

## The Endeavor Mystery

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On March 13, 1928, nearly a year after Charles Lindbergh made history by flying across the Atlantic, from New York to Paris, Captain Raymond Hinchliffe, a veteran fighter pilot, and Elsie Mackay, a British actress and pilot, took off from Cranwell aerodrome in England in their small plane, Endeavor, in an attempt to complete the first east-to-west transatlantic crossing, considered riskier than the west-to-east crossing of Lindbergh because of the head winds. They were not to be heard from again, at least in the flesh.



Eileen Garrett

About 2 a.m. on March 14, Colonel G. L. P. Henderson and Squadron Leader Rivers Oldmeadow, two Royal Air Force friends of Hinchliffe's, were asleep on a ship in the Atlantic, headed from South Africa to England, completely unaware of their friend's flight. Oldmeadow was awakened when Henderson pounded on his cabin door. "Hinch has just been

in my cabin. Eye patch and all," Henderson exclaimed. (Hinchliffe had lost an eye in the war). "It was ghastly. He kept repeating over and over again. 'Hendy – what am I going to do? What am I going to do? I've got this woman with me, and I'm lost. I'm lost!' Then he disappeared in front of my eyes! Just disappeared." Henderson needed three fingers of straight Scotch to calm down. The two flyers learned three days later that Hinchliffe was missing after a trans-Atlantic attempt and then related their story.

On the evening of March 31, Beatrice Earl was experimenting with her Ouija board, hoping to hear from her deceased son. However, instead of hearing from her son, she received a message that read: "Can you help a man who has drowned?" (No spaces or punctuation in the actual messages.) She asked who was communicating and the reply came: "I was drowned with Elsie Mackay." Mrs. Earl asked how it happened and the reply was: "Fog storm winds went down from great height." The communicator further stated that he went down off the leeward islands and requested that Mrs. Earl get a message to his wife as he wanted to speak to her.

Although Mrs. Earl had read about the disappearance of the Endeavor, she could not bring herself to attempt contact with Emilie Hinchliffe. On April 11, she again sat at the board and Hinchliffe again appealed to her to get word to his wife. Earl requested an address and Hinchliffe responded with the name and town of his solicitor. After mulling over the situation, she sent a letter to Emilie Hinchliffe in care of the solicitors as well as to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Great Britain's most famous Spiritualist.

Emilie read the letter but not believing in Spiritualism or even in life after death, she ignored it, apparently assuming it came from a depraved woman. Moreover, her friends pointed out that there were no leeward islands on her husband's route. But Doyle did follow up, checking the maps and speculating that Hinchliffe could have been blown off course to the Azores Islands. He arranged a sitting for Mrs. Earl with Eileen Garrett, the famous Irish medium who was living in London at the time. After Garrett went into a trance, Uvani, her spirit control, began communicating through Garrett. Mrs. Earl asked Uvani if he could tell her anything about Captain Hinchliffe. Uvani responded: "Yes. He has been about you a good deal. He has been trying to get messages through, but thinks he has succeeded well with you."

Mrs. Earl then asked what happened to Hinchliffe. Uvani said that he went far off course, some 500 miles to the south. After a pause, the voice coming through Garrett's voice mechanism changed and it was Hinchliffe talking. Mrs. Earl asked him if he had suffered and he replied that he did not as it happened too quickly. But Uvani then again took over the medium's body and said that Hinchliffe is very confused and needs to speak to his wife.

It took a month for the report of the sitting with Garrett to reach Doyle. Impressed, he wrote to Emilie Hinchliffe and informed her of the information that had come to his attention. Emilie could not ignore a letter from someone as famous as Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes. So she immediately wrote to Mrs. Earl and arranged to visit her. Over tea, Mrs. Earl explained to her that she was hesitant about using the Ouija board again because "low-grade spirits" could intrude. She recommended a sitting with Mrs. Garrett.

On May 22, 1928, Emilie Hinchliffe sat with Eileen Garrett at the London Spiritualist Alliance. As was policy, Garrett was not given Emilie's identity. As Emilie knew shorthand, she

showed up prepared to take detailed notes. After Garrett went into trance, Uvani began speaking and said that "he shows me portraits. He mentions the name Joan, little Joan. He was full of strength, full of speed. Perhaps cars or planes. He passed after having flown in an airplane. He says it was no one's fault. He was 33."

While Hinchliffe called their daughter "Little Joan" and his age was correctly stated, Emilie remained skeptical as the information could have been researched. Uvani then said the communicator was referring to an eye problem and said that the man must be her husband as he kept pointing to the ring on her finger. He then gave some specifics about his own watch which he was wearing when he went down as well as her watch.

Uvani then said that "he mentions the names Hermann and Wilhelm He has seen them both here..." Emilie clearly recalled Hermann Hess, her husband's close friend who had been killed in a crash in 1925, and Wilhelm Hepner, also killed in a crash, in 1925. Slowly, Emilie was beginning to believe that this was all real.

Then details of the plane's problems were communicated, going back and forth between Uvani's voice and Hinchliffe's voice. "...left strut breaks...He hovered near water...At 3 a.m. abandoned hope..Plug oiled...Terror never..But anguish...Knew every half hour it might be the end...Had to change course..I did go south, tell my wife. I went deliberately, deliberately south. I told her I would go north. I never lost my course. I knew exactly where I was, but went deliberately south hoping to find land."

Details continued to come and Hinchliffe's voice seemed to take over. "Have you seen Brancker? Brancker told you not to hope any more. I curse myself I did not listen to Brancker. I went against all observations. Everyone said the weather was bad...I was drowned 20 minutes after leaving the wreck."

While none of the information about her husband's demise could be verified, there were

enough bits and pieces – references to their watches, a photo of their daughter that he carried on the flight with him, his two deceased friends, Sir Sefton Brancker, who had been helping Emilie – that Emilie was becoming convinced that it was for real. =

The tone of the voice changed as Uvani again took over, mentioning that Emilie had been worried about finances but she would soon have good news. Wilhelm was again mentioned, this time stating that he was headed for Brussels when he crashed, a fact. After a pause, Uvani passed on a message from Hinchliffe: “Tell them there is no Death, but everlasting life. Life here is but a journey and a change to different conditions. We go on from unconscious perfection to conscious perfection.”

Emilie arranged another sitting with Garrett, on May 24, but this time Emilie took special precautions. While it was the policy of the Alliance not to disclose the name of the sitter to the medium beforehand, Emilie asked the secretary of the London Alliance to have Garrett go into trance before she entered the room. Uvani greeted her in a sonorous and masculine voice and said he had recognized her as having been there before. Hinchliffe came through and referred to Betty, the woman who was caring for their two children and also made reference to details of their home. But Emilie had been told that mediums can read minds and therefore did not consider this particularly evidential. However, her husband also referred to having changed the spark plugs on the plane to a different brand just before the flight, something she knew nothing about but later verified with one of the mechanics. He also mentioned that he had left two of his studs in a box in a cupboard, something Emilie did not know about until she got home and confirmed it as fact.

A week or two later, Emilie persuaded Mrs. Earl to go back to the Ouija board and brought along her husband’s friend, Captain John Morkham. Some technical information concerning the

plane was communicated, things which Emilie concluded could not have been known to Mrs. Earl. At the end, Hinchliffe instructed his wife to look behind a drawer on the left of his desk and she would find a document concerning their house that she had been looking for without success. Upon returning home, she found it exactly where the Ouija board messages said it would be.

“Life used to be so jolly on earth at times, but this life is so much freer,” Hinchliffe communicated to Morkham. “Be good to my wife. I am anxious about my darling Joan baby is all right (sic).”

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