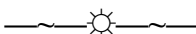




Volume.2 No.2 March 2015

Contents list:



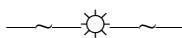
- 033 – Were the S.N.U. Seven Principles changed?
- 041 – South Wales D. C. – Barry Spiritualist Church & Centre – Hydesville Day
- 042 – “Remembering our old workers” – Spiritualism in Blackburn
- 046 – Mr. Tom Tyrrell
- 051 – The Effect of the Vagrancy Act (Part II) – The Work of the Spiritualists’ National Union.

SNU Pioneer goes bi-monthly from January 2015

This new history journal will be presented using original researched material wherever possible.

Articles and quotes are taken from original sources as they were published at the time and reproduced by “Optical Character Recognition” (OCR), the conversion of scanned images of handwritten, typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded text. This means that grammar, old English, spelling mistakes, etc. are not usually changed. However, long paragraphs are sometimes split for easier reading; any errors or explanations needed are noted in footnotes.

Special thanks are acknowledged to Leslie Price and Charles Coulston for their work in sub-editing this issue



“Subscribe” free to Pioneer or contact the editor – pioneer@snu.org.uk

All references to Psypioneer in this issue are archived in Australia by Garth Willey at the Woodlands Sanctuary Foundation. For further information about Psypioneer or to subscribe please visit:—<http://www.woodlandway.org>

Were the S.N.U. Seven Principles changed?

Emma Hardinge Britten gave six Principles to the 'National Conference of British Spiritualists' in July 1890. The following July it was renamed and constituted the 'Spiritualists' National Federation'. During its existence Emma's set of Principles were not actually used; she had also freely given her Principles to other conferences and societies.

At the opening of the fifth National Conference on July 6th 1894 at Darwen, the Lyceum banner of the 'Darwen Psychological Society and Children's Progressive Lyceum' was used for the opening of the Conference. On the reverse side, in ornamental gold letters, was the declaration of the Principles of the Darwen Society:

The Fatherhood of God,
The Brotherhood of Man,
The Immortality and Progression of the Soul.

It was this 1894 Conference which started the long legal battle for the right of the Federation to legally own its own property. Below is quoted from the Conference report, published by the 'Two Worlds', Friday July 6th 1894:

"Mr. Johnson pointed out that we are under legal disabilities—societies cannot hold property. Halls have been lost to societies after they have subscribed to build them, and he proposed as an amendment, "That the Executive be empowered to obtain a copy of the Wesleyan Poll Deed, and to take legal advice thereon, and submit a similar deed to the next Conference." He cited the recent fine of £200 and costs inflicted upon the Leeds Sunday Society as a proof that persecution is not dead yet.

"Mr. Morse contended that the business part of the movement ought to be placed on a legal and satisfactory foundation, and moved a resolution (the exact wording of which we have not received) to the effect that the executive should be empowered to obtain all the required legal information, a copy of the Poll Deed, and that a model draft of such deed or deeds as are necessary should be drawn up by a legal man and submitted to the next Conference.

"Mr. Rayner pointed out that history was repeating itself; that a similar resolution was proposed four years ago and nothing came of it. Lawyers had assured him that we do possess the same rights and privileges as Nonconformists; that halls can be registered as places of worship and for the solemnisation of marriage, and he thought that those who put up a hall should have the control over it. If the resolution was carried he hoped it would not be a dead letter like it was four years ago.

"Mr. Morse's resolution was carried and adopted as a substantive motion."

The end result was on October 18th 1901, when the Spiritualists' National Union Ltd was registered by the Board of Trade. July 5th and 6th 1902 saw the last Spiritualists' National Federation Conference, held at Bootle. On Sunday the 6th the Federation confirmed the committee's resolution for winding up the Federation and transferring the assets to the Union, and the Spiritualists' National Federation ceased to exist.

‘Light’ published the Conference proceedings on July 12th 1902 and for their readers’ information made mention of the ‘Memorandum of Association’ of the Union, that declared among its ‘objects’ the recognition of seven Principles.

The Principles then read as they do today. ➔

It should be noted that Emma’s Principles underwent numerous changes throughout the years and were not given as a single outpouring, as previously thought.¹ At the Oldham Spiritual Temple on April 9th 1887, she summarised some of her Principles into a set of six.² These, with some modification, became our Seven Principles. For example, her third Principle,

‘The Immortality of the Soul’,

became our fourth Principle,

‘The Continuous Existence of the Human Soul’.

But our third Principle, ‘The Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels’, was not part of Emma’s six Principles as she gave them at Oldham in 1887, though she had given a similar Principle in London in 1871: “I believe in the communication of spirits as ministering angels.” This was at Cleveland Hall on April 30th 1871. The full recorded lecture and other information are available in an SNU publication.³ Whether or not our third Principle is taken from this lecture is not presently known.

However, some questions have arisen:

“Were the S.N.U. Seven Principles changed?”

They are as follows:—

1. The Fatherhood of God.
2. The Brotherhood of Man.
3. Continuous Existence.
4. Communion of Spirits and Ministry of Angels.
5. Personal Responsibility.
6. Compensation and Retribution hereafter for good or ill done on earth.
7. A Path of Endless Progression.

In the early years of the SNU a series of booklets were available, called ‘Propaganda Publications’. No. 2 was entitled ‘The Seven Principles of Spiritualism’, by the General Secretary (1904-1920), Hanson Hey.⁴ I have been able to locate only the revised and enlarged fifth edition of 1923.

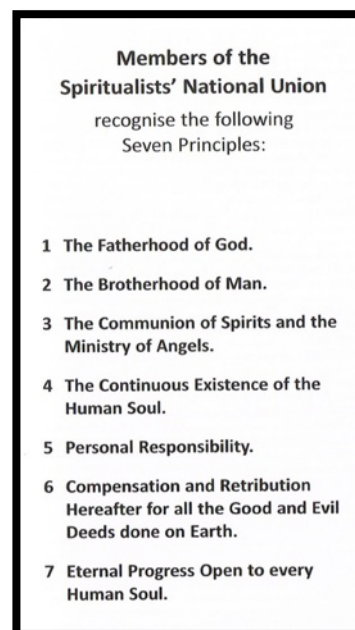
It can be noted in this publication that our third Principle, ‘Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels’, become No. 4, with the shortened ‘Continuous Existence’ as Principle 3.

¹ See the SNU Pioneer: July 2014, ‘How many Principles made up Emma’s ‘Creed of the Spirits’?’

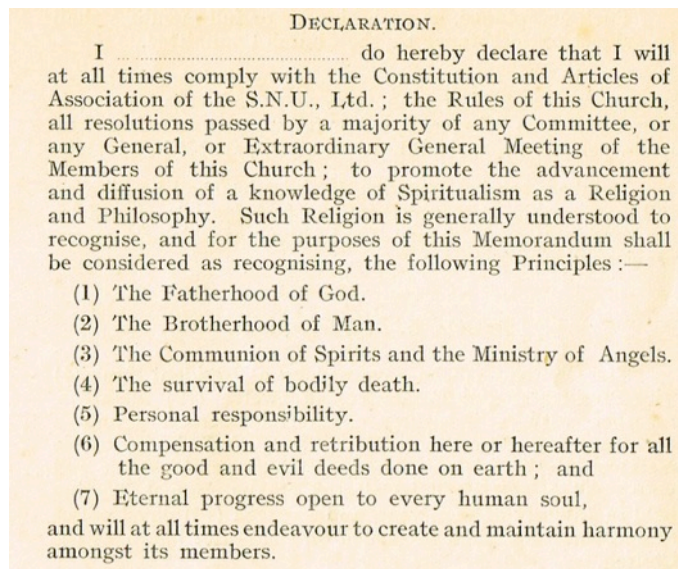
² See SNU Pioneer: August 2013, ‘The Laying of the Oldham Spiritual Temple Corner Stones’.

³ ‘The Creed of the Spirits’, Britten Memorial Museum booklet, published 2013.

⁴ For the full list of all the General Secretaries see the SNU Pioneer, October 2014: ‘General Secretaries of the SNU’ and also ‘National Secretaries’.



Subtle changes appear in other Principles but the general context of the Principles remains the same. S.N.U. President George Berry, in his 1921 Conference address at Halifax, referred to the third Principle as ‘The Continuity of Life’.



We can note here from Darwen Spiritualists’ (National) Church and Lyceum rules that it is stated: “Amended to come into Harmony with the new constitution and articles of association of the S.N.U. Ltd., 1921”; note the changes primarily in Principles four and seven.

‘Eden Progressive National Spiritualist Church’, Gateshead, founded in 1897, published the Seven Principles in their ‘Principles and Rules’ booklet in April 1930. Here the fourth Principle read ‘The Survival of Bodily Death’, with some changes to the 6th Principle,

‘Compensation and Retribution here or hereafter, for all the Good or Evil deeds done in the Body’.

The first official S.N.U. emblem came into existence and was displayed at the thirteenth Annual General Meeting held in Hull on July 3rd and 4th 1915, under the presidency of Ernest Oaten (first term), and its image was published in the ‘Two Worlds’, July 16th. See the S.N.U. Pioneer article, ‘Badges, Symbols and Emblems of the Spiritualists’ National Union’.⁵ The emblem was practical and adaptable and it was employed for Church affiliation, Exponents’ certification, etc. It was also used to show the Union’s Principles; the image shown is undated, so post-1915 is all that can be said. It can be seen that even by the Union itself some of the Principles are changed from their original 1902- published Seven Principles.



We can note that the fourth Principle reads:

‘Survival of man beyond Physical Death’.

⁵ S.N.U. Pioneer, April 2014.

On Friday April 13th 1934, there was a broadcast on the National Transmitter of the B.B.C. by Ernest Oaten, who spoke to the nation on ‘What I Believe: (Spiritualism)’. This has been republished in Psypioneer, March 2006. Oaten stated:

“I personally accept the principles laid down by the Spiritualists’ National Union—the representative body of Spiritualist Churches of which I was honoured to be the President for a number of years.”

The first broadcast of the Union’s Principles were (quoted as published in the 1934 ‘Two Worlds’ publication):

- (1) The Fatherhood of God;
- (2) The Brotherhood of man;
- (3) Continuous existence of the soul;
- (4) The Communion of saints and the ministry of angels;
- (5) Personal Responsibility;
- (6) Compensation and retribution here or hereafter for all good or evil done on earth; and
- (7) A path of endless progress open to every soul.

These seven principles constitute no creed or dogma, since to every individual is granted the right of personal interpretation.

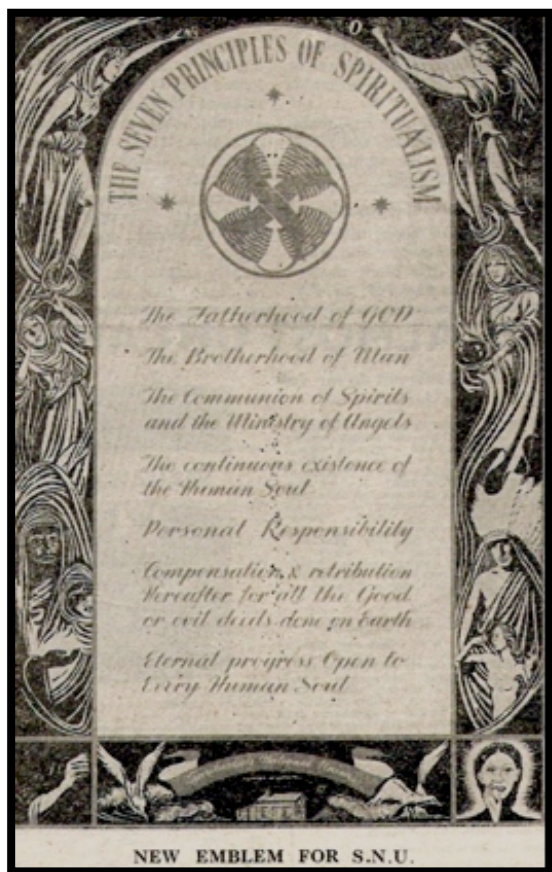
The wide interpretation of the Union’s Principles would in time cause it problems

The differences and confusion that existed in the wording and numbering of the Union’s Seven Principles continued to around 1950. But “Were the S.N.U. Seven Principles changed?” No!

The Principles were, as we have seen, widely open to interpretation. The variations were moulded to suit churches and societies. The Lyceum, too, in the early days of the Union was very active. The merging of the ‘British Spiritualists’ Lyceum Union’ (B.S.L.U.) into the S.N.U., with the Lyceum Union becoming a branch of the Union in January 1948, would have helped in stabilising the confusing variations of the Principles. The Lyceum did not have, for example, the ‘Communion of Spirits and Ministry of Angels’; it had, instead, ‘Proven Facts of Communication between departed Human Spirits and Mortals’.⁶ So the churches and societies with Lyceum groups would merge their Principles, some more closely to the official Union Principles than others.

I have pointed out only some of the variations of the Principles’ wording in this article. The Union’s Seven Principles were used and *generally* looked upon as the ‘Principles of Modern Spiritualism’ but were sometimes adopted by Union-affiliated churches, adding a range of differences in the wording. In 1927 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tried to introduce an eighth Principle but this was unanimously defeated at the 1928 AGM held at Barry, Glamorgan, on July 7th & 8th. Further information can be found in Psypioneer, November 2004, ‘The SNU and the Christ Principle’, or contact the editor for the Union’s report.

⁶ This is shown in ‘Introduction to Spiritualism and Lyceumism’, published by the BSLU in 1932.



In 1943 Percy Wilson asked the National Council of the Union to arrange a new emblem, and five years later a symbolic representation of the meaning of Spiritualism for the modern age, showing the original Seven Principles adopted at the onset of the Union in 1902,⁷ was drawn by an artist-medium, Mr. W. Foster Morgan, largely under the direct influence of Emma Hardinge Britten.

The story of the emblem design was told in the 'Two Worlds', April 30th 1948, by Percy Wilson, M.A. Later, in 1950, he became S.N.U. President.⁸ This has been republished in Psypioneer, April 2011, and explains the different symbolic drawings surrounding the Principles.

In October 1946 Ernest Thompson instigated a National Education scheme for the Spiritualists' National Union. By July 1949 Thompson had written and completed 150 Lecturettes (approximately 200,000 words) and had also prepared the comprehensive syllabus, which

provided the framework of the S.N.U. education courses.⁹ Education was the main theme for the S.N.U. Conference on July 2nd 1949, in Edinburgh, under the presidency of Mr W. Lorraine Haig.

Ernest Thompson was at this time editor of the 'Two Worlds' and in the November 5th 1949 issue he brought attention to 'Certitude Needed in our Religious Principles' and asked, "Do the Seven Principles need revising?"

Below is partly quoted:

Permanent Truths?

It would be fateful to assume that our S.N.U. 'Seven Principles' will represent our truths for all time, for that would certainly ensure the decline of our Movement.

Unless we are prepared to change our ideas in conformity with evolving thought and philosophy we will ourselves become as outmoded and reactionary as the orthodox Churches.

We must be prepared to examine periodically our principles and move with the times if we intend to aspire to the position of the Spiritual leaders' of the Human Race.

⁷ Slight change in Principle six.

⁸ See the SNU President's page: Percy Wilson 1950-1952 – <http://www.snu.org.uk/spiritualism/presidents>

⁹ It was Ernest Thompson who officially and incorrectly added Robert Owen as the originator of their Seven Principles.

Greater Certitude of Teaching

The question arises therefore ‘Do our present principles convey to the public our ideas of God, human existence and a teaching which does not conflict with modern knowledge?’

If not, we should certainly revise them so that they clearly indicate what our philosophy really is.

When we examine those spiritual principles which are accepted and affirmed by our brothers and sisters of the National Spiritualist Association of the United States of America, I think that many of us will admit that they are much more specific, indicate greater certitude of teaching, and are in fuller harmony with the Harmonial Philosophy of Spiritualism as given by the Spirits through Andrew Jackson Davis, the great Spiritualist Seer.

N.S.A. Principles

1. We believe in Infinite Intelligence.
2. We believe that the phenomena of nature both physical and spiritual, are the expression of Infinite Intelligence.
3. We affirm that a correct understanding of such expression and living in accordance therewith constitute true religion.
4. We affirm that the existence and personal identity of the individual continue after the change called death.
5. We affirm that communication with the so-called dead is a fact, scientifically proven by the phenomena of Spiritualism.
6. We believe that the highest morality is contained in the Golden Rule: “Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye also unto them.”
7. We affirm the moral responsibility of individuals, and that he makes his own happiness or unhappiness as he obeys or disobeys Nature’s physical and spiritual laws.
8. We affirm that the doorway to reformation is never closed against any human soul here or hereafter.
9. We affirm that the Precepts of Prophecy contained in the Bible are scientifically proven through Mediumship.¹⁰

Traditional Teachings

In the light of these (in my opinion more evolved and progressive principles) let us review our own and see if any improvements can be suggested.

One aspect which has been mentioned several times is that our principles are too brief, too general, and allow for certain interpretations which are very far removed from the teachings of traditional S.N.U. Spiritualism.

¹⁰ These have been updated from the first set of six at Chicago, Illinois, in 1899 and have increased and revised as the movement has grown. As they read today: – <http://www.nsac.org/principles.php>

On the other hand, many people who read the Seven Principles in our Churches and hymn books, have not had the spiritual education to understand the deep significance behind each short statement.

We should therefore state more clearly, and with greater certitude, what our teaching really is.

Ernest Thompson's remarks:

"... our principles are too brief, too general, and allow for certain interpretations, which are very far removed from the teachings of traditional S.N.U. Spiritualism."

prompted an article in the December 10th 1949 issue of the 'Two Worlds' by J. T. Williams: 'Individual Liberty of Interpretation Primary Cause of S.N.U. Decline – The Seven Principles'. Williams noted:

"It has been clear for some time that the S.N.U., is losing ground, and I believe the primary cause is the policy of "Full individual liberty of interpretation" of the Seven Principles, which is causing confusion in the minds of enquirers, and no little confusion in the minds of the speakers too.

"Without adopting the creeds and dogmas of orthodoxy we must have some degree of uniformity in our teachings."

This is exactly what happened. The Union started to lose churches to breakaway independent Spiritualist groups and to Christian Spiritualists, especially the Greater World Christian Spiritualists League (GWCSL), founded on May 30th, 1931, later known as the Greater World Christian Spiritualist Association (GWCSA). By the mid-1930s it was having an



Jean Bassett (1940-2011)

impact on Union churches. Some Union churches were starting to run on Christian lines, the Seven Principles being taken over with Christian trappings. Attempts were made to retain the traditional teachings of Union Spiritualism within their churches, including discussions with the Greater World and other groups, but with little success. In 1988 the Union withdrew 'liberty of interpretation'.¹¹ In '100 Years of National Spiritualism', by Jean Bassett, published 1990, Jean stated that liberty of interpretation was not part of the Memorandum or the Articles of Association; below is quoted from pages 86-87:

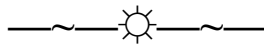
"... At least ten churches were being run by declared Christians on Christian lines. A small minority, but too many for a religion which was open, because of its declared freedom of philosophy, to people of all other religions. The signing of the Seven Principles should have protected the possibility of this

¹¹ Charles Coulston, SNU Consultant, notes: "Liberty of interpretation issue: the Council of the Union, which was at that time the policy-making body of the Union, agreed to accept this [legal] advice from the Union's solicitors and the Council's acceptance of it was relayed to members at the Union's 1988 Annual General Meeting. The reference to liberty of interpretation was accordingly deleted from the Union's Articles of Association and elsewhere from that point in time."

eventuality, but many of the people concerned used our traditional tolerance against us. They stated that their ‘liberty of interpretation’ gave them the freedom to include a belief in Christianity while following Spiritualism. Gordon Higginson put the feeling of the majority of members into a few words at Conference: “I have nothing against Christian Spiritualism, but if the church was National Spiritualist then it must remain National Spiritualist. If they did not want this then they should find their own buildings and not pinch ours!”

“The subject of Liberty of Interpretation caused even more dissent. This phrase had been part of our tradition from around 1902. It was not part of the Memorandum or the Articles of Association, but had been viewed with pride by generations. No one had considered that it would be used in such a way as to distort the essence of our Principles. Because of this, a member of Council queried the legal validity of the phrase. Legal advice was sought and the Union was advised that the phrase had no meaning or validity in the context of a legal framework. It was with some regret that it was withdrawn from general usage. But the Union pointed out that ‘Personal Responsibility’ covered each individual’s right to think for his or herself, whereas the Churches did have to stay within the cover of the Memorandum and Articles without personal interpretation.”

Over the years some leading Spiritualists have felt, with Gordon Higginson, that the Principles should be looked at from time to time and updated if needed. In later years, however, the Union has stated that the Seven Principles are ‘unalterable’.¹²



¹² Charles Coulston, SNU Consultant, notes: “The Seven Principles are unalterable because they are enshrined in the Union’s Memorandum of Association as the official definition of the religion and religious philosophy of Spiritualism, the promotion of which is the principal object of the Union. The Charity Commission would not permit an alteration in this most fundamental object for which the Union was established.”

South Wales District Council

Barry Spiritualist Church & Centre

Celebrated 'Hydesville Day' with a talk and discussion on the importance of Hydesville and the formation of Modern Spiritualism

The Formation of Modern Spiritualism "Should be Carefully Considered" - Emma Hardinge Britten

Emanuel Swedenborg	Franz Anton Mesmer	Mesmerism	Shakers	Andrew Jackson Davis	Hydesville
Extraordinary Clairvoyance. Life was much the same in the Spirit World as on Earth. →	Healing. Natural energetic transference between objects. "regarded as the human founder of the New Spiritual Dispensation" – Emma Hardinge Britten	Trance, diagnosis, clairvoyance, and the intercourse with spirits. They were therefore termed spiritualists.	Remarkable evidence of clairvoyance, seership, trance and impressional mediumship were displayed. John the Baptists of the modern movement.	In 1843 he started to attend lectures on Mesmerism. He elaborated on and modified Swedenborg's vivid description of the after life. Which he would later term "The Summerland".	The good work has begun - behold, a living demonstration is born!

Andrew Jackson Davis had established a *defined status* through philosophical thought as to a foundation and explanation of *Modern Spiritualism* through Mesmerism.

Hydesville demonstrated physically two-way communication between the spirit world and the physical world.

The Fox sisters were the first mediums to publicly demonstrate the communication between the two worlds.

The Birth of Modern Spiritualism.

Emma Hardinge Britten:

"In endeavouring to trace out with all fidelity, the origin of the great modern spiritual movement, it will soon become apparent that though very momentous results were obtained in the Hydesville investigations of 1848 – especially in the discovery of a systematic mode of communing with spirits through a set of concerted signals – yet even in America, the land in which Spiritualism has attained to a pre-eminent degree of popularity, spirit communion was demonstrated, long prior to the "Hydesville disturbances"; in fact, it is obvious that this century in the New, as well as the Old World, has been remarkable for the persistence with which spirits have endeavoured to effect a direct method of intercourse with mortals.

"The causes before alluded to, which have favoured the marked publicity to which Spiritualism has attained in America, should be carefully considered, and will be found explanatory of the custom of dating the commencement of the modern movement, from the "Rochester knockings" in 1848. One great difficulty in attempting to chronicle the details of this movement, is the very fact that it did not originate in any special locality, or at any given time, inasmuch as it manifested its influence in a spontaneous and universal outpouring all over the world, coming and going like the wind – few, if any, could say whence, or whitherward. Again; it is because we cannot trace up the history of modern Spiritualism consecutively from point to point, either in time or place, that we find it expedient to take the commencement of this century for our data, and propose to treat of the manifestations as they occurred, independently, in the various countries of earth from which authentic records are obtainable. ..."

'Nineteenth-Century Miracles', Emma Hardinge Britten, 1883, pages 4-5.

“Remembering our old workers”

Spiritualism in Blackburn

Blackburn holds a significant place in Spiritualist history and within the Spiritualists' National Union

Below is quoted from the ‘Two Worlds’, May 17th 1895, under the editorship of Edward Wallis, who co-founded the journal with Emma Hardinge Britten in 1887:

“Blackburn has been a centre of Spiritual activity for a number of years, and was for a long time the scene of the operations of one of the strongest, most harmonious, and most successful societies in the kingdom. Audiences of upwards of a thousand persons assembled for some time, and month after month, on Sunday evenings, 7, 8 or 9 hundred people listened to our speakers and mediums.

“Among the earnest and devoted workers of those days the subject of our sketch for this week, Mr. R. Wolstenholme, did yeoman’s service, and we are pleased to have him in our portrait gallery. He it was who, some ten years ago, seeing that there was a likelihood of the termination of the Glasgow engagement with Mr. and Mrs. Wallis, set on foot the scheme to bring them to Lancashire to live and labour for Spiritualism. Quiet, observant, thoughtful and persevering, outspoken and high-principled he has won respect and esteem from all sorts and conditions of men, and after a spell of rest has again consented to be president of the Blackburn Society, which society, by the way, has just successfully entertained the Lyceum Union for their Annual Conference.”¹³



Richard Wolstenholme

Richard Wolstenholme was born in the village of Rhodes, near Manchester, in 1842. He was one of the founders of the ‘Blackburn Psychological Society’ and its first President, which continued for some years. In 1895 he was elected a member of the Board of Directors of the Two Worlds Publishing Company Limited; below, Wolstenholme briefly outlines in his own words the early years at Blackburn and the forming of the Society:

¹³ This was the tenth Annual Lyceum Conference, held on May 12th 1895 at the Blackburn Spiritualist Society. Thomas Olman Todd was elected President for the ensuing year, Alfred Kitson Hon. Secretary and J. Sutcliffe Treasurer.

“In 1873 I came to live in Blackburn, and in 1876, for the first time in my life, I heard Spiritualism publicly advocated from the platform. Mr. Samuel Quarmby, of Oldham,¹⁴ was the speaker, and from what I heard that night I determined to investigate for myself, and see what truth there was in the subject. For this purpose I held a circle at my own house every Sunday and Thursday evening, where I became thoroughly convinced of the genuineness of spirit return. With the enthusiasm of a new convert I went wherever I could get more evidence.

“During the time of the Slade trial my wife and I went to London and had a seance with Dr. Slade; also with Mr. Williams, Mrs. Olive and other noted London mediums. Several times I visited Newcastle and had seances with Miss Wood and Mrs. Esperance. I also very often got Mr. John Taylor, the physical medium, to come to our house, when the wonderful phenomena taking place in his presence was watched and critically examined by us. From 1876 to about 1881 Spiritualism was presented to the public of Blackburn only very occasionally, Mr. J. B. Stones, of Pleasington, at intervals getting J. J. Morse to give a lecture. The Lancashire Committee also occasionally sent Miss Longbottom and others to speak, but about 1881 a number of us met together to form a society and to inaugurate the same. Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten came and spoke most effectively in the Exchange Hall. Then followed Mr. Colville, Mr. Howell, Rev. C. Ware, Mr. James Burns (late Editor of the *Medium and Daybreak*), Mr. Farmer (then Editor of *Light*), Mr. Morse, Mr. and Mrs. Wallis, and many other able exponents of the movement; in fact, all the best speakers in the country were engaged, and Spiritualism spread fast and furious. A strong society was the result, and for years I was annually elected its president.

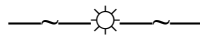
“During my presidency the famous debate between the Rev. T. Ashcroft and Mr. E. W. Wallis took place, a debate that never would have taken place but for the determined attitude of the committee of the Blackburn Society. When Mr. Ashcroft broke off the negotiations, a few of the committee went with me one Sunday to Chorley, where Mr. Ashcroft was stationed, and we placed ourselves at every church and chapel door in the town, and gave out printed papers to every one entering the various places of worship, in which we challenged Mr. Ashcroft to debate with Mr. Wallis. The debate came off with, so far as the Spiritualists were concerned, very gratifying results, both friends and foes proclaiming Mr. Wallis a gentleman.

“I conducted the first Spiritualist funeral in Blackburn, over the body of Mr. R. Walsh, one of the pioneers of Spiritualism in the town.¹⁵ I also joined in matrimony the first couple of Spiritualists ever married in England in a Spiritualist

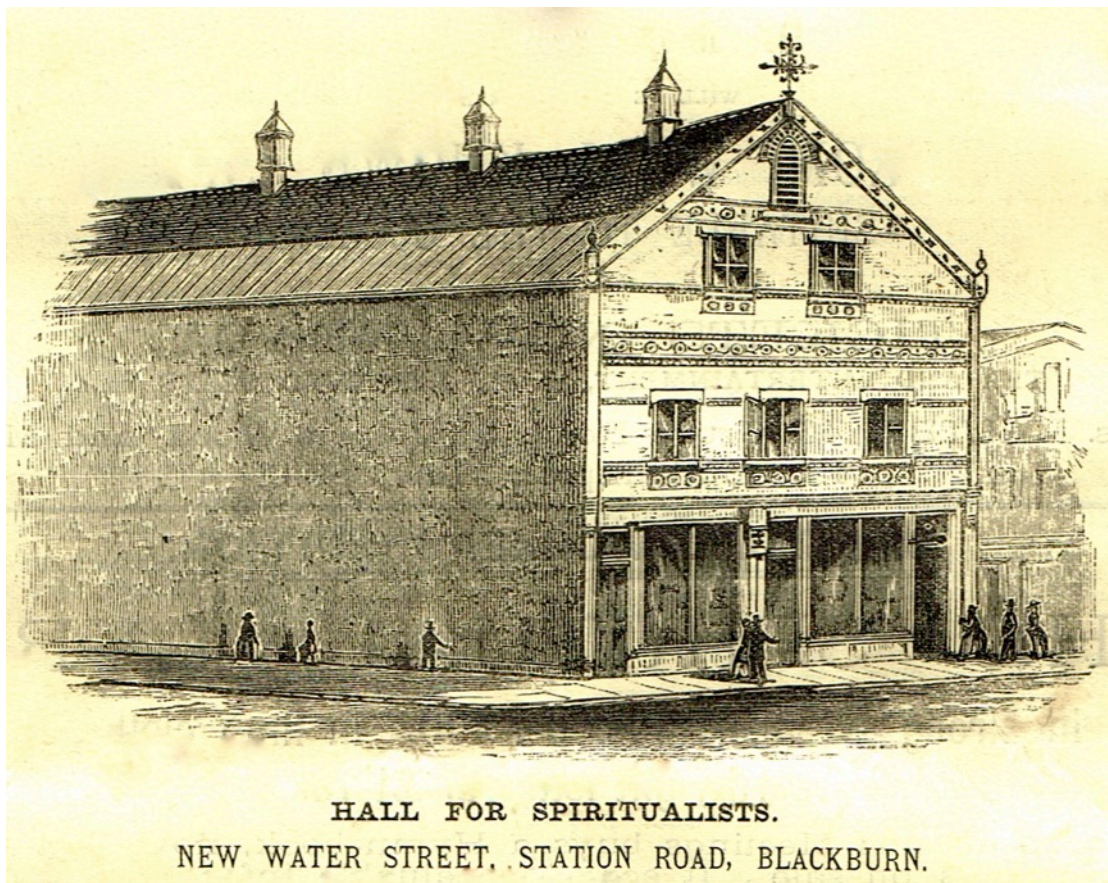
¹⁴ Samuel Quarmby was Secretary of the Oldham Society of Spiritualists; for further information see the SNU Pioneer, Volume I, No. 1, August 2013: ‘Oldham Society of Spiritualists’: <http://www.snu.org.uk/spiritualism/pioneer>

¹⁵ Richard Walsh died on March 28th 1886; he had built the public hall in Blackburn where the Spiritualists held their meetings. The funeral procession route on April 1st was lined with people; hundreds assembled to watch the proceedings. James Pemberton was one of the coffin-bearers; Pemberton founded a Lyceum at Blackburn and was known for his work in the days of the Spiritualists’ National Federation. In 1892 he became a director of the ‘Two Worlds’, in 1893 he was Secretary of the South-West Lancashire Committee and in 1903 he was elected to the first S.N.U. Council.

meeting room and with a Spiritualistic ceremony. Spiritualism in Blackburn for a long term of years sailed with the flowing tide until jealousy, that curse of societies, crept into what once was an earnest and enthusiastic body of workers. A new society was formed, and to-day we have the spectacle of two struggling societies, each burdened with heavy liabilities, neither of them presenting Spiritualism to the public as it ought to be, neither of them able to afford (only on very rare occasions) to engage the best speakers in the movement. Blackburn is not the only town where this suicidal folly has been developed, but all over the country this canker-worm has crept in, destroying instead of raising the status of Spiritualism. When will men learn that to be true saviours we must sacrifice self, and that he who is least shall become greatest? When shall we learn the lesson that union is strength and disbanding is weakness? Let me appeal to Spiritualists all over the country to amalgamate and form strong, robust societies where the truths of Spiritualism can be intelligently and effectively put before the public by intelligent and forcible speakers, whose lives shall command respect and admiration, and whose words shall carry conviction to all who hear them. This can only be done by unity and unselfishness, and if we cannot see eye to eye with our neighbours, let us try to so mould our lives and actions that we may work for the general good."



On Saturday March 7th and Sunday March 8th 1885 a new hall opened in Blackburn. The opening was front-page news on March 13th in the 'Medium and Daybreak'. Below are quoted the opening remarks (the four-page report is freely available from the editor):



OPENING OF THE NEW HALL AT BLACKBURN

On Thursday evening a private party of local friends, some 200 in number, had a preliminary seance in the Hall, though it was then in an unfinished state. In fact on Saturday, Mr. Delaine and his men were busy with the work necessary to the completion of the building. Some of the plaster had been recently put on, and rather a cool influence predominated, but which was amply compensated for by the heartiness of the audience which crowded it in every part.

The platform is at the end opposite to the front entrance, the deep gallery coming well forward into the middle of the area. At the platform end the house is nearly double the width of the other end. There is, therefore, a kind of side hall to the left of the speaker, which can be boarded off by moveable shutters into two small halls or seance rooms: one on the level of the platform and the other on the lower level of the floor of the Hall.

THE OPENING ENTERTAINMENT.

On Saturday evening the twenty-five feet screen on which the pictures were thrown, stood so far forward on the platform that the side space was not available. The other parts of the house were filled. It was supposed that about 1,000 persons were present, and the entrance money was about of £18; so we were informed. There were a few seats at 1s., the other prices being 6d. and 3d. Mr. Wolstenholme had his lantern well back under the gallery, requiring a very long focus to magnify our spirit friends to the vast proportions of the twenty-five feet screen, but in such a large hall it was needful to have size, that all might see perfectly what was placed before them. The whole of the proceedings, which were of rather a complex character, went off without a hitch, as if all had rehearsed their parts together to perfection.

Mr. Wolstenholme took entire charge of the exhibition department, and did his work in a very able manner. Mr. Burns had the duties of the platform entrusted to him, and in words few and to the point, he seemed ready to offer appropriate comments on all that appeared on the screen. Mr. Holt presided over the musical arrangements, surrounded by his devoted choir, who did all they could to add the charms of their delightful art to the merits of the entertainment. Several ladies and gentlemen did effective service as soloists, &c., which items will be duly noted as we proceed.

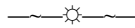
Long before the time for opening, the doors were besieged by a clamorous multitude. It was like Drury Lane Theatre on the first night of a great piece, only the crush was proportionately less severe. Half-past seven was the hour for commencing, and by that time a full house was in a state of eager expectancy. Mr. Wolstenholme, as President of the Society, briefly introduced, from the platform, the business of the evening, after which he took his position at the lantern. The gas was turned down to a "blue peep" by Mr. Delaine, and Mr. Wolstenholme threw on the screen,

*Welcome angels, pure and bright,
Children of the living light,*

which was sung in a glorious manner and in the sweetest harmony, by the whole audience. That hymn was indeed the consecration of the building, for it altered the atmosphere entirely; all tumult and confusion passed away, and a serene and spiritual influence pervaded the house. The angels had responded to the invitation, and taken

possession of a Home on earth for Spiritual Work. It was at Mr. Walsh's particular request that this was sung, and there could not have been a better introduction. Then followed some mottoes, such as Success to Spiritualism, and some views of the MEDIUM: the page commencing the Bishop's Sermon, last week's front page with the portrait of Hon. R. Stout, also the programme page with the engraving of the Hall, and a motto recommending all present to secure a copy of the MEDIUM. This advice was followed by hundreds' of the audience.

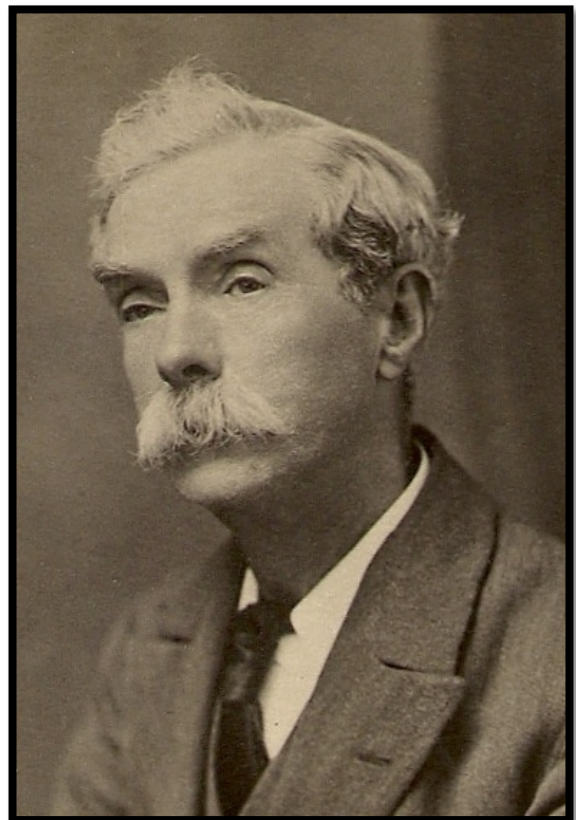
A full programme of events followed a lecture on the 'Facts and Phenomena of Spiritualism' by James Burns, a choir, duets and solo singers. More lectures on drawings, direct drawing and spirit photography continued till late in the evening. Wolstenholme gave recognition of Walsh's enterprise in building the hall and leading Spiritualists filled the platform; on the following day the Hall was formally inaugurated for spiritual purposes on Sunday afternoon. The Blackburn Spiritualists enjoyed another full day.



One of the greatest clairvoyants that the movement has ever produced and who was closely associated with Blackburn was Tom Tyrrell. The article below is taken from the 'Two Worlds', March 2nd 1928, pages 133-134:

Mr. Tom Tyrrell

As briefly announced in last week's issue, Mr. Tom Tyrrell, the famous clairvoyant, was translated to spirit life on Friday, February 17th, at 8-15 a.m., at his home, 54, Whalley Banks, King Street, Blackburn. For several years Mr. Tyrrell has known that there was a danger from an impending stroke, and for at least eight years has been gradually easing up his public work with a view to avoiding it, but he had a seizure on February 13th (not the 15th as we stated last week) which affected his right side. Consciousness was intermittent for several days, during which, without alarm or regrets, he carefully made all arrangements concerning his estate and his interment. He passed peacefully away on the Friday morning.



Mr. Tom Tyrrell was born at Darwen on July 2nd, 1857, and was thus 70 years of age at the time of his passing. He was of Irish extraction, his parents migrating to Lancashire from West Meath sometime before his birth. Mr. Tyrrell had a twin sister who passed to spirit life in 1918. The family were adherents of the Church of England, and Mr. Tyrrell was brought up in the heart of that communion in Darwen. He was always weakly in health, and in early manhood was several times prostrated by the breaking of blood vessels. His father died when Tom was a child, and at a

very early age he went into the cotton mills to earn a few shillings to assist his widowed mother to keep the wolf from the door.

Brought up in the heart of Lancashire he became a weaver, and at one time worked a hand loom. Later he had charge of four power looms, and continued in the mill until he had turned 60 years of age. He was twice married, his first wife being Miss M. A. Horrocks, of Bolton, a daughter of one of the old circus clowns, and as a result of this union there were three sons and one daughter, all of whom survive him. His early life was a struggle—long hours, small wages and the responsibility of a young family, and was one continual struggle against poverty.

His first wife passed away in 1912, and in the following year he was united to Miss Annie Holt, a former sweetheart and early friend of his first wife. It was some 45 years ago that Mr. Tyrrell's interest in Spiritualism commenced, and he was introduced to his first seance at the house of Mrs. Holt, subsequently destined to be his mother-in-law. He soon found himself possessed of very exceptional powers of a decidedly physical nature, and for some years his house was full of physical manifestations which are almost unbelievable. In his presence heavy articles of furniture would be moved from place to place or carried from room to room. These phenomena were decidedly distasteful to Mr. Tyrrell and caused him a good deal of distress. To the end of his career he was always full of fear when physical phenomena occurred in his presence, probably due to a nervous reaction caused by the withdrawal of the psychic forces from his body. Had he pursued physical mediumship it is quite likely that he would have been even greater than D. D. Home, but in the early days of his connection with Spiritualism he was brought into close contact with Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten and she advised him very strongly that owing to his physical weakness it was inadvisable for him to cultivate that class of phenomena, and suggested that he should endeavour to develop the clairvoyant and clairaudient faculty.

It was some 43 years ago that this clairvoyant faculty began to emerge, and the results which accrued were really remarkable. Names, dates, places of abode and minute particulars concerning deceased persons seemed to flow naturally through him, and he became one of the greatest clairvoyants that the movement has ever produced. He threw in his lot with the Blackburn Spiritualist Society (then meeting in Freckleton Street), and began to take an interest in the training of the young. He visited Keighley, where a Spiritualist Lyceum had been established, in order to learn something of Lyceum methods, and speedily established a Lyceum in connection with the Blackburn Society.

The possession of a wonderful clairvoyant faculty brought him visitors from all over the country, and Mr. Tyrrell consistently put his gift at the disposal of any and every inquirer who came. Despite the fact that he was in continual poverty he viewed his gift especially as a spiritual privilege and steadfastly refused to take one single penny from anyone, though later in life when he was called upon to take the platform throughout the whole country he, in justice to his family who were then growing up, demanded a fee for the taking of public services, but to the end of his life he would not sit for fees, though he seldom refused help to honest investigators.

No one who has not heard Mr. Tyrrell can understand the value of the services he rendered to the movement. For over 40 years he was upon the platform of Spiritualist Societies and travelled throughout the whole of the country. It was a very rare thing for him to miss a Sunday. Generally he gave clairvoyance at two services—afternoon and evening or morning and evening—and in the course of his public career he must have described something like a HUNDRED THOUSAND SPIRIT PEOPLE. In 90 per cent. of such cases it is safe to say that he gave the full Christian and surname of the spirit described, whilst in a large proportion of cases gave the date and place of birth, the address at which they lived, read the exact wording of their mourning cards, stated the number of children and other intimate details, which left no option between recognition and non-recognition. When it is remembered that quite 80 per cent. of the descriptions given were readily recognised (whilst he would often pick out two or three members of a family sat in different parts of the hall) his clairvoyance could only be described as marvellous. In addition to this he has given thousands of small seances either at his home or in the homes of others.

From the standpoint of the demonstration of clairvoyance at PUBLIC meetings we think it would be true to say that Tom Tyrrell is the greatest clairvoyant this country has ever produced. Others may excel him in private consultation, which was a phase of the subject he never cultivated, but for public demonstrations he has stood unequalled, and thousands of people have been brought to conviction of the truths of Spiritualism through his advocacy. What the future may bring forth we do not know, but his place will be hard to fill.

Inquiry into his family life shows that there is no record of any psychic gift whatever amongst his ancestry, but several of his children are psychically endowed, one in particular having the same gift as his father, although he has never used it or given public demonstrations.

Mr. Tyrrell was very varied in his tastes. He was a clever amateur photographer, and had several times exhibited in photographic exhibitions. He was a keen botanist, and knew practically every herb of the fields and their medicinal and other values. Since his retirement from the platform some few years ago he had used his clairvoyant faculty for the diagnosis of disease and applied magnetic and herbal remedies, and at the time of his passing on had a long list of patients whom he was treating. As a healer he was extraordinary. Quite a number of cases of epilepsy had been cured by him, and we believe it is true to say that he never treated a case of epilepsy without effecting a complete cure. On several occasions he showed the possession of the remarkable gift of handling fire, live coals, etc., without harm to himself. Throughout it all he was the most humble of men who never spoke about himself and became impatient when you talked of his gifts, and studiously endeavoured to efface himself. He detested public life, and was never happier than when taking a long ramble through the country amongst the nature which he loved. There is not a tree which grows in this country which he could not name on sight. He has journeyed forty and fifty miles to see a rare tree. Even foreign trees which had been imported to this country he quickly recognised, and to take a country walk in his company was a generous education.

He was never a successful speaker and never tried to become one, but as a teacher in a class he was one of the best we have ever known. He could interest everyone, from the child

to the adult. His knowledge of botany, mesmerism, phrenology and psychic investigation was unequalled.

We venture to express the opinion that there is no man living who knows as much about the philosophy, laws and practice of mediumship or the possibilities of psychic development as Tom Tyrrell, and this world is poorer by his transition. For forty years Spiritualism was his only religion. Tolerant towards others he often proclaimed that no system of religious thought could add anything of value to Spiritualism as taught by the spirit people.

The final obsequies took place on Tuesday, February 21st, when the fine Spiritualist Temple at Blackburn was packed with friends and sympathisers who joined heartily in singing "Where have the world's great heroes gone," and after prayer had been offered by Mr. E. W. Oaten, Mr. Entwistle (President of the Blackburn Church), in a brief and pointed speech, referred to the great work which Mr. Tyrrell had done and the loss which Spiritualism would suffer by the transference of his activities to another plane. He spoke feelingly of the pleasure it had always been to work with Mr. Tyrrell, and urged upon them the necessity of making such sacrifices for a great and noble cause as their comrade had done.

Mrs. Battersby (Vice-President) also paid an eloquent tribute to the work of Mr. Tyrrell, and expressed the sympathy of the members to his wife and family.

Mr. Oaten followed, and was deeply moved as he told of the great debt they owed to the pioneers of Spiritualism, amongst whom the name of Mr. Tom Tyrrell might deservedly be placed. He was one of the humblest and most sincere of men, and those who knew him best had the highest admiration of his character. His word was his bond. Any form of deceit was repulsive to him. He was simple and direct, and though without education he had all the fine feelings of nature's gentlemen. He expressed his thanks to Mr. Tyrrell for the work he had done and considered it a privilege to be associated with such a fine soul.

After the singing of "Blest be the tie that binds" the tremendous company wended their way to the Wesleyan Church Yard at New Row, some few miles out from Blackburn, beautifully situate on the top of a hill surrounded by pastoral scenes. It was a glorious Spring morning. The fresh nip of the winds from the moors was tempered by brilliant sunshine, and the song of the birds and the tramp of footsteps alone marred the peace of the scene. On the hillside, in the very scenes in which Mr. Tyrrell had delighted, we laid his body to rest with that of his first wife, while a company of many hundreds of people representative of all the Spiritualistic interests of a wide area stood reverently around the grave. The committal was pronounced by Mr. Oaten, and Mr. Battersby pronounced the benediction. While the company joined in singing "Father of all" the great throng wended their way back into the town and took tea at the Blackburn Temple.

The mourners were Mrs. E. Tyrrell (widow), Mr. A. Holt (brother-in-law), Miss Maggie Tyrrell (daughter), Mr. and Mrs. J. Tyrrell, Mr. and Mrs. T. Tyrrell, and Mr. and Mrs. H. Tyrrell (sons and daughters-in-law), Mrs. L. Riding (niece), Mr. and Mrs. Warburton (brother-in-law and sister), Mrs. Smith (sister-in-law) and Miss Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Drane, Miss Ward, Mrs. Southworth, Mrs. Crook and Mr. T. Bolton, J.P.

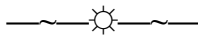
Mrs. Robinson, Messrs. J. Entwistle, G. B. Battersby, E. Holding and S. Crook represented the Spiritualist Temple and Lyceum.

Mr. G. F. Berry and Jessy Greenwood, J.P. (S.N.U.), Mr. W. Edwards and Mrs. L. Nurse (B.S.L.U.), Mrs. Keeling (Lanes. D.C.), Mrs. A. Riding (N.E. Lanes. D.C.), Mr. Hibbins, B.A. (Sheffield D.C.), and representatives were present from Blackburn Churches and others in the district.

There were a large number of floral tributes, including wreaths from a number of Spiritualist organisations.

The memorial service was held in the Temple on Sunday, February 26th, and was conducted by Mr. E. W. Oaten and Mrs. M. E. Pickles.

Mrs. Tyrrell desires us to express her thanks to the many friends whose letters and floral tributes have helped her, and regrets that it is impracticable to reply to all.



Today we have the ‘Blackburn Spiritualist Centre’, a fine tribute to its early workers.

On Saturday November 2nd 2013 a Dedication Service was conducted by Minister David Bruton, President of the Spiritualists’ National Union

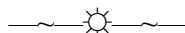


**Blackburn Spiritualist Centre
Princes Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 1LS**

<http://www.blackburnspiritualistcentre.co.uk/home/4584599533>

THE EFFECT OF THE VAGRANCY ACT

THE WORK OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION



Continued from the last issue:

On July 27th 1943, Mr Osbert Peake, M.P, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Deputy Under-Secretary of State Sir Frank Newsam, and Mr Graham Harrison received a Deputation to the Home Office from the SNU supported by Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding,¹⁶ Sidney Peters M.P. (Spiritualist Healer), Thomas Brooks M.P. (Spiritualist),¹⁷ E. A. Radford M.P. and Captain Charles Loseby (M.P. 1918-22), Barrister-at Law.¹⁸

The SNU delegates: Harold Vigurs, President, John McIndoe, (past President), Treasurer, John Stewart, past President (attended the first 1930 Deputation), A. J. Raffill, Vice-President, Ernest Keeling, (past President), General Secretary, and Union Solicitor Godfrey A. Elkin.

Loseby delivered the desired changes and amendments required for fair and safe practice of genuine mediumship without the fear of unfair prosecution under a law to which there was no legal defence. It should be noted that similar clauses against mediumship were contained in the older 1735 Witchcraft Act but this had not then been used against a Spiritualist medium. Below are quoted some of Loseby's submissions to Mr Osbert Peake and company:

“Now I think it only right and only fair to commence with this: that our opposition to the Vagrancy Act, 1824, Section 4, which is the main cause of the trouble, admits of no compromise. It is, in our submission, the embodiment of ignorance, intolerance and injustice. It must go. Those of us who either know or think we know the facts of the matter must not and cannot rest until it is removed in toto—that the matter must not and cannot rest until it is removed in toto—that particular Section—from the Statute Book.

¹⁶ See *Psypioneer*: Volume 7, No. 12: December 2011: “Lord Dowding – Philip Paul – *Two Worlds*” & “Beauty – Not the Beast – Lady Dowding”.

¹⁷ Thomas Judson Brooks MBE, JP. 1880-1958, was a devoted Spiritualist; for some years he was connected with and President of the Castleford National Spiritualist Church, which he opened in May 1912. See *Psypioneer*: Volume 7, No. 09: September 2011: “Tom Brooks” – Paul J. Gaunt, “M.P. for Spiritualism passes on” – The Two Worlds, “Castleford National Spiritualist Church” – Paul J. Gaunt & Judith Seaman, and “Tom Brooks’ Church is Re-dedicated” – *Psychic News*.

¹⁸ Charles Edgar Loseby, 1881-1970, was a captain, lawyer and British politician, being Member of Parliament (Conservative) for Bradford East. Some sources suggest that Loseby in 1943 was young and not very experienced at the Bar but this is incorrect, as he was called to the Bar in 1913. He founded a Society for Psychical Research in Leicester, of which he was President. He was also honorary legal adviser to the Essex Healers’ Association (John Britnell), forerunner of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers, which Harry Edwards joined. *Psychic News* published his obituary January 17th 1970, front page: “Loseby was outspoken when Mrs Duncan passed on six weeks after Nottingham police seized her at the last materialisation seance she gave in 1957. He said that in law any person who by “gross negligence accelerates the death of another is guilty of murder. I personally, therefore, am satisfied that Helen Duncan was murdered.” ” His image can be seen: National Portrait Gallery Collection: <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp50884/charles-edgar-loseby>



“All of us here realise and appreciate the difficulty of introducing matters which might be deemed controversial in time of War. We think however there are many things the Home Secretary could do if he were good enough to do so.”

“Now the material words of Section 4 are these, “Any person professing to tell fortunes or using any subtle means or device by palmistry or otherwise” commits an offence and is liable to punishment.

“MR. PEAKE: It goes on does it not “to deceive and impose on His Majesty’s subjects?”

“CAPTAIN LOSEBY. Yes, and it has been held in a Court of Law that these words are not of any importance because the mere fact of a person “subtle means or device”—in this case to be a Spiritualistic medium—of itself and ipso facto, shows that the person intends to deceive. The effect of the words has been established by judicial decision. The words “by palmistry or otherwise” cover the case of any person professing to hold communication with departed spirits. A Spiritualistic medium is such a person. I refer you to the case of *Monck v. Hilton*, 1877, in which it was held that it was not necessary to prove fraud, as I have stated. The allegation of itself carries with it the presumption of fraud.

“Section 4, therefore, in my submission, as judicially interpreted and established, reads as follows: “any person professing to tell fortunes or professing to be a Spiritualistic medium commits an offence and is liable to the penalties under this Act.””

“Now here is the list of persons with whom Spiritualistic mediums are classified. I want you to note the people inter alios who are listed and stand in the dock with those persons sometimes called sensitives, and not inappropriately so called.

“No. 4. A woman deserting her bastard child.

“No. 8. A person in a public place exposing indecent prints or exhibitions.

“No. 9. A person lewdly and obscenely in a public place exposing his person with intent to insult a female.

“No. 10. A male person who lives on the proceeds of prostitution or in a public place importunes for immoral purposes.

“Fortune-tellers and mediums come under No. 11.

This is the list of people who are placed in the same category as Spiritualistic mediums.

“I am reading from the Act. I ask you, Mr. Peake, to consider for a moment—with what is this woman charged. What is the seriousness of the offence in Law, of this person who stands in the dock charged alongside the woman who has deserted her bastard child, and the man who has exposed his person in a public place and the male person who lives on prostitution, whose offence is deemed to be *ejusdem generis* and such that if she is found guilty she is liable to the same handling.”

“She is a person who has been heard to *speak* no more—

“(like Socrates) “A voice not my own speaks through me.”

“(like Joan of Arc) “Spirits from another world use me.”

“(like Luther) “Here stand I, I can do no other.”

“Let her but admit such words and she must be told by counsel defending her that she has no defence in law. They are the words, however, that every medium if she is honest must say. Every medium does not say them because of the law and because every medium is not honest.”

“Under the Vagrancy Act, 1824, any person may arrest a professing medium without a warrant. A policeman refusing to arrest when requested to do so is himself liable to penalties. Is that fair to the police? In fact it is the practice for the police to proceed by arrest rather than by summons. Worse than that, in many cases the police arrest upon request. I am satisfied that many mediums are only safe from persistent persecution under the above powers by reason of one thing, and one thing only, namely that these powers given by law to officious and unofficial people are not widely known. A veritable spate of attacks, however, might come at any time. They will come if mediums prove their value to the community in the way we hope and think they will.”

“The reasons are twofold. Firstly, the muddled state of the law; secondly, the fact that under Section 4, the right of trial by indictment and by jury is not given.

“I want to deal quite quickly with No. I. The matter of amending the law could be dealt with simply if some member of the Government initiated some such amendment as this; “No proceeding under this Section shall lie against any person claiming to be a Spiritualistic medium and proved to be acting at the time as a representative of a recognised religious or scientific society or body.” That would suffice.

“Of course, I visualise that the onus would be on the person accused to prove that she was acting at the time as a representative of a recognised religious or scientific body when it had once been established that she claimed to be a Spiritualistic medium.

“Secondly, the fact that under Section 4, the right to trial by jury is not given. A one line amendment would put that right. “Any person charged under this Section shall be entitled to trial by jury.”

“Now how do we establish that claim? I am quite satisfied that the present unsatisfactory trial method is due to an oversight and nothing but an oversight. It is of course a fundamental principle of English Law (dating back as far as the Magna Charta)

that any person placed in grave peril on a criminal charge is entitled to trial by jury. The extent of the trial is dogmatically fixed by the rule that any person liable to imprisonment for more than three months is entitled to trial by jury. A Spiritualistic medium is imperilled to a much greater extent than three months imprisonment. I want to leave that for the moment though.

“Is it really true, this assertion that trial by jury ensures anything? The answer is “It is true.” Trial by jury is the only known method calculated to ensure Justice at every stage. It enables the accused to examine the evidence of hostile witnesses, reduced to writing, and to protect himself against unscrupulous evidence and surprise—a vital point for mediums. It is the only system that enables a person in peril to prepare his defence knowing what the evidence against him is and insuring that he can prepare his defence having examined it with his legal adviser; it is the only system which ensures careful direction of the presiding judge on the facts, the law and the admissible evidence—the judge works throughout in a public court with a fierce glare upon him the whole time and is liable to have his directions and decisions examined the Court of Criminal Appeal; this form of trial carries with it the right of appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal, who will unhesitatingly quash conviction if there is any irregularity proved at any stage. Is this important? I say it is of vital importance.”

“What is the punishment that I say is greater than three months imprisonment? I have given you a list of the rather odious people with whom mediums are classified. No differentiation is made between them. For the first offence a medium is liable to three months imprisonment and to be put on a certain black-list known as the List of Rogues and Vagabonds. Any practising lawyer will tell you that being put upon this list, is rather a terrible punishment. You are on the list for all time. Whatever you do you cannot be removed from that list. At the top of it,—I think it is hardly an exaggeration to say this—might well be written the words “Abandon hope all ye whose names are written here.”

“The penalty of being black-listed is such that I would undertake to destroy any medium as a medium, however valuable to Science, within a short period of time. I say I know of one case in which a medium this year, as a medium, has been destroyed—and through this list.

“For the second offence a person goes to trial knowing that the Court is told as she is being tried: “This is a person who has been condemned of using a subtle means to deceive and impose.” For the second offence, on conviction, the punishment is one year’s imprisonment a whipping, and her name is placed on a different black-list, namely a list of Incurable Rogues. By a subtle gesture under the Vagrancy Act, 1824, things were so manipulated that there was no right to trial by jury in this case either.”

“By one of the law’s vagaries a medium convicted and sentenced to imprisonment has it recorded not only that she has been sentenced to imprisonment but also that she has been found guilty of using “subtle craft to deceive and impose,” although she will not be allowed to submit in evidence that she was in truth and in fact a genuine medium. The mere fact of holding yourself out to be a medium has been held, by the Court of 1877, of itself to prove that you are a fraud. That might do for the year 1877, but who is there who would be heard to-day to say that from such facts such a conclusion and such a deduction is an inevitable and right conclusion in the year 1943.

“Now, if nothing is done in the matter quickly, will great harm be done? The answer is that great harm may be done. Nothing was done by Mr. Clynes thirteen years ago and great harm was done. It is only fair to remember that the Government of that time were warned of many dangers and apparently took no steps in regard to any of them.

“The wrongness of inactivity is made plain by a consideration of the qualities and nature of these people under discussion—these people who are treated by the Legislation as coming naturally under the Poor Law Administration, who are being treated not as gifted persons of high potential value, but as being odious. The quality and nature of them was well described by the last Deputation all of whom had mediums under observation for many years.”

“There is one final word I must say. There is not a person in this room who would not wish to disassociate himself from me and repudiate me if I were to suggest by implication or otherwise that the Home Office had been a conscious party to injustice. No such suggestion of course is made. The suggestion and submission is that the Home Office could help to rectify matters.

“Now for my precise proposals. These are the proposals which I most respectfully put forward for your consideration and I prefer to do so without argument. I attach the greatest importance to No. 4.”

“If that were considered then of course it would govern all the others. It would satisfy me personally, better than anything. Of one thing in regard to this Committee I am sure. You would discover a surprising consensus of opinion by the Home Office representatives and the representatives of ourselves as to what is desirable and could be done. You would certainly find no desire on the part of any representatives of Spiritualistic organisations to weaken the machinery of Government regarding fraud or chicanery [sic]. Anything in the nature of fraud or chicanery is, of course, deadly to the Cause we are representing.

“I will not argue the other points. I will but read the proposals. I would put No. 4 first. We ask for no more than that and I realise myself that we can hardly expect more. The detail would obviously have to be discussed on either side. When I said I had something in mind to cover an amendment proposed earlier I was thinking of this. The amendment in question would have to be considered as to whether it could be put forward at all, as to whether it was in the best form or in what form it could be put.”

PROPOSALS HANDED IN.

I. The Home Secretary is asked to secure the amendment of Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, through the following amendments: –

At the end of Section 4, add the words following:–

(a) No proceedings under this Section shall lie against any person claiming to be a Spiritualistic medium proved to be acting at the time as a servant of recognised religious or scientific society or body.

(b) Any person charged under this Section shall be liable to Trial by Jury.

2. To advise the Police

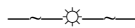
In the matter of proceedings against Spiritualistic Mediums to proceed under the Common Law and to avoid the use of machinery provided under the Vagrancy Act, 1824, Section 4 (and any advices from the Home Office I have no doubt are of the greatest possible value).

3. To advise the Magistracy

To frown upon any unfair use of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, Section 4, in so far as it relates to Spiritualistic mediums, for example, in such cases as when fraud is alleged and there are alternative methods provided under the above Act and under the Common Law.

4. The Home Secretary is asked to set up a small Committee consisting of representatives of the Home Secretary and representatives of Spiritualist and Psychic Research Organisations and kindred bodies, to consider the Vagrancy Act, 1824, Section 4, and the machinery provided under it in so far as it affects Spiritualistic mediums, and to report.

5. To move for the appointment of a Select Committee of Members of Parliament to consider the Vagrancy Act, 1824 and Section 4 of the said Act in particular. This Committee I submit should be set up as well as the Home Office Committee.



SNU President Harold Vigurs dealt with the religious aspect of mediumship in some detail, including the Education Scheme showing the Union as a responsible organised body and the vital part mediumship plays in their religion. Lord Dowding, Dr. Sidney Peters, John Stewart and Mr. Raffill also spoke. Thomas Brooks MBE., M.P., addressed Mr. Peake, who was well known in these circles for the last thirty years as a practising Spiritualist. It was through Brooks that the letters in connection with the deputation came to the Home Office. The SNU Solicitor, Mr. Elkin, spoke briefly:

MR. ELKIN. I am not a Spiritualist, but I feel it my duty to speak. I am concerned only with justice and it seems to me the penalties under the Law are prescribed to prevent and punish evil doing. But so far as I can see of these people, there is nothing evil in this matter; on the contrary, it seems to be beneficial and therefore my stand in this matter is the stand of the millions in this country who have no sympathy, perhaps, with this cult but who stand for the freedom of the Atlantic Charter. There is no other case in which I find myself having to go to a Court of Law and having to plead "guilty" because there is no defence I can put forward. I have *no* defence. There is no other religion, or anything approaching religion, which is so penalised under the statutes of this country. Even Sun Worshipers are allowed freedom and the Law is only concerned to prevent people indulging in cults which are evil.

Mr. Peake concluded the meeting:

MR. PEAKE: I have listened carefully and with interest to everything that you have said. I notice that a shorthand report is being taken and I feel sure that in due course I shall receive a copy of the transcript, and that will be carefully studied in the Home Office in order that we may form our view as to whether anything could or should be undertaken at the present time.

I shall report to the Home Secretary not only what the Deputation has said, but also the general feeling of uneasiness which the Deputation has conveyed to me.

Four months would pass:

**REPLY FROM THE HOME SECRETARY
TO DR. SIDNEY J. PETERS, M.P.**

I have now given very careful consideration to the representations put forward by the deputation from the Spiritualists' National Union which was received by Mr. Peake on the 27th July.

As was recognised by the members of the deputation, there can be no question of introducing legislation in wartime to amend Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824. In any case I fear that it would prove extremely difficult to frame an amendment of the law which, while meeting the aspirations of spiritualists, would not open the door wide to frauds and grave abuses.



I have considered the suggestion that a committee should be appointed, consisting of representatives of the Home Office and of spiritualist and psychical research organisations, to consider this question, but I have come to the conclusion that the appointment of such a committee would not be an appropriate method of dealing with the problem.

I appreciate, however, the feelings of spiritualists on this subject, and I have made enquiries as to prosecutions under this Act. I understand that it is the practice in some police forces in cases of this kind to institute proceedings only against persons whose activities have been the subject of complaint by members of the public and where there is evidence that the person is an impostor and taking money or other valuable consideration. Although I have no power to issue any directions to the police as to the manner in which they should enforce the law, I have asked Chief Constables to consider the adoption of this practice in their forces.¹⁹ Further than this I cannot go, but, if the practice I have described is generally adopted persons bona fide engaged in the ministrations of the spiritualist churches and in psychical research should not find themselves hampered by the provisions of the law.

27th November, 1943.

¹⁹ The Chief Constables' Association declined to receive a deputation from the SNU.



REPLY TO THE HOME SECRETARY'S LETTER.

7th December, 1943.

Dear Home Secretary,

Your reply (sent through Dr. Peters on 29th November) to the Deputation which was received by Mr. Peake on July 27th, has been read by us with feelings of astonishment and even indignation.

In approaching you, the responsible Minister of a Government pledged to the principles of Religious Freedom embodied in the Atlantic Charter, we had felt convinced that it would only be necessary to draw your attention to the indignities and injustices inflicted on Spiritualists in order to secure, as the very least possible response from you, the appointment of a committee to advise how these grievances could be most quickly and effectively remedied.

We stressed that mediums are important and valuable members of the community. We did not ask that they should be specially privileged, but merely that the law should cease to discriminate against them, that they should have elementary justice, the right of trial by jury when accused. That is a fundamental right of every British citizen. But it is denied to mediums charged under Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, the harsh penalties of which entail grievous peril to those involved.

Is it seriously contended that there is in the House of Commons one single Member whose ideals of justice are so low that he would describe as “controversial” our plea for trial by jury?

How can it be that granting this to mediums—or anyone else—would, to quote your own words, “open the door wide to fraud and grave abuses?” Nothing in your letter deals with, or even begins to touch, this entirely reasonable request.

That you have suggested to all Chief Constables that they should “consider” adopting the procedure which some now follow has no bearing upon it.

To say that you can go no further than that to remedy our grievances seems to us to savour almost of insult. In plain language it means that you prefer to let mediums remain the victims of the whims and prejudices of the less enlightened of the police in their administration of an antiquated Act of Parliament; to force on them the ordeal of a trial in which Mr. Loseby, speaking as a practising barrister with many years experience, says the scales of justice are heavily weighted against the defence; and with the knowledge that penalties evolved during the dark ages may be inflicted upon them.

You refer to the “aspirations of Spiritualists” and say that you appreciate their feelings. But it seems that you fail to realise that Spiritualism is the religion of many thousands of your fellow citizens.

Our mediums, by the exercise of their psychic gifts, have proved that men live on after physical death, and thus, as well as in other ways, provide an incentive and a stimulus to higher ethical standards of life.

We demand for them respect and even-handed justice.

It is intolerable to us that they shall any longer remain liable to street arrest, even in any single town, at the whim of a prejudiced Chief Constable. It is intolerable that when brought to Court they should be denied a fair trial with adequate right of appeal. It is intolerable that they should be subject, on conviction, to barbaric penalties, including their listing as rogues and vagabonds along with the ten categories of wretched, disreputable, or odious persons thus stigmatised by the Vagrancy Act.

We have waited four months for this unsatisfactory reply, and we feel strongly that we had a right to expect better treatment from the Home Secretary of this free nation.

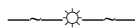
We appear now to have no alternative but to go back to our people, and to the public at large, and tell them that we have no hope for justice, even elementary justice, or for fair hearing from the Home Office.

Nevertheless, we trust that even at this eleventh hour you will still find it possible, on a further review of our case, to grant at least our request for a full inquiry by a representative committee.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) J. B. MCINDOE,
Chairman, Parliamentary Committee.

The Right Hon. H. Morrison, M .P.,
Home Secretary,
House of Commons.



Tom Brooks, M.P.



The Home Secretary stood firm in his decisions; numerous letters were sent to Morrison from Brooks and Loseby on behalf of the SNU. But Morrison's position and general response was, "I can only reiterate what I already said in my letter of the 27th November 1943." One of the issues was for the "right to trial by jury"; Brooks in a letter to Morrison on January 14th 1944 made another attempt in this avenue.

This is the final exchange of letters at this time:

14th *January*, 1944.

Dear Mr. Morrison,

I have consulted the Spiritualists' National Union on your reply to Mr. Loseby's letter dated 21st December.

They have asked me to let you know that they consider that you have not even dealt with the main issue which is whether or not a Spiritualist medium charged, fairly or unfairly, with an offence, should be entitled to defend himself or herself according to the ordinary process of law. They do not accept the implication in your letter that the Police will not move unless invited to do so and that, therefore, such matters as fair trial and defence are formalities only.

In order to make their position plain, beyond all possibility of misunderstanding, they now, formally, ask you to initiate a one line amendment to Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act increasing the maximum penalty of imprisonment from *three* months to *four* months.

Such an amendment would carry with it automatically the right to trial by jury and, whilst bettering the position, would not favour the accused, would be non-controversial, and would take up but a few moments of Parliamentary time—certainly not so much as the Bill relating to Outlaws which we see you are to introduce this Session.

The Spiritualists' National Union note that you are unwilling to have the matter enquired into by any committee representative or otherwise and however small. They wish me to say that they regard this as a plain indication that you realise that every contention they [sic] have made is just and would upon enquiry be so found.

Yours sincerely,

T. J. BROOKS.

Home Office, 24th Jan., 1941.

Dear Brooks,

You wrote to me on the 14th Jan on behalf of the Spiritualists' National Union, asking me to introduce legislation to increase the maximum penalty under section 4 of the Vagrancy Act from three months' to four months' imprisonment.

I have considered this proposal, but I cannot share your view that such a measure would necessarily be non-controversial, and I should not be justified in introducing a Bill to increase the maximum penalty for offences described in that section in the absence of evidence that the existing penalties are inadequate sanctions.

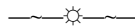
A Bill to increase the penalty would not in my view be justified merely on the ground that a certain type of alleged offender desired to be tried by jury. As you no doubt know a number of offences are punishable by not more than 3 months imprisonment and I cannot accept the contention that in fixing the maximum for certain offences, Parliament has thereby denied justice to persons charged with these offences.

I have given much time and thought to the questions raised by the deputation from the Spiritualists' National Union, and after full consideration I came to the conclusion that it would be right to give advice to the police in the sense explained in my letter of the 9th Jan. I have examined the problem again, but I am afraid there is no further action I can take.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT MOIMSON.

T. J. Brooks, Esq., M.B.E., M.P.



Around this time Maurice Barbanell published "Rogues and Vagabonds", Psychic Press 1944, which covers much of the above, with a detailed account of Stella Hughes, whom I have briefly noted. On page 60 Barbanell states: "It is the Vagrancy Act which we are determined to have amended. We do not fear the operations of the Witchcraft Act of 1735, for it is very rarely invoked. Apparently the minions of the law realise that to accuse anybody of witchcraft in the 20th century might sound just a little ridiculous."

On publication Barbanell had to add an amendment because, on January 19th 1944, Helen Duncan was seized at a séance in Portsmouth and together with some of her associates was arrested and subsequently charged under the 1824 Vagrancy Act. Other charges were later considered and added; the Vagrancy Act was upgraded to a single clause under Section 4 of the 1735 Witchcraft Act, "pretend to exercise or use any kind of Witchcraft, Sorcery, Inchantment or Conjurament..." Duncan and her co-defendants were charged upon an indictment, which contained seven counts – for the first time a Spiritualist medium was trialled by jury.

The stakes were now much higher – the long fight intensified.

To be continued...

Much of the information used in this article is taken from the AGM reports and the official SNU published report of the deputation. Anybody needing direct references, please contact the editor.