

# The 'dead normal' mediumship school at Grand Hotel is attracting students from across Europe Town the centre of the spiritual medium

by Matt Leclere

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To some it is a way of dealing with grief, while others think it is a bit strange.

But mediumship – or speaking to spirits – is becoming increasingly popular and Folkestone is right at the heart of it.

For seven weeks of the year classes are held at The Grand Hotel and dozens of people travel to the town to be taught by Sheila French at her mediumship school – which she has run for nearly 14 years – or to become teachers themselves.

Most of them are Swiss, German or Austrian, countries where it is becoming hugely popular.

But why come to Britain to learn how to connect with the spirit world and what does it really mean?

"Historically, English mediumship is considered to be the best because we have the background of religion and spiritualism and they don't have it," Sheila said.

"Speaking to the dead is too crude. A medium will be in the company of someone you know in the spirit world, say your dad, and they take information and present you with evidence that says that you must have my dad here because only he would know those things."

And Britain is it at forefront of spreading mediumship and the teaching to other countries.

Bruno Della Carbonare, from Basel in Switzerland, explained: "We don't have the long tradition. We need further advanced teaching and we don't have that in Switzerland."

His wife, Monika, added: "I come here because I'm not only using tools and techniques but actually do them. I can use techniques but not explain them."

"I speak to people here about it and can't always speak to people in our homeland."

There are many reasons why people turn to spiritualism. It started to become popular in Britain between the two world



Sheila French

Pictures: Gary Browne FM3003624



**'We've moved from being a witch to being a weirdo'**

wars, as people looked for a way of dealing with grief.

East Kent has several places where spiritualists meet. Folkestone, Hythe, Dover and Romney Marsh all have spiritualist churches.

Britain has a history for spiritualism and it has grown quicker here than in America.

Sheila added: "The basic reason is to support people that are living to prove beyond reasonable



Foreign students at the mediumship school in The Grand, Folkestone

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doubt that life continues.

"If it continues, then it makes life a bit more important. It brings people together and there's a sense of community about exploring life together."

"It looks 'dead normal' and I like to keep it that way. There's nothing spectacular. Until 1953 you could have been burned for

being a witch and we've moved from being a witch to being a weirdo.

"Some believe you are born with it but I don't. I believe anyone can do it."

"It's like when you're at a supermarket queue, something tells you where to step in, or a party where you don't know anyone,

something tells you who to speak to using intuition. It's the unspoken conversation."

Everyone has different reasons for taking it up of course.

But whether you believe in the methods or find it weird, the reasons for taking up this fascinating belief and skill are completely understandable.



Sheila French with foreign mediumship school students

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