it yourself.

Tape should NEVER be longer than the 90 minutes variety and do not use "metal" or CrO2 tapes if the deck you bought cannot handle this type. Again, this is for static and 'bleed through' reasons and the "length" of the tape is to avoid stretching and breaking.

Normal C60s or C90s are fine and (good news) VERY inexpensive.

To avoid criticism, make sure you ALWAYS use fresh, sealed tapes OPENED ON SITE in front of AT LEAST one other person to avoid the inevitable call of people screaming "FRAUD!" If the tape was factory sealed, opened in front of at least one witness and a new tape is used on EACH session (not opened and then re-used because you used half or part in one location and decided to "kill" the rest of the tape) then the "fraud" factor is decreased significantly.

BATTERIES, BATTERIES, BATTERIES! Make sure that you do two things... First, always TRY very hard to use battery power rather than an outlet to avoid interference and feedback from the power current from the wall. Secondly, bring EXTRA batteries. If you figure you MIGHT go through two sets of batteries for your unit, bring four sets. Nothing worse than paying extravagant prices for batteries at an all hours convenience store when you could have stocked up MUCH

cheaper earlier in the day.

As far as "reel-to-reel" decks or other specialty tape decks, that's entirely up to you but as a reminder, you MAY want to abandon or leave the machine alone somewhere... Just in case, the less expensive the unit, the less tears if, on recovery, it's broken or missing...

"Vox" or "Voice Activated" units CAN be the enemy! Turn off the VOX settings and let the tape roll. As evident, EVP can be EXTREMELY quiet (to a whisper) and therefore may not 'trip' the recording abilities of the machine.

Make sure, also, you TEST the machine and recording BEFORE heading out to a location!!! Getting to a site and finding out then that the machine is not functioning... well... sucks.

LASTLY, try to use "normal" record and tape speeds. Although "double-speed" is a clearer form of recording and "slow-speed" extends the tape, it also leads to stretching and can make it VERY difficult to transfer to another tape or computer later.

Methodology

We have really only EVER come out with two good possibilities for capturing these events. Both are listed below...

Abandon and Retrieve Method: This is the most "foolproof" way of ensuring that the possible recorder sounds are indeed anomalous in nature.

In a good spot, set up the mic (three feet away from the unit and shielded) in a good "recording" spot. Open a fresh tape in front of a witness. Place the unit on record. Announce the time, date, location and who's around (at the initial point of starting) and leave the tape rolling. MAKE SURE that before doing this, you test with A DIFFERENT TAPE for audio interference and double-check for possible "natural sound sources" that might be misconstrued later on while listening. NOTE ALL POSSIBILITIES IN WRITING! Always ensure 100% fresh (factory sealed) batteries are used in the tape recorder from the beginning.

Next, "seal" (as best as possible) the area the unit is in. Put a note on a door (or whatever) warning people that might enter that an experiment is in progress and IF they HAVE to enter, they should announce their name, the time they enter the room near the microphone and announce the time that they are leaving the room.

In an ideal situation, a video camera of some sort could ALSO monitor the cassette deck and area for possible "human" intervention. If you can afford to do this, make sure the "Time and Date" stamp are on the video tape.

Once 30 or 45 minutes have passed, two people can enter the room and either retrieve or "flip" the tape. MAKE SURE EACH UNIT IS ASSIGNED TO ONE TEAM! We have had situations of tapes being flipped thrice (losing the initial recording and voiding the tape as being "re-used" and therefore unreliable) and moved without the recorders "owning" team being informed or involved. This is a HUGE no-no!

After the investigation is done, take the tapes to a "good" playback unit (if the recorder isn't "great," try a 'boom-box' or home stereo) and listen to the tapes CAREFULLY. Remember to double check the noted "natural" causation for some noises.

As stated, with this method, it's almost a given that indeed, any 'odd' sound recorded is indeed, anomalous but remember, be your own watchdog and debunker and if presenting, make sure you

can, if possible, debunk yourself. It will save you arguments and aggravation later.

Interactive Recording: This is the more "human fallible" of the two methods.

In this case, an ideal scenario is a team of THREE using the machine. Either it is "taken" on a walk (again, ensuring that the mic is away from the mechanism, fresh batteries, fresh tape, etc.) and the researchers simply converse or even possibly ask questions. The person with the microphone MUST do two things...

#1: Stay in VISUAL range (front facing) the other two team mates to avoid possibly being asked if "they" are the mysterious sounds/voices that are being presented. If two researchers validate that this is NOT the case and the sound/voice was caught WITHOUT the mic-holder's assisting it, that's pretty convincing testimony.

#2: Watch for "natural" explanations for possible captured sounds. The mic person must be vigilant for things like other people, nearby sources of sound or "natural" causation (such as wind or the like) and make note of it.

Again, when playing back later, listen for ALL sounds with the team and make sure you honestly write off any "normal" interference so it is not mistake for the "paranormal."

Also, in the interactive method 'realm', is the more interesting type that we are currently (Jan 2003) working with.

Again, preferably three (but two WILL do provided a video cam is available) actually sit or at least stay in one area. The mic and machine are placed in a central location and left on recording. The researchers MUST face each other or a video camera should be trained on them.

While there, a series of questions SHOULD be asked aloud to "anyone" other than the visible to answer. Leave at least ten seconds between each question for an answer and try to do "reasonable" questions for the environment.

For example, the basic questions good in any location are...

- Is anyone else here?
- Who are you?
- Do you know why you're here?
- How old are you?
- How do you feel?
- Is anyone else here?
- Are you waiting for or looking for someone?

After this, you can tailor the questions... Let's say you're at a restaurant...

- Did you work here?
- Do you like the restaurant?

...and so on.

Again, you **MUST** make sure all things are taken into consideration. As "common sense" as it seems, doing the above at a restaurant during the "dinner hour" with other patrons around of COURSE is going to net you some sound(s) or voice that would match.

Same thing applies, **AFTER** doing this, take the tape and let the team listen to it intently.

REMEMBER no matter how honest you are and how good you are and how compelling the evidence is to you, there will **ALWAYS** be those that will argue. It's best to accept this and if there's any reasonable argument, learn from it, adopt preventative measures into your techniques and move on **QUICKLY**. No one needs or wants a flame war over data unless it's being presented as **ABSOLUTE** proof or evidence or is being presented poorly to all.

If you look hard enough, you'll find something... even if it really was never there.

This will probably be my **LEAST** favourite and most controversial part of this document but I must say it.

Some people believe that when an audible, clear sound or voice is not evident, you need to push the sound through multiple filters via something like Cool Edit (which we did purchase and use for 'dumping' analog tape to computer... but we still keep the tapes!) or "back track" it and play the noise backwards.

As someone who is familiar with synthesizers (musically) I can and will attest to the fact that with enough tweaking, I can make your dishwasher sound like it's ordering Chinese food in Cantonese. "White noise" can be manipulated into anything.

Also, many of the "backtracking" samples I've heard are clearly voices (probably human and sometimes, even admittedly so) where the person is straining and reaching to hear something more... "unusual."

I liken this to "orb and mist" photos in the fact that whereas I can't say for certain there is **ZERO** validation in this, it's amazing that we try to do things like this as researchers when there's so many apparently good, "normal," no-editing-needed voices and sounds... Why would we need to (depending on your view) either create or attempt to decipher something when indeed, it may not be there to begin with?

It reminds me of the latest (again, Jan 2003) batch of "orb" enthusiasts who are **TRYING** to say that orbs are the **ONLY** way 'ghosts' can be photographed. This is the equivalent of saying "Take all those silly full and partial apparition photos we've all seen and chuck them in the garbage! They are **WRONG!**"

How does this relate?

Simple, there **SEEM** to be **THOUSANDS** of clear, "normal" audio captures of possible anomalies... Why do we "need" to accent them so much to try and pull out more???

Conclusion

So, remember, if you're off to go and record 'ghostly' voices, remember these rules...

- Get Permission to be on the site you're doing this at.
- Use discretion and don't disturb other "living" souls to do it.
- BE YOUR OWN SCEPTDEBUNKER and always try to answer all your own (and other's) questions in advance!
- Remember, nothing is ever going to be perfect so understand that there may be people that WILL question your findings.
- Take from the above SOME (if not all) the recommendations. I'm sure they will help.
- Be honest, be respectful and do your best... and have fun!

I would close this with the obligatory "Happy Hunting" but, nah... Just let it suffice to say, I hope your efforts are VERY successful!

Oh yeah, I forgot my usual disclaimer... "This document is how "we" at the GHRS are doing things and what has worked for us. It does not represent the ONLY way of doing things nor does it represent the way other groups and researchers do their job. It is presented for you to read and possibly use (part or all of) for your own studies. Again, we (the GHRS) are CERTAINLY NOT the "end all of be alls" in ghost research so please, look around at other's work and decide what works best for you."

Matthew Didier

UPDATE January 15th, 2005: *Article about "White Noise" collection...*

In response to those using a TV, radio or other item to achieve "white noise" to then attempt to grab EVPs from this static, I posted this (below) on our message board...

The intrinsic problem with using a TV, radio or any electrical device to generate "white noise" is that NOTHING is RF (radio frequency) shielded perfectly... well, at least, not without spending a WHACKLOAD of money to literally re-do the walls of a spot with shielding, then ALSO shield the current coming into the devices then shield the devices themselves.... and all cables...

ONLY THEN could you have true RF shielding and could 100% rule out any interference from a radio, television or even TRUE cellular signal... (not "digital", but true "cellular"... it's a misnomer to refer to a digital phone as a "cell phone".)

What makes "me" an expert on this???

Well...

Back in the bad old days of computers, we used to have to "add" an RF shields around video cards and modems... this was because the other components would interfere with them. Remember your old computer case? Remember how it weighed about 700lbs? That was because the case was "shielded".

At the time, I was studying ways to lessen interference... guess what? We found NOTHING worked and eventually computer cases started being made thinner and lighter and video cards and modems stopped being separately shielded... Error correction "firmware" was added instead.

In doubt still? Ask anyone with a HAM radio... if it's near a TV or radio... cordless phone... they will tell you it "bleeds" badly... on any station on any frequency. Heck, back in the day, you COULDN'T run a HAM set in the same room as a computer!

If the signal is near enough and/or strong enough, no matter what the frequency that the electronic device is set to and no matter if you've "made sure" you didn't hear any "bleed through" for an indeterminate length of time, you STILL could not perfectly guarantee that a signal did NOT bleed though. That signal COULD be from those "two-way radios" that are so popular nowadays, cell phones and whatever... someone walks past the site and WHAMMO! you got a bleed...

Even "in the middle of nowhere", again, ask a HAM operator... Signal gets boosted for any reason and boom! Bleed! Even in outter Shwabovia!

...and these bleed can last minutes... or seconds... depending on the source, medium and power of the signal.

Lastly, radio and television signals CAN and WILL go through "electrical current". Again, modern devices "error correct" for this, but in the case of straining through "white noise", to NOT hear a voice or sound would be odd.

Then there's the whole concept of "white noise". Ask a keyboardist what makes those wonderful sounds emanate from the synthesiser... Guess what? It's white noise "tweaked" by messing with the registers of the tones.

The long and the short of it is, "White noise generator enhanced EVPs" especially ones that used a TV or radio, are completely flawed ways of gathering EVP phenomena... That's just a fact... and yet another "damned inconvenient" one too.

One site (who will remain nameless... but is still around and "large as ever" in the states) had a message board and when they suggested this method of EVP collection, I did chime in and mentioned the horrendous issues with RF bleed through... As always, I wasn't answered, I was branded a "skeptic" (read: non-believer... as I am an admitted sceptic... I do need to have better evidence to put my entire faith in anything... but to them, "skeptic" = "Non-Believer/Out to Ruin Our Fun") and the thread, notes and information eventually (quickly) were deleted... Darn my inconvenient facts!

Like I said, to those thinking about this method, PLEASE ask a HAM radio operator, an old computer technician and/or a radio engineer... They will back me up.

LAST NOTE: There has been GOOD success without using "extra tools" with EVP... Why did anyone ASSUME we needed to "enhance" this... especially without FULL scientific or even logical evaluation???

Article: A Look at Ghosts and History

Ghost Research and Historical Significance

Authored by Matthew Didier and Sue Darroch

Could we, as witnesses, be so caught up in an effort to explain ghostly phenomena that we attach a historical persona to these events in order for it to make sense to us?

Research shows that the answer to this question is: Yes.

To quote author Theo Brown's book, [Devon Ghosts](#), (a study of ghosts in that part of England)...

"As a recent BBC talk put it, most English ghosts are 'episodic'; the more detailed the supposed history, the less likely it is to be genuine, and they follow conventional patterns..."

That is to say, that the more someone digs for a history, the more the activity is likely to start matching that particular history, and the more likely people are apt to attribute the phenomena to it - even if the phenomena does not exactly match.

Case in point...

Look at a "standard haunted house" story that you may have heard. The phenomena are limited to what we would term "light poltergeist activity," basic small items moving about by themselves, and maybe some phantom footsteps. The witness, using methods of historical research, looks into the history and finds a "person" whom seems to have a good reason to "haunt" the place. Ergo: it is this person, regardless, that is now haunting and we will attempt to look for convenient 'clues' that further promotes this hypothesis - even though it may have nothing to do with that person in actuality.

A good rule of thumb for the investigator/researcher to apply would be; Correlation does not equal causation.

Yet another example of where a historical persona has been falsely applied to a reported "haunt" is a case that occurred in New Brunswick, Canada. It involves the property of an old Loyalist family and a favored slave (brought up from the States during the flight to Royalist Canada from then Revolutionary America). Apparently the slave was so beloved by his owners that he was invited to live on their property in his own cottage after his "retirement" as a free man. When he grew old and infirm he was convalesced in the main house by his former 'owners' and passed away in the home.

Many decades later new owners began to experience poltergeist phenomena in the home. Historical research is conducted and everyone now attributes the haunting to the slave who has been dubbed "Black Pete". This appears to be logical to those involved as the activity is mostly reported in the area of the home where the former slave had died.

But, just to prove there's always a monkey wrench to throw into any good story, finally an apparition is seen. An apparition so "life like" that it's mistaken (as many apparitions are) as a solid person... and guess what? It's a Caucasian fellow wearing "nautical attire".

This apparition whom doesn't appear to factor into the history of the home itself is seen by yet another witness later on - same description, different location of the house.

So, is this a second "ghost" or is this the fellow that was doing things that got pinned on "Black Pete"?

The answer to the above question is that in all likelihood we will never know with any degree of certainty. However, the evidence does not support the hypothesis of "Black Pete."

How many times have we, as ghost enthusiasts, read or heard a report that starts with the history and then moves into the phenomena? Maybe we should be working the other way and even then, very, very, carefully and with a sceptical eye.

Another thing is that when you really think about it... We often use history as a crutch in some situations. When people can't find a "reason" for the ghost in their house, they then expand their historical research to include the land it's on... then the area of the home... the long and the short of it is, at some point, they'll find a "historical person" to attach to the phenomena... and even then, if that fails, they'll fall back on pre-history and attach the phenomena to a native encampment or something like this.

Should we do this? Of course not! Not only is it bad science, but it is also bad history.

In our eyes, the only time history must factor into a report or proper data collection of a haunted site is when there is, (before looking into the history) some sort of phenomena that does seem to be "going through the motions" that can be readily recognized as belonging to a historical figure. This can be defined as either an apparition with clear features and clothing or perhaps poltergeist phenomena that follows a distinct pattern - something like - cupboard door opens, sounds of sweeping, cupboard door closes all around 6:30pm.

Even then, a good researcher must be extremely cautious lest we start saying "Well, that phenomena doesn't seem to be related to 'X' person, but maybe this time, 'X' person was trying to do this!"

This article was not written to imply that historical data gathering is completely irrelevant in regards to ghost and hauntings research. We do not believe that we can or should discount any history of any given site. However we must look through that data as clinically and as objectively as possible when presenting a report. Not only will we maintain our academic integrity by doing such, but we will also eliminate a possible disservice to the study of these phenomena as a whole.

Article/Original Course (2001/2002) Document: Method/Sceptics/Snobs/Make Work

Possible Paranormal Investigative Method...

While working away on various papers and such this past year (2002), we noticed that the "Scientific Method" cannot, in most situations, be applied to areas of the paranormal.

As everyone remembers, the good ol' scientific method consists of the following...

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Question: What question are you trying to answer and why?

Hypothesis: What I think is the possible answer for said question.

Experiment: What do/did I do to see if my hypothesis is correct?

Observation: What did my experiment yield in the way of an answer?

Conclusion: Was my hypothesis correct according to my experiment?

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Problem is, that in the paranormal, "Observation" factors in right away.

You COULD say a place LOOKS haunted and therefore...

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Question: Is "X" Place Haunted?

Hypothesis: I think "X" Place is Haunted.

Experiment: Investigate "X" Place or Try to dig out witness testimony of "X" place.

Observation: Did my investigation yield something? Did I find witness testimony?

Conclusion: "X" Place is haunted or not because...

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Doesn't sound TOO bad except...

What is your criteria for "haunted"? Where do you draw the line as far as what is or isn't on your bill of investigation? Imagine this, having to investigate EVERY structure and site to obtain proper identification!!! All I can say is honestly, you'd never be able to do it in your lifetime.

So, how DO we do it???

Well, as stated, you wait for witness testimony FIRST. That means, OBSERVATION has happened first. Confusing, isn't it?

Not really.

This is why the GHRS adopted the "Paranormal Investigative Method." Since yes, "science" does factor in but overall, the "scientific method" (Hmmm... is this why CSICOP calls it the "scientific model?") does not work too well in with a lot of the areas of ghost investigation, we've tooled a method that should lead to simple and realistic results and work... here's how it breaks down...

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OBSERVATION: Witness testimony or interviews with people that have experienced some phenomena at "X" place or point.

INVESTIGATION: Objective on site investigation, historical research (does the phenomena match something within the history of the site?) and data collection in general.

HYPOTHESIS: Not necessarily "positive" or "negative". Your hypothesis could range from "This could be a case of an urban legend" to "The ghost seems to be doing or acting like 'X' person from the site's history" or who knows what.

ELIMINATION: This is where you take the data you have collected and compare it to your hypothesis. Also, this is your chance to take a hard look at your witness testimony. Keep in mind, every witness is different... To some people, having the family couch move rapidly across the floor and bang into an opposing wall is nothing. To others, it's the end of the world. Also, is this "first hand" information or the report from a friend of a friend...? Carefully and with an open mind, try to sort the testimony to eliminate any issues and also eliminate possible "natural" causes or even eliminate possible "ghosts"... I mean, if your hypothesis is that a grandmother is "haunting" but the lion's share of reports are about a big, burly man... It's a safe bet that Granny's off the menu... but you never know and ALL data should be collected!

RESEARCH: So now, you've eliminated some ideas and hopefully strengthened others. You look into the most LIKELY cause(s)/idea(s) that the above has given you and do a little extra research. Can you completely discount the "wind" for the noise that was reported? Did Granny have a son that was very protective? A little extra research should help answer these questions. Also, look for "ties" to the phenomena. Who has seen it? What is there relation with each other and the phenomena?

CONCLUSION(S): First off, there is NO such thing as a "closed case" unless you have completely (and with the documented evidence that you have collected) debunked the stories and reports or proven that "ghosts" do exist overall... and that proof had better be more than substantial and stand up to the highest scrutiny! You can finish a case as far as your present situation allows but remember, someone else may come along and figure something else out OR a new piece of equipment might be just the ticket OR... well, you get the idea. This is just the conclusion of your present investigation.

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So, a solid method but does it answer EVERY type of question? Nope! Does an investigation that yields negative results mean more or less work that shouldn't be looked at? Not at all!

ANY proper investigation or research is worth it's weight in gold as even though "X" investigation may have run dry, the information learned there might be invaluable to "Y" investigation.

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"Know Your Enemy" or why keeping up with the "so-called-sceptics" is a good idea...

Perfect example... When looking into the historical relevance and findings of people using EMF detectors, I found that the only solid study that absolutely links EMF and the paranormal was a debunker. Granted, Dr. Persinger's work is good and thorough but he proved (in a good, scientific lab study) that high levels of electro magnetic fields cause hallucinations. This means (if you think about it) all those folks running about woo-hooing over EMF jumps at haunted locations are actually NOT necessarily proving ghosts produce EM fields BUT could (and more or less are) proving that indeed, the debunker is right.

Knowing little tidbits like this could save you from getting the "so-called-sceptics" (sceptdebunkers) on your butt. Before proceeding with any idea or thought, research it not only from the "ghostly" point of view but from the "debunker" point of view too. It sounds VERY negative but being your own best watchdog will save you time and arguments later on.

So, don't read only "ghost" books and surf to only "ghost" websites, take the time to look in on our friends the "Sceptics" (sceptdebunkers) and see what they have to say lately.

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History & Paranormal Snobs

"I know more about [blank] than YOU do so don't bug me!"

You run into this attitude more than one might think. I've always said kindness does help and courtesy is important but sometimes, contacts and other's won't be so kind and courteous to you.

In the historical "camps", historians and site managers and workers can sometimes seem to have little time for people that state historical boo-boos.

You: "During the Rebellions of 1837, was this house involved with anything that pertains to back then?"

Guide (or whomever): "Well, this house was built in 1850 so I somehow doubt it!"

It happens! Best way to recover...

You: "Oh, I'm sorry... I was lead to believe that it was. I'd heard [fill in factoid here] so I guess there's no truth to this, correct?"

...or...

You: "I'm sorry. Was there a structure previously here? Legend has it that [fill in factoid here] and if I have the wrong spot, I do apologise."

Usually, when you let them know that you are acknowledging that their knowledge is (or at least, should be) much better than yours, they will ease off and fill you in.

In the paranormal "camps", so-called 'experts' really tweak me off! I mean, think about it... You are an EXPERT in the UNKNOWN!?! It's UNKNOWN!!! How can you possibly be an expert!?!

First rule of a GOOD paranormal researcher is realizing that all information or thought that isn't 100% valid historical reference or proven outright is CONJECTURE ONLY. It is opinion and that's it. Granted, an opinion CAN be based on sound research but until PROVEN, it's only an opinion.

Case in point: The expert says "Ghosts are the spirits of the dead."

Are they? How do you know FOR SURE? How can you convince someone... especially a sceptdebunker?

A much BETTER statement would be "I believe that ghosts are the spirits of the dead."

I get very riled up when the "experts" make bold statements. I have my beliefs, you have yours but unless you have irrefutable evidence, it's just that! Beliefs! Keep this in mind...

Why I bring this up is because at our 2002 Anniversary "do" at Todmorden Mills, I made the statement: "In my opinion, and it's only an opinion and people do and will argue with me, children are NOT more psychic than adults, just less likely to 'write off' occurrences and things than we "trained" adults will. They WILL mention the 'strange man' sitting nearby on a bench even if they only caught a glimpse... We as adults will catch the glimpse, if he 'vanishes' right away, we rub our eyes, think it's a trick of the light and move on without a further thought."

NOW, this is AN OPINION. I don't KNOW for sure if it's accurate and I don't pretend to YET this statement really irritated an "expert" who not only couldn't resist trying to argue with me until they left the site BUT they stated, categorically, that children ARE more psychic.

Had I the will or the time, TRUST me, I would have said "What is your basis for this?" and a very circular argument would have ensued. Worse yet, I wouldn't really be arguing too much as I admit this is an OPINION and I'm NOT trying to ram it down anyone's throat yet this is what this "expert" was trying to do. Simply I was WRONG and they were RIGHT... about something that has not been proven either way to anyone's satisfaction.

There's nothing you can do with these "experts" but smile and nod and if you feel like it, ask them to validate their ideas but remember, you MUST be ready to validate your own too but as a good researcher, you should never say ANYTHING is WRONG or IMPOSSIBLE.

...but "unlikely" or "improbable" do in a pinch. (Okay, I'm grinning.)

Face facts, ALL theories are possible BUT as good researchers, we must remain OBJECTIVE!

There are no TRUE "Paranormal Phenomena Experts" because if there were, it really wouldn't be considered the "Unknown".

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Make Work Projects

As stated time and time again, we (the GHRs) are NOT sitting on dozens of great investigations waiting to happen... Far from it! But this has been covered already.

A good researcher should be able to start projects without too much help though so if the "bug bites" and you need to get going on a good project, you can always self start!

NOW, the only people that should approach OTHER people saying "I'm with the GHRs!" (or Ontarioghosts or Torontoghosts) are those folks that have taken this course and passed the exam and are listed on our "About Us" page (although why you'd want to approach with this is a darned good question!) but that being said, there's no reason why you cannot go to a "likely" location or a rumoured place and do a little leg work of your own.

Perfect example... One weekend, you're bored and want to get in some "field" experience. Grab your camera and whatever else and head to a local historic home or museum. Do the 'normal' tour and then, when it's appropriate (i.e.: not when fifteen people are listening to you and the guide... unless the guide mentions it first) say something like "Wow! This place is amazing! What a great atmosphere! I have an interest in things like this... Has anyone gotten 'creeped out' or something here because of it's age or atmosphere?"

Chances are, IF the guide or whoever has any information, they MIGHT tell you at that point.

Also, don't assume just because someplace has been "done to death" that it's not worthy of a re-visit. As stated above, there's really no such thing as a "closed case" unless thoroughly debunked or proven without a shadow of a doubt. Go on your own and do your own investigation. Get your own "feeling" for the spot. Collect your own data.

On these lines, how about a research concept?

For example, why not attempt some good ol' fashioned research on EVPs?

Our ongoing EVP experiment is looking into successful capturing of anomalous noises with a human "agent" vs. the abandon and retrieve method. We're doing both when we can.

First, we're going in with a minimum of two people (three preferred) who take out the recorder and ask a series of "set" questions leaving spaces for 'invisible' responses. The two (or three) people monitor for each other and background noises corrupting the data. Then, three extra "site specific" questions are asked (things like "Have you ever shut the door on the wall over there on someone?"). Finally, we abandon the recorder and begin our usual technique of capturing noises/voices/sounds.

After a time, this will allow us to say WHICH of these two methods gives the best results... which, granted, will not stop us using either method but is interesting collecting none the less.

Another study underway is the relationship between ghost reports and certain architecture/building materials. Is there one? Are some buildings more prone to ghostly activity because of how or what they're made with?

If a question like this comes your way, look into it.

A non-GHRs person right now is looking into hauntings and natural elements... Granted, I have warned them about history and settlements near water (i.e.: Human's always tend to settle near water first for food and industry therefore more human traffic, more history, more folklore = more hauntings so water could be a tricky subject.

So, next time you're bored... Ask yourself a GOOD question and then research it!

A decent report (in a perfect world) will look at no less than fifty different cases from as many different sources as possible. The more cases and sources, needless to say, the more complete the report. If fifty isn't available, then needless to say, the more information the merrier!

So, no matter what, a GOOD paranormal researcher is, in a way, always working and never completely dormant in thought and action.

Remember, all field work is valid and important... even if the answers lay elsewhere. Your work will help someone else avoid the same pitfalls or issues and because you've backed everything up, your "expertise" will be valid and not conjecture... but still keep an open mind.

Debating something based on your own belief is okay but being able to say "Well, I disagree and when I looked at 'X', 'Y' and 'Z' cases, I found that..." always looks better.

Make the pontificators and sceptdebunkers EARN their keep! Let them know YOU ARE in the field and INVESTIGATING and WORKING and not simply being an armchair "expert"!

Comment: *Spiritual/Religious Comments (Protection?)*

Many of the “how to” manuals and whatnot I’ve read (mostly via the web), include things ranging from “protective spells” to certain prayers to help or protect investigators.

If you feel that you would be happier using this sort of *protection* or *safety measure* (if you will) then that is entirely your decision.

The only note I would like to make about this topic is that this is a personal choice and the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society (as a whole) operate under the individual researcher’s/investigator’s beliefs and margins of comfort. Provided that the data is being collected properly and without the data being skewed, if you feel that you want to do something of a more spiritual nature before or after an investigation, that is your decision and provided you do not force or try to coerce others into your belief system, we see no harm in doing what you feel needs to be done to help you.

Of course, this *must* be done privately and any *blessing* or other *spiritual assistance* to the group or to a witness is not tolerated if you are acting as a part of the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society.

Overall, the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society is not a “spiritual” group and is not claiming any affiliation or favouritism towards any religious or other spiritual philosophy, and again, any “personal” needs or preferences of an individual researcher or investigator is up to that person alone and we request that these personal opinions/thoughts/beliefs stay private.

Also, the Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society, as a group, does its best to respect the beliefs and philosophies of all the people it is working with and/or for but, as a unit, does not encourage or “preach” any sort of systems of philosophies or spiritual aspects and concentrates solely on scientific and historical data collection at hand.

Hence as a rule, we don’t offer or recommend any prayers, mantras, or the like as it is not our main objective and is not something that all the members subscribe.

Article: *Ghost Classifications (For Data Collection)*

A combined effort from ParaResearchers and The Ghosts and Hauntings Research Society

GENERAL GHOST TYPES

Historical Repeater (HR)	A 'ghost' that seems to be simply repeating a task or event the person the 'ghost' represents would have or did do.
Sentient Spirit (SG)	A 'ghost' that seems to be aware of it's current surroundings and the changes that have occurred since the passing of the person the 'ghost' represents.
Goal Oriented Spirit (GOS)	A 'ghost' that seems to be trying to complete a goal after the person who the 'ghost' represents has passed such as guarding something or 'seeking' some sort of closure to a situation.
Doppelganger (Dxx)	The ghost of a living person. Someone who has not passed on. Researchers must note the following if looking into a doppelganger... Living Person - No Reason For "Haunting" Obvious. (DKI) Living Person - Crisis Apparition (near death or in trouble) (DCA)

NUMBER OF SUSPECTED 'ENTITIES'

Using witness testimony, how many 'ghosts' might be at this site?

Single 'Ghost' (G1)	One 'person' or entity is suspected of being responsible for the reports of ghostly phenomena.
Multiple 'Ghosts' Two through Five (G2)	A few 'people' or entities are suspected of being responsible for the reports of ghostly phenomena.
Many 'Ghosts' Five Plus (G3)	Many 'people' or entities are suspected of being responsible for the reports of ghostly phenomena.

'REASONS' OR 'AGENTS' FOR HAUNTING

Is someone or some event more likely to bring out the 'ghost'?

Single Human Agent (HA1)	One person seems to be the focal point for the 'ghost' or haunting. Explanation MUST be provided by the researcher in a report of this type.
Human Agent(s) (HA2)	A person (or people) need to do something or be somewhere to cause the ghostly phenomena. (Example: Opening the door at night causes it to slam shut on it's own but if the door is closed, no reported activity.)
Anniversary or Time Related (TRG)	The phenomena seems to be tied to a time or date of some significance.
No Special Reason for Ghostly Phenomena (GHB)	The hauntings do not seem to have any date, time or 'living people' addition to the environment for the phenomena's events.

NUMBER OF WITNESSES

One Witness - Non-Researcher (W-1C1)	Single person has seen this phenomena and is reporting it for the first time.
Multiple Witnesses - Non-Researchers (W-2C1)	More than one person has seen this phenomena and they are reporting it for the first time.
Single Witness - Known Haunt - Previously Reported - Non-Researcher (W-1C2)	Single person is reporting an experience for a place or situation previously published or looked into by ourselves or another 'ghost' group, author or researcher.
Multiple Witnesses - Known Haunt - Previously Reported - Non-Researcher (W-2C2)	More than one person is reporting an experience for a place or situation previously published or looked into by ourselves or another 'ghost' group, author or researcher.
Single Witness - Researcher (W-1R)	A report of an experience from a known 'ghost researcher'.
Multiple Witness - Researchers (W-2R)	A report of an experience from more than one 'ghost researcher'.
Multiple Witnesses (Mix) - Known Haunt (W-2KH)	A report from a mix of people about a 'known haunt'.
Multiple Witnesses (Mix) - Previously Unknown Haunt (W-2UH)	A report from a mix of people about a new site with new reported phenomena.

ACCORDING TO WITNESSES - 'SENSITIVITY' NEEDED TO EXPERIENCE PHENOMENA

Would this be considered 'obvious' and happens 'frequently' or is it only apparent to some people?

Note: Using our statistics and experiences, if the site or person experiences something every 48 hours, it is "frequent". If it's once a week or month, it's "moderate". Once a year or longer is "infrequent".

Low Sensitivity (PSI-1x)	The phenomena is very obvious when it occurs. Add a (2) to the code if the phenomena is experienced "frequently", add a (1) if it is experienced "moderately" and a (0) if the phenomena is not experienced on "infrequently".
Moderate Sensitivity (PSI-2x)	The phenomena is fairly obvious when it occurs but only some witnesses experience it whereas some who have tried have not. Add a (2) to the code if the phenomena is experienced "frequently", add a (1) if it is experienced "moderately" and a (0) if the phenomena is not experienced on "infrequently".
High Sensitivity (PSI-3x)	The phenomena is not obvious when it occurs very few witnesses experience it whereas most who have tried haven't. Add a (2) to the code if the phenomena is experienced "frequently", add a (1) if it is experienced "moderately" and a (0) if the phenomena is not experienced on "infrequently".

POLTERGEIST

Noises or movement attributed to 'ghostly' phenomena as opposed to anything else.

Levels of Poltergeist Activity

Level 1 (P1)	Light footsteps, quiet knocks, quiet breathing
Level 2 (P2)	Heavy footsteps, moderate movement detected (door swinging open lightly, curtains moving without a breeze, etc.), quiet voice(s), repetitive knocking, small items 'vanish' to re-appear later in odd places
Level 3 (P3)	Heavy repetitive footsteps, obvious movement detected (doors or windows opening and closing fully), discernable voice(s), loud and repetitive knockings, electrical equipment/appliances operating without human intervention, small items being shifted in view of witnesses without a human agent
Level 4 (P4)	Very heavy footsteps, obvious movement in front of witnesses multiple times, loud voices or loud 'human' vocal noises, small items being thrown or moved with force
Level 5 (P5)	Very loud repeated footsteps, large and small items being moved or thrown with extreme force without human agent, extremely loud voices or 'human' vocal noises, extremely loud banging or noises attributed to the 'ghost', shaking or violent motion of the area of the 'haunting' like a seismic event (without an actual seismic event recorded by authorities and tests for vibrations from other sources proven negative).

APPARITIONS

A 'seen' entity. Visual phenomena attributed to a 'ghost'.

Full Body (FBA)	A full 'human' (or animal) image. Seen as a full person or body.
Partial Body (PBA)	Part of a body. The same as seeing a leg or an arm only or the traditional "headless" ghost. When reporting these instances, the researcher should mention what part(s) was seen or perceived.
Free Form (FFx)	<p>Shapeless. An unexplained ball of light or something else. The researcher must break this down into the following "shape" categories...</p> <p>Ball (FFB) - Mist (FFM) - Square (FFS) - Changing (FFC) - Other (FFO)</p> <p>A researcher using the FFC and FFO should give a brief description of shape(s) as best as possible in their report</p>

PERCEIVED PHENOMENA

"Feelings" or "messages" people report relating to supposed ghostly phenomena.

Stomach Upset - Nervousness (S1)	The feeling of vertigo. The feeling of dread or nervous tension without apparent rational explanation.
Being Watched - Not Alone (S2)	The feeling of being observed or of another entity or person in the room without rational explanation.
Receiving Message - Dreamstate (S3)	Where there appears to be some sort of visitation by the 'ghost' or entity in the person dreams. (Can be "daydreams" as well)
High Energy - 'Static' (S4)	A feeling of high energy like static for no apparent rational reason.
Depression - Sadness (S5)	Sudden inexplicable feelings of depression and/or sadness attributed to the site or the 'ghost'.
Anger - Fighting (S6)	Sudden inexplicable feelings of anger and/or aggression attributed to the site or the 'ghost'.
Joy - Giddiness (S7)	Sudden inexplicable feelings of happiness, contentedness or joy attributed to the site or the 'ghost'.
Using above - High emotional changes (Sx!)	If the above applies and it's impacting a person to the level of changing their usual mood or personality (either negatively or positively) that seemingly can not be attributed to a 'natural' change of environment. A researcher MUST include an exclamation mark (!) to the end of code designation with a description of "who" and "what" is happening that is being attributed to the 'ghost' by the witnesses.

TEMPERATURE/WEATHER/HUMIDITY/WATER

If the ghostly phenomena has an effect listed below, please use the below codes...

Water Phenomena - Light (WP-L)	Moisture, 'wet spots', water marks appear without apparent rational explanation.
Water Phenomena - Heavy (WP-H)	Heavy wet spots, puddles appear without apparent rational explanation.
Liquid Phenomena (LP)	Non-water liquid phenomena. Used in conjunction with the above.
Temperature Changes - Hot (TC-Hxx)	<p>"Hot Spots" or places where the temperature has risen for no apparent rational reason.</p> <p>Add to the code the following...</p> <p>For "long time" or "long experienced" moments, add (L) For "short time" or "quick experienced" moments, add (S)</p> <p>For what is perceived to be radical temperature changes, add (H) For what is perceived to be minor temperature changes, add (L)</p> <p>So, a "Hot Spot" that lasted a 'long time' and was quite hot would be (TC-HLH) Conversely, one that lasted a 'short time' and was not too hot would be (TC-HSL)</p>
Temperature Changes - Cold (TC-Cxx)	<p>"Cold Spots" or places where the temperature has dropped for no apparent rational reason.</p> <p>Add to the code the following...</p> <p>For "long time" or "long experienced" moments, add (L) For "short time" or "quick experienced" moments, add (S)</p> <p>For what is perceived to be radical temperature changes, add (H) For what is perceived to be minor temperature changes, add (L)</p> <p>So, a "Cold Spot" that lasted a 'long time' and was quite chilly would be (TC-CLH) Conversely, one that lasted a 'short time' and was not too cold would be (TC-CSL)</p>
Air Pressure Change (AP-x)	<p>Sudden noticeable air pressure changes without apparent rational explanation.</p> <p>Add a (H) to the code for an increase in pressure or an (L) for a lowered air pressure.</p>
Apparent Physical Static Discharge (PSD)	Almost like lightning or at least a LARGE amount of physical static discharging (causing shock or even sparks) with no apparent rational explanation.

PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES

If the 'ghost' has touched someone and the levels thereof...

"Brush Past" or Breeze Level One (T1)	If the 'ghost' has caused breezes or has been said to 'brush past' the person.
Touch, Gentle Level 2 (T2)	The person has felt a gentle touch or gentle brushing. This would also include 'pressures' applied to beds or furniture the witness is on.
Touch, Firm Level 3 (T3)	The witness has experienced a 'shove' or a 'thump' with some force near them.
Touch, Hard Level 4 (T4)	The witness has been hit, punched, pinched or pushed by the entity. May leave bruising or 'physical' trauma.
Touch, Violent Level 5 (T5)	The witness has been assaulted by the entity. Punched very hard or sexually assaulted. Will leave bruising or 'physical' trauma.

ENVIRONMENTAL PHYSICAL PHENOMENA

What the 'ghost' might leave behind...

Level One Phenomena (PE1)	Picture skewed, item on shelf now on floor, things that might be attributed to natural seismic phenomena or to a (P2) or (P3) poltergeist situation.
Level Two Phenomena (PE2)	Phantom Foot prints, hand prints... usual "human marks" but with no apparent human agent.
Level Three Phenomena (PE3)	Things disturbed seemingly in an attempt to communicate a message. Showing signs of being an (SG) or (GOS) by using physical items to get the message across.

WITNESS CAPTURED DATA

<p>'Psychical' or 'Psychic' information (WD-Px)</p>	<p>The witness has attempted to utilize a psychic or psychical communicating device and has data that this method has gathered.</p> <p>Please add the following to this to clarify the situation...</p> <p>(1) for a psychic or sensitive (Please note if this was a trance medium or clairvoyant/clairaudient psychic). (2) for 'automatic writing' or a similar device. (3) for an Ouija Board, Pendulum, or Angel Board. (4) for another method. Researchers MUST explain what method was used in a (WP-P4)</p>
<p>Voice or Sound (WD-SND)</p>	<p>The witness has attempted and apparently has captured an EVP (Electronic Voice Phenomena) or at least an anomalous sound without apparent rational explanation.</p>
<p>Videotape or Film (Motion) (WD-FLM)</p>	<p>The witness has employed a motion camera (video, webcam with motion or motion-film camera) and has captured something.</p>
<p>Still Image (WD-STL)</p>	<p>The witness has images or photos of the 'ghost' with a still camera (digital or 'film').</p>

EASE OF INITIAL, REPEATED OR RETURN INVESTIGATION

How happy are the current owners/tenants of the site with the possibility of ghost investigation?

Easy Access (OS-1)	The present owners/residents of the site are open to a repeat investigation with no issues or the site is public and safe access and findings should be easily presentable regardless.
Moderate Access (OS-2)	The current owners/residents are 'okay' with the idea of investigation but are not very accommodating or the area has some restricted access to the public. Permission might be tricky to obtain and findings may be difficult to present without restrictions if an on-site investigation is permitted.
Difficult Access (OS-3)	The current owners/residents are not thrilled with the idea of investigations or investigators or the area has severely restricted access to the public or is only available through special permissions which are not easy to get. Findings will be next to impossible to present if an on-site investigation actually happens.
Extremely Difficult Access (OS-4)	The current owners/residents do not acknowledge the 'ghost stories' or deny them outright and will not allow any type of investigations. On-site investigations will be denied. Public access is nil.
Non-Access or Un-investigateable (OS-5)	The current owners/residents are not reachable on any level. No investigation will ever be probable or really possible. Findings either are or should be omitted from all but the offline databases (never presented online). This rating should also be used for reports that by dint of other criteria of investigation (such as 'human elements' like a recent suicide) or another good moral reason to tell other investigators to back off "this" report.

Sample Form: *Team Release Form*

Nota Bella:

These forms are "samples" and may/should be modified to suit each team's individual needs.

The form below is useful as a "template" of the form you should have the members of your team sign before an investigation. It ensures that security and privacy to the witness is ensured.

DATE: _____

I, _____, understand that all information pertaining to and gathered during the investigation of _____ will be kept in the strictest confidence and that I will not use this information for my own uses or any other organization's purposes nor will I discuss the events/information gathered with representatives of any media without first consulting and getting written authorization from _____.

I also understand that I am responsible for my own belongings and safety and realize that any loss or injury that occurs is my own fault and will not hold (team lead's name) _____ or the GHRS responsible.

I have read the above and understand fully my obligations.

_____ - Investigator's/Researcher's Signature

_____ - Team Leader's Signature

Sample Form: *Data Collection (On-Site) Form*

Nota Bella:

These forms are "samples" and may/should be modified to suit each team's individual needs.

The form below is a "basic" on-site investigation form for your team to complete/fill out while on an investigation. There should be one of these forms given to each investigator for each location, room, or area covered during an investigation.

INVESTIGATION: _____ **Date:** _____

Site Location: _____

Investigator Name: _____ Team Lead: _____

Working With - Partner(s) or Team Members in the Vicinity of this Location:

Location/Room/Space Covered: _____

Time of Investigation of this Space: _____

Type of Equipment Used: _____

Type of Method (if any) Used with Equipment: _____

Notes/Feelings/Experiences:

(use back of sheet if needed)

Were you aware of reported phenomena from the past in this area? [] Yes [] No

Were you aware of any of the historical significance of this area? [] Yes [] No

Were you working with (or as) a "psychic" or "sensitive" in this area? [] Yes [] No

Do you feel this area requires more study/investigation? [] Yes [] No

If yes to the above, why? _____

Did you have a non-researcher with you at the time of your work? [] Yes [] No

If being used, please state and classification data for any phenomena witnessed below...

Did you find this guidebook useful?

If you've read this and gleaned anything from it and wish to show your support, you can do one of two things...

#1: Using a PayPal account, gifts to PSICAN are greatly appreciated and accepted! You can go to <http://www.psican.org/donations/> and make a small (any amount) deposit to our own accounts.

#2: Using PayPal, if you *HATED* the course and wish our director, the author, would find another hobby to take up his time, go to <http://doubledeckerbuses.org/> and scroll to the bottom of the page and give a gift to "DoubleDeckerBuses.Org" which is his other 'hobby' aside from ghosts and hauntings. Every penny there helps him (personally) look into getting and preserving one of these vehicles which will, indeed, take his time up and get him away from ghostly studies for a while! (See <http://www.doubledeckerbuses.org/about.htm> for the whole story on his other curious obsession.)

Regardless, either would be of great assistance and greatly appreciated... To quote Jim Moseley from "*Saucer Smear*", **We guarantee that every dollar you donate to [our director's causes] will forever remain out of the hands of terrorists, anarchists, Free Thinkers, and other Undesirables! Every cent of your Donation will go to our own personal use, for necessities such as Scotch, Gin, Rum, and Coca-Cola [and double-decker buses].**

Well, donations to the Toronto and Ontario GHRS will go towards upkeep of the servers and equipment as well as funding experiments and some on-site work... Donations to DoubleDeckerBuses.Org will be used for personal things... Hopefully for the author's "new toy", if you will...

Thank you for reading this course and, regardless, we do hope it at least gave you some food for thought.
