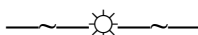


the PIONEER

Volume 3, No. 4: August 2016

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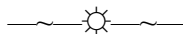


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The Pioneer (bi-monthly) is now part of the recommended reading for the Spiritualists’ National Union’s education courses.

This history journal is 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 to Leslie Price and Charles Coulston for their work in sub-editing this issue



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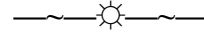
All references to Psypioneer in this issue are archived in Australia by Garth Willey at the Woodlands Sanctuary Foundation. For further information about Psypioneer or to subscribe please visit:—<http://www.woodlandway.org>

BRITTEN MEMORIAL MUSEUM & LIBRARY

enters into its original purpose



“From Mortal Life To Life Immortal”



The image on the Sutton-in-Ashfield Church & Lyceum banner displayed on the wall outside the Museum at Stansted Hall is that of Emma Hardinge. The original large framed pastel drawing by Cress Woollett

“Emma Hardinge as an Angel in the Night Sky”

hangs in the Arthur Findlay Library at Stansted Hall. Shortly after Emma’s death on October 2nd 1899 a scheme was set in motion to provide a suitable memorial to her life and work. Later in the same year the “Britten Memorial” was founded.

Although its main objective was to provide a home for the then “Spiritualists’ National Federation”, which was later fulfilled under the name of the Spiritualists’ National Union, donations over the decades produced one of the finest libraries in the country, a collection of rare documents and a

variety of artefacts. This created a centre for research, reading room and borrowing library at the Union’s offices, mainly then based in Manchester, for the furtherance of investigation into the history of the Union and Spiritualistic studies generally. The Union first purchased an office, “Britten House”, circa 1948 at Tib Lane, Manchester, where it remained until the move to Stansted in 1971.

Since President David Bruton appointed me Museum Curator in 2011, later as Librarian, it has been my goal to reunite the Britten Memorial Museum and Library and create a unique and unrivalled study area at the Arthur Findlay College, such as the Union once held in Manchester. With the support of our President and of Arthur Findlay College General Manager Tanya Smith, together with the NEC and AFC Committees, in August this goal was fulfilled.

The Britten Memorial Museum & Library now forms a workable, comfy study area for around twelve students at the Arthur Findlay College situated at the top of the staircase.

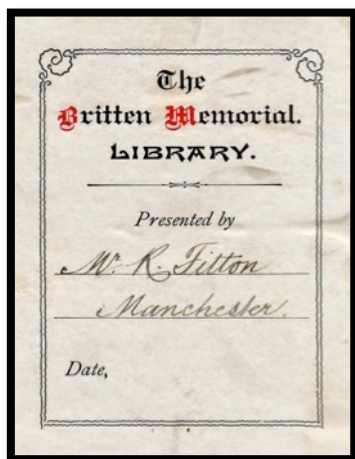
This year saw the introduction of two “Study Weeks”; the first took place in March and the second week is November 13th–19th.¹

The Museum exhibits take us through some phases of physical phenomena like direct/independent writing in the form of slate writing and art, as in the exhibits of David Duguid. Also present are probably the only surviving exhibits of wax moulds formed by materialised hands and numerous original examples of psychic/spirit photography in the production of spirit extras.

Further exhibits include trance paintings, extensive works by Harold Sharp, symbolic art, later becoming known as Auragraphs, spirit portraiture by Coral Polge and Ivor James, an original Frank Leigh image of the guide of Harold Sharp, and the stunning 1875 pencil drawing by Wella Anderson in New York of “Tien Sien Tie”, the chief control of the renowned trance medium, James J. Morse, a founder member of the Union.



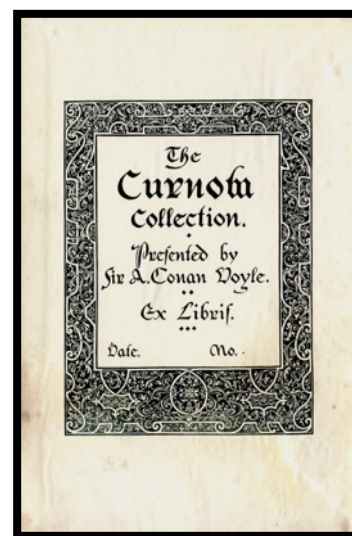
The visual artefacts record a stunning reminder of our history; however, in some cases the textual records of our history can give a more far-reaching reminder, a week-by-week record of the development of Spiritualism from 1870 for almost a century! Or travel even further back to the early attempts at a National Spiritualism, or the movement’s first 1855 ongoing publication, the “Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph”, or the monthly publications of the “Spiritual Magazine”, 1861-1877, or James Burns’ “Human Nature”, 1867-1878, etc.



As previously noted, the Museum and Library are made up of donations, including items from Emma Hardinge Britten, the Victorian medium, Robert James Lees, etc. Whole libraries are sometimes donated, for example by Richard Fitton, a well-known early worker in Manchester and district, like James Morse, another founder of our Union, who donated a valuable set of the “Medium and Daybreak” bound journals.

By October 1925 the Britten Memorial was known as the “Britten Memorial Institute and Library”. The twenty-seventh annual meeting of subscribers was held at the Britten Memorial Library, 65 Bridge Street, Deansgate, Manchester (also the registered office of the SNU) on Saturday May 28th 1927, under the chairmanship of former SNU President Ernest Oaten; below is quoted from this meeting:

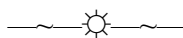
“Ernest Oaten announced Sir Arthur Conan Doyle donated one-half of Leslie Curnow’s collection of psychic books to the Britten Memorial Library, however the gift being conditional upon the library being established at an early date. Sir Arthur was assured that this would be carried out.”²



¹ Britten Memorial Museum Study Week (2): <http://www.arthurfindlaycollege.org/prog2016/bmmsw2-16.html>

The long, arduous struggle of the Britten Memorial to fulfil its original purpose in giving the Spiritualists' National Union a permanent home, sadly, has been largely forgotten and its final accomplishment is little known today. Below is a short article which gives an overview of the first three decades of its work, published in the "Two Worlds", July 21st 1933, page 560:

THE STORY OF THE BRITTEN MEMORIAL



THE time is rapidly approaching when every city of importance will have its own psychic institute where books may be borrowed or seances arranged on any day during the week. The Spiritualist Churches which confine their activities to Sunday services and a few weeknight meetings are doing a valuable work—but it is not enough.

What has been done by the several large London Spiritualist organisations, and by smaller societies in the provinces—for example, the Psychic College at Edinburgh, and the Britten Memorial at Manchester—may also be accomplished in other centres where Spiritualism is not pulling full weight.

I talked last week with Mr. John Jackson Hon. Secretary of the Britten Memorial and he told me briefly how in the space of a few months the Institute had supplied a great want in the Manchester district. Immediately after the transition of Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten in 1899, it was decided to erect a fitting memorial to commemorate that lady's great work and many sacrifices for Spiritualism.

Originally, it was suggested that the Memorial should take the form of a "School for Prophets." and later a Spiritualist library was contemplated. The scheme had from the first the support of distinguished Spiritualists, and under Mr. A. W. Orr's capable secretaryship funds steadily accumulated. When Mr. Orr vacated his position in 1922 some £600 had been collected, and many valuable contributions had been made to the library. He handed over the reins of office to Mr. John Jackson, whose association with Spiritualism in the North extends over half-a-century, and to-day the funds accumulated exceed £5,000, while the library itself has developed enormously.

HOW IT STARTED

Describing how the Memorial came to be put on an active footing. Mr. Jackson said: "In 1925 it was found necessary to occupy a small room in which the library could be housed, and as our properties extended larger accommodation had to be sought. By 1932 it was considered imperative that larger premises be secured and at the same time the Trustees deemed it advisable to establish the Memorial on an active basis. An admirable suite of rooms was obtained in the centre of the city.

"The initiative of the Trustees was early rewarded, for the Britten Memorial has to its credit the centralising of the activities of the whole Spiritualist Movement. As the result of negotiations inaugurated by us, the Spiritualists' National Union and the British Spiritualists' Lyceum Union moved their headquarters to Hollins Chambers, Manchester, where all are happily established.

Mr. Jackson explained that the first seance held in the new building took place in August last, and immediately it became known that the Memorial had taken premises

² Leslie Curnow died on December 11th 1926; for further information see *Psypioneer*, Vol. 5, No. 8, August 2009: "Conan Doyle's Australian Helper - Leslie Curnow".

which were available to the public, interest steadily grew. From the first it was seen that there was a definite need for an institution of this kind in the city.

To-day, as a result of only a few months activities, some 250 members and associates have been enrolled and are actively participating in the many advantages which the Britten Memorial offers the serious student of Spiritualism. The inclusive membership fee is £1 1s. per year, and this entitles the member to the use of the Reading room—where all the leading home and foreign Spiritualist journals can be consulted—and the extensive library of over 3,000 volumes, many of which are otherwise inaccessible. The Library incorporates reference and lending sections, and the members find that the services offered are greatly in excess of those available through municipal channels.

“We have been able to present the educational side of the Movement in our weekly lectures on all phases of psychic subjects,” added Mr. Jackson. “In this respect we have benefitted greatly from the offices of (among others) Mr. Ernest W. Oaten, Mr. J. B. McIndoe, Mr. G. F. Berry, Mr. J. Norbury, Mr. E. A. Keeling, and Mr. J. M. Greenwood. In addition, the School for Prophets finds its embryo in the three Development Classes already established, wherein some 30 to 40 students sit weekly.

“Healing work is another important activity, as is evidenced in the testimony received by Mr. James Kite, a healing diplomist of the S.N.U. Many of our members and visitors have found the healing meetings of inestimable value.

“Every week we have, of course, our usual programme of private and group seances. To date quite a number of gifted mediums have served us in this capacity—among them Miss Petersen, Mrs. Bertha Harris. Miss N. Cordall Mr. Arthur Whyman, Mrs. Bates, and Mrs. S. Hughes; while from further afield have come Mrs. B. Hirst Mrs. Annie Johnson and Miss Jacqueline.

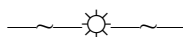
FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

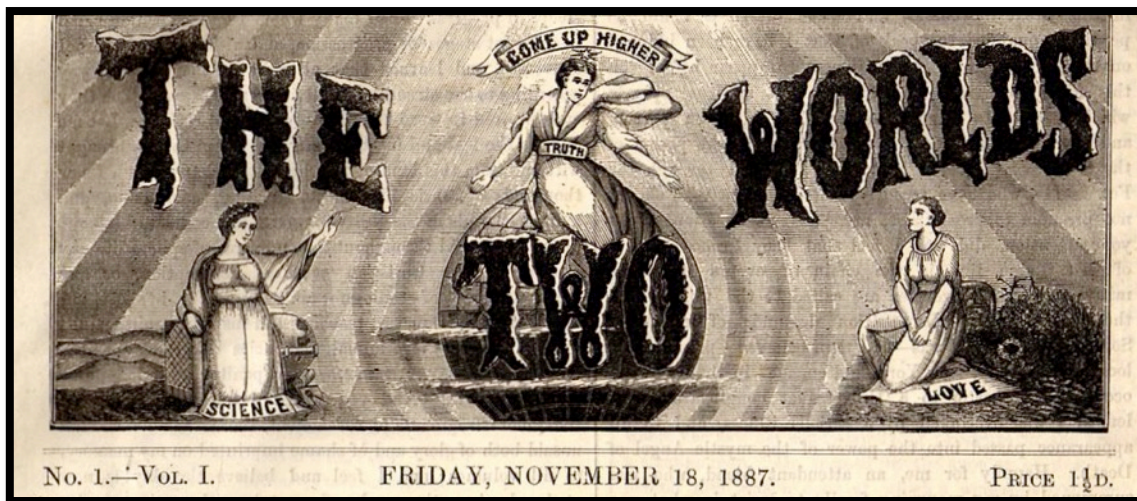
“In short, every day of the week proves conclusively that an institute on these lines has been greatly needed, and there is every reason for further expansion in the not too far distant future. Our present accommodation is already severely taxed to meet our needs and as soon as funds admit we hope to set about the originally planned building which was to provide a worthy home and head quarters for the Spiritualist Cause in this country.”

Apart from Mr. Jackson’s very able work, great credit is due to the enterprise of the surviving Trustees of whom Mr. W. A. Herring is the senior, the other two being Mr. E. W. Oaten and Mr. E. A. Keeling.

All insist that the Britten Memorial in its present state must soon be eclipsed. The funds of the Institute still remain intact, and the Memorial in its present form is simply established to hasten the day when the original plans may be suitably carried out. What has been done in this case can be done in others—and Spiritualist Societies in other towns must look to their laurels.

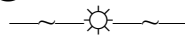
Already the British College of Psychic Science has been working in association with its Societies (somewhat similar in the scope of the Britten Memorial) at Bradford, Reading, Sheffield, Ipswich, and Edinburgh.





The “Two Worlds” and the Spiritualists’ National Union

“*Again Unite!*”



As arrangements were being finalised to move the Britten Memorial Library into the Museum in 2016, the directors of the “Two Worlds” had decided to offer the Union all their volumes from 1887 to present on permanent loan. The Editor, Tony Ortzen, contacted President David Bruton to see if the Union would accept this offer; of course there was little to consider and the offer was met with an overwhelming “Yes, please!”

The above subtitle may sound a little confusing: The “Two Worlds” and the Spiritualists’ National Union *Again Unite!*” The “Two Worlds” for over the first seven decades was closely associated with, firstly, the Spiritualists’ National Federation, which was re-constituted in 1901 as the Spiritualists’ National Union.

It can be noted in “Pioneer”, Vol. 1, No. 1, August 2013:

The formation of the Spiritualists’ National Union

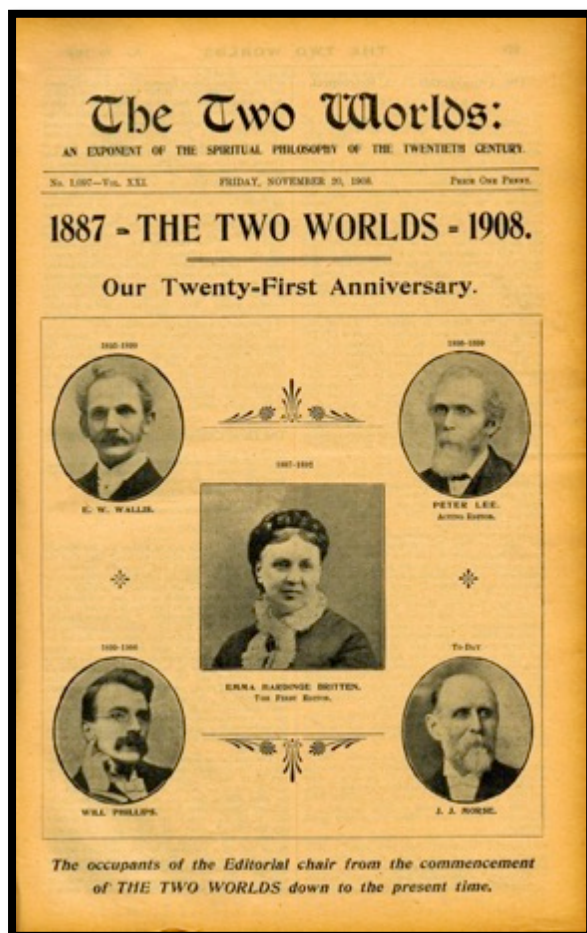
Shortly after the laying of the Oldham Spiritual Temple Corner Stones, a new weekly journal called *The Two Worlds* was founded, with Emma Hardinge Britten as its editor and E. W. Wallis as sub-editor and General Manager; the first issue was put on sale on Friday November 18, 1887, priced at 1½D. From issue No. 7 (Dec 30) it was reduced to one penny, so becoming known as *The People’s popular Penny Spiritual Paper*. Numerous people mentioned in Oldham reports would become the first Directors of *The Two Worlds*.

Later, in 1890, as previously mentioned, a Conference would form the Spiritualists’ National Federation (SNF). *The Two Worlds* would play a significant part; a *pro tem* committee was formed to arrange the inaugural Conference and consisted of sixteen Spiritualists:

Dr and Mrs Britten, Mr and Mrs Edward W. Wallis, Mrs Margaret Wilkinson, (Emma’s sister), James J. Morse, William Johnson, J. B. Tetlow (Secretary), H. Boardman, Peter Lee, Mr Rayner, Mr J. Gibson, Richard Fitton, Mr Thomas Brown, Mr [J]. Simkin (the original report has the incorrect initial and should read [T] (Thomas) Simkin and Mr F. Tomlinson (Treasurer).

This *pro tem* committee was significantly made up with the Officers and Directors of “*The Two Worlds*” Publishing Company Ltd, Manchester, including its Chairman/President Dr William Britten, Treasurer Thomas Brown, Secretary Edward Wallis, and its editor Emma Hardinge Britten (not a director). Emma had significantly supported a national organisation for a number of years. The *pro tem* committee’s work was to agree the agenda for the forthcoming Conference; they formed sub-committees within the group for various tasks, e.g. printing, announcements, instructions for travelling delegates, train times and accommodation. They nominated the veteran Spiritualist, John Lamont, of Liverpool as their first Conference President/Chairman.³ John Lamont and William Johnson had worked since the 1870s to bring about organisation; they were leading figures in the “Lancashire District Committee” (the title varied over its existence) who had in many ways helped to lay the foundations of the Spiritualists’ National Federation.

The *pro tem* committee and the Chairman, John Lamont, were co-opted as the Executive Committee for the next year’s Conference to be held over the weekend of July 4th and 5th 1891. After a meeting at the Temperance Hall on the Saturday evening, the Conference commenced on Sunday the 5th at the Prince’s Theatre, Bradford, Yorkshire with around 2,000 people present. It should be noted that Emma Hardinge Britten was never the President of the National Federation, as is often assumed. After the 1891 Conference Emma seems not to have attended any other meeting or Conferences of the Spiritualists’ National Federation and in February 1892 she resigned as editor of *The Two Worlds*.



Throughout the decades the “Two Worlds” remained as it does today, a Spiritualist publication; it was edited for the first seventy years by the National Federation/SNU Officers:

Emma Hardinge Britten – Edward Wallis – Peter Lee – Will Phillips – James J. Morse – Ernest Oaten – Ernest Thompson.

Free space was always given for Federation/Union business and it covered the AGMs in detail. It was without doubt our flagship journal, hence the significance of it now becoming part of the Britten Memorial Museum & Library!⁴

³ See the last issue of Pioneer: “John Lamont – Our first President”.

⁴ Psypioneer, Vol. 9, No. 5, May 2013, published: “After Forty Years: An Outline of the History of “The Two Worlds”.”

Editors of the “Two Worlds”

Emma Hardinge Britten 1887-1892
Edward Walter Wallis 1893-1899
Peter Lee (acting editor) 1898-1899
Will Phillips 1899-1906
James Johnson Morse 1906-1919
Ernest Walter Oaten 1919-1945
Ernest Thompson 1945-1952
J. W. Herries (acting editor)
Crestern Roskelly 1952-1957
Maurice Barbanell 1957-1981
Tony Ortzen 1981-1985
Kay Hunter 1985-1988
Ray F. Taylor 1988-1993
Tony Ortzen 1993-

[Italic notes circa (possibly another editor between Roskelly & Barbanell)]

The present editor, Tony Ortzen

Over the years we were known to each other only by e-mail and in August the opportunity arose to meet at a restaurant in Waterloo. What a joy it was to meet Tony at long last and share in the ensuing discussions.

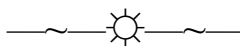
Tony worked with Maurice Barbanell at “Psychic News” and he gave me some interesting, often amusing first-hand accounts of his days with Barbanell. On the death of Barbanell in 1981 Tony took over his former boss’s role as editor of “Psychic News” and the “Two Worlds”.



The Two Worlds is now a monthly magazine

For full details:

www.twoworldsmag.co.uk



Britten Memorial Museum & Library

Contact: Curator & Librarian curator@snu.org.uk

*Within this small space is the
magical key to much of the
history of the Federation –
Union – our early Societies –
Churches – pioneer mediums –
the history of mediumship
throughout our movement!*



Emma Hardinge Britten generally advocated her views on Spiritualism precisely and clearly. She referred to her creeds/principles over the years as generally accepted statements that had evolved from Spiritualism – proven on the basis of previously established truths of spirit communication through Spiritualism. Below is published from an undated propaganda “Seed-Corn Leaflet No. 5”:



What Spiritualism is and what it is not.

Emma Hardinge Britten

SPIRITUALISM applies in general to the communion of spiritual beings with mortals, but when used in connection with the term “modern,” Spiritualism signifies:

The discovery of a mode whereby discarnate spirits can and do communicate *systematically* with earth.

The consensus of the earliest manifestations affirms and proves, not only by corroborative intelligence, but also by tests of personal identity, that the communicants are the spirits of the men, women and children who once lived on earth, and are now enjoying continuity of life, personal identity, and all that made them individuals, in various

spheres of spiritual existence.

These communicants, by a great variety of signals, such as sounds, lights, motions, and psychic influence, inform us of their conditions of life in the spirit spheres (the sum of all being), that they are in varied states of happiness or of misery, in exact proportion to the amount of good or evil they did on earth; that the young, from infants upwards, are taught and trained by good spirits, who, as their fathers and mothers, adopt them, while the vicious and ignorant are unceasingly ministered to, until all are stimulated onward to progress, the good to attain still higher heights, the evil to become good, and ultimately to attain to the highest conditions of angelhood.

Another branch of spiritual revelation has been to point out that the ancient seer, prophet, or magian, and the modern medium, are one and the same in organic nature; and though some ancients, by study, isolation, and special devotion to spiritual powers, may have acquired a wider and more practical knowledge of spiritual potencies than we have; they, like the modern medium, possessed their special gifts as the result only of certain psychological and natural organic qualities, and not by virtue of any special morality, goodness, or the favour of the Creator.

Spiritualism teaches that as all human beings are spirits, and the body is only an external mould, in which spirit grows, forms, and becomes individualised, so all powers exercised by spirits, appertain as much to the human spirit now as they ever will do in the hereafter; and if all mortals cannot and do not exercise these powers, it is only on account of their ignorance, the darkness concerning spiritual things in which the world has been kept, and the present incipient and experimental state of the communion between spirits and mortals.

It is claimed by reasonable mortals, as well as taught by spirits, that it is just as natural, in divine order, for fathers, mothers, children, and friends to communicate with each other, when the one party is on earth and the other in the spirit-world, as it was when both parties were on earth; and, that the spirits of mortals who had lived a good life, or even simply done their best, are impelled by affection towards those they have left behind to commune with them. Furthermore, as they are in a higher and better life, and in most cases have wider vistas of knowledge and wisdom than when on earth, such communion is not only good, instructive, and natural, but it tends to prove immortality—the existence and nature of spirit,

and therefore, inferentially, of GOD THE SPIRIT, besides offering the strongest possible motor power for living a righteous life, and avoiding evil, by proving that heaven and hell are both states resulting inevitably from the good or evil within the soul itself.

The evidence that human spirit-control is true is to be found in its spontaneity, having originated without expectation of, or participation in, its demonstrations by man; next, in its worldwide appeal to all grades, classes, and countries of earth during the last seventy years; in the conviction of a personal, human, spiritual agency, which its manifestations have forced upon millions of minds, including multitudes of the learned, wise, scientific—persons accustomed to take judicial evidence—commonsense people, and even simple children.

The phenomena by which this immense and unprecedented sum of conviction has been wrought have in quite two-thirds of their action been accompanied by such intelligence as could only have originated with the individual spirits claiming to be communicants. Thus names, ages, dates, events, and many secret things known only to the communicating spirits and their friends, have been spelled out by raps or signed motions, written or spoken sometimes automatically by mediums, sometimes by the spirits themselves. Thousands of portraits of deceased persons have been drawn, or painted, sometimes under magnetic impressions by mediums, sometimes by spirits. On thousands of occasions photographs of deceased persons have been obtained.

Millions of spirits have been seen and described by stranger mediums and recognised by their friends. The unlearned have been inspired to speak with new tongues, or abnormal powers of eloquence. Healers have been inspired and directed. Spirits have guided, instructed, and not infrequently saved their beloved ones on earth from danger and mischief by their counsels and advice. They have presented wise and wonderful visions, and in thousands of ways blessed, benefited, and assisted the friends they have left behind.

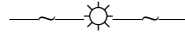
From the above statement it may readily be determined what Spiritualism is NOT. Being a direct revelation from the spiritual spheres of existence, it does NOT originate in any human theories or opinions; nor do its facts bend to any such; unless these theories and opinions correspond to its facts. As its communications and descriptions of the life hereafter proceed wholly from those who are actually experiencing what they teach, those teachings derive NO authority from books written by men, whether ancient or modern, whether labelled “Sacred” or “profane.” As a movement founded on facts, corroborated by such testimony as is admitted the world over to represent truth, Spiritualism does NOT need endorsement from, or affiliation with, any sect, society, body of believers, or any dogmatic class of thinkers. Spiritualism is not a religion—it is religion *per se*. Spiritualism is not a sect. It has no fixed creed, as is NOT binding upon any human soul that is not convinced of its truth by sufficient evidence. It may be in harmony with one or many religions, sects, or writings, but it derives no authority from them, being an existing independent fact of itself. It may be in harmony with the known laws of science, but it derives no authority from them, claiming to proceed by virtue of spiritual laws, absolute and true, whether man understands them or not.

The following theorems grow out of the facts of Spiritualism and its proven consensus of revelations, and are generally accepted as truth by Spiritualists:—

The Fatherhood of God, The Brotherhood of Man, The Immortality of the Soul, The proven facts of Communion between departed Human Spirits and Mortals, Personal Responsibility, Compensation and Retribution hereafter for all the good or evil deeds done here, and a path of Eternal Progress open to every human soul that wills to tread it by the path of eternal good.

September 17th 2016 marks the Golden Anniversary of the Official Opening of Stansted Hall

“May this house flourish”



The original name was “The J. Arthur Findlay College for the Advancement of Psychic Science”. Its early history as a functioning College up until the early 1970s is published in “Pioneer”, Vol. 1, No. 2, January 2014. The official opening was under the SNU President Dr John Winning (1965-1968), who also served as its first Principal. Below is a short quote from the article:

Stansted Hall’s official opening, a little later than previously scheduled, was on Saturday, September 17th at 3 p.m. and was officiated by Mrs Francis Wayne, daughter of Arthur and Gertrude, carried out the official opening, to which the public were invited at the price of 3/6. *Psychic News* reported there were over two hundred and fifty people; this included four coach parties.

Findlay’s daughter stated in her dedication:

Mrs. Wayne recalled that her father “tried to find answers to questions mankind has always asked. This search eventually led him to Spiritualism.”

“As a result of his writings and speeches there were people who did not agree with him,” she said. “I remember one woman wrote to him and accused him of being in league with the Devil. We laughed. Daddy didn’t mind. I didn’t mind. And I don’t think the Devil did either!”

She said Stansted Hall been a very happy home for years, adding, “My husband and family are very pleased to think that you now have care of this house.” Mrs. Wayne spoke of her father’s dream that his house should be used for research into psychic matters. And she expressed her pleasant surprise at the change that had taken place in spite of the many difficulties which had faced the Spiritualists’ National Union.

Declaring the college open, Mrs. Wayne quoted “the words you have as your motto: ‘May this house flourish’.”



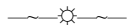
In 1968 Charles Quastel became the SNU President for the second time; Quastel was featured in “Pioneer”, Vol. 3, Nos. 1 and 2, February-April 2016. The amount of work and finance required to keep the College, as indicated in the article referred to, far outweighed the income it received, plunging the College into possible financial ruin, with a roll-on effect on the Union. In 1969 the “Friends of Stansted” was formed, with Gordon Higginson as Chairman, Bertha Frank as Secretary and W. Potter as Treasurer, aided by Mrs E. Anderson and Frank Tams.

It can be noted in the minutes of the inaugural meeting of the “Friends of Stansted” held at Stansted Hall on February 21st and 22nd 1970, with a hundred and fifty present. Opening the meeting, Higginson “clearly stated the reason why the

Friends of Stansted was formed last year, when a few decided to support the College and to fight for its continuation. With this in mind his appeal letter was sent out in December 1969

to which, he stated, the response had been very encouraging and membership was gradually increasing.” General Secretary Dick Ellidge provided a list of Class B members for Gordon to prepare a further list of possible ‘Friends’; prior to the formation of the Friends of Stansted there were ‘Founder Members of the College’.

Numerous activities were planned to raise funds, including two “Friends Weeks” at the College. It was agreed at this meeting that the word “Hall” be added to the “Friends of Stansted”.



At the 1970 AGM Gordon Higginson became President of the Union. Seven years later, during the “Arthur Findlay Weekend” of November 19th and 20th, a Dinner Dance and, on Sunday, the Arthur Findlay Memorial Lecture took place. It was customary in the early years of the College for the year to generally end with the Arthur Findlay Memorial dinner. In 1977 the guest of honour was Maurice Barbanell, who had supported numerous dinners at the College to raise the much-needed funds for it to survive.

Gordon announced at the Dinner Dance:

“President of the Spiritualists’ National Union expressed his gratitude to all who had supported him and the Union, through the ‘President’s Appeal’ and through ‘The Friends of Stansted Hall’ in order that the Debt to the Building Fund Pool might be cleared.”

In the President’s letter to the SNU publication, “Communicator” (Vol. 2, No. 5, 1977) Mr Higginson reiterates his thanks.



Stansted Hall Cleared of Debt

During the period of my Presidency of the Union, I have been greatly moved by the invaluable support that I have been given at all times, with this support I have been able to make many alterations which tend to the advancement of our Movement. One of my aims on taking over this onerous job was to find the means to clear the debt owing to the Building Fund Pool for the adaptation of Stansted Hall for the purpose of a College. The generosity of the late Arthur Findlay has been recognised and acknowledged on many occasions. It is now my pleasure to give my acknowledgement to the many ordinary people who by their generosity have made it possible to repay the debt owed to the Building Fund Pool.

Realising the enormity of the task of raising the money to repay the debt and the accumulating interest, I launched an Appeal a few years ago, and today I can give my thanks to all those who responded with outright gifts of money and to those who made interest free loans. My fellow custodians and I, ably advised by Mr Wilf Potter, the Custodian Trustee have been able to invest the monies received at very advantageous rates and we can now make our contribution to the clearing of the debt.

We are greatly helped towards the end of clearing the debt, by the Friends of Stansted Hall who have contributed their investments which have been received or raised for this ultimate purpose.

It is not my purpose to make reference to the specific amounts which have been contributed, but to inform you that aided by the Union as the Trustee of the Britten Memorial Trust in purchasing Britten House for the Union's Offices [annex building] it is possible to clear, as from the beginning of October 1977 the debt to the Building Fund Pool has been set at £100,000. This is a magnificent effort and I cannot let the occasion pass without giving to all concerned my most grateful and heartfelt thanks.

In acknowledging the efforts of the past, we must look to the future and the work that has to be done and above all to the part which can be played by the Hall in the scheme of things. Undoubtedly it has been proved that there is a demand both from this country and from overseas for a College where all can be helped in their search for the Truth and for their spiritual advancement. We have started a Foundation Fund for the College under the auspices of the Union and though at the moment the investments that we have been able to make are very small nevertheless it is a beginning towards assuring that there will be an income each year which will allow us to maintain the Hall in good condition and perhaps make any improvements.

I would close by once again paying my acknowledgement to everyone who has aided my efforts, either by giving money, making loans or by taking the necessary care that the money received has been wisely used in order to achieve this most satisfactory.

Thank you,
G. M. Higginson,
President.
Spiritualists' Nat. Union

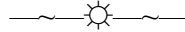


Without the strenuous, dedicated, ongoing efforts of Gordon Higginson in the early years of his Presidency it is very doubtful today that we would enjoy J. Arthur Findlay's great gift to the Union – Thank You.⁵

⁵ There would be many more challenges to Stansted Hall over the ensuing years but this was the first landmark achievement by Gordon Higginson and all those dedicated Spiritualists who worked so hard to give the Arthur Findlay College success today worldwide. Donald Brooks took the B&W images.

HELEN DUNCAN SÉANCE DURING HER 1944 TRIAL

New séance evidence!



In 1958 a conference was organised by the College of Psychic Science in Brighton on November 28th-30th on “The Problem of Survival”; the principal speakers were Brigadier R.C. Firebrace, Percy Wilson and Professor H.H. Price. A report of part of the discussion can be read in *Psypioneer*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2009.

Percy Wilson and his family were friends with Helen Duncan and during his 1958 lecture he wanted to put on record the circumstances relating to the Duncan prosecution. Below is a short quote relating to a séance during the trial at Wilson’s house; as a result of this séance he considered “...that evidence was sufficient for us to conclude that it was safe, even in the hard circumstances of the court at the Old Bailey, for Mr. Loseby to offer the judge and jury a personal demonstration when he opened his evidence for the defence. That offer, as you will remember, was refused.”



Further information of the Duncan trial can be found in the “Pioneer”, Vol. 2, No. 4, July 2015: “The Effect of the Vagrancy Act (Part III) – The Work of the Spiritualists’ National Union” – Helen Duncan in Court – Was Helen Removed by the British Intelligence Services? – Eighth Day – Monday 3rd April 1944 – Sentences

EVIDENCE FOR SURVIVAL

The Historical Significance of Physical Mediumship

By Percy Wilson, M.A.

Séance During Trial

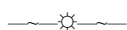
During the trial one of my sons, Geoffrey, acted in the court as a messenger for the defence, and when it was half-way through, after prosecution evidence had been given, we arranged (it was a Friday afternoon) that he should collect Mrs. Duncan straight from the court at four o'clock, take her to Holborn Viaduct station, bring her through to Wimbledon and then by taxi on to my house. This he duly did. She had had no opportunity of going anywhere else from the court on the way. And I had my usual home circle gathered there. So, we gave Mrs. Duncan a good tea, I don't advocate this before a physical circle, but there was a reason for it on this occasion because we included some really good red jam in it, thanks to the regurgitation theory of Harry Price. Shortly afterwards, we went upstairs to my own seance room and held a seance. I was seated next to the curtains of the cabinet, and there was a red light behind me on the ceiling. (I could not see it but it was shining behind me, so that my eyes were not inhibited by it.) In the course of the seance Mrs. Duncan stood up and ectoplasm poured in streams, in ribbons, from her nose and her mouth, on to her massive bosom, curled up in a ribbon on her bosom, and dropped to the ground; and then, as she was standing with her arms akimbo, I suddenly saw it leap up two ways to her hands. I was within a yard of her with a light above my head and I saw everything that happened. Shortly afterwards the whole mass of ectoplasm disappeared in an instant. I could not tell you when: it was there and then it was not. It just disappeared.

The prosecution (John Maude, KC, and Henry Elam) concluded on the second day of the trial, Friday March 24th 1944, the day the above séance was held at the Wilsons' home at 3 Sheridan Road, S.W.19. It can be noted below that in fact there was a second séance at the Wilsons' house on Monday March 27th 1944, the third day of the trial, the day Charles Loseby and J. Simpson Pedler began their defence. The sitters named are Mr and Mrs John McIndoe (former SNU President), Joseph Newton, Mrs Lyon, Percy Wilson's sons, Laurie and Geoffrey, and a nurse. It may appear the nurse was the daughter of one of Duncan's co-defendants, Christine Homer, whom McIndoe refers to below as a court witness on March 28th.

This new valuable document was given to the Britten Memorial Museum & Library by Linda Smith, President of Norwich Spiritualist Church;⁶ Linda is the mother of Tanya Smith, the General Manager of the Arthur Findlay College. The typed séance report was found in David Dutton's old papers; David was born circa 1917 and first took to the Spiritualist platform in 1941 at Croydon Church (where he lived for some years), becoming a well-known and respected orator. He became well acquainted with the Wilson family with his involvement in "Psychic Press Ltd"; Percy Wilson was the Chairman from 1956 to his passing in 1977. "Psychic Press Ltd" published "Psychic News", ran a bookshop and published books, including Arthur Findlay books. "Psychic Press Ltd" was formed to finance the newly-formed "Psychic News" in 1932 by Maurice Barbanell and Jack M. Rubens, who received shares for the part they played; Findlay put up the necessary money

⁶ Norwich Spiritualist Church, affiliated to the Spiritualists' National Union:
<http://www.norwichspiritualistchurch.org.uk/html/pictures.html>

and so controlled the company. In 1965 the charity, "The Spiritual Truth Foundation", was founded; David Dutton was the Chairman, the trustees included Laurence Wilson and Maurice Barbanell, and the Foundation is still going today.



NOTES MADE AT SEANCE HELD WITH MRS. HELEN DUNCAN AT 3 SHERIDAN ROAD, S.W.19. ON 27TH MARCH 1944

Albert:⁷ It's difficult for me to get the amount of power I would like to get. I have got a person here who I am going to try and build. It's for the gentleman towards the back (Joseph Newton). It is a gentleman who passed with abdominal trouble – kidney. Neither old nor young. George.

(A form appeared but dropped down very quickly)

Albert: Did you notice his moustache? (Mrs. Lyon – the sitter nearest the cabinet – "I caught a glimpse of it") George is not his name.

(The form again appeared at full height but, unable to retain the power, soon dropped to the floor again)

Albert: The next form is for the lady in the corner (Mrs. Lyon). Go out, sir, do not stand in here.

(Tall figure appeared, bowing his head and turning it from side to side slightly.)

Albert: Did you notice he wore a turban of some kind? (Mrs. Lyon: "Yes and he had a small beard and moustache") I have now got a child here. (Mrs. Lyon: "Please come out; I know who you are") It is a coloured child.

(Small form appears but quickly sank down. Then a bunch of ectoplasm on the floor came out of the cabinet reaching forward until it reached a point almost level with Mr. McIndoe, sitting two places from the cabinet)

Albert: They are not holding.

(White bunch on the floor again – rose up high as though trying to build a form, curtains closed and then opened again but the form sank to the floor).

Albert to Mr. McIndoe: What on earth possessed you to pick this day? (McIndoe: "Because one or two witnesses are going in tomorrow and we don't want the other side to say they only saw Mrs. Duncan seven or eight years ago")

(Curtains opened. Large white expanse of ectoplasm shown which covered the medium, Albert to medium: Stand up. Then ectoplasm was seen coming from the region of the medium's mouth in a thick fold which went down to the floor and up again towards the edge of the cabinet.

After ectoplasm had disappeared, Albert walked Mrs. Duncan right out of the cabinet. (Mrs. McIndoe: There's nothing to be seen in the cabinet")

When Mrs. Duncan was back in cabinet and curtains closed Mrs. McIndoe said "Somebody is pulling at my chair")

Albert: I am going to show it is quite a solid material. (Big knock heard). May I ask a favour of one of you young men. (Laurie Wilson). I want you to stand up and then I

⁷ Albert was the main control of Helen Duncan for around twenty-five years.

am going to ask you to put your foot on a rod that will come out, to prove to you that no cloth could do what this is going to do.

(Laurie stood up and moved forward from his chair about four feet. He was then about four feet from the cabinet. He put his right foot on the white rod which had come out in front of him. Suddenly he staggered backwards. The rod had pushed upwards, nearly throwing him off his balance. After the seance he said the rod had been about 9" above the floor and when he put his foot on it he pressed it down an inch or two. When it pushed up under his shoe it forced his foot up to about the height of his thigh which threw him back off his balance. The rod continued to move upwards and disappeared over the top of the curtain. Of its nature he said afterwards that it felt like cylindrical tube of perhaps 4" or 5" diameter with a hard core of 2" or 3" and soft covering.

During séance Laurie described it in these words "It felt soft and spongy as would a thin steel rod, thickly bound round with cotton wool". Albert: Would not you say it was like rubber?" Laurie: Perhaps like sorbo rubber.)

Albert: I am going away now but I know that I had to produce something and I had a reason for doing that. Mrs. Duncan sat in that court all day today and was escorted here by an outsider. (Geoffrey Wilson). You did not let her out of your sight did you young man? (Geoffrey: "No") You are quite sure she was not swallowing something. ("Yes"). There is my reason that I did that. I did not want to let Mr. McIndoe down and I have not done so. I want to say "God be with you till we meet again". And by the way, Nurse, I still adhere to my prophecy. That is all and I will now say Au revoir.

(Mrs. Duncan in a very few seconds came out of the cabinet, still partly under control. Lights raised. Mrs. Duncan's eyes were open but had a staring expression)



Reference to a strong "steel" rod can be noted on another occasion almost two decades earlier, involving the original small Duncan circle, which would be around 1926, prior to the introduction of Albert. Then under the direction of Dr. Williams, he is the least-known control but it appears he was the first in laying the foundations of the home development circle at the Duncan residence, introducing the direct voice. The quote below is taken from "The Two Worlds of Helen Duncan", by Helen's daughter, Gena Brealey, and Kay Hunter, published in 1985 (reprinted in 2008), page 52:

As he spoke [Dr Williams], out through the curtain surrounding the corner of the room which served as Helen's cabinet, came a substance not unlike cheesecloth or butter muslin. The material continued to flow until there seemed to the sitters to be at least ten yards in a soft pile in the room. Henry [Helen's husband] asked if he could touch it and was told he could. He said afterwards that it was dry and soft to touch. The other sitters remarked that there was no odour. Through the opening of the curtains they could see Helen sitting in her hard-backed chair, and the ectoplasm flowing from her nose and ears. They were amazed to see the substance flowing down the front of her dress on to her lap, then down on to the floor and out to the centre of the room. The curtains were drawn together, then the substance started to recede until the entire volume had gone back into the cabinet.

There now appeared a rod about three feet long. It came all round the sitters and stopped at Jim Murray. Dr. Williams told him to take hold of the rod and bang it on the floor. When he had done this, he was asked if the rod felt solid.

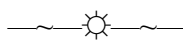
"Solid as steel," he replied.

He was then told to place the rod so that it rested on two chairs two feet apart, and to sit in the centre of the rod. He did as directed and was lifted up above the heads of the other sitters, who were asked to stand up and check that there was no rope or anything else holding Jim up.

The sitters were very careful in their examination of any spirit phenomena. Joe Souter and Frank Murray stood on chairs to make sure nothing was holding Jim from above. The voice asked if they were certain there was nothing holding Jim up so high, “no material substance”, as Dr. Williams called it. He then thanked them, and told Jim he would be lowered, and would they please watch carefully.

Jim was lowered gently to the floor, the rod disappeared, and Jim was left standing in the middle of the circle. Dr. Williams’ voice then said, “I will leave you for the present. Good-night, and God bless you all.”

During this stage of development much phenomena was witnessed—voices, lights, and the continuing development of the ectoplasm, which at times resembled a spider’s web, and at other times solid steel.



Helen and her husband, Henry Duncan

College of Psychic Studies President: Stephen Chapman
Spiritualists' National Union President: David Bruton
meet for the first time at Stansted Hall



The two Presidents from the two leading teaching colleges in the UK met for the first time at the Arthur Findlay College on June 27th 2016. Stephen was accompanied by the College Principal, Gill Matini, and curator Vivienne Roberts. In May 2016 Arthur Findlay College tutor Janette Marshall and Paul Gaunt were invited to spend a day at the College of Psychic Studies,⁸ which resulted in a return invitation to spend a day at the Arthur Findlay College.

Stephen and his colleagues were welcomed by President Bruton, Tanya Smith, General Manager of the College, Jan Marshall and Paul Gaunt (shown in the centre of the photograph). William Stainton Moses founded the College of Psychic Studies, originally called the London Spiritualist Alliance, on October 25th 1883, seven years prior to the SNU, which was then called the Spiritualists' National Federation; Moses himself was a strong advocate of National Spiritualism.⁹

In 1926 Arthur Conan Doyle, until shortly before his death in 1930, became the President of the London Spiritualist Alliance. Towards the end of Doyle's life he was also the Hon. President of the Union and today remains so *in spirit*. Later Arthur Findlay became President of the Alliance.

⁸ The full report can be found in the last issue of Pioneer.

⁹ The College of Psychic Studies: <https://www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk/>



⇒ Paul Gaunt – Jan Marshall – Vivienne Roberts – Stephen Chapman – Tanya Smith – David Bruton – Gill Matini.

The morning was taken up with general discussions on the two organisations. Although both are teaching colleges, the courses are generally quite diverse and varied in their approach to psychic, spiritual and healing development. After lunch Tanya Smith gave our guests an excellent detailed tour of the College and the history of Stansted Hall and President Bruton introduced the party to the SNU headquarters at Redwoods. The final part of the visit was spent in the Britten Memorial Museum with Paul Gaunt and Jan Marshall.

One of the great features of the College of Psychic Studies is its fine collection of spirit art, photography and its library. Its President, who became a member of the College in 1985, served as a volunteer librarian for many years before becoming president in 2011. Its archives hold many reminders of our past; Leslie Price, the College archivist, was unfortunately ill and unable to join us. So it was no surprise that the final part of their visit to the Museum created some intense mutual interest.



Top of the agenda were our displayed independent/trance and inspired works of art. The more technical points of production and application were discussed by Jan and art historian Vivienne. I relate below some of the interesting points of the discussions.

The first was a drawing by Robert Cooper, who died on November 5th 1909. He was introduced into Spiritualism in 1862, although, interestingly, history has no record

of him as a medium, but he was a well-known lecturer on the Spiritualist platform. He worked with Emma Hardinge Britten, authored books on Spiritualism and travelled extensively with the likes of James J. Morse, etc.

So I found it strange when I found an ink spirit drawing called “Chaos”, executed through the hand of Robert Cooper; Vivienne Roberts (shown on the left of the image) likened the work to that of Madge Gill, whose work is displayed at the College of Psychic Studies.¹⁰

The mystery about the spirit drawing is explained in a “Two Worlds” Xmas supplement dated December 12th 1924, neatly found in a pocket at the back of the drawing, which I am pointing out to Stephen. Cooper’s son, C. J. Cooper, tells the story of how the drawing was done by his father:

“In connection with the spirit drawing, representing ‘Chaos,’ I think it as well to state the circumstances under which it was produced. My father, the late Robert Cooper, had some time previously become acquainted with J. H. Powell, the poet, who, when calling at our house one day, mentioned some very extraordinary things which he had witnessed at a seance when he was present at a Mrs. Marshall’s, in London, and my father, who was at the time quite a materialist, was very much interested in what he was told, and subsequently paid Mrs. Marshall a visit, and was more than ever impressed by what he there witnessed. Seances were then conducted in our own home, and my eldest sister, then only a schoolgirl, developed the faculty of automatic writing. Through her mediumship some interesting and extraordinary messages were obtained, some in languages she knew nothing whatever about.



“Later on my father became very abnormal, and informed us he was being controlled by his uncle, John Thomas Cooper, who, was a celebrated chemist. He was the discoverer of the oxyhydrogen light, also of the process of enamelling as applied to articles of daily use: jugs, basins, etc. The subject of Spiritualism was, of course, little understood by any members of my father’s family,

¹⁰ Unfortunately, the image shown above does not do the exquisite drawing justice; it is taken from the “Two Worlds” journal. For Madge Gill, see *Psypioneer*, Vol. 10, No. 4, April 2014: “The Psychic Art of Madge Gill – Psychic News”.

and as his condition became apparently worse (he abstained from food for days together), it was arranged that I should be continually with him, as his condition was such that we deemed it necessary that he should not be left alone. During this time I slept in the same room with him, and it was then that the spirit drawings were produced.

“There was a table in the room on which, before retiring, would be placed a sheet of drawing paper, together with ink, pencils, etc., and he would say, ‘We’ll see what the spirits will give us to-night,’ or words to that effect. Every night I would hear, him get out of bed, go to the table, and then the sound of writing or drawing could be heard; then after a short time—ten minutes, may be—he would get back into bed, and in the morning the drawings would be there. I should say perhaps ten or a dozen pictures were produced in this way. A light was never at any time used, so I may consistently say they were produced in total darkness.

“This phase of things went on for nearly a fortnight, when by degrees his abnormal condition disappeared, and food was again taken. He still continued engrossed in the subject of Spiritualism, but no recurrence of this sort ever again appeared. The other drawings were all of a most exquisite character and design, but totally different to the one now exhibited.

(Signed) C. COOPER.”



Vivienne Roberts drew attention to a painting drawn under spirit influence by Mrs Cranstoun (sometimes spelt Cranston) Laurie in one and a half hours, dated July 1st 1867 and presented to Emma Harding by the medium. Vivienne noted that the medium lived in Washington DC, and the family were mediums connected with President Abraham Lincoln. It is noteworthy to mention that Emma Hardinge (Emma Hardinge Britten from October 11th 1870) campaigned for Lincoln in the Presidential election of 1864. Emma wrote in her autobiography published by her sister posthumously in 1900, page 203:

I, in especial, may look back with glad memory to that night when, in my first public plea uttered in his honour, I declared that the day was not far distant when every true American would say, that ‘If George Washington was the father of this country, Abraham Lincoln was its preserver.’

The artist is Margaret Ann McCutcheon, who married Cranstoun H. Laurie;¹¹ Emma wrote an article, “Spirit Art”, in the 1871 “Year Book of Spiritualism”; below is a short quote:

The whole of Mr. Laurie’s highly-gifted family display mediumistic powers in the direction of spirit-art; and the immense maps or charts, so to speak, of floral luxuriance, executed under control by Mrs. Laurie, have, for years, excited the admiration and astonishment of all beholders. Still they represent flowers, fruits, and other objects, which, despite their singular groupings, and the wonderfully-abnormal character of their execution, might be the work of some highly-gifted artist endowed with an erratic and exuberant fancy.

From Vivienne Roberts’ observation and comments a history has been built about this valuable exhibit in the Britten Memorial Museum, which had previously gone unnoticed!

Many discussions, items and documents were viewed throughout the afternoon; psychic artist Janette Marshall called attention to the bust of Joseph Benjamin and the Museum’s collection of Benjamin memorabilia. He was a remarkable evidential mental medium who served the Spiritualist movement for over five decades.

Part of the collection is a silver cup presented to Joseph Benjamin when he was voted as “The Spiritualist of 1979” by *Psychic News*, together with a framed letter of recognition signed by Maurice Barbanell, Editor.¹²

Jan was particularly interested in the Maurice and Sylvia Barbanell portrait inscribed “To Joe Benjamin whose superb gifts confound sceptics, from Sylvia & Maurice Barbanell”. Recently Jan and myself had the pleasure to meet up with Roy Stemman and Tony Ortzen. Both had previously worked with Barbanell at “*Psychic News*” and took the opportunity to give us some amusing and interesting stories of their former boss. President Bruton announced at this year’s AGM that the NEC had agreed to accord the honour of Honorary President-in-Spirit to Maurice Barbanell, together with the news that the Union is to rename the Arthur Findlay Centre in Stafford as the “Barbanell Conference Centre”, giving an interesting significance to Jan’s choice!



¹¹ “Mrs. Belle Miller, Mr. Laurie’s daughter, was one of the most powerful physical mediums I ever met. While she played the piano it would rise with apparent ease, and keep perfect time, rising and falling with the music. By placing her hand on the top of the piano it would rise clear from the floor, though I have seen as many as *five men seated on it at the time*. Mr. and Mrs. Laurie were both fine mediums; and I had met many prominent people during my visits there, who, though not professing to be spiritualists, made no secret of their desire to investigate the subject.” Taken from Nettie Colburn Maynard’s book, “Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist?”, published 1891. Available at the Arthur Findlay Shop: <http://arthurfindlayshop.org/>

¹² Note in the photograph one of our Presidents-in-spirit, Hannen Swaffer, inscribed “To Maurice Barbanell from Hannen Swaffer, Xmas Eve 1929”.



Numerous other works of direct/independent and trance art by the early 1860s Glasgow medium, David Duguid, came into discussion, including a statement attesting to the conditions under which Duguid painted “The Pool” in a trance state in 1872. I had previously noted that the painting in the Museum was not in fact “The Pool” as previously thought – all a bit of a mystery!

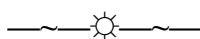
Finally, another image which created interest was a spirit oil painting on slate by the Campbell brothers, “Spirit Artists of Lily Dale, New York”, an oil painting of flowers (bottom right of the photograph).

The séance took place in Salford, Manchester, about 1901. The picture was painted by spirit precipitation “before a full audience in good gaslight on a penny slate bought at Abel Heywood's shop.” The time taken was two minutes.

The day was a great success all round and links between the two major organisations were forged for closer relations in the future.

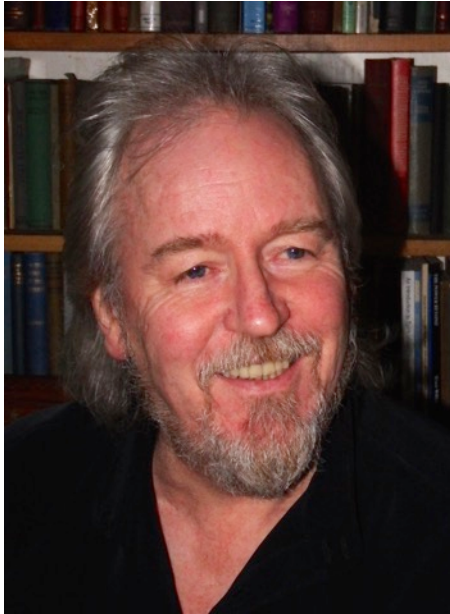
The College of Psychic Studies held an “Exhibition: Encounters with the Spirit World” from 14th to 20th August 2016. David Bruton, Janette Marshall and myself attended this excellent exhibition of our Spiritualist heritage. We were privileged to have a conducted tour by the College archivist, Leslie Price. Above, I noted the mystery of the missing 1872 David Duguid painting, “The Pool”; the exhibition held a copy of the Britten Memorial missing painting. A story for a future issue!

Special thanks are due to Jan Marshall for taking all the photographs in this article and also in the “Britten Memorial Museum & Library” article elsewhere in this issue.



**Below are some images of
the exhibition with Leslie
Price:**





Britten Memorial Study Weeks at the Arthur Findlay College

A Unique Opportunity – Exploring Spiritualist History

*Britten Memorial, founded in 1899, opens its
doors again to researching the Spiritualist
movement from its earliest days!*

Studying for an SNU Course, a degree, writing a paper or furthering your
general knowledge of Spiritualism and our history, etc.

£25.00 per day 09.30 – 20.30

Meals and accommodation available if required*

Dates presently available 2016

November 13-19

Your study visit will be supported under the guidance of the Museum Curator and Librarian,
Mr Paul Gaunt. Students will have access to the important major Spiritualistic journals of
the day, books and the Museum, where you can study the many aspects of our history.
Scans/photocopies will be available on some material.

Paul has an extensive knowledge of the history of Spiritualism and has been involved with
the movement for 46 years; he is the editor of the SNU Pioneer and Psypioneer Journal.

**All those intending to book should contact Paul first to make sure any specialised
subject material is available**

curator@snu.org.uk

*** Additional costs if required:**

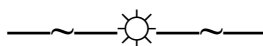
Lunch £10, Dinner £12.50.

Bed & Full English breakfast is £90.00 per room per night for an ensuite room.

Bed & Full English breakfast is £70.00 per room per night.

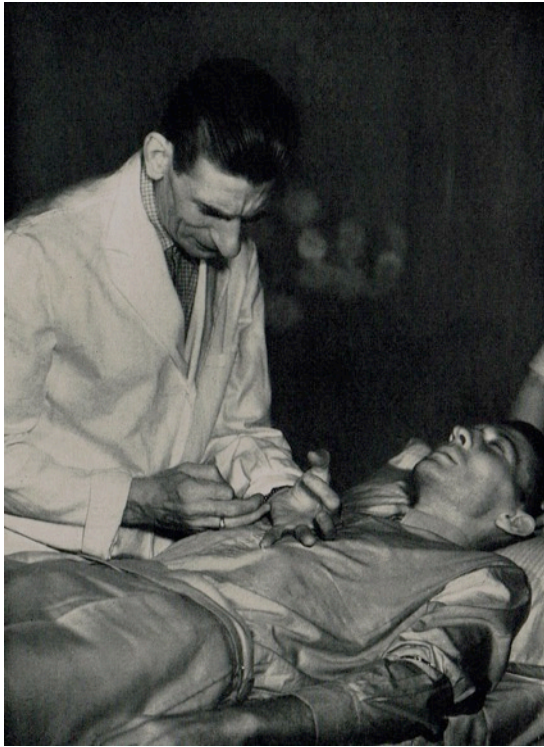
Alternatively, accommodation is available in the village, list available

Spaces are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment



SPIRITUALIST HEALERS OF THE PAST

In the April issue of "Pioneer" we featured physical medium Isa Northage. During her healing sessions her spirit guide, "Dr. Reynolds", would materialise in full view of the sitters and the patient to perform his operations – he cured by removing growths, clots and bone splinters, etc. Another healer time has forgotten is "Psychic Surgeon" Jesse J. Thomas, whose healing abilities graced the psychic press during the 1950s and most probably earlier. Thomas died in 1960; below is published his obituary, taken from the "Two Worlds", July 9th 1960. The photographic image shown is from his autobiography, "Psychic Surgeon", published in 1957:



J. J. Thomas passes on

IT is ironical that J. J. Thomas, the famous healer who had thousands of successes to his credit, many of them "incurables," should have passed on last week after a long illness. His trouble began some months ago with pneumonia, which was followed by heart and chest complications so acute that even oxygen had to be regularly taken.

Almost from the start of his healing career, Thomas specialised in healing by psychic "operations." His guide went through all the motions of a surgeon performing an operation.

Why this should be necessary was a matter of controversy among Spiritualists. But there is no doubt that through Thomas remarkable cures were achieved, some of them even confirmed by medical men.

A Surgeon comes back

The guide who performed the "operations" used the pseudonym of "Dr. Robert" and said that he had been a German surgeon. It was not surprising that when Thomas' autobiography was published it was called "Psychic Surgeon."

He demonstrated his healing gifts not only all over Britain but in Germany, Denmark and South Africa, where crowds flocked to his public meetings and sufferers queued for private treatment. On his passport his occupation was given as "psychic healer."

Thomas discovered his psychic powers when he was six. On three successive nights his father, a ship's engineer away at sea, came to his bedside and said, "Go tell your mother I am dead." All he got from telling her was a hiding for his trouble. Later, however, confirmation came that his father had in fact died on the first night of his appearance.

His first case

Thomas' healing career began 21 years ago after he had sat in a developing circle for 18 months and found he had trance mediumship. Through him a guide healed a severe case of arthritis in an elderly woman who had suffered for years.

At the time Thomas worked in a tiny garage in Brighton, Sussex, repairing old motor cycles, which gave him a bare living. Soon he was told in a spirit message that the rest of his life was to be used for healing.

Doctor's 6d. fee

He opened a healing centre in a large bare room over his garage. As cures were achieved, the number of patients grew through recommendation.

The war interrupted his healing career, but after being discharged from the RAF he returned to Brighton to resume his mission. Among his healing guides was one recognised by some patients as a former Negro doctor whose practice was in the East End of London, where his fee was never more than sixpence.

Soon "Dr. Robert" became the chief healing guide, with his "operations" on the etheric bodies of sick patients.

In Germany his healing created a furore because some of the cures were sensational. He demonstrated his gift to a panel of doctors in Hamburg.

Though they stated that his diagnoses were 100% accurate, the health authorities refused to give him permission to do healing, which was against the law. This verdict came despite the doctors' declaration that 40 out of 120 patients were cured after one treatment!

In South Africa, where he also had many extraordinary cures, he met the legal difficulty again and was charged with "practising medicine," which is the technical offence. Prominent Spiritualists were anxious to fight the case, but legal experts advised it would be a waste of time. Thomas pleaded guilty and paid a fine.

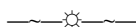
Surprise for visitor

Though he was a difficult man, whose brusqueness of manner was not calculated to win friendship, Thomas earned the gratitude of patients whose lives he had changed through his mediumship.

A well-known figure in the newspaper world, one who had been a Spiritualist for many years, went out of curiosity to watch Thomas give healing. The visitor was surprised when Dr. Robert asked him to come forward, said he was suffering from haemorrhoids and instantaneously effected a cure which the best medical skill had failed to do.

Thomas said it was a tough life being a healer because he always assumed his patients' aches and pains. He was essentially a lone wolf, who found it difficult to work in any organisation.

Unlike most healers who rely on voluntary donations he always charged a fee for his services. "I live in a material world," he said. "I do not expect 'pennies from heaven'".



Some insight into the work of Jesse Thomas can be found in the report below, taken from the “Two Worlds”, May 2nd 1953:

MASS-SELLING WEEKLY FEATURES SPIRIT HEALING BY J. J. THOMAS

UNDER the heading of “Psychic Surgeon” four pages of “Illustrated,” the national pictorial weekly, were devoted to J. J. Thomas, the Brighton medium, last week.

He was described as “one of the best known and most dramatic exponents of psychic healing in Europe.”

In addition to featuring a cure of “a crippling affliction,” the journal published seven pictures, one right across two pages.

The account, written by Peter Small, was fair, though guarded. An editorial introduction stated that Thomas “claims startling cures.” The journal’s report was presented “impartially and as a matter of public interest.”

THE TESTIMONY

The story began with the cure of 60-year-old Mrs. Madeleine Horseman, a laundry manageress from Salisbury. Peter Small wrote:

“In a matter of fact voice, Mrs. Horseman told me that she had been cured of a crippling affliction by a surgeon who had returned from the dead to operate on her. The doctor, she explained, was working through a spiritualist medium.”

This was the sort of story that psychic healing produced, and it was easy to be cynical about such accounts. Nevertheless, Mrs. Horseman was a sensible housewife and business woman, inclined neither to sensation nor superstition.

Four years ago she was suffering from a dropped abdomen. She was pronounced incurable and was obliged to wear a heavy steel girdle. Today she was, apparently, a perfectly fit woman.

CONFIRMATION

“Her relatives and colleagues in Salisbury confirm this,” said the reporter, “although some of them remain unconvinced about the method of recovery. It does seem, though, that Madeleine Horseman’s story is a reliable personal account of psychic healing. It is a factual statement of one woman’s experience.”

“I first went to see Mr. Thomas,” she said, “because my family dared me to. I was never a Spiritualist, and didn’t believe in that sort of thing.

“But I’d worn an uncomfortable belt for 13 years, and after three operations the doctors said they could do no more. So, when I was in Brighton on holiday, I thought I might as well try Mr. Thomas.

AS PREDICTED

“He operated’ on me,” Mrs. Horseman continued, “but it didn’t seem to have any effect. I told my husband there was nothing in it. But two days later I felt very ill—the effect of the operation as predicted by Mr. Thomas.

“A few days after that, the remarkable thing happened: I felt as if a great weight had been lifted from me. I took off my belt and found that my stomach was once again a normal size. That was four years ago, and I haven’t worn a belt or had any pain since that day.”

Thomas, who performed this “operation,” proved most willing to have his methods investigated. There was nothing particularly spiritual or medical about the healing centre in his Brighton flat, said the writer. The operating theatre was a small, airy room containing the operating table—a reclining couch of the sort beloved by psychiatrists—a washbasin and a portrait of “Dr. Robert.”

“Dr. Robert,” Thomas explained, “is the spirit who uses my body. He was one of the leading surgeons in Germany until he died 66 years ago.”

Thomas said he could not identify him further as “the spirit people always say that names are unimportant in their world.” The portrait, he was careful to point out, was not a true likeness, but “only a materialisation as it occurred to one of our psychic painters.”

EVER-PRESENT GUIDE

Small added that Thomas’ conversation was laced with references to “Dr. Robert,” and gave the impression that the doctor was an ever-present partner in the concern. Thomas claimed that he could talk with the doctor in an ordinary manner. “But for an operation,” he adds, “I must go into a trance, and Dr. Robert takes over my body completely.”

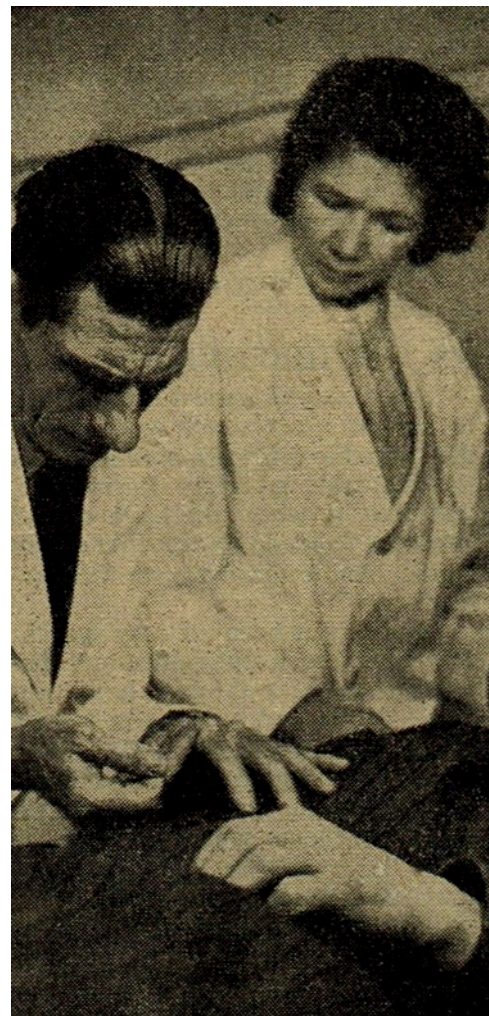
Small wrote: “The operations I watched were performed with a minimum of formality. Thomas, dressed in a surgeon’s smock, said a short prayer, closed his eyes, breathed deeply for a few seconds, and was thereafter referred to as ‘Dr. Robert.’ Thomas’ wife, Ruby, acted as soothsayer to the patients, but in no other way could she be described as an assistant.”

Ruby told him that “Dr. Robert” was helped by a panel of doctors of all ages and nationalities.

During the “operations” the spirit doctor kept up a flow of humorous conversation in a thick, broken accent and went “deftly through the motions of incisions, stitching up, and so on.”

It was explained to the reporter that the “operation” was performed on the patient’s spiritual body. It might take up to two days for the effect to reach the physical body.

Diagnosis was simplified because to “Dr. Robert” “diseased organs are grey and healthy ones red surrounded by blue. As I can see right into the body, I can get right to the source of the trouble without bothering about the area of pain.”



EIGHT “ OPERATIONS ”

The reporter saw eight “operations ” conducted in approximately 90 minutes. Complaints treated at this Brighton public meeting included asthma, a slipped disc, rheumatism, and various intestinal troubles.

When Thomas emerged from trance he seemed exhausted and pained because, he explained, patients’ symptoms were often transferred to his body where they could remain for hours.

The reporter commented: “This intriguing ritual no doubt reinforces the faith of the converted, and so serves a useful purpose in the treatment. It might, though, increase the doubts of the cynical. But, for the open-minded person who likes his evidence watertight, it adds nothing.

“The changed accent and expert procedure of Thomas in trance *could* be magnificent acting.

“Thomas’ own story, of how he became aware of his powers and of how he was called into this service against his will, is convincingly told, but it cannot be independently checked. Nothing *provable*, of course, happened to the patients during the actual operations.”

EMPLOYER’S TRIBUTE

The reporter visited Salisbury and interviewed the general manager of the laundry where Mrs. Horseman worked. “I thought the laundry was going to lose Mrs. Horseman,” he said. “She was often in pain at her work. Since she was treated, she has been just as you see her today.”

Mrs. Horseman’s brother wouldn’t take psychic treatment even though he wholeheartedly confirmed the story. “Even now, I can’t make top nor tail of it,” he said. “In fact, if it weren’t my own sister I wouldn’t believe it, no matter where I read it.”

Next came this tribute. Said the reporter:

“The most uncompromising testimony came from a Salisbury business man, who prefers to remain anonymous. His wife was suffering from a duodenal ulcer when he heard about Thomas from Mrs. Horseman.

THIS STAGGERED ME

“ ‘My wife and I were both very doubtful about the whole affair,’ said the business man. ‘So I went to Brighton to watch the treatment. While Dr. Robert was working on my wife he told me I had a bad hand. This staggered me, as I couldn’t grip anything with my right hand. But he certainly couldn’t have heard of this, and there were no visible signs.

“ ‘He said he would clear this affliction by passing it to Thomas. Sure enough, it’s been all right since—and my wife’s complaint got better. You can take this as gospel, because I’m not the imaginative type. Besides, I hold no brief for Spiritualism.

These experiences, Thomas told Peter Small, illustrated psychic healing only at its simplest level. He went on to refer to “absent healing” whereby “Dr. Robert works directly on patients in their sleep, if they have first asked for his help through me.”

At the clinic, patients paid what they felt they could afford—many, in fact, pay nothing. On the other hand, Thomas received large sums from richer patients to enable him to carry on his work. “The spirit people see that there is sufficient income from these sources,” is his philosophic appraisal of these windfalls.

UNDERLYING MOTIVE

Then there was the deeper motive that Thomas claims for his work: “To bring men, in their gratitude, closer to God, not in the churches, but in their hearts and deeds.”

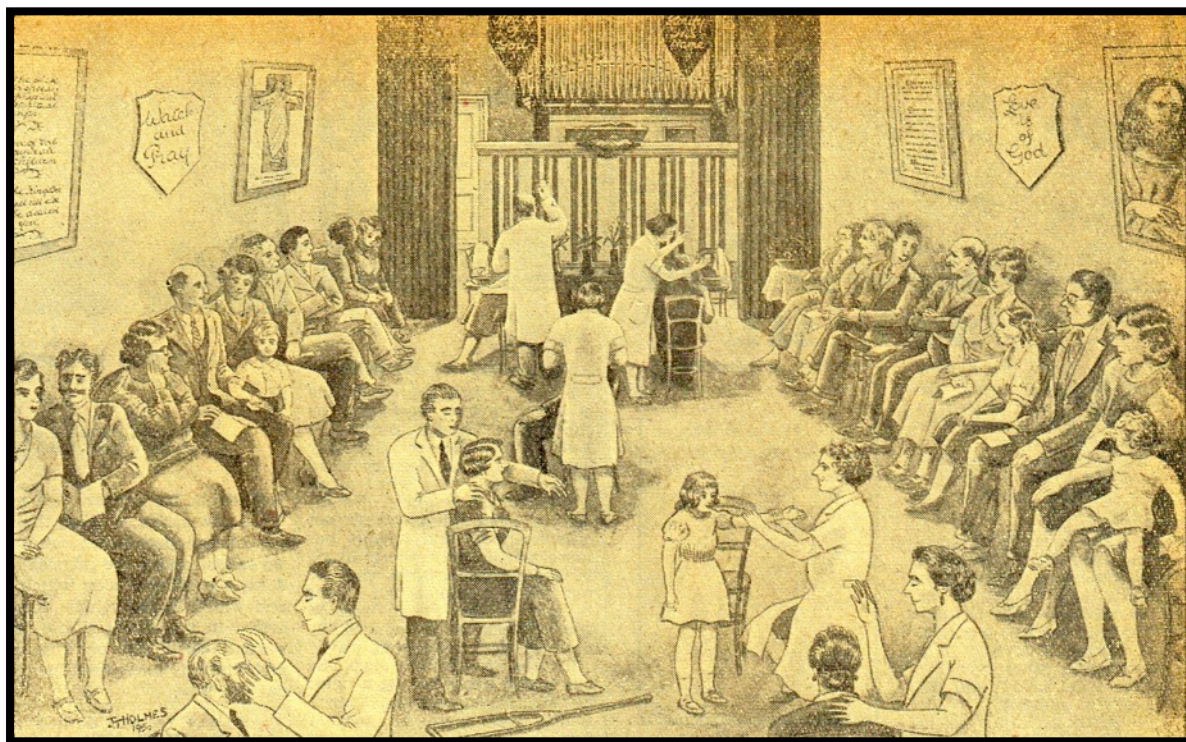
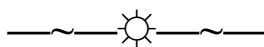
The last three paragraphs of the account resolved themselves into the usual stand-by, a plea for an inquiry, the device to which so many newspapers resort, doubtless because they do not wish to offend readers unfavourably disposed towards Spiritualism.

Here is the way the reporter expressed it:

“One result of all this is an ever widening circle of sick and despairing people who—as I realised in Salisbury—see with their own eyes what they feel is good reason to renew hope.

“Do such cases as that of Mrs. Horseman, if checked against the known facts, constitute sufficient reason for a full-scale authoritative inquiry? I would say that they do, if only because of the growing number of sick people who are being prompted to turn to psychic healing—for good or ill.

“Worse still, many are no doubt going to Thomas on the basis of exaggerated stories of believers more fervent than Mrs. Horseman. This is merely the least reason why an investigation should be held.”



SPIRITUAL HEALERS AT WORK

A typical scene at a Healing Centre in an SNU Church

Sketch by John T. Holmes

Taken from the “Two Worlds”, January 12th 1952