



BORLEY RECTORY.

"THE MOST HAUNTED HOUSE IN ENGLAND"

A Report by New Horizons Foundation of some  
Investigations made into this alleged Haunting.

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THE MOST HAUNTED HOUSE IN ENGLAND.

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1. Introduction.
2. The Story of Borley. (a) The story of the Bull Family  
(b) The Smith incumbency  
(c) The Foyster incumbency
3. Harry Price
4. Investigations by the British Society for Psychical Research
5. Marianne's Story.  
New Horizons Research Foundation report to  
Trinity College, Cambridge.
6. Summary.

## INTRODUCTION.

We recently produced a paper giving an update of our knowledge and understanding of poltergeist phenomena, especially those we have had an opportunity to study in Canada. As noted there, many of the day-to-day cases are relatively trivial, and it is a comparatively easy task to unravel the problems and arrive at a solution. It is probable that some of these cases, at least, if not dealt with at an early stage, like a fever or infectious illness, would have become blown up into something much more complicated and difficult to unravel.

Some such cases, having come to the attention of the media, have become overlaid with so many other factors that it has become almost impossible to discover the truth of what really happened and, generally speaking, serious investigators shy away from them, simply because it is almost impossible to disentangle truth from fiction. Also, many people become committed to one explanation or another, and so controversy rages among the investigators as well as those to whom the events happen.

One such case is the story of the mysterious events that have happened at Borley Rectory over the years. Borley is a small village, a hamlet really, in the county of Suffolk in the south eastern corner of England. The events centred around the Rectory, the home of the Anglican Vicar of the local church. It should be noted that the appointment of a local vicar until very recent years, and in some cases still does, rests with the local landowners, usually those who own what are known as glebe lands, or church lands. These local magnates have the complete say as to who shall become the local vicar, provided he is properly qualified and ordained, of course. The local landowners in this case were a family named Bull, and for some generations members of that family were functioning as the local rectors.

The story of Borley Rectory has been the subject of many books, and endless magazine and newspaper articles, as well as more serious papers in the various parapsychological journals in the world. The story is not only extremely wellknown to parapsychologists, but to most members of the general public in England, and to some extent in North America.

Even though the Rectory has been non-existent since February 1939, when it was totally destroyed by fire, the site has been a mecca for people hoping that some ghostly manifestations might still occur; and indeed, many allege that some of the phenomena previously experienced in the Rectory now take place in the adjacent Anglican Church. People still take tape recorders into the Church at night and record noises which they state are supernatural in origin and part of the total 'haunting' of the Rectory. We in fact received one such recording only a few months ago.

Travel agents are always looking for novelty in planning holiday packages, and several agencies now offer tours of haunted sites, particularly of sites in England where stories of ghosts haunting stately homes abound. Top of the list on many such trips is a visit to the site of Borley Rectory.

Despite all the research that has been done on this particular haunting, and despite all the scepticism that such research has aroused, many people still believe that Borley Rectory was, and still is, the most haunted site in history.

We ourselves remember the Rectory becoming known to the general public during the 1930's when the living was in the incumbency of the Rev. Lionel Foyster, and at the time when the famous 'ghost hunter', Harry Price, made headline news in the Daily Mirror newspaper with his investigations and alleged discoveries at the site. Borley became a household word.

Later, in the 1950's we had opportunity to learn more about the 'goings-on' in the company of Mr. Trevor Hall, who was conducting an investigation on behalf of the British Society for Psychical Research into the activities and experiences of the Rev. and Mrs. Lionel Foyster during their term there. We visited the site, the Church, and the various places of interest connected with the life of Mrs. Foyster after they left the Rectory, and after Mr. Foyster had died. We met people who had known her, and the children she had left behind when she went to the U.S.A. As a result of their investigations, and particularly those of Trevor Hall into the life and background of Marianne Foyster the British Society for Psychical Research felt they had finally laid to rest the ghosts of Borley. But it was not to be so!

Incidentally, it was as a result of that investigation by Mr. Hall who was also under supervision by George Owen in his conducting of telepathy tests for a Fellowship at Trinity College, that we ourselves became especially interested in poltergeist phenomena, and it was as a result of a direct suggestion by him that a study was undertaken by George Owen to review all the poltergeist literature available. The unspoken thought was that we might find that all other cases were as patently fraudulent as Trevor believed that Borley was, but in the event it turned out the opposite. Borley is unique in its complications and admixture of truth and fraud. But the matter rested in a sort of 'no-man's' land for many years, believers continuing to press their case that Borley was indeed haunted, and the sceptics maintaining that the whole thing was a fraud from start to finish.

In the fall of 1978, here in Canada, we had a further opportunity to explore this interesting story. We were able to have conversation with Marianne Foyster, and record her version of what had happened. We were given a grant by the electors to the Perrot Warwick Fellowship of Trinity College, Cambridge, and we submitted a report to them, and to the Journal of the British Society for Psychical Research.

However, we had promised Marianne Foyster that we would not publish her story in any other form until after her death, for reasons which will become obvious when reading the report, and we have honoured that promise. Now, however, Marianne has died, at the age of 86, and we feel we can make her story known, and have it added to the 'soap opera' that has been created from the story of Borley Rectory.

## THE LEGEND OF BORLEY RECTORY.

Borley Rectory was built in the year 1863 and destroyed by fire in February 1939, a relatively short life for a house of that size and nature in England - a mere 76 years. But a great deal of publicity was crammed into that short time, leaving it with the reputation of having been the most haunted house in England. Borley is a small village, not much more than a hamlet, in the county of Suffolk; it is an agricultural district, which has been very prosperous in previous centuries owing to the wool trade. However, at the time of the Industrial Revolution, some 40 years earlier than 1863, when the incumbent Rector built the Rectory the centre of the wool trade had been moved to the north of England. The damp climate in Yorkshire was more suited to the new processes of carding, spinning and weaving the wool. Consequently Suffolk, and the surrounding area, which had been among the most densely populated part of England, was suffering a decline; the population was waning, the great ornate churches which had been built by the 'wool barons' were half empty and the countryside was returning to a quiet agricultural existance.

The history of Borley falls roughly into five sections - the period from 1863 - 1927 when it was inhabited first by the Rev. Henry Bull, who built the house, and then variously by his daughters and his son, the Rev. Harry Bull, who succeeded his father as Rector of the parish.

During the latter part of 1928 and the first six months of 1929 the Rectory was lived in by the Rev. Eric Smith and his wife, newcomers to the district, and recently returned from India, where they had lived for some years. The Rev. Smith's health occasioned their return to England, and Borley was their first living in England.

When the Smiths left both the Rectory and parish in 1930 the living remained vacant for six months, and then the Rev. Lionel Foyster, a cousin of the Bull family was offered the living. The Rev. Foyster was a man in his middle years, and like Mr. Smith had had to return from an overseas living to England for health reasons. He and his young wife had been living in Nova Scotia, Canada, and they brought with them a small child, Adelaide. The Rev. Foyster was plagued with a particularly virulent form of rheumatism.

During the two latter incumbencies, that of the Smiths and Foysters, much publicity was given to the stories of the events that were happening in the Rectory, and the Smiths, through their daily newspaper, the Daily Mirror, sought the help of psychic researchers. A well-known researcher of the time, Harry Price, was commissioned by the newspaper to investigate the hauntings, and to him we owe much, if not all, of the publicity that arose. He subsequently wrote two books about the Rectory - The Most Haunted House in England, and The End of Borley Rectory (1946).

Harry Price was a well known and prolific psychic journalist and it is probably right to emphasise that he was first and foremost a journalist, and his research was secondary to this. He founded his own Research organisation - The National Laboratory of Psychical Research, later called the University Council for Psychical Investigation (though this organization had nothing at all to do with London University). He was a foreign research officer for the American SPR and had conducted a great number of investigations into the work of famous mediums - in fact he largely specialized in working with mediums. His entry into the Borley story was crucial and responsible for the tremendous notoriety of the whole story.

In 1935 the Foysters left the Rectory and the new rector asked the permission of the Bishop to live elsewhere. The place was so notorious; as well as being greatly rundown and delapidated, it was an unattractive home! The parish was shortly to be combined with another, and so the new rector took up his residence at Liston. In 1937, after the Rectory had been empty for eighteen months Harry Price rented it for a year and moved in teams of investigators to see if they could solve the mystery of the hauntings. This, of course, was done with all due publicity through the newspapers with which Price was associated. Advertisements were placed in the papers asking for people to volunteer for a continual rota of investigators, and some 48 people were chosen. The leaders of this team were a Mr. S.H. Glanville, his son, Roger, and Mr. Mark Kerr Pearse. During this period also the story is enlarged and changed through the planchette writings of Mr. Glanville's daughter, Helen.

Finally, when Price's tenancy lapsed at the end of his year of investigations the rectory was bought by a Captain Gregson in December 1938, and it was destroyed by fire in mysterious circumstances at midnight on February 27th 1939. It was subsequently discovered that Captain Gregson had an unfortunate history where fires were concerned. Many of his properties had been destroyed in this way, and he collected handsomely on the insurance!

But burning the Rectory did not destroy the legend, so powerful had it become during the previous years as a result of all Price's publicity. Even today, in 1986, people still visit the site, groups of people band together to investigate the ruins, and many of the poltergeist phenomena have been alleged to be transferred to the church itself. People spend nights in the church tape-recording all the noises they hear, and controversy still rages.

In 1944 the ruins of the rectory were finally demolished, and during this demolition Price was around and photographed a brick which he alleged was paranormally levitated. He

was accompanied at that time by a reporter from the American magazine LIFE.

So what were the strange and mysterious happenings going on at this quiet country Rectory that led to it having an international reputation for haunting?

We will give a brief outline of the events in chronological order.

The period when the Bull family was in residence was between 1863 and 1927. The family had built the property, and owned it, and subsequent Rectors who lived there were given the living by the members of the Bull family. The last two daughters, the Misses Bull were still around in the 1950's and were interviewed by various investigators. During this period the haunting followed the lines of what one might call a traditional ghost story, very typical of many of the stories built around the larger homes in a great part of rural England. People walking the unlit country roads on moonlight nights would report seeing phantom coaches, pulled by headless horses, or driven by headless coachmen, and these 'ghosts' were seen on the roads leading to Borley. There was also a legend, subsequently proved to have no foundation in fact, that the Rectory itself was built on the site of an old monastery. Although it was not built on such a site, it would not have been remarkable if it had, as that district had been full of churches, monasteries, and nunneries during the previous two or three hundred years, and the whole area abounds in stories of ghostly nuns and monks. The particular story attached to this (non-existent) monastery was again a fairly well-used story - that of a monk and nun falling in love and running away together. They were caught, the monk was hanged, and the nun was bricked up in the walls of her nunnery. There was a nunnery at Bures some 8 miles away from Borley. But there is no evidence for the truth of this story. However the nun was among the regular 'ghosts' seen around the Rectory. There were variations on the story, one was that the ghost was the ghost of Arabella Waldegrave (of the noble family of that name) brought against her will to Borley, another that it was the ghost of a maidservant that the Rev. Henry Bull had ravished and then murdered. There was also a story that the ghost was 'old Amos' a previous gardener, and the ghost of Harry Bull himself was said to have been seen. During the Bull incumbency the ghost of the allegedly bricked up nun, plus the phantom coaches, and headless horses were the favourites. As we have said these types of story abound all over England, and especially in the more remote rural areas of the Eastern parts of England. No village, no large house of any standing or age, is without its legend. One of us (Iris Owen) who lived her childhood in rural eastern England remembers a number of such stories attached to her own locality. If this were all that happened at Borley the place would have long been forgotten.



The story becomes more interesting when we look at the Smith incumbency. By 1927 there were no more members of the Bull family to serve as Rector, and the two Misses Bull, in whose gift the living was vested, offered the charge to the Rev. Eric Smith and his wife, a childless couple. Mr. Smith took holy orders late in life, while he was working in India, and subsequently his health failed him, and he was compelled to return to England. They were assigned to Borley and later Mrs. Smith recalled for investigators how appalled she was at her first sight of the Rectory. (Perhaps one should explain that although the Rectory and the gift of the living belonged to the members of the Bull family, the rectors were also under the jurisdiction of the Bishop, and if he accepted the living on their behalf, they had to accept it!). Mrs. Smith described the Rectory as being an enormous house, with 23 rooms, connected by 3 staircases on the two main floors, with considerable cellerage in the basement, and storage room in the roof. There was no central heating, no gas, or electricity, or main water. The water supply was a well in theyard. The house was cold, draughty and depressing. It was in a considerable state of disrepair, and infested with rodents. Attached was a cottage, stables, harness rooms, and there were nine acres of garden! It was a daunting prospect for an elderly couple coming straight from the warm climate of India, and the comparative luxury of the life of an Englishman in the days of the Raj!

The Smiths, being new to the district, of course were unaware of the stories of the hauntings, but they cannot have been left long in ignorance. Everyone in the locality knew the stories, and the Smiths hired a very impressionable local girl, who was well aware of the history. They laughed at the tales of ghosts and ghostly activities, but they worried over the fact that their parishioners might refuse to come to the rectory for meetings because of its reputation. So, in their naiveté they decided to approach a psychical research society, hoping to obtain an authoritative verdict that there was nothing sinister about the place, and hoping to reassure their fearful parishioners. So they wrote to the Daily Mirror newspaper asking for help in contacting such investigators and, of course, they got Harry Price and a reporter Mr. Wall. Not only were the hopes and intentions of the Smiths unfulfilled, but a spate of physical phenomena of many kinds immediately broke out around the astonished and bewildered couple.

Hordes of curious sightseers descended upon them, even motor coach tours were run to see the "Borley Ghost". The whole situation got out of control.

But the picture itself had changed from the kind of hauntings reported in the Bull's time. Mr. Smith first reported the sound of slow dragging footsteps across the floor of an unoccupied room. A mysterious light appeared in one of the windows, shining from an unoccupied room, and where there was no light. Whisperings and voices were heard in thin air, with no-one present. Ghosts were seen, nuns, coaches, and other figures.

Objects were moved, in some cases hurled about - a candlestick was hurled downstairs and smashed against the stove, and other small objects, mothballs, pebbles, and the like. Bells rang of their own volition. The Rectory was fitted with old-fashioned type bells; a rope would be pulled in the various rooms, and the bell would ring in the kitchen. These bells were constantly ringing of their own accord. Knockings were heard in the walls and coming from the back of a mirror.

Price and his assistants were fully involved in the investigations at this stage, and every event was being reported faithfully in the daily newspapers. The situation was totally out of hand.

The Smiths found it unbearable, and managed to persuade the Bishop to move them, and in the middle of 1929 they moved out. The Rectory was vacant for about six months.

It will be noted that, whereas during the time the Bulls lived in the house the events reported were mainly reports of ghosts, during the time the Smiths were in residence the phenomena were predominantly of the poltergeist type, mixed with some reports of ghosts having been seen. Also, the situation having become known to many people, including Harry Price, the chances of any newcomer to the Rectory not being aware of the history were non-existent. When the Foysters arrived in 1930 they could not have failed to have been made aware of all the goings on.

It is important for the reader to be aware of the circumstances under which the reporting of the events at Borley during the Foyster incumbency was done. During the time of the Bulls, any knowledge of the reputed hauntings was conveyed by word of mouth, local gossip, stories etc, and nothing was printed. The Smiths called in the news media, and all of the events that happened during their time were reported to the newspapers through Price. Things were done differently for the Foysters. The Rev. Foyster kept a diary of the happenings and, although he initially sought the help and advice of Harry Price, Price did in fact pay only one visit (perhaps two) to the Rectory during the whole period of the Foyster tenancy. On that first visit he accused Marianne Foyster of producing the phenomena herself, and she was so outraged by this suggestion that she refused to have him in the house again. After Foyster's death, and after Marianne had left the Rectory, Price got hold of the manuscript of Foyster's diary and reprinted it under the title beforementioned The Most Haunted House in England. Price himself did not witness any of the phenomena he so graphically describes in the book, he merely rewrote Foyster's accounts. Foyster wrote two manuscripts, the first diary he sent to Price for comment and criticism. Price kept it for some time, and when asked for its return he claimed he had lost it. Foyster then rewrote the manuscript, which accounts for some discrepancies in the accounts, and after Foyster's death it was left to his sister, from whom Price subsequently obtained a copy.

So it will be seen that, although Price wrote his two best-selling books in a manner which might lead the reader to believe that he was present and aware of the phenomena that happened on a day-to-day basis, in fact the books were written well after the event, and Price had not been a witness to anything that had happened.

Foyster kept his diary from the very first day that the family moved to Borley, and he recorded that on that very day he, his wife, and little Adelaide heard strange footsteps around the house, and a voice calling "Marianne dear". (Adelaide was two and a half years old at that time). Foyster was a man of about 60, badly crippled by chronic arthritis. His health deteriorated steadily from the time he came to England. He was greatly liked and respected in the neighbourhood, and was described as "a delightful, typical cultured parson, of the best type, a scholar, a Cambridge (Pembroke College) M.A. and much travelled." Marianne Foyster, his wife was aged between 25 and 30, physically attractive; she was a redhead, and to all appearances in excellent health.

The phenomena started in the time-honoured way. The footfalls were followed by other noises, the bells rang again without human hand to pull the ropes, bottles, and small pebbles were hurled down the staitcase well. Perfumes would float into the house, mysterious writings appeared on the walls, furniture was moved, objects disappeared, indeed all the classic types of poltergeist phenomena with which the reader is now familiar were alleged to have occurred. Some of these were supposed to have been witnessed by visitors and neighbours. Concurrently also the regular ghosts appeared, the nun, the headless horses, the ghost of Harry Bull and so on. One visitor to the Rectory figures prominently in the diary of the occurrences. This was a young man by the name of Edwin Whitehouse. He was a young man who had suffered severe shell-shock during the first World War, and was in something of an emotional and nervous state. He and Foyster became friends, and as Edwin was in a state of great indecision about his spiritual state of mind, they had many discussions. Edwin eventually joined a Benedictine community of monks. During the time he stayed with the Foysters it is recorded that poltergeist phenomena were at their height, and his name figured prominently in some of the wall writings.

Apart from the 'goings-on' at the Rectory in the realm of poltergeist phenomena, Mrs. Foyster excited the curiosity, and sometimes censure, of the local population. While Lionel Foyster was the typical country parson, she was far from being the typical country parson's wife! Attractive and lively, life in a country village obviously bored her, and she took every opportunity to escape. She was fond of taking trips to London, and for a time set up a flower shop in partnership with a certain man, Mr. D'Arles, whose son she was also looking after. The Foysters were fond of children, and had none of their own, Adelaide was adopted - more about her later. Mrs. Foyster adopted children privately, and also through the local Church of England Children's Society. It should be remembered

that in the 1930's it was considered a social disgrace for single girl to give birth to a baby out of wedlock, and it was common for these girls to go to a special home for the delivery of the baby, and leave without it - the baby being subsequently privately adopted. Adoption laws were much more lax then than they are today. Marianne Foyster, it was reported by the villagers, had many strange babies around the place, and the rumour was that she was engaged in the business of 'baby farming'. She, for her part, despised the villagers, as a lot of old gossips, and had little patience with them.

While they were at the Rectory the Rev. Foyster's health steadily deteriorated, until by 1935 he was almost totally crippled and unable to continue to serve his parish. They left the Rectory, and subsequently moved around various villages in Norfolk and Suffolk. Lionel Foyster died in 1945 of his arthritic complaint, he was infact 67 years old when he died, so that although he was stated to have looked 60 when at Borley, he was in fact only 52 or 53; undoubtedly his illness made him look much older. Marianne was born in 1899, so she was only 32 years old in 1931.

After the Foysters left the Rectory it remained vacant, as we have said, and Harry Price set up his investigating teams to explore the hauntings. He was to publish his first book on Borley in 1940, while the Rev. Foyster was still alive, but living totally crippled and an invalid in the remote rural areas of Suffolk. His later book, The End of Borley Rectory was not published until after Foyster's death, in 1946.

Price took over the now empty Rectory for a year and a half from May 1937, and inserted advertisements in newspapers for investigators to take part in round-the-clock investigations of this most haunted house. Some 48 people were chosen for this team, the leaders of which appear to have been a Mr. S.H. Glanville, his son Roger Glanville, and Mr. Mark Kerr-Pearse. Price produced a sort of 'do-it-yourself' guide for his team on how to act when investigating these strange phenomena. It was called the Blue Book, and was, of course, full of suggestions and ideas as to what they might expect to see. Putting on one side the various taps, cracks, thumps and rustlings reported by the team we are struck by the paucity and insignificance of most of the phenomena they reported. But there were a number of clear-cut events which those experiencing them attributed to a paranormal cause. For instance there was an occasion when a pile of books, which had been carefully placed and attached to an electric circuit, which would ring a bell when disturbed, was in fact disturbed. But there was also some doubt as to whether a stray cat that had been ejected from the house previously might not have managed to return and thus be responsible.

Perhaps the most significant feature of this period of investigation was the series of seances and table-rapping sessions which were conducted by some of the leading investigators. In the manner with which we have become familiar in the 'Philip experiment' a table was used for communication and questions were asked that required a 'yes' or 'no' answer. The

transcripts of the 'conversations' that ensued with the table were given to Miss Helen Glanville, Mr. Glanville's daughter, and she, using a planchette, which she had never done before, produced a considerable amount of material in which was built up the story of the murdered nun, giving the name Mary or Marie Lairre, and on which subsequently a remarkable series of speculations was founded. There was little in the writings that had not already been the cause of speculation, and some of the information allegedly given by the 'spirits' was readily available. These scripts were later published and added to the confusion which surrounded the whole picture.

After Price's teams had finished their tenancy, the Rectory was bought, as has been said previously, by a Captain Gregson, and it was burned down in February 1939, probably for the insurance money.

But the story, far from dying out, was revived in all its intensity by the publication of Price's first book in 1940. Price received voluminous correspondence and everyone put forward their own theories. All kinds of research projects started; people researched the local history to find the records of the murdered nun; the foundations of the ruins were dug up to look for hidden passages; human bones were found, and assumed to be the remains of the nun, and these were ultimately buried in the churchyard at Liston. Many people wrote to Price claiming that they had experienced strange phenomena on the ruined site of the rectory. The story was picked up by newspapers and magazines all over the world, the BBC ran a series of programmes on the happenings, and in general Borley became a household word. It was just after the end of the Second World War, and people needed something other than warfare to think about. Also it should be remembered travel was very restricted still; it was not even easy to go to the coast for a holiday in Britain at that time; the beaches were still full of mines, and barbed wire; so it was natural that people would flock to see something of the nature of a haunted house, even if it was no longer there! From 1947-1953 the story enjoyed incredible publicity, séances were held in the grounds, lectures given, newspaper articles written.

On the 24th March 1948 Harry Price died. Later in the same year a Mr. Charles Sutton wrote an article in which he accused Harry Price of fraudulently producing the phenomena himself on the occasion of a joint visit to the rectory in 1929. Mr. Sutton was a reporter on the staff of the Daily Mail newspaper. Mrs. Eric Smith, who had written in October 1945 to the Church Times stating that neither she nor her husband believed Borley to be haunted, wrote again to the Daily Mail, again asserting her disbelief in the Borley haunting.

In subsequent years controversy has raged over what did actually happen at Borley. There are those who believe that everything that has been described happened as stated, and those who equally fervently believe that nothing happened at all, and that the whole thing is a joke or hoax from the beginning.

As a result of this controversy, the British Society for Psychical Research decided to conduct a critical survey of the evidence for such a haunting, and in 1955 this Committee produced its report.

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## HARRY PRICE.

Before we give a summary of the investigation conducted on behalf of the British Society for Psychical Research we should perhaps write a few lines about Harry Price, self-styled investigator and ghost-hunter. His role in the story of Borley is crucial, without him there would likely have been no story, or perhaps it would have been presented in a different form! Almost as much controversy has been generated about Harry Price as about Borley Rectory itself, and almost as many books and articles have been written. Like the story of the Rectory itself it is extremely difficult to disentangle truth from fiction; and to arrive at any kind of understanding of what kind of a person Harry Price really was is an exercise in detection. But in order to understand the story at all we have to come to some conclusions about Harry Price himself, and the role he played in the story. The real difficulty in dealing with this investigation is the total volume of material that has been written about the events. Endless people were involved in various ways, as investigators, as correspondents, both of Price and the newspapers, independent observers, professional researchers, everyone jumped on the bandwagon and published their theories, their experiences their knowledge, for what they were worth. As many books and newspaper articles were written about Price subsequent to his death as were written about Borley. Added to that the fact that endless television, radio, and journalistic interviews took place with many people, and countless newspaper articles were produced giving differing views of the happenings; it will be realised that anyone attempting to uncover the truth is having to find their way through an incredible maze.

Harry Price was born in 1881 in Shrewsbury; the son of a paper manufacturer was how he described himself in his autobiography The Search for Truth. Price's own story of his early life painted him as the only child of wealthy and indulgent parents. He says that early in life he became fascinated with the art of conjuring, and became a magician himself. He left the public with the impression that he was descended from an ancient and distinguished family. When after his death suspicions were raised about his honesty and integrity, Mr. Trevor Hall researched into Price's early history, and came up with some surprising facts. Records of births, marriages and deaths are meticulously kept, and readily available to the public in England, and Mr. Hall was by now an expert in the use of such records. He discovered that in fact Price was not the "Shropshire Lad" he claimed to be, but was born in London, the son of a commercial traveller, who travelled in paper, it is true, but he was not the wealthy manufacturer portrayed by Price. In his own biography Price stated that he became an engineer, but according to the research undertaken by Trevor Hall, plus evidence from a book of cuttings from his early life left by Price, it seems evident that he in fact spent his early years after school peddling some kind of veterinary medicine. One should mention, of course, that it would be of no consequence that Price deceived the public about his early life, if it were not for the fact that the very nature of his subsequent writings required that he

be believed to be telling the absolute truth.

There is not room in this paper to detail Price's own version of his early life, along with the reality as discovered by subsequent researchers, it is sufficient to note that Price showed himself to have little regard for the truth in the printed word. He was a man interested in unusual and out-of-the-way subjects. He became an expert conjurer, he was for a time interested in numismatics, archaeology, he was a book collector, and he certainly had a very active mind. His interest in conjuring is alleged to have lead to his interest in psychical research. He joined the Society for Psychical Research in 1920, and when Dr. Eric Dingwall was appointed research officer for that organization in 1922 he collaborated with Dingwall in some publications at that time regarding the investigations of some spirit mediums. Dingwall was impressed by Price's energy and exceptionally keen and ingenious mind and invited Price to participate in further investigations, particularly of the medium Rudi Schneider. Much was published about sittings with this famous medium again the subject for many books and articles, but in essence, both Trevor Hall and Anita Gregory, who researched the incidents later, came to the conclusion that Price manipulated the evidence by means of a fake photograph which he himself produced, and maintained that Rudi Schneider cheated in the seances. The other investigators at the time were inclined to believe the phenomena were genuine.

The background was as follows. Price had married a lady with a small amount of money, and so was able to be somewhat financially independent. Fired with ambition to become a full-time psychical researcher he set up his own laboratory, which he called the National Laboratory for Psychical Research. Dingwall had become somewhat disenchanted by him by then, and was reluctant to give him much work to do for the British S.P.R. In fact, Price for many years unsuccessfully tried to merge his Laboratory with the British SPR, but the members of that society feared Price would attempt to 'take-over' the whole operation, and they did not trust his integrity, and they were suspicious of his publicity-seeking. "Price became angry with other researchers, and preferred to discredit their work rather than be deprived of the monopoly of acclaim he considered his just due". So wrote Anita Gregory, on reporting the conclusions of her findings into the affair of Rudi Schneider. The British SPR was about to bring Schneider to England for a more extensive series of tests of his mediumship, when Price published his doctored photograph alleging the the medium was a blatant fraud. The publicity was such that it was impossible to continue the experiments, and the medium's reputation was sullied for ever. It was only after Price's death that the original of the photograph was found among his archives and found to be a deliberate composite. One cannot help but wonder at the mentality of people who, committing such offences, leave the evidence behind in their papers. It could so easily have been destroyed after it had served its purpose. Perhaps in some remote corner of his mind Price hoped it would one day be found, and wrongs be put right. How can one understand the minds of people like



Price who pervert the truth so easily?

Today Price is, of course, best remembered for his writings on Borley. One might wonder why he spent so much of his time and effort on this particular case, but it is important to remember that although all the actual events happened during the early 1930's Price did not get down to the actual writing of his accounts until the War years:- 1939 - 1945. While the events were allegedly happening Price took very little notice of them - he had visited the Smiths a few times, and written newspaper articles, but he only visited the Foysters once, perhaps twice, and corresponded in a fairly desultory fashion with Lionel Foyster during the years that the most active phenomena were supposedly taking place. Even after the Rectory burned Price himself did not lead his team of investigators, he employed a large number of naive and enthusiastic volunteers, and let them loose on the site with very little direction or supervision. He accepted happily and uncritically whatever they told him. During that time he himself was travelling extensively, investigating, writing, lecturing, and enjoying a reputation as one of the country's foremost psychical researchers. In fact, it was not an exaggeration to say that he had a world-wide reputation, largely self-claimed.

Then came the War, and Price's travels were totally cut-off. Newspaper print was scarce, and newspapers had room only for war news. People were not interested in ghosts and paranormal events. Suddenly Price saw himself fading from the public view, and that was when he collected together all the material about Borley and started to write his best-selling book, The Most Haunted House in England.

In spite of the fact that he had visited Borley so infrequently, after his death and when people were beginning to ask questions about his integrity several people came forward and claimed that they had at times witnessed Price himself fraudulently producing the phenomena, a reporter says he caught Price throwing stones, and his pocket was full of stones - Marianne herself said then, and still maintains that a mysterious event when a glass of wine was apparently turned into ink was one of Price's conjuring tricks. At the time people realised that if they accused Price to his face they would not be believed, because of his reputation; also they were well aware of the laws of libel which were very strict in England, and they did not care to get entangled in law suits.

This was the man who was responsible for all the publicity about Borley Rectory, and who gave it it's reputation as the most haunted house in England.

THE INVESTIGATIONS OF THE COMMITTEES OF THE SOCIETY FOR  
FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.  
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The story of Borley had reached such proportions some few years after Price's death on March 29th 1948 that it became something of a "benchmark" case. Whenever a phenomenon occurred in other situations and doubt was cast on the validity of what was happening people were apt to quote Borley, rather on the lines that because of what happened there anything of a similar nature that happened elsewhere should be believed. One could not escape Borley, it was the perfect and definitive poltergeist case, the ultimate, and to most people's minds proved up to the hilt! "Look at all the reputable people who were involved" people said "How can you disbelieve what they have attested to so strongly"? And yet serious and scientific investigators were left with a lot of nagging doubts.

So the Council of the Society for Psychical Research decided to conduct an extensive and independent enquiry into the evidence relating to Borley, hopefully to settle the matter once and for all. They commissioned three committees, each to examine onephase of the story. One committee was to look at the history of Borley during the time the Bull family lived at the Rectory, another committee was detailed to examine the Smith incumbency, and a third committee was to examine the Foyster incumbency. These committees presented a joint report to the S.P.R. in 1955, and the report was subsequently printed as a complete issue of the SPR Journal in January 1956. We ourselves were working with Trevor Hall at the time, who was a member of the committee investigating the Foyster incumbency, and so had opportunity to participate in a minor way in that particular investigation. With Trevor we visited not only the site of the rectory, and the church, but many of the homes that Marianne Foyster lived in subsequently, and were present at many of the interviews conducted with people who had known the Foysters.

The full report is still readily available, and here we will only summarise the conclusions. The committees did a very thorough and effective job, and spent much time.

The committee researching the Bull incumbency were able to interview the two Misses Bull, who were still alive, although of course quite elderly at this time. It was quite clear that during this period the phenomena really took the form of the traditional ghost story, of a type with which most country people are familiar, and which abound all over England, and perhaps particularly in that rather lonely and somewhat mysterious area of eastern England. Such stories would have completely faded in the normal course of events as the countryside became more fully integrated into the modern age.

In the present day and age it is a fact that people are more apt to see flying saucers, U.F.O.'s and creatures from outer space, than nuns, headless horsemen and the like. Ghosts are very much a product of the cultural life of the times. But, in their report, this committee, after having interviewed the Misses Bull very carefully and extensively, remarks .... 'what is more disturbing is the discovery of indications that Price apparently over-stated Miss Bull's narrative in his books'. Miss Bull told the interviewers that she had been annoyed that Price never gave her the opportunity of approving the section of his book dealing with her testimony, and that in consequence he made a number of mistakes. The committee were also able to compare Price's contemporary notes with his later published versions, and found instances of exaggeration and over-statement. On one occasion, for instance, the notes read, and Miss Bull's recollection was, that "Rev. Harry Bull saw <sup>the</sup> coach. Juvenal, retriever, terrified and growled. Saw man's legs, rest hid by fruit trees, thought poacher, followed with Juvenal, gate shut, but saw legs disappear thro' gate". When published Price alleged of this incident that Harry Bull saw a headless man, without mention of the suspicion that he might have been a poacher, or tramp. Incidentally, tramps and poachers were very common in the neighbourhood.

It is likely that Harry Bull did from time to time 'see' apparitions. It was said that he was always asleep, always having to be found to come to meals, and usually found asleep in one or other of the arbours. It was probable that he suffered from narcolepsy, and if he were in the habit of dropping off to sleep at all hours, he would experience a similar number of periods of drowsiness producing a condition in which he would be susceptible to hypnopompic hallucinations.

The two Misses Bull, and their brother Mr. Alfred Bull maintained that they themselves had experienced no objective phenomena during the whole of their lives there, and that poltergeist activity was reported for the first time by the Smiths. They had, however, on one occasion collectively seen something which they took to be the ghost of the nun. The committee reported that until 1929 the stories never spread beyond Borley and its immediate vicinity, and that until then Borley was no different from the many English country houses which possess a local ghost story.

We then come to the Smith incumbency. The Smiths had spent their early married life in India, but decided for health reasons to return to England, and Mr. Smith took Holy Orders and was appointed to Borley in October 1928. They had one resident maid, Mary Pearson, who was only fifteen years of age, and she had a young man friend aged about 16 or 17 years, who spent some time in the rectory. Mary and the young man, Fred Tatum subsequently married. It was very common in those days for young girls in the villages, leaving school at fourteen years of age, to go into local service. Although their home might be in the village, they would live in, working long hours,

often a 12 or 14 hour day, with a couple of hours off during the afternoon. They would have half a day off during the week. They were supplied with food, uniform, and a small bedroom to sleep in, perhaps sharing if more than one maid was kept, and they lived the daytime hours in the kitchen. If the mistress was lenient a boyfriend would be allowed to visit during certain hours of the day. They were on call continually. The wage was generally around half a crown a week (about a dollar Canadian money).

As we have said before, the Smiths were appalled when they arrived at the Rectory, it was in shocking condition, bad sanitation, broken pipes, no water, leaking roof. It was bitterly cold, there was no heating, and they were able to furnish and live in only a few of its many rooms.

They were soon made aware of the local reputation, and worried whether their parishioners would come out to meetings in the rectory. It was they, who in their anxiety to get something done about the rectory, who contacted Harry Price and asked him to come, and as we have related earlier, this was the period when the poltergeist phenomena started to happen, and the Rectory attained its reputation in the newspapers and magazines of the time. The Smiths only stayed at Borley for nine months. They left the district shortly after vacating the rectory, and Mr. Smith died in 1940 just before Price's first book was published.

Price wrote to Mr. Smith in May 1939 asking him to write an account of their experiences at Borley, or else to confirm an account they had given to Mr. Glanville so that it could be inserted as a chapter in the book. Mr. Smith was reluctant; in his reply he said that it was not so much the rumours of apparitions that had worried them as the bad sanitation, broken pipes and isolation, and that these were the cause of their leaving the rectory. Price persisted, and Smith replied again "Mrs. Smith and I would rather be left out of it .. we really did not believe there were any such things as ghosts".

In October 1945, Mrs. Smith wrote in a letter to the Church Times ..... "I would like to state definitely that neither my husband nor myself believed the house haunted by anything else other than rats and local superstitions. We left the rectory because of its broken down condition, but certainly found nothing to fear there"

In 1949 Mrs. Smith again wrote, this time to the Daily Mail some ten months after Price's death making the same statement. As a result of this letter members of the S.P.R. interviewed her at that time, and she gave her version of the occurrences, but did not want publicity at that time. She had had so much publicity as a result of Price's investigations she dreaded anything further. However, she gave consent to publication of her version for this special committee, and reiterated her own account. She said "I have no reason at all to think Borley was haunted. Of course our minds were turned towards the subject,

owing to so much gossip, but in spite of this nothing occurred which could not be explained. One or two items occurred which were not explained and I thought "That's funny!" but surely such things occur in all people's lives, and only means they were unable to trace the cause."

She goes on to describe some of these incidents, and then went on to say that when Mr. Price arrived down to investigate, "immediately we were astonished at an onset of phenomena, bangs, clatterings, keys, thrown, etc. We could not help being led to suppose that he himself was producing some of the effects." She goes on to relate the occurrence of some of the other phenomena, including the fact that at the dinner table the water in her glass turned into ink (which her guest believed to have been a trick of Price's). It is significant that on the only occasion Price was at dinner with the Foysters at Borley a similar incident occurred when a glass of wine was changed into a glass of ink. Marianne regarded this as a conjuring trick performed by Price.

Mrs. Smith went on to say that she knew Price to be an expert conjurer, and they had their suspicions, as well as being puzzled by what was happening. She says that on one occasion 'the maid, Mary, said to her "It was that man threw that coin, so I threw some sugar". I know she did produce some of the phenomena, and to add to the excitement.'

In addition to the Smiths, and their maidservant, Mary, others who took part in the investigations at Borley during this period were suspicious of Price's behaviour. Most of these people were reluctant to accuse Price at the time, or during his lifetime such was his formidable reputation. One must also realise that each did not know of the suspicions of the other. It is only when the facts are all collected together that a pattern emerges. Among those who suspected Price were Mr. Wall, the Daily Mirror reporter, Mr. Sutton, Lord Charles Hope, Major Douglas-Home and Miss Ledsham, all people who had visited the Rectory with Price in order to pursue the investigations.

Mrs. Smith admitted to the Committee that she was pleased that all the publicity gave them a strong case to make to the bishop for moving them, which of course he eventually did. She maintained however that the only reason she and her husband wished to move was because of the dreadful living conditions, it was completely unbearable to live there, and they would do almost anything to get away. So they did not voice their suspicions of Price's behaviour, nor did they deny anything he said about the phenomena, after all, they were in a difficult position, they had called him in, hoping that enough publicity might be generated to give them the means of persuading the bishop to move them. It was unfortunate that they chose

Harry Price.

The committee set up to investigate the Foyster incumbency included Trevor Hall, who himself is an expert on magic and conjuring, being a Vice President of the prestigious Magic Circle in Britain. He is also a historian and archivist of some note, with all the instincts of a detective when it comes to tracking down public records. In England the registration of births, deaths, marriages, and wills are all matters of public record and any member of the public may see such records on payment of a nominal fee for the search. The committee were well aware of the dubious reputation ascribed to Price by other investigators, and it is fair to say that they went into the investigation with a fairly firmly fixed idea that the whole episode was a complete fraud. From their approach to the subject it is also fairly clear that they believed Marianne Foyster was the culprit. They could not conceive, for instance, that the scholarly, witty, and popular Lionel Foyster would perpetrate any tricks, but his young, vivacious redheaded wife would nicely fit the bill. As we have said Price himself could not be held responsible for all the phenomena that happened during the Foyster's days, as he only visited them twice during five years. So, if the phenomena were occurring, and Lionel Foyster said they were, in his daily recorded diary, which Price claimed to have reproduced faithfully, then as Lionel was an honest man, they reasoned that only Marianne could be playing tricks.

In his book Price alleged that at least 2,000 allegedly paranormal phenomena occurred. The reader needs to remember that Price's book was written in 1940, nearly ten years after the beginning of the happenings, and that it was based entirely on manuscripts he had obtained that were written by Lionel Foyster, and which purported to be a meticulously kept diary of the events, and which Price appeared to accept as the entire truth. Lionel Foyster at the time of publishing the book was a total cripple, confined entirely to his bedroom in a cottage in Norfolk to which he and Marianne had retired. Price interviewed none of the participants or witnesses as far as we are aware, other than a few local villagers, who repeated the old ghost stories.

The committee concentrated on two aspects of the case. They tried to evaluate and assess all the alleged phenomena that happened, and track down alleged witnesses and get their version of what happened. Trevor Hall, in particular, concentrated on Marianne's own background and history, acting on the supposition that if she was cheating there might be something in her background that would indicate the reason for this. It would not be of much value to this report to expound on the phenomena themselves, as they will be irrelevant to the main enquiry, but Trevor Hall's efforts uncovered a fascinating background to Marianne. Unfortunately it was incomplete, as they were unable to interview her personally, and so they

jumped to a number of unwarranted conclusions. They decided that on the basis of Marianne's background she was probably more responsible for the fraud they were sure had been perpetrated than was Price, or anyone else, and they did not consider seriously that any other explanation was feasible. Marianne was condemned unheard. Subsequently to their report her current address was obtained in the U.S. and she was asked to give her own version of the affair at the offices of the Parapsychological Association. However her interviewer was a lawyer, who asked her a lot of leading questions implying her guilt before she had had a chance to state her own version, and the interview was somewhat of a failure.

What the committee found out about Marianne's life was as follows. She had been born in Romily, Cheshire, on January 26th 1899. She lived in Ireland for a while during the first World War, and she married an Irishman there, who subsequently went to War and was never heard of again. She had a son by this marriage, whom she had left in the care of her parents while she worked in a munitions factory. After the War she went to Canada, and married the Rev. Lionel Foyster, posing as a spinster, and in her maiden name. The members of the committee thus assumed that the marriage to Foyster was bigamous, and they were not legally married. While in Canada the Foysters lived for some time within five miles of Amherst, the scene of the famous poltergeist case written about by Walter Hubbell, and the Foysters could not have failed to become aware of this story in all its details. (The reader of this paper will have read a full account of the Amherst Mystery in our previous paper). The members of the committee drew up comparison tables showing the similarity between the events that happened at Amherst, and those that were supposed to have taken place at Borley. Marianne was already firmly fixed in their minds as the chief villainess of the story.

Just before the Foysters returned to Canada they had adopted the small girl Adelaide, and they brought her back to England with them. She was one of a family of children tragically orphaned - the mother had died of a brain tumour, and the father was killed by falling off a hayrick.

When the Foysters came to Borley Marianne advertised for a companion for Adelaide, and a man by the name of D'Arles answered the advertisement. He was a single man (? widower) with a small child the same age as Adelaide. He and Marianne became friendly, and eventually she set up in business with him in a flower shop in the south of London. Naturally the committee members saw this as evidence of an 'affair' that the "bigamous" Marianne was having with him. The young Edwin Whitehouse also became friendly with the family, and again, in the process of painting the pot blacker still, it was alleged Marianne had an affair with him too. It was suggested that

the larger number of phenomena that seemed to happen when Edwin was around were engineered in order to cover up this alleged affair. The members of the committee discovered that various small children were living at the Rectory from time to time, and the word 'baby-farming' was bandied about. Efforts to trace the parentage of some of these children proved fruitless, although one at least was traced back to a home for unwed mothers, whence Marianne had brought the child. Some of these children were left behind in England, with a neighbour, when Marianne finally went to the U.S.

The Committee members dug out evidence that Marianne had gone through a marriage ceremony in a Roman Catholic Church at Ipswich with a man called Fisher. He was supposed to have lived for a time at the rectory, and to have gone with the Foysters when they left and moved into another home. Fisher was a commercial traveller, away from home for months at a time. The household contained a baby at the time, which was said to have been Marianne's, and which it was alleged was believed both by Fisher and Foyster that each was the father. A somewhat far-fetched story, but the villagers were only too willing and ready to gossip about Marianne, she had not cared for them, and they thoroughly disliked her, she was not the conventional vicar's wife at all.

When the Foysters moved from the rectory, it was said that Foyster was confined to his bedroom entirely by his arthritis, and Fisher was living with them, and Marianne passed Foyster off as her father, and Fisher as her husband.

However the liason with Fisher broke up just before Foyster died in April 1945, and Marianne lived with two or three of the children. Adelaide by then was about seventeen years old and had been in boarding school for sometime. Marianne met a man named O'Neill in Ipswich, an American doing contract work for the American Army in Europe. She married him in Ipswich Registry Office, and left for America with him the next day, taking with her the smallest child, a baby, which she had recently adopted, and which she led O'Neill to believe was his, and left the other children in the care of a neighbour, saying she was going to visit a dying relative in Ireland. She never communicated with anyone in England again, she completely disappeared, and it was many years before she was actually tracked down in the U.S. and her address obtained, when as previously stated, she was asked for her version of the events, and because of the hostility of the lawyer who questioned her, she refused to co-operate. At the time of the Committee's report the whereabouts of Adelaide were unknown as were also the whereabouts of Marianne's son by her first marriage.

Faced with the above evidence the reader might be forgiven for believing that the committee members were indeed right in ascribing guilt to Marianne over the events that happened at Borley. It was seen as a perfect cover-up for a life of licentiousness, deceit and bigamy! While everyone



was diverted by the poltergeist happenings they were not taking much notice of the goings on of Marianne, and her various friends! They were indeed also critical of Price, but much less so than of Marianne. Lionel Foyster they regarded as having been completely deceived, and believing everything he had written in his diaries. It never ever occurred to anyone of them that he might have had anything to do with the phenomena. They noted that he was deeply in love with his young wife and believed everything she said.

They completed their report with the words "A complete investigation in terms of finality is not now possible after two decades; the golden opportunity which was presented to Harry Price is not available to us".

And there it seemed the matter was going to rest. Nothing more could be done; all the evidence was available; the reader had to make up his or her own mind as to what had really happened over the 76 years of the life of the most haunted house in England. Controversy raged after the report was published; Borley is still a centre of attention in this field, and indeed everyone has their own point of view. Much more evidence of Price's unreliability and fraudulent practices has been uncovered. All the main characters have died, the last of them being Marianne, who died very recently, the last of the people who inhabited that haunted house.

By the strangest of coincidences after we came to Canada we had the opportunity to place the last piece in the jigsaw. We were able to interview Marianne under the circumstances described in the attached report, and at this time she was prepared to talk freely and openly about all the circumstances both of the haunting, and about her own life. Her account finally completes the picture, and we are never likely to know anything more about this case. We had promised her we would not publish her account during her lifetime, but she knew that we would after her death, as she expected other investigators, especially Trevor Hall to do, when she could no longer sue them for libel.

To our mind Marianne's account does indeed complete the picture, and we are inclined to believe what she told us - it makes sense, and fits what we know of human behaviour. But we will let our readers judge for themselves!.

Footnote - Mrs. Foyster's given name on her birth certificate was spelt Marianne - with one 'r'. When we subsequently interviewed her in the U.S. she spelt it in correspondence with us as Marrianne with 2 'r's, and it is so spelt in the report which we prepared following those interviews.

MARRIANNE'S STORY.

THE ALLEGED HAUNTING OF  
BORLEY RECTORY

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A report prepared for the  
Perrott Warrick Electors of  
Trinity College, Cambridge

by

Iris M. Owen and Paulene Mitchell

New Horizons Research Foundation 9 March 1979

## INTRODUCTION

There has to be an explanation and a reason for yet another article on Borley Rectory, and we believe we have the best reason for once again resurrecting this old story. It's probably best to present the facts and events as they occurred. One of the authors, Paulene Mitchell, came across a book - 'The End of Borley Rectory', by Harry Price, in a local library. She became interested in the story and tried to obtain Price's first book, 'The Haunting of Borley Rectory', and any other books pertaining to the subject. From the National Library in Ottawa she obtained Trevor Hall's book, 'New Light on Old Ghosts', and became interested in the whereabouts of Adelaide, the adopted child taken from Sackville, New Brunswick, to Borley. She decided to write to the local newspaper in Sackville to try and locate any members of the Tower family. She was surprised to learn that the newspaper had published her letter, and within a couple of weeks she received a reply from Miss Jean Cole, who was living in the house once occupied by the Tower family. Miss Cole was able to supply Adelaide's present whereabouts and her married name. She is married to an Englishman and has four children. The address of one of Adelaide's sisters in the States was also supplied by Miss Cole. Paulene contacted Adelaide's sister, a Mrs. Salisbury, by phone, and was told that Adelaide had very unhappy recollections of her life at Borley, and would not talk about that period of her life. Mrs. Salisbury also said that there were very bad feelings between the Tower family and Marrienne, whom they had not heard of for many years. Paulene then wrote to Trevor Hall, telling him of her knowledge, and a correspondence ensued when it was suggested that Paulene approach Marrienne Foyster O'Neil and attempt to get permission for Trevor Hall to publish the details of his investigations into her life at Borley. At this stage a book was contemplated by Paulene, possibly in collaboration with someone with more background knowledge of the Borley story. Paulene has no knowledge

of parapsychological research, and at this stage she contacted Iris Owen. Having obtained Marianne's present address from Trevor Hall, Paulene then contacted her by letter and asked for an interview. Her initial response was a definite NO, but after further correspondence and a couple of telephone calls, Marianne conceded and agreed to a meeting in a hotel, and not at her home. Her main objection to a resurrection of the story was that she had been badly treated by earlier investigators, and was now very wary of them, and she continually reiterated that there was nothing to it, there were no ghosts, and she was the victim of publicity seekers. Only when it was pointed out that her own version of the story would stop continual speculation did she agree to give her account of the occurrences, on certain conditions. She would tell the story to Paulene in the context of a biography of her life, and only to someone not involved in earlier research on the subject. She specifically stated that she would not tell the story to anyone who had written about her earlier, particularly mentioning Trevor Hall. She also gave her permission for use of the interview material she had given on tape to the Parapsychology Foundation, of New York. At this stage Iris Owen wrote to Mrs. Coly, present President of the Parapsychology Foundation, enquiring about the status of the tapes of these interviews, and asking whether any promises had been made to anyone about their release, and whether Mrs. Coly would make them available now. A very pleasant letter was received in reply; Mrs. Coly stated there was no agreement on either side about the disposition of the material, and she offered access to the transcripts. She stated that the P.F. had no intention of publishing the material themselves, and <sup>the authors</sup> were given access on the strict understanding that <sup>they</sup> did not quote directly from the interviews but only used the material to check out with what Marianne would be telling them now.

Marrianne's story was obtained by means of personal interviews, many telephone calls, and from letters *she* wrote. For her Borley is an unpleasant memory, not so much because of the hauntings, but because of Lionel's illness, and all the problems that accompanied his ill health.

She is still very youthful looking and smart, despite her 79 years. She is working as a Secretary at an elderly citizens home, and passes for some 15 years younger than she is. Once she had agreed to talk, she wrote quite full accounts of her life, and answered questions quite freely. She writes well, and in fact still does some writing for the local newspaper, and writes poetry. She learned to speak Danish when in Canada.

Perhaps the best way to tell Marrianne's story is to relate the events in chronological order, as she told them to <sup>the authors.</sup> us. In view of all that has been written about Marrianne, her personal life has become relevant to the story, and the details have to be cleared up.

In summary, the facts she gave are as follows. She was born in Romily, Stockport, Cheshire, in 1899, and was the eldest of two children, a younger brother, Geoffrey, being born later. The Rev. Foyster was a friend of the family, and baptized Marrianne. Her father was a musician and church organist, and Foyster visited them regularly. He gave her the first book she remembers reading, at six years of age, 'The World of Ice'. Marrianne's family moved to Ireland, and she says, 'I remember being sad when we left and went to Ireland'. She continues, 'Rev. Foyster visited us there, and then later went to Canada.

He continued to write to them regularly, and Marrianne remembers receiving Christmas and Easter cards from his, as well as a <sup>childrens'</sup> magazine, Sunshine. When he came home for holidays Foyster would visit the Shaws in Ireland, and Marrianne says he 'told such vivid stories of blizzards coming up out of nowhere, - of summer wild raspberries, wild strawberries, and fishing for trout and salmon. He had a vivid way of portraying people and places, firing us all with enthusiasm for far away places'.

Marrienne goes on to relate the poverty in Ireland in 1913, and how poor everyone was. "People lived on potatoes, wheat, flour and herrings - nobody died of hunger, but nobody got fat". Always fond of the outdoors and living creatures, she doesn't recall a time she was without a pet, and claims she learnt a lot from animals. She was not a superstitious person, although many were around her.

Then the Portland Cement Co opened a factory in the district and she says 'jobs came into being'. Her father got a job at the factory, and made the acquaintance of a young English boy who had come to Ireland to work, Harold Greenwood, aged 19. He was a talented violinist, and Marrienne's parents invited him to join with them in forming a musical group. Marrienne describes what happened thus -

"I had never had a beau, never been on a date before. He was a talented violinist and he and mother and father started a music group which ended up in a big concert in a local hall. I thought he was beautiful, and was delighted to be the object of his affections. He suggested marriage - and spoke of a way to get round the need for parental consent. This was to be married by declaration in Scotland. In order to do this he persuaded his sister to invite me to visit her. Father objected, but mother said it was OK since I'd been very properly invited.

So - we went - but before we went Harold slipped over to Stranraer, Wiganshire, [sic] and hired a room, making it an address. So we married, and later went on to visit Harold's sister and brother-in-law. We kept our marriage secret until I got pregnant. Then all hell came out of the closet. Mother nearly went raving mad. Finally Harold broke down and told of the Scotch marriage. That only made matters worse - now Dad got into the act. He said such a marriage was illegal - we'd not filled the residency laws, and no clergyman was present. So once more we were married - this time in church, Belfast Church of Ireland, my parents were witnesses. We were all happy.

Harold told us he wanted to buy a little cottage near to my parents.

This he did, and we moved in there. Harold continued to work at the plant, and as I said we were happy. He had always told us his only relations were his sister and 2 older brothers, now he began to mention a mother who was rather delicate. Our child was born, and it was a boy. We had a ball naming him.

One morning Harold's mother arrived out of a clear blue sky. She hated Ireland, the Irish, the little house, the scenery, but most of all she hated ME.

Within three weeks it was all over. Harold was like a whipped puppy. He must not kiss me, he must not do this, that or the other. Finally she announced he must go back to England with her - he agreed and said he would send for me later. My father asked me if this was what I wanted and I knew Harold would always resent me if I persisted in being what his mother called a burden. So I said NO. Whereupon Dad went to an attorney and had a deed drawn up that Harold and I were separated legally, forever. Harold's mother said she would oppose any payment, my dad said 'we don't want either your money, or you, or your son'. I never saw either of them again, as they both went back to England.

Later, by several years, my father was contacted in 1920 by a young English lady saying she had married Harold, and was planning on going to Australia to join him - except that an aunt of Harold's had communicated with her telling of his marriage to myself. She wanted to know was this true? My father went to England and visited her. We never knew if she went to Australia or not, my father thought not. Sometime later father received a letter from an aunt of Harold's saying that she had heard of Harold's death. She said she would find where and when, but she never did. I wrote to his sister, but she did not reply." Marianne's letter continues -

"I received a letter at this time from Lionel Foyster, who said he was moving to a new parish named Drummond. I replied and sent a snapshot of myself and my aging grandmother. Lion quickly replied that I'd changed from the

sweet child he'd christened. I wrote back 'Thanks a lot, I'm still a sweet person' - this tickled Lionel and he began a daily correspondence. I began to reply to his letters telling him of the troubled times (I.R.A.) He told me of the pine forests, fireweed, golden maples, and the foreign born folk he lived among. The next thing he asked me to come to Canada and share his life.

I contacted an attorney at law and told him of my marriage to Harold. Showed him the letter I'd received from Harold's mother, and told him of Harold's marriage to the English girl. The attorney said you have had no contact with this man for seven years. He consoled himself with someone else, and his aunt reported him dead. Then my advice is since you will be leaving Ireland and going to a new world to go out and look the situation over. If you like what you see, take a chance on the man.

I went to Canada, stayed nearly a month, then went through a ceremony of marriage with Lionel. Canon Smithers officiated, and after the ceremony Lionel bragged about christening me. Dr. Smithers said the marriage was legal in law, but void in the church's eyes - by reason of spiritual relationship.

We went to Long Lake for a vacation or honeymoon. We had sunshine, swimming, and canoeing, we played chess, and ate 3 good meals. Four days soon went, and we went back to Salmonhurst, where we found a lovely meal, and a quiet house awaiting us. We found also much mail and newspapers. Lion had a sermon to prepare and I unpacked. Next day we attended 3 services in the 3 churches of L's parish - we ate too much, because the Danes were hospitable, and good cooks. We were very happy, and life was good. The rectory was not too big, it had beautiful hardwood floors, a chemical toilet and an outside pump.

We returned to the old country for a vacation in 1924. We had a ball - we stayed with all Lion's folks, and later went to my folks for a visit. Three months passed too quickly and we had to go back to Salmonhurst. Once on shipboard we were very glad to go home. Lion had a bout of bronchitis, but not too bad, and before we knew it we were home at Salmonhurst. SURPRISE. During our absence the people



had put a new furnace under the house for us. We were truly home.

We were glad to have this wonderful addition to the house because New Brunswick winters were very cold. But hearts were warm. That winter Lion produced a really nice children's operetta and everyone pitched in to make costumes.

Lion worked like a dog - he was a good cleric - and never spared himself.

If he had stayed home in cold weather it would have been better for him.

The next summer we went to Prince Edward Island for a vacation. And then Lion had a heart attack while swimming - mild, but enough to warrant no more water sport. That winter he had a sudden onset of arthritis. Life wasn't so good after that. He knew he had to have lighter work, and began to enquire about a new parish. I had learned to read and speak Danish, and never wanted to leave.

I never liked towns much - I still don't. But leave we did, and went to Sackville, N.B.. Sackville at that time was a quaint little college town - calm unhurried, and definitely respectable in a prim old world way - to the church the sidewalks were wooden at that time. It was a very nice town with just the right number of stones [houses] and with some really beautiful houses.

A country club and a ladies college gave lustre to the city, fortunate enough to have St. Allison University and a business academy. It also had two foundries to add substance to its economy. All the best people knew each other, which made for close-knit relations.

It expected tradition from its professionals. The Rev. Wiggins, the former Episcopal pastor had given years of faithful service. Beautiful service by a dedicated man. Now a new man is in the pulpit - a man with liberal high church traditions. It was difficult going, and Lion did not help it much by setting a high priority on visiting the lower class people. I didn't help much. I was very suspect because I was too young. My predecessor, Mrs. Wiggins, was everything I am not. Grey haired, calm, a veteran in church work. She was a dear beautiful person, who was kind and good.

I took courses at L. B. Allison, and then my brother Geoffrey came to stay for a whole year. He obtained a job at the foundry and was soon singing in the choir, and entered into many church activities. I was glad to have Geoffrey because Lion had the lower church to take care of, in addition to the parish church, which combined with all the other activities, and visiting, kept him very busy. He also was not in the best of health, which slowed him up somewhat. This troubled him, and caused him to do more than he should, in order to prove he was alright. We both missed our Salmonhurst connections.

Geoffrey had his tonsils out and somehow or other this made him long for home. Even his paintings did not satisfy him any more, and he left, and we missed him. I missed being able to chatter to him. I developed polyps in the uterus, and bled often so I was told to have them removed, which I did in Amherst Hospital. By the way the hospital caught fire, and I was sent home 2 days after the operation. Mrs. Wiggins was so sweet, she came in and fixed me a lovely tray. Lion began to drill the choir, and introduced Warback's communion service. The organist left and a less experienced organist took over. Lion was beginning to lose sleep at night due to pain. He feared cancer, since his mother had suffered this malignancy. He refused to consult a medical doctor until it was nearly too late. He had fallen victim of arthritis deformans. On advice of his doctors he began to think of going to an English hospital, and with this in mind he settled on St. Luke's hospital in London.

Just around this time a tragic thing happened in Westcock; a man named Tower fell off a load of marsh hay and was killed. He left behind several children, the youngest a little girl, just a few months of age. The mother had died just previously of a brain tumour. We were asked to take the little girl, and did so. She was blond and nordic. We had an old photograph of Lion's mother as a little girl, and we added Adelaide to her name of Barbara. "

Marrienne goes on to relate how while Lionel would be attending St. Luke's hospital she would live in an apartment in St. John. She tells us how her

son Ian came over from Belfast to keep her company while Lionel was attending hospital in England. She says, "Lion thought it would be company for me to have Ian on his vacation. Lion had previously met Ian when we were home in '26. So Ian arrived just before we went to St. John. Lion and he horrified the neighbours by climbing out to the flat roof to view the city." She goes on to tell us that Ian suffered a ruptured appendix at this time, and so Adelaide was taken care of by a dear friend, Karen Johansen of Salmonhurst. Marianne found a job, and left Adelaide for the winter with her friend, while Ian attended the local school, St. Josephs. Marianne says, "he was a really good student - the fees were not high, and he received a scholarship". She then goes on to tell us, "Time passed and Lion returned to Canada - lame, and not much better than when he left. We went to visit Salmonhurst, retrieve Adelaide, and go to England, where Lion had the opportunity to become rector of Borley. He realised no more Canadian winters for him, no more fighting the elements. I guess we both hated this part, for Canada had been good to us. We both worried about returning to a land we both knew had changed so much. Ian wanted to stay at St. Josephs until his term was out. We sailed away to England after spending some time in Salmonhurst. We adopted Adelaide legally here through Anders J. Jensen. Once in England we went to Ireland for a short time, then we went to stay in private lodgings in Cornardagna, quite near the Bull residence. We attended Cornard church, which was high Anglican, and Lion really loved it. We visited often at the Bulls, and we were glad of this opportunity. The Bulls, first cousins of Lion's, were really delightfully different. We really liked them, and they liked us. We visited Borley Rectory and supervised some of the alterations, or should I say renovations. We fell in love with the terrace garden, really a sort of elevated rock garden. There was a cedar tree with a round flower bed beneath it. Gerald Bull had started this bed many years before. It was lovely in the spring with scillas, grape hyacinths, snowdrops, crocus, and Star of Bethlehem. The narcissus and jonquils followed later.

The rooms inside were enormous. The floors were varnished and the front hall stairs. Really looked beautiful but hard to keep up. The rector's warden, Sir George Whitehouse, and Lady Whitehouse called upon us immediately. He had been knighted for a bridge he had built in India. They were both plain people, kind and down to earth. They were avid gardeners and Sir George grew ----- which had to be seen to be believed. We met their sons, Langford, and O'Bre and visited Arthur Hall, their residence. We met their nephew, Edwin Whitehouse.

Edwin was a guest at Arthur Hall, he seemed to be at a loose end, having given up a teaching position, <sup>was</sup> and attempting to discover if he had a vocation. Edwin had been in U.S.N. as a midshipman and this had apparently taken toll of his nerves. Lion liked him very much; so did I, for we found it pleasant to have someone friendly and uncritical to talk with.

Adelaide was lonely without other children. We answered an ad. in the Times, and from this we acquired a little boy named Francois. He was a beautiful child, a few months younger than Adelaide, and we offered him a month's vacation. But long before that time was up Lion and I adored him, and so did all who came in contact with him. Big blue eyes and brown curls, and an ever present smile. He was a chubby lad. At no time did his father pay us anything in the line of cash. The father, Francois D'Arles, visited him every weekend at first. He did some handy work around the place and was good about the garden. Lionel's health deteriorated rather rapidly, and we were somewhat disconcerted by happenings taking place."

The following pages contain an account of the time the Foysters spent at Borley, and events subsequent to this time. As this was the crucial period, much time was spent discussing the alleged hauntings and Marrianne's recollections of the Rectory. Of course the Foysters knew of the history of Borley before they took the living; as well as hearing all about it from the Bulls when they visited in 1924, and 1926, they had met Mrs. Smith and heard from her at first hand of the Smith's experiences. (Marrianne said she felt Mrs. Smith was confused, and felt that after being talked to by Harry Price, Mabel Smith did not know what to believe!). Marrianne's own attitude when they went there was that it was a 'lot of tall stories', and she was impatient and annoyed at being stopped by the local people everytime she 'put her nose out of the door' to be asked for the latest. Probably Lionel Foyster got the idea of writing a book about a haunted rectory as a result of the intense interest of the local people-- Marrianne says he had the idea at an early stage. They were not happy with the villagers, and especially the local gentry (with the exception of the Whitehouses). The villagers thought they were too friendly with the wrong kind of people-- the lower classes. Lionel Foyster, especially, was a man who was friendly to everybody; he fed the local tramps, and let them sleep in the outhouses; he loved children; he adopted stray dogs and cats, and kept an open house; doors were never locked, Marrianne says.

The authors soon found there was no point in questioning Marrianne about detailed events that were alleged to have happened, as she stated flatly that by far the majority were completely invented by Lionel, as part of his book. However, she stated that from time to time odd things would happen of a poltergeist nature, which would puzzle her, and which she did not think Lionel or anyone else was responsible for. Footsteps were heard when nobody really appeared to be around, and some of the things that happened when Edwin Whitehouse was present bothered her. She felt the wall writing originated in some way

from him, although they would all 'reply' to the comments and questions - she specifically said she <sup>herself</sup> wrote, as did Lionel and Ian, when he stayed with them on holiday. But now, all these years later, she seems reluctant to believe that anything was of a supernatural nature, and feels it was more likely that someone was playing tricks. She believes Harry Price performed a magic trick when he converted the wine, but does not accuse <sup>him</sup> of any other trickery. Because so much importance has been attached to her personal life and integrity we questioned her at length about the various children, and the bigamous marriages. In fact, of course, only the marriage to Fisher was bigamous, and she had obviously hoped at the outset that this could be ratified eventually, as she was genuinely fond of him, and was expecting Foyster to die at any time. However Foyster recovered from that particular bout of illness and during the ensuing months she and Fisher drifted apart until he left her, not knowing that the marriage was bigamous. Foyster had been told when he came out of the nursing home. Again her story about the children fits in with the general background. They both loved children, they were an eminently suitable couple for the Church of England's <sup>Children's</sup> Society, and the other organizations for unmarried mothers to consider as foster parents, and it is clear from Marianne's conversation that they regarded themselves as just that. One has to remember that both the adoption laws and the regulations concerning foster homes were very much more lax than they are at present. One has to remember when talking to Marianne that the paramount concern in her life was Lionel Foyster's ill health, and the fact that he would soon die, and leave her unprovided for. She had no skills to earn her living, she had married Greenwood when only 15 years old, and had her baby when she was 16. She still says she cannot understand why everybody made such a fuss about a 'bunch of tall stories', and finds it difficult to believe anyone takes ghost stories seriously. So we will expand in the following pages on Marianne's own account of the happenings at Borley.

## THE FOYSTER INCUMBENCY

Certain important factors have emerged during interview and correspondence with Marianne Foyster which shed a very different kind of light on the happenings at Borley during the years that the Foysters were in residence. For some reason this has become recognised as the 'key' period; the time which has been regarded as affording most proof of the alleged hauntings. The happenings during the Foyster incumbency were more of a poltergeist type in nature, and the general view prevailing at the time was that either this type of event was entirely fraudulent, or if the phenomena did occur they were caused by 'entities' or spirits, very often mischievous or lying spirits, but spirits nevertheless. It must be noted, however, that many of the events that took place during the Smith's incumbency were of a poltergeist type, accompanied by stories of ghostly apparitions, and the Foysters' experiences were, so to speak, a continuation of what had been reported as having happened to the Smiths.

During the last twenty years we have come to understand the poltergeist phenomenon much more than we did previously, and it is interesting to read, for instance, of the dragging footsteps, and the mysterious light in the window, phenomena that bothered the Smiths, and to realize that these are accepted components of poltergeist events happening at the present time. Moreover, with modern recording equipment the sounds have been recorded, the strange lights encountered in this type of situation have been photographed, and even objects have been photographed in flight. During recent years many more investigators have witnessed and recorded poltergeist events, and there is now widespread acceptance of the reality and objectivity of the phenomenon. Poltergeist phenomena are much more commonly experienced than most people realize, and mild outbreaks and spontaneous occurrences are frequently reported to us. It would not now seem so unlikely that both the Smiths and the Foysters could have experienced poltergeisty.

But during the Foyster incumbency there was more than just a <sup>mild</sup> poltergeist outbreak. From what Marianne has told us, three main strands weave their way through the story of the Borley hauntings. First of all, there were some inexplicable happenings of a poltergeist nature; secondly, there was undoubtedly an amount of trickery; and thirdly, there was misrepresentation and misinformation as to what had actually happened. We will go back to these points later, but it is essential to fill in the background first. It is important to understand that the over-riding and dominant factor in the lives of the Foysters at that time was not the hauntings and ghosts - it was the fact that Lionel Foyster was living through a death sentence. He had returned from Canada knowing that his illness was going to worsen progressively until he became helpless and bedridden, and that he would finally die of his disease within the next 10/15 years. He did die, in fact, 15 years after his return from Canada, following ten years during which he was completely confined to wheelchairs or bed. Marianne, his wife, was 21 years younger than him, and was 46 years of age at his death. When the Foysters took the living at Borley, they knew it would be a temporary arrangement, and they were concerned and anxious about the future. They were aware it was only a question of time before Lionel would be completely unable to continue his ministry. Lionel Foyster was an educated, fun-loving man, with a tremendous love of music and theatricals. (Marianne has told us he always felt he could have become a great actor if he had not been in the Church). This love of music was the initial bond between Foyster and Marianne's family. Marianne's father, Mr. Shaw, was an organist, who had a great love of classical music, and he and Foyster collected together a small group of people who played and sang music together. Marianne tells us all of her family were musically inclined.



As a Churchman, Foyster was a high Anglican, with a love of ritual. He liked to write church music, and Marianne says he wrote new masses and tried out new forms of communion services. He produced operettas, pageants, and plays in his various livings, and much enjoyed this side of his work. He took great pleasure in training his church choirs himself; Marianne uses the word 'drilled'.

He was a man who thoroughly enjoyed his life and his church work.

But by the time they arrived at Borley Foyster had become obsessed with concern about his future, and was worrying about what would happen eventually to Marianne and Adelaide. He became increasingly concerned about his financial state; he had lost most of his own personal money in some venture in Canada in 1928, Marianne told us. He would not be eligible for much in the way of a pension when he left Borley, if indeed he received any at all. In actual fact, Marianne says they were penniless when they left the rectory and relied solely on what Fisher allowed her at that time, and what she was able to make working as an usherette in the local cinema. Marianne herself, of course, had had very little training that would enable her to earn a living. The whole of the Foysters' life in England was lived against the backdrop of this anxiety and concern about the future.

They were, of course, familiar with the story of the Amherst poltergeist. Marianne had had an operation for uterine polyps in the Amherst Hospital, and their home at this time was only a few miles from the scene of this famous poltergeist outbreak. She says the area abounded in ghost stories, as it does, in fact, to this day; one of Canada's steady best-selling books is the one by Helen Creighton entitled 'Bluenose Ghosts', which is a collection of ghost stories from the Maritimes, and which was originally published more than twenty years ago. The Foysters were also fully aware of the accounts of the happenings at Borley; they had visited England in 1924 (some 2 years after their marriage), and at this time they stayed with the Misses Bull for some of the time they were

on holiday. Marianne also recalls meeting Mrs. Smith and discussing the happenings with her, although she cannot quite recall when this was. She feels it might have been during the time after the Smiths had left the living, and before the Foysters moved in. There was a period of some time between the two incumbencies when the rectory was empty, and even after the Foysters had accepted the living, and had returned to England, they did not actually move into Borley until after a fair amount of renovation had been carried out. They stayed at Great Cornard, a neighbouring parish, and Marianne says they attended the Church there, and Lionel loved it because the service was very ritualistic; it was a very high Anglican service. Incidentally, the fact that many renovations were carried out before the Foysters moved in, bears out what Mrs. Smith had said about the place being in a state of extreme disrepair, and infested with rats and mice. The Foysters were several months supervising the alterations before moving in during October of 1930.

Lionel Foyster was well aware that Walter Hubbell had made a great deal of money from the book he had written about the Amherst poltergeist, and he conceived the idea of doing the same thing by writing a book about Borley. This would solve his financial problems. The three documents, which have been so extensively quoted in all the reports about Borley, were just the bones of a story that Foyster was hoping to turn into a best-seller. The 'Summary of Events' was the basic plot, so to speak, the book was to take the form of a Diary; 'Fifteen Months in a Haunted House' would be the final title. Marianne says that everyone in the household knew of this, and she believes that Harry Price was aware that the accounts were mainly fictional. However, it seems that on the occasion of his first visit to the rectory during the Foyster incumbency Price was shown Foyster's 'Diary of Occurrences' and he reacted as if he believed the account

to be a truthful repetition of what had actually happened. Price talked a lot about his own researches, including his work with Rudi Schneider, and it was on the occasion of this visit that he accused Marrianne of being responsible for the phenomena. Both Foyster and Marrianne were upset that she should have been more or less publicly accused, and said they did not want Price to visit again. It is not possible to ascertain so much later in time whether Foyster actually told Price that the account was fictional, or whether he deliberately allowed Price to believe it was genuine, or whether, as is most likely, Price was aware of its fictional nature, but it suited his purpose to pretend to believe it as truth. Marrianne describes Price as 'a clever one' and is herself of the opinion that Price must have known that the Diary was fictional. However, Foyster was hoping that Price would endorse the book when it was completed (a foreword perhaps?) and he may have been uncertain as to how Price would react to a purely fictional account, and so he may have deliberately left the matter open. Foyster certainly wanted to make use of Price's expertise and knowledge of the subject, and also of his assistance and contacts when it came to publishing the book. Foyster continued to correspond with Price after that first visit. Marrianne says it was against her wishes; she did not like or trust Price. But, she says, Lionel could be obstinate, and he was obstinate on this point. Price persuaded Foyster to lend him the 'Diary of Occurrences', in order that he could use some of the material in one of his own books, and when he failed to return the manuscript some months later Marrianne telephoned Price to request its return. Price claimed that he had lost it. Foyster, however, still had his Summary of Events, and after they had left Borley he recommenced writing the book, this time under the title "Fifteen Months in a Haunted House". This fact explains the reason for some of the observed discrepancies in the various accounts. Foyster, well aware that his account was fictional, did not

bother too much with minor details, or attempt seriously to reproduce the lost 'Diary'. After Foyster died Marrianne gave his books and papers to his sister Hilda. Marrianne says she wanted no part of them, in fact she was not very interested in the 'Fifteen Months' manuscript while Foyster was writing it; she regarded it as something to keep him amused while he was confined to bed. Marrianne assumes that Price acquired the 'Fifteen Months' manuscript from Hilda, after she, Marrianne, had already left for the U.S.A. This would agree with the comments in the SPR report, The Haunting of Borley Rectory, page 83, where Price, in a letter to Dr. Dingwall dated October 17 1946 is quoted as saying "I have now acquired Foyster's complete "Fifteen Months in a Haunted House". As we have already said it is difficult to be certain whether Price was aware that this account was fiction, or not. Price only visited Borley himself twice during the Foyster incumbency, on the first occasion in October 1931, when he stayed overnight, and subsequently intimated that he believed Marrianne was fraudulently producing the phenomena; and again, on a later occasion, when, Marrianne tells us, he arrived unheralded and uninvited, following the report of a fire having occurred in the schoolhouse wing of the rectory. Marrianne says Price heard of the fire through a lady in the neighbourhood with whom he corresponded, and turned up on the rectory doorstep. She says he had others with him, and they brought a picnic hamper and wine, and she places the incident of the wine becoming ink as occurring on this occasion. She relates it as 'one of Harry's magician's tricks', and did not regard it as anything other than this. There was apparently a similar incident when Price was dining with the Smiths. Lionel Foyster continued to correspond with Price during the whole time they were at Borley, feeding him with stories of the alleged happenings, evidently to gain Price's opinion, and to obtain background knowledge for his book. It also seems that Foyster himself was personally responsible for some apparent phenomena, probably produced for effect, to see how people around would react.

Marrianne says that Lionel threw objects many times, especially when the group of spiritualists from Marks Tey were present. He threw things in order to observe their reactions and to note what they would say. She says the minute these people left the house all such throwing of objects stopped. The phenomena ceased completely when Lionel became confined to a wheelchair. Marrianne says she herself was never very sure who threw what, because she says, other people would join in, particularly the village children. Foyster's intention was not to frighten and deceive so much as to observe and test people's reactions to the phenomena. Marrianne also says he would relate, with great relish, stories of phenomena that were alleged to have happened, and which the family members present knew were not true, in order to observe his visitor's reactions. In addition, the house was always wide open, the villagers came and went; some of the rooms in the house were used for parish and church business and meetings; the only toilet facilities were upstairs, thus affording excuse for people to wander all over the house, and much of the time she did not know who was in the house, or where they were. She tells us that Lionel was very fond of children, and of the local tramps and down-and outs. These people were fed at the back door, and allowed to sleep in the outhouse. She believes that on cold nights they crept into the kitchen for warmth. The house was never locked; the keys had long been lost; the house had 4 outer doors and 3 staircases. They also possessed a dog, and a stray cat or two. One can understand how easy it would be for anyone to produce fraudulent phenomena, and it is equally easy to realise that if any genuine phenomena took place they might not be recognised as such.

Marrianne says that sometimes there were events and happenings that puzzled them. They did hear footsteps from time to time, when there really did not seem to be any cause. Objects did sometimes appear to move entirely on their own.

The wall writings were an example of phenomena that puzzled them. These would initially appear, apparently, from nowhere, although she admits that she herself, and other members of the family 'answered' the remarks by writing underneath them. But she denies responsibility for initiating them, and remarked that she was mad when they first appeared, as the wall had been recently re-decorated, and it took her hours to clean it up. But she says the writings only appeared when Edwin Whitehouse was in the vicinity, and she felt he was in some way responsible, either deliberately, or unconsciously.

Edwin was a very emotionally disturbed young man, judging both from previous reports about him, and from what Harrienne says of him now. He was obsessed with discussing religion, could not decide whether to become a spiritualist or a Roman Catholic at one time, and he was always praying and holding long serious conversations. He and Foyster played a lot of chess together, and spent much time in each others' company. Harrienne says Edwin was at a loss initially as to what to believe about the 'hauntings'. He had been sceptical until he talked to Harry Price, who apparently convinced him of the reality of paranormal phenomena. Later, while in the rectory he himself witnessed some phenomena, (see pages 100/100 of SPR Report 'The Haunting of Borley Rectory') and Harrienne says he became totally confused about the reality of the subject. She gives a picture of the three of them playing dice and word games for hours in the evenings, when Lionel and Edwin would discuss the poltergeist events, and religion, and she observes 'often I did not agree with either of them'. Again, there are two possible explanations, and one can never be sure of the truth so long after the event. Edwin Whitehouse could well have been the focus of such genuine poltergeist activity as occurred, and this is probably the most likely assessment,

especially since Marianne herself says she witnessed some of these things when Edwin was present, and finds them puzzling. But it is also possible (although perhaps less likely) that Edwin was a confederate of Lionel's, and would 'create' phenomena when Lionel was not there to do so himself. They were very close friends and Edwin was continually at the rectory. Marianne says the meals at Sir George Whitehouse's home were light, and Edwin had a healthy appetite - she fed him at the rectory on most days. It is also noteworthy that the poltergeist phenomena finally ceased after Marianne says she pleaded that the house be 'cleaned'. She wanted a religious service. Edwin arranged for a mass to be said and Lionel officiated at a religious service. This also coincided with the time that Lionel became permanently confined to his wheelchair, and Edwin had decided to become a Benedictine monk, and left the village. From then on the phenomena ceased completely. Again we are left with <sup>the</sup> two possible explanations;-- the phenomena ceased because Foyster could no longer throw things without being detected, and Edwin left the neighbourhood. It would be interesting to know whether Edwin experienced continuing poltergeist phenomena in his monastery! We cannot now decide whether Edwin was the centre of <sup>genuine</sup> poltergeist phenomena, or whether it was all trickery. Marianne herself confirms that the events of the bottle, tumbler and stiletto happened as described in the SPR report, but with the exception of the wall writings, which she definitely attributes to Edwin's conscious or subconscious self, she still thinks there is a possibility that it was trickery. Edwin, of course, knew of the book, and that it was meant to be a fictional account, and could have been, as we have said, a confederate of Lionel's. However, we are inclined to believe they were genuine phenomena. At the time the SPR report was written there was not such good evidence for the reality and objectivity of this type of phenomenon as there is today. The events

described have all the ring of truth to anyone who has been as involved in this kind of research as one of us has (Iris Owen). Iris writes, "I have personally seen a spoon rise from my dining room table and float several feet across the room before gently coming to rest on the floor, under a radiator. The event was 'triggered off' by a remark that produced an emotional response. On another occasion in the 'Philip' experiment an ashtray rose from the floor to the ceiling by itself, and dropped down close by the person who was the 'target' of a comment, This was seen by several people, and the sound of the ashtray hitting the overhead pipes, and then hitting the table was recorded"! We ourselves now believe that isolated spontaneous poltergeist phenomena are frequently 'triggered' as a release of suppressed emotion, and that they occur quite often. We have had hundreds of such incidents related to us. The behaviour of the stiletto, the tumbler, and the bottle, <sup>as</sup> related in the SPR report, seems to be perfectly typical of this type of phenomena. Edwin Whitehouse was certainly the kind of person to become the focus of such events. As we have said before it is not entirely unknown for two people in the same household to become the focus for poltergeist outbreaks, and it is certainly not impossible that two succeeding families in a house should have such experiences. This fact could account for the initial hearing of footsteps in the house, before Edwin Whitehouse was in the village. Either of the Foysters, or Adelaide, could have been the focus for the more minor events. Adelaide must have been a very emotionally confused little girl. She had lost her parents within a short time of each other under tragic circumstances. She had been taken away from her older brothers and sisters, and then finally brought to a strange country, and exposed to all the talk of ghosts and goblins. It is no wonder that she has most unhappy memories of her experiences as a young child!

After the 'house-cleaning' and Edwin's departure to join the Benedictines, Harrienne writes "the house stayed quiet. Lionel's arthritis wasn't too bad.



We built a doll's bungalow for Adelaide. Lion and I played snakes and ladders with the children. We burned without reading several letters whose postmark we recognised. Some really happy months passed. Then Lionel's arthritis caused him to be hospitalised".

From then on the Foysters became increasingly concerned about Lionel's health and their financial future. This was the period during which Marrienne tried various jobs, including the flower shop venture with D'Arles. She started to foster children for long and short periods. These children were mostly placed with the Foysters by the Church of England Children's Society. This is a voluntary Society run as a charity by the Church of England which looks after children in need, <sup>provides</sup> holidays for children from poor areas, temporary foster homes for children whose parents are sick, and runs an adoption agency for children of unwed mothers, where the mother is unable to provide for them. The Society looks for accommodation for these children from among members of the Church of England, and it was a completely natural thing that the Rector of the parish would be asked to help find homes for needy children. The Foysters had already demonstrated their generosity in this respect by their adoption of Adelaide before leaving Canada, and they started to look after children again at this time. Marrienne told us that Lionel and she both loved children, and she stated they 'did not receive a penny' for looking after the children they took in at Borley. However, it is very likely they received money for the children's upkeep and clothing.

Marrianne tells us that Lionel managed the family finances, and he looked after the money from the flower shop. Marrianne continued to take in children right up until she left England, after Lionel had died. She was looking after children at weekends who had been evacuated from the bombed out areas of London. When asked what she thought would happen to the children when she left for the U.S. she replied that she had thought the Children's Society would reclaim them, 'they knew where they were'. She would have liked to have sent for John and Astrid after going to the U.S. but never had enough money. So, as we have said earlier, there were the three aspects to the alleged hauntings during the Foyster incumbency; in the first place, Lionel Foyster was writing a work of fiction, not fact, with the specific intention of making money. This accounts for the varying discrepancies that have been noted by those who have tried to obtain a picture of the sequence of events. Having lost his original 'Diary of Occurrences' to Price, Foyster restarted the manuscript after leaving Borley, and ~~did~~ not bother to rewrite the story (or perhaps could not remember the details) so that it <sup>might</sup> coincide exactly with the previous account. This also explains why Foyster did not make much of the 'wine into ink' trick. Marrianne says that they both recognised this as a conjuring trick of Price's to 'help things along' as she put it. Secondly, in order to gain colour and background for his book Foyster manufactured incidents, or invented them (i.e. he related details of events that had not happened) in order to observe his visitors' reactions. Marrianne says that everyone concerned knew that this was happening, and regarded it as fun, and not to be taken seriously. It is impossible, as we have said, to be certain whether Price was aware that Foyster was doing this, and pretended to go along, in order to get the material for his own books, or whether he was completely deceived by Foyster. Marrianne herself

says she is not sure about this, although inclined to believe that Price must have had some idea. She felt he was too clever to be completely deceived. Apparently, also, no especial secret was made of the details of Lionel's illness and its prognosis, and it seems likely Price must have been aware of this, although little is made of the Foysters' over-riding concern about the future. Presumably, Price could have been 'biding his time' until he could use the material freely, and would be able to plead that he believed Foyster to be telling the truth. It is true that the "Most Haunted House in England" was published in 1940, about five years before Foyster's death, and it was in relation to Price's request for use of the "Diary" MSS that Foyster wrote (as quoted in the SPR report) 'I am afraid that it would clash with an effort of my own to do the same thing'. This implies, since we knew that Foyster was intending to write a book of fiction, that he believed Price was writing in the same vein, and he was finally persuaded, as we have mentioned, to lend the MSS to Price, who never returned it. During the last five years of his life Foyster was frequently very ill, and almost completely bedridden, and he may not have been able to summon up the energy to protest at his material being treated in the way it was by Price. But Price did not publish the bulk of the material until after Foyster's death, and his lectures, radio talks and so on, publicising the events at Borley mostly occurred after Foyster's death and when Marianne was safely out of the country. The facts of Lionel's illness and its prognosis make a tremendous difference when looking at the many suppositions put forward from time to time about Marianne's possible motivations for fraud. *Far* from wishing to leave the Rectory, as has been alleged, they were happy there. She commented to us that anyone who had lived under the circumstances of their early days in Canada would regard living at Borley as a luxurious way of life. The Misses Bull had had some extensive re-decorating done before they moved in, and Marianne says she loved the place, and especially the garden and grounds.

But whether they had liked Borley or not, they had no money, and knew that when they left Borley it would be because Lionel would no longer be able to continue his ministry, and they would have no home to go to. Since the Rectory did not belong to them they could not be accused of trying to profit should its reputation for being haunted increase its value in the real estate market! Finally, in order to add confusion to an already confused situation, events of a poltergeist nature that appeared to be genuine did occur from time to time, and, as has been previously stated, most frequently when Edwin Whitehouse was present. When you consider these three facts, together with the knowledge that, as Marianne says, 'everyone around joined in the fun,' it is clearly impossible, now, to disentangle fact from fiction, or to make any judgement as to the reality of any of the events during this period of time.

But we feel that what Marianne has told us makes sense. It is logical, and, what is more important, everything she has told us fits in with what is already known about the Borley hauntings during the Foyster incumbency. To us it has the ring of truth. Nowadays we are very familiar with the large number of very profitable books and films that have been produced "based" on alleged hauntings, but bearing very little relationship to the original facts. The book and film entitled "The Exorcist" is a well-known example in the field of poltergeisty, as is the current best-seller "The Amityville Horror". Both of these books were based on actual poltergeist events, but in both cases the events were exaggerated and dramatised to such an extent that they bore little relationship to the actual events in their final accounts. Also, in the case of "The Amityville Horror" an ulterior motive emerges - Dr. Stephen Kaplan, Director of the Parapsychology Institute of America, 76-03 45th Avenue, Queens, N.Y. 11373, sent the following statement to THETA (The Journal of the Psychical Research Foundation, Inc. Durham, N.C.) "After several months of extensive research and interviews with those who were involved in THE AMITYVILLE HORROR, we have found no

evidence to support any claims of a 'haunted house'. What we did find is a couple who had purchased a house that they could not economically afford. It is our professional opinion that the story of its haunting is mostly fiction". (Vol.5. No.4. 4th Quarter 1977). In the same volume, Peter Jordan and Rick Moran have stated publicly that the book is grossly inaccurate, and that their investigation of the case did not support claims of paranormal activity. Jordan is a field investigator for the PRF and Project Director for VESTIGIA, a research organization in New Jersey, and Moran is a photojournalist who covered the Amityville story since the first reports were made of strange occurrences there in February of 1976. In spite of this, however, we find an account in the Sunday Star of Toronto, dated 27th August 1976, stating that the author of the book (who was also, incidentally, the screen writer for the film, "The Exorcist") has received \$6 million for the movie rights to the Amityville story. The Toronto Star article states that the book 'is based on the experiences of a couple who fled in terror from their six-bedroom house in Amityville in January 1976, only 28 days after they had moved in with their three children. The author of the book did not actually visit the house during the alleged hauntings, his story is based on interviews and local gossip. Two years previously the house had been the scene of a grisly mass murder; a young man, aged 23, had killed his parents, two sisters, and two brothers; thus making it an excellent target for a haunting! Somewhat surprisingly, the 'ghost' alleged to have been seen during the poltergeist events was not that of the murdered persons, but of the young man who committed the murders, and who is currently serving a life sentence in prison for the crime! An unusual twist!

An article in FATE magazine in May 1978 states "the affair places uncommon demands on our credulity. Is there any evidence that George and Kathy Lutz

actually witnessed such consistently dramatic occurrences? Our own investigation leads us to believe that while the Lutzes may have experienced some genuine paranormal events, these events were relatively infrequent and unremarkable. Certainly that is what the Lutzes originally reported to the press in February 1976. To the best of our knowledge no objective evidence exists to support the more spectacular and bizarre claims the book describes.

We base this conclusion on careful comparison of earlier newspaper and magazine accounts (many containing the Lutzes own personal statements recorded during the time of their brief stay in Amityville,) with Anson's copious material and on the testimony of individuals who the author credits with intimate involvement in the case". The authors of the article go on to comment that "in all of their combined years of investigating such occurrences and studying the literature of the paranormal, we had never before heard of so much psychic activity concentrated in one area in such a short period of time .... the book reads like a primer of paranormal occurrences with every conceivable type of experience reported".

One cannot help being struck by the fact that exactly the same has been said of the Borley hauntings. If Price had been alive today he might very well have made a fortune out of the film rights of his Borley books. Foyster, of course, was unlucky that he did not live to finish and publish his own book. It is interesting too, that in spite of the fact that serious researchers have proved that the stories behind the above mentioned books ('The Exorcist' and 'The Amityville Horror') are grossly exaggerated and distorted, and consist mainly of fictional accounts, this does not detract from their commercial value. Neither does it prevent them from being presented as being at least based on real experiences. The general buying public does not seem to care very much whether the stories are true or not; they are prepared to believe them.

As we have said, we cannot now be sure where the most responsibility for the deception over Borley lay. Foyster may have finally intended to present his book as fiction (even if slightly based on fact). Price may have believed that Foyster was relating faithfully details of actual occurrences. Foyster was a scholar, a Vicar of the Church of England, Price could have argued that he would be the last person to tell outright lies, and if Foyster told him it was truth, he may have believed him. Foyster may have believed that he needed Price's belief and support to get the book published, and so let him continue to believe in the reality of the phenomena. Or he could have been deliberately cheating Price to get his own back for his behaviour towards Marrianne.

We cannot now know the truth. But Price certainly emerges as an inadequate investigator, a journalist rather than a researcher; he apparently accepted everything at face value, and could not have investigated the occurrences in depth. So many facts could clearly have given him clues if he had made a few enquiries at the time. He did for Borley what Jay Anson has done for Amityville.

Finally, what about Marrianne? She has long been cast as the villainess of the piece, mainly because of Price's first accusation against her. For some reason, many people were prepared to believe Price when he accused Marrianne.

We find it interesting that Price was apparently prepared to believe in the reality of the poltergeist phenomena during the Smith incumbency, and did not level any accusations of fraud there, although many of the phenomena were similar to those experienced, apparently, by the Foysters. Marrianne's personal life has been investigated to the last detail, on the assumption that since she indulged in deception, investigation of her private life and publication of its results is justified. Unfortunately much of what has been said about Marrianne has been assumption, or part-truth, at best. Investigators have taken the line of reasoning that because she contracted a bigamous marriage to Fisher, and

apparently indulged in some extra marital affairs, she could have been equally deceitful in producing the phenomena at Borley. In actual fact, the lives of many people could not bear the kind of intensive scrutiny to which Harrienne's private life was subjected. It is important to clear up some of the accusations made and restore her credibility.

In the first place, a great deal has been said and written about Harrienne's marital status and relationship with Lionel Foyster. The legality of her marriage to Foyster has been questioned. From her own account it seems quite clear that this was a legal marriage. Although her second marriage ceremony to Greenwood was legal (the first having been a runaway affair without parental consent), everything now known points to the fact that she is telling the truth when she tells us that following her <sup>al</sup>leg separation from Greenwood he did go to Australia, where he subsequently died. She had this information from Greenwood's aunt, and so she could be regarded as a widow at the time she married Foyster. It seems very possible, however, that whether he had died or not, Greenwood had in some way obtained either an <sup>n</sup>annulment or a divorce. Greenwood was, of course, under age, and the second marriage ceremony was without his mother's knowledge or consent. Harrienne says her father dealt with the lawyers on her behalf, and visited England to see lawyers when they were told Greenwood <sup>o</sup>wished to remarry, and she has a recollection of signing papers at some time. She had always refused to accept money from Greenwood, and he never contributed to the upkeep of the child. Furthermore, Lionel Foyster was, of course, completely aware of her marital status, or otherwise, when he suggested she join him in Canada and become his wife. They had been corresponding frequently for some time, and she had told him about her marriage and the baby, and the subsequent events. Of course her parents were corresponding with him too, and would have advised him of the true position.



However, an interesting fact emerged from conversation with Marrianne in regard to her marriage with Foyster. She tells us that at the wedding reception Lionel was boasting to Dr. Smithers, who performed the marriage ceremony, that he, Lionel, had baptized Marrianne when she was a baby. He was very disturbed by Dr. Smithers' response to that information. According to Marrianne, Dr. Smithers said that the marriage, although legal in the eyes of the law, would not be regarded as valid in the eyes of the Church, as Lionel stood in the relationship of a spiritual father to Marrianne. Marrianne says this shocked Lionel very much. We cannot ascertain if the particular church or congregation to which they belonged did, in fact, hold that view at that time. It seems very strange to us that this should be so, but Marrianne assures us that it is true. What is important of course is, that if Lionel Foyster believed that as far as the Church was concerned his marriage was not valid, this explains his subsequent acceptance both of Marrianne's 'flings' as she describes them, and her bigamous marriage to Fisher. Whatever the facts regarding this alleged statement of Dr. Smithers however, there remained, as there had always been, a deep affection between Marrianne and Lionel Foyster, although this appeared at time to be the relationship of a father and daughter, rather than that of husband and wife. This father/daughter aspect of their relationship probably became strengthened further when Foyster became stricken with arthritis a few years after their marriage. They were married in 1922, and visited England for three months in 1924. Lionel developed bronchitis on the journey home in 1924, and in the summer of 1925 he had a heart attack while swimming. That winter he had his first attack of arthritis, and realised he would have to take lighter work. He had been looking after 3 parishes, and they moved to the quieter town of Sackville. So Lionel Foyster had only about two years of good health after their wedding! But, as we have said

their relationship was very close. Marianne still speaks of him affectionately by her pet name of 'Lion', and often uses the present tense when talking about him. He was clearly the most important man in her life, and they remained married and together for twenty three years. She makes it clear that she never had any intention of abandoning Foyster while he still lived in spite of her 'flings'. When she married Fisher Lionel was very ill, they had given notice of leaving Borley, and she thought he might never come out of the nursing home.

Marianne says Lionel became increasingly worried while they were at Borley as to what might become of her when he died, and had various ideas for making provision for her. As we have said, the publication of the book was one idea, and the opening of the flower shop in London was another. The agreement in this case was that Marianne should run the shop and D'Arles grow the flowers in the rectory garden. D'Arles was reputed to be good at growing flowers. But either this reputation was unjustified, or he became lazy and would not bother, and the business failed because he could not produce the flowers to sell. Marianne had, and still has, a great love of flowers. She says how she loved the Rectory garden in the Spring, and has told us about the beautiful flowers grown in the gardens of Sir George and Lady Whitehouse. Lionel managed the flower shop finances; he apparently kept all the household accounts, and Marianne tells us that the incident that has been related of D'Arles seen weeping in the churchyard, happened following a row they had had over D'Arles failure to produce the flowers. During this period they were also looking after various children, for long and short periods, mainly obtained from the Church of England Childrens' Society. Most of these were probably foster, but some stayed for much longer periods than others. The laws regarding to fostering and adoption at that period of time were much more flexible than they are now, and volunteer

societies, such as the Church of England Childrens' Society, were allowed a great deal of discretion in the disposal of the children who came into their care. Children were fostered, often, for long periods, then if the arrangement was satisfactory to all parties, adoption could be arranged, Or the child could remain a foster child. Children from cities were often sent into the country for holidays, to recuperate from illnesses, to be looked after when there was illness in the family home, and so on. One of us (Iris) had a great aunt in an East Anglian village, very much like Borley, who used to take in children from the C. of E. Childrens Society in just this way. Sometimes a child would stay for a year or more, sometimes for two or three weeks. The Society would pay the expenses of the child. feeding, clothing, and so on, and the foster parent would make a very tiny profit. Marianne tells us she never 'received a penny' for the children she looked after, but we think she means she did not make any extra money for her fostering, and this is probably true. Of course a Church of England Rector and his wife in a small rural village would be most excellent prospective foster parents for the Church of England Children's Society's wards, and Marianne says they were constantly in touch.

After the failure of the flower shop venture Lionel began to have long spells of illness and from time to time spent weeks, and even months in the Long Aelford Nursing Home. Marianne says he was always urging her to look around for someone whom she could marry after he had died, and it was during one of the times that he was in the Nursing Home that she met Henry Fisher. She went through a form of marriage with him, and lived with him in Ipswich, while Foyster was in the nursing home. During this flare-up of his illness it became clear that Foyster was unable to continue his duties as Rector of Borley, and arrangements were made for them to leave the living. Foyster was told of the 'marriage' by Marianne shortly afterwards, and when they moved from Borley he posed quite

happily as Marrienne's father, and she became known as Mrs. Fisher in their new home. Her intention apparently was that if Foyster did not recover from this bout of illness she would be married and provided for. Although she says Foyster knew that the marriage was bigamous, she seems to believe that Fisher never knew the truth. She had a small baby at that time, another one fostered through recommendations of the Church of England Society, and it is possible that she allowed Fisher to believe this child was his, in order to persuade him to go through the marriage ceremony. Fosyter was almost completely incapacitated at this time and confined to his bed. Fisher worked, mainly as a long distance lorry driver, and contributed to the upkeep of the home, and Marrienne worked as a cinema usherette. Fisher was away from home a good deal at his work. The need for money was dominant all the time, it seems as if there was no pension for Foyster, Marrienne describes them as being penniless at times. Unfortunately she did not get on with her new in-laws. She says she and Fisher had arguments, and his family did not accept her. The 'marriage' failed, and Fisher finally left her. She stayed on alone with Lionel until he died some time later.

The marriage to O'Neil offered her a chance to get back to the New World, as she still calls it, where she was always happy, and to which she had longed to return. By then Foyster was dead, and she and O'Neil planned to marry, but she feared that if they waited too long he might be sent away and not return. He was in fact due to go to Europe for a few months. She told him she was pregnant, and he agreed to marry her. On his return from abroad she and Vincent were waiting for him. She moved to a War Brides' camp where her papers were processed to enable her to go to the U.S. When asked about the children she had left behind she claimed that she thought the Church of England Children's Society would reclaim them. She has never made it very clear whether ~~they~~ had actually adopted any of the children other than Adelaide, who was legally

adopted before they left Canada, but it seems there were no legal formalities entered into in respect of the other children. Marianne is reluctant to talk about Adelaide, and she has completely lost touch with her. Adelaide was of course her legal responsibility. I imagine that when the Foysters left Borley Adelaide was put in <sup>boarding</sup> school so that she would not reveal the truth of Marianne's relationship to Foyster when she was 'married' to Fisher! Marianne would not talk about her. In 1945 when Marianne left for the U.S.A. Adelaide would, of course, have been 17 years old, and presumably no longer financially dependent upon Marianne. A child could also legally leave home at 16 years of age, and so she was legally independent of Marianne. Marianne says Adelaide has 'suffered enough' and should not be bothered further.

Marianne is now a citizen of the U.S.A. Her marriage to Foyster was legal in the eyes of the law, whether or not the church at that time and place regarded it as void in the spiritual sense. Her marriage to O'Neil was legal, as she had been a widow for some months when she married him. Her marriage to Fisher was bigamous, but he deserted her! It seems likely that he was not aware that the marriage was bigamous. Marianne tells us she divorced O'Neil on account of his alcoholism, but they remain on friendly terms, and while one of us (Paulene) was interviewing her in a hotel room she called O'Neil and asked him to fetch her and take her home, as it was late at night. Vincent, the baby she took to the U.S. is still living at home with her, and they are apparently very fond of each other. He is now in his early 30's.

One final point has to be made on Marianne's behalf, as so much weight has been attached to it in reporting events at Borley. This concerns the state of her health. Marianne was indeed a normally healthy young woman during her life at Borley, except that during the early days of her marriage to Foyster

she developed some gynaecological troubles, which caused heavy loss of blood at certain times. The operation she had in Amherst Hospital to correct this condition was only partially successful, and she suffered from this complaint subsequently. This heavy loss of blood was the cause of the fainting fits and the frequent illnesses so often commented upon in the reports. One has to realise that the modern hormone treatments which would now be available were not available at that time.

As a final conclusion, one has to recognise that we are relating only what Marrienne has told us. There is now no way of proving that one opinion as to the truth of the matter is more believable than another, except by comparing the accounts and trying to see which version makes most sense. The Rev. Foyster is long dead, and can no longer confirm or deny what his widow is saying, and the same applies to Harry Price. Fisher is dead and cannot corroborate or deny Marrienne's statement that Foyster acceded to the bigamous marriage by voluntarily posing as her father. Marrienne herself is just on 80 years of age, although she still looks much younger, and she still works, for a Committee on Aging!. She dresses smartly, is alert, and appears to have a very good memory for past events. As the reader can see from the accounts printed verbatim in the earlier part of this report, she has not lost her ability with words, and the material is extremely well typed. She still writes 'pieces' for the local paper, and composes small poems for publication. Her own reaction when first contacted was of dismay and horror. She wrote back to say that she was "under the impression that I had at last achieved privacy. I have suffered much at the hands of sensationalists ... I was not a central figure(at Borley) ..... unhappily I happened to be there when the time was right for the sensationalist to make heyday .... I am the innocent victim". She only consented to talk to us on the basis that she would relate her story to someone who was not previously involved in research at Borley, and that her version

of the events would be what was printed. This we agreed to. Marrianne also told us of the interview granted to Mr. Robert Swanson of the Parapsychology Association in May 1958. She gave us permission to use these tapes if we wished, to check the story she was telling us now. She said that during those interviews she had been questioned on a yes-no basis, and remarked that the lawyer seemed more interested in her sex life than on what had really happened. She maintained that she had told him then that most of the events alleged to have occurred were fiction and not fact. She said that if she had been asked she would have related the whole story then,, but she felt she was being threatened, and decided only to answer the questions put to her. Due to the generosity of Mrs. Babs Coly, President of the Parapsychology Association, we were furnished with a transcript of the tapes of those interviews, or rather with as much as remains, some of the material having been lost during a flood in the basement of the P.A. We had access to this material on the strict understanding that we did not quote directly from the transcripts, or use them in any way other than to check the information Marrianne has given us recently, with what she said at that time. A lot of the questioning was based on events as described in "The Haunting of Borley Rectory" and therefore is irrelevant, as we have pointed out that Marrianne has stated that it was meant as fiction - the reality of any specific event is immaterial in that context. It is interesting that many of the events that Marrianne is questioned about in the interview are completely new to her. This bears out the fact that while she says Foyster read and passed around the manuscript headed "Diary of Occurrences" while they were still at Borley, after this document was 'lost' by Price and he (Foyster) started to rewrite his book when they had left Borley, Marrianne herself was no longer interested, and did not see or read the later manuscript. She regarded it as something that kept Foyster amused while he was confined to a wheelchair, and later to bed.

In the interview in 1958 she allows it to be believed that Foyster did not know of the existence of her son, Ian, and that he was passed off as her younger brother. This fact, is of course, irrelevant to the hauntings, but forms part of the general attack on Marianne's character and her alleged deceitfulness. However, her present account seems much more realistic. After all, Foyster was primarily and originally a friend of her parents, and during her childhood he wrote to her more in the capacity of an honorary 'uncle'. Also, he visited them on a number of occasions when he came from Canada on vacation - Marianne tells us of the way he kept them all spellbound by his descriptions of the beauties of Canada. Her marriage to Greenwood and the subsequent birth of the baby was told him in letters written at the time, and her present account that Ian visited them in Canada and stayed over while Lionel was visiting St. Luke's Hospital, and that he remained in Canada to complete his education when they returned is much more plausible. She says that Lionel paid for Ian's education, and certainly until he lost his money in 1928 Foyster seemed well provided for financially. The Foysters visited England *at least twice* after their marriage, in 1924 <sup>and 1926</sup> visiting both with Marianne's folks in Ireland, and with the Bulls near Borley. It would have been impossible for Marianne to have pretended Ian was her brother and not her son, when her husband was still in such close touch with her parents.

Apart from that one instance there are no important discrepancies between the answers to the questions put by Mr. Swanson, and the *information* Marianne has given us in the <sup>present</sup> interviews, letters and telephone conversations. As previously stated we are most grateful to Mrs. Coly for the opportunity of checking this information.



SUMMARY.

In order to attempt a summary of the Borley hauntings, and arrive at some conclusions as to what really happened, one has to look at the whole history, and attempt to evaluate the happenings during the various periods. This is what the authors of the SPR report (which as published in January 1956) attempted to do during the course of their enquiry. It is impossible to ignore events occurring previously to, and following the Foyster incumbency in any report on Borley. During the past twenty years or more our own knowledge of the type of events frequently described as having occurred at Borley has advanced and changed, so that there are acceptable explanations for some of the events which seemed inexplicable at the time. It seems a good moment to attempt some re-evaluation, together with the more detailed picture of the events during the Foyster incumbency. Obviously after this lapse of time there will remain some loose ends and variations of detail.

We can look at the periods separately, as was done in the SPR report. Of the first period, from 1862-1927 while the members of the Bull family were living at the Rectory, little need be said or added. It is a typical ghost story, of a type which abounds in England. Although embroidered and added to over the years by the local people for various reasons, if nothing further had happened the story would have eventually faded away as a local legend. The advent of electricity to the village streets, the improved transportation in the form of local buses to the nearby towns, the popularity of the movies relieved the boredom of the local youth in many a village, and most ghost stories were forgotten. One of us (Iris) was a child in a small village in that part of England during the twenties and early thirties, and there was scarcely a village in the neighbourhood that did not have its local ghost story, and many boasted of more than one. Most of these centred around the village church and graveyard.

Iris writes - "I remember vividly that we children used to 'play ghost' around the graveyard; we would dress in something white (an old sheet perhaps) and, waving a luminous object, dart among the tombstones, howling like banshees. We also found a small hidden door at the back of the church intended for use by the bellringer<sup>s</sup>, who, having rung the congregation 'in' on Sundays, would slip out the back way during the service, only returning if their presence was needed to ring the congregation 'out'. The existence of this door was known only to a few, and it was often left unlocked, so we children would sneak into the church, sometimes waving flashlights, and playing on the organ if it had<sup>been</sup> left unlocked. Since the front of the church was securely fastened this gave rise to the story that 'spirits' sometimes entered the church at night and ghostly music was heard coming from the organ. Many of the more superstitious of the villagers would not go near the church on a dark winter's night!" The history of Borley from 1862-1927 has to be regarded as a mixture of superstition and pranks.

However, in 1927, the Smiths came to the Rectory, and this is the period during which, as was stated by the authors of the SPR report, the story of the Borley hauntings became changed from a local unimportant ghost story to something that attracted nationwide attention. The story of the Smiths' coming to Borley is told in the SPR report, but I will recapitulate briefly. Mr. and Mrs. Smith had spent their early married life in India. However, Mrs. Smith contracted a serious illness and it was felt that she should return to England. Mr. Smith decided to take Holy Orders and obtain a living in England. This he did, and they were offered the living at Borley, which they accepted. They took the Rectory on trust, not having seen it before accepting the living. The Rectory was in a dreadful state, as the SPR report states, the sanitation was bad, there were broken pipes, the water had to be hauled from a well, the roof leaked. The heating was inadequate (especially for a couple who had lived so long in India), and the rectory as a whole was in a shocking state

of repair. The Smiths were appalled. They took with them one resident maid, a girl of 15 years of age, Mary Pearson, and she had a young man friend (whom she later married) Fred, aged 16/17 years. The Smiths knew nothing of the ghost stories when they went to Borley, but the villagers quickly apprised them as to what might be expected to happen. They discovered that the parishioners were reluctant to come to the rectory at night for fear of the ghosts. The Smiths went to Borley in October 1928, and in June 1929 wrote to a national newspaper seeking the help of a psychical research society. (It has been alleged they hoped that the church authorities would listen kindly to a request for a transfer if the rectory acquired a reputation for being haunted). They related to the newspaper some of the previous stories of the ghosts, and told of poltergeist type phenomena they were themselves experiencing. This contact had unexpected results. The 'Daily Mirror' Editor to whom they had written called on the services of Harry Price, at that time well known as a psychic investigator, and Price, together with a reporter from the Mirror, visited the rectory. The resulting publicity was overwhelming. The happenings now taking place appeared to be a mixture of the previously attested 'hauntings' (i.e. people were reporting seeing the 'ghost' of the Nun, and the phantom coach and horses) and also a new kind of phenomena which were of a poltergeist type in nature. Incidentally, Marianne has told us that the Misses Bull kept an old-fashioned coach which was used frequently by an elderly cousin in her visits around the neighbourhood. Marianne says they used to joke about this, and refer to it as the 'phantom' coach or the 'headless' coach (presumably referring to the alleged state of the coachman!). Marianne says that she and Lionel used to say they 'wished the headless coach would give them a ride to Sudbury' - the local bus service was pretty poor. The villagers must have all known about this coach, but it seems strange that nobody has actually mentioned

the existence of this real coach, and the fact that it was in use until at least the early thirties. Of course at that time in the rural areas of East Anglia many people still travelled around their local neighbourhoods by pony and trap.

In the light of hindsight the poltergeist type happenings would seem to be a logical occurrence. Whether the events centred around the Smiths themselves, who were certainly undergoing sufficient emotional tensions to be the focus of such an outbreak, or whether they centred around Mary Pearson, who having been indoctrinated by the villagers about the hauntings, was probably scared out of her wits around the rectory, or whether <sup>were collectively</sup> all three the focus, it would be impossible to decide now. However, our work on the poltergeist phenomenon, and on the Philip experiment in particular, has shown us that this could be regarded as a natural sequel to the previous events. Typical poltergeist phenomena happened and, as the story of the nun was already in existence, it would be expected that *she* would be the ghost that was 'seen'. Harry Price arrived, in fact, in the middle of a typical poltergeist outbreak. It is interesting also, that during the 'seance' held in the Blue Room on the occasion of Price's first visit taps were heard coming from the wooden back of the mirror in the room, and on being questioned, the communicator identified himself as Harry Bull. Our Philip experiment has shown clearly that in this situation the communicator will claim to be whomever the majority of the *participating* group expect or wish it to be. The content of the material obtained in this situation, of course, comes from the subconscious minds of the participants, and answers to questions will be just what are expected in the circumstances. So we believe Price walked into a full-blown poltergeist situation, triggered off by the emotions of either or both of the Smiths and Mary Pearson. Although Price was considered to be a very good investigator at that time, he, along with many other researchers in the field of parapsychology, did not fully understand the mechanics of the poltergeist phenomenon. Also, in view of later investigations conducted by Price himself,

we have to wonder whether he might not himself have helped events along when they began to die down, as they often do in these circumstances. The incident of the water turning to ink at this time is worth remembering, as, during the Foyster incumbency, a glass of wine was turned into ink, while Price was present, and which Harrienne says she and Foyster always regarded as 'just a magician's trick' which Price performed.

Finally, let us look at the fourth period of the hauntings - that time after the Foysters had left the rectory and it remained unoccupied. It was never used as a home after the Foysters left in October 1935; they had been there for just five years. Some eighteen months after the Foysters left, and five and a half years since his last visit to Borley, Price took a tenancy of the rectory for a year, beginning on 19 May 1937. He advertised in 'The Times' for people to take part in investigations there, and finally employed some 48 volunteers. These people visited the rectory, mainly at weekends, during the year following. The Arbons were still living in the cottage, and were entrusted with the keys. (It is interesting to note that Harrienne commented to us that the occupants of the cottage "told Price a bunch of tall tales. They decided to cash in on the act independently". In the SPR report it is noted that 'the caretaker gives up his keys very readily to anyone', and it was also said that on one occasion when 'a dark figure was seen' it turned out to be Mr. Arbon, having a look round to see if anyone was about. (P. 124 of report). So we have the possibility of continued 'encouraged' stories by the Arbons.

Also, Price's Blue Book of Instructions to investigators, well-meaning though it may have been, probably had the effect of stimulating imagination and producing exactly the apparitions and stories that were expected. One cannot say now whether Price was or was not aware of this possibility, but research during subsequent years points to the fact that in such a situation it is very likely

that some people among the investigating team are very likely to see a 'ghost'! It was the result of just such an experience that led to the start of our Philip experiment. We sent a team of inexperienced amateur investigators to an allegedly 'haunted' house in Scarborough, Ontario. Events of a poltergeist nature had been taking place, and the occupant, having discovered that a previous tenant had committed suicide by hanging herself in the basement, claimed to have actually seen the ghost of this lady, whom she felt was responsible for the unaccountable things that were happening. Our team visited the home, and listened to the tale of all the experiences. They decided to visit again on the next evening, and planned to spend the whole night in the haunted basement to see if the ghost would appear. They were furnished with a list of 'instructions' on what to do and how to behave when investigating a haunting. Sure enough, at around 3 a.m. when they were all in a state of emotional tension waiting for something to happen, and when they were also probably, quite physically tired, some members of the team 'saw a horrible face looking at them' (their own words). Questioned further they felt it resembled the face of the previous tenant, as she had been described to them. They endeavoured to take a picture, but all that came out was a grey picture of the wall, with a blue dot in the middle, the room itself did not come out on the photograph. All the previous and subsequent photographs on the roll were completely normal. Whether the excitement produced a 'poltergeist-type' malfunction of the camera, or they just plain 'goofed' the picture it is difficult to say. (Incidentally the picture was sent to the Kodak laboratories for comment who could offer no explanation for the strange effect). The members of the team who had remained relatively calm, and who did not see the ghost, felt that the camera had been handled properly, that it was pointed in the right direction, and that the flash bulb went off. It was as a result of that incident and the discussion we had following it, that we attempted our Philip experiment, which was initially, an effort to deliberately create a ghost.

With regard to the planchette writings, again, our Philip experiment proves what many researchers already believed, that the content of these messages comes from the subconscious minds of the participants. It is very interesting to look at the reports of the planchette and ouija board sittings of the Glanvilles in the light of the knowledge we ourselves have gained from our Philip experiment. A full report of some of the Glanville sittings is given in the pages following p. 120 of Price's "The End of Borley Rectory", and they are extremely reminiscent of our Philip experiments, except, of course, that our Philip experiments were always held in full light. But the content of the messages obtained by the Glanvilles seem clearly to be a mixture of already 'known' (or accepted) facts, and a 'fantasy' emerging from the subconscious minds of the sitters, - to fit the story, so to speak. It is interesting that when the facts do not quite fit the story, or when there are anomalies, (such as the different dates of her own death given by the <sup>alleged</sup> spirit of Katie Boreham), Price assumes there are 'lying spirits, just as there are lying humans' (p. 145), whereas, in the light of our 'Philip' experience, we would say that either the members of the participating group find it difficult to remember everything that has gone before, or, as sometimes happened, if the composition of the group varied, then the story itself became varied to match the feelings or beliefs of that particular 'quorum'. A striking example of this in the Philip group was over the question of smoking. It chanced that two or three members of the group are addicted smokers, while two others very much object to even being in the same room where others are smoking. If the non-smokers (plus those members who while not smoking themselves nevertheless tolerated the smokers) were all present, Philip, on being questioned, would reject the idea of smoking; ashtrays on the table would be tipped off, and loud negative raps would signify his displeasure. If however, the non-smokers were in a minority, and all the smokers were present, Philip, when questioned would loudly affirm his love of smoking, answering

in the affirmative when questioned as to whether he himself liked smoking. The ashtrays would remain on the table. It is also interesting that the only time during the Philip experiment that an object was thrown in a poltergeist-like manner was over this divided question of smoking. The group had started working, and three people were at the tape-recording apparatus, Dr. Whitton, with the earphones <sup>was</sup> on monitoring the input, Frank Riley and Craig Knudsen operating the controls. The smokers at that moment were in the majority and they were indulging, and an ashtray was on the table. Margaret Sparrow, the most intolerant of the non-smokers entered the room late, and seeing the situation exclaimed 'Philip you don't like smoking do you?' The table immediately rapped "No". Sidney then said, pacifically, 'alright then, we will put the ashtray on the floor' and he laid it on the floor behind himself. Sue took the seat next to Sidney and the session restarted. Frank Riley, at the tape recorder, made some remark about Sue being a 'killjoy', and she made an equally joking rude retort. At that moment, the ashtray dropped down from the ceiling and landed by Frank's feet, just missing his ear on the way down. Dr Whitton and Craig Knudsen, at the tape recorder, heard the ashtray hit the overhead pipes and fall to the ground. All the members of the group were sitting around the table, hands on the table. (Dr. Whitton was watching them and would have seen any movement <sup>by anyone</sup> to pick up the ashtray, as would all the other members of the group). Nobody observed the ashtray rise from the floor, as they were looking towards the centre of the table, and at each other at the time; some had their backs to it. The three men at the tape recorder only saw it as it fell, apparently, from the ceiling. The sound of the ashtray falling, and the comments made at the time were, of course, all part of the recording. This was one of the many episodes that caused us to realise that the content of the messages received in this type of session comes from the minds of the members of the group, and that this content can, and does, vary according to the composition of the group and



their varying ideas and beliefs. To us it demonstrates that the material derived from the planchette sittings of the Glanville could very well have emanated from the subconscious beliefs and fantasies of the participants.

So, in retrospect, it seems possible there is a logical explanation to fit all the different phases of the alleged hauntings at Borley over the years.

The events follow a pattern which has been seen several times in cases which have made the headlines in the media. A combined haunting and poltergeist outbreak is reported, followed by the arrival of investigators and journalists.

The possibilities present in a 'good story' are obvious, and the story is embroidered, and expanded. In many of these cases a psychic is called in to make contact with the ghost, and find out what is needed to bring peace to the supposed 'unquiet spirit'. In the case of Borley the Glanvilles seemed to have played this latter role, and thus gave further substance to the account by confirming the existence of such a 'spirit'. It has become a well-recognised sequence of events.



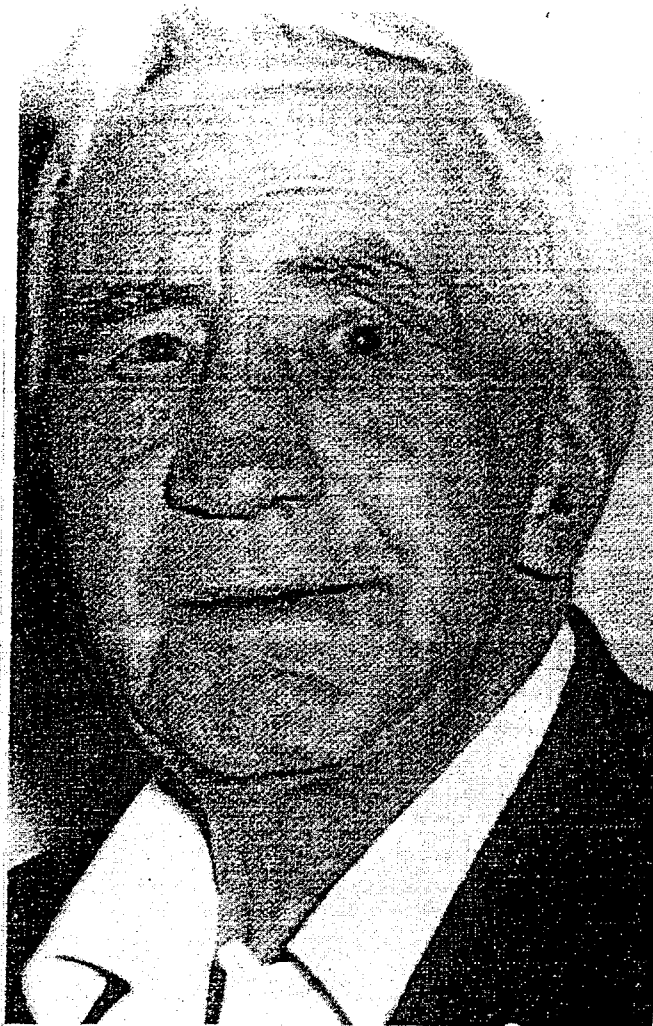
Page 33 (*above*) Early photograph of Borley Rectory, with the Rev and Mrs H. D. E. Bull and seven of their daughters; (*below*) Borley Rectory drawing-room, early twentieth century





Page 51 (above) The Rev H. F. (Harry) Bull, Rector of Borley 1892-1927; (below left) The Rev Guy Eric Smith, Rector 1928-30; (below right) Mabel Smith (Mrs Eric Smith) at Borley, 1929





Page 52 (*above left*) François d'Arles (Frank Charles Pearlless, 1894-1966); (*above right*) Marianne Foyster (Mrs L. A. Foyster); (*below*) the Rev Lionel Algernon Foyster, Rector 1930-5, at Borley

