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PSYCHIC WEEK: SCHOOL OF THE SUPERNATURAL

Just how spooky can a learners' night be...?

Exclusive By Jane Simon

HOLDING the key-ring in his hand, Daren Stephens closes his eyes. Without pausing to think, he's off.

"I'm getting some kind of fire. A fire extinguisher. There's pain in the wrist. A dispute with your brother and the name Paul."

Daren's confidence is breath-taking. He's the star pupil at this psychic circle run by TV's Craig Hamilton-Parker.

On Sunday night, I joined them in a village hall in Southampton, to see if I could be psychic, too.

"You have a nice healing energy about you," says Craig as we shake hands, which is a good start.

He and his wife Jane were actually united by the spirit world.

Britain's most famous medium, Doris Stokes, once told Craig he would meet his future wife on March 6 and that her name was Jane Wallis. Nine years later, on the appointed date, Craig met Jane Willis at a psychic show.

They have been married 14 years and Craig, who starred in the recent BBC2 series, *Mediums: Talking To The Dead*, chucked in his advertising business to concentrate on the supernatural.

"Everyone has natural psychic abilities," he promises me. "They work on gut feeling and we teach people to listen to their intuition."

Sounds simple enough, so I join the circle as Craig dims the lights. There are six regulars and all seem reassuringly normal - like Christine Harding, from Portsmouth, who works in marketing.

"My husband laughs at me," she admits. "Tonight, when I was leaving, he said:

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'Don't forget your wand.'

She first contacted a medium seven years ago after suffering a miscarriage.

"I saw different mediums and, each time, my grandmother and grandfather came across - that gave me comfort."

Her friend Christine Forster tells me that the first time she came to the group three years ago, one member told her she was pregnant before she knew it herself.

"I came here because I had a lot of spiritual activity at home. My kids would talk about other people in the room..."

We all start by meditating to calm our minds. We then focus on tonight's guinea-pig, 25-year-old Carley Richards. None of the trainee psychics has met her before.

"Try to get a picture of what makes Carley tick," Craig says. Everyone scribbles in their notebooks before announcing their findings. "I'm getting a grandmother on the spirit side. Mary. Or an M name." "It's a grandfather link." "I have a connection with the countryside."

"There are lots of horses."

"I've been brought up with horses," Carley confirms. "My grandad used to have them."

I get nothing apart from the fact that Carley looks like she'd probably go out with someone named Darren. But I keep this to myself because it sounds daft.

Then the other Daren - the one in our group - amazes everyone when he announces, correctly, that Carley has a butterfly tattoo and that her grandfather used to carry a walking stick.

Daren is 27 and works for Southern Electric. He's been psychic since he was a kid. "As a child, I'd speak to a gentleman in my room who my mum and dad couldn't see," he tells me.

"As I grew older, I started hearing voices and seeing people around me. I saw Carley's grandad briefly over her left shoulder. But it was just a glimpse and then, when you try to focus, he's gone."

Daren has three spirit guides who help him see things. Do they help him pick lottery numbers, I wonder? "I'm not interested in that," he insists. "I want to help people."

The circle now moves on to psychometry. Carley passes us her keyring and we try to read the vibrations from it.

"You might not get anything at first but go past that," says Craig. He must be psychic because, when it's my turn, my mind is blank.

"You're resisting because your logical mind tells you this isn't possible," says Craig. "Say the first thing that comes into your head."

"Andrew!" I blurt at random.

"More!" Craig shouts. Incredibly, in my head I do see something - like a holiday snapshot of a guy with short, light-brown hair, sitting on a stone wall. I don't recognise him. Neither does Carley.

"Describe her house," orders Craig. "What's the front door like?"

"It's white UPVC," I say.

"What's the hall carpet like?"

"There isn't any."

Carley nods. "My dad's front door is UPVC. And he doesn't have carpet. He has tiles."

Success at last! But my wild guess that the house number was 29 is way off. He lives at No.45.

Then Carley passes over a piece of jewellery. Craig tells me to describe her mother, so I say the first thing that pops into my head.

"She's a bit argumentative, more outgoing after a drink. She did typing at school, she hasn't travelled much. She's had three children, can cook and takes a size-five shoe. "I feel like I'm making it up," I protest.

"Just let it come," Craig reassures me. "The important thing is not to censor it."

I'm right about not travelling and the three children but Carley's mum doesn't drink and is a terrible cook. Her shoe size was wrong, too.

"Give me three names that connect with her!" orders Craig.

"Patricia, Susan and Dominic," I say. Carley blurts out: "That's my mum's name - Sue!" Everyone is impressed. Getting a name is the Holy Grail of mediums.

For the last exercise, everyone tries to contact Carley's grandmother in the spirit world. Carley has brought a photo. Christine Forster goes first and immediately her hands start shaking.

"Did she have tremors?" she asks and Carley nods, amazed.

I'm picking up nothing from granny but contacting the dead is a bit of a tall order for a beginner. So instead I try to predict who the photo will be passed to next.

I get a 100 per cent success rate as the photo goes to Christine Harding - "My legs are shaking, too!".

Afterwards, I'm disappointed I didn't do better but Carley's impressed with what she heard tonight. "Craig told me a lot of things that were true," she says. "For instance, he said my boyfriend could be possessive - and Darren, my ex, was very jealous."

I don't say anything but the news that Carley really did have a boyfriend named Darren sends a little shiver down my spine.

Perhaps I really am more psychic than I think.

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Tone your third eye

LIKE any talent, psychic ability improves with practice, say the experts. To tone up your extra-sensory skills, try these exercises they showed me...

1 Sit comfortably, close your eyes, breathe slowly and deeply. Listen to your breath and gradually slow your breathing until you feel fully relaxed. Be aware of being in the moment. Ignore distracting thoughts or noises. Tell yourself that your conscious mind is ready to focus. Move your consciousness to the centre

of your brain.2 Visualise a warm rainbow of light streaming down from above and in through the top of your head. Imagine the light flowing through your body, connecting you to the universe.

3 With eyes still closed, imagine you are warming your hands over a fire. Continue until your hands feel warmer. Now imagine the fire is gone and you are holding ice cubes. Continue until your hands are colder.

4 Rub hands together to increase their electrical charge. Wipe one hand in the air an inch from your forehead and the other above the back of your head. Clean the air round your head to strengthen your aura.

5 See yourself sitting in a white room with a door at one end. Visualise the door opening and your spirit guide coming to help you on your spiritual path. Is it somebody you know? Or a psychic guide who has been chosen for you? Ask them questions and if you don't feel a good connection to the first guide, thank them and ask to meet another spirit. It's your right to choose your own psychic helpers. TEST THE NATION YESTERDAY we asked you to use your sixth sense to decide which image we'd publish today - a house, a triangle, a tree or a moon. The image we'd chosen was the tree.

Twenty-seven per cent of callers chose correctly and an equal number chose triangle. A quarter picked the house and just 21 per cent went for the moon.

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