

PSICAN Document

**Paranormal Studies & Inquiry
Canada:
Ghost Research and Investigation
Course Document**

v2.4

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I'd like to thank the following folks without whose help both this version of the course and the "online" version would not be possible...

First and foremost, I must give a very special thanks to my bastion of sanity and partner in life and in this study, Sue Demeter-St.Clair, 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 and investigator for being in her company. Je t'aime, mon cher!

Without question I have to thank the AMAZING team at Paranormal Studies and Inquiry Canada which have been both an inspiration and major contributors to this document.

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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 Ashley, someone whose been of great help both in the field and there for us often with sage advice. I would be remiss to forget to also thank David LeFort and Joanne Didier for their assistance and advice in the psychical realms.

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 PSICAN at all!**

There are, of course, in these 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 – 2012

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 “experients” 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 is incomplete. At the moment, it will always remain incomplete. Until we (all of us who are interested,) reach a goal of complete understanding and comprehension of these experiences people have that are attributed to ghosts. No one has the perfect answer to these things and won’t unless we either find a quantifiable element to each situation that is thought to be related to things ghostly.

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. The original Canadian GHRs have now become a component of Paranormal Studies and Inquiry Canada (or PSICAN) as we have concentrated more on our home country and opened up possible investigations into other phenomena.

Over time, 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, observation, 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 PSICAN sites and volunteers are different and can espouse differing opinions, but the nice thing is none of us “preach” and we do try to hear all sides of any argument and neutrality in terms of belief and disbelief is quite literally built into our mandate.

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 PSICAN, 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 PSICAN that I respectfully request that should you use any portion of this document in reference of as a whole that you do give PSICAN, Sue Demeter-St.Clair and Matthew Didier proper credit and/ or acknowledgement. Thank you in advance.

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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 physically exist. I'm afraid it's all speculation, hypotheses, and if we're lucky, 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 own 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 and experiences 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 PSICAN try to 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. 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.

- - -

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 investigators and 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 PSICAN use a variation of "groupings" for ghosts gleaned from a book written by a member of the Society for Psychical Research ... pretty much like the "selections" above.

For us, ghosts, or rather, the most common experiences related to 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 a complete classification... and why that can be so complicated, even we rarely use it!)

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 empirical 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 an investigator or 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.

Even amongst "believers", you'll find disagreements on what causes these experiences... like the fact that parapsychologists (who are not really "ghost hunters", despite what Hollywood tries to tell us,) concentrate on psi... or the idea that ghosts are effectively some form of energy a living person is able to broadcast or "send out" into the environment through some form of psychic ability, which manifests itself as a "ghost". Most ghost hunters tend to work within the DPH (or "Dead Person Hypothesis" as coined by Dr. Eric Ouellet,) or that a ghost is that left-over spirit of a formerly living person and is a separate entity unto itself.

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.

QUICK NOTE: *In order to absolutely and without question prove ghosts (in any form) exist to literally everyone's satisfaction; you need to be able to qualify something as a ghost and then quantify it... quite literally, measure it... repeatedly. This is what you absolutely need to do in order to make a pitch-perfect case.*

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

When looking into reports of “ghostly” activity or experiences, or of anything to do with the paranormal, a good PSICAN style researcher/investigator 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 investigative 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.

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.

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 fairly standard stories from places that the "reporters", "witnesses", or "experients" know that had "*things-a-happenin' there*" (phenomena occurring) based on of 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, at PSICAN as of 2012, have heard of no less than fourteen 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 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 fourteen 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/investigator 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 or experiencers 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 experiencer's 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 investigator's/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!'

Sadly, thanks to not only the so-called sceptics (non-believers... usually passionate ones,) who mock experiencers as "woo woos" and other names, when you look at media presenting fictional ghosts, they range from Abbot and Costello meeting a ghost to the more frightening (and thrilling) ghosts of the modern horror film. From Scooby Doo to The Sixth Sense, to many people, ghosts are amusement only... and when you add the mocking of the so-called sceptics, it really adds to what is called "The Giggle Factor". It's this problem that keeps many people from reporting things to investigators and researchers.

- - -

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.

A long while back, I lived 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" are hypothesized 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 may 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 an investigator or 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 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 investigator/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 and investigators 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.

I need to add a note about how this “need to perform” has now been elevated (at the time of this revision,) because of the crop of wanna-be reality-ish television “ghost hunters” who try to emulate their favourite television programmes and para-celebrities by playing up things on YouTube videos in the hopes of being “discovered” or garnering a fan base based on their... intrigue? These cosplayers (*cosplayers* are “costume players”, a term coined to describe people who dress up as favoured fictional characters at comic book conventions and the like,) often try to “add” to the drama of moments (like the shows they’re emulating,) and in so doing, often add greatly to the “giggle factor” with these studies. Unfortunately, as time is going on, more and more we’re hearing how the reality-ish shows were not as “real” as originally reported... and with their fandom adding to this fiction, the damage to the reputation of those legitimately looking into these things can get quite bad in some circles.

Are We Truly Anti-Psychic?

The Ghosts and Hauntings Research Societies and to a degree, even PSICAN 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... which, realistically, by definition is simply a place where people have reported experiencing a ghost. There is no "weight" in terms of what places are "more haunted" or even "haunted" or "not haunted" unless one has either thoroughly debunked the reports or proven that, if nothing else, the reports are a mystery.

I know, picking a haunted location to start in 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? (It never should be.)

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, Roll, Price, Underwood, 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... far less than 1%.

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 I personally know in my home of 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 experients.

No word of a lie here, but according to our statistics at PSICAN, at least 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/experient want from you?

In the witness report, does the person allude to what they're expecting from a visit with you? PSICAN groups (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.psican.org/alpha/clearinghelp01.htm>

In April of 2012, I went through my e-mail thoroughly... I'd sent the above to just under two-thousand, nine-hundred people with exactly nine people saying it was of no help or use. One of those nine insisted that the only help that could be provided was a contact within the hierarchy of their Roman Catholic Diocese. This means, the information at the above link has a (roughly) 99.998% effective rate... and costs nothing for the experient.

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 or investigator 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.

PSICAN groups are documentarians only.

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 overall dynamic of the person submitting the report?

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

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 library filled with video 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 child) did believe in their ghost and maybe, there was something there (psi or 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 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 and send it in to us... 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 in a folkloric sense, but as stated over and over, it may actually not be relevant to the case at hand. A good researcher or investigator, 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.

One case that really shrieks about thinking twice about pinning a history on a ghost is a case in New Brunswick on Canada's East Coast. 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 infirmed 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"?

Who knows... your guess is as good as any, but perhaps attributing the activities to the one person may have been premature... and who knows, perhaps in that determination, people moved along firm in their conviction and another story is now lost to time about this sailor.

Addition: October 2009: Although we most certainly do not expect anyone reading this to have a medical background, (although some might,) there are times when witnesses will tell you things they attribute to ghosts and hauntings that, without question, must be examined by a proper/qualified medical doctor.

For example, we have had one woman contact us claiming their child had not eaten or had anything to drink for literally days, was nauseated, dizzy, and overall very sick. The woman attributed this illness to some sort of "trauma" brought on by a ghost or "worse".

We were able to convince her to take the child to a doctor and have them examined... though initially the suggestion seemed to the woman that we "didn't believe" her... by pointing out that one MUST eliminate the natural before moving to the supernatural... and in this case, it was vital to ensure that the child had a clean bill of health before trying to even find her any help.

Thankfully, this seems to have done the trick.

Therefore, let us remind you that it's vital that when you read a report and note something that needs to be looked into by proper authorities first, (like a doctor,) you do your best to ensure that the witness seeks those avenues first for their own health and well being.

Our number one concern is and always will be the safety, security, and comfort of our witnesses... and sometimes, this means just ensuring they seek medical attention or the like.

How to be an Expert!

I used to be tired of people referring to me as “an expert”... a practice that seems to have stopped... but at one point, it was a name people loved to attach to me.

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 the late 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 day 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 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 Scott Rogo, William Roll, 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 define a “ghost researcher/investigator” as someone who will be spending the rest of their 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 investigator and researcher can bring new things to it.

It is at the investigator's or 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" who claims twenty-one years' experience decrying all other researchers as not doing good work (as, of course, in his own opinion 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 we've taken to calling them, "autodebunkers" or "remotedebunkers". These folks seem more interested in simply yelling "FRAUD!" at claims rather than in "doubting" or "questioning" them. They see it as a waste of time and energy and leading people into ridiculous beliefs and silly backward thoughts.

A few years back, Sue Demeter-St.Clair and Lisa Findlay 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 investigators 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! (Actually, with a little research, the statement "refraction" was correct... but hey, they knew more than the investigators/researchers did!)

The next fellow, after the speech, asked the researchers 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”... especially one that doesn’t match their own paradigm of what’s “real,” 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 the late 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 (now re-named CSI – Committee for Skeptical Inquiry). CSI often tosses the following quote out: “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.”

It’s not a truly fair quote, and is 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.” Remote/Autodebunkers 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 CSI’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 these evangelical non-believers 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 evangelical non-believers will hate you as vehemently as the too-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, it’s not unusual for many (most of the ones I’ve dealt with, at least,) learned (academic minded) researchers of paranormal events and experiences to see most (if not all) “ghostly activity” being based firmly in psi... basically, the manifestation of a living person’s “energy” through some sort of subconscious psychic ability. To be honest, I don’t know if this is a sound cover-all argument... but there are many peer reviewed papers and even experiments to suggest it’s a very worthy idea in terms of what causes ghostly experiences. I don’t (at all) say it’s nonsense, but by the same token I won’t accept it “as is” for a global explanation of things ghostly either... not without perfect evidence to support the hypothesis as a universal answer to ‘ghosts’.(*)

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 CSI articles to "ghostly authors" like the late 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...

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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 loose 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 a bunch of dudes 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 (PSICAN) are not “professional ghost investigators and researchers” as professionalism entails being paid for the work. Via PSICAN, 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 more or less, from Ufologist 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.

* – Thanks to Chris Laursen for a correction to this part... The SPR (Society for Psychical Research) was mentioned as pretty much abandoning any other idea of what causes ghostly experiences – such as the DPH or “Dead Person Hypothesis” as a singular example – for a strictly psi hypothesis of causation. This is incorrect as the SPR as an entity holds no corporate opinions, only it’s members as individuals. My note was based from what I now consider an inadequate amount of data and I apologise for the error.

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 Investigate and 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 Toronto's Historic 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.

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 currently in Canada. 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/experient's 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 old 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

Second rule of ghost investigation on-site: Never go alone! (First is always be ethical in your work! Don't break the laws of the land and don't harm, upset, or bother the people involved or nearby.)

Not only is this for data purposes, but its part of general 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!).

Sorry for that digression... 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 may also need to 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 Nickleback 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 PSICAN 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 (in the flesh) 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 allude 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 without talking to myself (or a team lead) first to avoid that the information 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 Jon 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 PSICAN, “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 (PSICAN) 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 a good thing (obviously) as they are dispassionate observers when used correctly. I used to say that only 35mm (or the like) film cameras should be used as they are not easy to "fake" a ghost photo with and remain undetected as a fake... but sadly, this is dating myself.

Film is now almost impossible to find, and digital is all the rage... so allow me to amend my recommendation to suggesting at least two cameras (a proper camera who's only purpose is photography and is capable of taking decent images in all lighting situations, and another which can be a "smart" gadget like a phone or tablet,) so that comparison images can be seen with two different devices.

Still, be aware that any digital image is extremely easy to modify or "play with" virtually undetected. (The minute an image passes through a DSP or "Digital Signal Processor", it's impossible to prove it was not altered.) Digital images will always be highly questioned which is why two or more devices would be best. It's unlikely both instruments, simultaneously, will have the same images and potential "defects" limiting the chances of a mistake or someone (usually a passionate "non-believer") claiming it's a "hoax".

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

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 with more than one camera device. See if any anomalies show up on both images.

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 using film (if you're lucky enough to still be using it,) I neglected to mention was that when you take a roll 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.

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.



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

The most common cause of orbs is airborne particles caught between the lens and the flash of the camera. Thanks to the work of Dr. Charles Lietzau followed by Steve Parsons using stereo cameras, (a camera with two offset lenses and one flash,) the evidence is more than strong to claim that orb photos should not be taken as "paranormal" in nature by anyone.

If you wish to prove this wrong, we ask you use a stereo camera and take an image that shows the orb in both frames of equal brightness, intensity, and clarity.

Mists can all too easily occur from breath on a cold day to cigarette smoke to steam from hot foods. Unfortunately, this photographic phenomena is too easily "manufactured" that it's difficult if not impossible to accept as paranormal in nature for most serious investigators and researchers.

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.

Also, many people claim seeing faces or shapes in orbs and mists... although this is in the eye of the beholder, please be aware of the common situation called pareidolia. Basically, the human brain is trained to see familiar shapes in sometimes random patterns... like seeing shapes in clouds. Two dots above one dot above three or four dots and we see a face. Though a popular reality-ish television program calls this "matrixing" (which literally means graphing on an X-Y axis mathematically,) the etymology of pareidolia is the correct term and indeed, even they noticed this problem. Often the "faces" and shapes seen in orbs and mists are just that, finding patterns in the random, and as such should be taken with a gentle grain of salt.

Audio Recordings are also great tools for your investigations for the same reasons photographic equipment is useful. A dispassionate “witness” to things.

Again, when I originally wrote this book, digital was not as common as magnetic (or analog,) and recommended for similar reasons (cropping and “faking” are easier for an authority to spot on a magnetic recording than something that’s passed through a DSP,) but times have indeed changed.

As with photographic equipment, audio equipment should be run in tandem with another recorder... even audio with full sound video if possible. If both recorders pick up something anomalous, that would be more than interesting as it’s unlikely it’s the cause of mechanical or “media” flaws or failures. I would caution (as would most respectable investigators/researchers,) that you should avoid any recording filters or digital adjustments beyond standard sound recording... again, to lessen speculation of “tampering”.

Recording can be done in really only two ways. Mobile where the unit is taken with the investigator or researcher, or static where the unit is left in one place during the investigation.

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 PSICAN, are working with three distinct types of EVP capture techniques. One is the “abandon and retrieve” method where the recording devices are quite literally left alone in place that’s as secure as possible to prevent tampering. The second is a controlled “question and response” method of asking pre-determined questions and statements to see if a response is recorded. The third is simply carrying on normal team conversations with the recording being made. This last option, though the most difficult to control and therefore a tiny bit flawed in terms of absolutes, has (so far in 2012) been the most successful for picking up seemingly unexplainable voices, sounds, and even responses.

To be honest, I can say there is mounting evidence to support EVP... but is it ghostly? Is it radio bleed-through? Is it some other form of interference? This is what we’re looking into ourselves as are many others.

As a quick note... Indoor recordings are much simpler as exterior recording is next to impossible. Guaranteeing that there was no ambient noise or sounds is very difficult out of doors.

Do's and Don'ts with Audio Recordings

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, many PSICAN groups own 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.

I personally searched through the collected archives of The Society for Psychical Research, Rhine Research Center, Society for Scientific Exploration, Institut Métapsychique International, Parapsychological Association, Exceptional Human Experiences Network, and the European Journal of Parapsychology... quite literally thousands of journals and notes dating from the mid-to-late nineteenth century until today... and found that before the aforementioned Dr. Persinger's work in the 1980's, I only found one result for EMF... and it wasn't "electro magnetic" stuff, it was about "electro-motive force"... where they looked at the application of electricity to the skin of a hypnotised person to measure it's resistance in terms of muscle stimulation and pain. (It was a look into "faith healing" and other mind-over-body healing properties.)

Granted, in 1973 there was a fictional movie named The Legend of Hell House where a scientist theorizes that if he bursts an EM pulse through a haunted house, it will dispel the ghost. It was written by Richard Matheson, a prolific horror and science fiction writer who was more than likely aware of the work put forward by well known ufologist Jacques Vallée, who, at the time of the writing of this movie, was bringing up the idea that the logical propulsion systems of a UFO would be electro-magnetism... and how that would effectively explain the disorientation of witnesses who then have troubles explaining their experience or remembering precisely.

EMF meters didn't become staples of ghost hunters until the 1984 movie Ghostbusters where Egon Spengler produced something he referred to as a "PK Meter"... and one wonders if it was that, combined with The Legend of Hell House, combined with the fact that EM was being used in legitimate studies of the paranormal to explain that people were hallucinating that led to their use by modern day ghost hunters? If so, one wonders what they are finding... and why?

Please, don't even mention those people using an EM meter as effectively a combination Ouija board and Magic Eight-Ball. Even if we accept the fluctuations of EM during these "sessions" as something truly odd, who's to say the EM isn't being generated by the person asking the question as opposed to an external entity?

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

This said, the "gun-like" infrared and laser thermometers favoured by some ghost hunters are not good as they are not designed to be absolutely accurate. They are designed for taking several temperatures of "hard-to-reach" areas and a medium found. (Think of taking the temperature of the top of a remote electrical pole without the easy ability to bring in a crane or cherry picker.) These items also need a surface as a rule

to "bounce off" from... and it's a big unknown if there is a surface to ghostly things as, again, we've yet to quantify one... or any!

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, trust, 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 investigators (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 (nothing special, just a generic "dollar-store" type,) 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!

Addition: October 23rd, 2009 – Physical Evidence Collection

Recently, thanks mostly to a resurgence of media that looks mostly into demonic cases; many witnesses report things like blood or other fluids being "present" at site. Unless you're a trained medical technician, **never** collect these samples or come into contact with them physically yourself... and although you can entertain having a chemical analysis done of these things, this will cost hundreds of dollars from most labs.

You must look for all other possibilities in these cases...

For example, could the fluid be rusty water? Could it be sewage? Look at the plumbing and see if perhaps leaky pipes are to blame... or even if the roof leaks.

Have you checked the health of all those on the site? Could someone (or even a pet,) produced up the offending fluids?

Remember. This type of thing could be VERY “normal” in origin, but still potentially harmful to your own health (in terms of germs and toxins) so it’s best not to handle them ever... and if a witness demands a thorough examination of a sample, the best thing you can possibly do is look up the nearest trustworthy medical laboratory (through the Yellow Pages, under medical labs,) or even find a contact for them at a respected local university then ask the witness to make the request themselves directly. They can then explain to the lab that they would like an analysis of the fluid. If they are uncomfortable with this, remind them that they need not disclose their views on the origins of the liquid, just that they want a confirmation of its make-up... and don’t forget to remind them that there will most likely be a charge for this through the lab.

This sort of thing can be a slippery slope and is often used by disreputable investigators and “ghost hunters” to bleed money from unsuspecting people... this is why it’s best to let the witness deal with this sort of thing, (ONLY if they demand it,) on their own and simply give them good and solid contact information to help.

The Basic “Kit”

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

Bring extra batteries if possible or a way to charge the ones you have. If you feel you might go through three sets of batteries for your equipment, bring four. If you think you’ll use four memory cards, 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 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 PSICAN is concerned at the present time, 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? Little things like making sure you've used as correct terminology as possible (for example, if you say something was an energy, a sharp-eyed sceptic will point out that if it's an energy, what kind and how did you measure it? Best to say "it felt like some kind of energy".) Is your final document based on your own ideas 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 of the reputable "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 PSICAN looks into a report or undertakes 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 an almost "global" opinion within the more reputable 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!

QUICK NOTE: Remember that anything you publish is up for potential review and critique... and although we try to keep our criticisms constructive, others may not.

Is That Cool? The Safe and Ethical Ghost Researcher/Investigator

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 essential 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 PSICAN, 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/investigator 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, in the past, I have retired to a pub *long after* an investigation is completed and although I have been a teetotaler (personally) for many years, I've not begrudge people on my team in the appropriate time and place, having a cold beer to "blow off a little steam."

One of the most incredible moments I experienced in the field was once working with another group of non-PSICAN "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 RULES OF THIS WORK

1. The safety and security of the witness/experient 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. When presenting things publicly, try to be as precise and correct as possible. Use language and vocabulary that will do credit in all circles who will read it. As mentioned above, avoid saying “matrixing” instead of the more correct word, pareidolia. If you’re not sure of something and using a descriptive word, use “like a” or something to denote this use... so instead of “I felt an energy”, it would be “I felt something like an energy”. Try to know the difference between a theory and a hypothesis.* As Mark Twain once said, the difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and lightning bug.
15. 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.

*- A theory starts off as a hypothesis. A hypothesis is a “best guess” which is then poked, prodded, and experimented on/with to look for holes or problems. If it survives all this scientific examination intact, it becomes a theory. The more a hypothesis survives examination, the stronger the theory... but you need to show good empirical evidence of this process before a hypothesis goes from being an untested hypothesis to a full blown theory. As we have not quantified ghosts as a “thing” scientifically, then all guesses as to what a ghosts “is” is strictly hypothesis... hence “The DPH”... or the “Dead Person Hypothesis” as opposed the “Dead Person Theory”.

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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)	Shapeless. An unexplained ball of light or something else. The researcher must break this down into the following "shape" categories... Ball (FFB) - Mist (FFM) - Square (FFS) - Changing (FFC) - Other (FFO) A researcher using the FFC and FFO should give a brief description of shape(s) as best as possible in their report

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 PSICAN and its related groups 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...

Self Starting – How To Get Going Into The Study!

***THIS ARTICLE** is actually in our "Staff Only" section on the PSICAN message board. It was written ONLY for staff, but if you look through, it's applicable to ANYONE... just remove the bits that are PSICAN/Torontoghosts/Ontarioghosts/ParaResearchers specific! Call this, the SECRET (not a well kept one,) of our success as a site and group!*

Many people hope that by joining one of our groups, they will have something to do every weekend they're free and that, effectively, PSICAN is almost a social network and/or something that they will be involved with all the time... "The Keys to the Haunted House" will be theirs!

Time to be honest, this is not the case at all.

We do get many cases sent in to us, but considering the size of our group and the size of the area we cover, it is almost absolutely essential that our investigators/researchers "self start"... meaning, they have to make their own work happen initially... but it does pay dividends.

What this means in our world is the following nine steps below...

#1: figure out a place (or three) near where you live that already has some existing reports... for instance, if you lived in Kingston, Ontario, then perhaps look into Fort Henry... which we (currently as of October 2009) have bupkiss on the site about, but does have some stories to it... and mighty good one's to boot! You could also find perhaps two other places... perhaps City Hall and the Prince George Hotel just for extras.

#2: First, dig through websites and books... get an idea of what's been reported and why. (Remember, on the cheap, the library and Google are your friends!!!) Arm yourself with the "ghost stories" and legends of the site.

#3: Next, look into those stories and legends... is there a history behind it? What about the "people" who are supposed to be the ghosts? Is there truth to the legends, or do you see discrepancies? (This sounds negative, but bear with me...)

#4: Visit the sites with a tour or visit them as a tourist... Nothing more than paper an pen/pencil... and a camera MAYBE... wander around, listen to the guides/interpreters... let them do their thing. (It's what they're paid for and they need to do their job... and again, their information on the history will be invaluable to your efforts, no doubt!)

#5: At an appropriate juncture, like after a tour... or perhaps when crowds have died away... and DEFINITELY out of the earshot of any kids... ask the guides/interpreters or whatever about the ghost stories.

Need a "script"? Try this...

A place like this, so atmospheric and old, must have it's share of ghost stories... I'm interested in that... the folklore and legends... and the real history... have you heard any stories yourself?

If you get "cut off" with a quick, "No!", just move on and find someone else... oh, and now you can use this with the next person...

Gee, I hope I didn't offend that person... I asked about the ghost stories and I think I might have upset them. I am sorry if I did...

Usually, the apologetic approach will yield a sympathetic ear from this next person and, voila, information!

#6: Once you have the "real" information from the people at the site, compare it to the legends... Again, is there anything worth noting? Have you discovered something new? Does the legend match the history? Are the staff STILL experiencing (or reporting experiences) from the site?

#7: At this point, PLEASE "Write it up!" Yup, what's the legends... what's the real poop... what did you discover... AND CITE SOURCES (of course!) If staff or anyone doesn't want to be identified, simply say, "A person involved with the site" (and don't mention the name or gender if possible...)

Basically, if you REALLY want loads of reports sent to you, CONTENT about a site and the surrounding area is kind of key...

Case in point...

"Gee, I live in Kingston and got spooky boo-ed at Fort Henry! I know! I'll Google it and see if anyone else has! Well! Looky-here, a website DOES have ghostly stories from Fort Henry! I'll send 'em my story... and the story about that park... and the one about that pub... and..."

(Don't believe this? We can vouch... it's true... CONTENT is KING!)

Moving on...

#8: IF (big IF) you have a chance to investigate...

(a)...and none of the PSICAN team can accommodate a request for assistance, DON'T be afraid to go it alone. Assuming you passed the course and the exam, just work with a trusted friend or family member... and for equipment on a first investigation, paper, pen, pencil, flashlight, tape recorder (not COMPLETELY necessary, but nice...) and a cell phone will do you fine.

(b)...the investigation is a bust, it's STILL noteworthy! Write it up and let us know.

#9: DON'T EXPECT TO GET THE KEYS TO THE HAUNTED HOUSE JUST 'CUZ! Like I said, content is key... and self-starting will often get the ball rolling.

*What's miserable is how often people ARE "chomping at the bit" to do things... right until a date and time are set... then it's dreadfully inconvenient. This is understandable, but often it's not *us* that makes the timetable, but a site's management, owners, and caretakers... or witnesses... and that's even if/when they allow us to go "on site". It's this that REALLY makes "being your own boss" all the more important... 'cuz then you can schedule to your timetable when possible.*

So lose the fear! Get out there and, indeed, self-start! You won't be sorry!

Our Legacy & Our Big Secret – From a blog post dated Aug. 23rd, 2008

After a decade of doing this study, I have had more enemies and more people trying to figure out our "angle" than you can possibly believe. What's sad is, as opposed to asking, they just make suppositions...

They assume we're trying to make a fortune from paranormal phenomena... or we're out to "control" everyone... or we want fame... or heaven knows what.

They also tend to place their own "reasons" for why they're interested in things on us... and get mad when they find out it's not why we're here and indeed, their thoughts about our passions are not what they assumed.

People think we've already "decided" on what causes paranormal phenomena... and when we admit that we have no clue, they think we're lying... or covering things up to "hide" our true reason for existence in the study.

They get mad at us because they think we're out to stop others from looking into things because we put "rules" on what we do... or, because they set up a website and haven't received invitations to visit the UFO sighting location - the haunted house - to test the world's greatest psychic, we must be responsible for the lack of communications they have from the outside world.

When we question them... when we read a report or see an article and say, "Hey! that doesn't make sense!" or "Wait a second, do you have evidence for your conclusion?"... they scream, rant, rave, and yes, even call us names.

What's odd is we've received FAR more kudos and congratulations from sceptical groups and people than the "true believers". The former likes us because we admit we don't know why things are happening and we will debunk ourselves and often find good and repeatable evidence for some things... the latter hate us because we're not afraid to debunk ourselves, we won't cave in to faith and belief without evidence, and we do try to keep things very honest about what we find...

Both hate us a little... and sometimes a lot because we do say *We don't know...* which is apparently not acceptable in so many people's books as everything *must* be known.

PSICAN, ParaResearchers, and Toronto/Ontario Ghosts have been around a decent amount of time... and have plenty of content on the sites... and yet, people assume there must be some kind of jiggery-pokery to our work...

...and what's sad... what has quite literally brought us to tears is... there isn't.

Why have we lasted?

Easy... we don't have the set goal of fame and/or fortune. So many others who do seek this, when the goal of a million-dollar TV contract doesn't appear, just abandon things. We have watched this happen over, and over again, which is why there are so few groups that are older than a few years and still very active.

We aren't "thrill seekers" only out for a faux sense of fear. We study things... try to find answers... and we've never had a moment where "thing's didn't work out how we wanted them to" because we have never entered anything with a preconceived notion of what was supposed to happen.

Do we want answers? Yes... but we're painfully aware that answers will only lead to new questions. We're also very prepared for the idea that no answers may ever come... more importantly, we are learning that there may be no "single answer" to everything.

In the acceptance of this, we are soundly loathed by many. They want us to have an agenda... They want us to support their hypothesis... They want us to support their faith... and we can't... because we're prepared to say *we don't know why these things happen*.

Sue and I are both "experiencers"... witnesses... we have had odd things happen to us that we can't explain yet... and we know we may never explain.

That said, we try to learn... to understand... and we aren't "married" to any one concept of what these things are.

This upsets and annoys some people... and yes, we're really hated.

I suppose it doesn't help that we see what we do as a viable study. Something that could be important and deserving of proper academic help... and as such, when we do see charlatans trying to make a buck... or people ONLY interested in fame... or people trying to use the study to buff-up a faith without proper investigation, it angers us... actually, no... that's not right... we're not angry... we're sad.

We're sad because weird things DO happen and ARE experienced... and thanks to petty jealousies, odd cravings for fame, willingness to do fraudulent efforts to gain fiscal advantages, and the complete and utter disregard for everything from proper data collection and legitimate review are negated for some odd quasi-popularity contest.

We're sad because we have precious few true colleagues. People willing to examine things and learn... and share properly.

I often rant about the lack of ability to credit and downright theft of work... and it's not for the reason you'd think.

It's not because "I" or "we" want our names in lights... it's because if "I" or "we" come up with something, we want to be consulted... we want people to say, *I read your stuff on {blank} and thought, what if...* and perhaps teach us something... and be willing to debate and come up with better questions... or even those elusive answers.

We do this constantly. We attribute thoughts and ideas to the originators when we find them and try to ask them... to talk to them... to discuss with them alternatives, evidence, data... and understand better.

Sadly, in the "paranormal community" at large, this is seen as a weakness. Everyone seems to need to be the original... the "one"... the group or person that's so magnificent that all worship their cleverness...it is rare to find someone who cites their sources.

Look through our notes... do you see us doing that?

Ask yourself why... Why AREN'T we like so many others?

Recently, I read that our group was not willing to "share" data... the author of the note had never written to us... or asked... and when I called them out on it, they told me there was "no point in trying" because they knew we were elitists and wouldn't answer. Effectively, they shut us down and went on a public forum to say how awful we were without trying... or finding out... and I hate to say this, but let's examine the fact that if sending an e-mail to us was a no-go because they assumed they knew the answer AND they were willing to publish this answer about how stuck up we were, what else don't they bother with? When they go to a location or a witness, do they *bother* to get their details... or assume they know what's coming and don't?

I also pointed out that if we were so "stuck up", why was I responding to them in that forum?

Of course, the answer was just look at the "rules" we tried to force people to abide by...

Our number one "rule" is that the **safety, privacy, and security of a witness** who comes forward is our paramount concern... meaning, if someone comes forward and doesn't want to be "outed", we won't publish their information. This isn't just the rule, but where we're based, it's also a law. (The Ontario Privacy Act of March 2003)

Our number two "rule" is to **respect a location** we work in and the current owners/tenants/management of that location.

Our third and most constricting "rule" is that our people are not allowed to break any civil laws in doing our work... so no trespassing and no other illegal activities. This is a major sticking point with us and a "rule" we will never countenance the bending or breaking of.

Our fourth "rule" and another one people don't like is **stay neutral**. Be agnostic in belief and work. Keep an open mind... not ONLY to the possibility of things "paranormal" existing, but that they may indeed not exist... and our findings *must* be honest and "down the middle". If we find nothing, we say we found nothing... if we find something, then we explain what we found and what it might be... and that includes ALL possibilities... some of which may not sit well with the "true believers" and others that will not sit well with the so-called sceptics.

That last one also includes occasionally pointing out where history and folklore may part... and where a treasured story may not jive with what's been recorded. Not every haunt is on a Native ossuary... not every Native ossuary is cursed or haunted... not every big hairy creature is a bigfoot... not every big hairy creature seen can be written off as a bear... not all UFOs are alien craft... not every UFO is an airplane misidentified... I can tell you, these truisms do NOT sit well with many.

So, there are OUR rules... and we only "force" them on people we work with... even then, if someone refuses to live by the last one, we still try to work with them and try to make them make us a believer with solid evidence... data... facts.

If they fail or fall back on faith, we do grumble... but that's because if we want the acceptance of academia, we must be able to provide evidence or facts to them.

It's not a lie to say Sue and I have both literally shed tears... because we have so few colleagues... and must suffer the slings and arrows of people who's reasons for (supposedly) studying the "unknown" are self-reported to be something more than fame, fortune, and popularity... when they quite obviously have ulterior motives.

I've said it before... many people ask us about our feelings towards a group in the United States that have a television program... who APPEAR to be on the same "wavelength" as us... but we have evidence and correspondence to show that they only adopted our way of doing things after they got their show... in fact, when they started out, they and their followers fought with us tooth and nail... and all the time, we stuck to our guns of neutrality and proper study. They even used to have phony "doctoral" accreditations next to their names...

I'll say it... their producers... or possibly themselves... finally read all our stuff and realised that in order to appeal to some people, they needed to adopt our philosophies... and they did so without a word to or about us.

In some ways, it stung because of the abuse we took because we were doing what they now say they do... and because we would hear of things they tried to adapt and obviously had problems understanding... and yet, never once asked... never once tried to become legitimate colleagues.

This sounds like "sour grapes", and perhaps it is... but it's based on months and years of being told how we would suffer and how stupid we were... only to see our own "suffering" and "stupidity" parroted back at us when they managed to eek out that little bit of fame they wanted...

As a cold comfort, we say that they obviously learned from us... but did they...? ...or is this simply the whim of their producers or "creative" team realising to look "serious", they needed to pretend to be "serious"? We honestly don't know...

...but this study bought them houses.

For us, it's been a struggle just to keep our own efforts going.

...but allow me to get back to why we're here...

At this point, we want to establish a legacy.

Yup, plain and simple... we want to leave a legacy of and for others who genuinely do not have a drum to beat... they don't have a faith they wish to convert us all to... they realise that there are possibilities and maybe even answer... but fame, fortune, or a "good scare" are so off their radar, they honestly are wanting to study these things neutrally and properly... and help others understand them... and in the process, maybe explain something to themselves.

Sue and I are trying hard to stay a course... to try and get the best and brightest involved... to remove the ridiculous trappings placed on this study by those who wish to profit from it or to garner fame and popularity...

To bring a respectability that precious few are willing to even try to bring to the table.

That's our reason.

I remember once being on the phone with another couple looking into things... this couple and us had some fallings-out, but the hatchet had been buried and we were discussing an event that we were going to do with them.

During the course of the conversation, Sue and I ended up off on tangents... citing cases and discussing books and authors... looking up things significant to the conversation (so we thought)... about ten minutes into the phone call, there was a pause from the other side of the phone... and the next comment from our friends was, *You guys really do live this stuff, don't you?*

We do.

Perhaps it's unfair to ask other's to do the same... but it would be nice to see a small percentage of the love and passion we have for things invested in what many purport to be their area of interest... and so few do.

Sue and I have amassed an amazing collection of books on the subject by literally hundreds of authors... some good, some bad, but all a little different and we read and learn... and when we speak, we TRY to speak with authority on the subjects...

This intimidates some... it's why we're seen as elitists, I suppose...

They assume we THINK we have all the answers, when they don't understand that we're sometimes saying "X" person looked into "Y" thing and this is what they found... and are hoping and yes, even praying that they will show us something "X" never thought of...

...but that's not how it's seen, as I'm sure you've noted.

Nope, it's seen as us saying *You don't know anything! You aren't the first!*

New people can bring new things and ideas to a study... but shouldn't they base some of their efforts on what might have come before?

If someone is trying to learn about car engines, I'd certainly expect them to have some understanding of the original concepts of the internal combustion engine as thought of by Sam Brown in 1823.

I know if I talk to someone about "thought form ghosts", I should be somewhat acquainted of The Philip Experiments, The Scoble Experiments, and even the Tibetan Buddhist's Tulpas... otherwise, I'm working with only part of an equation and probably traversing old and possibly proven incorrect ground... and therefore, I'm spinning my wheels.

...but apparently, expecting other's to hold the same ideas of study and knowledge is bad, evil, and wrong...

...and yes, we suffer because we are bad.

...but that legacy of ours...

Despite the sour grapes about the US TV group, they have learned a little... and because of them, others are starting to try a little harder... and we do still have a lot of people who do read our notes, who aren't happy with pat answers, who aren't willing to take things solely on faith... and are trying to understand why things happen the way they do.

They're willing to make an effort.

Those people ARE out there... and many DO thank us... and let us know we're on the right track... or help us find that track without name-calling or supposition of some odd personal motivation for us working so hard on things that even we are unaware of.

To those groups out there, and you know who you are... and yes, I know you do read these notes... you want to know what we're about?

We're about learning... understanding... and openness... and we may not subscribe to everything you're doing wholly, but we do try to see why you're doing it... and try to find value in it... and we do want more colleagues badly... and we know we may not see things eye-to-eye, but perhaps we can teach you some things while you teach us some things and we can grow greater for the exchange.

We don't need fame... we don't want "fortunes" from our work...

...we want possible answers... and to learn.

When we make a point, we will back it up to the best of our abilities and try to make sure you understand why we are making that point... when we see a flaw, we might point it out... it's not us *telling people what or how to do things*, it's us trying to set up some sort of legitimate peer review.

If you can't understand this, you'll never understand us.

...but we will survive... we have for over a decade... and when we're gone, a new crop of people with similar philosophies who want to learn and understand things will take over for us... we bank on that.

We've already met some of them... we will meet more.

Eventually, the study of the unknown will be a legitimate study free of animated UFOs on websites who's main featured link is what TV and newspapers the people that host the site have done. No more "breaking into the abandoned hospital" to look for ghosts that may not exist as there's never been a report from that site.

...and the one thing that will bring literal tears of joy to us... more people reading, communicating, setting aside pettiness, and genuinely doing what needs to be done... so that people who do and have experienced these things have a place to learn and understand what it is that's happening or has happened to them.

We don't want our name in People Magazine... we want our names on a library.

We don't want a "cult" of sycophantic friends who agree in lock-step with a faith, we want a gathering of colleagues bringing hypothesis to the table, but are willing to listen and learn from others... and even utter the horrible words *We don't know* or even the most dreaded statement, *We were wrong*.

We, Sue and I, believe this will be the future...

...and now you know why we're here.

That's our legacy... a legacy of understanding and legitimate openness.

...and now, I'm going to give you the supposed "secret" of our success...

To those groups who DO believe we're holding them down because they aren't getting a whack-load of reports and cases e-mailed or sent to them... the secret is that when people visit our sites, there's content... something for people to read and think about. We have reports, editorials, notes, investigations... We haven't plastered the sites with useless photos, images, animated graphics, or the like... we present what we have been told and what we've learned.

When content has been "lean", we've created opportunities. We've written to people and asked permission to revisit things... We've asked to reproduce important things for other's to find... We've read and wrote... and continued... even when things seemed bleak and yes, even dull.

We've never really stopped.

We've made sure people know they can trust us... and backed up those words with evidence... and we've gone out of our way to help those who have helped us.

In doing this, we HAVE garnered respect outside the "paranormal community"... and yes, it's paid dividends in our work.

So, that's our secret... PLEASE feel free to use it OFTEN.

Currently, as stated, we don't have a lot of colleagues... but we would love that to change... and we hope - and are working towards - that happening.

Ghosts won't hurt you.....but people certainly might!

Ghost-busting the misconceptions! – Sue St. Clair and Matthew Didier

I just came across an article on another website that, in big bold letters, pronounced that "Real Paranormal Investigators Say That Ghosts Will Hurt You" or something along those lines.

It goes on to relate how thousands of evil ghosts like those of serial killers, and insane people (nice sensitivity towards mental illness eh!) roam about wishing to hurt the living. "And do not believe any ghost hunter who tells you otherwise. They are not real"

Are you frightened? Heck, I know I am! Apparently, there are legions of marauding spooks and spectres ravaging your towns and villages and us ghost people give you a false sense of security making you lambs for the spectral slaughter! (We're probably on the take from these phantom menaces...)

Thankfully, this wonderful website seems to know what they are talking about, and for a fee, I'm sure can help you out with all the psychopathic, murderous, roaming ghosts that are bothering you! (...was this an epidemic of which we were preciously unaware?)

By looking through this site that decries all of us awful "ghost people"... because we don't send you their way to protect you from the marauding ghosts... it becomes evident that they have troubles with these awfully inconvenient things called "facts". If you check through our files, the SPR, ASPR, CPRI, and any other large established organization that collects reports, cases of genuine harm associated with ghosts are very rare if not completely unheard of.

In fact, over the last two-hundred years of notations on paranormal reports in North America, there are only two documented cases of ghosts being "accused" of physically harming people that have been somewhat validated by third-party neutral authorities. One is the death of John Bell in relation to the Bell Witch case in Tennessee in 1817. The other is the attacks on a woman known as The Entity Case from California in the 1970's. These cases were not only studied by people "involved" in the paranormal as such, but medical authorities and other people with reasonable related credentials to what they were looking into.

When looking into cases of possible physical harm and "ghosts", we do remove cases where the people did not seek appropriate third-party verification (they simply did their own reporting without any backup,) and people who have a previously documented history of hoaxing.

So, using these reliable statistics, your chances of winning over one-million dollars in a lottery twice in your lifetime are greater than being hurt, injured, or killed by a ghost. Even these cases I found that say a "ghost" hurt a person do not stand up well to absolute scrutiny... and honestly, I have yet to find a single cases that offers absolute proof that a spirit caused physical harm to a human.

That said, the number of "bumps", "bruises", "bangs", and other injuries caused when people tried to "flee" a perceived ghost or were startled by an experience exist... but realistically, it's still difficult to say even those situations are numerous enough to start taking any type of major protective steps to prevent things...

In essence, a helmet and pads are really not needed... unless the haunting is on the fifty-yard line of your local football field.

Also, in reading the article from these nitwits, I was reminded that The Spiritualist Church, (which was established in the 19th century,) actually encourages positive spirit communication, and it's members routinely contact spirits... and this is a Christian group that believe that spirit communication and interaction is through God... and no, tetanus shots, hand sanitizers, and

kevlar vests are NOT being handed out at their meetings to defend against the vicious gangs of thug-like apparitions.

Still, according to that website, why listen to statistical facts, long held spiritual practices, or even common sense when you can just believe them without question! I mean, we (that being pretty much everyone other than them,) apparently are big fat poopy head liars who only wish to feed unsuspecting people to killer ghosties!

And who are these bastions of knowledge? Personally, I'd never heard of them before today, and I have been on the internet since 1995 looking into this subject online... and on the old ghost BBS/Fidonet and newsgroups since 1989.

This in my opinion is yet another way to bully poor frightened people into opening their wallets, and to intimidate younger people who want to start up their own groups because according to the author unless you research/investigate their way you are doomed to being possessed, chased down by angry insane ghosts of murderers, lose your presents Santa was going to bring to you this Christmas, and you will be letting the terrorists win.

These nincompoops smack more of BAD Hollywood crud, and cheesy fiction than a serious academic approach to a sensitive topic... and realistically, they are basically pandering to fear and ignorance... and have no concepts of the truth to the study of which they are speaking of.

When we receive reports from people who claim to be harmed by ghosts we investigate their claims, and have yet to come across a single case where natural causes could not be ruled out, meaning some people will automatically blame "ghosts" for negative occurrences because that is what they have been led to believe is the case by fiction, bad reality TV, and sensationalised websites.

Proper investigation tends to rule out the supernatural or lend highly to the probability that something other than a ghost is to blame for bruises, bumps, feelings of being hit, held, sat upon, or pinched. There are both medical, and psychological reasons why people occasionally experience these things, and believe they are occurring because of some external, and unseen force. The fear they experience is very real....but it is not because of a nasty, homicidal ghost out to get them.

Like I said, and it's something everyone should consider... we can only find the two valid cases of physical harm by a ghost... and even they are questioned to this day.

Conversely, exorcisms do have a body count... more than ten people have died between 1997 and 2009 in North America due to botched or inappropriately carried out exorcisms... usually with the victim being starved, dehydrated, and even beaten to death.

We can also mention the many people who've been defrauded and even bankrupted by shamans, "house clearers", fraudulent psychics/sensitives/mediums, and the like also offering to "help" with a ghost...

All in all, it's something to consider... is the perceived and marketed "cure" worse than the symptoms?

Statistics seem to say yes... they are.

PSICAN Internal Document – January 28, 2012
THIS DOCUMENT ALSO AVAILABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Paranormal Studies and Inquiry Canada:

General Information & Codes of Governance/Presentation

Version 3.0.1

Written By: Matthew Didier
Written By: Sue Demeter-St.Clair

Paranormal Studies and Inquiry Canada

This document is an internal document that is applicable only to PSICAN. It is not applicable to our affiliate or 'daughter' groups (without their specification) or any group outside of PSICAN.

Our Mission Statement...

The overall purpose of Paranormal Studies and Inquiry Canada is to examine reports and information of reported perceived paranormal phenomena without prejudice to any hypothesis of causation and to collect and to document these cases from a purely evidentiary point of view to the very best of our abilities.

Defined PSICAN member roles...

Founders:

This refers to Sue Demeter-St.Clair and Matthew James Didier. As PSICAN is truly a group of colleagues ahead of anything else, the founders are not responsible for anything save organisation, management of resources, and asking (not telling, demanding, or "ordering",) other members to help or take on tasks when applicable

Team or Project Leads:

This refers to members, investigators or researchers who take up active management of a case, experiment, or investigation who acts as an administrator to their team involved with said specific case or project.

Members, Investigators, and/or Researchers:

Within PSICAN, every person is effectively a member, investigator, or researcher. This designation simply denotes that the person is a volunteer with our group and is helping us look into these fields of study and have passed the necessary qualifications within our set standards. They have agreed to work within the Rules of Governance as well as our Code of Presentation which are both presented in this document below.

Resolution Committee:

This refers to a group of five appointed senior members whose task is to discuss, advocate, and make decisions should there be any conflicts or concerns from any of PSICAN's membership on any level. **As of January 28th, 2012, this group consists of Sue Demeter-St.Clair, Matthew Didier, Stu Finlay, Penny Eileen Dobson, and Heather McKenzie.**

PSICAN RULES of GOVERNANCE:

1: The safety, security, and overall comfort of a witness is paramount in our efforts.

- (i) Personal and private data including contact information must and will be held in the strictest confidence within PSICAN and its members, investigators, researchers, and founders unless the individual who shared the information has given express permission to publish or make said data publicly accessible or the information has been previously published or noted in a public manuscript, document, periodical, or other printed (televised/broadcast) source.
- (ii) Although PSICAN and its members, investigators, researchers, and founders are bound by neutrality, we remain open minded to any or all possible faiths, beliefs, and favoured hypothesis of anyone we are working with or sharing information with. It is not the responsibility for anyone within PSICAN to “correct” or otherwise argue any position with belief or faith as an absolute without empirical evidence to substantiate the members, investigators, researchers, or founder’s stance.
PLEASE NOTE that in discussion of the study overall and outside of an investigation proper, a particular member, investigator, researcher, or founder may voice an opinion or challenge a viewpoint on the basis of an untested hypothesis or simple thought, this is within the confines of “Rule of Governance #5” below.
- (iii) A witness may ask a team leader or a founder to remove or change an investigator or researcher working on the case without issue or problem if they so desire. (Any concerns or questions about any changes like this can be made by a PSICAN member to a member of the standing Resolution Committee.)
- (iv) Witnesses and others who experience the paranormal should be made aware that PSICAN does not certify, validate, or otherwise suggest anything may or may not be happening of a paranormal nature without empirical data to support that stance.
- (v) PSICAN does not use psychics, seers, sensitives, mediums, or other psychical help as a front-line tool of any investigation. We do not offer psychical services, house clearings, channeling communications, or exorcisms (or similar efforts) if so requested. We work strictly from a neutral observational standpoint as documentarians when investigating.
- (vi) PSICAN and its investigators, researchers, and founders must be as professional as possible while dealing with a witness and respect any property, local laws, schedules, or any legitimate requests put forward by anyone directly responsible for an investigation on any level.
- (vii) PSICAN and its investigators, researchers, and founders must work and strive to be within the realm of societal acceptability in deportment and

communication and maintain a professional attitude towards the study at all times when dealing with a witness or on an investigation.

2: PSICAN will strive to investigate, collect, and present data within a neutral standpoint without prejudice to possible hypothetical causations, beliefs, or faiths.

- (i) If the data is being produced for a possible demonstrated hypothesis or is presented as being solely for possible consideration as a hypothetical situation, it must be presented as such. PSICAN will never make a proclamation of fact without empirical evidence to substantiate a claim that is made.
- (ii) PSICAN and its investigators, researchers, and founders will always strive for accuracy, evidence of claims, and cite all works we may compile or use as material when producing or presenting data for consideration. We will never knowingly plagiarize or neglect giving appropriate credit for information and data used in our pursuits.
- (iii) PSICAN and its investigators, researchers, and founders will always work from an ethical viewpoint and try to ensure as much empathy is given to any person(s), property, or cultural groups as possible. We will not pursue, publish, or make public any information or case that may be deemed (after consideration of any investigative or research team,) inappropriate or possibly "hurtful". We will always try to wait an appropriate amount of time to pursue any study or data that may still involve a person or group of people's comfort levels.
- (iv) "Hoaxing", falsifying data, or perpetrating any sort of intentionally fraudulent information or events within what is currently considered the paranormal is forbidden to all PSICAN investigators, researchers, and founders. PSICAN and its investigators, researchers, and founders will also refrain from knowingly working directly with, supporting, or promoting anyone who has been found to be (or have been) part of a "hoax", fraud, or other illicit activities within the realm of the paranormal.

3: PSICAN acknowledges its responsibility to those who come to us for help or assistance, but must stay within the scope of our own studies.

- (i) If there's a concern on an investigation, within a case, or experimentation where a PSICAN investigator or researcher suspects there may be an issue at play that is far beyond the paranormal (such as a criminal acts or similar issues,) but was not witness to it directly, they should temporarily cease their efforts for PSICAN. The concern should be then brought to the attention to one other PSICAN investigator or researcher and one or all of the Resolution Committee. From this point, it is not a PSICAN issue, but simply a situation where three people should come to a 2/3 majority on if or how to proceed in suggesting a course of action to the

witness or contacting the appropriate authorities. PSICAN activities can only resume if a satisfactory result has been found for the situation.

- (ii) If a crime is witnessed or evidence of a crime presents itself without question to a PSICAN member, investigator, researcher, or one of the founders while on an investigation or working on a case, then the appropriate authorities must be contacted (as per local and established laws and/or simple local legal expectations,) at the earliest possible convenience.
- (iii) PSICAN investigators, researchers, and founders must be bondable and as such, not have any criminal records in order to work with us in any capacity.

4: PSICAN is a completely not-for-profit organisation. There will never be a fee for PSICAN's publishable information online or for any assistance or purely investigative/research work PSICAN is involved with pertaining our studies.

- (i) If a member of the PSICAN team stays within the framework of our "Rule of Governance #1", then said individual member, investigator, researcher, or founder can produce books, articles, or other media based on PSICAN data that they can market on a personal level. If using PSICAN material, please give proper citations and ensure the reader knows that this is a book by a PSICAN member, investigator, researcher, or founder and is not a "PSICAN" book from the group as a whole. Copyright will be retained by the author/producer.
- (ii) PSICAN "swag" (shirts, bags, articles, etc.) can also be marketed with an agreement on use (of logos and name) and upon any fees requested for/by PSICAN for said use between the manufacturer/seller and at least one of the PSICAN founders (or the two senior members of the Resolution Committee). PSICAN reserves the right to always demand immediate cessation of production and sale of any merchandise in production displaying the PSICAN name or logo at any time.
- (iii) A witness, "experiencer", or someone who has come to us with something for PSICAN to look at should never be charged a fee, asked for any money (even for expenses,) or otherwise billed, charged, or have money(s) requested on behalf of PSICAN or its investigators, researchers, and founders. If a witness is adamant about giving or donating to PSICAN, it should be made very clear that this is not necessary and not expected. If someone still wishes to help us, please have them give through the website and not discuss the gifts or any money(s) with our investigators or researchers that may be involved with a case that affects them.
- (iv) As with "Rule of Governance #4i" above, if a PSICAN member, investigator, researcher, or founder is asked to speak or be involved with a media presentation and a fee is offered, this would be considered a

personal matter between the PSICAN person and whomever is organising the event or project. We do believe our people should be compensated for their time if they are working with these types of events and projects. Again, however, this is between the PSICAN person involved and the event/project managers... and although the person can and will be listed as a PSICAN member, investigator, researcher, or founder, their contribution is as an individual who happens to hold that designation and is therefore, NOT considered as something that involves PSICAN as a group.

- (v) Reproduction of existing PSICAN books, materials, and documents for the purpose of sale is allowed with permission from either one of the founders (or, if the founders are no longer part of the organisation, one of the two senior members of the Resolution Committee) and with the understanding that the documents be properly credited as PSICAN documentation and that a consideration of a fiscal gift of some of the profits, if any, can be made back to PSICAN for possible future projects or current expenses.
- (vi) People wishing to reproduce PSICAN original documents for non-profit or educational uses may do so through Creative Commons/Fair Use dealings and ensure that credit is given to PSICAN and, if applicable, the individual author/creator of the work.

5: PSICAN does not hold or express any corporate views. Any opinions expressed through its articles, papers, websites, or via other means are, therefore, those of the PSICAN member, investigator, or researcher alone.

- (i) All reports, academic papers, presentations, and work of that nature *must* be presented with a viewpoint as neutral as possible in terms of belief, faith, or spirituality and must concentrate only on the data at hand.
- (ii) Exempt from this are critiques, editorials, and casual notes, but it should be maintained that these are opinions and not presented as fact.
- (iii) Elements of any statement made publicly by a member that would, by Canadian Law, be considered "Hate Speech" or that could be or are received negatively as either considered racism, sexism, or negative "culturalism" will be presented to the Resolution Committee for potential (eventual) action.
- (iv) Any concerns with any PSICAN (or related) material about this can be brought forward to a PSICAN member and presented to one of the members of the Resolution Committee.

6: If any member of PSICAN sees a potential problem, has a request for a fundamental change to the group or its policies, or wishes to voice a concern, they may contact any one of the five members of the standing Resolution Committee to be heard. The committee member, upon approval of the request,

will bring it forward to the other four members for a discussion and, if necessary, a popular vote amongst the standing committee members.

- (i) If a point is brought to the attention of a committee member by a PSICAN member, it will be either accepted by the member of the committee or, if the member (approached) of the committee feels they cannot advocate the situation on behalf of the person submitting the request, pass the request via the person submitting it to another committee member. If the request is passed to other committee member who also cannot advocate on the request's behalf three times, it will not be considered by the committee for discussion.
- (ii) The committee will not have "formal" meetings, but will simply communicate thoughts and concerns from members on an irregular basis as the need arises through whichever medium is deemed best.
- (iii) If even one committee member voices (or votes) against the others, each member will be allowed to make one statement of their reasons for their decision on the standing matter and the vote will be re-cast once. In this case, a three-to-five majority will carry the vote.
- (iv) The committee will be initially formed of the five most senior members of PSICAN and/or its directly related groups. Should one member be unable to fulfill their roll on permanent basis, either the next most senior member will take their place or the remaining committee members may appoint someone only by a complete consensus of opinions.
 - (a) Any "vote" or decision that is considered important or vital in terms of action must wait for all members of the committee to weigh the options and consider a plan of action up to 72 hours... after which, a majority decision with whomever will determine the course of action which will be taken.
 - (b) Any action taken quickly or immediately (such as the removal of a comment or user from the message board,) must be "saved" with the option to restore or repair any alterations made if the committee decides the action was precipitous. Action on Facebook Group(s) or other social media outlets not in our direct control are exempt from Rule 6, Section IV, B
- (v) The committee's decisions will be honoured by all members regardless of standing in the group.

7: All PSICAN investigators, researchers, or founders are governed by the Rules of Governance listed above. Any investigators, researchers, or even its founders found in breach of the above will be held accountable either by the founders directly or by the Resolution Committee if necessary.

8: Any changes, additions, or alterations to this document (as a whole) made after January 28th, 2012 must first be passed by a majority of the Resolution Committee and stand up to a potential “veto” vote from the founding members or, in lieu of them, the two senior members of the standing committee.

- (i) If a change, addition, or amendment is “vetoed” by one of the two founding members or by the two senior committee members, any notes, requests, changes, or suggestions for the alteration must be presented to the Resolution Committee for a potential re-draft and re-submission.

PSICAN Code of Presentation:

#1: Our first priority is respecting the needs and wishes of those who claim experiences with perceived paranormal phenomena. We will endeavour to maintain your safety, security and privacy to the best of our abilities and will not publish, report, "sell" or market any information you give us without your express permission. We do, however, reserve the right to publish a report without exact information (such as exact addresses and names) if a request to use/publish has been made and we've had no reply within fourteen (14) days.

#2: Ownership and "copyright" of a report or article submitted to us remains solely with the original witness/reporter/author/creator. We only ask that we have the ability to use or otherwise publish what the witness/reporter/author/creator has given us permission to work with for our studies or those elements that we have put into our "own words" in perpetuity.

#3: We will always take a neutral view on unexplained phenomena.

#4: We will always try our best to maintain proper and accepted methods of research and science within the limits of an investigation or any of our studies.

#5: We will never wilfully and/or knowingly fabricate or "manufacture" (hoax) evidence or findings to be displayed or otherwise officially distributed in a misleading representation of evidence, proof, and data and we will not proclaim these things as such without empirical evidence to back up the claim.

#6: We will NEVER charge for our work or for the display of our findings. PSICAN is "non-profit". (See "Rules of Governance – Section 4")

#7: We will never wilfully or knowingly break any laws or by-laws of an area or site in the pursuit of our studies.

#8: We will endeavour to the best of our abilities to meet the needs of those who ask for assistance, be that a request for information or help with an event or occurrence.

#9: We will read and respond to any or all reports and requests made to us within seven business days (unless otherwise stated on our website's main page).

#10: We will not "clear homes" or offer elimination of any phenomena. If a witness requests assistance in this area, we will offer what help we can through third-party contacts free of charge, but will never recommend any "fee based" help for someone requesting this assistance.

#11: PSICAN as a group will never proclaim anything as an absolute (in terms of phenomena or evidence) without proper study and investigation, which must yield empirical data that we are able to present. We will never preach a "belief" or "faith" as "fact" unless this criterion is met. Individual researchers, and investigators may offer personal opinions if requested.

#12: We do not offer "psychical" help such as readings or séances to the public.

#13: PRIVACY: We will never sell market or otherwise distribute any "mailing lists" or information that is sent to us to third-party companies or organisations. We will not "spam" people with unsolicited e-mails or send information to a group/company/business that will do this. All information is private and for use with PSICAN members, investigators, researchers, and founders only unless otherwise approved by the person who originates the information.

#14: LIABILITY: A browser, viewer, witness who submits a report or otherwise someone using information from PSICAN or its site assumes all liability for any actions or reactions that may arise from said visit or information.

#15: COMPLAINTS: If you have a complaint about PSICAN, we ask that you first contact the party who you have issue with and see if a resolution is possible. If you are not satisfied with a response or need further assistance, please e-mail admin@psican.org and give us the details of the issue. We will do our best to address any or all concerns.

#16: PSICAN will never knowingly display information or data from a third-party source without proper credit and/or consent of the owner of that information.

#17: PSICAN cannot be held responsible for content of site(s) outside of our group that we may have a link to. We can only be responsible for our own work and content.

#18: We will do our utmost to ensure accuracy with information (historical or otherwise) and will always credit sources (where possible and allowed) and welcome any corrections or notes from readers. We do ask, however, that if you do send these corrections or notes that you include a source for us to be able to check and use as a resource to make sure that the information is as correct as possible. Also note if something is listed as "folklore" or a "legend", it may mean that there is either no proper resource for that information or that there are multiple "versions" of events or data that have been presented within listed resources.

#19: We welcome people to use and reproduce our displayed work from our website online provided that proper credit and a "link back" is included in the reproduction and that the information is available freely to anyone visiting the site, blog, or other internet entity where the information is being used. We also ask you e-mail admin@psican.org first. (We work within the framework of Creative Commons.)
