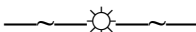




Volume 4, No. 4: August 2017

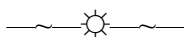
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The Pioneer (bi-monthly) is now part of the recommended reading for the Spiritualists' National Union's education courses.

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 at <http://psypioneer.iapsop.com/>

THE PRESIDENT'S BADGE

SNU Presidents

Robert A. Owen
1925 – 1928



David R. Bruton
2010 -

History was continued at this year's Spiritualists' National Union AGM held at the Holiday Inn, Runcorn on Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th July 2017 – President Bruton proudly wore the President's Badge of Gordon Higginson. Gordon was the second SNU President to die while in office, the first being Frank Blake (1938-1941), who died on March 1st 1941.

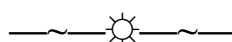
After Gordon Higginson's death on January 18th 1993 his President's badge was kept by his friend and successor as SNU President, Eric Hatton (1993-1996). After Eric's death on November 6th 2015 the badge was returned to the Union.

Following July's AGM President David Bruton ordained SNUi Chairman Arthur Plumpton on July 27th in the Sanctuary at the Arthur Findlay College, Stansted Hall. After the service David passed on the badge to be safely held and displayed in the Britten Museum & Library at Stansted Hall.

I later contacted David to ask if he knew the actual origin of the President's badge. He was only aware that it was worn by Gordon, adding that it was generally thought the badge was made for Gordon's term of office (1970-1993) around forty years ago. David also noted from the back of the badge that it was made in York; the inscription today is far from clear to read. I photographed the badge for our archives and with further conversation with David it was further revealed and unknown to everybody that the 2017 AGM was in fact a historic event, with our President wearing the badge!

The reverse side of the badge stated:

PRESENTED TO THE
S. N. U.
BY MR & MRS HENRY RICHARDSON
OF YORK
IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF BLESSINGS RECEIVED THROUGH
SPIRITUALISM



The history of the President's badge is indeed solved. It was not forty years old, as previously considered, but ninety years old almost to the day of the 2017 AGM!

At the twenty-fifth Annual General Meeting of the Union, held at Caxton Hall, Westminster and the Artworkers' Guild, Queens Square, Southampton Row, London, on July 2nd and 3rd 1927 respectively, SNU President Robert A. Owen was presented with a new President's badge. For many years, a farthing coin¹ was the symbol of office carried by the President of the Spiritualists' National Union; the story was already recorded in the Pioneer and partly quoted below:²

PRESENTATION OF A NEW PRESIDENTIAL BADGE

One of the most interesting events of the Conference took place on Sunday morning, July 3rd, when Mr. and Mrs. Richardson, of the York Spiritualist Church, presented the Union with a gold President's Badge. The Badge is in blue enamel on gold, with the name of the Union round the edge, the centre design showing the Setting Sun over the Book of Nature, with the words Light and Truth standing in relief. The back is suitably inscribed to commemorate the gift. It has a bar above on which is inscribed the word President.



Mrs. Richardson, in making the presentation, said that two farthings were once found in the collection at an annual meeting. She had discovered that one of them was put in by a resident of York. Whether the actual coin, which had served as a President's Badge for many years, was the York coin, she did not know, but it was appropriate that since the humblest coin of the realm had come from her city, a gift of the pure metal, gold, should also come from that ancient city, so closely identified with the introduction of Christianity into England. Mr. Richardson took up the thread and expressed the pleasure it gave him to have the honour of bestowing upon the Union some token of adornment to mark the growing honour and dignity of the great Movement of Spiritualism.

By the unanimous desire of the Conference Mrs. Richardson pinned the badge on the coat of Mr. Owen, who had been elected the previous day to the office of President for the third year in succession.

Mr. Owen returned thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Richardson for their generous gift; Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Greenwood heartily supporting.

G.F.B.³

¹ A former monetary unit and coin of the UK, withdrawn in 1961, equal to a quarter of an old penny.

² See Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 3, April 2014: "Badges, Symbols, and Emblems of the Spiritualists' National Union" and Vol. 3, No. 5, October 2016: "The 'President's Farthing'".

³ George Berry, former SNU President (1920-1922). In 1922 the Union's General Secretary, Mr. Yates, was taken ill and the Union asked Berry to take up his position. He resigned as President to take up the position of SNU General Secretary, which he held from 1922 to 1932. He then continued as Organising Secretary and was the first

At the 1928 Annual General Meeting of the Union, held at Barry, Wales, July 7th, Robert Owen noted in his President's address on this day that he had completed 20 years' service on the Council, further stating he had decided on this occasion not to accept nomination for President and Vice-President, although he would continue as a member of the SNU Council.

It can be noted in some of the AGM reports that the retiring President passes on the Presidential Badge, which would have served:

**Robert Owen
Ernest Keeling
John McIndoe
Frank Blake
John Stewart
Harold Vigurs
Lorraine Haig
Percy Wilson
Harry Dawson
Charles Quastel
John Winning
Charles Quastel
Gordon Higginson**

It appears that with the sudden death of Gordon Higginson the badge was not passed down in the traditional way. Given his long term in office, the historic significance and origin of the badge was probably lost. President Bruton informed me, "I know Eric wore it when he became Honorary President of the Union;" what is clear is that President David Bruton has restarted, albeit unknowingly, the tradition of wearing the *original* President's Badge in the official role of SNU President – I have no doubt President Bruton, when the time comes, will pass the badge on to his successor.

I will take this opportunity to give a brief profile of our former President, Robert A. Owen, which is taken from the "National Spiritualist", September 1929, No. 63, Vol. VI:⁴

Mr. Robert A. Owen was born at Bootle, Lancashire, Oct. 27th, 1881. His father was a native of North Wales. Robert was educated at St. John's Church Day School, which he left at the age of 12 years to become a wage earner. When 9 years of age, he was brought into contact with the Lyceum at Daulby Hall, Liverpool and there began the life-long friendship with his colleague, Mr. A. Keeling. In these early years the gifts of clairvoyance and clairsaudience were developed, and helped to bring conviction to his parents of the reality of a life beyond the tomb.

In 1896, a Spiritualist Society and Lyceum was opened at Bootle, and young Robert transferred his membership to the new Lyceum. Here he graduated in the various offices of both Lyceum and Church. The Church was closed within a few years, and Mr. Owen went back to Daulby Hall, where he remained until his removal to Dublin in 1924.

An ardent spiritualist throughout his life, Mr. Owen saw the birth of the South West Lancs and Cheshire Group in July 1904. He was appointed Secretary, a position he held for many years. When the Lancashire District Committee came into existence, Mr. Owen was elected its President, which he retained until his removal to Ireland.

President of the International Federation of Spiritualists (ISF). Under his presidency in 1925 the Council adopted the Sunflower Badge as an "International Spiritualists' Badge".

⁴ See Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 1, "The First SNU Journal".

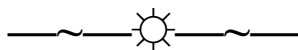
He was elected to the National Council in 1908, and only retired this year after filling in succession the office of Vice-President, 1923–25, President 1925–28, and one year as Ex-President of the Union. He has thus completed 21 years, successive service on the National Council.

His interests have been particularly directed to organisation, propaganda, finance and education. As secretary of the Organisation Committee he was instrumental in getting a census of the Churches and their activities. Out of these labours there came the institution of two-fold membership, the Study Groups Scheme, and re-drafting of Rules for Churches, District Councils, and for the National Council.

He has been no less active in the Lyceum movement. He became District Visitor in 1904, and held all offices in the Liverpool Lyceum District Council. In 1907 he became Secretary of the United Lyceum District Council, and later its President. In 1908 he was elected to the Management Committee of the B.S.L.U. and was Vice-President prior to his election as President in 1911. Later in 1919, he became Treasurer to the Union, holding that office until his removal to Dublin.

This article, I believe, emphasises the importance of recording our history in the Britten Museum & Library and in publications like “Pioneer”.

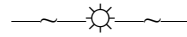
*Otherwise the story of the “President’s Badge”
today would have remained unknown!*



*President David Bruton at the 2017 AGM wearing the
“President’s Badge”*

HELEN DUNCAN SEIZED AT A SÉANCE IN 1956

Police searching for beards, masks and a “shroud”



On November 10th 1956 the “Two Worlds” reported that Helen Duncan had been grabbed in a police raid at a private seance in Nottingham on October 28th, this time not because the medium was breaking the Vagrancy or Witchcraft Acts, as they were changed/repealed six years previously, in 1951.⁵



Here is Helen Duncan inside the cabinet. An infra-red photograph taken before a materialisation seance.

POLICE RAID HELEN DUNCAN SEANCE

*Medium grabbed and
searched after cabinet
is torn down*

NOTTINGHAM police broke into a Helen Duncan seance last week, grabbing the medium, searching her, taking flashlight pictures in a series of happenings “reminiscent of an American gangster film,” says our correspondent.

They shouted that they were looking for beards, masks and a “shroud” which they alleged were the fraudulent means by which she produced her materialisations. But they found nothing.

The seances were held in the home of J. Timmins, a physiotherapist and healer. On the Saturday night a patient, later discovered to be a policewoman, attended with a man she said was her husband, but who was a policeman in disguise. Nobody materialised for them.

When it was all over and they were chatting over a cup of tea with the rest of the sitters they said how wonderful the sitting had been. These two people had also booked for the Sunday night seance for themselves and for two friends.

⁵ The image shown is said to be an infra-red photograph. This is interesting, as I am aware of only one other image of Duncan using infra-red photography, which was in Belfast in 1932 by Mr Donaldson. Please see Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 1, February 2017. We can note in the image shown that Mrs Duncan is in in her later years, but it appears it was not taken at the residence of Timmins in Nottingham, as they used the corner of the room where Duncan was seized.

In many of Duncan’s seances the cabinet was in the corner of the room, with a makeshift cabinet comprising a curtain-pole and two curtains. We can note in this photograph that it seems to be a purpose-built room, not using a corner, and the cabinet is suspended from the ceiling.

Law interrupts

After this seance had been in progress for 20 minutes, banging was heard on the outside door accompanied by the bell ringing. Albert, her control, who was speaking through the medium, asked Mrs. Timmins and Mrs. G. Hamilton, the medium's friend who had accompanied her, to take care of Helen Duncan.

When the door was opened the police came in. According to Timmins' account they made a dive over the sitters in the front row and tore down the curtains which formed a cabinet in a corner of the room.

Then two policewomen grabbed the medium while policemen took flashlight photographs. By this time the lights were put on. One policeman ran downstairs to admit other officers, among them an inspector.

Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Timmins tried to pull away the policewomen who had started to search Helen Duncan. They said they were looking for the "shroud." This presumably referred to the white mass of ectoplasm out of which figures usually materialise at her seances.

Mrs. Duncan, as part of her normal seance procedure, wore black undergarments—she never wears white to prevent confusion with the ectoplasm.

The inspector ordered everyone to stay where they were. Then he changed his mind, told them to go to another room and not to leave until their names were taken.

Mrs. Duncan's burns

In all this excitement Timmins forgot to ask the police whether they had a search warrant. He insisted, however, that every sitter should be searched, but the inspector said that if he interfered with the proceedings it would be his duty to arrest him.

Timmins went over to Helen Duncan and saw that she was ill. Later there were two burns on her stomach. She was controlled by Albert, who asked for a doctor to be called. The medical man arrived within five minutes.

Seeing how ill the medium was, he obtained police permission to take her to a bedroom where he treated her for shock. Even then the policewoman insisted on accompanying him.

The doctor was then allowed to make a search. He said he found nothing on her that could have produced any fraudulent results.

The police questioned Mrs. Duncan for about one and a half hours. In turn, every one of the 20 sitters was questioned. All the time the police kept asking for masks, beards and shroud.

Timmins and the others replied that the seance proceedings had been genuine and that no matter how much the police searched they would not find evidence of fraud.

None of the sitters left till 11.45 p.m., about two and a half hours afterwards. Even then the inspector later telephoned Timmins to ask if he could arrange a seance with Helen Duncan at which he could take another photograph by infra-red or otherwise.

“Come clean”

If this proved to be genuine, he said he would drop the case and they would hear no more about it. It was suggested by him that the flashlight photographs had revealed nothing that could be construed as incriminating.

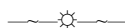
Timmins replied that the police had no evidence of fraud against Helen Duncan. In her present condition he was sure the doctor would not sanction another seance, as the police had already done her a lot of harm.

A police search of the house and the luggage of both the medium and her companion revealed nothing.

The police returned again two days later to question Helen Duncan and Mrs. Hamilton. Again and again they asked the medium to “come clean,” to tell them where she kept the beards and moustaches with which the forms had appeared—this time there was no mention of any shroud.

The police suggested that as she was “getting old” they would “make it easy” for her. When they left they said she might be charged under the Fraudulent Mediums’ Act of 1951 because they alleged that one materialised figure which came for a policewoman was that of a man who was still alive.

If the medium were charged, said the police, Timmins would also be prosecuted with aiding and abetting.



The following week the “Two Worlds” continues these dramatic events:

POLICE USE “GESTAPO METHODS” TO BREAK UP SEANCE?

ON Monday, four days after *Two Worlds* printed exclusively the account of Nottingham police raiding a Helen Duncan materialisation seance, grabbing the medium and searching her, the story was printed by most of the leading national newspapers. Some published headlines across six columns.

The medium is now in Edinburgh’s Western General Hospital, “obviously the result of these terrible happenings at Nottingham,” says her husband.

A “Daily Herald” reporter was told by the hospital that she was receiving treatment for diabetes. A “Daily Mail” reporter was told that she was “comfortable.” A “Daily Telegraph” reporter said that immediately she returned home she became ill. A “News Chronicle” reporter said she suffered so badly from shock that she was now “very ill” in hospital.

A police official denied to the “Daily Express” that there was any rough handling and said, “The matter is still under consideration.”

This followed its account that John Timmins, in whose house the police raid occurred, said, “I protested to the police about the manner of the search.”

Several newspapers stated that Spiritualists were angry over the police interruption while the medium was in trance and “are protesting against what they call Gestapo methods.”

“Surely my wife will have a champion from among the thousands to whom she has been the humble means of bringing solace and comfort in their hour of sorrow,” says the medium’s husband, who refers to her “terrible and ignominious ordeal” at the hands of the police.

He understands, he says, that the papers concerning the case have been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Meanwhile an attempt is being made to get a question asked of the Home Secretary in the House of Commons.

A Taunton Spiritualist says that three years ago, after Helen Duncan had given three successful materialisation seances in that town, they were visited by the police and “found ourselves in the midst of investigations which went on for six weeks.”

Their home was turned upside down. Nothing material was found and the matter was “shelved as no cause for complaint.”

Typical of the sentiments expressed in letters and telephone calls we have received is the following.

“Shocking methods”

I WAS so shocked by the inhuman treatment meted out to Helen Duncan by the Nottingham police that I feel the matter must not be allowed to rest there.

The police acted illegally, and overstepped the bounds of their duty in manhandling a woman, who is presumably innocent until proved guilty. They also apparently accused her of fraud.

These shocking methods on the part of the police should rouse the whole Spiritualist world to action.

If illegal and brutal methods such as these are to be tolerated there will slowly be no freedom in anything. Heaven knows what will be the results on Mrs. Duncan’s health, through shock.—J. Allen, 15 Sunderland Terrace, London, W.2.



Further, the “Two Worlds” continues its coverage on December 15th, 1956:

Helen Duncan's husband to sue police for damages

She dies five weeks after they raided seance

BY MAURICE BARBANELL

HELEN DUNCAN’S husband decided, on my advice, when I saw him in his Edinburgh home last Saturday, to bring an action for damages against the Nottingham police. They raided and broke up the medium’s last materialisation seance, while she was still in trance, five weeks before she passed on.

The family lawyer had urged Henry Duncan to institute proceedings and vindicate his wife’s name. But Duncan was concerned, among other problems, about the costs. I told him not to worry. The Movement, I said, would be behind him.

He then telephoned the lawyer and instructed him to take the necessary legal steps. They will also press for a public inquiry into the police conduct.

**Helen Duncan died on
December 6th 1956**



After discussing all the issues involved with Duncan, I was delighted to find the whole large family unanimously agreed on these steps.

Helen’s passing, two days earlier, at the age of 59, ended what many Spiritualists regarded as the martyrdom she had endured since 1933, four years after her psychic career began, when she was convicted and fined for fraud in an Edinburgh court.

“The verdict was against the weight of the evidence,” said the SNU’s exponents’ committee, an opinion endorsed by the Union’s next annual general meeting.

Eleven years later she was convicted under the notorious and antiquated Witchcraft Act of 1735 and sent to prison for nine months. In the opinion of leading Spiritualists this was a gross miscarriage of justice.

Up to the court

Now that legal proceedings against the police are being instituted it will be for the court to decide to what extent Mrs. Duncan’s passing was due to the raid.

“MEDIUM’S DEATH BLAMED ON RAID” was the “Daily Express” headline last Saturday. “TWO BLAME SHOCK IN TRANCE FOR MEDIUM’S DEATH” was the one used by the “Empire News.”

Her death certificate cited “diabetes and heart failure” as the causes.

The family maintained, "There can be little doubt that the police action hastened her death.

"Despite long ill-health." They added in their statement, "she continued to put Spiritualism before self and personal discomfort, which mattered little in the furtherance of what she believed to be her duty."

Even when Helen was in Holloway jail in 1944 she had constant medical attention for diabetes, angina pectoris and valvular disease of the heart.

The Rev. Thomas Jeffrey, a Church of Scotland minister who conducted the cremation service last Monday, has described her as "Scotland's Joan of Arc." His conviction of Spiritualism was partly based on attending her seances for about 15 years.

"The shock suffered by the police interruptions at a private seance on October 28, 1956," said the family, caused such mental suffering that she was not the same woman from that hour. We feel that her faith in human justice was so shaken that there was nothing more to live for."

"Come home to die"

When Mrs. Duncan left home, the family told me, "she looked well, with colour in her cheeks." After Nottingham, she looked as if she had "come home to die, with all the world's cares on her shoulders."

Ever since her return home Helen had constant medical treatment, both in hospital and at home.

Her shock was increased a few days before her passing when Nottingham's Chief Constable wrote her saying that all the papers in connection with her last seance had been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions. His letter was surprising, as there had been no communication between them.

Henry Duncan described the letter as "cruel—after a month's lapse to send this to her, knowing the state of her health."

She had to have medical attention for shock after the police broke up the seance while she was in trance, grabbed her and shone white flashlights on her. They searched her and subjected her to 90 minutes' questioning.

Spiritualists who were present described the raid as "Gestapo-like" and "reminiscent of an American gangster film." But a police officer denied that anybody had been handled roughly.

Though Mrs. Duncan, her luggage and the house were all searched—the police said they were looking for false masks, beards and a shroud—nothing incriminating was found.

I was able to give Henry Duncan a spirit message from his wife when I called. On the previous night in Glasgow, Margaret Lyon, the healer who is also clairvoyant, told me that Helen wanted me to give her love to "Hen," the nickname she always used for her husband.

Though it was only a day after her passing, she had met her beloved daughter, Nan, and had been greeted by Albert, her chief control at all her seances, who had sustained

her through all the dark hours. Finally, Helen commented that the spirit world was even more wonderful than she had hoped.

Margaret knew about Helen's passing before the news was published. On the day of her death the healer was conscious of the unmistakable odour of the ectoplasm, as she had experienced it at the many seances Helen had given in her home.

The Duncan family were delighted to get the message. The husband, the three daughters, the two sons, and their husbands and wives are all Spiritualists—Helen's extraordinary mediumship convinced them long ago.

And their behaviour was impressive. They were performing all their household duties with a calmness of demeanour that was admirable. They were a magnificent example of how Spiritualists should behave when faced with bereavement's acid test.

Soon after I arrived, Henry Duncan quoted his lawyer's opinion that he had excellent grounds for action against the police. Henry—I have known him and his children for 25 years — sought my opinion on instituting proceedings.

In view of the long controversy that had raged round his wife's mediumship, he asked, would he have the Spiritualist movement behind him? I assured him that the overwhelming majority would support him.

As a typical example of his wife's selflessness, he said that when she came home she was worried about whether news of the police seizure had caused anxiety to her family.

“I can't leave you”

Soon after the raid, and before she returned to Edinburgh, Helen's astral form appeared to him. “What's wrong?” he asked. Sobbing, she replied: “I was going to leave you, but I can't.” This he understood to mean that she fought against dying.

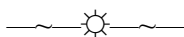
He recalled a statement she had often made: “I will never live to see another trial.” I reminded him of another saying, prophetically fulfilled: “I will survive those who accused me.” She named these antagonists who had all passed over.

I was surprised to see her coffin. It seemed too small for the body of a woman who weighed 20 stone when last we met. But, I learned, her weight had gone down to 12 stone towards the end.

Helen was one of the most remarkable mediums to appear on the Spiritualist scene. Her seances, held in good red light during the past 27 years, must have been attended by thousands. Many of them testified to seeing loved ones materialise and hearing their typical voices.

This accumulated evidence from apparently solid forms, who reproduced their earthly bodies, included their speaking in foreign languages that the medium did not know.

Mrs. Duncan always insisted that she be searched by women sitters before every seance.



The article continues about her trial at the Old Bailey, which does not concern us now...

Editor's endnote:

Without doubt this is one of the most disturbing stories in our history; Charles E. Loseby, her defence barrister during her 1944 Old Bailey trial (assisted by Mr. T. S. Pedler), was appointed by the Spiritualists' National Union solicitor, Godfrey A. Elkin. Loseby from his Guernsey home was outspoken after the Nottingham police seizure and the death of Helen Duncan, stating in law that any person who by "gross negligence accelerates the death of another is guilty of murder. I personally, therefore, am satisfied that Helen Duncan was murdered."

One of the most important functions of "Psypioneer", and now of the Spiritualists' National Union's publication "Pioneer", is to present the CORRECT FACTS concerning Spiritualist history, etc.

In the first of these articles concerning the seizure of Helen Duncan I removed the footnote at the end of the article which stated:

Footnote. Helen Duncan was convicted wrongly in the opinion of Spiritualists—a few years ago under the old Witchcraft Act. It was this conviction that led to Spiritualists campaigning to change the antiquated law that robbed them of religious freedom. The Fraudulent Mediums' Act was the result.

This conviction in *fact* had nothing to do with the *campaigning to change the antiquated law*. The petitioning of Parliament had been in progress since the arrest of Henry Slade, shortly after the first imprisonment of a Spiritualist medium, Francis Monck, under Section 4 of the 1824 Vagrancy Act. The British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS) 'Spiritualists' Defence Committee' was the first to challenge the Conservative government's Right Honorable R. A. Cross, Secretary of State for the Home Department, as to the rights of Spiritualist mediums in November 1876.

In 1916 the Spiritualists' National Union, under their President and Vice-President, Ernest Oaten and James J. Morse respectively, set up the "Spiritualist Parliamentary Fund", which was inaugurated at the July AGM; it was this fund (under later name changes) which would pay for all of Helen Duncan's court costs.

"Pioneer" has published in six parts, beginning in Vol. 2, No. 1, January 2015: *The Effect of the Vagrancy Act – The Work of the Spiritualists' National Union*.

Recap on the police raid:

The above articles hinge on the police raiding the private residence of Mr and Mrs Joe Timmins, violently breaking up a private Helen Duncan séance, grabbing the entranced medium, taking flashlight pictures and searching her and the premises. The police shouted that they were looking for beards, masks and a "shroud" which they alleged were the fraudulent means by which Duncan produced her materialisations. But they found nothing. It was later found on the previous day's séance held on Saturday October 27th that an undercover policewoman (PC Cutts) with a man she said was her husband attended.⁶ They both booked for the Sunday séance and for two friends.

At the Sunday séance, after twenty minutes banging was heard on the outside door accompanied by the bell ringing; according to Joe Timmins' account:

⁶ Joe Timmins' account is published in "Helen Duncan: My Living Has Not Been in Vain", by Mary Armour, 2000 pages. On pages 77-88 Timmins states that he was aware the lady was a policewoman, as he had previously treated her for a foot condition; she had recently married Mr Cutts.

“... they [Cutts and three others] made a dive over the sitters in the front row and tore down the curtains which formed a cabinet in a corner of the room. Then two policewomen grabbed the medium while policemen took flashlight photographs. By this time the lights were put on. One policeman ran downstairs to admit other officers, among them an inspector [Detective Inspector Smalley]. Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Timmins tried to pull away the policewomen who had started to search Helen Duncan. They said they were looking for the “shroud.” This presumably referred to the white mass of ectoplasm out of which figures usually materialise at her seances.”

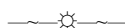
The sitters were ordered into another room and detained for about two and a half hours after the raid; Timmins forgot to ask the police whether they had a search warrant. He insisted, however, that every sitter should be searched, but the inspector said that if he interfered with the proceedings it would be his duty to arrest him.

Duncan was clearly ill and still allegedly under the control of Albert Stewart; Albert asked for a doctor to be called, who arrived within five minutes. The doctor obtained police permission to take Duncan to a bedroom and she was treated for shock, accompanied by a policewoman. The doctor searched Helen; he found nothing on her that could have produced any fraudulent results. The police questioned Duncan for around one and a half hours and searched her and her companion’s luggage.

The inspector later telephoned Timmins to ask if he could arrange a seance with Duncan “at which he could take another photograph by infra-red or otherwise.”⁷ According to Timmins, the inspector further said that, if this proved to be genuine, he would drop the case and they would hear no more about it. It was suggested by him that the flashlight photographs had revealed nothing that could be construed as incriminating.

Two days later the police returned and again questioned Duncan and her companion, Mrs. Hamilton, asking the medium to “come clean”, to tell them where she kept the beards and moustaches with which the forms had appeared—this time there was no mention of any shroud.

Helen was warned she might be charged under the Fraudulent Mediums Act of 1951 because they alleged that one materialised figure which came for a policewoman was that of a man who was still alive. If the medium was charged, Joe Timmins would also probably be prosecuted for aiding and abetting. Shortly after Duncan ended up in Edinburgh’s Western General Hospital she died five weeks later from diabetes and heart failure on December 6th 1956 at her home in Edinburgh.



⁷ This comment may suggest that, as well as flashlight bulbs, infra-red was used; it would be of interest to know whether these photographs are still archived by Nottingham police at present; I am looking into this.

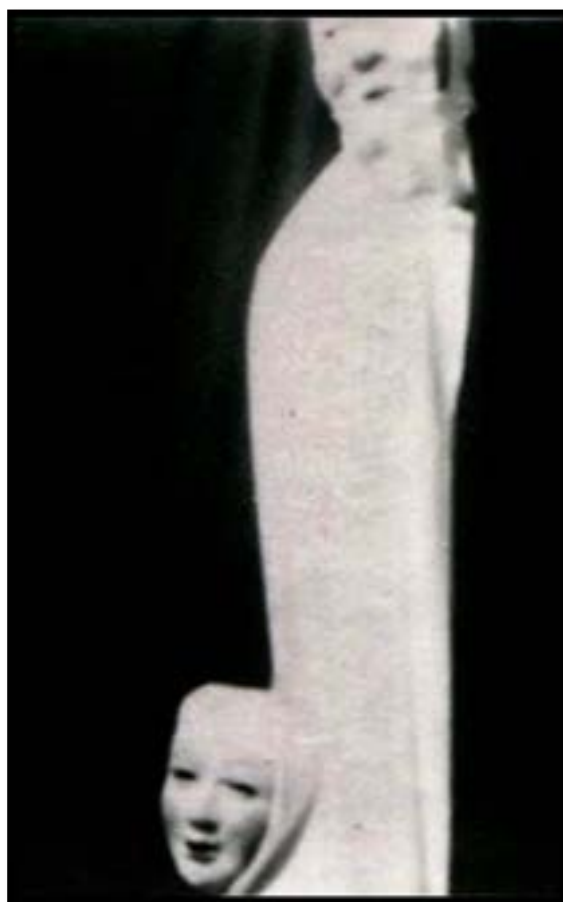
What can we make of these unprecedented events under the Fraudulent Mediums Act of 1951 – which led directly or indirectly to Duncan’s death?

It may be considered by some that this is reminiscent of the police undercover officers in the previous seances in 1944 and the seizure of the medium – resulting in Duncan being sentenced to nine months’ imprisonment under a clause in the Witchcraft Act.

The police raid in 1944 at Portsmouth showed that no incriminating evidence was found; this was also the case at Nottingham. At Portsmouth the sitters asked to be searched; the police refused. This appears to be the case at Nottingham. We can note that Timmins “insisted, however, that every sitter should be searched...” Timmins was told not to interfere.

One can only speculate as to why at Nottingham there was such a police presence, including four undercover officers and a Detective Inspector. A month later, a few days before Duncan’s death, Nottingham’s Chief Constable wrote to her informing her that all the papers in connection with her séance had been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

As no material, incriminating evidence was found, all that remained was the undercover police testimony that one materialised figure which came for a policewoman was that of a man who was still alive.



The photographs shown here were taken at a Helen Duncan séance on March 8th, 1939 in the Cheltenham area. It was common for Duncan’s materialisations to show beards, etc.; we can note the gentleman has a rather well-established moustache. Depending which side of the fence we sit, some could suggest the faces are mask-like. The figures are shrouded, so one can understand why the police were *searching for beards, masks and a “shroud”* if Duncan was considered a fraud.

But, of course, no such items were found. The images are part of the Britten Museum & Library, housed at Stansted Hall.

Nothing is noted in the reports about payments made to Duncan. The undercover police officers witnessed two séances and booked for two friends on the evening of the raid. This was Duncan’s income, so no doubt fees would change hands. If

the police had previous evidence of any fraudulent activity on an ongoing inquiry and of money being taken, this could put their action into a better perspective. [Duncan's fee⁸] Any pre-existing evidence would not be revealed until the inquiry was completed and charges brought forward. Duncan died before any charges existed.

Malcolm Gaskill, in his book, "Hellish Nell", makes reference on page 352:

"... it is likely that either the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Chief Constable contacted the Home Office, because on 15 November Helen Duncan files from 1944 were called up from the archive."

As noted, Nottingham's Chief Constable wrote to Helen Duncan a few days before her death informing her that all the papers in connection with her last seance had been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions. So, for whatever reason, it appears the police were once again out to get Helen Duncan and the prosecution was ongoing to her death, but, unlike in 1944, holding a séance in 1956 was perfectly legal.

Maurice Barbanell makes a valuable comment in his column, "All Worlds Are One", in the "Two Worlds", November 17th, 1956, as quoted below:

THE medium was warned privately by us some months ago from information received that the police were after her again and that she should be on her guard.

It behoves her, and the organisers of her seances, to take rigid precautions to ensure that nobody attends her sittings unless they can be vouched for. They should be on their guard against agents provocateurs, police officers in disguise, seeking material for a prosecution.

The methods invoked by the Nottingham police, described as "reminiscent of an American gangster film," must have had their origin in some "complaint." This may be genuine or, as in the past, due to the malice of vested interests, too often belonging to opposing religions that wish to destroy mediumship.

THE Nottingham case has been referred to the Spiritualists' National Union and the Spiritualist Council for Common Action to see if any legal or constitutional issues are involved.

It must be pointed out, however, that Helen Duncan no longer works under the aegis of the SNU, having withdrawn from that organisation. Neither were the Nottingham seances held in a Spiritualist church where, if there is police interference, the cry of religious freedom can be raised.

Regarding the break between Helen Duncan and the SNU which resulted in the suspension of her certificate in 1945, the full story is published in "Pioneer", Vol. 2, No. 5, September 2015: "Why did the S.N.U. remove Helen Duncan's diploma in 1945?"

The reasons behind the police raid and whether or not a prosecution would have been undertaken against Helen Duncan if she had lived remain a mystery.

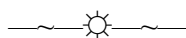
⁸ Timmins, in his statement referred to in footnote 6, gives the details: "We usually have about eight sitters who pay from 10-11 shillings, then many of our personal friends who come free ..." Duncan received free accommodation, etc. and kept all the fees paid.

To conclude, Malcolm Gaskill raises a few interesting points on page 356 of his book:

The drive to remember Helen Duncan, and to see justice done, started from the moment she died. Within a week, *Two Worlds* was inviting contributions to a memorial fund and the Home Secretary, Gwilym Lloyd George, was pestered until he replied that the matter had to be taken up with the Chief Constable of Nottingham. In the end the fund money was not spent in the intended manner. Henry, a man crumbling inside, was being cared for by Gena and was in no state to organize his own affairs, let alone a lawsuit. In any case his solicitor, who at first had been optimistic about their chances, now advised him to drop the case due to insufficient medical evidence to suggest that the police had caused Helen's death.

In addition, Percy Wilson was concerned that if the case was made *sub judice*,⁹ it might hold up action and comment in other quarters. Mr Timmins dropped his action too, announcing piously that turning the other cheek was behaviour more befitting a Spiritualist. Why Helen Duncan had been raided again after all these years therefore remains a mystery. There were no rumours of conspiracy, as in 1944, and probably local police simply heard about the seances, perhaps after receiving a complaint, and intervened to protect the public. That said, prosecutions under the Fraudulent Mediums Act were very rare.

And there is one final intriguing piece of evidence: the Anglo-French landings to reclaim the Suez Canal, which involved the Secret Service, were the largest British seaborne military operation since D-Day. The coincidence — and it is surely no more than that — is stranger because the police raid occurred less than thirty-six hours before the assault against Egypt began.



**Victoria Helen MacFarlane & Henry Duncan married on
May 27th 1916**

⁹ Under judicial consideration and therefore prohibited from public discussion elsewhere.



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3 nights £235.00

4 nights £285.00

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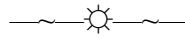
6 nights £335.00

7 nights £360.00



“DORCHAGRAPHS”

known today as “Skotographs”



Former SNU Vice-President Minister Steven Upton, as previously mentioned in “Pioneer”, Vol. 4, No. 2, April 2017, was intending to donate Estelle Roberts’ “Album of Red Cloud Pictures and Script in Skotographs by Madge Donohoe”. This valuable donation has now been received and is in the Britten Museum & Library at Stansted Hall.

Skotographs originated in the 1890s as a form of “direct phenomena” originally called “dorchagraphs” – images obtained on photographic plates without the use of a camera. This was pioneered by Andrew Glendinning, who during 1864-1908 was involved in psychic photography. He gave the name “dorchagraph” to distinguish them from photographs, basically meaning “hidden images”, an image on a photographic plate but without a camera.

Glendinning sent William Stead a series of twenty-six dorchagraph prints; Stead published some of these in his journal “Borderland”, Vol. IV, in January 1897. Later these would be better known as skotographs; that term is said to have been proposed by Felicia Scatcherd. It is from the Greek for “dark-writing” – spirit writing, images, or thought photography – impressed on photographic plates in unopened packets, etc. One medium for this was Madge Donohoe, who produced the well-known image of Estelle Roberts’ “Red Cloud”.¹⁰

The portrait (as shown) is of William Haxby, produced by Andrew Glendinning, published in *Borderland*, Vol. IV, January 1897:—

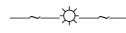


“Two of the pictures deserve special notice. The first of the two, No. 15 on sheet, is unfortunately so “fogged” that it is hardly suitable for reproduction in *BORDERLAND*. The plate was taken by me [Glendinning] from a new packet, and wrapped in a long strip of ruby cloth to exclude actinic rays. No one was with me when I did this, and no one except myself saw the plate till after I removed it from the fixing; bath. It remained in its wrapper of ruby cloth in my pocket till I found an opportunity for the experiment. My object was to find out whether an abnormal image could be obtained on a plate enveloped in ruby cloth as easily as on a plate in a black envelope. The experiment was quite successful, the image obtained being a facsimile of a photograph of my friend, William Haxby, who died about eleven years ago; it has been readily recognised as such by a number of his friends and acquaintances who have seen it.

“In a well-lighted room, in presence of A., B., and C., I took the plate from my pocket, held it between my hands in the usual way, and requested A. to place his hands, one above, the other below mine; but he only touched one corner with his thumb and forefinger, for about five seconds, he then said, “You may now go and develop the plate,

¹⁰ Scatcherd was a member of the Spiritualists’ National Union and of the Society for Psychical Research, London; she helped W.T. Stead found Julia’s Bureau. She was associated with the study of psychic photography. She died in 1927.

there is something on it, I saw it come.” I entreated him to come into the dark room with me, as I did not think the “something” could be developed by me unless he were present; he replied that, in his opinion, his presence during development would make no difference, and that he must hurry off to the city. The “fogging” of the plate was caused by the flame of the candle shining directly on the plate while in the developing-tray, through an accident to the small ruby lamp.”¹¹



Andrew Glendinning was a pioneer of psychic photography. It can be noted in his obituary published in the “Two Worlds”, November 4th 1910, “1826 Transition of Andrew Glendinning 1910”, that Glendinning took his first spirit photograph circa 1864. Below is taken from the Memorial Tributes. I quote from Mr. H. Blackwell’s Tribute:



“As the rose breatheth sweetness from its own nature, so the heart of a benevolent man produceth good works.”

“AN honoured name, one that has always stood for progress, intelligence, and sympathy, alas! now belongs to the past. With his mental faculties as clear as ever, after but a few hours’ illness the dear old man—for he was in his eighty-fourth year—received the call that his well-earned advancement was due. Looking back on his life’s record, we can imagine what a joyous welcome would await him.

“The body which had served him so well was placed by the side of his much-loved helpmate in St. Pancras Cemetery on Monday last, Mr. John Lobb impressively conducting the service.

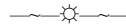
“His life has been a fruitful one indeed, always to the front in whatever movement he considered would benefit others, and the sum total of his life’s energies has been a most valuable addition to the world’s good. Seventy years have gone by since he joined the Glasgow Total Abstinence Society, and a few years later he was working as the hon. secretary of the Juvenile Temperance League, and also of the Anti-War Society. As time went on, stirred by the terrible evils of the slave trade in America he became an enthusiastic supporter of the Glasgow Emancipation Society. It is sad to remember that in those days out of about 33,000 clergyman and ministers in the United States, 30,000 were arrayed, either directly or indirectly, against the anti-slavery movement.

“In 1863 Mr. Glendinning initiated the early closing movement in Glasgow, and also became the hon. secretary of the local Amateur Photographic Association. A year later he took his first spirit-photograph, and afterwards carried out numerous experiments with his old friend and most versatile medium, Mr. David Duguid. In 1893 he introduced him to Mr. J. Traill Taylor, then probably the foremost photographic expert of the day. It is

¹¹ Portrait Recognised: — “Mr. Glendinning sent the portrait of No. 15 to two intimate friends of Mr. Haxby, one of them, Mr. Joseph Freeman, of Cape Town, without saying anything as to who Mr. Glendinning regarded as to the original of the likeness. Joseph Freeman writes on the 22nd December, “A glance at it was quite sufficient for me. I have not the slightest hesitation in naming Willie Haxby as being the original of that portrait. I do not think anybody who knew the young man at all intimately would fail to recognise it.” The wife of Mr. Fred Freeman writes: “Mr. Freeman wished me to write to say that the enclosed photograph was recognised at once by each member of his family as being the likeness of the late Mr. Haxby, the great medium, who was a great friend during the latter part of his life.”

impossible to estimate the good which resulted from this introduction, as Mr. Taylor had the courage to relate the (then) surprising results of his experiments in a lecture before his professional brethren. This was afterwards reprinted by Mr. Glendinning in a most interesting and well-illustrated volume, now very scarce, entitled, “The Veil Lifted.” Subsequently he had many sittings with Mr. R. Boursnell, and gladly agreed to be one of the committee formed to present that remarkable medium with an illuminated address and testimonial. Through his mediumship Mr. Glendinning has received six or seven spirit portraits of his wife, and also of his sister, daughter, and friends.”

*“To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die,”
and our beloved friend still lives”*



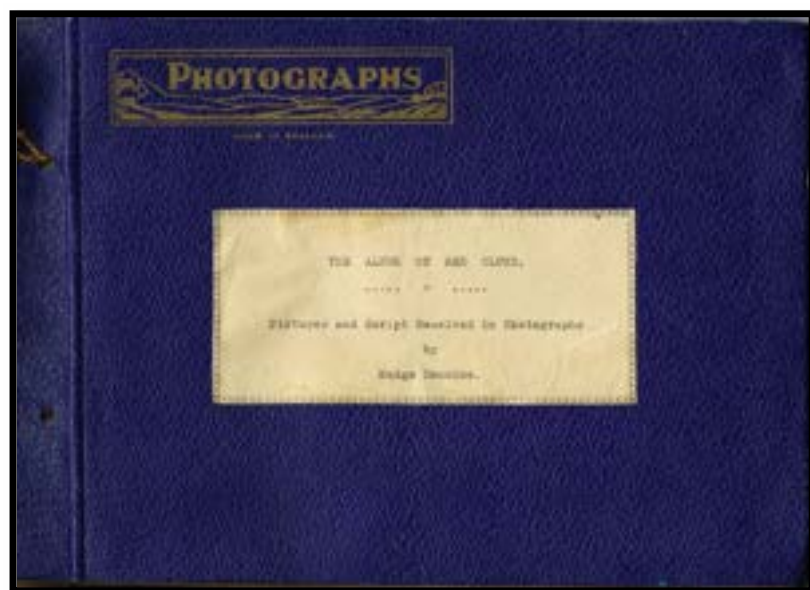
The album shown here (amongst many other items previously donated), now donated by Minister Steven Upton, was passed on to him by Estelle Roberts’ then surviving family; Steven has now kindly donated the full collection to the Britten Museum & Library.

This includes the hair of Archael, where in March 1937 sixty people witnessed the fully materialised form of Archael, one of Estelle Roberts’ spirit guides, within the cabinet at the “House of Red Cloud” in Wimbledon, London.

At the same séance the materialised form of Red Cloud began to disappear, but his voice could still be heard speaking in intervals and independently of the medium. At one part of the séance, becoming solidly visible again, and with a pair of scissors, he cut a lock from Archael’s hair.



The lock was exhibited in the House of Red Cloud’s séance room until 1941 and is now exhibited in the Britten Museum & Library.¹²



¹² See “Pioneer”, Vol. 1, No. 5, October 2014: “Estelle Roberts and the House of Red Cloud”.

MADGE DONOHOE

Madge Donohoe's name is well-known in the production of skotographs. Her fame is no doubt linked to her association with Estelle Roberts and Red Cloud. It should be noted that the production of skotographs was done by many other mediums, for example Billy Hope and the Crewe Circle, and earlier by David Duguid. Many experimental test conditions were imposed by experts in the field of photography, for example by the researcher William Walker. A selection of skotographs under test conditions is displayed in the Britten Museum & Library, which were produced in the Crewe Circle under the watchful eye of William Walker.

Donohoe was tested by various researchers, including F.W. Warrick, a chemical manufacturer and well-known British psychical researcher. His work is published in "Experiments in Psychics" (1939) by F.W. Warrick himself. The book contains six hundred and fifty illustrations relating to experiments in psychic photography. Pages 327-346 concern Mrs. Donohoe's skotographs. There are many images showing landscapes, groups of people, faces, flowers, animals, shapes, spirit messages and scenes of past events. There were 475 pictures illustrating a Grecian story, and tours of spirit homes of "C.D." and "M.D". This brings us more in line with Estelle Roberts' album of Red Cloud, as "C.D." is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and "M.D." is Donohoe's husband, Martin H. Donohoe, a well-known Australian war special correspondent for the "Daily Chronicle", who died in 1927.

The early mediums for direct phenomena would often magnetise the tools of their trade. The direct artist David Duguid would carry or hold his materials close to him before a séance, and photographers would hold their sealed photographic plates often against the forehead. Stainton Moses, when speaking about his writing ("Pioneer", Vol. 3, No. 3, June 2016: "Visit to the College of Psychic Studies"), noted:

"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.

Donohoe's photographic plates were developed by an unnamed photographer referred to as Mr. L—. Plates developed by Warrick were without success; none showed better results than the test ones. Warrick considered Donohoe's tests were very poor compared with the 4,300 results obtained, developed by her photographer, Mr. L—.

Much of her results she considered were intimately connected with her personal memories and affairs; Donohoe submitted to tests by Major Mowbray at the British College of Psychic Science but no results were obtained.¹³ Donohoe was anxious to prove herself genuine and get positive results with Warrick, who notes that mostly her photographic plates are supplied and loaded into the slides by Mr. L—. However, the plates were mostly blank when developed independently. One would expect the results would be similar as usually obtained by Mr. L—, noted Warrick.

On two occasions, developed promiscuously from Donohoe's stock by Warrick's photographer, on one of the plates a "strange unusual mark appeared". On another occasion four plates

¹³ Not to be confused with the "College of Psychic Studies", the British College of Psychic Science was founded in April 1920 in London by James Hewat McKenzie and his wife Barbara to study psychical phenomena; in December 1938 the College merged with the International Institute for Psychical Research.

developed by Harry Price “in her (Donohoe’s) presence two of the plates bore quite definite markings.”

Warrick considered, “If the pictures are due to Mrs. Donohoe’s influence, why do they not appear on the Donohoe plates I develop?” He considered Mr. L—’s method of developing – he used pyro developer – and hardly “one among the dozen or so plates she sends weekly to Mr. L— is a failure.” Warrick had used the same developer on his plates. He was present at Mr. L—’s studio while Mr. L— developed some of Donohoe’s plates and notes: “... nothing better came on them than splotches such as could be produced on sensitive plates by drops of an accelerator falling from a height.”

“Mr. L— was averse to being troubled by my attending further developments by him.”

Warrick suggested to Donohoe that she should send her plates for a period to another photographer.

She replied

“that there is no other photographer within a convenient distance; that, being a very busy person occupied with the administration of some property she owns and her own domestic affairs, she has no time to use other than the means close at hand. She is satisfied that Mr. L—could not, even if he would, produce the many pictures so intimately connected with herself which have appeared.”

“Mrs. Donohoe suggests [continues Warrick] that it is quite conceivable that there are favourable conditions under which these psychic photographs can be obtained and others under which they cannot; and that the nearness of Mr. L —’s establishment to her and the regularity of the bi-weekly proceedings (treatment and development) may be among the propitious conditions.”

Is this a case of “dual mediumship”? This has been recorded in numerous instances, one being a transmitter and the other as recorder. An example of this is the drawing of James J. Morse’s chief control, ‘Tien Sien Tie’, through the mediumship of Wella and Pat Anderson; see “Pioneer”, Vol. 2, No. 5, September 2015: “Morse & Vango”. Pat worked as Wella’s storehouse, providing him with the necessary energy. The physical medium Frank Hearne would sit with psychic photographers under similar circumstances as Pat Anderson.

Warrick did not consider Donohoe as a fraud and puts on record much of her work, noting that many of her results contain subject-matter which has obvious reference to events associated with herself. He surmises, “These [skotographs] probably have their origin in Mrs. Donohoe’s store of knowledge, her past history and her past and present thoughts.” On a visit to Donohoe, Warrick noted:

“It would seem that the intelligent entity operating through Mrs. Donohoe made use of some of the author’s memory pictures.”

Warrick was further able to request special evidence, which was received in skotographs, including messages from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Warrick later in March 1934 loaded his own plates, among which he marked two plates and sealed them with wafer paper in such a way that they could not be opened without detection, and he included another four plates as indicated in the report below. So Mr. L— did not have them previous to developing, Donohoe treated these in her usual manner (see below); Warrick then used an independent witness, Miss Hagon. This is her report:

Dear Mrs. Donohoe,

I called at your house at 7-45 p.m. and received from you a packet of six photographic slides, four of which were bound with strips of paper and sealed. The four, I understood from you, had been prepared for the test by Mr. F. W. Warrick, and on the plates should be found when developed his signature and the date on which he loaded the slides.

We then proceeded to L—'s studio. I carried the slides which neither you nor Mr. L— touched until each one was emptied and the plate it contained developed. I broke the seal of each of the sealed slides, removed the plate and placed it in the developing dish which Mr. L—had placed ready for the purpose. Mr. L—then poured the developing mixture over it and did not himself touch the plate until the impression had appeared. You and I watched the whole time and know that any other manipulation of the plates except that which I state here could not possibly have taken place. On each of the six plates a clear and definite impression came, the two plates from non-sealed slides showing a vase of flowers and the head of a nun respectively. On one of the sealed plates there was a swastika and on number D/I474 came what looked like a flight of birds or arrow heads in two groups of 13 and 4¹⁴ which you explained stood for your husband's initials, M.D. In addition to the impression each of the sealed plates showed Mr. Warrick's initials and a date.

Each plate was developed separately.

Yours sincerely,
M. HAGON.

The result was:

The two non-sealed plates showed a vase of flowers and the head of a nun.

The less securely sealed bore the swastika and the arrow heads. D/1474 and D/1471.

The most securely sealed plates bore much less definite markings.



Fig. D/I474.

D/I474. The photographic print itself shows quite distinctly 13 marks in a ring and 4 central marks. The above block does not show them all.



Fig. D/I471.

¹⁴ The 13th letter of the alphabet is M, the 4th D.

I conclude with a quote from Warrick's book, pages 330-331, by Madge Donohoe:

Mrs. Donohoe's own account of her Skotographs.

"It was in 1921, when I was attending a class for Spirit Photography held by Mrs. Deane at the British College of Psychic Science, that I first heard of Skotography from a fellow student. She told me that impressions could be obtained on photographic plates simply held between the hands or strapped to the forehead. The usual procedure, she said, was to get a packet of plates and, without opening it, carry it about on one's person, sleep with it (all this so as to "magnetise" it), and finally holding it—preferably to one's forehead—to ask the Spirit Photographers to impress it. I experimented with this method and had some success, but afterwards modified it for the one I now use.

"I sit twice weekly at night, in a darkness and quiet as absolute as I can achieve, holding pressed against my face a photographic slide containing a sensitised plate. I then, through movements (spelling out) of the slide, talk with the unseen operators and implicitly obey their instructions. Only one plate is impressed at a time. A definite signal announces the beginning of the experiment; another, the end."

"During the years 1921 to 1925 I sat at irregular intervals and obtained many skotographs of varying degrees of interest, several of which showed co-operation with my mind. In 1929, after an interval of nearly four years, I began sitting again, this time regularly, and I now have a collection of over 4,300 skotographs. They form an amazing picture gallery, and I myself never fail to be thrilled by the wonder of them, not only because of the miraculous manner in which they come to me, but by their own intrinsic quality and beauty, which testify to the versatility and skill of their unseen authors. Their variety is bewildering. Landscapes (often peopled), flowers, star constellations, jewels, birds, hands, eyes, faces as clear as in any ordinary photograph—all are there.

"It is true that since February of 1929, Mr. L—, of Hampstead, the photographer nearest to my home, has developed over ninety per cent. of my plates, with comparatively few blanks in the first years and practically none nowadays. Apart from the fact that during the twenty years he has been following his profession in Hampstead Mr. L—'s integrity has never been questioned and that, at my request, he has signed a statement that he has in no way tampered with the plates I have entrusted to him, I have good reason for knowing how absurd is the suggestion that he fakes these skotographs. The matters with which a large number of them deal are within the knowledge of only one person in the world—myself. If faking is done, it must be done by me, as I feel sure any intelligent reader of the notes appended to the illustrations in this book will agree. I may add that, except for our business dealings, Mr. L— and I are totally unknown to each other.

"The script which comes on my plates forms one of the most interesting features of my work. During the first three years it was written in a simple code in which the letters consist of short chains or ropes composed of dots. The number of dots employed corresponds to the position of the letter in the alphabet; thus one dot represents A, two B. and so on. Up to October, 1932, I had received over a hundred messages given in this manner. But in that month Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and my husband, Martin Donohoe, in collaboration, began sending me the life-story of one of the Pharaohs which they had heard from his own lips, and Sir Arthur, for the purposes of this tale, invented a new code to which he has added from time to time, so that it has really come in seven parts.¹⁵

¹⁵ A pity the use of codes prevents handwriting recognition. F.W.W.

“Many of the messages which came from my husband in the early code spoke of the flowers he was sending at the same time—on another plate. The first: “I can send you flowers,” reached me in August, 1930, and was accompanied by a vase of flowers. Another time came: “I hope you like the flowers,” with a bouquet. A third said: “A posy for you, dear!”.



“These flower gifts have lately furnished another proof that, save for skilful developing, my photographer has nothing to do with the production of the skotographs. From the time he first mentioned them five years ago, up to the 27th March of this year, 1935 my husband never failed to send me at least once a week flowers of some sort, either in a bouquet, vase, bowl, basket or spray. Then for four weeks (eight sittings) none came, and I felt puzzled and disappointed. So at last, before the sitting of the 27th April, 1935, I spoke to him saying what pleasure the flowers had always given me, and how much I missed them (all this, of course, was unknown to Mr. L—). He promised to resume sending them and that same night two of the plates bore exceptional floral greetings. In one (*Fig. 2144*) a messenger dove carries a waratah¹⁶ in its beak, instead of the

traditional olive leaf. On the other for the first time there is writing on the vase holding the flowering plant viz., the words “All Love” together with the signature M.D., the latter in response to my special request, as for some time he had discontinued his practice of signing the flower pictures.”

“Mr. Warrick, to whom I send a print of each skotograph as I receive it, and who has therefore a collection as complete as my own, can testify to these facts which I am glad to put on record through him, as they serve to disprove, once and for all, the ridiculous assertion that Mr. L— has consistently deceived me for six years, having faked the very large number of skotographs which I have given him to develop in that time. He could not possibly know about my appeal to my husband to resume sending the flowers, nor of his promise to do so.

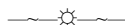
“Mr. Warrick has reproduced here less than a tithe of the more than 4,300 results my albums now contain. But even this relatively limited number will, I think, demonstrate to any impartial investigator how far removed they are from what I, or any photographer I might employ, could be supposed to invent. The meaning of at least a few is quite outside my knowledge. The interpretation of some I can only guess at. The great majority have for me a definite purpose and message, and what they are I shall try to explain in these notes which Mr. Warrick has kindly invited me to contribute to his book.”

“My group of workers in the Spirit World consists of my husband and four nephews. They have the occasional and inspiring help of two high spirits—Fletcher, the guide of the famous American medium, Arthur Ford, and of another whom I know only as “X”

“With the passing of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle five years ago their work received a fresh impetus, for he has continued the same kind, helpful interest in my skotographs which he manifested while here. They elected him their leader, and under his guidance

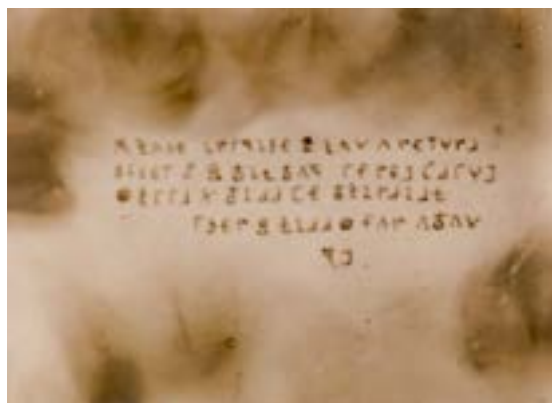
¹⁶ An Australian national flower.

many pictures with explanatory script have come to me in orderly, purposeful sequence, forming now a series of less than a dozen skotographs, and anon one of some hundreds.”¹⁷



Below are some of the unique images in Estelle Roberts’

“Album of Red Cloud Pictures and Script in Skotographs by Madge Donohoe”



1369/70 – 3/1/34: We promised to pay a return visit to the wigwam of Red Cloud, and soon we shall be whirling over the hills and far away. M.D.



647 – 31/8/32: We make a camp fire. We get Red Cloud, Morning Star and Silver moon to sing war song. A.C.D.



¹⁷ The above quotes contain numerous images of skotographs, which due to space cannot be reproduced here; any reader who would like electronic images please contact the editor.

BRITISH SPIRITUALISTS' LYCEUM UNION

Lyceum Archives moved to Stansted Hall

Andrew Jackson Davis was the founder of the Lyceum Movement in America in January 1863. In 1866 the first Lyceum was formed in this country in Nottingham; other Lyceums followed – Keighley 1870, Manchester 1889. A committee was appointed to draw up a constitution for a proposed Lyceum Union, which included John Pemberton, Samuel Chiswell, W.H. Wheeler and Edward Wallis, with Alfred Kitson as Secretary. With forty delegates in attendance at the Oldham Conference on May 11th 1890, under the presidency of Harry A. Kersey, the constitution for the Federation of Lyceums was formed.

On January 1st 1948, the British Spiritualists' Lyceum Union (BSLU) was incorporated into the Spiritualists' National Union, becoming a branch of the SNU. The BSLU would become known as the Spiritualists' Lyceum Union (SLU).

At the last Lyceum AGM it was decided to offer the Britten Museum & Library, housed at the Arthur Findlay College, Stansted Hall, a large part of the Lyceum museum. This was readily accepted, as it holds a valuable part of our Spiritualist history and is a great asset for research. The Lyceum was very closely entwined in the early days of National Spiritualism.



Since the removal of the Museum from Darlington Church the artefacts have been kept in the attic space at Brighouse Church, West Yorkshire. The Spiritualists' Lyceum Union archives, etc. are now at Stansted Hall, with the long task ahead of unpacking, scanning, cataloguing, etc. Much of this valuable archive will be available in the Britten Museum & Library early next year.

The items and details of the Spiritualists' Lyceum Union archives will be published in Pioneer in a later issue.

Above is the Lyceum President,
Publications Chairman and
Lyceum Banner Editor:
Minister Brian Gledhill

Loading the van for Stansted

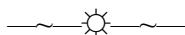
Left to Right:

Daniel James,¹⁸ Minister Brian Gledhill,
Mary Gledhill, Minister Jenny Peacock
(next to Mary Gledhill), Colin Stringer and
(front) Minister Nora Stringer



¹⁸ Daniel James. His mother is Tracy James president of Brighouse Church, Martin Street, Brighouse, Halifax, West Yorkshire. HD6 1DA which is affiliated to the SNU: <http://www.snu.org.uk/community/churches/brighouse.html>

SPIRITUALIST HEALERS OF THE PAST



James (Jimmy) Richards

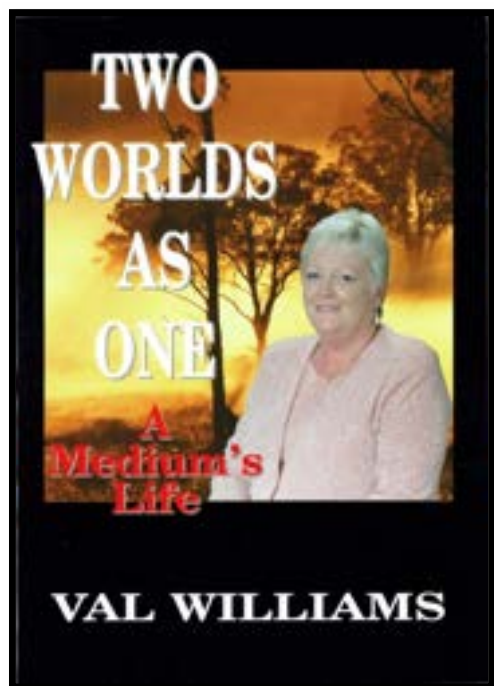
“THE most significant words spoken at a Manchester healing demonstration last week were, “Twenty to four.”¹⁹

“They proved that Mrs. K. Hellewell, of 23 Wensley Road, Salford, Lancs, was seeing the time for the first occasion since contracting cataracts in both eyes. She told the famous healer James Richards, that she could see the audience at this North-western Federation of Healers’ meeting much more clearly after treatment from him and his wife.

“Mrs. A. Broadbent of 7 Duchy Road, Salford, with 17 years’ arthritis behind her, was able to turn her head completely and bend her knees without pain, formerly impossible actions. ...”

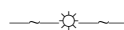


During Open Week at the Arthur Findlay College (April 29th–May 2nd), which is featured in “Pioneer”, Vol. 4, No. 2, April 2017, Minister Val Williams asked me if I knew a healer by the name of Jimmy Richards, which I did not. Clutched in her hand was a bundle of reports regarding the healer. Val had received the information from Jimmy Richards’ granddaughter and her husband, Mr and Mrs Brian Clarkson, who are acquainted with Val Williams.



Minister Williams is a course organiser and tutor at the College, working as a professional medium since 1984. Val is well-known internationally, as since 1987 she has worked in many European countries – Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Norway and Switzerland – and in North America she has worked in both Canada and the USA; this is apart from working extensively throughout the British Isles.

Val Williams’ story is told in her autobiography published in 2001 and available at the Arthur Findlay College Shop and at Amazon UK.



¹⁹ Taken from the “Two Worlds”, April 13th 1957 “James Richards ... restores woman’s sight.”

There is an abundance of reports in the Spiritualist press relating to the healing work of Jimmy Richards. Below is quoted from a report by Terry Smith published in "The Examiner", October 5th, 1956:

HE IS QUITE GENUINE, SAY PATIENTS

CRITICS of James Richards say that he makes a good living out of the people who are foolish enough to believe that he has a divine power to heal them from sickness.

They point out that he lives in an exquisitely furnished 16-room mansion standing in beautiful grounds in the best part of Lymm and rides around in an almost new Morris Oxford car.

But let me tell them how he is able to live in the mansion and run a £850 car. The house does not belong to him. He does not even pay any rent for it. It belongs to his brother-in-law, Mr. William Shaw, a retired plumber, and he also bought him the car.

And Mr. Shaw who looks nothing like his 69 years, told me: "I bought this house and the car to enable my brother-in-law to carry on his work."

"At one time I was one of his greatest cynics and I did not believe in the work at all but I changed my mind.

"My daughter Pat had been a cripple since she met with a car accident when she was two-years-old. One doctor after another told me that there was nothing that could be done for her but Mr. Richards cured her."

No limp

I saw Pat now aged 21. She is attractive and obviously in the best of health. She had no trace of a limp.

Mr. Shaw continued: "I myself was very ill and my doctor had very tactfully told me to put my affairs in order. Now I am fit and well."

And Mr. Shaw is fit and well. He spends most of his time tending the beautiful gardens at the house and he did a series of hand stands to show me just how fit he was.

I met Mr. Richards and his wife Zilla in their sanctuary at Lymm. It is a quiet but tastefully furnished chapel at the front of the house. There is an altar in the centre of the end wall faced by a number of carved chairs. At the side of the altar is the bed where the patients lie to be treated.

A prayer

Over the bed is a plaque which says

"Friends, you enter into this sanctuary not as strangers but as guests of the Great Spirit known to us as God the Father. Come then with joy in your heart and thanks on your lips into His presence to greet those who teach there is no death and that survival can demonstrate through the sacred gift of mediumship."

In the sanctuary, Mr Richards told me the amazing story of his work. He told me that as a result of Mr. Shaw's generosity he had been able to leave his tiny cottage in Delph near, Manchester, and live at Lymm.

But don't think I make a lot of money out of all this," he told me, "I do not make enough to cover my bare expenses and I am only able to carry on through the help given by Mr. Shaw.

Mr. Richards went to great lengths to illustrate that his work had nothing to do with faith healing. He told me:



"I have Spirit doctors who do the healing through me and faith does not come into it.

"It is the doctors who do the healing and I am only the medium which is in between the doctors and the patients. All I have to do is to place my hands on the affected part and the doctors go to work. My wife assists me and she is present all the time. I never ask anyone to remove any of their clothes."



We can note the sanctuary was opened in early February 1956 by the SNU President Harry Dawson, as was published in *Psychic News*, February 4th, 1956:

New sanctuary for healer

A NEW healing sanctuary for a famous Northern medium was dedicated a few days ago. He is James Richards, formerly of Oldham Lincs, who has a number of healing successes to his credit.

Harry Dawson, SNU president, performed the dedication of Foxley House, Broom Edge, Lymm, Cheshire, in the presence of friends and patients—some travelled scores of miles to be present.

There is healing in the Richards family, for 70 years ago his father was well known as a trance healer. The son cannot remember when he first practised the healing gift because he was so young at the time.

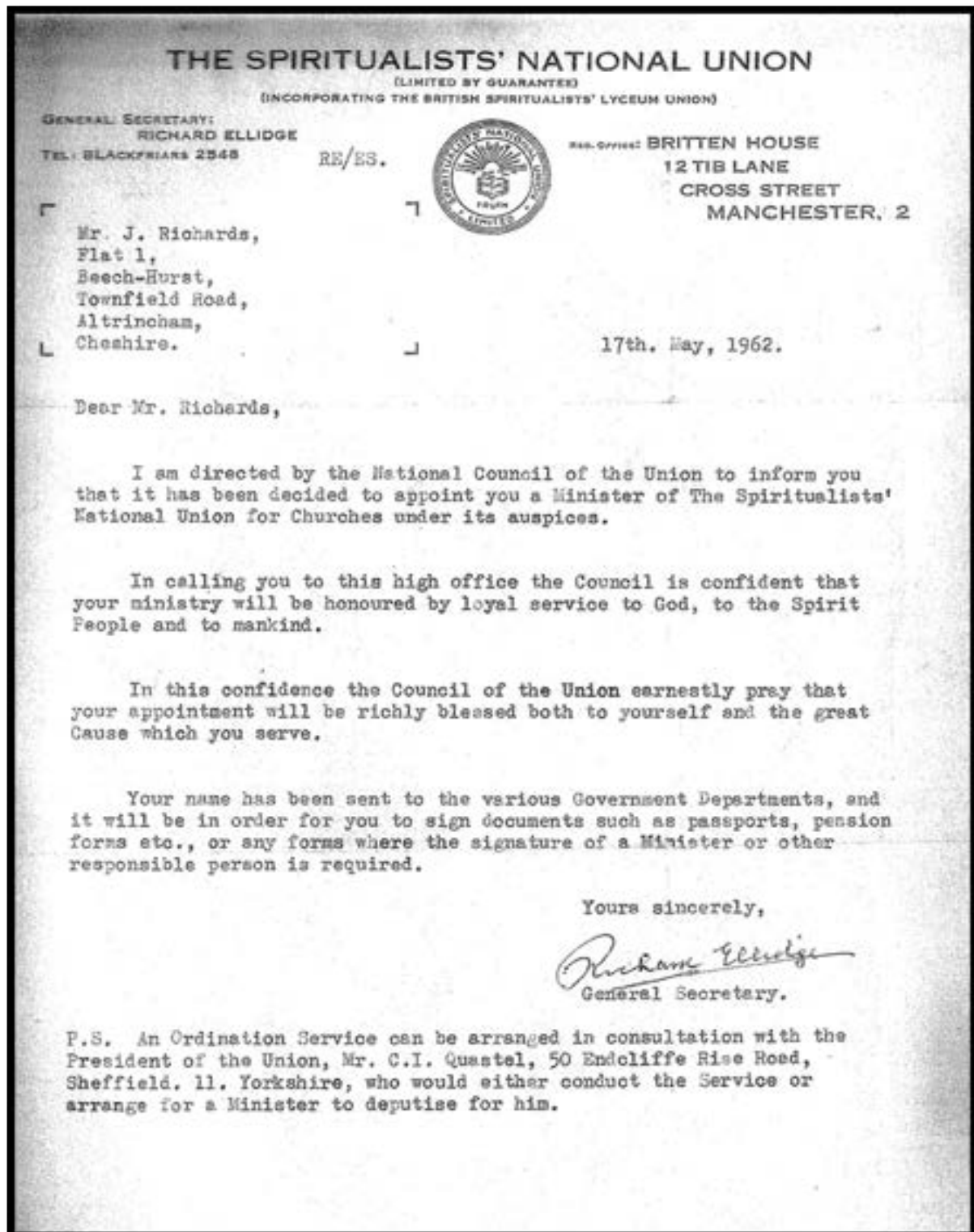
For the last 15 years patients have visited his Oldham home and queued up for treatment at Saddleworth Spiritualist Church, not far away, where it was a common occurrence for Richards to spend 12-hour stretches on his healing.



Dawson, in his dedication, said that orthodox Christianity had for long almost completely ignored the example of its founder and his command to his followers to heal the sick.

The work of healers like Richards had attracted the interest of many churchgoing people, with the result that the Archbishops had been forced to set up a commission to inquire into the subject.

On May 17th 1962 Jimmy Richards received a letter from the Spiritualists' National Union's General Secretary, Richard (Dick) Ellidge, offering Richards a ministership. The Union has always been insistent that Ministership is by invitation and cannot be applied for. The actual letter is reproduced here, which shows how our Ministers were appointed forty-five years ago. For the early history of our Ministers please see "Pioneer", Vol. I, No. 2, January 2014: "Who were the first Ministers of the Union?"



Later in 1962 the “Manchester Evening Chronicle” ran a series of investigations into Spiritualism, “Secrets of the Seances”; the journalist was Beryl Jones and one of her subjects was the healer James Richards. Although after five days of investigation into Spiritualism Jones was not convinced, *Psychic News* passed the comment, “Why should she be in one week?” The quote below is taken from “*Psychic News*”, issue October 27th, 1962:

After five days journalist is not convinced Healing triumphs

Not unnaturally in such a series spirit healing was featured. Beryl Jones interviewed some patients at a healing service in a church.

One woman testified to improvement in her arthritis which was so severe that the joints of her hands were swollen and the fingers twisted. A coronary thrombosis patient was “doing very well now.” A mother with a baby in her lap said they had been coming some time and there was definitely an improvement. The child was a mongol.

Beryl Jones interviewed James Richards, the well-known Northern healer, who has many remarkable cures to his credit. The 68-year old healer, “who looks much younger,” explained how he works.

He “tunes in” to spirit doctors who “have greater knowledge of the natural law than we have. They are able to see inside the body. The flesh which is a barrier to us is not so to them.”

Inherited gift

He obtained his diagnoses clairaudiently. Moreover he could speak to the spirit doctors, ask them questions and get their answers. “You have to dedicate your whole life to healing.” He said.

“I have been healing for 50 years. My parents were healers before me. I know it is very sacred work and carries a great deal of responsibility.”

Working all day in his sanctuary, Richards said that he loses four pounds in weight, but it returns the same night while he sleeps. Naturally no promises to cure could be given, but there had been successes with cancer, gangrene, mental illness, polio, paralysis and disseminated sclerosis.

He could “feel” a growth in a body—“it burns my finger-tips and I can trace it.” One trouble was that some people who felt better did not come again although told to do so. There was a danger that they might slip back.

Richards commented astringently that investigators always wanted to know how much money he was making. “We have to live,” he said. “I cannot risk doing any work which might roughen my finger-tips, for they have to be kept very sensitive for healing. I have never refused to treat anyone who could not pay. My wife and I have always had to live hand-to-mouth.”

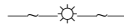
Quietly he added that his work was in line with the healing done by Jesus which the Church carried on for a time. “Yet we are condemned for it by many people,” he said.

After treatment

Beryl Jones interviewed one of his patients, a woman who had suffered from osteoarthritis. Previously three or four discs in her spinal column were deteriorating and she had a slight curvature of the spine. She had suffered a stiff neck and terrific head pains. For two months she could not turn her head. Doctors said they could only give pain-killing drugs.

After Richards' first treatment she could move her head and the pain had almost gone. Four more treatments and the neck had never since stiffened. For the first time in years she could clasp her hands behind her back.

"The curvature in my spine has almost disappeared," "I can walk straighter and feel better than I have done for years."



Jimmy Richards recalls as a little boy attending the Spiritualist church in Hebden Bridge, where the famous veteran, Jessie Greenwood, worked. Greenwood was the first female SNU President (1923-1925); she was followed by Robert Owen, featured in the lead story of this issue. To conclude is an article published by the "Two Worlds", January 31st, 1953, which records a remarkable report of healing; the story was also picked up by the Oldham Evening Chronicle entitled "Healing Hands":

Triumphs in Cancer Cure

HERE is a story of the triumph of spirit healing, a cure of cancer which has aroused great interest in Huddersfield because the patient is a mill owner who is a well-known man. He had been treated by a cancer specialist for three years.

Actually, he suffered from two cancers, one on the throat and the other on the tongue. Several operations and radium treatment proved of no avail.

Then a Huddersfield chemist, who had heard about the healing work of James Richards, of Delph, near Oldham, Lanes., advised the mill owner to see the medium, who spends every Thursday treating patients at the Saddleworth Spiritualist Church, Upper Mill, near Oldham.

It is quite a common occurrence for the medium a 59-year-old man who looks many years younger, to spend 12 hours treating patients at this church.

Though he had no interest in psychic matters, the business man went to the church as a "last resort." "I have no faith whatever in this work," he said.

URGENT CALL

He paid three visits to the church and had treatment on each occasion. There was an interval of just over two months before he could be fitted in again with another appointment. Then he asked the medium to see him because his condition was getting urgent. He could not eat properly and life was not worth living.

Once a week Richards called at the patient's house and treated him by his usual method, the laying-on of hands.

The cancer in the throat was the first to show results. It just healed—a bald statement, but that is what took place. The patient visited his cancer specialist, who confirmed that the throat was now healthy.

Next the healer got to work on the cancer in the tongue, which was about the size of an oyster. Gradually it began to loosen, to roll over on the tongue, where it hung from the mouth for about ten days. There was a cavity in the tongue where the cancer had been.

At this critical stage the healer was sent for again. Richards is controlled by a Chinese guide, who is helped by a pathologist well known on earth. The guide's advice was to leave the hanging cancer alone, saying it would gradually shrivel up and fall away.

The mill owner was advised to gargle in order to cleanse the mouth and throat thoroughly before going to bed.

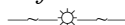
One evening, when his appetite returned, the patient went into the kitchen to get a meal and in eating it the cancer disappeared! In great excitement, he telephoned for the healer to come the following morning. An examination of the tongue showed it had healed, except for a little cavity.

Now the mill owner is back at work and has been able to assume most of the responsibility which formerly he had to delegate. He lives a normal life, eating three meals a day which he enjoys. Before, eating was unattractive because nothing had any taste. His speech had also become affected and it was difficult to understand everything that he said. Naturally, he is greatly excited at the marvellous cure that his friends describe as a miracle. "I can never really repay you," he said to the medium.

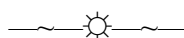
Richards devotes the whole of his life to healing. He obtains his diagnosis in trance and comes of a psychic family. His father was a trance medium and his mother also a healer.

He was reared in Spiritualism and can remember as a little boy attending the Spiritualist church in Hebden Bridge, where the famous veteran Jessy Greenwood, worked.

(We have not given the name and address of the cured patient, but they are available to bona-fide inquirers.)



This article on James (Jimmy) Richards is the result of the surviving Richards family giving Minister Val Williams information which was passed on to "Pioneer". Thanks are in order for the Richards family, Minister Williams and also Psychic News for sending me press copies.²⁰



²⁰ Contact Psychic News: <http://www.psychicnews.org.uk/contact>



Leslie Price has decided he will not continue to publish Psypioneer, following the retirement of Paul Gaunt as editor. In addition, Garth and Audrey Willey and their colleagues at Woodland Way in Australia have discontinued their website, which was the home for archived copies of Psypioneer.

However, Marc Demarest and the International Association for the Preservation of Occult and Spiritualist Periodicals (IAPSOP) have kindly offered to host all back issues of Psypioneer in a dedicated section of the IAPSOP web site.

The issues can be accessed via <http://psypioneer.iapsop.com/>

Google searches beginning “Psypioneer...” are now beginning to turn up links to Psypioneer articles on the IAPSOP site.

