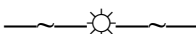


PIONEER

Volume 3, No. 3: June 2016

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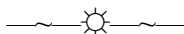


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The Pioneer (bi-monthly) is now part of the recommended reading for the Spiritualists’ National Union’s education courses.

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.

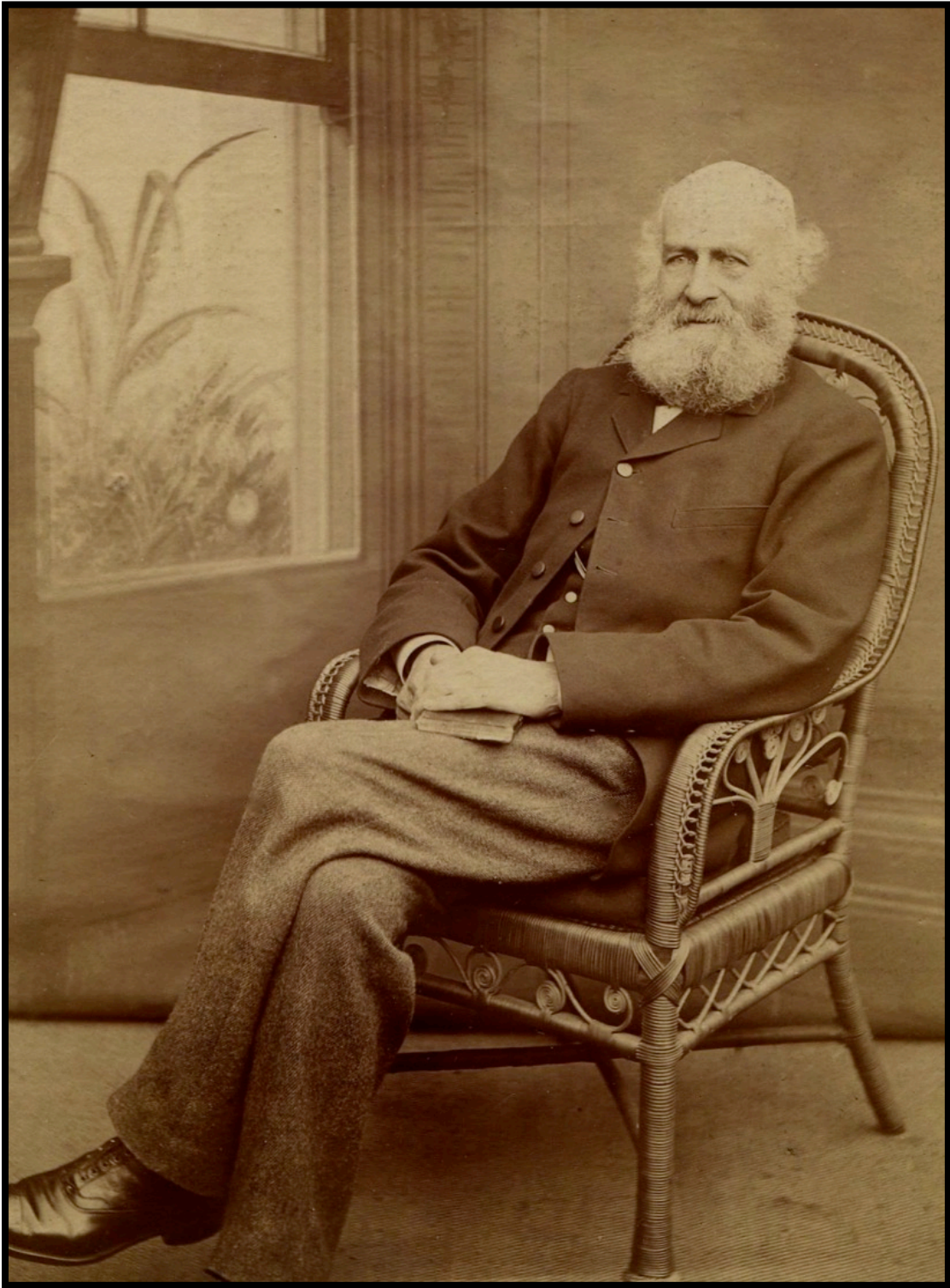
Special thanks to Leslie Price and Charles Coulston for their work in sub-editing this issue



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*As the AGM this year returns to the Manchester District,
where it all began in 1890,
we pay tribute to our first President*



John Lamont



John Lamont was a tireless pioneer of National Spiritualism from the early struggles in the 1870s to establish a national organisation of Spiritualists. This was fulfilled in 1890 at the 'National Conference of British Spiritualists', held in the Co-operative building. The large assembly room, large hall and anterooms were all booked for the Conference on Sunday July 6th 1890.

The Conference was reported over several issues of "Two Worlds". July 11th reported:

"... the finest, most thoroughly representative, and successful gathering of spiritualists took place that has ever been remembered in the short but busy annals of spiritualism in Great Britain. The three sessions announced during several past weeks in the Two Worlds were thronged with delegates from far and near, representing the entire country from London to Glasgow. By the

untiring exertions of the self-appointed and self-sacrificing committees *pro tem*, every preparation was complete, every devoted worker was in his or her place, and the extensive advertisements and notices issued brought together a large number of strangers and visitors from all quarters."

"By the admirable arrangements that had been organised, and thanks to the zeal, tact, and energy of the noble president, John Lamont, Esq., of Liverpool, every item of the "agenda" was carried out to the letter. The discussions on each resolution were bright, sharp, and pointed, and in every instance, notwithstanding the large numbers and divergent minds present, were carried UNANIMOUSLY, and often amidst prolonged and heartfelt cheers."

This Conference is accepted by the Spiritualists' National Union as their foundation; fine tributes to our *first* President have been given in the past but they were mistakenly given to Emma Hardinge Britten, who was never the President. For further details please see "Pioneer", Volume 1, No. 1, August 2013: "The Formation of the Spiritualists' National Union". Today Emma is deservedly one of our Presidents-in-Spirit.

John Lamont entered Spiritualism in 1870 as a result of a lecture given by Emma Hardinge Britten; Lamont became a close family friend. One of his last tasks was to fulfil Emma's request for him to conduct her funeral. Lamont had previously acted in the same role following Emma's mother's and husband's deaths. Emma died (aged 76 years) on the night of October 2nd 1899, at her residence at 2 Winfield Terrace, Chester Road, Old Trafford, Manchester. Her funeral took place on Saturday October 7th 1899, commencing in the study of Emma's house, where she lay, joined by a few close friends and relatives.¹

¹ Continued: James J. Morse followed with "a brief but impressive oration", then Walter Howell spoke, concluding the ceremonial at the house. The coffin was then removed to the hearse; the funeral cortege was long and contained representatives from all parts of the country. At two o'clock the cortege left the house, passing

The “Two Worlds”, July 6th 1900, covers the eleventh Annual Conference of the Spiritualists’ National Federation held at Bradford, Yorks, under the presidency of James J. Morse, on Saturday and Sunday, 31st June and 1st July. The Conference paid tribute to their first President, who lay dying. Former three times Federation President Samuel Southern Chiswell (1852-1910) stated:

Mr. S. S. Chiswell said that on the last occasion they met it was their sad privilege to send a telegram to Mrs. Britten, who then lay upon a bed of affliction. On this occasion he was sorry to have to inform them that the ‘grand old man’ of Spiritualism, Mr. John Lamont, was passing away. They would all feel with him how much they would lose by the passing from the physical of Mr. Lamont, and he felt that they would all be in agreement with him when he suggested that they should send a telegram of sympathy, of love, and of affection to him who had done so much.

Mr. Smedley seconded this proposition from his very heart. He last saw him, their father and brother John Lamont, at the graveside of Mrs. Britten, and little thought that so soon he would be called upon to follow her.

The President, in putting the vote, spoke of his lengthened acquaintance with Mr. Lamont, and of the tender sympathies which were aroused within him when he thought of the noble labours and sacrifices of their suffering friend.

The motion was agreed to unanimously by a standing vote, and the following telegram was despatched at once:—

Hodge, 5, Laburnum-road, Fairfield, Liverpool.

The Spiritualists’ National Federation, in Conference assembled at Bradford, send heartfelt sympathy to you and Mrs. Archie Lamont, in the regretted illness of John Lamont, and desire you to convey to him their loving sympathy and esteem.—MORSE, President.

Lamont was active in the ‘Lancashire District Committee’ and presided over several Conferences. The ‘Lancashire District Committee’ was the first district association to be formed at a Conference in Bury in August 1875. Its aim was to promote Spiritualism in new Districts, places of weak or non-existent Spiritualist activity, supply experienced speakers and distribute literature. “The Spiritualist”, February 2nd 1877, records their efforts:

through the heart of Manchester and attracting widespread attention. “The line of carriages was so extended that when the wreath-car was well out of Albert-square into Cross-street the last conveyance was just entering the square at the other end.”

Upon arriving at Harpurhey cemetery, Manchester, the entrance pathway was lined with Lyceumists clothed in white. Around the grave gathered a great concourse of people, with the Lyceum children in the centre. John Lamont gave out the hymn; James J. Morse gave the invocation, then Lamont spoke briefly in committing the coffin to the grave. Edward E. Wallis also spoke, and then after another hymn was sung, “Tell me not in mournful numbers”, Mr Lamont pronounced a closing benediction, “and the assembled crowd surged toward the grave to take a last look at the coffin besprinkled with lovely flowers.”

Taken from “The Britten Memorial Museum – A Brief History”, by Paul J. Gaunt.

“Organisation is the basis of all efficient movements, whether social or political. The Lancashire Spiritualists have determined that a more vigorous organising policy shall be commenced at once, for the purpose of enabling every town where there are a few Spiritualists only, to hold regular Sunday services and week-night classes for research and discussion in connection with the subject. There is scarcely a town or village in the district which the Lancashire Committee has not already visited, and sown the first seeds. Organisation would aid the progress of Spiritualism in these places.”

The work of the Lancashire Committee can be noted in a report from the fourteenth quarterly Conference held in the Temperance Hall, Grosvenor Street, Manchester, on November 3rd 1878; the president was John Lamont. In *Spiritual Notes*, p.77, Lamont explained:

“... a scheme which the Liverpool Psychological Society wished to enter into with the Committee, for the Lancashire Committee to supply the Liverpool Society with speakers every Sunday for six months, except on the five-Sunday months, when they would supply their own speakers on the fifth Sunday of such months. The Liverpool Society desired that Mr. Morse should be sent them one Sunday and one Monday in the month at least.² On one of the Sundays in each month the society would not object to a local speaker (that is, a resident of Liverpool). The other Sundays to be filled up by other speakers. For this the Society offered the Committee £27 for the six months. The proposal was unanimously adopted.”

Much of Lamont’s work was based at his home in Liverpool. He was President for numerous years of the Liverpool Psychological Society; in 1894 the name changed to the Liverpool Society of Spiritualists. His connection with Daulby Hall is outlined in his obituary, which follows. Today it is known as Liverpool Spiritualist Church and is affiliated to the Union.³ Lamont presided at the historic occasion when Emma Hardinge Britten laid the first corner-stone at the Oldham Spiritual Temple in 1887 and read a paper titled, “What has Spiritualism taught, and what good has it done for Humanity?” It contained twelve short statements, the last one being a summary of her creeds/principles. In 1901 they became the foundation of our Seven Principles; please see “Pioneer”, Volume 1, No. 1, August 2013: “The Laying of the Oldham Spiritual Temple Corner-Stones”.

On December 29th 1887 John Lamont suffered the loss of his wife, Mary, after almost fifty years of marriage; Emma Hardinge Britten took the funeral service on New Year’s Day:

*Released at last, even those who most loved the gentle invalid,
and will sadly miss her patient face and grateful smile,
cannot grudge her the exchange from a life of hopeless suffering
to one of eternal sunlight and bloom,
“where every tear is dried and pain and sorrow vanish.”*

² In June 1879 Morse entered into a second six months’ contract with the Lancashire District Committee to give ten lectures per month (*Spiritual Notes*, p. 157).

³ Liverpool Spiritualist Church, 14 Daulby Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L3 5NX.

Below is published John Lamont's obituary from the front page of the "Two Worlds", July 13th 1900:

THE PASSING OF JOHN LAMONT

On Saturday, July 7th, 1900, there departed from the mortal form our old and beloved friend, John Lamont, of Liverpool. To know him was an education in toleration, strenuousness, and all virtues that help to build a true manhood. To have his friendship and affection was to hold prizes indeed. A true son of 'Caledonia, stern and wild,' he had all the tenacity and energy of the Scots disposition, and being progressive by nature, small wonder he outgrew the creed of his youth, and though remaining for many years in association with a religious body he was ready for a wider interpretation of the problems of Life, Death, and Immortality than he was there taught, though until 1870 he was not at all prepared to look for such widening views in connection with Modern Spiritualism.

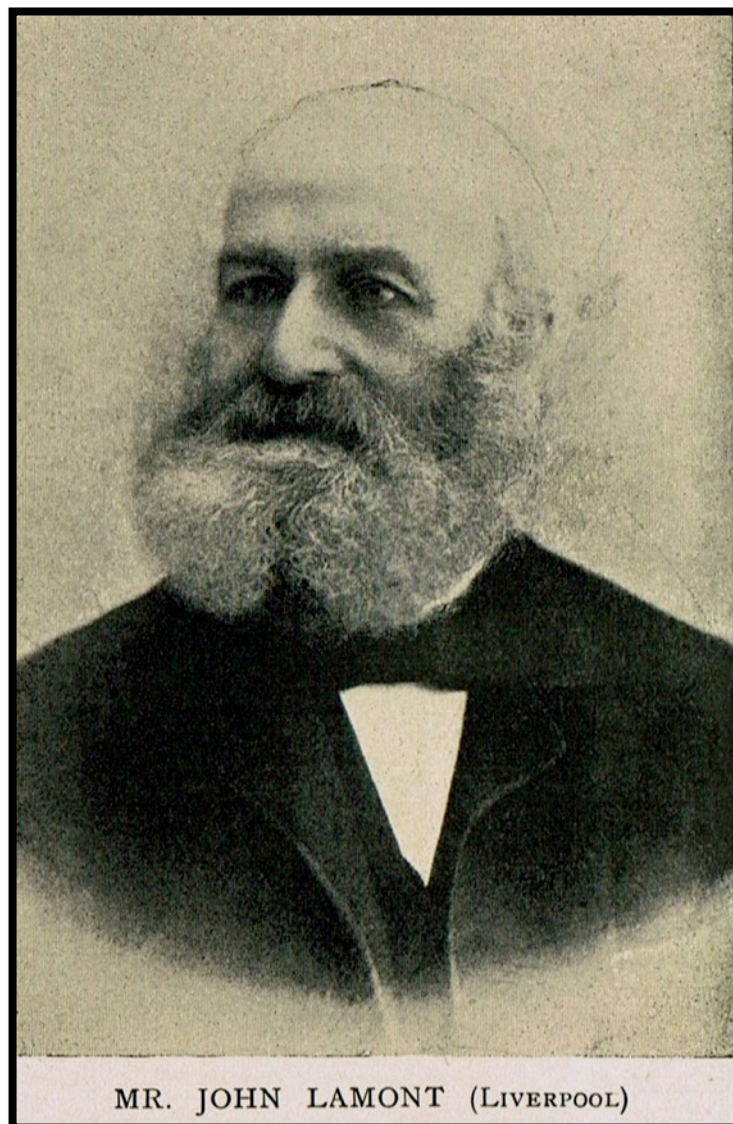
However, in the year named he was fortunate enough to listen to a lecture by Mrs. Britten, in Hope Hall, Liverpool. He was much impressed by the 'cleverness' of the woman, but not at all as to the spiritual side of the matter. Subsequently, meeting a friend, he was induced to investigate, and his first surprise was over the company he encountered, for, to his astonishment, he found included therein, two Quakers, a Churchman and a Churchwoman, and a lady! Subsequently, through the mediumship of his brother's wife, Mrs. Susan Lamont, Mrs. Everitt, Mr. Taylor, then of Swinton, Miss Fowler, Mr. D. Duguid, Miss Barlow, and several others of the early workers, he became positively satisfied of not only the reality of the facts and phenomena, but of the personal identity of spirits communicating with him. He visited the United States and Australia, meeting all the most noted mediums in his travels, and gaining a wide, varied, and intensely interesting series of experiences and information.

Shortly after he became convinced he entered into the local work with energy and enthusiasm. First with the old Liverpool Psychological Society, then with the Liverpool Society of Spiritualists, the reformed and remodelled Psychological Society, and for many years filled the position of President to both bodies with conspicuous credit to himself and the work. The creation and erection of Daulby Hall was the outcome of his love for the cause and his tireless energy in serving it, and he it was who purchased the hall when the mortgagor foreclosed on the property, and so for many years secured it to the service of the cause. For reasons still too acute to deal with, he sold the property for exactly the sum for which he purchased it, thereby relieving himself of much anxiety and trouble, which advancing years and physical weakness rendered him disinclined to continue to encounter. Spiritualism in Liverpool never had a more faithful friend, devoted servant, or more liberal supporter. Literally, 'his left hand' never knew what 'his right hand' did, and few outside his own domestic circle knew the many sacrifices in money and friendships his association with our cause entailed upon him.

As a speaker he was often a volunteer on our platforms. Always clear, cogent, forcible, and at times with a rugged eloquence, not unmingled with native shrewdness, his addresses were helpful, refreshing, and full of the experience of a careful and thoughtful investigator. Whether addressing an ordinary meeting, an anniversary, a Lyceum, or presiding at any public function, he was quite at home, and ever had something racy and original to propound. Children loved him, young men respected him, the mature admired him, for he diffused an atmosphere of love wherever he went. We may travel far and wait long before we meet his like again.

To us who knew him intimately he has been for years 'dear Grandpa,' and many are his loving grand children! His wise counsel has blessed many, his generous hand has aided many, his home has been as a haven of rest to many, and indeed, many are they who will miss him more than words can tell.

Now the old and well-known form is cold and still, the sparkle has left those kindly eyes, the erstwhile warm hand lies cold and nerveless, those lips no longer part with the old familiar smile. Silent is the mortal voice, blanched the cheeks; the sweet infinite calm of the White Angel has left its imprint on those dear features. The worn and pain-racked form rests from the strife, and the sacred duet will soon be reduced to its primal elements. Stricken on Thursday, May 31st, the imprisoned spirit was released from bondage and suffering on Saturday, July 7th. For thirty-eight days our beloved brother endured all the pain that paralysis can inflict, and though all that the devoted niece, Miss Hodge, and the equally devoted sister-in-law, Mrs. Archie Lamont, could do, the pain was too intense to be relieved to any considerable extent. Mercifully the Angel came; the white glory descended and enwrapped the tortured form in its embrace, and gently and sweetly as a babe at rest came the end of the struggle. Thou art not gone from us, dear brave soul. Heart so tender and true, thou art with us yet, and ever. Thousands lay their tributes of love above thy mortal garment, and in the sweet silence of the spirit thy own silvery voice proclaims, 'Rejoice!'



THE COLLEGE OF PSYCHIC STUDIES

Some background information



William Stainton Moses founded the London Spiritualist Alliance on October 25th 1883, although the roots of the Alliance can be traced back a further decade. The first attempt to form a national Spiritualist organisation began in Darlington in 1865. This was followed by subsequent yearly conferences in different locations. In 1873 the annual Conference of Spiritualists was held in Liverpool on Tuesday August 5th, in the rooms of the Psychological Society, Islington, under the presidency of Mr T. Everitt, of London. It is interesting to note that Mr John Lamont was elected Vice-President of the Conference.

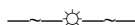
The result of this conference was the formation of the British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS), but in reality it never became a representative national organisation; its focus was London, with comparatively few affiliated societies. In May 1882 BNAS decided to reconstitute the Association under a new constitution by

the name of the Central Association of Spiritualists, taking over the membership and premises of BNAS. Later, at a meeting on October 25th 1883, the Central Association of Spiritualists was dissolved.

Stainton Moses played a leading part in these earlier Associations and moved for the foundation of a new society, to be called the London Spiritualist Alliance (LSA). The name was changed to the College of Psychic Science on 31st January 1955 and then to the College of Psychic Studies (CPS) in 1970, and remains so today. The College is the second oldest surviving Spiritualist organisation in this country; in 1872 the Marylebone Spiritualist Association was founded and on February 24th 1960 its name was changed to the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (SAGB).

Further information on the early years to achieve a national organisation can be found in *Psypioneer* in a series of articles, "The Building of the Spiritualists' National Union", starting in Volume 8, No. 8, August 2012.

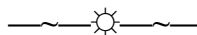
In January 2016 the College of Psychic Studies presented a successful exhibition to mark 90 years in its building at 16 Queensberry Place, London. See *Psypioneer*, Volume 12, No. 2, 2016: "The London Spiritualist Alliance: Great Gathering at New Premises".





Visit to the College of Psychic Studies

By Paul J. Gaunt



In May 2016 Arthur Findlay College tutor Janette Marshall and myself were invited to spend a day at the College of Psychic Studies. After meeting the Principal, Gill Matini, we were shown around the building by curator Vivienne Roberts and archivist Leslie Price.

I first came into contact with Leslie in the late 1990s, when he was the founder editor of the “Psychic Pioneer” (1999-2001) website, which carried news and articles about psychic pioneers. At this time I had no computer and I was researching the formation of the Union’s Seven Principles, about which Leslie kindly sent me material through the post.

In May 2004 Leslie relaunched the project as a newsletter under the title ‘Pyspioneer’, archived by Garth Willey on his website at his Woodlands Sanctuary Foundation Inc. in Melbourne, Australia; this invaluable arrangement remains so today. I took over as Pyspioneer editor in July 2005, assuming ownership in February 2006. Leslie has continued a close involvement to the present day and, together with Charles Coulston, Leslie also sub-edits this journal.

We worked our way from the impressive library in the College’s reception area through the College’s various rooms, floors and corridors, graced by portraits of the movements pioneers such as Alfred Vout Peters, Etta Wriedt and Daniel D. Home, to name a few. The collections of mediumistic art date back to Anna Howitt Watts’s work in 1856; other works, including artists Ethel Le Rossignol, Georgiana Houghton and Yta, are particularly striking.

The images shown here are available to buy from the College. An array of psychic-spirit photography is also among the displays, as are ouija boards, planchettes, slates and séance trumpets.



After lunch at a pleasant French restaurant we settled in the archive room; Jan, a psychic artist herself, found more art works with curator Vivienne Roberts, bringing us up to more recent times with some interesting works by Coral Polge. Of particular interest to us were the archives relating to test séances conducted by the College’s research department, the ‘London Psychical Laboratory’, in the early 1930s into the mediumship of Helen Duncan; Pyspioneer is now publishing these early reports.

One of the highlights of the day was to look at Stainton Moses’ numerous notebooks, which contain the material later edited and published in ‘Spirit Teachings’, 1883. This book is

regarded by some as the Spiritualists' Bible. Moses notes in his introduction under the pseudonym, 'M.A. Oxon':



“THE communications [...] were received by the process known as Automatic or Passive Writing. This is to be distinguished from Psychography. In the former case, the Psychic holds the pen or pencil, or places his hand upon the Planchette, and the message is written without the conscious intervention of his mind. In the latter case, the writing is direct, or is obtained without the use of the hand of the psychic, and sometimes without the aid of pen or pencil.”

Moses further comments:

“These messages began to be written through my hand just ten years since, 30th March 1873, about a year after my first introduction to Spiritualism. I had had many communications before, and this method was adopted for the purpose of convenience, and also to preserve what was intended to be a connected body of teaching. The laborious

method of rapping out messages was manifestly unfitted for communications such as those which I here print. If spoken through the lips of the medium in trance, they were partially lost, and it was, moreover, impossible at first to rely upon such a measure of mental passivity as would preserve them from admixture with his ideas.

“I procured a pocket-book, which I habitually carried about with me. I soon found that writing flowed more easily when I used a book that was permeated with the psychic aura, just as raps come more easily on a table that has been frequently used for the purpose, and as phenomena occur most readily in the medium's own room. When Slade could not get messages on a new slate, he rarely failed to get one on his own seasoned one. I am not responsible for the fact, the reason for which is sufficiently intelligible.

“At first the writing was very small and irregular, and it was necessary for me to write slowly and cautiously, and to watch the hand, following the lines with my eye, otherwise the message soon became incoherent, and the result was mere scribble.



“In a short time, however, I found that I could dispense with these precautions. The writing, while becoming more and more minute, became at the same time very regular and beautifully formed. As a specimen of caligraphy, some of the pages are exceedingly beautiful. The answers to my questions (written at the top of a page) were paragraphed, and arranged as if for the press: and the name of God was always written in capitals, and slowly, and, as it seemed, reverentially. The subject-matter was always of a pure and elevated character, much of it being of personal application, intended for my own guidance and direction. I may say that throughout the whole of these written communications, extending in unbroken continuity to the year 1880, there is no flippant message, no attempt at jest, no vulgarity or incongruity, no false or misleading statement, so far as I know or could discover; nothing incompatible with the avowed object, again and again repeated, of instruction, enlightenment, and guidance by Spirits fitted for the task. Judged as I should wish to be judged myself, they were what they pretended to be. Their words were words of sincerity, and of sober, serious purpose.”

**Standing: Curator Vivienne Roberts and Archivist Leslie Price
Seated: Paul Gaunt & Janette Marshall**



Photographs taken during our visit by Angela Mammarella-D'Cruz

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SW7 2EB

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SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

“100 Years Anniversary of his Acceptance of Spiritualism”



Doyle's interests in Spiritualism and psychic matters date back to the 1880s; in 1893 he became a member of the Society for Psychical Research. However, it would not be until 1916 that he would publicly identify himself as a Spiritualist, a mission he would strongly advocate until his death on July 7th 1930. Further details on Doyle's activities during the years 1887 to 1920 are revealed in a new book by Matt Wingett, 'Conan Doyle & the Mysterious World of Light'.⁴

At the time of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's death he was Hon. President of the Spiritualists' National Union. After his death we can note in the minutes of an SNU Council meeting held on October 25th 1930:⁵

“It was resolved that the name of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle be retained as Honorary President in spirit life, and to elect Mr. Hannen Swaffer as Honorary President, and Lady Jean Conan Doyle as Honorary Vice-President of the Union.”

Today Sir Arthur still retains this honour within the Union – Hon. Presidents-in-Spirit – alongside Emma Hardinge Britten, Hannen Swaffer, J. Arthur Findlay and Gordon Higginson.

Below gives the reader an insight into Doyle's 'New Revelation', which is taken from the "Two Worlds", November 9th 1917, page 416:

SIR A. CONAN DOYLE AND HIS CONVERSION.

THE following is a report which appeared in *The Northern Daily Telegraph* of Friday, October 26th, 1917. As it contains some points which are open questions to many earnest Spiritualists (which have been dealt with by not a few contributors to THE TWO WORLDS), we deem it wise to print what Sir Conan said, thus (as is the custom of this journal) supporting the free and open consideration of points which are matters of considerable differences of opinion among some classes of Spiritualists. Sir Conan evidently ranges himself on the side of those broad-minded and clear-visioned Spiritualists who take sane and wide views of the facts they are familiar with, and who

⁴ The book's preface is written by Leslie Price and published in *Psypioneer*, Volume 12, No. 3, May-June 2016.

⁵ The "National Spiritualist", December 1930, page 140: "Precis of Minutes of General Council held at National Spiritualist Church, Smethwick, October 25th, 1930." G. F. Berry, General Secretary.

are not afraid to speculate upon their relations to religion, science, ethics, philosophy, and the problems of our daily lives.

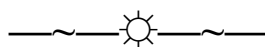
The report says:—

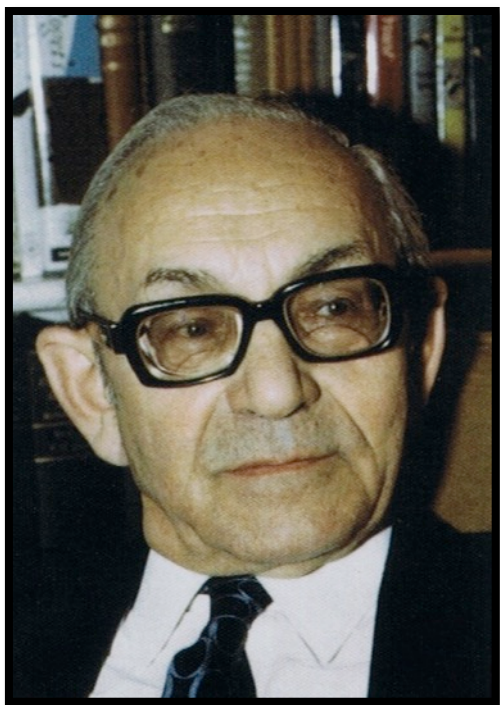
Lecturing before the London Spiritualists' Alliance last night on "The New Revelation," Sir Arthur Conan Doyle said the subject had engaged his attention more than any other. If it had taken him a long time to arrive at the conclusions he held, it was because psychical research involved questions which were complex, deep, and difficult. When he finished his medical education he was a convinced materialist, and was of opinion that the whole analogy of nature was against the theory of the survival of personality after death. He was a theist, but did not believe in an anthropomorphic deity. He had looked upon Spiritualism as the greatest nonsense. He traced the steps by which he had been brought to change his views—his personal experiences of psychic phenomena and the views of great men like Crookes, Wallace, and Flammarion. The replies of spirits given through table rapping were not always stupid. In one case he got this reply to a test question: "It is the religious frame of mind, not the critical, we wish to inculcate."

No other religion was so strongly supported by the testimony of able and learned men as was Spiritualism. The existence of fraudulent mediums was not surprising, seeing that many were paid by results and that in any case mediumship was a physical gift and had no necessary relationship to morality. The war, by compelling the re-assessment of values, had made him realise fully for the first time the importance to everyone of a study which aimed at the breakdown of the wall between two worlds. Through Spiritualism a new revelation was in process of delivery. It was perhaps still in the John the Baptist stage, but certainly a body of fresh doctrine had already been accumulated, mainly through automatic writing, but partly also from direct voices and other sources, which told us of the life of the soul on the other side. It was fatal to no creed except that of materialism, but Christianity, like everything else, must change or perish. Change had already perhaps been delayed too long.

Christianity was failing because too much was made of the death and not enough of the life of Christ. The new doctrine taught that passing was easy and painless. The spirit body was analogous to the earth body. There was a period of oblivion or sleep before entering on the duties of the spirit life, which was a pleasant condition in the world beyond, from which no one wished to return. Hell dropped out, but purgatory was justified. The world beyond was no vague region of floating emotion, but a definite reality attested by a body of evidence nobody could reject.

Sir Oliver Lodge, who presided, said revelation was that which we had not yet obtained directly from the evidence of the senses, which, like all else in process of evolution, were still imperfect, and were not in themselves sufficient to explore a spiritual and mental universe. The materialists failed when they professed to lay down the law on a subject of which they knew nothing.





Maurice Barbanell has already featured in “Pioneer”, “Maurice Barbanell, the S.N.U. and his Propaganda Work”, published in Volume 2, No. 6, November 2015. Below is taken from the “Two Worlds”, June 28th 1958, under the editorship of Barbanell. The ‘witness box’ public meetings held at the Marylebone Spiritualist Association, today known as the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (SAGB), would bring out frank replies to probing questions. Barbanell was no exception in some of his controversial replies to his questioners; some of the subject matter leads us to the following article on the independent direct voice.

— ✨ — Psychic editor goes into the “witness box”

“TWO WORLDS” REPORTER

IF YOU SEE MY EDITOR, MAURICE BARBANELL, TRYING TO FLY AN AEROPLANE, BAKE A CAKE, SCORE A GOAL, BUILD A HOUSE, CAN SARDINES, KNIT A CARDIGAN, CHANGE A BABY’S NAPKIN, OR SELL INSURANCE, DON’T SAY YOU HAVEN’T ASKED FOR IT.

“It is so very strange,” he said last week, at Marylebone Spiritualist Association, “that everyone knows better than the Editor how to produce a newspaper. Yet no one tells a plumber how to plumb.”

Barbanell was the third well-known Spiritualist to be put “In the Witness Box” at the MSA, a new idea for public meetings. Prosecuting counsel” Eric Stuart and members of the audience hurled questions at the “witness,” who is presumed to be under oath to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Do we exaggerate?

Like Harry Edwards, the first witness. Barbanell was asked, “Don’t you think the psychic Press over – emphasises and sometimes exaggerates accounts of spirit healing?”

“If you saw the stuff *we throw out*,” replied Barbanell, “ you would realise that we take the greatest possible care to check the accuracy of reports which we publish.”

Only this week a healer wrote about two patients he had cured. We didn’t print his account, said Barbanell. We wrote to the patients instead. By the time they answered the story might have lost its topicality. But we could not be too sure.

“Running a newspaper,” he said, “is a highly skilled professional job that calls for a number of qualities, including the ability to make quick decisions.”

Day of decision

It is the day before you go to press. An interesting and seemingly factual account of spirit healing comes in. Do you print it? Who is the medium? Is he capable of performing such healing? Who is the correspondent? Can you trust him'?

All these questions, and sometimes many more, had to be answered before you decided whether to print the story.

Some people said there was too much philosophy in the paper; others said there was not enough. Some said there was not enough about psychic phenomena, others that there was too much. And so it went on. "They usually cancel one another out with their suggestions," smiled Barbanell.

"I will let you into a secret," he said. "We print what interests us in the office. If we're lucky it will interest readers."

Spirit master

Asked what he considered to be this most outstanding proof of Survival, he answered: "I would say that Estelle Roberts' direct-voice seances produced almost at every session what I regard as impeccable evidence.

"Red Cloud, her guide, was a master at presenting proof. He would not allow a communicator to return until he had rehearsed him and he knew he would provide evidence of his identity."

Barbanell told a remarkable story when asked, "How would you prove guides are not a part of your subconscious self?" He referred to the early days of his trance mediumship when the fiancée who is now his wife doubted whether Silver Birch, the guide who has since become world-famous, was really a separate entity.

To settle the matter, Silver Birch, through the entranced Barbanell, said: "I will prove my separate existence by coming to you at Red Cloud's next voice seance and by speaking these words to you . . ." The guide used a phrase, one of a very intimate nature.

Promise fulfilled

Though not a word was said about this to Estelle Roberts, Silver Birch manifested at the next voice seance and uttered the promised phrase. There were no more doubts after that.

Barbanell's answer to a question on reincarnation aroused controversy. He declared, unequivocally: "I do not believe in a universal reincarnation. In a few cases some people voluntarily come back to perform certain important tasks.

"I believe, for instance, that Winston Churchill was reborn to save the world in its great crisis."

The theory that everyone kept returning to earth was, he thought retrogressive.

Reincarnation propounded as many problems as it attempted to solve.

Foolish optimists

He was asked how he would explain life's inequalities and injustices if not by reincarnation. "Anyone," said Barbanell, "who expects fairness or justice in this world is a foolish optimist.

"I don't see," he added, "that physical difficulties can be equated with spiritual growth."

Should we believe everything spirit communicators, especially guides, tell us?

"I have been a Spiritualist and a trance medium for 37 years," said Barbanell. "I still would not accept anything from the Other Side that did not pass the bar of my reason. *I cannot accept blind credulity in Spiritualism anymore than I can outside it.*"

Another questioner wanted to know why physical mediumship was so rare today. Barbanell replied that he believed there was an overall plan conceived by wise beings in the Beyond who direct the welfare of Spiritualism as well as that of the whole of humanity.

"I believe physical phenomena were introduced as part of that plan," he added, "to combat the gross materialism prevalent in the Victorian era when, with the advance of science, religion was retreating and losing every battle.

Proof for sick world

"It is not necessary to repeat that demonstration year after year," he declared. "The human race is gradually evolving to a slightly higher mental field. Hence, the rise of spirit healing.

"It has come to the fore in a sick world as a supreme demonstration of the evidence of a spiritual power which can heal when all physical help has failed."

Here are further Barbanellisms that aroused argument:

"I don't believe any person is cured until he is spiritually ready to be cured."

"The body is a self-healing organism. It is our stupid way of living that blocks the channel of healing."

"There is no proof of Survival for any individual until his soul is awakened."

"All our problems would be solved," he ended, "if Spiritualists brought into their daily lives the *implications* of Spiritualism. Our great failure is that we have the knowledge but do not apply it.

Blame and praise

"My criticism of the Spiritualist movement is that despite our tremendous truths there are still bigotry, vanity, self-importance and prejudice in our ranks.

"On the other hand, there are, up and down the country, many Spiritualists who give service, without seeking the limelight. You seldom hear of them, but their little labours may be deemed of greater value when they pass on than many of the bigger things of which we are so proud.

“I would sum up by quoting the immortal words of Emma Hardinge Britten, ‘*Spiritualism is divine, Spiritualists are human.*’ ”



Looking at the Independent Direct Voice

In direct voice, spirits can objectively talk with a suitably developed medium independently of the medium, rather than through a medium in a trance state. An ectoplasmic larynx is created and mostly used in conjunction with a trumpet. However, in most cases the spirit voice is not readily recognised by friends and family. As the voice box is manufactured, synthetic, the ectoplasm will retain some of the characteristics of the medium. However, the communicators will generally hold their old mannerisms, style of language, etc. as when they were living in the physical world to prove their identity. This form of phenomenon can be traced back to the very early days of Spiritualism in America.

Without doubt this phenomenon is as compelling as it is rare today. It started Arthur Findlay on his journey into psychical research in around 1918 with the direct-voice medium, John Sloan.⁶ In more recent years Leslie Flint was the most well-known independent direct-voice medium, with many of his communications recorded.

Flint was able to demonstrate the direct voice while he was fully conscious, seldom going into a trance state. Flint did not speak in trance; he worked in total darkness and, unlike most mediums, he did not use a trumpet or any other physical devices to help produce the spirit voices. His ectoplastic larynx was formed on his left side and located some two feet away from the medium, where the spirit voices would speak into the manufactured replica voice box. The communicating spirit would concentrate its thoughts into the ectoplasmic voice box by lowering its frequency/vibration to produce objective speech.

Estelle Roberts is generally remembered as an outstanding mental medium, filling large halls, including the Albert Hall, on numerous occasions. Her main control/guide was Red Cloud, who would entrance Estelle and also produce the independent direct voice. In the article below, which was published in “*Psychic News*”, July 22nd 1944, the paper’s founding editor, Maurice Barbanell, questioned Red Cloud as to how the direct voice was produced. We can note from the brief description I have given of Leslie Flint’s mediumship that Estelle Roberts/Red Cloud’s production of the independent direct voice takes a different avenue of production.

Barbanell started the article with these words:

Psychic News has published several stories of the remarkable evidence for Survival obtained at Estelle Roberts’s voice seances. Red Cloud, assisted by four war victims [see footnote 7], has succeeded in giving proofs that are far more remarkable than anything previously recorded at direct-voice sittings. I thought, therefore, a statement by this guide on what happens behind the scenes at voice seances would prove of great interest. When I approached Red Cloud he said it would be difficult to convey to us happenings in a spirit world of different dimensions, but he would do his best.

⁶ See *Psypioneer*, Volume 8, No. 12, December 2012: John Campbell Sloan (1869-1951), “A Scotch Materializing and Voice Medium”.

Behind The Scenes At Estelle Roberts's Voice Seances

“THERE are some things I can tell you,” he said, “ but some are impossible. Let me put it like this. When a scientist is in his laboratory, and he is testing the various elements, he is very secluded and does not let others into his laboratory.

“Well, in this new group we have formed we are experimenting still. We are experimenting along lines of electricity and ether, that we may be able to accomplish the direct voice later on without a material body, because it causes a certain amount of interference and waste. Under those conditions, in the first instance, we must be careful in our experiments.

“I have my group. In it I have a scientist who was very well known in your world in his day. He has come in since I started this new series of voice circles, which you must admit are better than the old ones. Then there are some doctors and the four boys.



Estelle Roberts

ECTOPLASM

“The scientist and I gather a certain amount of ectoplasm from the medium and a little—very little—from the sitters. Some of this we have managed to keep. That is difficult for you to understand because you have the idea that ectoplasm always must return to its source. This small quantity, such a fraction, we have solidified and retained. We draw on it when we are ready and put it into the trumpet when we are using the trumpet.”

“Would it be correct to say,” Red Cloud was asked, “that in addition to the ectoplasm, which has gone back to the medium after every seance, there is a small proportion which has been retained by you? ”

“That is right,” was his reply. “It is so fractional that it is not missed. We have moulded it into a larynx, able to expostulate, so that sound can be transmuted in an understandable form to your ears.”

“So you have actually constructed a model larynx,” I said to the guide, “and kept it in stock, as it were, one that is not connected with the medium? ”



ELECTRIC RODS

“That is what I want you to remember,” Red Cloud answered. “Now, then, we use electricity from the ether. We take rods from the magnetic belt and connect them with the larynx.”

“What exactly are the rods?” he was asked. “Are they made of ectoplasm, too?”

The guide said: “They are electrical. They are something like electrical waves with insulating tapes of ectoplasm over them, which we draw from the medium and which have to return to the medium.”

“Is the purpose of the rods to enable the trumpet to move?” he was asked.

“No. Sometimes there is one rod, sometimes there are two rods. It depends on the conditions in operation, the condition of the body, atmospherics, etc.

These affect the life-ray of electricity, as they do in your world, because we have to strike the vibration of your world.”

“Is it the same kind of electricity that we have in this world?” was the next question.

“It is,” said Red Cloud, “but the revolution of it is quicker until it strikes your vibration of electricity. When we have attached those rods to the larynx in the trumpet, the voices are struck on the electrical vibrations at the other end of the rods—not the trumpet end—and vibrate through the larynx, which converts them into audible sound in your world.”

“At what stage does the projection of the voice take place?” the guide was asked.

“It takes place twice,” said Red Cloud. “First, from the astral—we do not have to have a conductor for that, we use our own—then it strikes down to a lower vibration, and then it strikes through the electrical rod into the mouthpiece of the larynx. Hence you get the boys’ voices.”

HOW IT WORKS

“So two distinct operations are required to bring the vibration down to earth’s level and then to make it audible?”

“Yes, for the larynx is inside the trumpet.”

“And where does the spirit speaker stand, at the trumpet or the other end?”

“The other end, sometimes right at the side of the medium.”

“Where the rod is connected to the medium?”

“Yes.”

“Then that electrical impulse travels up the rod into the larynx and so we hear the voice?”

“Quite right.”

“What does the spirit speaker have to do in order to make himself heard? Does he think, or actually speak?”

THE “ BOX ”

“In the voice circles, we have formed, just outside the ether, a box, or case, large enough for a man to stand in. Sometimes you have heard them say they have been asked to stand in the box, haven’t you? Well, they stand there and we fix over their ears and their mouths an electric rod, and they strike on the rod through which they strike to the earth.

“But they often stand near the medium. It depends on how calm they are and on the kind of voice we want to put through. Some are more capable than others. You know that in your world you have speakers and speakers.

“But they do speak. You have to be a long time in our world before you conduct conversation only by thought. You have to use your lips to voice your thoughts—well, it is the same here. We certainly talk.”

“Why are a trumpet and rods necessary? Why can’t you have a larynx at the side of the medium, or build it up over the medium’s larynx, and let them speak direct into that?”

EXPERIMENTING

“Now, listen. That is just what I was coming to. I told you we were experimenting. In your world there is a man I know.”

Here Red Cloud was referring to Sir Ernest Fisk, one of the world’s, experts on radio communication. Sir Ernest, who was associated with Marconi in his pioneering experiments, has stated that he considers one day wireless communication with the “dead” will be achieved. Sir Ernest has spoken to Red Cloud and the guide said;

“We are experimenting along his lines. Eventually, instead of using the box, the electrical machine will be built in your world by which voices will be heard directly from the ether space. We shall then be able to manifest the vibration sufficiently to strike the heavier forms of ether of your world through wireless telegraphy.”

“And that will dispense with the medium?” was the next inquiry.

“Yes, later on, but not yet. You are aware that always there are voices in space. You have proved that earthly voices and music can be picked up on certain wavelengths. Well, it will come about. Tell him he is right. The time will come, just as your wireless came, but it is still in the experimental stage.”

“But why can’t you have a larynx over the medium’s and dispense with the rods?”

USE OF TRUMPET

“We cannot at present. We would have to form certain electrical rods which might interfere with the grey matter of the medium.”

“What purpose does the trumpet serve from your point of view?”

“For one thing, you must have elements of conduction. We must have conduction to help hold the electricity together, something like a little cabinet to hold the ectoplasm, otherwise it would disintegrate. That is why I ask for water to be poured through the trumpet—it is a conductor.”

“So it is in cabinet form to condense and break down everything to make it audible to us?”

“Quite right. You appreciate also that we are dealing with the electrical vibrations of all the people in the room.”

“What exactly, as far as you can describe it, is it that you put over the ears and mouth of the people who speak, and why is it done?”

INSULATION

“It is done, first of all, to distract their attention from what is going on round them, and also to cause them to lower their vibration just a little to touch the rods sufficiently to express themselves clearly.”

“It is really the means of enabling them to concentrate on talking to the exclusion of anything else?”

“Yes, we do not want them to be put off by the others, or by any outside noise. You have external distractions; well, we have the noise of the universe around us.”

“It is a means of isolating them?”

“Yes, exactly. It is a substance used from our sphere and not from yours at all. It is a means of insulation by a substance which you cannot understand, a form of solidified ether.”

“It seems to me similar to the kind of apparatus that airmen use to communicate with one another.”

ALL DIFFERENT

“Yes, it is similar. It is also a means of preventing the communicator from being interfered with by the conventional things of our world. You know the interference and atmospherics you get when the rays are crossed by some vehicles.”

“So the communicators talk just as naturally as they would here when they get into the box?”

“Yes, except when they break down.”

“Does it require an effort on the part of the speaker?”

“Yes, and no. It is all according to the nature of the person and his ability to overcome self-consciousness. Every personality is different.”

“Is it largely emotional stress that makes them break down sometimes?”

“Not always, sometimes they become self-conscious without any emotional stress. Some are successful, like Henry Segrave; he has grown quite accustomed to it, like I have. But to

some, when they hear your voices, it strikes such a chord in their memory that the emotion rises and they give it up.”

“Would you describe it as a difficult task for the average communicator to speak in the direct voice?”

“Yes, it is, but remember it is only in its infancy. Men like Oliver Lodge are endeavouring with their earthly knowledge to do what they can to help this subject forward.”

“How far are the speakers rehearsed beforehand?”

“We have to put them through their paces.”

“Do you cross-examine them beforehand?”

“Yes, but it is not done out of any disrespect or lack of love, but merely to make them practised. We put them on once or twice to see if they are capable of holding it. If they break down, we put them back a bit, but we always promise to let them come back and try again.”

REHEARSALS

“Do you rehearse the evidence?”

“Yes, but sometimes if the earth person becomes emotional that immediately has the effect of causing the voice to withdraw.”

“When a question is asked which the spirit does not answer, is that because that question has been unrehearsed?”

“That is true. They can sometimes answer spontaneously; it is all according to their personality. They are all keyed-up to get over what they want to say, that sometimes your questions make them feel they want to run back and find out the answers, and then it all breaks down.”

“Obviously they are not completely normal while communicating, keyed up with the excitement of what they are going to say.”

DOCTORS TELL

“Yes, but it is all according to the personality of the communicator.”

“Is the duration of the seance determined by the amount of strain it causes to the medium?”

“Exactly. I have often said to you ‘I must go away now.’ That is when the doctors come and beckon to me that it is time the medium returned to her body.”

“Why does the trumpet go down with a bang?”

“When we disconnect and withdraw the rods from the trumpet it has nothing to hold it up. The voice and the box are often at the medium’s side. You will notice the trumpet often ends there in the box. Then the rods and larynx are removed and it comes down. It is just the law of gravitation.”

“How is the trumpet manipulated?”

“It is held up by an electrical ray.”

“Not by rods?”

“It is the same thing really.”

“Who actually manipulates trumpet?”

“I do.”

“When Bill Castello is talking to his father and mother and the trumpet goes right over to them, is that you or Bill moving it?”⁷

“I move it for Bill.”

“But Bill is not at the small end of the trumpet; his voice is still striking the rod near your medium.”

“Yes, quite right, that is the position. When the boys sometimes say: ‘Let us get it up a bit higher,’ they are all just giving a bit of power.”

“So the ‘transmitting station’ is by the side of the medium, and the loud-speaker is the trumpet?”

“Yes, that is a good way of putting it.”

“Your methods are a great improvement on the old ones.”

IT MUST IMPROVE

“Yes, all things must improve. Credit must be given to the pioneers of 50 years ago, but there has never been work like that you have had in the past 20 years. Everything must go on, if it is for the good of mankind. You do not think good men are going to sit down here and forget all about their life efforts, do you?”

“Do you get any interference at the voice seances?”

“Yes. You may wonder why I do not allow my medium to have them too often. I believe she has told you the condition of the astral world is chaotic. The result is that we find, very often, there are so many wandering round our world. That is something we have to watch out for. Many men, lying unconscious in hospitals, are wandering in the astral world. If they can get to know of a circle being held, they are just like normal beings over here and they endeavour to join in. And they could do so and talk just as easily as one who is really over

⁷ “As the war got into its stride my psychic career continued undiminished. In 1941, I married Charles Tilson Chowne. Shortly afterwards, our home was bombed and we moved to Oxford where I held a number of public meetings and gave many private sittings. We returned to London after twelve months. My work became intensified as the casualty lists grew bigger and more and more war victims wanted to communicate with those they had left behind.

“Among these were four young men who had died in action. They were David White and Arthur Heath of Royal Navy, and Bill Castello and Clive Wilson of the Royal Air Force. These four youngsters, having proved their own survival, were determined to help others to achieve similar success. Because of their dedication to this task, we started a private circle for the direct-voice communication. It comprised the parents of the four boys and friends and relatives of other spirit communicators who had been able to prove their identities. The sittings were free of payment to all who attended.” Taken from ‘Estelle Roberts - Forty Years a Medium’, 1959, pages 164-165.

here for good. That is one thing we have to be careful about. It is not deliberate interference, but due to their natural desire.”

“How are they attracted to a circle?”

“They just hear somehow. News travels here, too, and they all rush to see what is going on, just like any man would.”

“How do you keep them out?”

“We have watchers. That is why your mediums should not work half so hard as they do.”

“And yet the demand at present is greater than ever.”

“Yes, but they should wait until the conditions settle down more.”

“Does the one communicating hear all that is said? Do you hear what is said?”

ALL VIBRATIONS

“I can, but not the others, only the one inside the box. They cannot strike through so clearly into your world and they only get a distorted view of what is going on, if at all. You get a word here and there, but not a great deal, if you are not in the box actually speaking. But I hear it all.”

“It all really comes down to a question of vibrations.”

“Yes, and the greatest difficulty of all is to strike the vibration between our rate and your rate, so that the link operates between the two at the right moment. That is tricky.”

“That is done by impulses?”

“Yes, ‘it is purely a scientific question. You may have noticed that sometimes the boys’ voices become slurred, that is, when they try to speak their words become slurred as they strike the lower rate of vibration, and it becomes sound without articulation.”

“Is that why we do not always get the distinct, characteristic tones of the speaker, but there seems to be the sound of Estelle’s voice in the background?”

“That is due to the striking between the two rates. If you could listen from our world you would hear their own characteristic voices, but the medium’s characteristics are in the ectoplasm. It is impossible to cut that completely out.”

“Yes, I suppose it is inherent in the ectoplasm, in the larynx you build.”

“Yes, you cannot have it otherwise, except when I talk. I am in complete charge. After all, the boys cannot understand it as well as I do.”

“Is it right to call it a larynx, is that the most suitable description?”

“We call it the articulation box.”

“What happens to the larynx that is retained, the piece of ectoplasm that does not go back into the medium?”

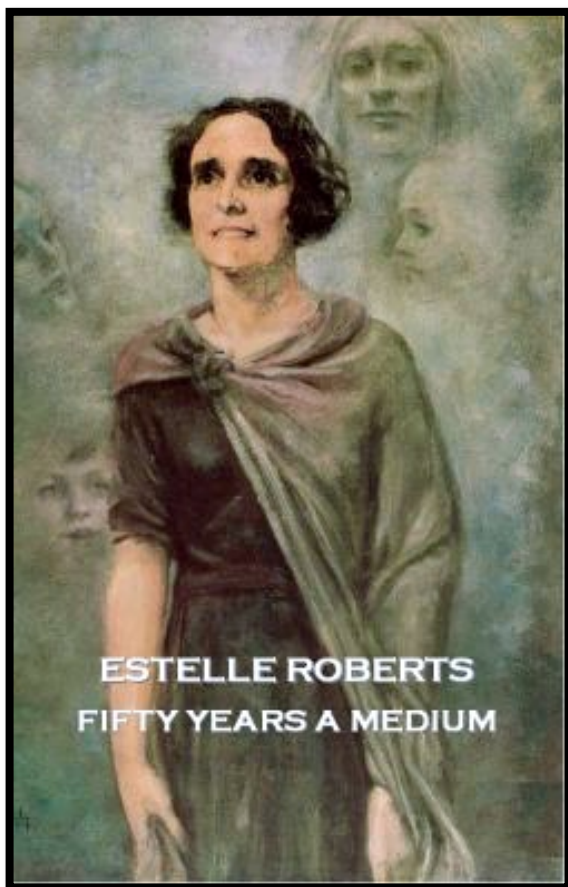
“We take it away in a little case we have, because it is solidified, not in your sense, but in the etheric sense; that is, once again, a transmutation of matter.”

“With the direct voice, when the spirits speak, is that not astral projection?”

“No, the person has to be there in order to speak; nobody else can do it for them. It is not actually his voice, he is there behind it, but I suppose it is a form of projection.”

“We can understand that. It is no more the actual voice than a gramophone record of my voice would be actually me.”

“Yes, that is right.”



Estelle Roberts - Fifty Years a Medium

Originally published in 1959 under the title ‘Forty Years a Medium’. In 1969 Estelle Roberts’ autobiography was brought up to date by the addition of a chapter covering her life during the following ten years.

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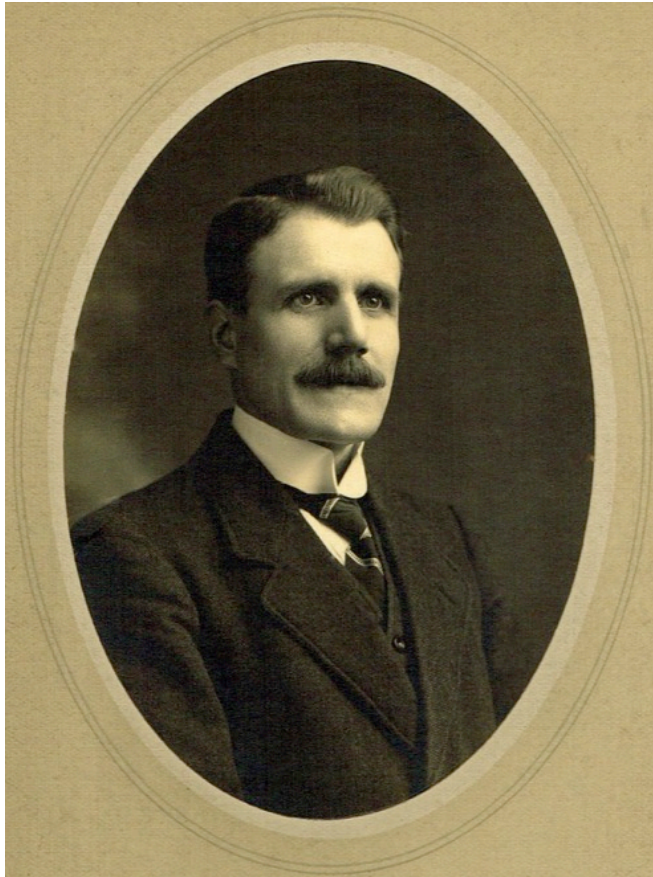
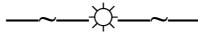
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JOHN MACINTOSH STEWART

President of the Glasgow Association, President of the London District Council, President of Croydon Church and President of the Spiritualists' National Union



The name John Stewart is largely unknown today, although his dedicated service to National Spiritualism was immense, spanning over twenty-five years. He is featured in the series “The Effect of the Vagrancy & Witchcraft Act – The Work of the Spiritualists’ National Union”, which concluded in the last issue of “Pioneer”. Below is taken from the “Two Worlds”, May 18th 1949, which gives a brief overview of some of his work:

MEET THE S.N.U. NATIONAL COUNCIL

Mr. John M. Stewart has a most outstanding record of work on the National Council of the Spiritualists’ National Union. Our memories of the fine work done for the Freedom Committee, for which he has acted as Secretary since its formation in 1943 are still fresh. He was the ‘key man’ of the arrangements in connection with the re-

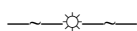
formation of the International Spiritualists’ Federation, acting as Secretary for the Bournemouth Conference in 1947, and also for the London Congress in 1948. As Chairman he has guided the activities of the Education and Exponents’ Committee for several years.

He was born in Glasgow on the 24th September, 1883, and was first attracted to Spiritualism by a lecture given to the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists, becoming a member in 1901.⁸

⁸ Stewart was brought up in the faith of the Church of Scotland, but at the age of 16 he set out to formulate for himself a philosophy of life. In his quest he visited mostly every denomination in Glasgow and ultimately found his way to the Spiritualists’ Hall. A lecture given to the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists by Dr. John C. Kenworthy was Stewart’s first introduction to the movement, which later became his main interest in life. Stewart joined the Glasgow Association in 1901 and eventually found complete conviction through the mediumship of David Duguid, Mrs Mellon, Mrs Wriedt and others. See for further information *Psypioneer*, Vol. 7, No. 10, October 2011: “The Glasgow Association of Spiritualists & Historical Notes”.

In 1903, he was appointed Secretary of the Glasgow Association, and took a prominent part in the formation of the Scottish Spiritualist Alliance, acting as Secretary for 8 years. In 1913 he succeeded Mr. James Robertson as President of the Glasgow Association.⁹

The Lyceum side of Spiritualism has always held a warm corner in the affections of Mr Stewart, and for many years he was the Conductor of the Glasgow Lyceum, later serving on the B.S.L.U. Management Committee.¹⁰ His work in the Civil Service involved a transfer to London in 1923, where he was instrumental in forming the Croydon Church. Later he took an active part in the work of the London District Council, and was elected President in 1934, serving in that office for 6 years. On the National Council he served as Treasurer for ten years (1928-1938), and in 1941 succeeded Frank Blake as President until 1943. By the next A.G.M. he will have served the National Council for 21 years. A splendid record!



First Croydon Spiritualist Society

Many of the Spiritualist churches were established by the work of the early societies, which are often overlooked. The Croydon Spiritualist Society was formed in around 1905. Early societies had difficult times trying to rent premises. It appears that Croydon Spiritualist Society originated in Katherine Street, with a room holding around forty or so people. They moved to another building at the back of some shops in Lower Addiscombe Road; at this time a committee was set up and officers appointed for the first time. The founder of the Society, Mr W. H. Thornton, was elected President, with Vice-Presidents Mr John Edwards and Mr C.J. Stockwell.

A circle was formed for the development of mediumship; so successful was the society that people were being refused admission for lack of space. By 1913 they had moved from George Street to Elmwood Hall, Elmwood Road, West Croydon, a much larger building in a select part of the town, with good acoustic properties and seating for around 300 people. The President was now Mr Percy Scholey, a well-known London platform worker of reportedly fine ability as a speaker and clairvoyant. A choir was formed under the direction of Mrs Scholey, a circle formed for the purpose of developing its own workers, not for phenomena but for philosophy. A healing circle was introduced after the morning Sunday service. In an interview with Horace Leaf ("Two Worlds", February 1913) the President, Percy Scholey, was asked about philosophy:

"Properly speaking," he replied quickly, "there is no more beautiful philosophy under the sun than that which we are out to teach—the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the immortality of the soul, and a path of eternal progression for all. It is the broadest of philosophies. I can realise no grander ideal than those four principles of the Spiritualist faith."

⁹ He relinquished this position in 1916 when he went on 'active service' and Mr Peter Galloway was appointed in his stead. When Mr Galloway passed to the higher life John Stewart again assumed office and took a leading part in the opening of the James Robertson Hall in 1923, which was the realisation of the Association's long-cherished ideal of a home of its own.

¹⁰ It was in this Lyceum that Stewart met the lady who subsequently became his life's partner. He married in 1909 and had a family of two boys and two girls.

First Croydon National Spiritualist Church

As indicated, Stewart was a founder member of Croydon National Spiritualist Church; former SNU President Ernest Oaten conducted the dedication ceremony at Bedford Park on Saturday June 9th 1934 at 3.30pm. We can note on the photograph shown below Ernest Oaten on the right and the Church President, John Stewart, on the other side of the door (hands clenched).

Stewart notes on the front of the Souvenir Programme:

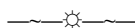
A brief history of the Croydon National Spiritualist Church

THE church was formed eight years ago, the opening meeting being held on the 14th March, 1926, in The New Gallery, Katharine Street, at which, Miss Estelle Stead was the principal speaker. So successful were the early meetings, that by the end of the year 1926, the membership had risen from 20 to 70 and despite the heavy initial expenses, the sum of £50 was set aside as the nucleus of a Building Fund. Even greater progress was made during the year 1927, which closed with 100 members on the roll and with sufficient funds in hand to purchase the site in Bedford Park on which the present church is built. In the year 1928, efforts were made to raise the sum required to build the church, for which plans had been prepared, by Mr. Jarman and passed by the Town Council, but unfortunately, a division took place in the membership and a portion left to form a new church at Ruskin House, Wellesley Road.



The work was continued at The New Gallery during 1929, but the limitations of our tenancy handicapped the various activities of the church so that early in 1930, it was found desirable to remove to the Broad Green Hall, Handcroft Road. Difficulties were also encountered over the trusteeship of the land in Bedford Park which delayed progress during the years 1931 and 1932, but these were ultimately overcome in 1933 and the question of building the church was again taken up. For this purpose efforts were made to secure an amalgamation with the two existing Spiritualist meetings at Bedford Park, but without success and it was then decided to proceed with modified plans subsequently drawn up by Mr. Jarman. Arrangements were made with the Pooling Committee of the Spiritualist National Union for an advance of £900 and the balance of the purchase price was raised by donations and loans from church members and their generous friends, who wish to remain anonymous. A joint trust is being drawn up with the Union, which will secure the church definitely for Spiritualism.

J.M.S.



The benefits of Union affiliation!

After the war years problems arose for the Church and by the early 1950s it had to be closed owing to serious structural damage caused by subsidence. It was in this Church in 1950 that the young future SNU President, Gordon Higginson, made his southern debut. Six years later, on Saturday June 9th 1956 at 3 pm, Gordon opened the new Church at Chatsworth Road, Croydon, under the presidency of Bertie Hardwick.¹¹ Below is a quote from the Souvenir Programme:

From the early days of struggle to meet the mortgage repayments on a loan of £900; on through the War years, Croydon Church steadily progressed, and by soon after the end of hostilities it could claim a membership nearly 200; was free of debt; had a credit balance in the Bank; supported local charities, had the Mayor grace its platform at a Civic Hall Meeting and was unable to accommodate all the people that were desirous of attending the Sunday Service.

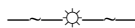
The future seemed more than secure. However, ominous cracks appeared in the walls and the building took a decided tilt. The combined effect of bombing and soil subsidence was taking its toll, and with the withdrawal of Insurance cover the Church in Bedford Park closed its doors to the public

Thanks to the kindness of The Society of Friends and The Free Christian Church, Croydon was able to continue its existence in premises rented by these two august bodies. However, the need for its own building was an ever pressing one, and after much searching for a suitable central site, a General Meeting of members decided to buy the derelict Grove House in Chatsworth Road, together with its freehold site for the sum of £1,400.

It was indeed with regret that the beautiful old Grove House could not be restored and adapted to the needs of the Church, for its flight of Portland stone steps to its west front, its paved entrance hall and noble staircase with carved mahogany balustrade, its sculptured marble chimney piece, its oak panelled walls and carved enrichments were things of real beauty, being reminiscent of craftsmanship fast dying and never to return. It had housed that local “character” Mr. Chollett who used to fire a pistol at 10 p.m. from the balcony to warn anyone lurking in the grounds that they would meet armed resistance.

Regretfully Croydon Church learned from its Architect that restoration was impossible at the funds that were available, and the site was cleared to make way for the present building.

This has been erected by Messrs. Adams Bros. (Contractors) Ltd., at a price of £8,000. Practically the whole of this sum being loaned from The S.N.U. Building Pool. There is no doubt that the efforts needed to meet the heavy commitments that lie ahead are considerable, but Croydon Church is confident it is capable of meeting and surpassing these difficulties.



¹¹ Bertie Hardwick, known as ‘Bert’, was a masseur and chiropodist.

A year earlier the foundation-stone of the Church was officially laid:



Left is John Stewart in the white mac and on his left shoulder is Harold Vigurs; the lady on his left shoulder is Elsie Hardwick, her husband in front of her; in the dark coat is the Church President, Bert Hardwick, and on his left shoulder is former SNU President Harry Dawson

On July 7th 1956 President Hardwick (1948-1957) applied to register Croydon National Spiritualist Church as a place for religious worship and on September 6th 1956 the Church was registered.

The Church website notes:

“Practically the whole of this sum was loaned from the SNU Building Pool. The Building Fund Pool 20 year advance was repaid by 1972 (within 16 years) and from that date all monies received by the Church have been for its maintenance and upkeep. The Church now has brand new chairs and velvet curtains throughout. Structural alterations in 1976 provided much needed washing facilities, a larger kitchen and the room for Speakers was completely refurbished from the generous bequest from Mary Vigurs and is now called the Vigurs Room.

The Hardwick Room houses the library and is to the memory of the President of the Church who saw through all the planning and building of the church, Bert Hardwick. Unfortunately, he was only able to see the fruits of his labours for two years. At the

beginning of 1981 his daughter Inez, at one time leader of a flourishing Lyceum, passed to Spirit and books are to be added to the library in her memory.

Harold Vigurs was President from 1957, E.S. Jeffries from 1970 until December 1973, when on his resignation, Wilfred Watts was elected President. On his resignation due to ill health in 1998, Mrs. Mollie McManus was elected President and remains in office to this day. Under her stewardship there have been many improvements to the building including redecoration, replacement double glazed windows, central heating, new toilet including disabled facilities, cavity wall insulation, a new modern kitchen, carpets laid throughout the church and a book stall selling second hand books has been established.”



Croydon Spiritualist Church today is still affiliated to the Union.

Services are held on Sundays and Wednesdays at the following times:

Sunday 11:00am & 6:30pm

Wednesday 7:45pm

Special Events, details of speakers/mediums, etc. can be found on its website at:

<http://www.croydonspiritualistchurch.org.uk/index.html>

Special thanks is given to Alan Seymour CSNU LSSNU, the Church's Vice-President for the past 18 years and a member of the Church for 28 years, for his invaluable help in the construction of the article. Thanks are also due to the Church's President, Mrs Mollie McManus OSNU LSSNU, for checking out the old Church archives. Alan advised me that their Church membership is currently at around 75.



Croydon Spiritualist Church

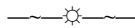
Croydon Spiritualist Church, Chatsworth Road, Croydon CR0 1HE

In 1953 the "Two Worlds", July 25th, announced John Stewart's retirement as published below. Stewart had given many years' service to Croydon National Spiritualist Church; he became its President in 1930 and continued for over a decade. The Church minutes for December 31st 1953 state that John Stewart was their Hon. President:

"Our sadness at the retirement of Mr. & Mrs. John Stewart to Pevensey Bay is somewhat tempered by the assurance that their removal from Croydon will in no way break their association with the church. They are continuing in membership and on important occasions will make every effort to be with us.

Mr. John Stewart, Hon. President and founder of Croydon Church, has also acted in the advisory capacity as Warden. [...]

We take this opportunity of wishing both Mr. and Mrs. Stewart good health and every happiness in their new home."



Pioneer retires from active service

FAREWELL TO JOHN STEWART

THE Spiritualist movement is going to lose the services of John M. Stewart, one of its national figures for many years. Next week he and his wife are moving to Pevensey Bay, Sussex, where they have built a bungalow.

John is relinquishing all the offices he holds. He has given this movement yeoman service, particularly on its freedom and parliamentary committees which were responsible for getting through the House of Commons measures which gave Spiritualism relief from the antiquated Acts that robbed them of religious liberty.

HE LED CAMPAIGN

John was the spearhead of the campaign. He interviewed M.P.s, got them organised into a group of active participants, working as a team towards victory. It was due to his charm and engaging personality that he enlisted the help of M.P.s who were not even Spiritualists. Indeed the man who brought in our Bill was a Methodist.

John has filled with distinction the highest offices that organised Spiritualism has to offer. He has been president, vice-president and treasurer of the S.N.U. and president of its London District Council.

In 1937, when the International Spiritualist Congress met in Glasgow, he was responsible for organising a "London week" which enabled delegates from abroad to see everything the capital had to offer.



After the war, he took a leading part in reviving the International Spiritualist Federation. He was organising secretary for the first post-war Congress in London in 1948.

TRIBUTE TO HIS WORK

When 30 years ago he came to London from Scotland, he helped to start a new society in Croydon. The flourishing National Spiritualist Church in that district is a monument to his labours. He has been a tower of strength on the board of the *Two Worlds*.

Brought up in the strict atmosphere of a Church of Scotland family, John became dissatisfied with the orthodox teachings he heard every Sunday. After his father's passing when John was 17, he set out on his own spiritual exploration. None of the religious denominations attracted him.

He attended Spiritualist meetings and found its philosophy so reasonable that he became a Spiritualist even before he had any evidence. When this came, it was convincing. Through the direct-voice mediumship of Etta Wriedt he received convincing proof from his father, mother and an aunt.

SWEDISH SPIRIT VOICE

At this seance, one sitter conversed with a spirit communicator in Swedish. John's wife is a Swede and she was able to follow the conversation.

He met his wife at a Spiritualist Lyceum in Glasgow and as a result has always been interested in this youth movement. All his children were brought up in it.

In his early investigation 50 years ago, John attended remarkable seances with Mrs. J. B. Mellon, the materialisation medium.¹² There was sufficient light for the sitters to see spirit forms materialise and come out of the cabinet well away from the medium. She was English, but her guide was an Aberdonian and spoke in a broad Scots dialect. Sitters could see the guide materialise and the medium at the same time.

John also attended seances with Charles Bailey, the Australian apport medium. Live birds and fishes were brought into the room by spirit operators. Occasionally figures materialised and left impressions of their hands on plasticine moulds.

SCOTS' "GRAND OLD MAN"

In Glasgow, where he lived for many years, John always turned for advice to James Robertson. He was known as the "grand old man" of Scottish Spiritualism.

On one occasion when Tom Tyrrell, the famous clairvoyant, visited the Glasgow Spiritualist Association, the largest S.N.U. church in the country, Robertson was his chairman and John was in the audience. Tyrrell described how he saw a spirit form take a mantle from Robertson's shoulders and place it on a man in the audience. This was John, whom the medium had not met.

¹² This is the well-known physical medium, Annie Fairlamb, who married James Barr Mellon in 1878.

Shortly afterwards Robertson passed on and John was called upon to succeed him as president of the Glasgow Association, a position he held twice.

NO THOUGHT OF SELF

For half a century he has laboured unceasingly without thought of self and never seeking the limelight. He has addressed hundreds of meetings at which his calm logic and his dry Scots wit have captivated the audience.

He has always been a living embodiment of the song, “Smiling Thro’ ”—no matter what difficulty or problem has arisen, John has always smiled his way through.

In his well-deserved retirement, John will be able to draw on many happy memories. He is a man with hundreds of friends and no enemies. He inspires affection from everyone he meets. Even those who disagree with him pay tribute to his honesty of purpose.

