

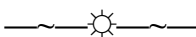
The PIONEER

The Pioneer is
now part of the
recommended
reading for the
Spiritualists'
National Union's
education courses.





Volume 10, No. 4: 2023



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Special thanks to Charles Coulston for his work in sub-editing this issue

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Annie Gertrude *née* Walker Findlay

In the 1940s James Arthur Findlay made the decision to bequeath his home, Stansted Hall, to the Spiritualists' National Union for the purpose of a college following his death and for the college to be named after him. ¹ However, on July 19th, 1963, Findlay's wife, Annie Gertrude (known as Gertrude), died, so it was decided that the College be opened early and that Findlay should remain in residence. Therefore, on 6th and 7th June, 1964, a meeting of members of a Management Committee was held and Findlay accepted the position of Honorary Member. Almost a year after Annie's death on July 24th, 1964, amidst the implementation of agreements and requests, James Arthur Findlay died. ²

Findlay's wife, Gertrude, receives little public mention for the support she gave her husband. Published below is a short tribute to her from *Psychic News*, August 3rd, 1963:

Findlay's wife passes

She was responsible for his psychic quest

Arthur Findlay with his wife in the grounds of their Essex home

ARTHUR FINDLAY has been bereaved by the passing at their Essex home last week of his wife, Gertrude, at the age of 82. A few days ago they celebrated the golden jubilee of their wedding — they were married on July 15, 1913 by the Bishop of Peterborough.

It is a great tribute to Mrs. Findlay that though her husband was regarded by many people as a rebel because of his books exposing the falsity of creedalism by revealing its pagan origin, she always stood by him.



Anglican upbringing

Even his espousal of Spiritualism must have been difficult for her in the early days, for hers was an orthodox upbringing. Originally she was a member of the Anglican Church, and she had a county background. Because of her temperament she naturally gravitated to such charitable work as being county president of the Distressed Gentlefolk's Aid Association and chairman of the local branch of the Victoria League.

She dispensed hospitality with typical grace when mediums and Spiritualists from all over the world were guests in their Stansted Hall mansion.

One of her last public functions, so far as Spiritualism is concerned, was to attend with her husband the *Psychic News* dinner held just four months ago.

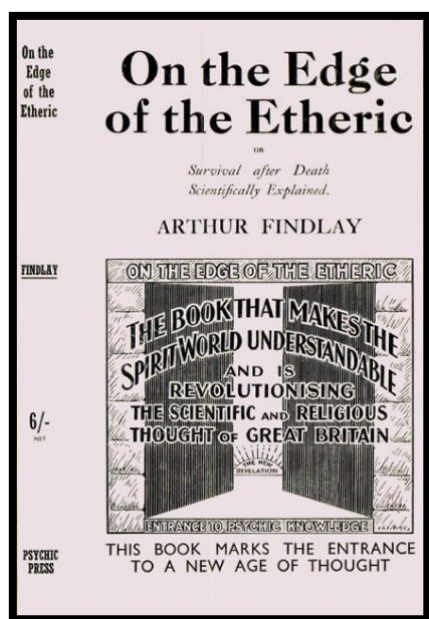
¹ January 1966: SNU General Secretary Richard Ellidge: "It was early in 1945 that Mr J. Arthur Findlay first approached the Union regarding Stansted Hall when it was occupied by the Red Cross as a Convalescent Home and when he resided at Rockingham Castle, Market Harborough. This was followed in 1950 by personal contact with W. Lorraine Haig, then President of the Union, who appointed a President's Committee to investigate and report on a College for Spiritualism. But it was not until January, 1954, that Mr Findlay wrote to Mr H. Dawson, who had been elected President six months previously, followed by meeting at Stansted, that a direct and close liaison between the Hall and the Union was established."

² For further information please see *Pioneer*, Vol. 1, No. 2: "The J. Arthur Findlay College, for the Advancement of Psychic Science — The early years".

Indirectly it was because of his wife that Findlay became acquainted with Spiritualism. In 1918 she was seriously ill and was taken to a Glasgow nursing home. To be near her Findlay stayed at an hotel.

Challenge to speaker

One Sunday evening he went for a stroll, merely to get some fresh air. He came across a Spiritualist church for the first time, for he did not know that such places even existed. Out of curiosity he attended the service. Later he challenged the speaker, saying that surely he could not expect any rational thinker to accept the statements he had made concerning spirit communication and Survival.

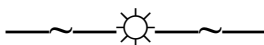


The result was that the speaker suggested Findlay should make his own inquiry and sit with a medium. Though his wife thought it was not a wise thing to do, but did not object, Findlay accompanied the speaker the next night to a Glasgow house. There he attended a seance with John Sloan, the voice medium he later made famous.

Outstanding evidence

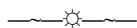
At that seance Findlay's father and a business partner both communicated with such outstanding evidence of identity that Findlay realised his previous thinking was wrong. No one in the room even knew his name, let alone had knowledge of his business affairs.

There followed a series of seances with Sloan, all recorded in Findlay's "On The Edge Of The Etheric," which speedily became Spiritualism's best-selling book.³



³ "On the Edge of the Etheric" was first published in September 1931; within the first six months there were twenty-three editions and a total of 20,000 copies were sold at 3/6. It was initially published by Rider & Co, London, and later published by Psychic Press.

Another snippet of the mental mediumship of Estelle Roberts



Estelle Roberts needs little introduction in the pages of Pioneer. Much of her mediumship can be found in the Pioneer booklets detailed on the last page of this issue. This article, published in *Psychic News*, May 20th, 1950, gives an excellent example of *not* making the message *fit* to a willing recipient: "I cannot make a canoe out of a raft," was Estelle's reply. "No, it is not for you."

Raft Or Canoe ?

MEDIUM REFUSED TO CHANGE DESCRIPTION AND WAS RIGHT

FOR A NUMBER OF DAYS A SAILOR CLUNG HELPLESSLY TO A RAFT WHICH DRIFTED IN THE COLD NORTHERN BRITISH WATERS. HIS SHIP HAD BEEN TORPEDOED. GRADUALLY HE SUCCUMBED TO THE EXTREME PRIVATION AND DIED.

Yet he lived on in another world and during Estelle Roberts's recent clairvoyant demonstration at the Victoria Hall returned to prove his existence.

His contact was Mrs. Nell Badsey, of 109 Cazenove Road, Stoke Newington, London, N.16, who had been a friend of his family.

Mrs. Badsey's husband had seen his spirit form about their home only that week, so his manifestation at Victoria Hall was not entirely unexpected.

WRONG CONTACT

Despite this, however, the sailor did not succeed in establishing the right contact at the outset. Through Estelle he gave a brief and terse description of his passing and mentioned the names of Ethel, Edie and Ken.

A man in the audience claimed recognition, but said the sailor had been in a canoe, not a raft. This did not satisfy either the sailor or Estelle.

"I cannot make a canoe out of a raft," was Estelle's reply. "No, it is not for you."

By giving his own name, George, and the name of Nellie, the sailor finally elicited recognition from Mrs. Badsey.



Estelle Roberts

Every detail connected with his passing was verified, Mrs. Badsey explaining in a letter to *Psychic News* that Ethel and Edie were his sisters and Ken his brother.

During the actual communication Estelle was prompted to ask: "Who is Dorothy ?" Immediately Mrs. Badsey replied: "His wife," thus clinching the sailor's efforts to identify himself.

KNOCKINGS IN HOME

Before making way for other communicators, he spoke of how he had endeavoured to attract Mrs. Badsey's attention by knocking in the home.

“Also he says there is a photograph of himself in a trunk,” Estelle stated, immediately adding: “In that trunk there is a photograph of a young man wearing the uniform of the Royal Horse Artillery.”

This was true, Mrs. Badsey said, and then gave recognition to a Margaret Henderson, an old friend, who referred to a private matter which was understood perfectly.

Another extremely evidential message concerned a woman who had gassed herself after suffering a protracted illness, namely cancer.

Again there was difficulty in finding the right recipient but Estelle, loathe to leave the contact, persisted until a woman was able to fully understand the details.



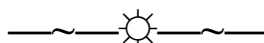
Drayton Thomas, who gave the address, delighted his audience with his dry humour and his fund of amusing anecdotes.⁴

He sought by means of various illustrations to provoke his audience into a new appreciation of the great wonder of spirit life and communication.

Such an appreciation of the fact that discarnate spirits were ever round and about us required, at times, an effort of the imagination.

Many Spiritualists of long standing became so familiar with the fact of survival that it sometimes became difficult for them to realise that the spirit people were truly present.

Familiarity dulled perception, but Thomas urged that all should realise anew the reality of the Beyond and its inhabitants.



⁴ The Rev. Drayton Thomas was a well-known supporter of Spiritualism; he was a member of the Council of the Society for Psychical Research. We can note the capacity of his involvement in the testing of the direct/independent voice medium Leslie Flint. Please see Pioneer, Vol. 8, No. 6: “Leslie Flint Public Séances”.

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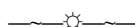
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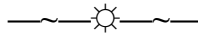
Britten Museum & Library

This page also has a selection of downloadable important subjects from the history of the Spiritualists’ National Union, designed to cover key topics for anyone studying one of our courses or for anyone looking to further their knowledge on the history of our movement.

Also, a link to all “Psypioneer” issues often referenced in Pioneer



Mrs Rose Champion de Crespigny



Mrs de Crespigny was without doubt a central figure in Spiritualism during the 1930s, a time when the various London societies were flourishing, a time when Spiritualism was in high demand with large public demonstrations. Two of these Spiritualist societies remain today; the oldest is the Marylebone Spiritualist Association (MSA), when on February 7th, 1872 about a dozen friends met at 16, David Street, Marylebone (on the site of which now stands Portman Mansions) and discussed the question of forming a Spiritualistic Society. On February 24th, 1960 its name was changed to the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (SAGB).⁵ The second oldest surviving Spiritualist organisation was 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.⁶



The editor of *Light*, the LSA's in-house, then a weekly, journal, George Lethem, announced on February 14th, 1935: "Mrs. De Crespigny: Transition of a Leader of Spiritualism"; below is a short quote from the full article published in *Psypioneer*, Vol. 1, No. 20: "Mrs De Crespigny and the British College Of Psychic Science":

"SPIRITUALISM has suffered a great loss – on the earth side of its activities – by the transition of Mrs. Philip Champion de Crespigny, Hon. Principal of the British College of Psychic Science, which took place on Sunday afternoon (February 10th), after a short illness. The funeral takes place tomorrow (Friday, February 15th), at 11.30 a.m., at Golders Green Crematorium.

"Sunday evening next (February 17th), the Marylebone Spiritualist Association meeting at Queen's Hall, London, will be conducted, in co-operation with the British College, as a memorial service for Mrs. De Crespigny, who was a vice-president of the M.S.A., and a frequent speaker at the Queen's Hall and other meetings. Mr. George Craze, president, will be in the chair, and, with Mr. Ernest Hunt, will speak for the Association; and Mrs. Hewat McKenzie, joint founder (with Mr. Hewat McKenzie) of the British College of Psychic Science, will speak for the College. The meeting begins at 7 o'clock.

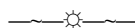
"Mrs. de Crespigny was an authoress of repute; and, in addition to her Spiritualist activities (which took her all over the country at frequent intervals), she took a very keen interest in literary societies and gatherings. She wrote a number of novels and detective stories, which had considerable success.⁷ Her latest book was autobiographical and was entitled *This World and Beyond*.

⁵ See *Pioneer*, Vol. 6, No. 1: "Visit to the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain".

⁶ Further information can be found in the lead article of this issue: "The early years to establish a national organisation". Further, in *Pioneer*, Vol. 3, No. 3: "Visit to the College of Psychic Studies".

⁷ She was also an accomplished artist of some repute; some of her work can be seen online.

“Mrs. de Crespigny was a daughter of Admiral the Rt. Hon. Sir Astley Cooper Key, G.C.B., who was for a period First Sea Lord. She was married whilst still in her teens to Lt. Philip de Crespigny, R.N., second son of Sir Claud de Crespigny, the third baronet, but had long been a widow. She was chairman of the Psychic Research Circle founded by her at the Lyceum Club, and was on the Council of the Authors’ Society.”



In April 1920 James Hewat McKenzie founded the British College of Psychic Science (not to be confused with the post-war College of Psychic Science). McKenzie died on August 29th, 1929 but the BCPS continued with great success, largely due to his wife, Barbara McKenzie, and many of its active workers. On January 1st, 1939 the College combined with the International Institute for Psychical Research, changing their name to the International Institute for Psychical Investigation.⁸ In 1947 the College closed; it appears that with the outbreak of war the organisation had a difficult time and its library and records are said to have been lost or destroyed by bombing and the IIPi collapsed.⁹

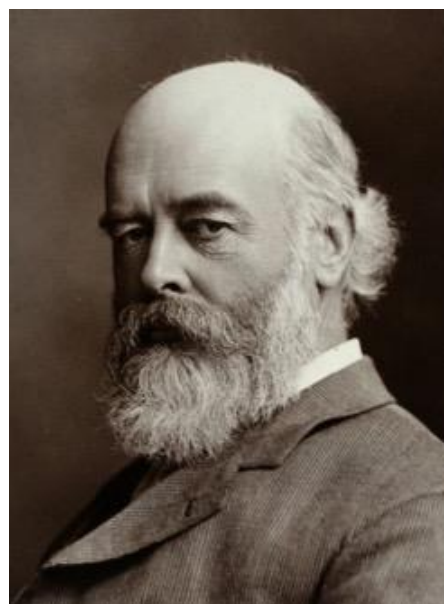
Noted above in Mrs. de Crespigny’s obituary is a reference to: “Her latest book was autobiographical and was entitled *This World and Beyond*.” It was published by Cassell & Co. Ltd in the year of her death, 1934, and Sir Oliver Lodge wrote the Foreword, dated May 8th of the same year. I will quote some of her recorded experiences below; firstly, this is what Sir Oliver Lodge said:

FOREWORD

by

Sir Oliver Lodge

MY friend Mrs. de Crespigny has asked me to write an introduction to her book on the *Beyond*. She is so well-known that it seems to me quite unnecessary, but assuming it is any help, I agree. The book is practically an autobiography, and relates her struggles with scepticism at the beginning, until an interview with Mrs. Etta Wriedt of Detroit opened her eyes to the truth. Mrs. De Crespigny had what may be called a scientific bringing up, which rendered her rather specially sceptical; but she had a mind that was open, and the evidence was too strong. Mrs. Wriedt is a good medium, with whom I have had sittings myself, her special phenomenon being what is called “the direct voice,” which sometimes was so loud that, when sitting with the windows open, as Mr. Appleyard of Sheffield testifies, people walking in the road stopped outside the railings sometimes to listen to what was going on.



Mrs. de Crespigny’s father was President of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, and First Sea-Lord of the Admiralty, and was made an F.R.S. She received ultimately very convincing messages both from her father and her husband, of which she tells. The

⁸ See *Psypioneer*, Vol. 7, No. 2: “Amalgamation of the British College of Psychic Science and the International Institute for Psychical Research Under the Name of the International Institute for Psychic Investigation”.

⁹ For further information on the British College of Psychic Science, please see *Psypioneer*, Vol. 3, No. 8: “A Knight Errant of Psychic Science: James Hewat McKenzie”.

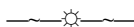
result is that she has devoted her life to the work, has accepted the Honorary Principalship of the Psychic College, at 15, Queen's Gate, where she continues to do good work.

One episode in the book bears on a much controverted subject. She went through the Fire Test, and relates her experience,—it is a thing for which Crookes' testimony is very good, though the extraordinary nature of the phenomenon makes it difficult to believe without confirmatory evidence, which is here forthcoming. But the whole book represents the passage from incredulity to conviction, not only about survival, but about many other more unlikely things; and I commend it to anyone interested or willing to allow their mind to become interested in a subject which in spite of a growing tendency towards open-mindedness is still too much taboo.

But Mrs. de Crespigny has many ideas, some of which sound extraordinary but have a bearing on deep questions of Theology. She has expressed some of these to lofty spirits on the other side and has received from them approbation to a surprising extent. The most striking of these she narrates at the end of this book, and those who know the reverence usually felt for a personality as high as "Imperator"¹⁰ may well be astonished at her recorded replies, yet they will feel it is a genuine record. Perhaps there may be truth in other modes of expression arrived at by the intuition to which she lays some claim.

8th May, 1934.

Oliver Lodge.



Mrs de Crespigny's initial turning point to the acceptance of *survival after death* was her investigation in 1914, where we find her attending her first séance for the direct/independent voice with Mrs Etta Wriedt, of Detroit, then on a visit to London. She was introduced anonymously by a Theosophist acquaintance who was also a Spiritualist, Col. Johnson. Mrs de Crespigny exhibits all the hallmarks of the comment made by Sir Oliver Lodge regarding her *scientific bringing up, which rendered her rather specially sceptical*. The report below shows her cautious and critical approach to all the possibilities, which may account for her sittings with the medium, taken from pages 84/98:

Then, not long before the machines of war ripped their way through the peace of nations, and turned life into temporary chaos, I met Mrs. Etta Wriedt.

It was in May 1914 !

Everyone with any knowledge of this subject of psychic research knows Mrs. Wriedt as a celebrated medium for the direct voice. Her home is in Detroit, but at one time she spent a great deal of time in London and was well-known to all the prominent pioneers of the moment at that time. To her I owe one of the greatest privileges of my life—my first introduction to Sir Oliver Lodge, who has many a time extended a helping hand

¹⁰ Please see *Psypioneer*, Vol. 8, Nos. 3/4: "The "Controls" of Stainton Moses ("M.A. Oxon.") – A.W. Trethewy".

when I have been floundering in doubt or difficulty.

I was introduced to Mrs. Wriedt by a man who at the time was a mere acquaintance, afterwards developing into an intimate friend—the late Colonel E. R. Johnson, who knew nothing of my life in the past, had never met my husband and who first mentioned Mrs. Wriedt's name to me in casual conversation.

I may as well confess at once that I was full of prejudice; no objections on principle, nor disbelief in the possibility of communication; but I was “up against” mediums in any form, connecting them with fraud, hoaxes and audiences of credulous people ready to swallow anything that came along, which latter is an attitude often adopted by persons toward others who happen to believe something they themselves do not!

All I can say in extenuation is that I took the means at hand to correct these erroneous conclusions, and quickly realized that I was faced with a marvellous truth that every sense I possessed of logic, understanding and reason told me was fundamental and had been there waiting for man to open the door to it ever since the world began.

I had disliked the very word *medium*, although now I know no other term so aptly describes the living organism that appears to be the link between physical, etheric and astral conditions—the intermediary wave-length that can contact both worlds. Every known force in nature requires a medium through which it can make itself manifest; without it our senses are unaware of its existence. Electricity, magnetism, gravitation must have a means of manifestation. Séances, sittings, circles were all terms which in my ignorance were the expression of the entire gamut of trickery and imposition; but in spite of that I was ever conscious of the inborn conviction that somewhere lay the clue to communication between ourselves and those who had passed on to another world—a common-sense world of some kind, unconnected with harps and wings, and that if we could only put our hand on the key we could open the door. It was something impossible to put into words—an echo perhaps that clung to me and had come with me into this life from somewhere else?

So, as I was always ready for adventure, I felt the experiment could do no harm even if it led to nowhere; through the kind offices of Colonel Johnson a sitting was arranged, my name being kept in the background, and on a fine bright day in May I found myself at a house in Wimbledon which I learnt later had once belonged to Mr. W. T. Stead.

The knowledge of technical procedure in psychical research has so advanced during the last twenty years, and experiences in the séance-room become so widespread that it seems superfluous to go into a detailed description of the conditions under which my first séance was held; but as I hope to interest readers who perhaps have not been able to gain first-hand experience for themselves, I will give a brief description of the technical differences between a “direct voice” séance and that of the variety known as “trance.”

Etta Wriedt never went into trance, so far as I know. She remained throughout the sitting her fully conscious self, entering into the conversations in her ordinary voice, remembering afterwards all that had taken place, and on many occasions overlapping with her own conversation the voices of communicators trying to “come through.”

On this first occasion we were alone, in a large room empty of furniture beyond the chairs we sat on—I think there was a sofa in one corner of the room—with a distance of five or six feet between us, and the aluminium trumpet—used to assist those operating on the other side in concentrating the vibrations, as a megaphone is used here—at my feet between myself and Mrs. Wriedt.

The room was darkened, an essential with this medium in obtaining the best results; for the same reason that a wireless message will travel considerably farther at night than

in the daytime. The action of light has a destructive effect on ectoplasm and all phenomena dependent upon the use of it, and as the movements of the trumpet and no doubt the “larynx” formed by the unseen operators and instrumental in the transmission of the voices involve the use of this tenuous substance thrown out by the physical body, darkness is the greatest assistance in this form of demonstration.

At the same time the phenomenon has been produced in my own room when conditions made it impossible to exclude the light completely, and I have seen the levitation and movement of the trumpet take place without human contact of any kind.

Mrs. Murphy Lydy, a direct voice medium also well-known in America, produced the voice success fully in full daylight.

It was rather a weird experience, sitting in the pitch dark with a total stranger waiting for—I hardly knew what !

But once the communications began the commonplaceness of the situation and the voices robbed the phenomenon of any feeling of ghostliness or uncanniness. I did not recognize the voices, but the explanation of that is simple enough. The difference in tone of *physical* voices is due to the formation of the organs through which they are produced, and as these organs disintegrate with the physical body, the physical voice as we knew it can never be counted on in the different conditions. Some people, I believe, do recognize some of the voices that come through, but I say frankly I have never done so. Mannerisms, tricks in expression and so on continue and can be identified; I once recognized an uncle by his laugh before he gave me his name.

Very shortly after the light was turned out I was touched on the knee, Mrs. Wriedt still talking from the same spot five or six feet away, and immediately afterwards I heard a voice speaking through the trumpet. It was a physical voice and would have been audible to any number of persons had they been in the room. There was no question of imagination or telepathy; it was an objective voice, and as Mrs. Wriedt continued to talk, I was obliged to ask her to desist as someone was trying to speak.

Mrs. Wriedt described a figure she saw come into the room, a good description of my husband “in dark blue uniform with gold lace and shiny things on the shoulders.” (Epauettes.) ¹¹ She said he was dancing—we had both been very fond of dancing—and before he spoke *a bar from our favourite waltz “Daheim” was whistled through the trumpet !*

A voice then that claimed to be that of my husband spoke. He called me by my Christian name and seemed to be greatly agitated, but as it was not like my husband’s voice, and moreover spoke with a pronounced American accent, it was not surprising that I doubted the identity of the speaker ! Elucidation has to come gradually. But although in the first flush of a novel experience, and ignorance of the laws governing the situation, I doubted the claims of the speaker, I knew myself to be face to face with a marvel greater than the birth of steam engines, aeroplanes or anything yet discovered by the ingenuity and perseverance of mankind.

I was “up against” the most marvellous incident in my life !

The voice spoke for some time asking and answering questions; the answers seemed to me a little illusive, unsatisfying. I wanted *proof*—indubitable—complete. We all do—incontrovertible proof, that will save us the trouble of further doubt and inquiry—proof, that we shall never get without patience and persistent seeking.

¹¹ Rose married Philip Augustus Champion de Crespigny in 1878, a Royal Navy officer who died in September 1912.

I wanted to set my own tests, a line of action and a frame of mind that always seems to inhibit the best results. Patience and a certain attitude of tolerance when things do not go exactly as we expect, hardly ever fail to bring proof in the end. That, at least, is my experience, but the evidence must be furnished by the operators on the other side in their own way. To attempt to impose our way on them while we are so ignorant of their limitations generally ends in disaster.

After this, another voice claimed recognition, giving a Christian and surname which at first were unintelligible. Finally the speaker explained who he was by reference to my husband by a name that only a few members of his family had used, and I recognized him as a brother-in-law who had passed over as the result of an accident at polo fifteen years previously.

I was much surprised. I considered him one of the most unlikely people to speak to me, but I asked what he was doing and if he was happy.

“Quite happy,” he replied. “I am studying the subject of evolution and am much interested in all such subjects now.”

“I have always been interested in natural science,” I replied.

“Yes, I know, but I never expected to find you here.”

“Why not?” I asked. “Communication with another world has always seemed to me one of the solvable problems of the future.”

“Well, you are the only member of the family who has tried to speak to us.”

That was true, but might have been a guess. He then went on to remind me of a dance we had been to when we were both young and of some flowers I had worn. Which was correct.

He added, my husband had asked him to come through and assure me it was he who had spoken first.

I had other visitors, including one who, although a stranger to me on this plane, has since become a valued link with the other.

She said she was Florence Nightingale and showed me her lamp as an “identification mark”—the Lady of the Lamp. It was a luminous disk about the size of a bicycle lamp and as sharply defined. She waved it several times close to my face and I put out my hand and passed it right through the light. A case of fools stepping in where angels fear to tread ! I certainly would not do such a thing now !

I left Mrs. Wriedt’s not satisfied. There is no need to deal with the usual objections urged by the novice, and which any ordinarily intelligent investigator is of course keeping in mind, such as—Ventriloquism?

On one or two occasions Mrs. Wriedt was speaking at the same time as the voice through the trumpet. I had to ask her to stop. Also, I am told ventriloquism is not possible in the dark. ¹²

Telepathy?

At this first sitting this might have accounted for the *matter* of the communications, but not for the *manner* of conveying them. No one of any intelligence who has ever

¹² Please see Pioneer, Vol. 5, No. 6: “Direct - Independent Voice Phenomena – *Could this be simulated by ventriloquism?*” – “Ventriloquism, Considered as A Possible Explanation of ‘Independent Voice’ Phenomena”.

heard the direct voice in favourable circumstances will try to account for it through telepathy. It has no bearing on the problem.

The subconscious mind?

Even this overworked beast of burden may plead not guilty. The subconscious mind cannot—it is to be presumed—create an objective voice and, with telepathy, may be dismissed as of no assistance.

The identity of the sitters remained the knotty point. Mrs. Wriedt might have been suspected of looking up family names, if by any chance she had managed to learn my own, and refer to members of my family correctly. There had been nothing absolutely convincing in anything that had taken place.

In fact there had been a big error in a statement made.

The voice alleged to be that of my husband had said, among other things: “Thank you for the flowers !” I, wishing to make my own tests, replied:

“Do you mean flowers I put on your grave?” and I thought the answer had been “Yes”—which was quite wrong !

YET, there were points that required a good deal of explaining away.

I went over the evidence carefully bit by bit, weighing the pros and cons with as little prejudice as possible; convinced only upon one point. Whoever their owners might be, the circumstances of my surroundings and my own commonsense indicated that the voices came from that country from which Shakespeare in direct contradiction of the Bible, has told us there is no return.

There seemed to be no other explanation—if my ordinary senses were of any use to me at all ! And in the main they had spoken of affairs that could not possibly have been known to the medium.

My first argument took a more or less negative form. If *any* person could communicate from the other side, my husband should be equally able to do so; and if he could, he *would*—a point those who have lost anyone for whom they greatly care would do well to consider.

But—and it was a big *but* in those first days of uncertainty—the voice was not *his* voice, and he had made little mistakes in diction and phrases it was difficult to account for. I had not learnt then, as I have already explained, that the timbre, the actual ring of the old voice had presumably gone for ever.

But my brother-in-law, who had given his name and referred to trivial incidents that could not have been known to the medium, nor found in any reference book—how was he to be explained?—and how about the bar of “Daheim” that had been whistled as an introduction?

Thought-reading? But that was merely suggesting a fresh miracle to account for the first; and anyway it did not explain the *voices*—nor the whistling.

With so much uncertainty in my mind it might have been a long time before I visited Mrs. Wriedt again. I should have done so eventually, because I was puzzled—and when you have an inquiring mind you are not content to remain so; but the following day Colonel Johnson, whom I have already mentioned, spoke to me after a Theosophical lecture we had both attended; he said he had a message to give me.

He had visited Mrs. Wriedt that morning, had taken notes of the message on the spot,

being an expert at doing so in the dark, and written them out afterwards.

“I don’t know what it means,” he explained, “but was told you would understand, and I give it to you verbatim.”

A voice, it seemed, had spoken to him from the trumpet in a state of great agitation, giving my husband’s Christian and surnames, saying his wife had been there the previous day and had gone away doubting his identity; that she had misunderstood him, and he was most anxious Colonel Johnson should put it right. He said her father, Sir Cooper Key, was there, very happy and they had spent many hours together.

He then said most earnestly: “She misunderstood me—she thought I said she put flowers on my grave. But it was her mistake. I have no grave. My body was cremated.”

He then added: “It is very difficult to do this—as difficult as she found her painting when she first began. Ask her,” he went on, “if she remembers the Galaton—on the Australian Station. This will be understood.

“I am sorry I mismanaged it. (The séance.) We often do the first time.”

It is quite impossible to describe the overwhelming flood of conviction this message brought ! It was as a crowning point of evidence after a lifetime of inquiry and honest speculation. I had been knocking all my life, and the door had at last opened.

No one but my husband would have sent me that message. Those who have read the previous pages may understand the full force of it. The name of course should have been *Galatea*, showing how little Colonel Johnson understood the point of it.

None of it was known to the medium, nor to Colonel Johnson. Even if she had had the means of finding out so many details in my husband’s life, she would only have had two days in which to do it. He had left the Navy thirty-four years previously, and to have suspected her of consulting ancient Navy lists, which are not at all easy to get at, would have been childish. Nor, if she had had the opportunity of doing so, would she have had any reason for selecting the *Galatea* among all the ships he had served in as of special interest. In its very triviality lay the weight of the evidence.

At the séance my husband had been followed, so Colonel Johnson said, by his own wife who had died some years before I made his acquaintance, and we had been unknown to one another during her earth life. She, too, sent me a message, to the effect that “Mrs. de Crespigny’s father was present with her, and wished to say something about Malta, where she had been when she was a little girl.”

These messages, may it be noted, were brought to me by a *third* person, who knew nothing of my past life nor of the names given to him and passed on to me. They were not drawn from his subconscious mind as the information had never been known to him, and it was all sufficiently arresting to send me again to Mrs. Wriedt—this time to have all doubt removed, and to be convinced of a truth that is indeed the Pearl of great price.

At the next sitting with Mrs. Wriedt my husband was preceded by his brother, who said the message about the *Galatea* had been sent to me as a proof of his identity, as he knew all it would convey to me, and he had been so distressed at having been previously misunderstood. My husband followed, called me by the old names and again mentioned the *Galatea*, and did I remember how often he had told me of the good times they had?

Trivial? Of course, most of life is made up of trivialities. If he had told me the names of our children, the date of my marriage, or of his own death, the medium might have looked it up in a book; if he had given me a dissertation on philosophy, it would have been so unlike him I should not have believed in him at all; if he had described his life in

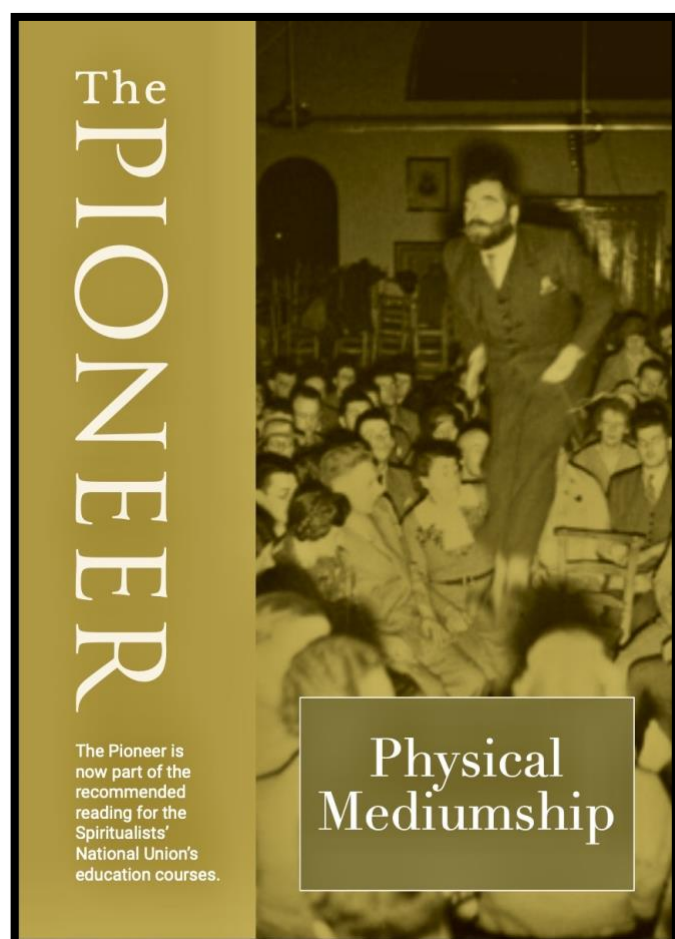
that other world, I had first to be sure there was another world to describe. It was the reference to the little insignificant things in life—things known perhaps to him and me alone, that drove the truth home as could nothing else in the world. How would you prove your identity to someone who doubted it on the telephone?

I remember a case in point. At the time the search for the poor little Lindbergh baby was going on, the Captain of the liner which had a short time before conveyed Colonel Lindbergh from England wished to speak to him on the telephone. Colonel Lindbergh, distracted, poor man, as he was, insisted upon the establishment of the communicator's identity before he would answer the call, and it was only after a trivial incident that had happened on board, known to them both, had been mentioned that he consented to go to the telephone.

My husband and I at that sitting had some really intimate talk, and when he said he must go my eyes filled with tears.

Although it was pitch-dark and my voice was under perfect control, he exclaimed at once: "Don't cry !"

For Direct/Independent voice phenomena see the Pioneer PDF booklet as detailed on the last page of this issue, which includes:



Mrs Everitt was probably the first direct-voice medium in this country

Susanna Harris

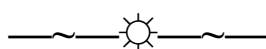
Leslie Flint

Estelle Roberts

Jack Webber

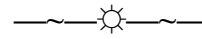
John Sloan

Einer Nielsen





JOHN BRITNELL AND HARRY EDWARDS



John Britnell was the Father of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers. Britnell, I understand, gave his first demonstration of spiritual healing in late 1948, forming a band of healers under his leadership. A year later Britnell formed the Essex Healers Association. Among other important groups founded was “The Bristol Society of Spiritual Healing” (1952); Dennis Fare drew up the constitution. In the summer of 1954, at the initiative of John Britnell, Gordon Turner and two others held a meeting and minuted the start of “The National Federation of Spiritual Healers”. After the meeting they wrote to Harry Edwards (1893-1976) asking him to be President, which he accepted, and “The National Federation of Spiritual Healers” (NFSH) was formed.

It is reported that in 1970 Harry Edwards asked Dennis Fare to start the “Bristol District & Somerset Association of Healers”, as the “Bristol Society of Spiritual Healers” was no longer in existence. Edwards continued as NFSH President until the Annual Meeting on 21st July, 1973, when he was appointed as Hon. Life President. He had said in 1972 that he would stop being the active President. Dennis Fare was elected at the AGM as the second President of the NFSH.¹³

John Britnell was never President of the NFSH, as is sometimes thought, but he was the founding President of Essex Healers and became the NFSH Chairman in the summer of 1954. He remained Chairman until his death on December 16th, 1957. The NFSH HQ was at Britnell’s home in Ilford, Essex until the end of July 1958. From August 1958, the HQ was moved to Burrows Lea, Shere, as Harry Edwards offered the NFSH rent-free office space and his sister, Dorothy Commerford, became the NFSH Secretary.



Today “The National Federation of Spiritual Healers” is known as “The Healing Trust”.

Below was published in *Psychic News*, April 22nd, 1950, which gives a brief overview as to how Healing was pioneered to make its mark on the public and the attempts in breaking down the barriers between healing, the medical profession and the church. The Pioneer booklet of all previous articles on “Healing & Healers” (details on the last page of this issue) will highlight some of the struggles with the medical professions and the established Church:

¹³ Dennis Fare passed on June 17th, 2011. His wife Doreen, also a spiritual healer, died on February 20th, 2015.

Doctors and Clergy See Healing Film

THE film of Harry Edwards's healing work was shown to an audience at the Ritz Cinema, Billericay, last Wednesday at a special preview to which doctors and clergymen were invited.

After the screening John Britnell, the Essex healer, volunteered to answer questions.

One person wanted to know whether faith was responsible for the cures which were effected by healers.

While not ruling out the possibility that this played an important part in the road to recovery Britnell was at pains to explain that faith was a product of the conscious mind and could not account for all cases of healing.

AFTER TREATMENT

Spirit healers, he said, contacted the spirit of the patient and this contact worked through the superconscious mind to the seat of the trouble.

In answer to a question asking whether instantaneous cures ever took place, the healer said that such examples were known, but all healers, and especially Harry Edwards, urged patients to continue treatment after such a cure as it often took some time for muscles which had been inactive for a long period to accustom themselves to regular usage.

Do healers get paid for their work ? asked one member of the audience.

Britnell, in reply, declared that he only knew of one case where a healer made a specific charge. All the others gave their services freely.

"With regard to visiting patients," he said, "healers often pay the travelling expenses out of their own pockets and in addition sometimes take something for the patient, such as a bunch of grapes."

PARSON'S INTEREST

He knew of one case where a healer was up at 5 o'clock every morning and was not home from work until five in the evening. Then, after tea, he was at work healing patients until 10 p.m. for five or six nights a week.

"I can assure you," averred Britnell, "that we don't get rich out of healing."

One or two of the medicos and clergy showed interest in the film and questions.

The Rev. H. C. Johnson, of Ramsden Heath, told our reporter that he liked the film.

"You cannot dismiss this as all humbug," he said, "but I cannot say anything about it because I have never seen a demonstration of healing."

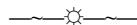
He expressed the view that he would like to see a more detailed film on the subject which devoted more time to technicalities.

Mr. Edwards, the manager of the cinema, arranged in the foyer a very fine display of photographs associated with the healing work of his famous namesake, who is, however, no relation.

Stills from the film, shots of Edwards at work all over the country at public demonstrations, and some exteriors and interiors of the healer's sanctuary at Shere

formed a very attractive three-panel display. Some recent front-page stories in *Psychic News* featuring Harry Edwards were also included.

This will be on view in the foyer again when the film is shown to the public at this cinema during May.



The article continued below:

EDWARDS TALKS ON HEALING

ABOUT thirty sick persons were treated, some of whom received instantaneous benefit, during Harry Edwards's visit to the Romford Christian Spiritualist Society on Good Friday.

In one case a woman who had broken her wrist, which remained fixed after medical attention, was able to flex the afflicted joint freely after the healer's ministrations.

A person suffering great pain with arthritis in the knee was able to walk normally after Edwards had treated the affected joints.

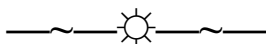
A man who was unable to raise his hand above his head due to a wound in the shoulder received great benefit from Edwards. He could raise his arm straight up after the healer had freed the locked joint.

Before his demonstration Edwards gave a short address, during which he dedicated a table specially made for healing services, and then went on to speak of the gift of healing.

When a man realises the importance of the spirit body and the influence it has on the physical body, declared Edwards, it will be necessary for him to change his way of living so that harmony may exist between the two.

Edwards averred that to make a person happy was in itself tantamount to performing a healing work. Healing was a simple, but divine act, he said, and he believed that anyone who had the desire to help the sick would be able to do so by the power that was within them.

He hoped that this fact would become so well known that in time to come healing would be a normal family affair.



Spiritualist Healers of the Past – Jessie Curl:

Medium and healer Mrs Jessie Curl today is much forgotten, like many of our pioneers who were once so well known in their active years, maybe more so with Jessie Curl, who was an internationally acclaimed healer in numerous countries, where she travelled and demonstrated with astonishing results and was known for the long-lasting results of her patients.

Jessie Curl was known as a psychic healer but worked somewhat differently from the more established routine of healers, as can be noted in some of the reports. She would also mingle with the audience to treat some patients.

Below are some published reports and quotes taken from Psychic News: ¹⁴



December 24th, 1949:

Healing by A Glance

REMARKABLE RESULTS CLAIMED FOR MEDIUM

TESTIMONIALS FROM DOCTORS DECLARING PATIENTS TO BE FIT AFTER RECEIVING PSYCHIC HEALING FROM HER WERE CLAIMED BY MRS. JESSIE CURL, THE AUSTRALIAN MEDIUM, TO BE IN HER POSSESSION.

She made this statement during her demonstration of healing and clairvoyance at the Colchester Spiritualist Church recently.

Mrs. Curl, who has demonstrated in seven different countries, has an unusual healing gift. It is sufficient in some instances for her merely to look at a patient in order to bring about a cure.

CALL FOR PATIENTS

Explaining that she worked on a very rapid vibration, Mrs. Curl commenced her demonstration by requesting anyone afflicted with pain to raise a hand.

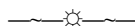
One person in the audience responded, rather diffidently, and in answer to the medium's question, "What is the trouble?" replied, "Rheumatism." For a few seconds Mrs. Curl pointed towards the patient and, our correspondent claims, the pain was removed.

A girl was treated for fits and the next day her parents reported that she had had the first night free from fits in four years.

Another patient, a woman, declared that she could feel sensation in her arm which had been paralysed for fifteen years.

After the healing demonstration, Mrs. Curl gave clairvoyance during which, our correspondent adds, all the messages relayed were acknowledged.

Mrs. Curl, who is touring Britain, asks that anyone wishing to contact her may do so c/o Mr. Ernest Everson, 23... .



¹⁴ Psychic News archives are freely available online.

February 25th, 1950:

THEY HELD UP THEIR HANDS FOR HEALING

Treatment from A Distance

A PROFOUND impression was created by the clairvoyance and psychic healing of Mrs. Jessie Curl at a special meeting of the Northampton Psychic Society in the Carnegie Hall.

Her demonstration, in the presence of a large audience, was preceded by a lecture on esoteric philosophy by Major Leith-Hay-Clark, in which with marked fluency he proved how the cultivation of a philosophical outlook creates a balanced mind not unduly upset by ill or good.

At the outset, Mrs. Curl commanded the close attention of her hearers by announcing that she intended to exercise her powers of healing by remote control from the platform, which was quite new to Northampton meetings.

SCORES RESPONDED

She then asked those suffering from rheumatism or other pains to hold up their hands. Scores of both sexes instantly responded.

Without leaving the platform she started singling out sufferers and some of them who had not been able to outstretch their arms for years gradually responded to her directions and imitated the movements of her own arms until pains began to ease.

“I have not been able to do this for twelve years,” was the grateful outburst of one man.

Another sufferer, a woman, when asked if her pain was getting easier, said, “I can feel a tingling sensation, but I can feel the pain getting less.” Eventually the woman exclaimed that the pain had gone.

In order to establish close contact Mrs. Curl left the platform and began treatment in the body of the hall. With a young woman who was stone deaf she started stroking her ears and then turning to the chairman asked him to speak to the sufferer.

To the amazement of all, and not least that of the young woman herself, she was able to hear all he said and repeat correctly save one word—origins instead of oranges.

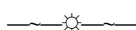
This triumph was followed by an outburst of applause.

ASTHMA EASED

After a few moments another patient, suffering with asthma, declared with delight that her wheezing had gone.

Finally, after more than an hour's demonstration, during which she had provided a succession of thrills and much food for thought, Mrs. Curl, although obviously feeling the physical strain, courageously asked: “Are there any more in pain who wish to come along? Don't hesitate. I love doing this healing work.”

In expressing thanks to her, the chairman, Mr. T. Hardiman Scott, said that Mrs. Curl had been sitting up all night with a cancer patient in hospital at Glasgow.



Numerous reports of Jessie Curl's British tour were published in *Psychic News* from the late 1940s to the early 1950s, with many testimonies of those who received healing of their improvement and in numerous cases of lasting positive effects on their health. The weekly *Psychic News* issues are archived at the University of Manitoba and can be read online or downloaded free.¹⁵

On May 18th, 1950 Curl demonstrated at the Corn Exchange in Bedford. The headline of the *Psychic News* for May 27 was "She Heals Without Need Of Touch".¹⁶ It can be noted that some articles and references to Jessie Curl generally address her as the Australian medium. The meeting was organised by the Bedford Psychic Society and was presided over by Mr B. Abdy Collins¹⁷; the article notes:

"In his introduction he cleared up a fallacy which has been surrounding Mrs. Curl since her arrival in this country.

"She was not an Australian, as had been frequently reported, he said, but an Englishwoman, born in Norwich. She had travelled extensively in America and Australia, a fact which gave rise to the error."



The Bedford meeting was a great success by all accounts, as are the accounts from other venues during her British tour. However, in October 1953 Curl was convicted in a New York court of "diagnosing", as it was illegal for an unorthodox practitioner to diagnose patients or even prescribe a diet.

April 17th, 1954:

Healer Is Convicted on Charge Of 'Diagnosing'

NEW YORK CITY HAS RIGID LAWS GOVERNING THE ACTIVITIES OF HEALERS. IT IS ILLEGAL FOR AN UNORTHODOX PRACTITIONER TO DIAGNOSE PATIENTS' ILLS OR PRESCRIBE A DIET.

MRS. JESSIE CURL, THE WELL-KNOWN MEDIUM WHO TOURED BRITAIN SOME YEARS AGO AND CONDUCTED HEALING MEETINGS IN MANY LARGE CENTRES, HAS RECENTLY RUN FOUL OF THIS LAW AND BEEN CONVICTED.

IN THIS ARTICLE, A NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT TELLS HOW MRS. CURL CAME BEFORE THE UNITED STATES' COURT AFTER A VISIT BY POLICE AGENTS PROVOCATEUR.

¹⁵ PN issues are available from the first issue in 1932 to 2010; Google "University of Manitoba psychic news".

¹⁶ May 27th, 1950.

¹⁷ For further information on Abdy Collins please see *Pioneer*, Vol. 8, No. 3: "B. Abdy Collins – Psychological Researcher, Spiritualist and Author".

In October last year Mrs. Curl was arrested in New York on a charge of “diagnosing.” Now, months later, she has appeared in court and been convicted.

Four policewomen, disguised and feigning need for healing, came to her clinic at a New York hotel.

They put leading questions to her, such as: “Have I cancer? Have I gall-bladder trouble? Have I ulcers?” to which Mrs. Curl answered, “I must not diagnose in New York.”

Again they urged, “Oh, do tell me.”

“I could analyse it,” the healer said, and their testimony on those four words led to her conviction.



Accused by the policewomen of massage and prescribing diet, Mrs. Curl was absolved on those counts but judged guilty of “diagnosing.”

New York law forbids the diagnosing of physical ailments without a medical licence.

Designed to protect the public from fraudulent healers, New York laws are strict, and the City’s judges are hard-headed.

Therefore, it is significant that the three judges before whom Jessie Curl appeared should have made it plain that they did not like the task of convicting her.

On the contrary, they said repeatedly that they were impressed by her integrity, her sincerity, her honesty and her stature as an individual.

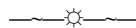
Mrs. Curl, despite this upset, has been earning an important place for herself in the U.S.A.

In New York City alone she has won the affection, gratitude and esteem of a host of individuals, some of whom she has healed of numerous ailments.

Recently I attended several of her meetings. I have seen her heal a young boy who was cross-eyed, and who became normal after six treatments.

A woman, Mrs. Kipsonia, who could not part her legs, now walks well.

Sentence will be passed on Jessie Curl on April 27.



Curl was defended by Kenneth W. Greenawalt, a staunch advocate of religious liberty. The case was tried at the court of Special Sessions, City and County of New York on March 2nd, 3rd and 8th. Decision was reserved on Greenawalt's motion to dismiss the information. On March 23rd, a decision of guilty was recorded, resulting in a fine of \$250.00 (£87 10s).

June 4th, 1955:

HEALER'S VICTORY

WHEN I [Psychic News] talked with Jessie Curl following her arrival from the United States it was exactly a year after her conviction by a New York court for diagnosing.

Although the state laws of New York deal harshly with Spiritualists and several charges were preferred against Mrs. Curl, diagnosing was the only one that could be made to stick.

There can be no doubt that the moral victory was hers. When she left the court Mrs. Curl went straight back the same day to resume healing at the scene of her arrest. Although the healing sessions were continued for the next three months there was no further complaint.

Mrs. Curl's counsel was convinced that an appeal would have cleared her of the conviction. But financial backing was not forthcoming and no appeal was made.

FILM OF TRIAL?

Several other interesting sidelights emerged during our conversation. Forty-nine people she had healed, including an ambassador, were present at the trial but none were allowed to give evidence.

So much feeling was engendered that many of those in court were in tears during the hearing.

The case caused such a furore and had such dramatic qualities that a film company has considered basing a screenplay on the trial.

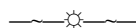
1,000 DOLLAR BAIL

On the day of Mrs. Curl's arrest, a woman who had been healed had called expecting to see her. She learned of the arrest and was there when the news came that bail of 1,000 dollars was being asked.

Straightaway the patient produced the sum from her handbag. She had drawn exactly that amount from her bank that day — not knowing, of course, what was to happen.

During her transatlantic tour Jessie Curl visited 43 states, Canada and Puerto Rico. Her husband died while they were in the U.S.A. and now the passing of her father has brought her back to England.

As yet she has made no definite plans for the future, but is considering the possibility of opening a healing centre in London.



No healing centre was opened or at least in the long term, as, in the following year, 1956, Curl was residing in Sydney and demonstrating in Australia.¹⁸ Some of the Psychic News articles on Jessie Curl are a bit disjointed, mostly datewise. However, to conclude, as all the above articles are taken from Psychic News:

¹⁸ The information is taken from "Bits and Pieces", Psychic News, October 13th, 1956.

August 3rd, 1963:

HEALER MAKES HEADLINES IN NEW ZEALAND

SUCH is the fame enjoyed by Jessie Curl, the globe-trotting international spirit healer now in New Zealand, that when she demonstrated her gift in Auckland reporters and photographers flocked to the meeting. The sequel was that two newspapers featured her healing and its results, a happening which is an achievement for a medium in that country.

Mrs. Curl went from London to New Zealand in 1957 to help the building up of a Spiritualist church in Dunedin. It was strenuous work, for it entailed holding services, sometimes twice on a Sunday, two large healing meetings each week and daily private sessions. Sandwiched between them were hospital visits.

New centre formed

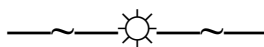
Last year, feeling the need of a change, she decided to tour the Dominion. She began in Nelson, where her efforts led to a small group beginning a psychic research society. Jessie Curl then left for Whangarei and Keri Keri, the sub-tropical part of the North Island, where she broke fresh ground. An immediate result was establishing a centre which had 40 members by the time she left.

Rotorua was next on her schedule. There she worked among the Maoris with many outstanding successes. Rangi, a world-famous Maori guide, was so grateful for his healing that he presented her with a written testimony. She attracted so much attention that she was invited to preach in the Maori Mission House at Whaka. Thus Jessie earned the distinction of being the only white woman to hold a service there with the exception of one missionary.

‘Courageous campaign’

In Wellington, the capital city, she was able to revive a psychic centre after a lapse of many years, so adding more laurels to her campaign. It brought her an invitation to Napier, which she accepted. Then she made a return visit to Auckland.

“This has been a courageous one-woman campaign to spread the cause of Spiritualism in a new young country,” comments our correspondent.



As a point of reference to the above court case involving the British medium Jessie Curl, the article below is of some interest regarding some of the points of law at that time.

February 19th, 1955:

PLIGHT OF HEALERS IN U.S.A.

Attorney Reviews Present Unsatisfactory Position Of Unorthodox Practitioner

BRITISH healers encounter much opposition but they are not as exposed to the perils of the law as are U.S. healers.

A recent talk by Mr. Sheldon H. Sabeau, formerly of the Attorney General's office and now attorney to the American National Congress of Healers and Spiritual Consultants, warned against pitfalls.

Usually it was on the grounds that religion was being used as a cover for business that U.S. healers got into trouble, he pointed out.

Sometimes they convicted themselves out of their own mouths, even when they were perfectly sincere.

A healer if arrested should be careful about what he said until he had consulted a lawyer, advised Sabeau.

His only defence under existing law was the guarantee of religious freedom in the American Constitution.

The healer was advised to confine himself to healing practices that were in themselves tenets and practices of the religion he professed, such as prayer and acting as a channel of spiritual force without physical means.

The lawyer quoted the judgment of Justice Cardoza in the famous People v. Vogelgasang case:

The sufferer's mind must be brought into submission to the infinite mind and in this must be the healing. The operation of the power of spirit must be, not indirect and remote, but direct and immediate.

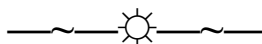
Use of Hands

"When the healer goes beyond that he takes up the agencies of the flesh and his immunity ceases. He is then competing with physicians on their own ground, using the methods they use and arrogating to himself the right to pursue the same method without the same training."

Sabeau pointed out that healers could not use the practices of medical men operating under licence: that included diagnosis, prescriptions and diet.

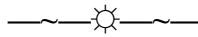
Although no special law prohibited the manual application of healing force, courts, in evaluating particular cases, had frowned on the practice of the laying on of hands.

They had said that the practice went beyond religious practice and overlapped the function of medicine.



A Means of Spirit Communication

Designed from the Spirit World!



In Pioneer issue Vol. 7, No. 6 appeared the article: “A Means of Spirit Communication – *Designed from the Spirit World!*”; in the following issue, Vol. 8, No. 1, Marc Demarest ¹⁹ added a supplement: “Some Notes on the Reflectograph and Communigraph”. The articles are focused on a pact made between George Jobson in the mid-1920s, who at the time was on his death-bed, and a man called Basil Kirkby, who had brought a medium to the sick man’s bedside, where Jobson was able to speak to his mother through the entranced medium.

Jobson responded to his new-found friend:

“I must repay you for this most marvellous happening of my life,” he said. “I feel I can do this best by making a promise to you that when I return after so-called death I will endeavour to instruct you how to build an instrument to enable spirits to communicate with mortals. But I shall take over a call-sign for you to be certain it is I communicating.”

At the time of putting the above articles together information from the Spiritualist press of the day was somewhat sparse. However, I noted in Mrs Rose Champion de Crespigny’s book, “This World and Beyond”, which is featured elsewhere in this issue, that she had first-hand experience in the early days of the development of the Reflectograph. The reader is urged to read the articles referred to above to get a fuller perspective of their history and the second instrument which would follow the Communigraph:

Taken from Chapter Fifteen:



IN the world of physical phenomena the “Reflectograph” has been to me a most fruitful field for study, with Mr. B. K. Kirkby as director and Mrs. Singleton as medium.

I had the privilege of working with them to a certain extent in the earlier stages of development, and had opportunities for the study of ectoplasm and its ways that has stood me in good stead ever since.

The story of how this particular form of demonstration came into being is a romance in itself, and shows us how plans and resolutions made on this plane may sometimes be carried out subsequently on the next as the result of deliberate intention and preparation.

Mr. B. K. Kirkby tells the story. At a chance trance sitting at which his mother took control, he had his first introduction to spiritualism; as the result of an injunction from her to pass on the knowledge wherever he went and not “to keep it to himself as the rest of the world are doing,” he took up the subject in good earnest, and has devoted his life to it ever since.

¹⁹ “The International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals” (IAPSOP). See <http://iapsop.com>

Shortly after this sitting, he met a man called George Jobson, at that time paralysed and bedridden, but with a brain still alive and working along old lines. George Jobson had brought one of the first telephones into this country; he had travelled the world over in search of knowledge and was one of the early pioneers of photography and wireless.

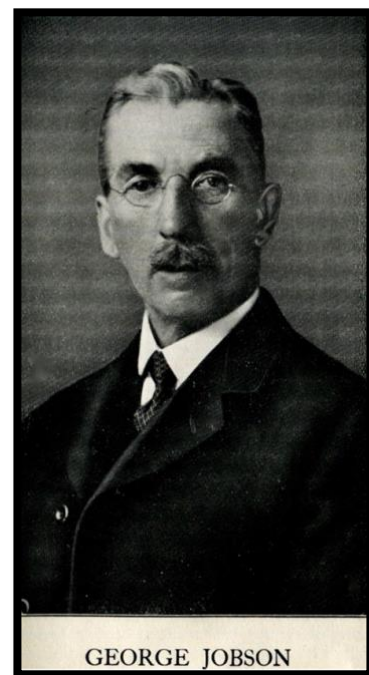
To cut a long story short, they made a pact that they would try and establish some means of communication after George Jobson had passed into the next life; not only made a pact, which many seemed to have done and then found it impossible to carry out, but set to work to go through a definite preparatory training in the hope of laying some foundation for success in the experiment hereafter.

“I will call you up,” he said, “with letters as they do on the wireless. Choose the letters !”

After some deliberation they chose Mr. Kirkby’s initials, B.K.K., as the sign between them.

The paralysed man then had these letters written in large size upon a piece of paper and pinned up on the foot of his bed. Morning, noon and night he repeated them, memorized them, impressed them on his brain. Up to the last two or three days of his life those letters stared him in the face; whenever his eyes were open they confronted him for months, his lips continually repeating them, in the hope that they might form the link between the brain of his physical body and that of his astral, proving the continuity of memory which is the corner-stone of personality.

Three months after Jobson’s death, Mr. Kirkby, at a seaside place, met a psychometrist who was a stranger to him, but who had been highly recommended as a “seer.” Not having the time at the moment to sit with the psychometrist, he gave him an article that had belonged to George Jobson with a request that if he should obtain from it anything of an interesting nature he would let him know. As the medium would be in trance, his sister promised to make a faithful record of anything that transpired.



GEORGE JOBSON



ETHEL

A few days later Mr. Kirkby re-visited the psychometrist and his sister, and asked if any message had been obtained.

“This is all we have got—and we can’t understand it,” was the answer. “For nearly a quarter of an hour these letters were impressed: ‘B.K.K.—B.K.K.’ ” then followed: “Remember the signal. Now we see through a glass darkly, but later we are going to see one another face to face. It is George—George—George !” ”

From that incident sprang the co-operation between the two planes—Mr. Kirkby and Mrs. Singleton working together on this, George Jobson and his “control,” a young girl who passed early from earth life, called “Ethel,” on the other.²⁰

In giving my experience with this group I am merely transcribing to the best of my ability exactly what occurred. I

²⁰ This is an error or a misprint: Ethel was a control of the medium Mrs Louise Eliza Singleton, *not* George Jobson as stated.

do not say the conditions so far as “test” were concerned, might not have been tightened up in accordance with the best traditions; but to have watched the gradual development of the ectoplasmic rod, and be allowed to take part in the experiment, gave me opportunities which were sufficient to convince me through my physical senses, plus common sense, of the genuineness of the phenomena. In this belief, Sir Oliver Lodge, later on, was willing to support me.

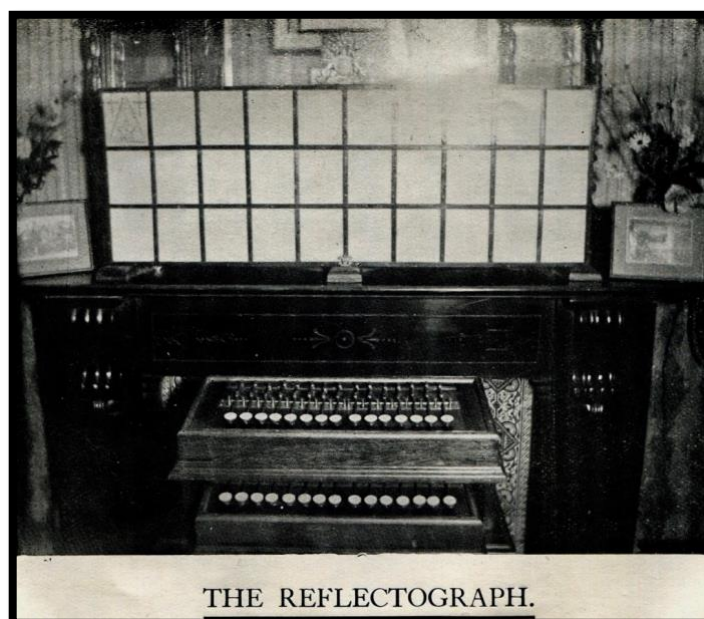


When I first sat with the Reflectograph group the display of ectoplasm was crude and immature. The medium, Mrs. Singleton, sat in a semi-dark cabinet, the room illuminated by a good red light, and at that early period the medium herself being partially visible from certain angles to the sitters. She was tied to the chair, the back, arms and legs of it, by cords which with Mr. Kirkby's consent I often manipulated myself. The keyboard upon which “Ethel” was to operate was placed at some distance in front of her, well outside the cabinet.

This keyboard consisted of the letters of the alphabet, each painted on a disk so delicately poised that the slightest touch, or even a breath, was sufficient to depress them. Against the wall was placed an indicator also displaying the letters of the alphabet, each of which became luminous as its duplicate on the keyboard was touched, presumably by the ectoplasmic rod manipulated by “Ethel.” In this way messages were spelt out, sometimes pertinent and recognizable,

sometimes not; but it was on the phenomenal side rather than the content of the messages, that the interest of the sitters focused, especially if their mentality was of the scientific order. I shall always be grateful for the opportunity of watching developments of a super-physical order in circumstances where experiments were so frankly and openly carried on.

At my first sittings with the Reflectograph, a rod of ectoplasm only was visible, starting from the direction of the medium and extending to the disks on the keyboard; a faint line of luminosity, but evidently directed by some intelligence, as its movements with regard to the letters on the keyboard testified. As each letter was depressed the contact was reflected on the indicator against the wall, haltingly at first but gaining in strength and confidence as time went on—passing from individual letters only to the spelling of intelligible words.



With the idea of making assurance doubly sure, experiments were tried with a gauze curtain stretched across the front of the cabinet between the medium and the keyboard.

Although the ectoplasm passed through it, however, the impact appeared to break up the rod, dividing it into rays giving the appearance of a searchlight, no one of them having sufficient force to depress the disks independently. A coarse net was tried with the same result, and the experiment was given up.

It was not long before patient endeavour was rewarded, and a further development took place.

A hand was formed at the end of the rod, with fingers and thumb folded in what is termed the “snake’s head” form; followed later by an opening out, the fingers and thumb becoming widespread and perfectly moulded. Faint and misty at first, a wisp of cloud taking the form of a hand, materializing and fading away, and materializing again—that ebb and flow of the power that I have already mentioned as accompanying all physical phenomena.

Finally the hand, so misty and undefined in its earlier stages, developed into something concrete, solid as flesh and bone, every finger perfectly formed, and I was allowed to touch and handle it, or rather to allow it to touch me.

I found it at that stage *very* cold, lifeless and heavy as one would imagine a dead hand might be; but later on the temperature of it became normal more like that of a human hand, of a different type and size from that of the medium, but to sight and touch a normal human hand, in every detail.



On the back of the photograph it is noted: “The top row of the keys have been removed to give a clear view of the hand.” This shows the alleged materialised hand of “Ethel”.²¹

²¹ It is unfortunate that a front photograph of the cabinet was not taken to show the medium with both arms secured and the *additional* phantom arm and hand.

When this stage was reached, Sir Oliver Lodge was good enough to come and give an opinion of the phenomenon. He tied the medium in the chair and, visible at first as a filmy outline, the hand materialized as usual; he was able to examine it at close quarters, handling it, touching nails and knuckles which he pronounced to be perfectly formed in every respect, and finally expressed his conviction that the demonstration was genuine.

It is not easy for the inexperienced sitter to take in the true significance of such a phenomenon at first glance. It exacts a sudden re-orientation of previous conceptions that the understanding is apt to jib at, and it is almost impossible at first to get away from the suspicion of a conjuring trick. Therefore the utmost caution before “turning down” a physical phenomenon at a single sitting, or even more than one, is as essential as in accepting it. The new sitter may find it difficult to understand his—or her—own limitations through inexperience, not realizing how hard it is for the intelligence to swallow so large a dose at one gulp !

Many a time have I been “up against” this situation in connexion with the materialized hand of the Reflectograph. What sort of “miracle” the newcomer actually expects is difficult to imagine, but if the appearance and the feel of it differ from that of flesh and blood—which was sometimes the case in its earlier stages of development—it is immediately suggested by the sitter that it is a counterfeit made of wax or indiarubber or some other material which *must* have been smuggled into the cabinet by the medium. This suggestion is upheld, no matter how meticulous the preparatory search may have been, and which incidentally reduces all such search to futile waste of time.

But the more minutely the materialized hand resembles the genuine article—as was the case in its final development—the more convinced the tyro becomes that it obviously is a human hand—and therefore must be fraud and is the hand of the medium! A vicious circle !

From a single hand “Ethel” advanced to a demonstration of both hands, and from that arrived at the achievement of the full figure; draped forms standing in front of the cabinet with a faint red light illuminating the rest of the room, she herself being one of the first appearances. George Jobson also materialized, fulfilling his early promise that his friend and he should see one another “face to face.” Many other forms recognized by sitters, most of them clad in clinging white drapery that seemed to have a luminosity of its own—something beyond the ordinary appearance of a white object such as a handkerchief, in semi-darkness, and justifying the age-old tradition of “ghosts” and heavenly visions, the “radiantly white” figures spoken of in the Bible.

I passed my hand on one occasion—with permission—through the gossamer-like drapery hanging from the arm of a materialized form; it passed through it as though it were mist not substance, and though I was conscious of a soft touch on my hand, there was no feeling of any sort of obstruction.

Among the various materializations I have seen there a little coloured girl sometimes appears. She is full of life and spirits, shows the whites of her eyes and a little bright red tongue in sharp contrast to her dark skin. Everyone present sees it and hears her childish chatter. If Mrs. Singleton, hands tied to chair, can blacken her face and get it clean again inside the cabinet in the time at her disposal she ought to go on the music-hall stage ! That there are no masks and faces hidden under her chair I can testify personally.

I have seen figures at these manifestations dematerialize by sinking through the floor, not merely vanishing by retiring into the cabinet.

With regard to messages received through this channel success has not, within the bounds of my own experience, been so marked. This of course may depend upon many factors, and be partly owing slight impatience on my part—quite unjustifiable—due to

what has sometimes seemed a rather tedious process, and not nearly so easy and rapid as the direct voice, or even the channels of trance mediumship. To spell out every word, be it ever so swiftly, is somewhat akin to table-rapping, which must always be a strain on the patience of most temperaments. When I have been present a large proportion of the messages being addressed to others has made it difficult to form a definite opinion, but very many of them have seemed to be unrecognized. My own private opinion has always been that the powers on the other side have been more definitely concerned with and interested in the physical side of the phenomena than in the conveyance of communications, and have dedicated the power, of which there is only a limited supply, to this end. Perhaps I have come to this conclusion because I myself was more interested in the materializations than in the messages and a natural bias was the result !

At the same time it is to be recorded that I have received two outstanding messages through this agency, of a nature sufficiently convincing to prove that whatever the proportion of failures the potentiality for the establishment of direct communication is there and the efforts made entirely genuine.

On the first occasion Sir Arthur Conan Doyle purported to be the communicator, and he reproached me in unmistakable terms for having neglected to act upon a letter he wrote to me some time before his death suggesting I should adopt a certain line of conduct with regard to a medium. I regret to say I had pushed it into a drawer and forgotten all about it ! No one knew of that letter except myself for I had mentioned it to no one. We discussed the contents through the Reflectograph, and finally I acted upon it.

The other incident was even more remarkable.

With the object of showing it to a member of the Council, I had carried a document belonging to the British College of Psychic Science away with me one Saturday afternoon, and on my return home to my flat in Westminster found to my dismay I had lost it. Whether it had been dropped in bus, taxi, in the street or in the car of a friend with whom I had driven some little distance I had no idea. I was distracted ! The document did not belong to me and should certain circumstances arise it might be of the greatest importance—and I, through some sort of carelessness, had dropped it !

I spent a nearly sleepless night and on the next day, Sunday, inquired in every direction I could think of in the hope of tracing it, with no result. On Monday I made equally vain inquiries at the Scotland Yard Lost Property Office, and then gave up all hope of ever seeing it again.

Late on the Tuesday evening I had an engagement to go to Wimbledon for a sitting with the Reflectograph group. Almost the first message that came through was for me, “Ethel” spelling it out on the keyboard.

For Mrs. de Crespigny. Don’t worry. It will be all right. The missing paper will return.”

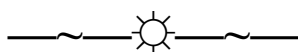
I could hardly believe my ears, for, with the exception of Mrs. Hankey, the secretary of the College, who was not present, I had mentioned my loss to no one, in the hope my sin would not find me out !

I thanked my informant, and had a good night in the assurance through long experience that messages given spontaneously and not as the result of questions never “let me down”—and on Wednesday morning the document arrived by the first post, from a stranger who had picked it up on the pavement in Victoria Street the previous Saturday, had been in two minds as to whether it was worth while to return it at all, and finally decided to despatch it to the address that was on the opened envelope !

That was one of the best bits of evidence in the way of a message I ever received. It was given before witnesses, Mrs. Hankey could testify to the original loss of the paper, and as no one present at the séance knew anything of the circumstances—not even myself so far as the finding and return of it was concerned—the suspicion of interference on the part of the subconscious mind, or thought-reading could be put out of court. It is some considerable time now since I have had the opportunity to watch further developments with this group so I can offer no opinion on them. I can only speak of and vouch for what occurred within my own knowledge.



Louise Eliza Bolt (1895 - 1982)
(Mrs L.E. Singleton)





Pioneer ends its tenth volume

Pioneer was launched at the Torquay AGM 2013, replacing the SNU hardback magazine of the same title; a special edited edition of the first issue was published for the delegates.

The front page noted:

The foundations of the Spiritualists' National Union were laid over a long period of time, and its growth ensured by dedicated pioneers, many of whom have been forgotten. Most readers will be unacquainted with their names and the roles they so valiantly played in the building of the SNU, an organisation that today stands firm due to their bold efforts.

This journal is dedicated to those Pioneers.

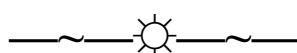
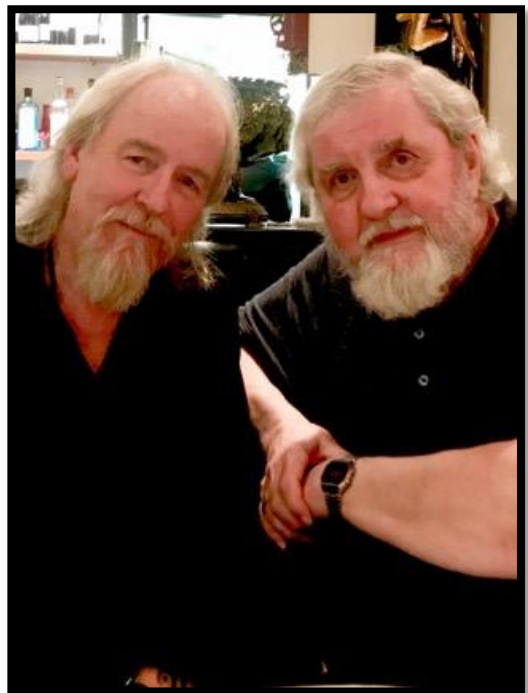
To date it has published 2,059 pages of researched materials; it is read in various societies, such as the Society for Psychical Research. It is recommended reading for the SNU education courses; it is also used by universities and has attracted numerous students and on occasion their professors to attend the Britten Museum and Library Research – Study Weeks, as noted elsewhere in this issue.

In the last year individual subscribers have substantially increased, rising to 3,300; in addition, it is sent out to SNUi members and is available on the SNU website.

Extended thanks are due to the late David Hopkins and Leslie Price, who sub-edited the early issues of the journal.

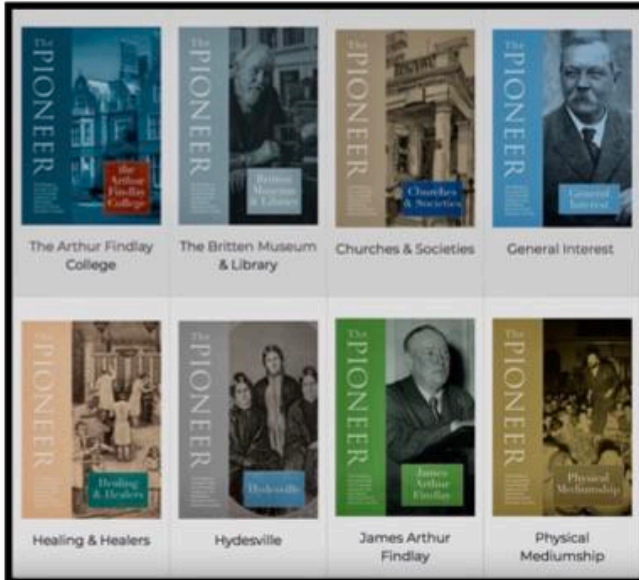
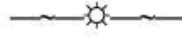
**All the very best wishes for the
New Year 2024**

**Editor Paul J. Gaunt and sub-editor,
former SNU General Secretary,
Charles Coulston**



NEW SNU PIONEER PAGE

Looking for a specific subject?



All the articles published in Pioneer over the last eight years have been grouped together within their category as much as possible

A selection of important subjects from the history of the Spiritualists' National Union.

Designed to cover key topics for anyone studying one of our courses or for anyone looking to further their knowledge on the history of our movement.

<https://www.snu.org.uk/the-pioneer-journal>

The Pioneer journal is a unique insight into the history of the Spiritualists' National Union and its pioneers.

