

From Bois to Boyce

The Survival Files — Case 43 — ESS = 206.7

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The well-respected medium, Geraldine Cummins, related this case during a talk she gave before the SPR on 29 April 1929. Its most intriguing feature is the apparent phonetic spelling — often seen in transcripts from spoken messages — given via automatic writing. This is one of two examples the case provides of mediumistic fallibility.

Cummins had granted a sitting to two elderly people who were anxious to communicate with some of their deceased relations. Much to everyone's irritation, a strange spirit insisted on writing instead. He gave his name as Henry Bois, and an address on Highfield Road in the village of Preston [England]. No one involved at the sitting knew of any such person or place.

The statement was made that this entity had just died and that he knew his wife was grieving. There was an insistent request that she should be traced and be assured of the continued existence of her husband, a fact that she would have difficulty accepting.

In following up, it was discovered that the name "Bois" should have been written "Boyce" (which is pronounced the same way). For, indeed, a Henry Boyce had resided on Highfield Road in Preston; he had recently died and his grieving widow did not, up until then at least, believe in an afterlife. The widow also corroborated other statements made during the session, including a description of her husband's personal appearance, his age, and the condition of his health for some time prior to his death.

The indication of fallibility mentioned above comes from the difference between the spirit's testimony that he had retired because his illness had rendered him unfit for business for some time, and his widow's claim that he had continued to go to work, even though he wasn't fit to do so. In this case, the contradiction is minor and hardly weakens the overall evidence. But it does remind us that mis-communication can occur in otherwise immaculate cases. Then again, for all we know, the man could have been skipping the office without his wife's knowledge and spending his days at the local pub.

Inquiries revealed no announcement in the local newspapers of the death of Henry Boyce.

ESS Score

As all the information was known to a single person who was not linked to anyone involved, the CS rating is "j", CS = 154.

With automatic bonus (4 pts) for witnesses (Gibbs, Barrett), the Witness Reliability rating is "s+", WR = 52.

The Character/Complexity of Information rating is "n". IC = 0.7.

Total ESS Score: $154 + 52 + .7 = 206.7$

For Further Information See:

"Experiments in Automatic Writing," by Geraldine Cummins, *Journal of the Society for Psychological Research*, Vol. 31, May, 1939, pages 69-71.