

Andover Poltergeist

Poltergeist-type activity was observed and documented in a household in Andover in southern England in 1974. The episode was of the responsive type, notable for signs that the phenomena came from an intelligent source.

This article is a summary. The original report can be read here:  [Andover Poltergeist \(Colvin 2008\).pdf](#)

Background

In 1974 the Andrews (not their real name) were living in a modern house in Andover, a market town in Hampshire in southern England. The family was comprised of the couple and their six children: Maria (age 20), Kevin (19), Gary (17), Steven (15), Theresa (12) and Mark (10).

The episode began in early April with unexplained sounds heard by Maria and Theresa shortly after going to bed in the room they shared. The sounds came from the wall next to Theresa's bed, which adjoined the house next door, suggesting that the neighbours were in some way responsible. However, the girls soon discarded this idea as they found that the sounds responded to questions posed by Theresa in faint whispers that no one on the other side would be able to hear.

The pair developed a code, as later described by Barrie Colvin, who investigated the case:

A typical procedure would involve Theresa and Maria asking questions such as "Is anybody there?" A very definite single knock was heard, followed by silence ... One knock was taken to indicate yes and two knocks indicated no. If the answer was not known, the girls requested that three knocks should be given ... words and sentences [were] tapped out according to the position of the letters in the alphabet. For example, the letter E would be represented by five knocks, the letter M by thirteen knocks, and so on.¹

A louder rap typically signified the end of a word or phrase.

The source identified itself as 'Eric Waters'. Other members of the family began communicating with 'Eric', at first viewing this as an intriguing game. It was noticed that Theresa usually had to be lying in her bed for the raps to be heard.

The phenomenon drew interest from neighbours, local clergy, police, and a local newspaper, which published a story about it.² A cross and holy water were applied, to no effect. A Spiritualist medium stated that 'Eric' was a young boy whose body had been buried beneath the house.

Investigation

The case came to Colvin's attention through the newspaper story published on 27 April. He visited the family nine times between 28 April and 10 June. He was

witness to many raps, not only hearing them but also feeling vibrations by laying a hand on the surfaces from which they seemed to emanate.

Colvin wrote up a full report soon thereafter, but at the family's request held off from publishing it, giving only a brief summary at a conference three years later.³ The report eventually appeared in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* in 2008, by which time the family had been long gone from Andover.

By the end of the month the raps had become louder and more disturbing, keeping the family awake at night. Colvin now carried out some tests. To establish clearly that they were not coming from the house next door, he had Mrs Andrews ask 'Eric' to produce them in different places. The noises were subsequently heard, first on the headboard of Theresa's bed, and next, at Colvin's request, on the bed's metal frame (these produced sounds of a higher tone). Colvin was able to feel the vibrations made by the sounds on these surfaces, observing that these slightly preceded the sounds themselves.

'Eric' communicated to the family that he wished his bones to be dug up from under the house and buried in a graveyard.⁴ By early May the noises had become loud thumps, apparently expressing his growing frustration, and were audible some distance from the house. On a visit on the 7th, Colvin found about twenty people gathered in the alleyway directly below Maria and Theresa's bedroom, listening to deafening bangs that by his measure could be heard fifty yards away. The vibrations could also be felt on the external wall.

In a later development it was discovered that 'Eric' could correctly rap out numbers that Theresa was holding in her mind. Colvin himself tested this with numbered playing cards, getting correct answers almost every time, including occasions when only Colvin knew the number and also when no one knew it until 'Eric' had given his answer.

Responding to Colvin's questions, 'Eric' was able to supply very little information about himself and his life. On 7 June, he delivered what appeared to be a final message: 'I am here to rest and stop my bones from rotting'.⁵ The noises now began to fade and by 10 June they ceased.

Conclusions

Colvin ruled out observational error as an explanation, as many of the sounds had occurred during full daylight and had been closely observed over an extended time period. He ruled out non-personal mechanical forces, as the sounds had clearly responded to questions and tests. He also ruled out deception, mostly on the basis that on request 'Eric' had been able to quickly shift the source of the sounds to places selected by Colvin himself.

Colvin was unable to find any trace of a deceased Eric Waters in Andover, after researching local birth and death records, making a press appeal, interviewing local historians, and talking to members of two families named Waters in the area.⁶ By the time of the report's publication in 2008, no attempt had been made to find bones under the house. Colvin tentatively concluded that Eric was probably not an

actual discarnate entity but a product of a living subconscious mind, namely Theresa's, in a case of [recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis](#) (RSPK).

KM Wehrstein

Literature

Anon. (1974). Mystery ghost making their lives a misery. *Andover Advertiser* (26 April).

Colvin, B.G. (1977). *The character of percussive and related sounds in recurrent, spontaneous psychokinesis*. Paper presented at the SPR International Conference, City University, London.

Colvin, B.G. (2008). The Andover case: A responsive rapping poltergeist. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 72, 1-20.

Earney, H.W. (1974). In search of a ghost. *Southern Evening Echo* (27 June).

Endnotes

Footnotes

- [1.](#) Colvin (2008), 4-5.
- [2.](#) Anon (1974).
- [3.](#) Colvin (1977).
- [4.](#) A similar demand was made by the Icelandic communicator Runolfur Runolfsson, who wished appropriate treatment for his femur as it had not been found and buried with proper rites with the rest of his body after his accidental death; see [here](#).
- [5.](#) Colvin (2008), 14.
- [6.](#) Earney (1974).