

Society to be analysed and archived, and the orbs in those we were shown have been proven not to be dust particles or moisture in the air.

Stuart gave us a brief history of the pub and Sandgate and, after a much-needed buffet (all those nerves make you hungry!), we divided into three smaller groups.

With the pub lights out and only the orange glow of the streetlights outside to light our way, we headed to the front bar for a séance.

Holding hands around the table, we were told to imagine our energy flowing round the circle. After only a few minutes Donna said there was a male spirit with us – a fisherman. Stuart reported feeling extremely hot, and those sitting either side of him confirmed that they, too, could feel extreme heat. Donna told us the fisherman was happy to have so much attention and was feeling playful. He wanted to touch each of us in turn so we would know he was with us.

When my turn came I suddenly felt very strange. My shoulders became heavy and I felt like I was wearing a lead suit. My head felt almost like it was in a vice. Donna explained that it was the spirit energy I could feel, and when the fisherman moved on to the next person the feeling disappeared.

### Clogs

Then Donna reported a female presence who appeared to be wearing clogs.

Pete – a medium from one of the other groups – later told me that his group had encountered the same two spirits in the front bar.

He was able to give a name to the fisherman: Joseph Brannigan, who Pete says drowned in 1886 when his boat sank. He had also noticed the lady's clogs and said she was speaking excitedly about the new queen, Victoria.

At that point Stuart revealed an interesting fact he had previously kept to himself. Years ago, part of the pub was a fishmongers, and the women who worked



■ Another 'orb' (circled) was captured in this photograph taken in The Ship's front bar area  
■ Inset, right: an enlargement of the orb

in there would have worn wooden clogs on their feet, as the water on the floor would have rotted normal shoes.

Next, we headed upstairs to a small bedroom and as we sat quietly there was a strange dragging noise.

No one could decide where it came from, or what it might have been. Then Jack, a member of our group, began shivering uncontrollably.

Donna said there was the spirit of a boy in the room. This shaking went on for several minutes and was quite disturbing – finally Donna stepped in and told the spirit (who she said was trying to take Jack into a trance state in order to communicate through him) to draw back. Instantly the shaking stopped and Jack reported feeling normal again.

Back downstairs, there was a flurry of activity in the front bar. Stuart was standing in the area directly below where we had just been and was holding an EMF meter with readings going off the scale. The room felt cold and icy.

After a while the readings suddenly

stopped and the temperature returned to normal, without explanation.

After a break my group headed off to investigate the ladies' toilets. I was the last in the room and as I was about to leave I had a strange sensation that someone was in the empty front bar. I decided to investigate and as I reached the doorway of the pitch-black room I got a whiff of fish on the left-hand side of the corridor.

Worried I might be starting to imagine things, I looked around for someone to confirm this and found another guest, who walked down to the bar door and said she too could smell a faint fish smell in the same place. (Stuart later confirmed this is one of two places this phenomenon occurs).

I went to sit in the front bar on my own for a while, and although it was empty it still felt occupied. I took some photos then left the bar to rejoin my group. Back out in the corridor, the fishy smell had gone.

By 5am there seemed to be a real drop in energy levels, not just in the Ghost Search team and guests but in the atmosphere too.

### Cobbler

In a final attempt to encounter more activity, my group headed back upstairs to the front bedroom and sat quietly. Just as we all began to think that nothing would happen Donna announced she had a male spirit with her called Thomas Beckett – “but not the Thomas Beckett”. This one was a cobbler who worked in a shop three doors along.

Suddenly her posture changed and she started to shake her head from side to side, saying “such a waste, such a bloody waste”.

I had never witnessed anything like this before, other than on Living TV's Most Haunted when Derek Acorah gets ‘possessed’. Donna appeared to be in a trance with the spirit talking through her.

Being cynical about these things, I was surprised to find myself quite convinced by what appeared to be happening, and also concerned for Donna's wellbeing.

A member of our group confirmed that it was Thomas coming through. We were told that he was killed in 1851, at the age

## Glossary

**Clairvoyance** the ability to see spirit.

**Clairaudience** the ability to hear spirit.

**Clairsentience** the ability to sense spirit.

**Medium** a person who becomes an instrument for spirit to communicate through.

**Orbs** Balls of light usually captured in photographs or on film, and very occasionally seen by the naked eye.

Sceptics believe orbs to be nothing more than dust particles, moisture or flying bugs, but another theory is that orbs are spiritual energy.

Donna said: “There have been numerous occasions when I have been communicating with a spiritual entity and gone on to request that a photo be taken in the exact spot where that spiritual being is, and instead of a full ghost manifestation an orb had taken its place.

“When a second photograph has been taken once the spirit had gone, needless to say, so had the orb. If you are lucky enough to film an orb in motion, they are a sight to marvel at, appearing to have a mind of their own, they change direction, move through solid structures, some seem to pulsate, others seem dense and some can alter their shape. “I truly do not know if an orb is the actual spirit or the energy it brings with it, or perhaps even an effect it leaves as it enters our energy field.

“All I can say, hand on heart, is that I believe an orb has something to do with spiritual matters, energies from another dimension.

“One other point I must make: sceptics claim orb photos could be the result of dust being stirred up in the atmosphere. If this is the case, would all the photos that have been taken in sequence not show the same dust orbs? Surely dust cannot settle that quickly, can it?”