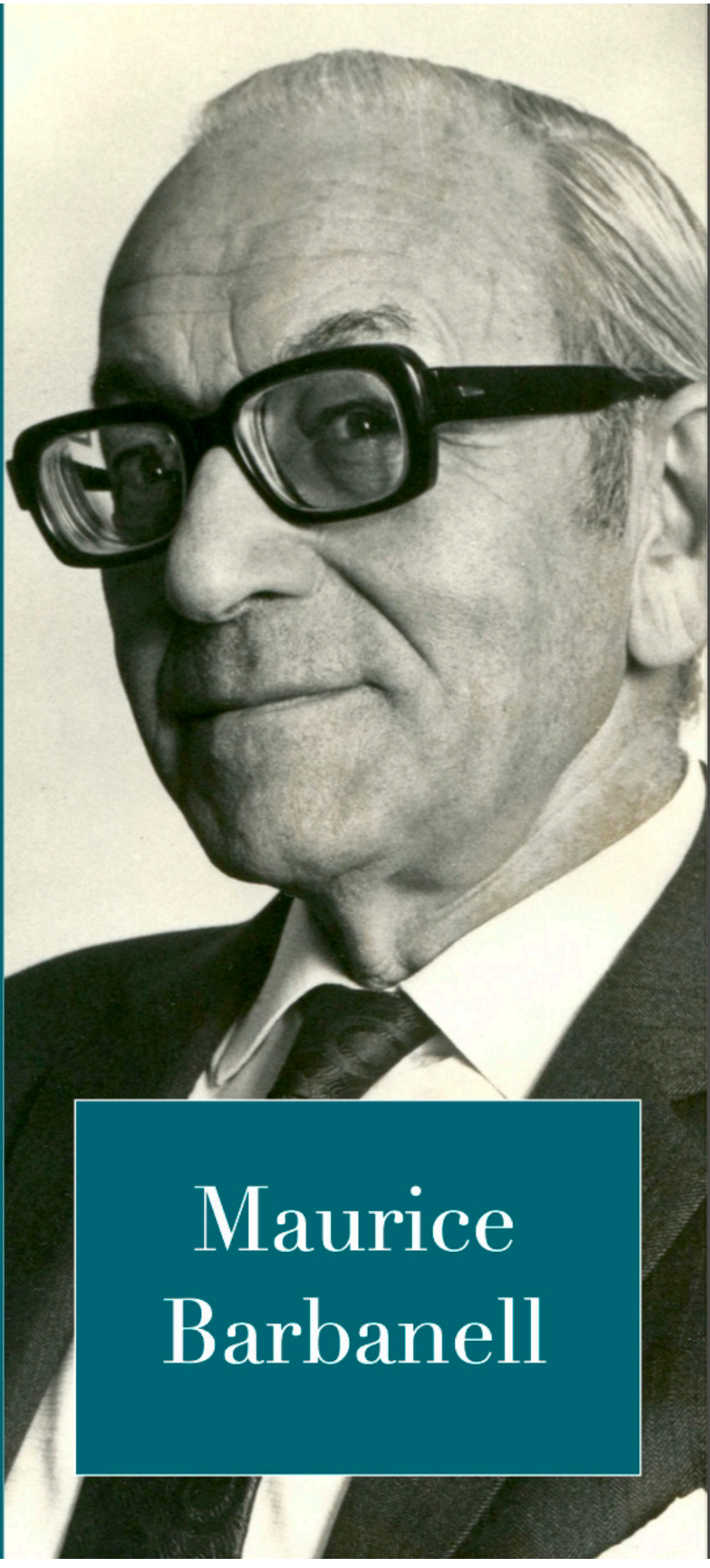
The PIONEER

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



Maurice Barbanell

the PIONEER

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Special thanks to Charles Coulston for his work in sub-editing these issues – also acknowledged to Minister David Hopkins and Leslie Price for their past work in sub-editing the issues

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MAURICE BARBANELL, THE S.N.U. AND HIS PROPAGANDA WORK



The name Maurice Barbanell needs little introduction, but given there is no biography of his life and work we mostly only associate him with being the founder editor of "Psychic News", the medium for the teachings of Silver Birch and the author of numerous books. It is not generally known that for many years he was closely associated with the Spiritualists' National Union. In October 1926 the AGM minutes were published in the Union's monthly journal, "The National Spiritualist",[1] and Barbanell was recommended for a Diploma as a result of the Exponents and Education assessment; his marking was Class B (Honours). In a further report of the 1926 examinations published in May 1927, Barbanell achieved Class A (Honours). At this time education was under the "National Spiritualist College and National Joint Education Scheme" (Union/Lyceum), which entailed a three years' course of study with yearly examinations – for details see "Pioneer", July 2015: "Early S.N.U Education History". By April 1928 it can be noted he was M. Barbanell, Dipl. S.N.U.

At the 1927 SNU Annual Consultative Conference held on Sunday July 3rd at the Art Workers' Guild Rooms, Queen Square, London under the presidency of Robert Owen, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Hon. President, moved the following:

> "That a new principle be added to the Seven Principles of Spiritualism, declaring that while admitting that every Creed has its own message from on high, however by human frailty, we in the Western World acknowledge the original teachings and example of Jesus of Nazareth and look upon them as an ideal model for our own conduct."

Barbanell opposed the resolution, stating:

> If this new principle were added to the seven it would mean that any who felt themselves unable to subscribe to this principle would not be eligible as members of the organisation. He objected also to the term "original" ("the original teaching and example of Jesus of Nazareth") in the resolution. Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, one of the greatest

[1] See Pioneer, Volume 1, No. 1, August 2013: "The First SNU Journal".

pioneers, claimed that Jesus did not originate a single ethic. He read a passage from her works as fo1lows:—

> "But even if he (Jesus) were a man there is no evidence of such a personality save the four Gospels, the authorship of which has conclusively been denied by the best authority to have belonged to any disciple of Jesus. No contemporary historian makes any mention of such a personage. The events stated to have occurred at his trial and death are neither found in Roman nor Jewish records, neither in the writings of the officials nor the historians of the time. Yet Philo, the learned historian of the Essenes, wrote of his period without ever alluding to him. Josephus, the voluminous historian of Herod and his times, makes no mention of him."

If Spiritualism wanted a leader, let it go to the highest and best it knew—a God who was all perfect.

A special Committee was appointed to deal with the proposed eighth Principle, which was presented to the 1928 AGM held at Barry, Vale of Glamorgan, Wales on July 7th and 8th July. Below is its "unanimous report":

> Since the revelations of Spiritualism are universal we recommend that it is not in the interests of Spiritualism or of the churches affiliated to the S.N.U., that the well-known Seven Principles of Spiritualism now embodied in the Memorandum of Association of the Union, should be added to or remodelled in such form as to reduce the universality of the basis of membership, which at present is open to people of all races, colours and religions.
>
> We recognise that spiritual truth is one and universal, and that all religious systems have resulted from an incursion from the spirit world, manifested through chosen instruments. These inspired men have revealed in varying degrees, and in their respective periods and countries, new and higher aspects of God, the spiritual nature of man, and glimpses of the whence and whither of man's origin and destiny.
>
> Recognising further the changing and controversial views regarding the person and work of Jesus current among the orthodox churches of Christendom, and recognising equally the wisdom of safeguarding the movement of Spiritualism from the unjust reproach of being "anti-Christian," we affirm that the development and unfolding of religious ideas from earliest items to the present age conforms to a law of evolution exactly as does the growth of man's perceptions, and his acquisition of scientific knowledge.
>
> Zoroaster, Gotama "The Buddha," Jesus "The Christ" and Mohammed are the recognised founders of great religions known by their names, which still exist and give spiritual consolation to innumerable congregations. Nearest to the Western World and accepted as its special teacher is Jesus. His teaching as represented by the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule, and the New Commandment, admittedly embodies an ideal ethical and spiritual standard for human conduct; and the story of his life and self-sacrificing death has been and remains an inspiration and comfort to millions of his followers.
>
> Spiritualism, however, bases its position upon the universal manifestations of the continuity of personal life after physical death and the uplifting influence of excarnate

spirit people upon the incarnate. It therefore accepts all these great founders as inspired and as revealers of spiritual truths to mankind, and builds its own philosophy and teaching not only upon the truths revealed to mankind through these ancient teachers, but also upon the New Revelations received by this generation through modern Seers, Prophets and Mediums.

Since Spiritualism accepts all revelations of truth as progressive it is unwise to impose restrictions which fetter liberty of thought. The S.N.U. therefore welcomes into its ranks every Spiritualist who can conscientiously subscribe to the Seven Principles, leaving him freedom to exercise liberty of interpretation thereto,[2] and to enjoy any further opinions which do not contravene the Statutory Principles.

The following resolution was then proposed:

"That this A.G.M. endorses and adopts the recommendations of the Council concerning the proposal to adopt an Eighth Principle which was remitted for consideration by the 1927 Consultative Conference."

The resolution was passed with ten dissentients.

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In 1928 Barbanell became a member of the SNU Council, taking over from the veteran Spiritualist, Richard Boddington (brother of Harry), as London Area Representative, a position he would hold for many years.

As previously noted, Barbanell had achieved high grades Class A & B. (Honours). I do not know of any other grades he may have achieved; however, these grades are significant. Class A was for "Normal Speakers" and "B" for "Inspirational or Trance Speakers"; Maurice Barbanell was first entranced in or around 1920. After about four years Barbanell came into contact with Hannen Swaffer, a friendship and working relationship which would last for almost forty years. The "Hannen Swaffer Home Circle" was formed, with Barbanell as the medium. It appears that the development of the guide's control, known as "Big Jump", over the medium was slow, with his eventual mastery of the English language changing the guide's guttural responses. It would not be until the 1930s, after *Psychic News* was founded, that the name Silver Birch would come into existence.

Barbanell's trance mediumship regarding "Big Jump" and "Silver Birch" were not public knowledge and remained strictly within the Hannen Swaffer Home Circle. In fact, it would be decades before Spiritualists were told that Maurice Barbanell was the medium for the then well-known spirit guide, Silver Birch. So it is interesting to note that Barbanell received such a prestigious marking for Inspirational or Trance Speaking, given that all reports I am aware of are for Normal Speaking! It may be considered similar to Emma Hardinge Britten; the audience often did not know if she was, in fact, speaking in trance, inspirationally or normally.

In 1929 Barbanell was asked to read a paper to the SNU Summer School students. (See "Pioneer", September 2015, for information on the SNU Summer Schools: "What we did before Stansted".)

[2] Liberty of Interpretation: Primary Cause of S.N.U. Decline! See "Pioneer", March 2015: "Were the S.N.U. Seven Principles changed?"

Barbanell commented: “When I was originally approached and asked whether I would speak at the Summer School, it was suggested that the subject be one which lent itself to controversy, and also one on which we could ask questions. This explains the title of my address; for surely of all questions that have puzzled thinking minds throughout the ages and is still unsolved, it is the great mystery we call God.” The paper was called “The God Idea”; it is an interesting paper but far too long to reproduce here; any reader requiring a copy please contact the editor. It may be interesting to compare this with the later published teachings of Silver Birch!

This generated some discussion in the SNU’s “National Spiritualist” and further articles were written by Barbanell in the publication. As London Representative he had his own column under the title, “Notes From The Areas”, where he kept the readers well informed of SNU business and activities within London. In 1930 Barbanell stood for SNU President and Vice-President but was pipped at the post by John Brown McIndoe and Alexander George Newton respectively. Later, circa 1938, Barbanell was one of the first to be appointed a Minister of the Union.

Barbanell was critical of poor mediumship, which is apparent in this experience, which he published in the SNU “National Spiritualist”, February 1931:

Where We Fail.

I was spending Christmas with some friends in a prominent City in the West of England, and decided to pay a visit to one of the local Spiritualist Societies. Although I bought every newspaper published in the Town on Saturday morning and evening, I could find no mention of the Spiritualist services of any Societies affiliated with the S.N.U. Consulting my diary I noticed there was one which held a morning service at 11 o’ clock. After a little difficulty I found the Hall. To my surprise I found only five other people in the congregation. The form of service was the usual one that I have heard in dozens of Spiritualist churches. There was a lady on the platform who gave a very long invocation full of orthodox tags, followed by a reading from the Bible, which struck me as being unsuitable for any Spiritualist Meeting. The address which followed, by the same lady, was a mixture of Evangelical orthodoxy, Salvation Army teaching, plus a modicum of Spiritualist philosophy. The title of the address was announced as “Responsibility,” but many of the statements were wildly irresponsible.

I learnt to my surprise that the last War was deliberately arranged by God, for some reason that even the speaker did not explain very clearly; also that the founder of Spiritualism was none other than Jesus. No evidence or argument of any kind was called in support of this statement.

At the conclusion of the address it was announced that another lady on the platform would give clairvoyance. The clairvoyant fastened immediately upon me, and gave me three descriptions. The first, an old man she said, was connected with my father. His name was John Henry. I regretted being unable to recognise him. “Can you go back three generations?” As I am not yet 30 years of age this struck me as being impossible. “Do you place the names?” Remembering my Jewish ancestry I decided against there ever having been a “John Henry.” Then there was an old lady named Martha, whose description was too meagre for anyone to recognise. The next description she announced was that of a Jewish Spirit. Could I understand that? “Yes,” said I, “I am a Jew,” a fact

which I have always thought was obvious to anybody who saw me. The message of this Jewish spirit was indeed remarkable, for he impressed upon the medium that I must understand that this (meaning Spiritualism) was the true religion, a fact which I have known now for eleven years. He wanted me to investigate it. Further, I had psychic powers, and I ought to sit in a circle for development. I hesitated, remembering that I had done nothing else for nearly ten years. I then discovered, according to the Medium, that were I to sit in a developing circle, I could get messages direct from the Spirit World, and that I had the gift of materialisation and automatic writing. It only requires someone now to tell me that I possess the gift of Spirit photography, and I shall then have every mediumistic phase that is known.

Everyone present received descriptions. One lady was told that she was a wonderful medium, and if she developed, would go round the world addressing vast audiences. The medium could see lights and ectoplasm streaming from her. I felt very envious.

This was followed by an exhibition of control on the part of the medium by her Guide "Pansy,'' whose method of speaking English was to introduce the letter "s" after every word. Heaven preserve us from these "Pansies" and these "Topsies!"

The hall itself looked very shabby, the walls being badly in need of a coat of paint. I went into that hall an eager, enthusiastic Spiritualist, I left almost an anti-Spiritualist.

We will never make any progress whilst we tolerate services of this kind in the name of Spiritualism.

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The long, arduous work of forming a National Organisation, the Spiritualists' National Federation, later the SNU, was founded on taking Spiritualism to the public in outside meetings, renting halls, etc. Speakers would travel miles, often under very poor conditions, to propagate the truths of our religion – Propaganda Committees organised the growth of the movement. The Federation had been formed in July 1890. Below is an early report published in the "Two Worlds", June 23rd 1893, page 293. Most of the names given are well-known in our history e.g. the founder of the Fund of Benevolence, the Hon Secretary, five Federation/SNU Presidents and members of the *first elected* Council of the SNU in 1903:

PROPAGANDA COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

We have the pleasure of presenting to you a report of another year's labours. Fourteen meetings have been held in response to invitations. Last year the calls came from about six societies, this year from thirteen, which indicates a more active interest in our work. The results of these meetings, judging by the numbers present, are satisfactory. The total attendance was about 3,000 persons, giving an average of 215 at each meeting. The largest gathering was at Royton, and the smallest at Bolton. The latter meeting was held during a fierce snowstorm. The cost of the meetings has been £16 16s. 11d., […]. No fees have been paid to any speaker; all services have been gratuitous and ungrudging.The collections totalled £14 9s. 9½d. The largest expenditure has been for printing and advertising, £8 16s. 7d:; railway and travelling expenses, £4 15s. 3d.; and rent of halls, £2 7s. 6d. Where societies existed with suitable halls, the use thereof has been freely granted, for which this committee thanks the various societies. The places visited were Bolton, Colne, Darwen, Hollinwood, Little Horton, Bradford, Macclesfield, Normanton, Oldham (two societies), Pendleton (two meetings), Rawtenstall, Royton, and Silsden.

The following speakers attended at the various meetings held, to whom thanks are justly due for their generous services, in some cases bestowed at great sacrifice. Number of meetings attended: Mrs, Wallis 5, Mrs. Craven 3, Mrs. J. A. Stansfield 2, Madame Henry 1, Mrs. Brooks 1, Miss Walker 1, Miss Janet Bailey 1, Miss Cotterill 1, Mr. Wallis 7, Mr. Tetlow 5, Mr. Johnson 4, Mr. Swindlehurst 4, Mr. Hepworth 3, Mr. Macdonald 2, Mr. W. H. Wheeler 2, Mr. Pilkington 1, Mr. Walsh l, Mr. Peter Lee 1, Mr. Kitson 1, Mr. Armitage 1.

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It appears that when the Union took over from the National Federation in 1902 the Propaganda Committee did not survive in the same degree, although of course the Spiritualist message was still being powerfully advocated and championed by the likes of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (after 1916) and Ernest Oaten.

Barbanell was young, with fresh ideas. He was born on May 3rd 1902 and was by all accounts an excellent public speaker. In January 1929 he took a Manchester Propaganda meeting at the Ardwick Picture Theatre, speaking on "The Future of Spiritualism", chaired by former SNU President Albert Wilkinson. Below I have quoted part of his address from the front page of the "Two Worlds", January 18th 1929. Such publication of his addresses is rarely found:

Manchester Propaganda Meetings.

Mr. Barbanell said he could not, like the Chairman or Mr. Oaten, speak about the past of Spiritualism. And there were those more expert than himself who could speak about the present, so he put himself on safe ground—where no one could contradict him—and would speak about the future. But he realised there was one danger, and that was if a policeman walked in and heard him predicting the future, he would have to ask that audience to stand bail!

"What is Spiritualism?" I suppose every Spiritualist could give at different definition. But for the purposes of my address, as far as I am concerned Spiritualism resolves itself into three fundamental things:—

(1) The definite knowledge that all people survive death.

(2) The fact that under certain conditions (and I want to stress that) it is possible to open up communication with those who have survived.

(3) The third is not a fact so much as an implication from the other two: that is that man is a spiritual being.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MOVEMENT.

Before we can talk about the future of Spiritualism we have to say: What have we achieved as a Spiritualistic movement?" And in order to see just a little of that achievement I want you to turn your attention to some of the current movements in this world. Take the greatest movement, that of religion. What has Spiritualism achieved in the world of religion during its modern inception? If you want to see the weight of its influence you have to make a comparison between the teaching of modern religion and the teaching of religion say Seventy years ago. To-day so much progress has been made only on account of Spiritualism that the ministers accept half our cause without paying

the tribute to us for what we have taught them. There are very few sensible men and women in the religious camp who to-day speak of miracles, yet 70 years ago there was no other explanation. Spiritualism has explained the so-called miracle, and reduced it to natural law. The last fifty years has seen a breaking away from dogma, from fixed teaching, a desire for more breadth, more latitude, more freedom. We have broadened the whole teaching concerning future states, life in the spirit world, heaven and hell. We have revealed beyond death a natural world, where natural human beings live: we have shown a heaven which is merely the earned heaven of those who have laboured well here. We have shown hell (that is not a fixed abode) to be a place where repentance starts.

Mr. Barbanell here related an amusing story of a sailor who had wandered into a church and heard a sermon preached on heaven. He just woke up, however, in time to hear the preacher say "Now, all those who wish to go to heaven stand up." The whole congregation rose with the exception of the solitary sailor. The preacher said, "You sir, do you not wish to go to heaven?" And the sailor, looking round said. "No, sir not with that crew."

It is a good story, said the speaker, because it has a moral and the moral is this: that being with that collection of people was no heaven for him. Heaven only becomes heaven when you are able to associate with those whom you love.

THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUALISM.

In the world of scientific achievement amazing progress had been attained in the last seventy-five years. Inventions have followed each other so quickly that it is almost impossible to keep abreast of them. In physics we have witnessed a complete change of scientific foundation, a change from the visible to the invisible. An extraordinary thing is this: that every scientific discovery in no way conflicts with the teaching of Spiritualism. And in nine cases out of ten nearly every one of those discoveries was foretold by spirit people many years ago.

What about the future? What is the purpose of Spiritualism? Many years ago a keen investigator in America made a practice of asking all mediums this question, and he invariably received the answer: "Firstly, to demonstrate man's survival beyond death. Secondly, to unify the religions of the world." To me, the whole progress of Spiritualism in this country and throughout the world is dependent on the soundness of mediums. Mediumship, as I understand it, is the platform of Spiritualism, and we shall only progress when we develop more and more mediums whose standard of mediumship is the highest it is possible to have. The Spiritualistic church of the future which has not its developing class for mediums might just as well not exist, and I urge the necessity for the production of mediums who will realise that mediumship is the most sacred gift in the world—not to be prostituted for material ends.

As a natural corollary with that, we shall find psychic faculties developing in the human race itself. I am certain that the next generation will be much more psychic than this, and as the generations proceed we shall have more and more psychic individuals who will bring the psychic faculty uppermost even in their daily lives. That will bring greater revelations, more inspiration. Some Spiritualists fallaciously believe that Spiritualism is the summit of revelation. We have not yet scratched the surface of

spiritual inspiration: there is more truth and wisdom, light and knowledge waiting for us when we can receive it, when we have developed our powers of reception.

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In the October issue of the Union's journal, "The National Spiritualist", 1931, Barbanell announces the Union's decision to restart its propaganda activities:

Propaganda.

By MAURICE BARBANELL.

The Union has resuscitated its Propaganda activities following upon the kind offer made by our Hon. President, Mr. Swaffer, who, at the annual General Meeting at Portsmouth, placed himself at the service of the Union for Propaganda meetings with myself. The following arrangements have already been made. Sunday, 27th September, Victoria Hall, Hanley; Saturday, 14th November, Town Hall, Birkenhead; Sunday, 15th November, Picton Hall, Liverpool; Wednesday, 18th November, Winter Gardens, Bournemouth; Sunday 22nd November, Opera House, Blackpool; Wednesday, 25th November, Central Hall, Southampton; Sunday, 29th November, Capitol Cinema, Tonbridge; Sunday, 6th December, Golders Green, London; Sunday, 13th December, Town Hall, Bolton.

At the time of writing, arrangements are also being made for meetings at Cardiff, Wakefield, Sheffield, Bradford, Maesteg, Derby and Hull, and it is hoped to include Aberdeen and Dundee.

In each case the meeting is being organised in co-operation with the local Union, Society, or District Council, and if only each Church will make a point of giving publicity to each meeting, and arrange for a strong platform for the next few weeks afterwards, the result should be to stimulate public interest in our Movement.

I intend to give my impressions in the Journal of these meetings, and where necessary offer criticism which I hope will be helpful.

Barbanell's first report November 1931:

S.N.U. Propaganda.

Mr. Swaffer and I commenced our first Propaganda meeting at Hanley, where several of the local Societies closed down their Sunday evening service to join in this meeting. The large Victoria Hall which seats approximately 3,000 was very well filled. The Lord Mayor elect was on the platform, and I noticed that she listened most intently to our case. The Chairman was rather worried because he had been told that many of the "young bloods" were in front and intended to disturb the meeting, but of course nothing happened. I sometimes wonder whether we would not be better off for an occasional disturbance. To my recollection there has never been a single incident at any of our Propaganda meetings.

I was struck by a very curious notice that was exhibited in the speaker's room at Hanley church, which asked mediums to give only spiritual phenomena on Sundays. "What happens," I asked, "When the medium feels she has an important message?"

"Then we leave it to their discretion" was the answer. Personally I do not know where lines of distinction can be drawn between the spiritual and the material.

An excellent spirit animates the Spiritualists in the Potteries; they are full of zest and enthusiasm. It is sad though to see the elder generation suffers the handicap of lack of schooling, as many of the written questions were illiterate.

When Mr. Swaffer and I arrived at our Hotel to engage rooms for the night, the clerk enquired, "Commercials?" I looked at Mr. Swaffer and shook my head.

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Venues continued to attract thousands of people; Swaffer would outline the works of the older pioneers like Emma Hardinge Britten. The meetings also presented a strong platform to fight the Vagrancy Act; at this time the Witchcraft Act had not been used against mediums and was not seen as a threat. Manchester's Free Trade Hall on December 2nd had a congregation of 2,000. Well-known mediums would demonstrate at these propaganda meetings, and on this occasion it was Mr Vyvyan Deacon. Below is an overview covering the second year of the tour, taken from the "Two Worlds", April 17th 1931. To save any confusion on dates, Barbanell has included his and Hannen Swaffer's total propaganda work of Great Britain, which took almost three years:

ON TOUR WITH HANNEN SWAFFER

WE CONTINUE OUR CRUSADE

BY MAURICE BARBANELL



Hannen Swaffer circa 1929

HANNEN SWAFFER and I have just completed the second year of our propaganda tour. In all we have visited twenty-five towns, ranging from Newcastle in the north to Portsmouth in the south, with Reading in the west and Southend in the east. The audiences that we have addressed total nearly 100.000, and we have answered hundreds of questions. During the whole of the tour neither Swaffer nor myself have made any charge for fees or expenses, and as far as possible we have seen that a donation has been sent to the Fund of Benevolence by the promoters of each meeting.

We commenced our tour in September at Reading, where the Central Cinema had been engaged. To our delight we were met outside by a venerable-looking old gentleman, with white beard, distributing pamphlets full of warnings of the work of the Devil. He became very voluble when he saw me, but Swaffer's appearance apparently frightened him, for it reduced him to silence!

On our arrival at Portsmouth for our next meeting we found a huge crowd awaiting outside the Cinema, which had been engaged. Unfortunately hundreds had to be turned away through lack of accommodation. The meeting was excellently organised by Mr. MacFarlane, and instead of a reading a record made by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was played and magnified by a loud speaker. An unhappy incident marred our visit to Portsmouth. We drove after the meeting to the house of Mrs. Read, who had prepared an excellent supper, and had left the meeting hurriedly to receive us. In her excitement she fell, was taken to bed, and so we missed the pleasure of meeting her. Next day we learned she had died during the night.

Once again we found ourselves at a Cinema when we arrived at Norbury. We have now spoken with success in so many Cinemas that Swaffer and I are wondering whether we might designate ourselves as "Talkie" Stars. Here again the capacity of the hall was insufficient, and many were turned away. Mrs. Estelle Roberts, who accompanied us on this occasion, gave some very fine clairvoyance, which was reported in detail by a local reporter, who verified all the descriptions by making personal enquiries. His account of the meeting filled two-and-a-half columns.

THE JOYS OF PROPAGANDISTS.

We were now due at Letchforth [*sic* Letchworth], where once more the inevitable Cinema had been engaged for the meeting. Prior to this meeting my own car was put into "dock" for repairs, and we hired another. My friend Mr. Hirst, who has kindly acted as our "chauffeur" on many of these drives, carefully examined the hired car to see if he could detect any flaws, but everything seemed in order. The Letchworth friends were very thoughtful, and had arranged for a car to meet us at Baldock and pilot us to the hall. The meeting itself was an excellent one; it was crowded. The chair was admirably taken by Mr. Groom and Mrs. Hirst gave some very acceptable clairvoyance. Some hospitable friends supplied us with coffee, and then at 11 o'clock we left for London.

Outside Knebworth the car stopped, and nothing in the world would induce it to start. We tried everything. Thinking we had run out of petrol, we hailed a passing motorist, and succeeded in purchasing a two-gallon can. No! This was not the trouble, and so at 1 a.m. we held a conference to decide what to do. I was bitterly cold! I hailed a car which drove me to a point a mile and half away from the nearest village. I trudged the rest, wondering whether I could find a garage proprietor who lived near his premises. Finally I espied a light coming from one of those small cafes which keep open all night. I enquired, and the attendant directed me to a house a few doors away where lived two proprietors of a local garage. By now it was 2 a.m. I knocked loudly on their door, and finally it was opened by one of the proprietors. I explained my troubles, and he seemed very loath to move. I begged and implored him, and succeeded at last in inducing them both to come to the scene of our mishap. It took us some time to find the others, as by now I had lost my sense of direction, and it was 3-30 a.m. before we were able to recommence our journey to London. Mr. and Mrs. Swaffer, Mr. and Mrs. Hirst and Mr. Groom, who were all in the car, told me they had whiled away the hours singing every song they knew!

Nevertheless, the following week we were on the road again, this time to make our second appearance at Southend, where by way of a change they had engaged a theatre instead of a cinema. We were again confronted by a large crowd, but unfortunately accommodation could not be found for at least five hundred people. When the regulation

number had been admitted, the fireman of the theatre commenced refusing admittance, but a member of the Southend Society was a local police sergeant, and he politely, but firmly, ejected the fireman, and found room for another two hundred people. Swaffer had to leave very early to take another meeting in London, not an unusual thing for him. He always hates making engagements, and resents the idea of being forced to go anywhere at a certain time. Yet when they are made, I have known him cram two or three meetings into one day. As was our usual custom, we had announced that we would answer written questions, and to my surprise there were dozens of them. I managed to answer thirty, but by this time we had exceeded the time allotted to our meeting, and standing in the wings were the amateurs waiting to proceed with their dress rehearsal of comic opera.

A COURAGEOUS VICAR

Once again the great North Road, on which we had travelled many times in the course of our crusade. This time we were bound for Kettering, with an invitation from the Rev. T. B. Clarke, an Anglican Minister, who had engaged the Central Hall for a propaganda meeting. He took the chair himself, and was very enthusiastic. I can remember his words now: "I am proud to be on this platform to-night, to add my testimony to that of Mr. Swaffer and Mr. Barbanell," he said. Mr. Clarke struck me a man of great courage. A few more like him, and the Church would soon be a living religious force.

Nottingham was the next town in our itinerary. The Baths Hall, seating two thousand, had been engaged, and the chairman was Alderman. Huntsman, ex-Lord Mayor of the City, and one of its most distinguished citizens. This was unquestionably our best meeting. We found the audience most appreciative and very responsive. On the platform, were the representatives of the District Council and Lyceum, and in addition, Mrs. Paling, who made a very graceful speech at the end of the meeting.

Soon after this our Bill was "talked" out of Parliament, the only opponent making a speech being Col. Freemantle, M.P. for St. Albans. So we decided to hold meeting in his constituency. The speakers were Mr. Oaten and Mr. Swaffer, and I was in the chair. The meeting was full of enthusiasm, and it unanimously passed a resolution calling upon their M.P. to support our Bill for freedom. Full details have already appeared in THE TWO WORLDS.

Once again we struck the great North Road, this time for Leeds, where, under the auspices of the West Riding Psychical Research Society, we were to appear at Salem Hall. The platform was a tribute to the universality of our Cause. The chair was taken by Mr. George Lethem, the well-known journalist, who said he was a Congregationalist; the Rev. J. Shaw, Unitarian; Rev. Britten, Moravian; Mr. Swaffer, Church of England; and myself, born a Jew. The meeting had been arranged specifically under the name of Psychical Research, with special emphasis on the scientific appeal, yet strangely enough the ministers on the platform decided to end with a hymn and a benediction. Mr. Swaffer took the occasion to pay a very graceful tribute to Mr. Tweedale for his excellent book, "Man's Survival After Death," which he felt sure had been of great service to hundreds.

A BROADMINDED CHIEF CONSTABLE

We made our longest journey to Newcastle, which was the last of our meetings. This was arranged under the auspices of the Northern District Council, and they were fortunate enough to secure Mr. F. J. Crawley, the Chief Constable of the City, to be the

chairman. After our attacks on the attitude of the police at many meetings, this was a decided pleasure. In a beautiful hall, which was almost full, we stated our case, replying particularly to a badly-informed article in "John Bull" attacking Spiritualism by the Dean of Chichester. Strangely enough, there were very few questions, but it was obvious that the meeting had aroused great interest.

It is a difficult task to be engaged on propaganda mission. We try and avoid using the same material because we have heard ourselves making the same point again and again. Although he must have heard many of my arguments repeated often, Swaffer always seemed to me to be listening politely. At one stage Mrs. Swaffer, Mr. Hirst and I repeated word for word one of Swaffer's experiences whilst he narrated it. He frustrated us by leaving it out on the next occasion!

Everywhere we went we found interested audiences; never any sign of disorder, never an interruption. With the exception of Leeds and Newcastle, we always drove back to London the same night, arriving at hours long after midnight. We cannot complain of the treatment of the Press, which has always been fair, and which generally published an account of our meetings; whilst the attitude of the modern man and woman shows that the spread of education has given them an enquiring mind ready to investigate seriously the claims laid before them.

We have tried to continue the work which was carried on many years before by the old pioneers, under conditions not so peaceful as at present, with audiences that must have been more hostile. The pioneers built well, and we heartily thank them.

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Maurice Barbanell (note Helen Hughes sitting behind him) at Edinburgh 1942

Saturday May 28th 1932 saw the first issue of a new weekly paper, "Psychic News", which cost twopence, founded by Maurice Barbanell and Mr J. Rubens, Swaffer's business manager. However, much of the foundation of the paper was orchestrated in the séance-room under the spirit influence; even the name *Psychic News* was chosen! See Psypioneer, October 2007: "Three 'Dead' Men Began Psychic News – Maurice Barbanell". It can be noted from the article:

I had been chosen to be the Editor, though when Psychic News began I had no practical knowledge of journalism. Theoretically I knew from Hannen Swaffer something about how newspapers are produced. Our friendship began shortly after his inquiry into Spiritualism when he set out to prove Northcliffe's survival.

> *For three years Swaffer and I conducted a propaganda tour and addressed a quarter of a million people – a record that has never been equalled. We spoke in nearly every large town in this country.*

Once we addressed three meetings on one Sunday. We spoke at Maesteg in the morning, Merthyr Tydfil in the afternoon and Cardiff in the evening. Then we motored back to London, arriving home after four in the morning. And I had motored down to South Wales on the Saturday afternoon and spoke at a meeting at Cærau that night.

In those three years, sitting up half the night talking, in conversations on trains, in cars and hotels, I learned a great deal about journalism from Swaffer.

My days, however, were spent in the world of commerce. I held some directorships, had my own business and owned some properties. I was fairly prosperous for many years. Then came a series of misfortunes, culminating in the slump of 1931, when things were very black. I was compelled to sell nearly everything I possessed.

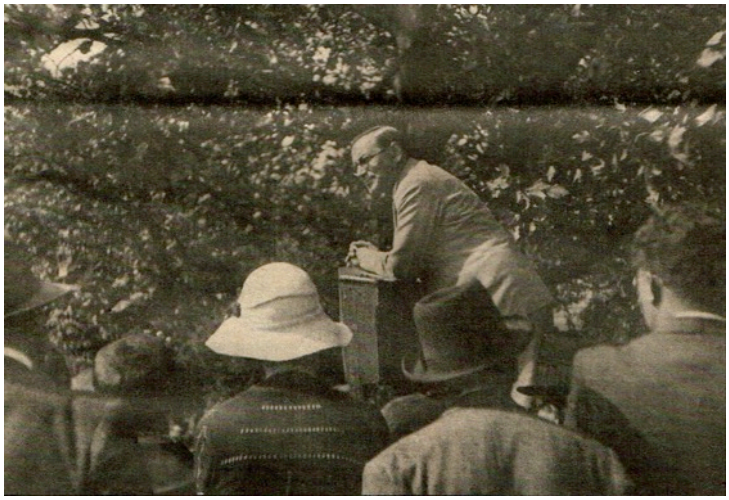
I had to wind up my own business and my income came from one directorship, but as that meant attendance at a board meeting for a few hours once a month I was virtually unemployed.

Just about that time Swaffer and I were approached to give editorial assistance to a proposed psychic weekly. Nothing, however, came of it. The scheme petered out.

One day, to my surprise, Swaffer's business manager, J. M. Rubens, a non-Spiritualist who was winding up one of my companies, suggested I should start a psychic paper.

He is well-known in Fleet Street and he thought there was a need for a Spiritualist paper on modern journalistic lines. He even offered to put up some capital though he was not convinced of our truths.

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The next propaganda campaign was open-air meetings at Hyde Park, which started in 1933 and was sponsored by "Psychic News". At first the audience was composed almost entirely of Spiritualists who came to support the speaker, Maurice Barbanell; however, as news travelled it became a valuable platform to discuss and argue the truths of Spiritualism. Death was inevitable, declared Barbanell, and it was surely better to face it with knowledge than with ignorance, he would declare through the hecklers. "Once you have proved the survival of one individual," the speaker said, "you have proved automatically the survival of every individual who has ever 'died' ". The photograph shows Barbanell speaking at Speakers Corner, Hyde Park in 1935. Other well-known speakers joined; a year later, in 1936, the SNU President, John McIndoe, made his debut at Hyde Park, chaired by another future President, John Stewart. It is reported that he successfully tackled the hecklers on issues of religious, scientific and philosophical aspects. He emphasised the Seven Principles, showing that the belief in the Brotherhood of Man would, if acted on, put an end to most of the troubles of the race. Challenged to produce proof of progress after 'death', he said there was evidence that children who passed over young came back at intervals, over years, and proved that they had become educated and enlightened according to their age on the Other Side.

To finish below is a report of the last meeting of 1936 at Hyde Park, taken from "Psychic News", September 12th 1936:

LAST MEETING AT HYDE PARK

CRITIC OPPOSES US AFTER ONE SEANCE

"SPIRITUALISM is a delusion," declared an opponent at the last *Psychic News* open-air meeting in Hyde Park on Sunday. This critic had peculiar ideas regarding the source of the phenomena of Spiritualism. He thought it could all be explained by assuming that the medium read the mind of the sitter and got from it the impressions left by the "dead" person when he was still on earth.

But, as he had attended only one seance, and, presumably, that was the first Spiritualist meeting to which he had been, it would have been very optimistic to expect anything in the nature of reasoned criticism.

At the one seance he attended, the medium described a spirit, saying she had on clothes exactly similar to those she wore on earth. This, to the critic, proved that the sitter had retained in her mind a photograph of her friend, and that the medium was looking at this photograph and describing it as a spirit.

WHAT A NERVE!

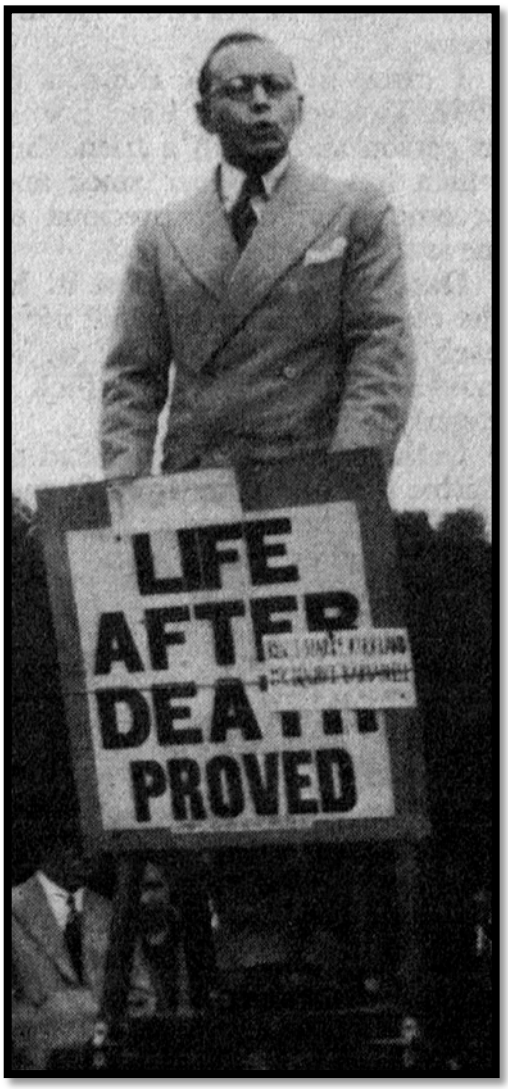
Maurice Barbanell, the speaker, after complimenting the opponent on his "nerve" in daring to criticise Spiritualism after such inadequate experience, pointed out that the theory put forward could not explain such phenomena as direct voice, materialisations, spirit photographs, levitation, the movement of objects or a fraction of the phenomena that prove our case.

Why was it that, at seances all over the world, the intelligence in charge of the manifestations always claimed to be a "dead" person?

The chairman, Leonard B. Lilley, had travelled from Portsmouth specially to preside over this meeting. Commenting on the implications of Spiritualism, he declared that those who accepted our facts were opposed to all forms of cruelty, to stag-hunting and all blood "sports" and to war. Spiritualists were not concerned, merely with what happened after "death." They were deeply interested in the problems of this life.

OTHER-SIDE CLOTHING

Maurice Barbanell explained in his speech why spirits wore clothes on the Other Side—a question which was asked the previous week. He said that to wear clothes was an instinct common to most of the civilised community, and the instinct remaining after "death" as part of the human make-up, the desire to wear clothes continued. The instinct for shelter explained why spirits lived in homes, constructed, like the clothes, of spirit materials.

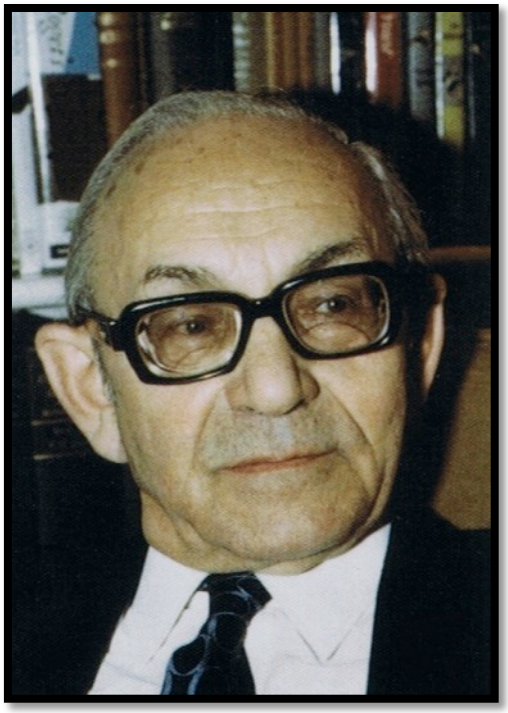


The questions, though very slow in coming, were varied. There were such queries as: "What is your definition of a psychical researcher?" "Do you think dreams have any bearing on the future?" "Where do you draw the line between those beings who consciously survive, and those who do not?" "Who is responsible for our actions when we are here?"

Asked whether there was any disease in the spirit world, Barbanell replied that physical illnesses disappeared at "death," but there were mental and spiritual ailments which would take their place.

This meeting concluded this year's series of Hyde Park meetings.

The photograph of Maurice Barbanell is undated, circa 1935



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

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Psychic editor goes into the "witness box"

"TWO WORLDS" REPORTER

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

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

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

Do we exaggerate?

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

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

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

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

Day of decision

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

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

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

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

Spirit master

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

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

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

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

Promise fulfilled

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

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

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

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

Reincarnation propounded as many problems as it attempted to solve.

Foolish optimists

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

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

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

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

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

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

Proof for sick world

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

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

Here are further Barbanellisms that aroused argument:

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

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

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

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

Blame and praise

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

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

"I would sum up by quoting the immortal words of Emma Hardinge Britten, '*Spiritualism is divine, Spiritualists are human*.' "

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Looking at the Independent Direct Voice

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

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

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

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

Barbanell started the article with these words:

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

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

MAURICE BARBANELL

My greatest journalistic "Scoop"

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In 1937 a Committee was appointed by Dr. Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury, to investigate Spiritualism. It carefully studied the subject for two years – but the report was suppressed.

Published below is taken from the "Two Worlds", June 7th 1952, front page and page 267:

MY GREATEST SCOOP

by Maurice Barbanell



THE passing of Dr. William Brown, the celebrated psychologist, enables me to disclose part of the story which gave me my greatest; journalistic "Scoop." This was the disclosure of the actual findings in the suppressed report of the committee appointed by Dr. Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury, to inquire into Spiritualism.

The story began when Hannan Swaffer met a distinguished public figure who was angry because he knew that the report was being withheld from the public. He had helped in the Investigation and was present at some of the sittings held by members of the committee.

Some time previously, he had made his own inquiry into Spiritualism and, with the aid of a mediumistic friend, had succeeded in receiving communications which satisfied him that Survival was a fact. When Swaff mentioned this meeting, I went to see his informant, who told me that he had seen a copy of the report and gave me some of the names of its signatories. Dr. William Brown was one of them.

I telephoned the psychologist and saw him in his Harley Street consulting rooms. I soon discovered that he objected to the report being suppressed. He stated that if he had known the efforts of his labours were not to be made public, he never would have joined the inquiry. The Primate had invited him to co-operate because of his scientific prestige.

This gave me my cue. I pointed out to Dr. Brown that, as a scientist, he could not be a party to the suppression of truth, a statement with which he promptly agreed. He himself was very sympathetic to Spiritualism, largely because of his own researches, coupled with the fact that he had discovered he possessed the psychic faculty of automatic writing.

Dr. Brown, however, would not allow me to take away a copy of the report because it was a confidential document which had been sent to him as a member of the committee. He opened a drawer in his desk, pulled out the report and handed it to me.

"You can read it," he said, "provided you do not take any notes. What you do afterwards is entirely your own affair."

I held the historic document in my hands and began to read the pages. Fortunately, nature has blessed me with a retentive memory. When I had finished reading, I expressed my thanks and jumped in to a taxi. No sooner had I reached the office than I dictated from memory all I could remember of the majority report. While I could not quote the actual words, I was able to give a fair summary.

The publication of my story created a sensation. National newspapers avidly seized on it, and soon the Primate was in a dilemma, Doubtless the fact that he was unsympathetic to Spiritualism—he had made no secret of his hostility—had influenced him in a decision to suppress the report. *The Daily Telegraph* was among the many national newspapers which followed up my story. It got into touch with Lambeth Palace and printed a reply by the Archbishop of Canterbury that my statements were "both unauthorised and inaccurate."

I was not concerned with the charge of being unauthorised and willingly pleaded guilty to it. The only inaccuracy I would admit was the fact that the committee numbered 10 instead of 12 as I had stated.

Having obtained from my perusal of the report, the actual names of the signatories, I then arranged for each of them to be interviewed. Some were co-operative and some were not. When some of them made unhelpful comments, I went back to Dr. Brown to tell him what they had said.

"Oh," he would answer, "is that so? Let us see what it says in the report." Back again he went to the drawer and fished out the historic document. Then he would quote, word for word, statements that completely answered any criticism of the accounts I had printed. Finally, so much of the report was published by me, that other members of the committee came out into the open and disclosed the part they had played, which made nonsense of the Primate's suppression.

I have placed these facts on record so that Spiritualists should know the debt of gratitude they owe to Dr. William Brown for the vital part he played in defeating a clerical attempt to suppress psychic truth.

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Maurice Barbanell was the founding editor of "Psychic News", which began on May 28th 1932. He continued in this role until 1946, when, following a disagreement with Arthur Findlay, he left. Stuart Martin took over from Barbanell but died on January 10th 1947. A.W. (Billy) Austin took over from Stuart Martin and continued until 1953; the next editor was Fred Archer. Sixteen years later, on June 20th 1962, Barbanell returned as editor. He was also the editor of the "Two Worlds" and continued with both publications until his death in 1981.

The full report was published in "Psychic News" by Billy Austin during his editorship; Austin stated: "For nine years the reports were kept secret; then one morning there mysteriously appeared on my office desk what purported to be a typed copy of the Majority Report." One may wonder if this was from Maurice Barbanell! For details and the full report please see the Church of England and Spiritualism.[6]

[6] Church of England and Spiritualism: http://www.aspects.org.au/intro.htm

See also Psypioneer, Vol. 1, No. 9, January 2005: "The Secret Report on Spiritualism". Leslie Price adds: Psychic News in 1947 published the conclusions of the majority report. For the full text of the majority and minority reports, contact the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies. Psychic News adds: The issue of Psychic News the Church of England Report was first reported in was 8th November 1947.

An extraordinary secret was held in the Spiritualist moment for over three decades:

Who was the medium for Silver Birch, known as the "Guide of the Hannen Swaffer Home Circle"?



It is well-known today that the medium was Maurice Barbanell, the founding editor of "Psychic News", which had begun on May 28th, 1932. Barbanell continued in this role until 1946, when (following a disagreement with Arthur Findlay) he left, later becoming the editor of the "Two Worlds". On August 24th 1957 the editor revealed that he himself was the trance medium through whom Silver Birch communicated. Sixteen years later, on June 20th, 1962, Barbanell returned to his previous role and continued as editor of "Psychic News" and the "Two Worlds" jointly until his death in 1981.

Below is Barbanell's announcement in 1957:

WHO IS SILVER BIRCH'S MEDIUM?

BY THE EDITOR

THE time has come to make public what has for long been a "secret." Who is Silver Birch's medium? The answer is—I am.

This fact has been known to a growing number of people who have visited Hannen Swaffer's home circle, where Silver Birch has spoken for over 20 years. Visitors, however, were asked not to disclose the medium's identity.

Swaff, always a critical journalist, recognised from the start that here we had spirit teachings, profound yet simple, expressing our philosophy in words of beauty and dignity, that ought to be printed. They were not given to the home circle for private use, he insisted, but so that they could be broadcast all over the world.

I agreed, with one proviso. "I am the Editor of a Spiritualist newspaper," I said. "If I print that I am the medium there could be the criticism that publication is done to flatter my vanity. I will leave my name out and let the spirit teachings stand or fall on their own merit."

What was the result of publication? Swaff has written: "As a consequence, Silver Birch has more followers than any earthly preacher. They belong to every clime and almost every race, and are people of all shades of colour."

Apart from regular publication of the teachings after every sitting, they have been recorded in seven books, translated into several languages. Who can measure their influence?

The teachings have won through on their own merits. There is therefore, no longer any need for anonymity. Besides, being very frank by nature, I dislike secrecy.

Silver Birch was responsible for bringing me into Spiritualism 37 years ago. I was secretary of a literary society at which, to ensure there were good discussions, it was my job to oppose the speaker, no matter what he said. One night we had a talk on Spiritualism from a man who recounted experiences that had convinced him.

Instead of opposing the speaker, I said that this was a subject on which opinions could not be expressed without prior investigation. Later, the speaker asked if I was serious in my views. If so, would I like to investigate?

I had no intention of conducting a personal inquiry, but it seemed churlish to refuse after what I had said in discussion. I still have the diary in which I noted, "Six months to investigate Spiritualism." I thought it would be fair to express no opinion until after six months' inquiry. Here I am, 37 years later, still inquiring . . .

I was taken by the speaker to my first seance. It was held in a tenement in one of London's poorest parts. But I was not impressed. I was an agnostic, with practically an atheistic outlook.

When at this seance sitters announced that they had suddenly become Red Indians, Africans and Chinese, I laughed outright. One of these reproved me, saying, "You will be doing this before long.'' Sceptical and incredulous I left, but returned the next week, as promised.

Half-way through the proceedings I woke up and apologised for having fallen asleep. "You have been a Red Indian, and in trance! I was told. "Your guide gave his name and said that he has been training you for this for years, having chosen you before your birth, and that before long you will be speaking on Spiritualist platforms."

Again I laughed at the prophecy, though bewildered by my experience. At subsequent seances this same guide continued to speak, though his English was faulty and the accent rather crude.

With the passing of the years the guide's language so improved that, to quote Swaff who has heard all the Keir Hardies and Philip Snowdens, all the Lloyd Georges and Lord Samuels, all the Churchills and Joseph Chamberlains, all the Dr. Gores and Dr. Temples:

"His simple eloquence now often transcends that of any speaker to whom I have ever listened."

Through the years, the degree of trance gradually grew. At first I could hear every word spoken. Then I seemed to be listening at a distance. Finally came the stage where, though unconscious, every word that had been uttered appeared as if on an unfolding screen before I went to sleep at night.

Having an independent mind, I always wanted to know what was going on so far as I was involved. This repetition at night of what had been said involved, I was told, the

utilisation of psychic power. When the decision to print the teachings was made, it was suggested to me that, as I would see the transcript, I should forego its being repeated to me at night. I agreed.

A curious happening followed. If the stenographer has made an error — it is no mean feat to record verbatim seance proceedings sometimes for as long as two hours —I always "know," when reading the transcript, what the right word should be.

There was an extraordinary incident after the decision to publish was made. The circle had always called the guide by an affectionate nickname, which they did not want printed. They asked him to choose the name to be used. He selected Silver Birch. The next morning, when I arrived at the office there was a postcard, addressed to me anonymously from a reader in Scotland, of a picture of silver birches.

Who is Silver Birch? That is another story. The Red Indian who manifests is only a small expression of a much larger and evolved being. Hints of identity have, however, been given.

"Silver Birch has an aura of majesty," says Lilian Bailey, whose clairvoyance has enabled her to see him frequently. "He is a very great soul who comes in the guise of an Indian."

Silver Birch has given ample evidence that he is not a secondary personality, as researchers so often assert, but an independent being. Once he told my wife that at the next Estelle Roberts voice seance he would speak through the trumpet and repeat certain words that she should remember. The promise was fulfilled — and it was a thrill for me to hear Silver Birch speak in the direct voice.

Then, in the early days, the guide to prove his separate existence, would insist on a pin being stuck deeply into my hand. Nothing was felt and no marks were visible.

Largely, Silver Birch has confined himself to teaching, though occasionally he has given healing and evidence of Survival. He has, however, provided remarkable guidance and help. I have often found myself envying Silver Birch his eloquence.

My speeches, which, alas, never touch oratorical heights, have to be prepared from notes. His wise utterances flow without pause, even when giving spontaneous answers to questions or replying to comments.

He has the remarkable facility for saying the same thing in a different way. His teaching could be compressed in an address no longer than the Sermon on the Mount. Yet he goes on and on with infinite but consistent variations.

"Does a guide choose his medium because "like attracts like"? With one exception, I have always agreed with the outlook Silver Birch reveals. That exception is reincarnation. In debates, when I have opposed it, I have always been told that I won.

Yet gradually my viewpoint has changed. Now I am prepared to believe that, in exceptional circumstances, individuals voluntarily reincarnate for a special task.

Silver Birch has a breadth of humanity and a transcendental wisdom which reveal an access to a pool of wisdom, alas not available to me. He never criticises individuals, never finds fault or blames them. I, on the other hand, am frankly critical.

He has always risen to the occasion, no matter who the visitor may be. He has met the arguments of the scientist and preacher, comforted the mourner, helped the tough and the simple, thrown light on the problems of the despairing, encouraged mediums and workers, and always maintained a level that is the hallmark of an evolved being. No caller has left feeling that his visit has been in vain.

Directly the war ended, Silver Birch, in prophetic mood,[11] began his weekly utterance with these words:

"One war ends. Another war begins—the war against human greed, selfishness and materialism, the war to liberate man and to build systems in an ever-better world in which freedom, equity, justice and decency are the lot of all peoples."

Lord Beaverbrook, after reading the first book of Silver Birch's teachings,[12] wrote: "It contains passages of great beauty. I was struck by the simplicity of the work."

The guide's oratory has been compared with the language of Churchill. "Almost Churchillian prose in their flights," said a journalist. "Rarely has the English language been so gently, so simply and so beautifully used," wrote another, who said of one passage, "That beats the drama of a Churchill."

It is not surprising that, having been a medium for 37 years, I have always sympathised with other instruments of the spirit world and fought for them, because I understand many of their problems at first hand. And the finest way to learn about Spiritualism, and the after-life, is from the wise teachers who are living in what will be our future existence.

It is in such an atmosphere that the Silver Birch teachings have been produced through a human instrument too often aware of his failings and weaknesses. Through the years, however, I have learned to love and respect this saintly guide whom I have never seen.

—~—☼—~—

Barbanell further adds:

SPIRIT ALCHEMY

MY own tribute to Silver Birch is contained in these words:

"His teaching is an example of spirit alchemy, the ability to take the 26 letters of the alphabet and transmute them into words of shimmering beauty.

"As one who spends the whole of his working life in writing, I can appreciate that the faculty of being able to deliver, week after week, words of wisdom, full of eloquent simplicity, in this spontaneous fashion, is in itself evidence of supernormality.

"Like other journalists who live by their pen, I know that simple English is the most difficult to write. I know how you have to polish and repolish, alter words, delete others, change sentences, consult the dictionary and the thesaurus, before you are satisfied.

[11] See Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 2, April 2016, "No World War" predictions.

[12] Lord Beaverbrook features in "My Greatest Story" by Hannen Swaffer; this has been republished by the SNU (the name 'Hannen' is incorrectly spelt 'Hannan' on the front cover).

"Yet here is a 'dead' man who, without hesitation, can produce perfect prose. Everything he says is full of common sense, inspiring, uplifting and ennobling.

"Silver Birch's words glisten like diamonds. I salute a master of English, a great literary craftsman whom I have grown to love and admire."

M.B.

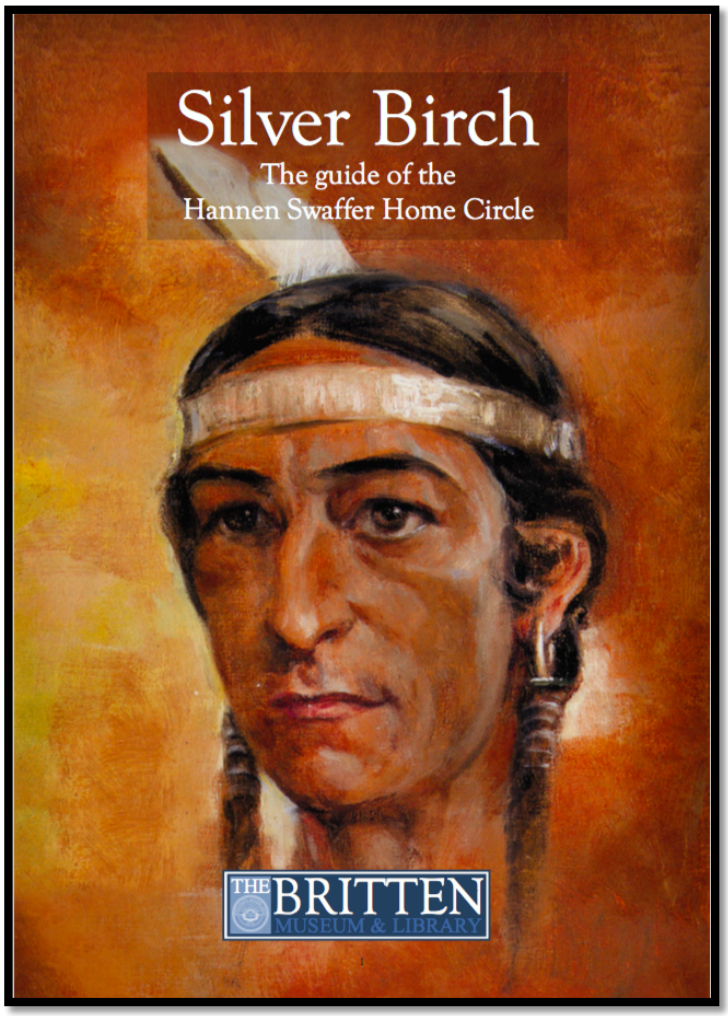


It is further revealed in the SNU publication that "Silver Birch", the guide, was not originally called Silver Birch but was known as

"Big Jump".

The name continued within the circle until Maurice Barbanell's death.[13]

This psychic painting of Silver Birch was done by Marcel Poncin, a famous French artist and actor. It is completely unlike his normal art. Though he never saw the guide, he was inspired to produce this portrait, working feverishly in the half-light. In addition, without realising it, he included in the picture a feature that is highly evidential. No mention has ever been made in print of this feature. The accuracy of the painting has been confirmed by several clairvoyants.





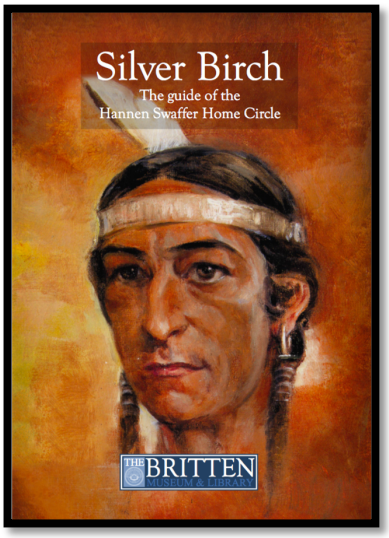
[13] Booklet is available at: https://www.snu.org.uk/shop/silver-birch

HARRY EDWARDS ADDRESSED BY SILVER BIRCH

In November 1952 Harry Edwards was addressed by Silver Birch, the spirit guide of Hannen Swaffer's home circle. At the sitting Edward's helpers, Olive and George Burton, were also present. Edwards, along with the formation of the 'National Federation of Spiritual Healers', 'Burrows Lea', etc., has featured numerous times in the pages of Pioneer.[1]

Below, Harry Edwards, together with his healing team, poses questions to Silver Birch; the article published here is the second part from the Two Worlds, November 8th, 1952. I hope to locate the first part and publish it in a later issue of Pioneer, where Silver Birch remarks to Harry Edwards:

"Great as is the work that has been achieved, the crown is still to be attained."



An extraordinary secret was kept in the Spiritualist moment for over three decades: who was the medium for Silver Birch, known as the guide of the Hannen Swaffer home circle? At the time of the article it was not publicly known that it was Maurice Barbanell until another five years, until 1957! [2]

It has also been further revealed in the SNU publication that Silver Birch, the guide, was not originally called Silver Birch but was initially known as "Big Jump".[3]

The name continued within the circle until Maurice Barbanell's death in 1981.[4]

Harry Edwards Questions Silver Birch on Healing Problems

"WHAT we find supporting the evidence of the continuance of spirit power is that, at times, people who ask for help write a year later to say they have got better," Edwards told the guide.

"That always must be," declared Silver Birch, "because what you cannot control is the measure of the spiritual unfoldment of the individual. I have touched on this before but all is controlled by the evolution of the soul. That is the decisive factor. No soul can obtain for

[1] For example, in Vol. 5, No. 2, April 2018: "Spiritualist Healers of the Past: John Britnell — Father of "The National Federation of Spiritual Healers" & "Burrows Lea", The Shrine of Healing — A Visit to Harry Edwards — Herbert Hampson 1947.

[2] See Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 6: "An extraordinary secret was held in the Spiritualist movement for over three decades: who is Silver Birch's medium?"

[3] This psychic painting of Silver Birch was done by Marcel Poncin, a famous French artist and actor (see Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 6). It is completely unlike his normal art. Though he never saw the guide, he was inspired to produce this portrait, working feverishly in the half-light. In addition, without realising it he included in the picture a feature that is highly evidential. No mention has ever been made in print of this feature. The accuracy of the painting has been confirmed by several clairvoyants.

[4] The booklet is available at the SNU online shop and the Arthur Findlay College (AFC).

itself that to which it is not entitled. The body is but the servant of the spirit; it is not the master."

Here the healer asked. "Do |you mean that an unevolved soul cannot be helped by spirit healing?"

"Yes, that is precisely what I mean," said Silver Birch, "but 'unevolved' is a difficult word. You must appreciate that when I speak of the law. I do not refer to one law. I refer to the law which comprises all the natural laws of the universe. These conform to a perfect pattern. They are laws within laws all the time. The universe is boundless; no one can see its limit. The universe, like the Great Spirit, is infinite; the laws of the Great Spirit are infinite too and progress is an infinite process.

THE BODY A STAGE

"Every person in the world of matter is a soul in a body. Now that soul is at a certain stage of evolution. You cannot dismiss the past life; it must come into the picture. The body is the expression of the mind, which in its turn is the expression of the spirit. The body represents the stage that the spirit has attained. If that soul is not to be healed because the pain is an essential concomitant of the process of purification that the soul must pass through in order to be ready for its next stage, then the power that flows through you cannot touch it, and there is no healer who can touch It.

"Pain is part of nature's process; pain is part of the law; pain, sorrow, suffering, these are all part of the natural law. You are back to what I have always tried to tell you, that sunshine and shadow, peace and storm, light and darkness, love and hatred, all these are parts of the law; you cannot have one without the other."

"Pain is the result of breaking the law," commented a member of the circle.

"RELY ON FAITH"

"Do not use the words 'breaking the law'—say transgressing it," averred the guide. "But then you can only learn about the law through transgression sometimes. You are not perfect beings, you have the seed of perfection which is growing, but it can only grow through the variety of conditions that life imposes. If there were no pain, no storm, no difficulty, no suffering, no disease, the soul could not grow.

"The law cannot fall. If the law could fall then the Great Spirit would cease to be the Great Spirit and the universe would cease to have any harmony, rhythm or purpose. You must pin your whole faith on the exactness and perfection of the natural law, because there are stages where you cannot have knowledge and you must rely on faith. I never decry faith born of knowledge. I decry blind faith which becomes mere credulity. But you cannot have all the knowledge and so you must perforce rely on some faith to help you. I do not want, as a result, that you should avoid compassion or mercy or tenderness and say, "This is the result of the law, I can do no more.' That would be wrong. You must strive to do your utmost, because in your striving you are fulfilling your own spiritual obligations."

After answering some questions Silver Birch stated: "The soul makes its own path. In addition to that, the body of matter imposes some restriction and limitation on the soul. The machine owes its existence to the spirit. There is a double influence at work the whole time, but overriding all is the influence of the soul. The soul is pre-eminent. This must be so because the soul is the Great Spirit within you and everything the Great Spirit possesses you possess in miniature."

PHYSICAL MIND

"It seems very fundamental," Edwards declared. "You said that upon the state of the evolution of the soul depends whether healing can take place. If that is so, then we should devote more time to the healing of the mind rather than physical healing."

The guide asked: "Where do you think your healing power is exerted now if not on the spirit of those who come to you?"

"Through healing, the spirit self is healed and from that the physical healing takes place," replied Edwards.

"Yes, that is what I say," the guide pointed out.

"Is it not necessary for us to influence the physical mind?" Edwards inquired.

"SOUL MUST ADVANCE"

The guide answered: "The physical mind is but the servant of the spirit, If you get the spirit mind to work all the rest will follow, but if the spirit has not attained the stage of evolution where it can respond then you cannot make it work. The soul must advance still further. It will have to endure those processes which will shape it, and these are the painful ones. The soul cannot awaken in conditions of ease."

A member of the circle asked: "Do you mean that if the soul has not reached the necessary stage of evolution, even the influence of the healers from the spirit side cannot help?"

"It is the same law which applies to you and to us," answered Silver Birch.

"Isn't this what the Christian Scientists believe?" another person asked.

"All truth is truth." the guide answered. "Labels do not matter, it is the principle with which we are concerned. If the one who is called a Christian Scientist can the power of the spirit to work and, as a result of the life-giving, dynamic, vital forces, make the body obey and the cure is achieved, it matters not whether you call it spirit healing or Christian Science, does it?"

"I know that we play a part" said Edwards. "But it is very difficult for us to reach the soul of the patients."

"You do play a part, a very important part. If you were not there it could not happen. You are the instruments; you are the mediums; you are the condensers; you are the means by which the power is transmitted."

"Transmitted to what, the body or the soul?" asked the healer.

"I am not concerned with bodies." said the guide. "What makes an arm locked?"

"The physical state of the arm," Edwards replied.

"NOT BY FORCE"

"What has happened to that normal, healthy force which gives movement to the arm?"

"It has gone; it has surrendered to the disease; it has created the ill-condition,"

"If that vitality could circulate, once again, what would happen?"

"The arm would get better."

"How do you get the life force to circulate through the arm?"

"That is their problem, not mine."

"You cannot do it by pushing the arm."

"Not by force,"

"Not by force. But if the soul, which made the body in the first instance to be its instrument, can now pursue its old function and allow the force to function, where there is now a lock, health will result."

"That is what we see.

Another visitor to the circle asked. "Is the function of the healer to give stimulus to the natural resources of the patient?"

Silver Birch answered: "It is a little more than that, because the power of the spirit has to be stepped down owing to the fact that the patient is a spirit in a body in an earthly world, vibrating at a rate much lower than the power which has to reach him. The healers, who are the transformers, enable the power to be stepped down, and when the soul is ready healing is almost instantaneous; because of the degree of harmony between you and those that work with you the power can flow with lightning rapidity. If the soul of the patient cannot receive that force, there is nothing you can do. You cannot transfer the dynamic into the bent leg; it is only the soul of the patient that can do that."

ACTION, NOT BELIEF

Still the comments came, one visitor declaring, "Some people who say they do not believe in God are healed."

"Yes, because whether they believe in the Great Spirit or not, the law can operate."

"But you would not think their souls would be evolved enough."

"You can have a great soul, who is an agnostic, and you can have poor soul, who is religious. The greatness of the soul is not measured by belief, but by action. Listen, you can only help those who are ready to be helped. Rejoice at the fact that so many can be helped to find the light. It should be a measure of great satisfaction that through your instrumentally there are so many souls who are freed and who can rejoice because their feet have been placed on the pathways that lead to knowledge to understanding and to abiding peace. That is the measure of the success. You will not be able to help them all: it is part of the law. I do not say that you should be satisfied—just as I say that the Great Spirit is in love and hatred, In sunshine and in storm. Success and failure again play their part, for if there were no failures there could be no successes."

Next came these questions: "Why is it that some people who believe and have faith and knowledge do not respond as well as they ought to spiritual healing? Is it a question of their soul?"

"Yes, it always comes back to the same thing. It is not a question of belief, faith, love. It is a question of the soul and what that soul is entitled to receive as a result of the stage it has reached in its evolution."

"We can see physical laws, but we cannot see the change to spirit laws," said Edwards.

"Even if you had many clairvoyants around you, they would not all see the same process at work, it is a most complex process. Do not think for a minute that it is simple. The whole of the interaction between matter and spirit is profound and complex. The body itself is a complicated piece of machinery and the spirit, too, is full of many facets. All of these are subject to laws that work within laws. Whilst harmony rules throughout, within the framework of all these laws there is plenty of interplay and the one reacts upon the other."

EFFECT OF SUFFERING

Olive Burton asked. "Did you say that the physical suffering of a person does not affect the spirit?"

"No. I did not say that. Any suffering to the body affects the spirit and suffering to the spirit affects the body. You cannot divorce one from the other. You are one person. Your body is part of you because it is a means by which you express yourself. You are the spirit. What happens to your body affects the spirit."

Next she asked. "If we make intercession for spirit help for people dying in agony, and the help cannot be given to keep them in this life, do you sometimes dissociate the spirit from the body to prevent any detrimental effect on the spirit?"

"That depends on the individual. The soul will be released from the body when the natural law determines it, unless you jump ahead of the natural and force a severance, as does happen many times."

"We have had instances where we have thought that happened."

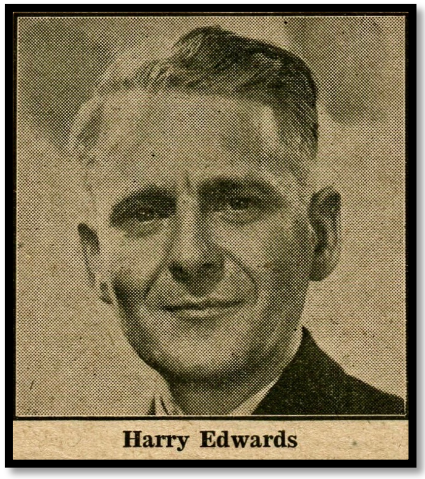
LAW OF BALANCE

"Remember that in all such cases there is a law of balance at work; there is a shock to the spirit, though not a great one."

"Is it a shock caused by the early releasing?"

"That is so. In all things there are compensation and retribution. If the soul frees itself from the body before its proper time, it has an adjustment to make. It must depend on the individual circumstance. Where you can help is that, if the soul has earned the right, you can ease the pain, the adjustment is made and it is cushioned off, as it were, until it finds its proper status."

To be continued ...[5]



Harry Edwards

[5] In Pioneer, Vol. 7, No. 5.

Continued from Pioneer, Vol. 7, No. 3:

HARRY EDWARDS ADDRESSED BY SILVER BIRCH



Hannen Swaffer

In November 1952 Harry Edwards was addressed by Silver Birch, the spirit guide of Hannen Swaffer's home circle.[19] At the sitting Edward's helpers, Olive and George Burton, were also present. Below, Harry Edwards, together with his healing team, poses questions to Silver Birch; the articles published here is the third and fourth part from the Two Worlds, November 15th & 29th, 1952:

"The Aim Of Mediums Is To Touch Souls"

THE talk between Harry Edwards, the famous healer and Silver Birch, spirit guide of Hannen Swaffer's home circle, is continued below. It took place when the healer was accompanied by his helpers, Olive and George Burton.

Edwards asked: "If there is a condition where the patient is in such a state that there is no hope, is it a good or bad thing to hasten the end?"

"I am one of those who always believe that the body should fall away when the spirit is ready to permit it."

"You hasten the break if you hasten the end of the physical body," said the healer. "Is that a right thing to do if there is great pain and suffering and there is not much chance of living?"

"I know the difficulty and I do not wish to appear to be stony-hearted in this matter. The law is quite clear and the body should fall away when the spirit is ready, just as the apple drops from the tree when it is ripe, If the apple drops before it is ripe it is not good for the apple. I am pointing out what should take place within the framework of natural law.

LAWS TRANSGRESSED

"There is the circumstance where through drugs and poisons, the body becomes full of disease. The body was not intended to be riddled with disease; the laws have been transgressed, and so we go from stage to stage. Doesn't this point out what the natural result should be, no interference by the individual, by the doctor, or by anybody? All must come within the framework of natural law."

LIVING IN SHADOWS

On another occasion when Edwards and the Burtons were present the guide emphasised: "The true aim of the power of the spirit is to touch the souls of those who come within your ministry. Until the people of your world realise that they are souls and not physical bodies, they are going through life completely indifferent to reality; they are living in the shadows and chasing illusions. It is only when they become aware of their real selves, their spiritual natures, that they come face to face with reality. To find yourself is the object of all earthly

[19] I hope to locate the first part and publish it in a later issue of Pioneer, with the concluding session between Silver Birch and Harry Edwards and co.

life, because once you find yourself you will then, if you are wise, proceed to develop that divinity which lies within you. It is mostly true that in your world people do not find themselves, and are unaware of their spiritual nature until some sorrow or tragedy touches them. It is only in the darkness of life that light is found

GREATEST SERVICE

"You meet mostly those who are afflicted in body and mind and the healing should induce in them a realisation that they are spiritual beings, and if you can touch their spiritual natures, if you can kindle the divine spark, the flame will come in time and its illumination will brighten the whole of their lives. Now that is not always easy. You may succeed in putting right a limb that is misplaced, or clearing up a disorderly condition, but if in so doing the individual is aware that he is a spirit with a body, not a body with a spirit, then you are indeed performing the greatest service that is possible.

"You must appreciate that we are more concerned with the spirit than with the body. If the spirit is right, then the body will be right, but if the spirit is not right, not in true alignment, then the body cannot possibly be right. I would like you to appreciate this because it is an aspect of your labours that you cannot measure. The gratitude and thankfulness of those who obtain a cure, or relief, or a betterment, is as naught compared with the soul being touched and the releasing of that tremendous dynamic that is within them.

"NO EASY TASK"

"It is not an easy task on which you are engaged; it demands great sacrifice and service. It is performed amidst difficulty and the pathway is not an easy one. But the path of the pioneer is never easy, neither is the road of those who give service one that is freed from obstacles. You must not expect that it should be so. Each obstacle and difficulty is a challenge to your own nature that you should rise triumphant above it and allow the pure gold of the spirit to be exhibited.

Here Harry Edwards asked. "With the healing of the mind, or the healing of the soul, is that not done more from your side than from ours?"

"Yes, it must be so" the guide replied.

"Is the part we play very little?"

"It is little and large," answered Silver Birch. "It is all a question of attunement. If you realise what takes place, it is a question of stepping down or lowering the vibration, frequency or radiation of these healing forces which, as you know, are differing kinds of rays, to a potential that can be manifested in physical form. That is one way. The other method is by using rays which produce a direct effect either on the mind or the spirit, that is, the consciousness of the sufferer, thus allowing the natural curative power to get rid of any disharmony or disease. That does not sound very clear."

"Yes it is clear, but its application is not easily seen," Edwards commented.

POWER OF THE SPIRITS

"Let me put it another way," said the guide. "Nobody in your world knows what life is. It cannot be resolved into a physical, chemical or scientific explanation. Life eludes because life cannot be resolved into any material formula. Now we say that life is spirit and spirit is life. That power of the spirit which is released in your activity is life itself—the same power that enables individuals to have consciousness, to breathe, to move, to walk, to think, to reflect, the same power that enables the whole of the natural phenomena of life to perform and fulfil their functions, the same power that enables the tree to grow,

the rose to bloom, the tide to ebb and flow. It is all part and parcel of the same power of the spirit.

A GUIDE'S ELOQUENT PRAYER

At the opening of every sitting at which Silver Birch makes a communication, he begins with an impressive invocation, and each sitting closes with a benediction. The following is a typical example of his invocations:—

"I PRAY to the Great White Spirit that we may be enabled to reveal the operation of the laws that belong to the spiritual realms. I pray that we may be enabled to give a clearer understanding of the Great Spirit and His relationship to all the phenomena of life and to all His children who dwell in the universe.

"The Great Spirit has been so misunderstood throughout the centuries, misinterpreted, limited and restricted that we seek to reveal the Great Spirit as perfect law in operation. The Great Spirit is responsible for every manifestation of life. All that exists does so because of His power and His sustenance.

The whole order of creation pays tribute to his Law. The mightiest and the lowliest, the strongest and the weakest, the birds, the flowers, the trees, the wind, the ocean, the mountain, the hills and the vales, the sunshine and the rain, the storm and the lightning—all these are but expressions of the Great Spirit of all life.

"We seek to reveal that all are fashioned in His spiritual image, that His spirit manifests through their being, that they move and breathe and live because the Great Spirit is within them and they are within the Great Spirit. None has the power to come between the child and the Father, for all the inspiration, all the truth, all the wisdom, all the revelation, all the knowledge that belongs to that infinite reservoir can be reached by each child of the Great Spirit as he desires, in aspiration, humility and service, to become an instrument for that mighty power.

"We seek to reveal the greatness latent within every human soul, the mighty force waiting to be released, pent up through misunderstanding, waiting to surge through the physical being and express spiritual heights in their daily lives.

"We would seek to make all children live lives in fulness, in beauty, in understanding of the purpose for which they were born, so that they might extract from life all the richness all the sweetness, all the beauty that is theirs for the asking.

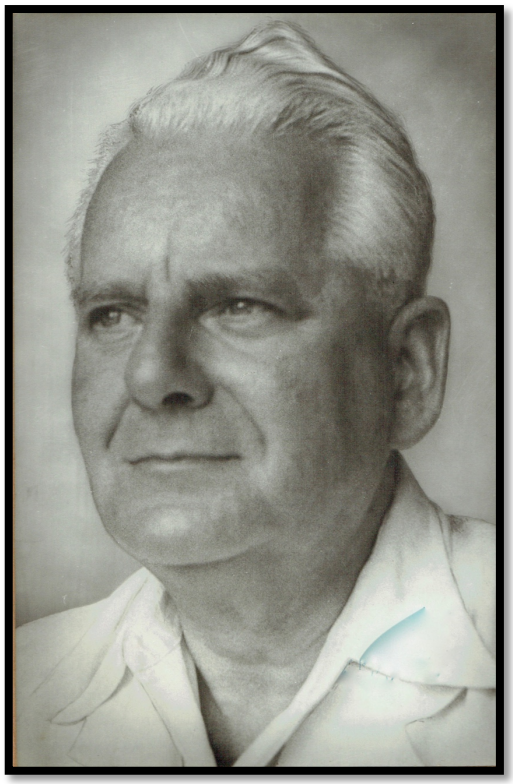
"We seek to bring the Great Spirit closer to His children and His children nearer to the Great Spirit, to overcome all the obstacles that stand in the way, to banish all the restrictions and limitations so that that the children of His world of matter may know the Great Spirit and seek to reveal Him in service.

"That is the prayer of Thy Indian servant, who seeks to serve."

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Continued in the Two Worlds, November 29th, 1952:

We continue below our account of the seance at which Silver Birch, guide of Hannen Swaffer's home circle, discussed healing with Harry Edwards and his helpers, Olive and George Burton.



Silver Birch Talks To Harry Edwards On Healing Problems

"What makes you live is the fact that you are a spirit. It is in essence that that power, in varying degrees, according to the development, the evolution of the patient, is released. Healing consists in applying this power to the soul of the patient where it is a disease that has its origin in the soul and not the body. As you know, there are two kinds of diseases, those that begin in the mind or the spirit, and those that are purely physical. The physical ones require the healer's touch, and those that owe their origin to mental or spiritual process require the application of the power of the spirit.

KARMIC LAW

"There is a limitation imposed by a set of factors; your own evolution, the evolution of your two collaborators, and the evolution reached by the person who comes for healing. What I call the karmic law is also at work, a process of cause and effect all the time."

There are many diseases of the mind or the soul, but they have different effects on the body," said the healer. "I assume, therefore, that there must be qualitative healing forces to deal with the individual healing condition."

THREEFOLD MAN

"Yes, that is perfectly true," said the guide. "Man is a triune being. Primarily, man is a spirit, that is the seed. The foundation of existence. Spirit is the first cause. The spirit is expressed through mind, which is the centre of consciousness, and mind regulates the body, which is the physical apparatus. Mind, spirit and body are inter-relating factors that affect one another. Not only does mind affect the body, the body qualifies the mind; you cannot have one without the other."

"That works both ways," said Edwards.

"Yes," agreed Silver Birch, "the limitation of the mental and spiritual expression of the individual affect the body, and the body can be regulated to a height as yet unknown by the mind and the spirit. Study the fakirs who train themselves to have a complete mastery and discipline over their bodies. They can perform bodily feats that to the eyes of the Western world are impossible. That merely means that they have trained the mind to rule the body with a consciousness, a deliberate consciousness, that is not usually done."

Edwards asked, "If you kindle that consciousness within the spirit, as we may do, is not the spirit a dominant factor in the individual and could it not be more easily done from your side than from ours?"

EARTHBOUND SOULS

Silver Birch answered: "In some cases Yes, but in the majority of cases No, because, like the many individuals who come to our world, although they are no longer on earth they are still nearer to earth than they are to spirit. Their evolution is so comparatively low that they are unable to respond to spiritual stimuli. Where you have this condition in your world we cannot reach them. That is what your mediumship consists of, it is the nexus, the stepping down process. The attuned medium, the evolved medium, is able both to reach out to spirit and to respond to matter.

LONELY PATH

"That is why it is very important that the healer, or the medium of any kind who desires to achieve the greatest results, should also strive to develop his own spiritual nature. It must be so that the higher you reach spiritually, the greater is the good that you can do because your range is extended. It is part of the law. As a corollary, it may be emphasised, too, that this process of development is a lonely path in which, as the individual unfolds, he leaves familiar signposts behind. I think you appreciate that; you cannot have one without the other."

Edwards intervened with: "You said of the healing rays, in one aspect of them, that they come and affect the physical body. Can you give me an indication where or how the change takes place between a spirit healing force and the physical change? There must at some time come the link-up where the spirit can be converted into matter? Can you give me any indication where the link is?"

The guide answered: "It depends on the kind of healing that is to be performed. Some will find it hard to believe this, but in some cases the centres are the old ones laid down by the masters of wisdom. The 'third eye' and the solar plexus are used because these are centres where body, mind and spirit link up. As an alternative, the subconscious mind of the individual, where it is receptive, is acted upon in such a way so that it is stimulated into sending the necessary chemical reaction to the affected part in a manner that it would normally do if health were there and not disease."

Edwards said: "It is clear, but I still cannot see where the 'no man's land' is. Can you give me an indication of a more tangible link between the physical condition and spirit healing force? There must be somewhere, some manner, where they change."

SPIRIT CONDENSER

The guide replied: "That is rather difficult my son, because it is not possible to explain it in a manner that I think I could make you understand it, but it is somewhat akin to what I think in your word is called a condenser, the function of a condenser being to regulate the transmission of one frequency into another. That is what mediumship is. In some cases, what you call ectoplasm is used, but not in the form in which it us used at a séance to reproduce a voice, or for materialisation, but in a more invisible –."

"An in-between state?" suggested Edwards.

COMBINED POWER

The answer was, "Yes, where it is sufficiently plastic and malleable to spirit influence but yet sufficiently semi-physical to work in the material world. It is your power combined with it that acts as the condenser. Then this healing force actually flows into the individuals either through the pineal gland or the solar plexus. The vital force streams through their whole being and that is when they feel this warm electrical vibration.

"What you have to appreciate is that there is no set method. It is all a question of experiment. Every time you have healing you attract more and more what you would call scientists from our world. They have noted the reactions; what rays have been used; they have measured them; and that is why you have found a quickening in the results. You have noticed, for example, that often there is a healing before the patient comes on to the platform, and that will continue. The greatest part of your work is done, not in public, but in the silence of your soul."

Edwards said: "That does lead me to another question. There is an idea prevalent – you have jut spoken of the gathering of scientists on your side – that there is conflict between various healing guides should one of our patients receive absent healing from us and physical healing from another medium. It seems to me to be contrary to all spiritual law. What do you think?"

PROVED BY RESULTS

The guide answered, "I say let the results determine it."

"But that is not an argument that we can use."

"In some cases there is a conflict. This cannot be laid down because there is a varied set of circumstances with every patient. You cannot look at an individual and say if he comes to you you will heal him. It may be that the stage of evolution he has reached and you have reached will determine that you can succeed, and it may be that you can partially help and others, with another set of conditions, can go a stage further.

INFINITE VARIETY

"The more one sees the working of this simple but intricate process, the more one guards oneself against laying down arbitrary laws. The power of the spirit is infinite in its variety of manifestations. The wisest plan is not to assert what must and what must not be. There are certain essentials of motive and desire to serve but after that who is to say what will succeed or what will not succeed?"

Edwards said: "We are not concerned with the details, but with the general principle, whether there is co-operation of all the healing guides to help a patient if necessary."

Silver Birch replied: "The hall-mark of an evolved soul is that he will not deny anybody. We will help wherever we can. This is the standard set in the highest realms. Never refuse, my son, never turn away a soul. You have produced mental and spiritual effects that are eternal in their nature. Do not attempt to judge. You cannot see with eyes of the spirit.

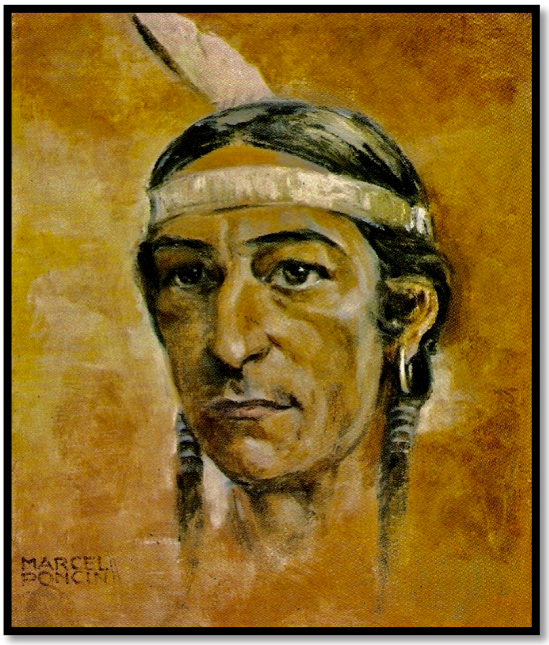
"You help far more than you know. Be assured that the service that you render is one of the greatest services that can be performed in your world. Where it would seem that physical success has not crowned your efforts, do not despair; it is no reflection on you or who are associated with you. The natural law must always work. You know there are no miracles; all is regulated by infinite love and infinite wisdom.

Here is a typical benediction:

"We are around and about you because we love you, and the love that we have for you makes us always seek to serve you and, through you, those who require service – the weak ones, the ones who have lost their strength, the ones who have fallen by the wayside, the derelicts of your world, the weary and struggling souls who do not know where to turn, who can find no comfort in the religion of earthly churches but who have a yearning for

the truth, those whose souls seek expression but who are choked by the creed and the dogma and the teaching of opposing sects.

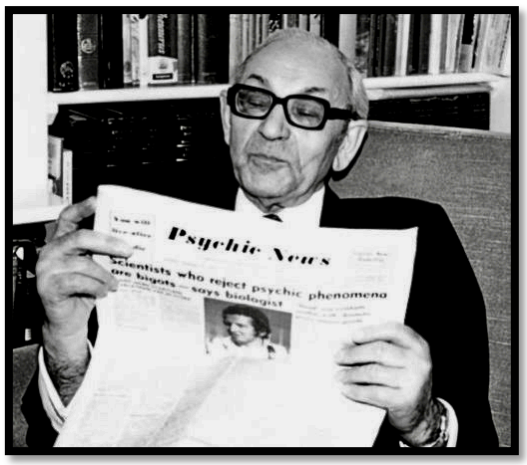
"May you become conscious of that mighty power that is around and about you, of the great love that is always being poured into your world, the inspiration that seeks to express itself through you, the truth that is waiting to be revealed, the wisdom that seeks to illumine your world, and may you strive through service to make yourself accessible to the mighty power of the spirit, so that you may become at one with the great Force, the Great Spirit, that is behind it all, so that, working in unison with His laws and filled with His knowledge, you may become instruments of His servants for all His children. May the Great Spirit bless you all.





Big Jump, better known as "Silver Birch", and his medium, Maurice Barbanell

PSYCHIC NEWS WAS FOUNDED BY MAURICE BARBANELL AND JACK RUBENS



Over the years there has been some ongoing confusion as to this fact—a few years ago the correct information was imput and corrected within the SNU, i.e. its Yearbook, education courses and general publications. However, the confusion continues as to who founded Psychic News; this is due to the many erroneous notices available from different sources, for example:

Psychic News – Wikipedia:

> The name of the paper was devised by one of its founding editors, Maurice Barbanell, who said that he was told to use it by his spirit guide. The other founding members were Hannen Swaffer, a Fleet Street journalist, and Arthur Findlay, a notable figure in the history of Spiritualism in Britain.



This sweeping statement holds three errors: Barbanell … *was told to use it by his spirit guide*, Hannen Swaffer, and Arthur Findlay *were other founding members*. This misinformation is addressed by Leslie Price (founder editor) in Psypioneer, Vol. 1, No. 9, January 2005, as published below:

PSYCHIC NEWS IN PERSPECTIVE

The origin and history of the weekly Spiritualist newspaper "Psychic News" is sometimes confusing. The SNU web site states: 1932– Psychic News founded by Arthur Findlay under the editorship of Maurice Barbanell. The web site of PN itself more modestly claims that Findlay was closely involved, along with Hannen Swaffer. The first issue appeared on 28 May 1932. Findlay's own account in "Looking Back" recalls that soon after the publication of his book "On the Edge of the Etheric" in 1931, he received a letter from Maurice Barbanell asking him to write an article for PN.

> The newspaper had just been born, and it was only a week old, but his letter had effects much greater than the article I wrote. I met him a few days later and found that he, and the other founder of Psychic News, J.M. Rubens, required financial help to continue publication. This I contributed and we formed a company Psychic Press Ltd, to finance and manage this new Spiritualist journal.

It will be seen that by his own account, Findlay did not found PN, but he certainly saved it from extinction, and as principal shareholder became controller of it for many years. Another perspective on these events was given by Maurice Barbanell himself in an article for Psychic News, reprinted in a special issue of the SNU's own newsletter "New Communicator" of 14 July 1995 to mark their acquisition of PN. Around 1930 Barbanell was lecturing on Spiritualism throughout Britain with Hannen Swaffer. Jack Rubens was accountant to HS and later to MB. Merrifield a Spiritualist financier had offered financial help to enliven psychic journalism. Ernest Oaten had been invited to bring "Two Worlds" to London where HS and MB would enliven it free of charge. Oaten declined, perhaps suspecting that he would be sidelined.

Rubens then suggested MB should start a modern Spiritualist newspaper. MB hesitated, but that same evening in an Estelle Roberts sitting, was told by Red Cloud to get on with it – full time. (Red Cloud's name for MB was always John the Scribe, supposedly a past life reference to MB promising to do this writing work in this life).

Seeking confirmation, MB sat with Kathleen Barkel whom he had never met. Her guide White Hawk told him that Northcliffe was interested in the projected newspaper. At the next sitting with Mrs Roberts, Red Cloud asked him if he was satisfied. He was, and Northcliffe and Stead then gave advice on the policy of the newspaper – to be independent. (Stead allegedly communicated earlier at a Vyvyan Deacon séance that a new paper, called Psychic News, would be coming within six months.)

There was insufficient money for the new paper, but Red Cloud said "You supply the faith, we will find the money". HS declined to invest, which left Rubens and Barbanell with a joint capital of £666 13s 4d. (Swaffer did write many articles later.)

Barbanell states that he wrote to Findlay while planning the first issue. It was on the evening of his first meeting with Findlay that Red Cloud said in circle "I have today sent you the man who is to supply the money". MB told this to Findlay who agreed to invest £1000, which soon ran out. Findlay then increased his shareholding to £3000, but insisted on voting power and control. Findlay promised not to interfere editorially and he did not. PN soon became profitable.

It will be seen that in Barbanell's account the newspaper is founded with much encouragement from spirit guides. MB and Findlay take decisions on that basis. The paper has a paranormal origin. Findlay is also seen by the other side as an essential part of the recipe for success. He is the man sent with the money.

Did Findlay know Barbanell and Swaffer already? They were after all three of the most famous Spiritualists in the country. Findlay had already published a best seller. MB and HS had lectured all over. Edwin Butler, then working at the Friendship Centre, Bayswater, London, recalls MB and HS coming in with a mock-up of the proposed new paper, and Findlay arriving separately to join them.

There is no published biography of Maurice Barbanell, and no autobiography, and until one is written, much remains unclear about this outstanding figure. (Additional research by Paul Gaunt.)

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Further, in Pioneer, October 2007, then under my editorship, the matter was again addressed. In the August Newsletter, 'The SNU and History', Leslie Price looked at the redesigned SNU website under the "Important Dates" web page:

> "1932 Psychic News founded by Arthur Findlay under the editorship of Maurice Barbanell.".

Psypioneer published an article written by its editor, Maurice Barbanell, on the front and second page of Psychic News, May 20th, 1939, albeit it repeats some of Leslie's research two years earlier as published above. Barbanell clearly shows how Psychic News came into being and survived its first seven years as published below:

Three "Dead" Men Began Psychic News

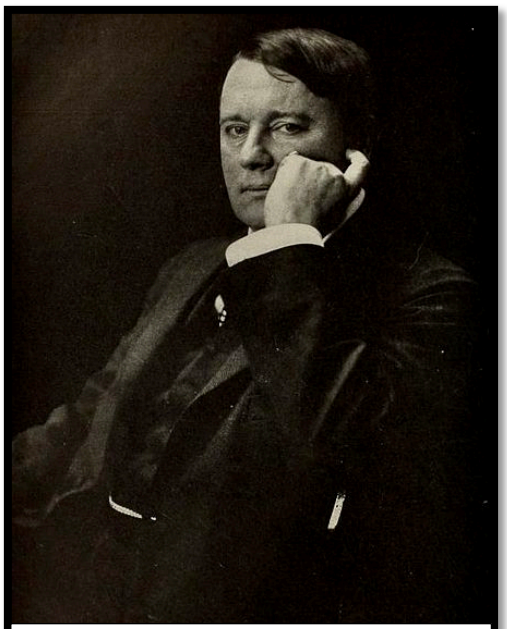
By The Editor

POLICY OF *PSYCHIC NEWS* WAS LAID DOWN IN THE SPIRIT WORLD

BECAUSE of three "dead" men you are reading these words. Two of them belong to that much misunderstood race, the North American Indians. The other is Lord Northcliffe, the creator of the "Daily Mail" and the founder of modern, popular journalism.

These three men were responsible for the advent of *Psychic News* seven years ago. Behind the founding of this paper there is a remarkable story of spirit planning and guidance. It came into existence as part of a campaign which originated in the spirit world.

Even the name *Psychic News* was chosen by the Other Side. After I decided to use it I was told of a seance at which W. T. Stead spoke in the direct voice, informing the sitters that a new paper called *Psychic News* was shortly to be launched. That was months before the first issue.



Alfred Harmsworth, better known under his later title Lord Northcliffe

I had been chosen to be the Editor, though when *Psychic News* began I had no practical knowledge of journalism. Theoretically I knew from Hannen Swaffer something about how newspapers are produced. Our friendship began shortly after his inquiry into Spiritualism when he set out to prove Northcliffe's survival.

For three years Swaffer and I conducted a propaganda tour and addressed a quarter of a million people – a record that has never been equalled. We spoke in nearly every large town in this country.

Once we addressed three meetings on one Sunday. We spoke at Maesteg in the morning, Merthyr Tydfil in the afternoon and Cardiff in the evening. Then we motored back to London, arriving home after four in the morning. And I had motored down to South Wales on the Saturday afternoon and spoke at a meeting at Caerau that night.

In those three years, sitting up half the night talking, in conversations on trains, in cars and hotels, I learned a great deal about journalism from Swaffer.

My days, however, were spent in the world of commerce. I held some directorships, had my own business and owned some properties. I was fairly prosperous for many years. Then came a series of misfortunes, culminating in the slump of 1931, when things were very black. I was compelled to sell nearly everything I possessed.

I had to wind up my own business and my income came from one directorship, but as that meant attendance at a board meeting for a few hours once a month I was virtually unemployed.

Just about that time Swaffer and I were approached to give editorial assistance to a proposed psychic weekly. Nothing, however, came of it. The scheme petered out.

One day, to my surprise, Swaffer's business manager, J. M. Rubens, a non- Spiritualist who was winding up one of my companies, suggested I should start a psychic paper.

He is well-known in Fleet Street and he thought there was a need for a Spiritualist paper on modern journalistic lines. He even offered to put up some capital though he was not convinced of our truths.

When he made this startling suggestion I recalled a seance with Alfred Vout Peters at which his guide said – and I am quoting from my notes made at the time—"*W. T. Stead is interested in you. You have a journalistic urge in your fingers. Cultivate your writing powers. Later on you are going to do writing work. I see association with Hannen Swaffer. You will contribute to the newspapers. Try to make your writing short and crisp.*"

TWO SEANCES PROPHECIES



That was more than eight years ago, at a time when I could see no possibility of the prediction being fulfilled.

I remembered, too, that Red Cloud, speaking through Estelle Roberts a month before Rubens threw out the suggestion, had said to me when discussing my troubles, "*We have plenty for you to do. Our plans are already made. They only have to materialise in your world. You are going forward to do a bigger work.*"

On the day that I saw Rubens I had later on a private sitting with Red Cloud. He surprised me by referring to Rubens's proposal. This was the work I had been chosen to do, he said, and if I would start the new paper, he and others in the spirit world would give it their whole-hearted support. I argued with Red Cloud, but it was all in vain.

I pointed out that I was a business man, not a journalist. Surely I was not the person for the job. In any case it was a vital decision to make—to abandon my idea of a commercial career for psychic journalism at the age of 30. I wanted time to consider it.

My commercial and financial troubles, this guide insisted, were all part of the plan. I was to sever my business ties and learn to be dependent on spirit guidance.

I knew I was being asked to make the biggest decision of my life. Though I had confidence in Red Cloud, a guide who had proved his ability and had earned my respect, I decided that on so important a matter I required confirmation.

THE RIGHT MEDIUM

I searched for a medium to whom I was unknown. I had been a public speaker for Spiritualism for twelve years and knew most of them. At last I found the medium I wanted —Kathleen Barkel. We had never met and at that time she had done hardly any public work, confining her mediumship to giving private seances.

Usually you had to wait months to get a sitting with her, but when I inquired, someone had just cancelled an appointment, and she was able to see me within a few days. I went anonymously and it was obvious she did not know me.

I waited eagerly for her guide, White Hawk, to control, wondering if I would obtain the confirmation I desired. The ground was already prepared for my work, he said, which was connected with Spiritualism. I would start these activities in two months. His prophecy was accurate, for *Psychic News* made its appearance two months later.

CO-OPERATION IN THE BEYOND

Then came a remark which proved how closely associated are these spirit guides. *"You know Red Cloud," he said. Then he added that the proposal in which I was interested had already been outlined to me by Red Cloud. "Everything is prepared," he said. "All is arranged as far as we are concerned. It has only to work out in the material world. You must accept that proposal."*

Now this was almost word for word what Red Cloud had said. To obtain closer contact the guide then asked me to hand him any article that belonged to me. I gave him my fountain-pen. As I placed it in the medium's hands it began to leak, something it had never done before.

"That is Northcliffe's fault," declared the spirit. "He is here and says he always upsets pens"—an ingenious reference to the famous newspaper proprietor's vigorous journalistic activities. "He comes in connection with the newspaper," added the guide, "and he says, 'Go ahead with it.' "

Then he told me that Northcliffe was dissatisfied with psychic journalism as then presented. Northcliffe's words, as relayed by Mrs. Barkel's guide, were, "It's about time something was done with common sense—too much sickly sentiment—there is opportunity for great growth and much spread of knowledge—he is amazed at the lack of guts. Get it on a strong basis and it will be of world-wide consequence."

Well, I had obtained the confirmation I wanted. The medium could not have known what I was after. I made the fateful decision to become the editor of a Spiritualist newspaper. The sequel was extraordinary.

A few days later I went down to Estelle Roberts's home to talk to Red Cloud. I said nothing about my visit to Kathleen Barkel. The first words spoken by Red Cloud, when he entranced his medium, were, "*Are you satisfied now that you have been to my brother White Hawk?*" Red Cloud knew.

I asked him whether he objected to my going, but he said he understood how I felt. There and then Red Cloud, speaking on behalf of others whom he said were present—and he referred to Northcliffe and Stead among others—outlined the policy of *Psychic News.*

It had to be bright. I was told. It had to be fearless. It had to "Stand for the truth and fear no man." The one thing impressed upon me was to print the evidence for Survival. And Red Cloud promised to provide these proofs.

I would like to place on record that for seven years he has kept his promise and has been responsible for enabling us to print accounts of the spirit return of famous men and women that have aroused world-wide interest.

GUIDE KEEPS HIS PROMISE



Psychic News

No. 1] SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1932 [Price TWOPENCE

"I CHALLENGE THE 'DAILY MAIL'"

By HANNEN SWAFFER

To the Editor of the "Daily Mail."

You have recently performed such a great service to Spiritualism that I want you to go on with your good work.

Because you said of Mrs. Meurig Morris, on a poster, "Trance Medium Found Out," there was a long trial which gave great publicity to the claims of proved survival. These claims, these proofs, usually obtain no publicity at all. A religious movement body is accused of fraud or trickery.

You published an article "exposing" Mrs. Meurig Morris.

I Challenge You to expose Mrs' Champion de Crespigny, the honorary secretary of the London College of Psychic Science, of 112, Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7. Her telephone number is Western 3981.

Mrs. de Crespigny appeared as a witness for Mrs. Meurig Morris, with the result that law journals which, cannot be accused of a Spiritualistic bias, complimented her upon her evidence.

"We find for the defendants on the plea of fair comment on a matter of public interest, but we do not consider that any allegations of fraud or dishonesty have been proved."
Meurig Morris case.

Now, Mrs. Champion de Crespigny, who belongs to a family very well known in England, and who is the widow of a naval officer, advertises publicly that she is making private appointments for seven times medium, ship, with two clairvoyants, with one natural medium, with one healer, who also does diagnosis, with one psychic photographer, and with two mediums who use what is called a rebus graph.

Now, some of the mediums are very well known. Hope, the psychic photographer, for instance, is vouched for by Mr. Hawtrey, Chief Constable of Newcastle, who, also vouched him with his own eyes. Another of the mediums is stood by, psychic "extras" appeared on the plates. The Rev. F. C. Spurr, the well-known Baptist minister of Birmingham, tells me that, through Hope, of Crewe, he obtained a photograph of his small dead son, although Hope had never seen the child.

There are a lot of mediums for you to expose. Your reporter need only go to the British College of Psychic Science and make an appointment, and then expose as many mediums as he likes. Please send the same one as you sent to Mrs. Champion de Crespigny. All the work of the British College of Psychic Science, with the exception of one paid secretary, is controlled by an honorary committee.

I Challenge You to expose the Marylebone Spiritualist Association,

Writes Weekly

which, apart from one paid secretary is conducted entirely by the unpaid labour of a committee. At their headquarters, in Russell Square, there are held regularly, meetings for phenomena and lectures; there are group seances and private seances, and there is healing.

I Challenge You particularly to expose their clairvoyant, Mrs. Estelle Roberts, whom reporters of yours have seen describing spirit forms in the Albert Hall, and at the Queen's Hall. You will find her at the Queen's Hall often on a Sunday.

I have often taken her to localities where she has never been before, and challenged the local Press to follow up the evidence she has given, track it down, disprove it, follow her home, follow her home the people whose spirit friends she has described. "Either it is a fact," I have declared, "or it is a fake."

The challenge has never been taken up.

I Challenge You, also, to expose a man called Jones, a healer, who every Wednesday afternoon and evening, and every Thursday afternoon, can be seen healing scores of people at the Marylebone Spiritualist Association headquarters in Russell Square. His name is Horace Leaf Jones.

No charge is made. There is a silver collection, which averages thirty shillings. I believe, and of this Jones retains only a portion.

All the sick people can be examined and cross-questioned. You can see the healing going on.

Please expose it. Someone must do it because we want it advertised still more.

I Challenge You to expose the Spiritualist National Union, which has, up and down the land, over five hundred churches, every one of which is controlled by people who draw no money, and all of whose accounts are thoroughly analysed.

Some of those churches have been going on for forty years or more. All of them carry on mediumship, in spite of the fact that mediumship is illegal in this country. Not one of them has ever been prosecuted. No one would dare to prosecute them.

They spread from the north of Scotland to the south of England, and from the east to the west of the country towns. You will find them all over Wales. In some Welsh towns, the miners have built the churches themselves, in their spare time, being too poor to pay for labour.

I Challenge You to expose Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, the head of the organisation known as the Open Sunday Services, and also of the Central Hall, and all the week, has meetings conducting seances. Healing, too, goes on.

Mrs. St. Clair Stobart is famous as the Woman on the Black Horse, who saved part of the Serbian Army in its great retreat during the war, and who is known as an authoress, pro-moter, and social worker

I Challenge You to expose Dr. Orchard, of the Free Church of Who recently, in semi-seance, wrote, in fifty-six hours, seventy-six thousand words of what purported to be, in addition to the Acts of the Apostles, so true in all historical, doctrinal, and other evidential detail that Dr. Orchard, examining chaplain to the Bishop of London, has certified the "writing" as genuine. Dr. Orchard has praised them because they were so "orthodox." Some of this writing, published under the title, "The Script of Cleophas," was done in the study of the late Bishop of Kensington.

I Challenge You to expose Mrs. Hester Dowden, who wrote, at lightning speed, in the exact style of Oscar Wilde, a play which purported to be written by him, and which certainly, as far as I knew—and I speak as a dramatic critic—could not be imitated by any writer of my acquaintance.

Now, when Clive Maskelyne, in 1926, "exposed" Spiritualism, by faking the conjuring tricks by making a pencil boast that "a new campaign against Spiritualism is about to be undertaken by the Occult Committee of the Magic Circle," and went on to say, "Seances will be secretly attended by members of the Magic Circle, and any fraud which shall be known as a public meeting, probably at the Royal Albert Hall, early in the New Year," Maskelyne did not take up our challenge.

He may have been out to conjure, but he had too much sense for that.

I have not yet heard the results of his carpings, nor, so far as I can trace, did any public meeting take place—certainly not at the Royal Albert Hall.

We offer you, for exposure as many mediums as you like.

SCEPTIC CONVINCES HIMSELF

MAKES OWN CONDITIONS

After laughing, as people often do, at spirit photography, A. W. Pulley, a records officer at the South-Western District Post Office, London, took six photographs of himself in the presence of J. Myers, a medium. He made the challenge and fixed his own conditions. The sittings were held in the dark room at 31 Warwick Road, on Monday evening. The room was illuminated with a 200-volt electric lamp. There were eight people present besides myself.

At the beginning my own camera was taken by me, charged, taken into the dark room, broke the seals, and loaded six dark slides. I then returned, inserted a slide, withdrew the sheath, and retired to the door where everyone in the room was visible. The medium released the shutter, I closed the slide and withdrew it, the same operation performed each time. After the exposure of the third plate I exchanged my camera for that of the medium. After the six plates were exposed, I took the slides into a dark room and by the aid of a photographic lamp, developed, fixed, and washed them. The result was that two plates had "extras."

I should like to state that all my conditions (to avoid deception) were willingly accepted.

(Sgd.) A. W. PULLEY, Parcel Office.

Our Booklet
on choosing an Advertising Agency
will be sent FREE
to all responsible persons applying on business paper
GODBOLDS
INCORPORATED PRACTITIONERS
ADVERTISING
1, Clements Inn
London, W.C.2

Well, *Psychic News* was launched. Actually, its first number was issued a week earlier than originally planned because of the Meurig Morris—"Daily Mail" lawsuit, which was the subject of comment in newspapers all over the land. It gave us an opportunity for an outstanding front page.

"I CHALLENGE THE "DAILY MAIL," it was headed, and it was written by Hannen Swaffer. Yes, the very first issue of *Psychic News* began with a challenging note on its front page!

I must tell you how *Psychic News* was financed. Actually the paper was started on the ridiculously small capital of just over £600—half subscribed by Rubens and the other half by myself, which I borrowed from a friend. And Rubens, the non- Spiritualist, guaranteed the bank and other accounts and gave personal references where necessary!

OTHER-SIDE GUIDANCE

When I pointed out to Red Cloud, "It is all very well to talk about a new paper, but where is the money coming from ?" he replied, "Do not worry; we will attend to that." And they did !

When planning the first issue I had an idea for an article. It was to get Arthur Findlay, author of "On The Edge Of The Etheric," Spiritualism's best-seller, to say in *Psychic News* why he wrote the book. Findlay called in to see me and we discussed the article, which he agreed to write.

That night I had another seance with Red Cloud. To my surprise the spirit guide volunteered, "The man who is to finance 'Psychic News' has called to see you today. His name is Findlay. Approach him on the subject."

I discussed this question with Arthur Findlay and he readily agreed. Again I should like to put on record that in seven years of close co-operation there has never been an angry word between us; neither has there been any disagreement on policy.

We agreed from the start that *Psychic News* had to be run on commercial lines, and its success, or failure, judged by commercial standards.



J. Arthur Findlay

For three years the paper lost money; but Findlay never complained. Indeed, he found whatever sum was necessary. The corner was turned with the fourth year,[19] and ever since *Psychic News* has paid its way.

The two libel actions we had to defend this year may break our record, but they are only chapters in the history of a newspaper.

I shall not tell of my troubles in producing the first number. I did not leave the printers on press night until three in the morning. It was a nightmare.

The first issue was received with fixed feelings. A few weeks before the paper appeared it was the subject of violent comment, some declaring, "Another Spiritualist weekly is not necessary," others being eager to see what we would produce.

ONE EDITOR'S COMMENT

One Spiritualist editor, whom I shall not name, wrote me a most discouraging letter. He had heard of my proposed journalistic ventures, he said, and added, "Frankly I am sorry that you find it necessary to change from business to journalism."

The reception given to *Psychic News,* on the whole, was very enthusiastic. There were, of course, those who exclaimed "It is too sensational," "It cannot last a week." But they were in the minority.

From the first number we had the largest circulation of any Spiritualist newspaper in the world, a position we have since proudly maintained. Today, our net paid circulation, which is approaching 25,000, exceeds the combined circulation of all English Spiritualist journals.

Psychic News broke new ground. Though it was not subsidised it was, and still is, the only English Spiritualist weekly to pay its way – and to make a profit.

NEW PUBLIC FOUND

It reached the man-in-the-street. Here was a modern newspaper, with news on the front page, boldly proclaiming the facts of Spiritualism. It was independent, for it belonged to no section, group or Spiritualist society.

Soon, our familiar green and white posters were to be seen in many of London's main thoroughfares.

Our Spiritualist contemporaries paid us the compliment of imitation. They changed their make-up and modelled themselves, more or less, on the format of *Psychic News.*

From the first number *Psychic News* adopted a bold policy. Because it was independent, it could criticise Spiritualists and the weaknesses of the movement.

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[19] In the December 5th issue of P.N., 1936, Barbanell dropped a libel suit against the Rev. J.W. Potter. It does not directly concern this article but an interesting remark by Barbanell was made:—

Psychic News was started against Swaffer's advice. He refused to have any financial interest in it, arguing that, if he put money into it, he would have to accept a dividend, and then he would be accused of making money out of Spiritualism. He has never received one penny from *Psychic News*. His only financial connection with the paper is that, once, he lent it £500, refusing to take interest. This amount, of course, was repaid.

It helped to change the Press attitude towards our truths and forced newspapers to realise that the evidences for Survival were as newsworthy as any other events recorded in their pages.

We are proud of the part we have played in giving comfort, hope and knowledge to thousands.

Looking back on our seven years of history, there is nothing that we regret.

Still, trusting to that spirit guidance which conceived this newspaper, we face the future unafraid, knowing that *Psychic News* can help to give the vital blow to the materialism which is the cancer of our modern civilisation.



MAURICE BARBANELL

Before he was famous

Maurice Barbanell was asked to read his paper, "The God Idea", at the third Annual S.N.U. Summer School at Matlock Modern School, Derby, August 3rd to 24th, 1929, inclusive. Information on the SNU Summer Schools ("What we did before Stansted") is published in Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 5. Other speakers over the three weeks were: John McIndoe, Aaron Wilkinson, Ernest Oaten, George Berry, Ernest Keeling (all former Union Presidents), and Alfred Kitson.

Barbanell was well-known within the SNU in the 1920s

In October 1926, the AGM minutes were published in the Union's monthly journal, "The National Spiritualist",[16] and Barbanell was recommended for a Diploma as a result of the Exponents and Education assessment; his marking was Class B (Honours). In a further report of the 1926 examinations published in May 1927 Barbanell achieved Class A (Honours). At this time education was under the "National Spiritualist College and National Joint Education Scheme" (Union/Lyceum), which entailed a three-year course of study with yearly examinations – for details see Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 4: "Early S.N.U Education History". By April 1928 it can be noted that he was M. Barbanell, Dipl. S.N.U.

It can be further noted in Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 6: "Maurice Barbanell, the S.N.U. and his Propaganda Work":

> At the 1927 SNU Annual Consultative Conference held on Sunday July 3rd at the Art Workers' Guild Rooms, Queen Square, London under the presidency of Robert Owen, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Hon. President, moved the following:
>
> > "That a new principle be added to the Seven Principles of Spiritualism, declaring that while admitting that every Creed has its own message from on high, however by human frailty, we in the Western World acknowledge the original teachings and example of Jesus of Nazareth and look upon them as an ideal model for our own conduct."

Barbanell opposed the resolution, stating:

> If this new principle were added to the seven it would mean that any who felt themselves unable to subscribe to this principle would not be eligible as members of the organisation. He objected also to the term "original" ("the original teaching and example of Jesus of Nazareth") in the resolution. Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, one of the greatest pioneers, claimed that Jesus did not originate a single ethic. He read a passage from her works as follows:—
>
> > "But even if he (Jesus) were a man there is no evidence of such a personality save the four Gospels, the authorship of which has conclusively been denied by the best authority to have belonged to any disciple of Jesus. No contemporary historian makes any mention of such a personage. The events stated to have occurred at his trial and death are neither found in Roman nor Jewish records, neither in the writings of the officials nor the historians of the time. Yet Philo, the learned historian of the Essenes, wrote of his period without ever alluding to him. Josephus, the voluminous historian of Herod and his times, makes no mention of him."

[16] See Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 1, August 2013: "The First SNU Journal".

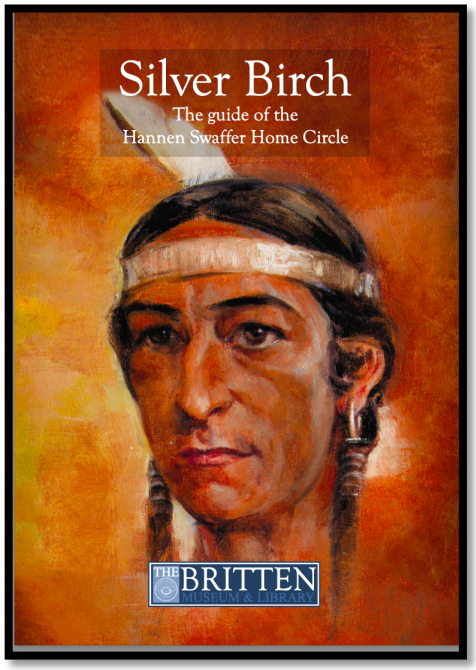
> If Spiritualism wanted a leader, let it go to the highest and best it knew—a God who was all perfect… *(See the Pioneer issue for further information.)*

In 1928 Barbanell became a member of the SNU Council, taking over from the veteran Spiritualist, Richard Boddington (brother of Harry), as London's Area Representative, a position he would hold for many years. In 1930 Barbanell stood for SNU President and Vice-President but was pipped at the post by John Brown McIndoe and Alexander George Newton respectively.

The early 1930s would bring Barbanell to wide public attention with his extensive propaganda work, for example in the above-mentioned Pioneer issue: "On Tour with Hannen Swaffer We Continue Our Crusade". In 1932 Barbanell would become a household name as founder editor of Psychic News; the last issue outlines in detail the founding of this *then* weekly newspaper: "Psychic News was Founded by Maurice Barbanell and Jack Rubens".

After the founding of Psychic News, the name "Silver Birch" was brought about for the main reason to find an appropriate name for the publication of the guide's teachings from the "Hannen Swaffer Home Circle". Maurice Barbanell was first entranced in or around 1920; after about four years he met Hannen Swaffer and a friendship and working relationship were formed which would last for almost forty years. The "Hannen Swaffer Home Circle" was formed, with Barbanell as the medium; this would remain a highly-guarded secret, in fact not revealed until 1957 by Barbanell himself. See Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 6: "An extraordinary secret was held in the Spiritualist movement for over three decades: who is Silver Birch's medium?"

The circle's guide was called "Big Jump," a fact which would remain within the circle until the medium's death in 1981; the name "Silver Birch" was used solely as a public name to bring about the guide's teachings.



Quoted from "Silver Birch – The guide of the Hannen Swaffer Home Circle":

> … when The Teachings were printed it was thought a more suitable name should be used. Barbie [17] has said that the name 'Silver Birch' was decided one evening at a sitting and the next morning in his office he received a post card with a picture of a silver birch tree on the front. It had come from a member of the public he did not know. [18]

—~—☼—~—

[17] Used by Barbanell's friends.

[18] Booklet available at: https://www.snu.org.uk/shop/silver-birch

Below is taken from the S.N.U. “National Spiritualist” over several issues: October, November and December 1929.

The God Idea

A Paper read to the Summer School Students,

BY M. BARBANELL, Dipl., S.N.U.

When I was originally approached and asked whether I would speak at the Summer School, it was suggested that the subject be one which lent itself to controversy, and also one on which we could ask questions. This explains the title of my address; for surely of all questions that have puzzled thinking minds throughout the ages and is still unsolved, it is the great mystery we call God.

One of the difficulties in approaching this subject is due to the fact that man’s idea of God has been subject to evolution, and the ideas that were accepted generations ago have become considerably modified, as undoubtedly will current conceptions in a generation hence, and it is still true to say that no matter how much ideas and conceptions may alter, God must of necessity remain the same, and unalterable.

In order to gain some idea of this constant evolution, one has only to take the Bible, and compare the conception of God depicted in the very early pages of the Old Testament, where we have delineated a very jealous and personal God, who takes sides, who is war-like, who sends pestilences and diseases, who exterminates lives, who incites wars, and blood-shed, and who is tyrannical.

Then we turn to the picture of God as revealed by Jesus in the New Testament, and the conception has become completely changed, and we have a God who is depicted as the loving Father of justice and mercy. One would be inclined to say that the two conceptions referred to two different Gods, yet they were both depicting the self-same idea.

Similarly we find that the modern conception of God has evolved, and so startling is the evolution, that were a modern preacher to have stood in a pulpit seventy years ago, and expressed ideas which modern Christianity now accepts, he would without doubt have been denounced as a heretic. Bearing this in mind, one approaches the subject with great difficulty, realising this constant modification of ideas.

The first questions we have to ask ourselves are, Does God exist, and if so, what is God?

The answers are far more difficult than the questions. For the essence of the God idea is that God shall be greater than any definition, and so it must be realised that any definition of God could only be a crude attempt to express in language an idea greater than any language is capable of expressing.

Does God exist? Let us see. It is true to say that the last generation has witnessed a tremendous number of discoveries in all phases of scientific research, and as a result we have learnt a great deal concerning the universe which was hitherto considered mysterious and unknown. We have measured the stars, and the planets, and have even calculated their movements. We have delved into the earth, and wrested from her, secrets which have been buried for countless ages, which have enabled us to reconstruct pages of past history. We have discovered how to manipulate many of the vibrations of light and sound, and have invented apparatus to harness them for our requirements.

Yet in all fields of research, no matter what discovery has been made, behind every fact, new or old, is the question of law. Whatever happens does so because its happening

is regulated by law, and this is true not only of the mightiest things in the universe, like tides and planets, but even of the humbler and lesser kingdom of microbes and insects.

Let us pause and consider. The movements of the tides are regulated by law, the stars and planets wheel in their courses, all by law. The sun rises and sets by law. The seasons follow each other by law. All growth, be it inanimate or animate, is subject to unalterable law, and so perfect are these laws, that they have been in operation now apparently for millions of years, working without a single mistake. Further, these laws never have to be modified or withdrawn or altered in any shape or form. Now the existence of law must postulate intelligence which creates the law, and sets the law in operation. Laws do not and cannot create themselves. If you throw a handful of type into the air a million times, it will never fall so as to make intelligent sentences. Not until you apply your own intelligence, which is external to the type, will you have sentences.

We too have laws, and in England we have laws which are considered to be the finest in the world. So much so that year by year Law students and lawyers visit our country in order to learn from us something of the standard of our laws. Yet we are always making fresh laws, we are always altering past laws, we are always repealing old laws that are now defunct and bad, and making new laws to meet new conditions. Although our laws are supposed to be the finest in the world, they are full of errors, and so liable to misinterpretation, that we have to have courts of law and barristers, solicitors, magistrates and lawyers, all of whom are employed day by day to see that the law is properly interpreted and carried out. No one would ever say our laws are perfect.

We ask ourselves the question. Why the necessity for repealing old laws? and the answer is that the minds who made those laws were imperfect minds and so the result was imperfect laws, the imperfections of which the sequence of time has discovered. Yet on the other hand there are laws made centuries ago which are still in operation to-day because the minds which made those laws were greater minds. So we are forced to conclude that the greater the laws the greater the minds which conceived them, and the poorer the laws, the poorer the minds which conceived them.

If we compare man-made laws with natural laws and follow the same lines of reasoning, we are forced to admit that because the laws of the universe are perfect both in their operation and their administration that the mind which created and set them in operation must be equally as perfect. Hence in this somewhat round-about fashion we get some conception, however faint and obscure, of a perfect mind which exists behind the laws of the universe. Beyond that it is almost impossible to get definitions and ideas. We are in the habit of referring to God as “He” and “Him,” yet the term is a bad one, although I shall be forced to use it. Obviously perfection cannot be human and have a gender which is either masculine or feminine. This, of course, eliminates the idea of a personal God, unless one is willing to make personality so elastic as to include the whole universe as the personality of God.

Having said all this, however, I must also say that there are many problems to be faced: problems to which it is impossible to give an immediate answer, and which are at present right beyond the range of human thought. It might be asked if God created the universe and the laws in it, what was there before the Creation, and if the universe is the effect of which God is the cause, what is the cause of which God is the effect? Or who created God? Or whether there was a series of Gods who created one another; I do not know. Whether there was anything in existence before the Universe, I do not know. We human beings are forced to conclude that we know nothing at all about first causers whatsoever.

There are some, however, who will not conceive the idea of a perfect God at all, because they say that God essentially is a part of the Universe, and if this is so, and it be

admitted that the Universe is subject to evolution, they say that God must be subject to evolution too. An evolving God cannot possibly be a perfect God, as perfection surely would be the summit of evolution. Then, too, there are others who are puzzled and at a loss to understand the relation of God to Man, for, say they, "If God made man, and man is imperfect, then surely God must he imperfect too, otherwise we would have to admit that perfection produces imperfection, whereas one would have thought that the natural results of perfection would be perfect."

Were we created by God? Is it true that God is spirit and we are spirit too, and that in a lesser degree we are all potential gods, and that a stream of divinity, be it small, flows throughout all our natures? Is it true that we are parts of God, and that God is composed of the totality of all our parts, and that apart from us, God has no existence? Then, too, how are we to understand so much which seems illogical and unjust to us as being the supposed action of a perfect God who is perfect in wisdom and in love?

There are the great twin mysteries of Pain and Evil for which there has never been any satisfactory explanation. Perhaps you may believe that there is no explanation that we would understand at present, but if so, I must reply that we must strive to understand, however difficult and elusive the problem. The reason for our existence on earth is only justified in an attempt to unravel the mysteries of nature. Can we honestly say that all pain exists merely as a chastening effect from which the soul emerges more purified than it was before?

Are we satisfied to believe that Pain provides the comparative experience to happiness, and without experiencing it there could be no happiness. If so, how do we explain the fact that so many seem to receive a measure of pain that seems unjust in comparison with other lives? Then too, the apparent suffering of innocent and good living men and women who are subject to some of the worst diseases of humanity, sometimes inherited with their birth. It does not seem just that an innocent child should be forced to go through life suffering the results of its parents' wrong living. Of course I know I shall be told the answer is that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children, that is the Law, but surely if we made the Law and if we had the power that apparently God had would we make unjust laws? The only other explanation is the belief that in the larger life after death, compensation can be offered and an adjustment made, but this still leaves unanswered the great question—Why is it necessary for suffering to be inherited through the misdeeds of parents?

Then, too, there are some who say that all the suffering in the Universe is not the action of God or natural law, but due to human beings. Here again one has to pause and remember that this does not explain earthquakes, tempests, tornadoes, whirlpools, icebergs, etc. all of which certainly are not man-made. I have heard this objection met with an answer that the suffering of a thousand people is no greater than the suffering of one, but this seems to me to be a very callous outlook, for surely we know as Spiritualists the effect that a sudden exit from life produces in the individual.

Then let us turn again to this question of suffering that is produced by human action, and let us see whether the responsibility altogether rests on human shoulders. We say God made us. If we are brutal, tyrannous, bullying with evil in our hearts, God made us so. Just as easily he could have made us sweet natured, amiable and full of love, but rightly or wrongly he chose to make us as we are. We were not consulted, we were not given a choice, and the responsibility for our organised being rests not upon us but upon God. And equally also surely the responsibility for our actions which are the results of our being, too, so that one could fasten all suffering and evil upon God as the intelligence who created us.

In passing, I have always wanted to know the opinion of Mr. Blatchford,[19] who so very cogently advances this Determinist argument, since his acceptance of Spiritualism. There are some who are quite satisfied to believe the only answer is that one day we shall know all, and that at present we are merely trying to form hasty judgments from incomplete portions, but we must refuse to be placated with this argument, and press on and investigate until our reason is satisfied.

It is advanced in some quarters that we only have pain, evil and suffering because of the fact that we have been given free wills, but certainly it is true to say that our free will is far from free. It is so restricted and limited by laws and circumstances over which we have no control, that its freedom is in a measure almost, but not wholly, insignificant. One wonders sometimes, if it is not too blasphemous a thought, whether, if we were god, with the powers divinity possesses, we would create a race of beings such as we are to-day, or whether we would produce far different results.

Let us turn to the question of Prayer, and here we see also much of the illogicality of the human mind. Recently we had a drought, and the water supplies of our country were threatened. Immediately the suggestion was thrown out by the Church that we should have prayers for rain. Why? Is it suggested that a perfect God was unaware of the fact that there was a drought, and needed to be reminded of it by our supplication? If so, this is a very curious state of perfection; and further, could our prayers influence or change the natural laws which determine rain and sunshine? Then again, we praise God for the Sun, but no-one blames God for the rain. We praise God for the flowers, but no-one blames God for the weeds. We praise God for all the beautiful things in life, but no-one blames God for the ugly, yet if God made one surely He is responsible for the other?

Have prayers any value at all apart from the spiritual exercise, and is there any point in reminding God of all the things, which, as God, He should know; and further, since 90% of prayer is generally personal request, is it not really a waste of breath? One could enlarge on this a great deal, particularly by making reference to the invocations offered by Speakers on public platforms at Services, which would certainly be far better were no attempt made at prayer whatsoever. This reminds me that there is a tendency both in the Spiritualist movement and in religious movements generally, to assume that it is only possible to make this contact with God in some place called a "Church," whereas, the idea is obviously contrary to the whole spirit of the nature of God.

God is Love we are told, but God is Law, and often it is difficult to reconcile the two, but one thing remains steadfastly certain, no matter what our desires or requests may be, unalterable and immutable law control and reign the universe.

Sunday after Sunday we have repeated what is supposed to be the Model Prayer for all human beings, namely the Lord's Prayer, which when examined in the light of reason is illogical. God in order to be God must be something more than a Father, and must exist not only in Heaven. Why should God's name require hallowing? The will of God is law and it is already "done on earth" for no man or woman has the power to interfere with the will of God.

It is useless praying to God for daily bread. It can only be obtained by our own efforts. It is vain asking God to forgive us our trespasses. We know that our trespasses cannot be forgiven until we have put right that which we have made wrong. Forgiveness can never cancel out sin. Asking God not to lead us into temptation is surely absurd, for it is suggesting that a God who loves us would lead us into temptation. From evil we can only deliver ourselves. So I am afraid that the whole conception of the Lord's Prayer requires considerable modification in the light of our modern knowledge.

[19] Robert Blatchford; see Psypioneer, Vol, 7, No. 3: "More Things about Robert Blatchford ... – Leslie Price".

It might be true that we never shall understand God, because the lesser cannot understand the greater, but we must persist in the attempt. Mere worship and praise are insufficient. One would imagine that God required nothing more than a constant reiteration of His praises day by day and a repetition of hymns and texts that have been uttered for hundreds of years, that surely by now He must be completely weary of them. For myself, I can only say that the question of God bristles with many problems, some of which we cannot understand, but nevertheless, which I hope some day will be understood.

Do not, however, let us be hypnotised into the acceptance of ideas because they have been dinned into our minds week after week, month after month, and year after year, and have now become woven into the subconscious fabric of our beings.

If there is any portion of us which is divine, it is our mind, and unless we are constantly stimulating our minds into action and persist in asking how, why, where and what, we might just as well revert to animal lives, and be content with mere sleep and work, and eat and drink.

The human race can only progress as long as it refuses to be baffled by the so-called mysteries of life, and civilisation can only be advanced as long as we are determined that the generation which comes after us shall know more about God and the universe, and nature through our efforts. We must hand on the flaming torch of knowledge, and add something to its lustre and brightness, for if we have not contributed any fresh illumination and helped to dispel some of the gloom in the universe, then indeed our lives have been in vain.



Maurice Barbanell (note Helen Hughes sitting behind him) at Edinburgh 1942

Hannan Swaffer, Lord Northcliffe & Big Jump



Hannen Swaffer (1879-1962) was a well-known English journalist and drama critic; although his views were left-wing, he worked mostly for right-wing publications, some of which were owned by Alfred Charles William Harmsworth, 1st Viscount Northcliffe (1865-1922), a British newspaper and publishing magnate and owner of the Daily Mail and Daily Mirror. Swaffer was editor of Northcliffe's Weekly Dispatch, helped to develop the Daily Mirror and would develop a close relationship with Lord Northcliffe.

The 'National Spiritualist' was the official Journal of the Spiritualists' National Union Ltd. The following is quoted from the front page and page 134, No. 78, Vol. VII, December 1930. [14]

Who's Who in the S.N.U.

HANNEN SWAFFER, ESQ., Honorary President, S. N. U.

Hannen Swaffer, the new Hon. President of the Spiritualist National Union, [15] is the best known working journalist in England. He is "Swaff" to half journalism, and a man who is so well known that few music-hall programmes are complete unless at least one comedian mentions his name. He has been a journalist ever since he was sixteen, starting in Folkestone, and then going to Preston and Birmingham before reaching Fleet Street, the Mecca of journalism when he was twenty-four.

He was, more than anybody, the creator of daily illustrated journalism, being for nearly nine years Picture Editor of the "Daily Mirror" and then Acting Editor of the "'Daily Sketch," into which he introduced the first "Gossip" feature now copied all over the world.

When, in 1914, he took charge of the "Weekly Dispatch," a century-old newspaper which Lord Northcliffe had owned for fifteen years, in which time he had tried over a score of editors, he so transformed it that Sunday journalism was revolutionised.

He worked for seventeen years for Lord Northcliffe in three different periods. Northcliffe called him "The Poet," and allowed him an independence and freedom of opinion never given by him to any other member of his staff. [16]

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[14] See Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 1: "The First SNU Journal July 1924 - December 1932".

[15] Swaffer became Hon. President of the Spiritualists' National Union after the death of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in July 1930.

[16] For the full article see Psypioneer, Vol. 7, No. 8: "Hannen Swaffer, esq., Honorary President S.N.U", "How I Became a Spiritualist (Hannen Swaffer) – *The National Spiritualist"*.

After Lord Northcliffe's death in 1922 Swaffer, in or around 1924 as the editor of The People, enquired into the alleged survival of Lord Northcliffe. Convinced by the direct voice mediumship of Dennis Bradley, Swaffer printed his new-found convictions, acknowledged his conversion from modernist-agnosticism at a crowded gathering at the Queen's Hall, London and made his first speech on Spiritualism, calling his lecture "Is Lord Northcliffe Dead?"

Maurice Barbanell notes: "Our friendship began shortly after his inquiry into Spiritualism when he set out to prove Northcliffe's survival." Barbanell was first entranced in or around 1920. About four years later Barbanell came into contact with Swaffer, a friendship and working relationship which would last for almost forty years, and the "Hannen Swaffer Home Circle" was formed with the spirit guide "Big Jump". It would not be until the early 1930s, after Psychic News was founded in 1932, that the name "Silver Birch" would come into existence.

The "Hannen Swaffer Home Circle" held an extraordinary secret in the Spiritualist movement for over three decades: who is Silver Birch's medium? This was not revealed until Barbanell's announcement in 1957 (please see the Pioneer Maurice Barbanell pdf booklet as shown on the last page of this issue).

It is further revealed in Pioneer that the circle's guide was in fact called "Big Jump", a fact which would remain within the circle until well after the medium's death in 1981. The name "Silver Birch" was used solely as a public name to bring about the guide's teachings. When the Teachings were printed, it was considered a more suitable name should be used. Barbanell had said that the name 'Silver Birch' was decided one evening at a sitting and the next morning in his Psychic News office he received a postcard with a picture of a silver birch tree on the front; it had come from a member of the public he did not know.

Publicly we are generally aware of the philosophical teachings of Silver Birch only from the various publications over the years but not behind the closed doors of the "Hannen Swaffer Home Circle". Big Jump would act as an intermediary for spirit communications and Barbanell on occasion would become entranced by another communicator, which is not generally known. Below are the communications between Northcliffe and Swaffer in the "Hannen Swaffer Home Circle"; the reader will note that Northcliffe called Swaff the "Poet" and Swaff would refer to Northcliffe as "Chief".



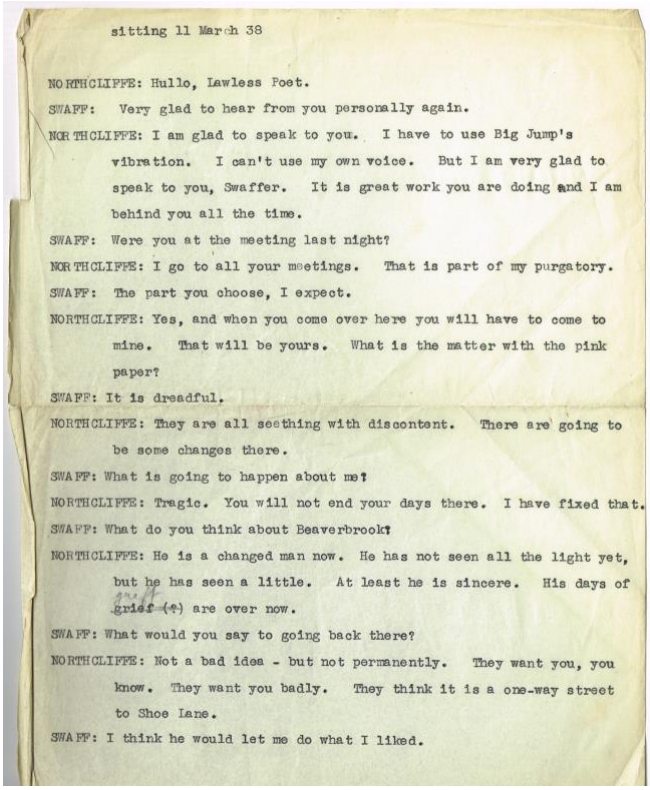
Lord Northcliffe & Hannan Swaffer

The following original typed scripts are dated May 26th, 1937 and March 11th, 1938 and are held in the Britten Museum & Library at Stansted.

I start with the later transcript as this is the order in which these fragile reports are placed; the reader will not necessarily know or understand the full content of the conversation between Swaffer and Northcliffe but it gives an insight into behind the doors of the “Hannen Swaffer Home Circle”.

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sitting 11 March 38



sitting 11 March 38

NORTHCLIFFE: Hullo, Lawless Poet.
SWAFF: Very glad to hear from you personally again.
NORTHCLIFFE: I am glad to speak to you. I have to use Big Jump's vibration. I can't use my own voice. But I am very glad to speak to you, Swaffer. It is great work you are doing and I am behind you all the time.
SWAFF: Were you at the meeting last night?
NORTHCLIFFE: I go to all your meetings. That is part of my purgatory.
SWAFF: The part you choose, I expect.
NORTHCLIFFE: Yes, and when you come over here you will have to come to mine. That will be yours. What is the matter with the pink paper?
SWAFF: It is dreadful.
NORTHCLIFFE: They are all seething with discontent. There are going to be some changes there.
SWAFF: What is going to happen about me?
NORTHCLIFFE: Tragic. You will not end your days there. I have fixed that.
SWAFF: What do you think about Beaverbrook?
NORTHCLIFFE: He is a changed man now. He has not seen all the light yet, but he has seen a little. At least he is sincere. His days of grief (?) are over now.
SWAFF: What would you say to going back there?
NORTHCLIFFE: Not a bad idea - but not permanently. They want you, you know. They want you badly. They think it is a one-way street to Shoe Lane.
SWAFF: I think he would let me do what I liked.

NORTHCLIFFE: Hullo, Lawless Poet.

SWAFF: Very glad to hear from you personally again.

NORTHCLIFFE: I am glad to speak to you. I have to use Big Jump’s vibration. I can’t use my own voice. But I am very glad to speak to you, Swaffer. It is great work you are doing and I am behind you all the time.

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SWAFF: What is going to happen about me?

NORTHCLIFFE: Tragic. You will not end your days there. I have fixed that.

SWAFF: What do you think about Beaverbrook? [17]

NORTHCLIFFE: He is a changed man now. He has not seen all the light yet, but he has seen a little. At least he is sincere. His days of graft are over now.

SWAFF: What would you say to going back there?

NORIHCLIFTE: Not a bad idea - but not permanently. They want you, you know. They want you badly. They think it is a one-way street to Shoe Lane.

SWAFF: I think he would let me do what I liked.

[17] Throughout the 1930s Lord Max Beaverbrook was owner of the London *Daily Express, Sunday Express* and *Evening Standard*; he said that Northcliffe was “the greatest figure who ever strode down Fleet Street” Lord Beaverbrook features in “My Greatest Story” by Hannen Swaffer; this has been republished by the SNU (the name 'Hannen' is incorrectly spelled and should read 'Hannan' on the front cover).

NORTHCLIFFE: Oh, yes, the Beaver is all right. He is the only one left who knows anything about journalism. The others do not know a story when they see it. I have endured tortures, Swaffer, when I see what has happened to all the years of effort, initiative, ingenuity and skill with which we planned. And the honesty - we were always honest - no mangles and wangles.[18]

SWAFF: I thought that was mine, but you have pinched it.

NORTHCLIFFE: Oh, no, it is mine. I let you call some of my ideas yours. I have got them all in my fold.

SWAFF: How is Wareham?

NORTHCLIFFE: All right.

SWAFF: Lumb?

NORTHCLIFFE: Yes. Very dull. So is Wareham. Never understood me at all. No one did, not even you.

SWAFF: I did a bit.

NORTHCLIFFE: Only when I wanted you to. I think I will start sending them communiques from heaven. See what they think.

SWAFF: Why aren't we selling more copies of Psychic News?

NORTHCLIFFE: Not spending enough money. You have a mean old skinflint. I am fixing that and arranging for a lot more money to come in, so that you can really put it over. I don't think the time is ready for a daily, but I don't see why you should not do a quarter of a million. There is very little wrong with the paper, except that it is too small. It has not enough variety, of course. It requires more features to brighten it up. The news side is quite well managed but it requires more features. You understand. Things are very sketchy sometimes, but I send them good stories.

This guide Big Jump is magnificent. I wish they would allow me to tell you who he is, but not yet. He is a great soul. I love him and he radiates love here. There are thousands who come to hear him when he speaks in our world.

SWAFF: He has a wonderful gift of language.

NORTHCLIFFE: Magnificent. I envy him his oratory and only get annoyed when he is not being reported.

SWAFF: It was a good story last week.

NORTHCLIFFE: Very good. Young man, you should have come back from France to report it - cohorting on the Continent!

SWAFF: Or being revered on the Riviera.

NORTHCLIFFE: That's not so Nice.

SWAFF: How is Wallace?

NORTHCLIFFE: He is doing magnificent work. Strangely enough, he and Doyle have got great friends. Queer things happen in this world, queerer than Fleet Street sometimes,

[18] Further, if you google "Lord Beaverbrook hosts dinner to honour journalist Hannen Swaffer (1942)" it will show an old film clip of them both speaking (the sound does cut out but returns).

strangest combinations. How is Lulu? I think she is getting scatterbrain but I daren't tell her so. I can get through to her through Feda. [19] I am coming through all over the place now, sometimes saying who I am and sometimes not. They get scared. I have seen Napoleon.

SWAFF: Were you very much like him?

NORTHCLIFFE: Not as much as I thought. I must confess I am not the hero-worshipper I was.

SWAFF: Have you seen William Morris?

NORTHCLIFFE: Fine chap.

SWAFF: Keir Hardie?

NORTHCLIFFE: Yes, I have converted him to Socialism!

SWAFF: I suppose they are the great ones?

NORTHCLIFFE: Over here they are the greatest ones. Over here the Birkenheads are nothing. There is no glitter in this world. This is not a world of illusion, but reality. I managed to squeeze in because I kidded them I had done some work. I am active.

SWAFF: You would soon see where you were wrong before.

NORTHCLIFFE: I knew where I was wrong. I never said so. I had to be right. It would not do if I were wrong. How is my poor old "Daily Mail"?

SWAFF: Still going down. You never hear them say, "The 'Daily Mail' says..."

NORTHCLIFFE: No, you hear them say what the "Daily Mail" doesn't say. It is no use. My brother never could lead the paper from behind. The Beaver knows how to get the best out of them.

SWAFF: Very nice to work for.

NORTHCLIFFE: Almost as erratic as I was. How are your couple of odd hams getting on?

SWAFF: I never see them. They are getting tired of me.

NORTHCLIFFE: I know. Southwood is so tired and dazed he doesn't know where he is. He thinks he is another Napoleon now. They are missing great opportunities. They have a potential power that could change world influence. They could not only lead the whole of England but the world with concerted initiative and knowledge. I am proud of you, Swaffer. I never thought that you would become a political speaker.

SWAFF: You told me long before I was.

NORTHCLIFFE: Yes, I know.

SWAFF: What sort of effect does it have?

NORTHCLIFFE: A tremendous effect. All those little people get heartened and in their own way they begin to realise that they too can stand up to iniquity and tyranny. It is a great change from cardboard drama and pasteboard scenery to go out and find the real

[19] Spirit control of Mrs Osborne Leonard.

dramas. You are a marked man, Swaffer, more than you realise. I have held on for a long time, now I must go.

SWAFF: There is no need to worry about anything?

NORTHCLIFFE: Not the slightest. I am behind you, and there are many more. You will be sorry to hear that Gladstone helps you politically.

SWAFF: I have had him described.

NORTHCLIFFE: Yes, I know.

SWAFF: He was a great guy.

NORTHCLIFFE: He cannot hear me now - he is not so dreary as he used to be. I am very glad to have had this chance to talk to you.

SWAFF: I will give your love to Lulu.

NORTHCLIFFE: Yes, and my very best wishes to your wife. Don't forget, I have got a very pleasant surprise for you. It is not long now. Forgive me if I have monopolised the time in talking to my old ?~~chief~~, but I want you to realise how privileged you are to be able to have a part in this work. You cannot imagine what you are doing, but allow me, who is one used to calculating public influence, to tell you that you are doing a magnificent work and you are to thank God for the opportunity that has come to you whilst you are in your comparative youth. God bless you, Thank the medium for allowing me to use him.

SWAFF: Love to Wareham, Randall Charlton, - Parsons.

NORTHCLIFFE: Not to ???

SWAFF: Oh, yes.

NORTHCLIFFE: He is a changed man too. We change them here. By the way, Swaffer, when are you going to write a story for my paper?

SWAFF: What do you mean?

NORTHCLIFFE: The St. Peter's Gazette. God bless you.

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26.5. 37

Big Jump: The Chief is here with you to-night. I would let him talk with you through medium, but the brain is so tired it is hard to find all the words so easily. But I will try to catch what he says. He always says things I do not understand, which makes it more difficult. He says, "How is the barren baron?" He says they give the carrot to the donkey at last. He says it will make him weaker. Something about weaken his position. I cannot quite get that.

Swaffer: He means with the Labour Party?

Big Jump: Yes. Chief says lot of troubles with the pink paper. He says it has gone white at the gills. He says they are very angry with you because they can't get you. He says that the Eli man wants to cut himself off from the other man does not want to. He laughs and says, "Because the odd ham wants to save his bacon". He says they are a couple of worms that can't turn. He is very cross because - he says you will know this phrase - they could bring down the government every day. The Chief tells me to tell you

that there is a door that opens for you, not yet, but you do not end your days with the pink paper run by pale people.

Swaffer: Does he give any advice at all?

Big Jump: He is laughing and says they can't see rhyme or reason so they can't see how to deal with my Poet. He says, "Go on, be awkward. Do some of the old monkey tricks."

Swaffer: I saw Tom Clarke to-day.

Big Jump: He says Tom always was a clerk. Only two people understood him, he said, you and his Lulu girl. He says you were his poet. That man was his peasant. He says he likes the Tommy man, but he never knew whether it was the Thunderer or the Cut Comic. He calls it a cock that doesn't crow any more.

Swaffer: I know what he means. He took one himself.

Big Jump: But he says he only took it to raise status and to make them angry.

Swaffer: Ask him if he has met Bob Crombie.

Big Jump: Yes. Chief says that this man had great respect for him and great admiration for you. Chief says your paper doesn't want Sweet Williams but Scarlet Runners. He is very close to you. Now he puts his arm round you and he looks straight at you. I wish you could see the love that comes from him. He says, "They think I am out of their way, but I am not, and through you and with you we shall make the Press what it should be." He urges you to go on because now, in spite of all the troubles, you give inspiration to many and courage to the weak. He means in your own work. He asks you to give his love to your squaw. And he also wants me to tell you that the Daily Mail is going down and down and down.

Swaffer: His nephew Geoffrey seems the best of the lot.

Big Jump: Yes, but he says there was only one Chief, thank God. He says what do you think would happen if he reincarnated? Chief says he is not finished with you yet. You can't get rid of him. But the door opens later. You do not end your days with the pink paper. And he is glad to help you in the political work.

I come and help you also, Chief. When the other man gets tired of throwing bombs, I throw them too. The Chief is great friends with all of them, you know - I mean, now. He laughs because he says it is a good story, but you can't print it, how the arm and the eye walk arm in arm (Hardy).

Swaffer: How is Pemberton?

Big Jump: He is all right now.

Swaffer: I do not think Beaverbrook has done anything for his widow yet.

Big Jump: He says, "The not-so-green incorruptible will have to disgorge."

Swaffer: I am going to see Lloyd George next week.

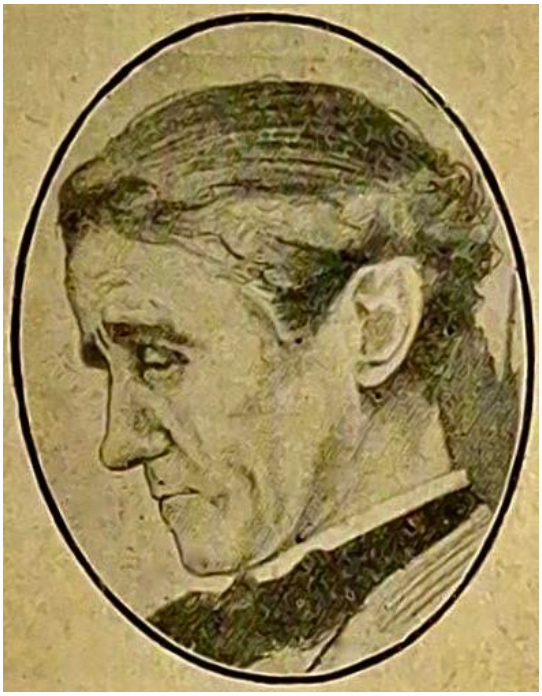
Big Jump: Chief says, "Take a wand for the wizard" I think he could keep it up all night, but he is very glad to talk with you. I cannot get it all because the medium's brain is tired and the words are hard to find

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To conclude:

Below from the Two Worlds, October 16th, 1925:

Manchester Propaganda Meetings.



THE fifth winter series of monthly meetings organised by the Manchester Spiritualists' Central Propaganda Committee started on Sunday, October 4th, in the Ardwick Picture Theatre. Mr. Hannen Swaffer, the well-known journalist, was the speaker, with Mr. Ernest W. Oaten in the chair. On behalf of the committee, Mr. Oaten extended a hearty welcome to those interested in the series of meetings. At these gatherings, Spiritualism was put before the public, said the chairman, from a free platform. No special "brand" of Spiritualism was preached. Spiritualists differed widely; all hope would be lost in a movement where everyone thought alike. In welcoming Mr. Swaffer to that meeting Mr. Oaten said that no man's mind was asked to range over a wider field than a journalist's. Mr. Swaffer had been enquiring into Spiritualism for some time, and he had come to Manchester to tell what he had found.

Mr. Swaffer's subject was "Lord Northcliffe's Return," and he led up to this by first reminding his hearers that, for all they knew, the civilisation that had been built up for many centuries was crumbling away.

"We are losing grip of the things about which we thought we were safe," he said. "The disappointments of war have rather jarred on us: we are over-tired, and critical. There are coming across this country, as they have come across other countries, changes that we are not quite certain about. At this moment we are not even so sure as we were about the Church, one of the props of the old order; it is now very critical of itself, and has changed its point of view.

"Lord Beaverbrook, the other week, asked some distinguished authors to write about 'My Religion' for one of his newspapers. There was remarkable evidence, in the ten articles contributed, that authors were very critical about established faith. The novelist's point of view is usually a little bit in front of that of the ordinary man. Only one of those men felt absolutely certain that he knew where he was. That was a man who, after leaving the Roman Catholic Church, had become an agnostic and had been brought back to Christianity by a belief in those principles, for the examination of which we are here assembled to-night. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was brought back from agnosticism because he had evidence that was scientific, that could be examined, that was proof.

"Henry Arthur Jones, in his article on 'My Religion,' said: 'Much of this evidence—that is, our evidence—is unreasonable; some of it is incredible; but much of it has great weight, is difficult to discredit, and is impossible to disprove.'

"Sir Hall Caine wrote to me, a few weeks ago, accepting our case absolutely, qualifying it only by saying that he does not seek personal contact with the dead, and

that he is quite satisfied to know that his dead are not dead, but that they are immortal and are around us.

"Here are two fresh evidences of belief in most of the things for which we stand. They are both the intelligent views of men who, while over seventy, looking back, surveying their years of achievement, noting the changes around them, seem to have arrived at a definite and settled conclusion about the things which we believe.

A WORD FOR MEDIUMS.

"Robert Blatchford, who, a few years ago, nearly made an agnostic of me, sat only a few times with Mrs. Leonard; yet he was soon convinced by the overwhelming proof which Mrs. Leonard's mediumship so often finds for her sitters. Robert Blatchford preceded me into your ranks by only a few weeks.

"The world can no longer think that the people who accept the truth of Spiritualism are a lot of lunatics. I have had many opportunities of discussing this matter with all sorts of very distinguished people, and I have discovered that, when they know you believe in it, they start to *tell* you things. The most hardened materialists come out with the most extraordinary stories which they cannot explain.

"Lord Dewar is a man of the world; yet I meet him at seances. I sat with him last year when Valiantine was here, and I sat with him the other week with Mrs. Pruden. Among other men who have confessed to me their remarkable experiences recently, is the Russian pianist, Czernikoff, who said that on one occasion, when he could not remember a note of a piece of Liszt's music he was called upon to play, he felt it was all suggested to him, almost note by note. 'I am conscious,' he said to me, 'that I was given that music, for, the next day, when I tried to play it at home, I had forgotten it again.'

"On the first night of 'Marie Rose,' Miss Fay Compton, having determined to play the heroine's part a certain way, felt herself impelled to play it another way. She can only explain it by believing that some influence outside her was showing her the way to do it. These stories, I find, are common. No one can explain them, except by adopting our hypothesis.

LORD NORTHCLIFFE.

"When I published, last July, a book called 'Lord Northcliffe's Return,' it was a rather daring thing to do. You see, from the point of view of somebody who was objecting, I had brought from the grave the ghost of Lord Northcliffe, to criticise certain newspapers, now controlled by his brother. And I had induced Lord Beaverbrook to write an introduction to say I was an honest man ! Yet, of all the criticisms of the book, almost the only one that attacked me was *Truth*, which said that 'the messages which come from the other world do not seem of much value.'

"We are left, at the end, with the conviction that revolting though a great many of the trappings are,' said the *Ladies' Field*, 'yet it can give definite proof—as nothing else is able—of life beyond the grave.'

"The best way of telling you how I arrived at my conclusions is to explain to you the mediumship of some of the people with whom I have sat. The first, George Valiantine, was visiting Pittsburg, some years ago, when a friend told him there was a spirit in the room, who wanted to speak with him. 'We will sit after lunch,' said the friend, 'and see if we get anything.' When they sat there were some raps, the usual beginning of mediumship. He was told to sit alone with his wife. In six months he got voices. Most of the mediums that I know have started themselves, singly, like that.

"During thirty sittings that I had with George Valiantine this Spring, we got accumulative evidence that was overwhelming. On one occasion, one of the sitters was the wife of a Chinese diplomat, who wanted to talk to her father. We were not told this until afterwards. At the end of the sitting, when Chinese words had been spoken to her, she said, 'There are twenty Chinese dialects. My father spoke to me to-night in two dialects, the one he used to me when I was a child and that he spoke in when I grew up. No medium could know that,' Clara Butt received a message from Lily Hanbury; Constance Collier had a message from her mother; Mrs. Hilton Philipson and Ivor Novello also had messages, all four at the same sitting. And all four people were satisfied.

"For many years I merely glanced at the subject now and then, when, like most of the outside world I read chiefly the exposures of mediums, and about the fortune-tellers who had been prosecuted. Then, on a particular night, I sat in Dennis Bradley's house, along with his wife, his son, Lord Northcliffe's former secretary, and a friend. We were all seekers after truth. Within a quarter-of-an hour Mr. Bradley's voice-mediumship, which he had developed suddenly, brought Lord Northcliffe's voice into the room. Then I knew that Spiritualism *was true*.

OTHER EVIDENCES.

"Another medium I should like to mention is Mrs. Gibbons Grinling. For three years, she and her son sat three times a week, alone. After three years they got the direct voice. It wants some patience, but if, at the end of it, you can prove to a bereaved person that his friend is not dead, it is a sacrifice worth making. It was through Mrs. Gibbons Grinling's mediumship that I heard, for the first time, the Northcliffe voice exactly as I had heard it in life. I have heard it since, as characteristically Northcliffe's as my own is characteristically mine. It was his voice undoubtedly. Yet Mrs. Grinling did not know Lord Northcliffe.

"Our enquiries into the Northcliffe survival began because Miss Owen, his former secretary, involved in worrying correspondence over a lawsuit, felt that, if it were true, as she had read, that Conan Doyle had spoken to Lord Northcliffe, she should consult her former Chief about it all. So she told Sir Arthur Conan Doyle all the story. Now, Conan Doyle objects to Spiritualism being used for material purposes; but he gave way in this case, hearing the large sums of money involved which might go to charity.

"Doyle sent Miss Owen to Mrs. Annie Brittain. Now, as Miss Owen was full of anxiety, full of enthusiasm and full of hope about speaking to Lord Northcliffe, why was it, if the subconscious theory was true, that the moment she got to Mrs. Brittain's it was *not* Northcliffe, but her mother, who came through ? Her mother died when Miss Owen was a few months old, and she could not remember anything of her; yet her mother came through, and for nearly two hours described the whole circumstances of her life and death.

"When, still determined to speak to Northcliffe, Miss Owen visited Mrs. Osborne Leonard, Northcliffe immediately came through and said that he had let her mother speak last time, but that now he was not going to be kept on one side."

SPIRITUALISM'S MAGNETISM.

After giving more examples of mediumship, Mr. Swaffer said that many people outside the Spiritualist movement were being drawn into it because they themselves were developing mediumship, without outside, or professional, help.

"I am not a sentimentalist," said Mr. Swaffer, "I am a man of the world. I have never lost anybody in my life who was very close to me. I am not the sort of person who, for

long, would be affected by bereavement: I am too selfishly interested in the things of to-day. I have had such proof, however, that I have felt it my duty, not for my own comfort, not for any reason of my own advancement, to come out and tell as many people as I can that there is no death.

"One evening a servant at Ciro's Club came to me and asked where he could get Mr. Bradley's book, 'Towards the Stars.' I asked him why he wanted to read it, and he told me he had lost his little girl. I told him I would send him some books to read. When, on Christmas eve, I met Mrs. Leonard I told her how, even in a night club, the subject of Spiritualism had cropped up. Later, the same night-club servant ran up to me while jazz was being played. 'We sat with Mrs. Leonard to-day,' he said, 'and we spoke to our little girl. We had evidence that she was always beside us in the house, as you told us, and that, when my wife is thinking of her, she is there.' That man has now joined a Spiritualist Society. What has Spiritualism done for his wife ? '*It has saved her reason*,' he told me. If I had only done that, what I have done would have been worth while.

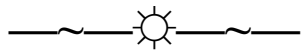
"Another man I know who lost his little girl last February told me that he and his wife now hear the voice of their own little child in the sanctity of their home. One by one, people are beginning to realise that certain things the Bible has always told us are true, and can be found if sought after. We know that the dead we love are not dead, but that they are trying to help us, are beside us when we mourn them, helping us, urging us on. I have had proof of that, and I want to bear witness to it.

IN YOUR OWN HOME.

"Out of every ten persons in the world there are probably eight who might become mediums. You need not risk being defrauded. You can study the rules for mediumship and you can follow them. Then, when the phenomena happen in your own home, with only your own friends, you know they are true. Supposing that Spiritualism cannot save the world, and I do not believe it can, for I know that man has to *save himself*, with faith or without it; supposing it cannot double your income, supposing it cannot cure your illness, there is at least one thing it can do.

"It can prove that Christ's last recorded words: 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,' are true. When the spirit voices first come through, when the spirit writings begin, when, at a seance, you hear your spirit friends described, you always get something like this: 'He says he is not dead; he is with you.' It was the word of Christ, it is the word of your dead friend, it is the language of Love itself. If it is all that Love ever had to say, it would make Love worth while."

During the evening Miss A. Rimmer (contralto) contributed in beautiful style "Abide With Me" and "My Prayer," accompanied by Miss Brand Lane.





SNU acquires ‘Psychic News’ archives



In August 2025 the Spiritualists’ National Union acquired the comprehensive archives of ‘Psychic News’, which was founded jointly by Jack Rubens and Maurice Barbanell, with its first weekly issue appearing on Saturday, May 28th 1932, priced at twopence. It is a large archive, so its new home is the spacious loft room over the Annex at Stansted Hall.

The archive consists of the bound weekly issues, photo and cuttings archive and Maurice Barbanell’s desk. This is all shown in some detail on the SNU video presented by Minister Jackie Wright, President of the Spiritualists’ National Union, and Paul J. Gaunt, Curator of the Britten Museum and Library and editor of this journal.

This video is available on the SNU website Pioneer page: https://snu.org.uk/the-pioneer-journal/

Part of the archive is a beautiful drawing of Barbanell in the editorial office, drawn in the last week of December 1943 by a well-known British artist, Russell Sidney Reeve (1896-1970).

Barbanell published the image in Psychic News on January 8th 1944. This is displayed in the Arthur Findlay College.



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The founding of the Psychic News newspaper and Psychic Press:

The First 25 Years

Previously the Psypioneer, and today the SNU Pioneer, have addressed numerous accounts of inaccurate information, for example the foundation of Hydesville, the formation of our Seven Principles and the aerial flight of Daniel D. Home, which nobody *actually* witnessed, to name a few.

The founding of the Psychic News newspaper is another prime example explored in the last twenty years by Psypioneer and Pioneer.[1] Today, however, we still find in the various publications, websites, social media, etc., statements that Psychic News was founded by:

Maurice Barbanell, Hannen Swaffer, Jack Rubens and Arthur Findlay

Only fifty per cent of these often-told claims are correct; the story of Psychic News is told below by those who were involved, taken from various documented materials:

Hannen Swaffer declined at the last minute to invest in Psychic News; however, he wholeheartedly supported the new publication, like so many other well-known Spiritualists, by the contributing articles.

In the December 5th issue of Psychic News, 1936, Barbanell noted:

> *Psychic News* was started against Swaffer's advice. He refused to have any financial interest in it, arguing that, if he put money into it, he would have to accept a dividend, and then he would be accused of making money out of Spiritualism. He has never received one penny from *Psychic News*. His only financial connection with the paper is that, once, he lent it £500, refusing to take interest. This amount, of course, was repaid.

As the reader will also note below, J. Arthur Findlay was also not one of the founders of Psychic News but he saved the publication from its early financial struggles. In the last issue of Pioneer it published: J. Arthur Findlay – "How do you write your books?" This sets the story in motion with Findlay's own account as he published in his 1955 autobiography, "Looking Back".

[1] See Pioneer: Vol. 8, No. 3: June 2021: "Psychic News was founded by Maurice Barbanell and Jack Rubens: Psychic News in Perspective – Leslie Price" & "Three "Dead" Men Began Psychic News – Maurice Barbanell".

He recalls that soon after the publication of his book, "On the Edge of the Etheric", he received a letter from Maurice Barbanell asking him to write an article for PN; this appeared in the first issue as "The Book That Sold 23 Editions in 6 Months – Why It Was Written".

Findlay notes in Chapter Seven, "Stansted Hall (1930-1936)":



"Shortly after the publication of this book in 1931 I received a letter from Maurice Barbanell, asking me to write an article for *Psychic News*, to tell how it was I came to write such a book. This newspaper had just been born, and it was only a week old, but his letter had effects much greater than the article I wrote. I met him a few days later and found that he, and the other founder of *Psychic News*, J. M. Rubens, required financial help to continue publication. This I contributed and we formed a company called Psychic Press Ltd. to finance and manage this new Spiritualist journal. Barbanell and Rubens received shares for the part they played in founding this new venture, and, in exchange for shares, I put up the necessary money and so controlled the company.

"I became chairman, without salary, and Barbanell the editor, but years were to pass before the time came for the new journal to be self-supporting…."

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It is not often realised that the founder editor after fourteen years had a disagreement with Findlay, resulting in Barbanell resigning as its editor and managing director in February 1946.

On July 14th 1956 Psychic News headlined:

Psychic News

CHANGE IN CONTROLLING OWNERSHIP

> ARTHUR Findlay, controlling shareholder in Psychic Press Ltd., the proprietors of *Psychic News*, has handed over as a gift the greater part of his interest in the company on trust to the Spiritualists' National Union, as the only corporation in the Spiritualist movement.

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This article can be read and/or downloaded online at the Psychic News archives hosted by the University of Manitoba. Maurice Barbanell responded to the article which he published in the Two Worlds the following week on July 21st; it is published in full below: [2]

[2] Circa 1956 until his death in 1981, Barbanell became the editor of the Two Worlds, moving it from its Manchester base to London.

Do you know a more amazing case of spirit guidance ?

BY THE EDITOR



AS one of the leading figures involved, and the only one who knows all the facts, I must tell you a remarkable and dramatic story of spirit guidance. I tell it because of the announcement made last week that Arthur Findlay has presented to the Spiritualists' National Union his shares which gives them control of "Psychic News."

In making the announcement, "Psychic News" referred to its own beginning. As these contained some inaccuracies, I sent a letter of correction.

It was stated that when "Psychic News" was only a week old, I asked Findlay "to contribute financial support to enable its publication to continue. This he did, and, in exchange for shares, Findlay put up the necessary capital."

Had he not done so, said the announcement, "the paper would probably have died at birth." It added that "he paid out a considerable sum of money before the newspaper became finally stable."

"I was staggered"

Now for the facts. In 1932, much to my surprise, J. M. Rubens, who was, and is, Hannen Swaffer's accountant, suggested that he and I should start a psychic newspaper. I was staggered, because Rubens was not a Spiritualist.

He made the suggestion, he said, because he had heard Swaff and me discuss Spiritualism. We had just completed a propaganda tour of Britain, addressing 250,000 people in three years.[3] As, till then, the whole of my adult life had been spent in commerce, and I had no practical knowledge of journalism, the suggestion did not appeal.

That night I was sitting with Estelle Roberts. Red Cloud, completely out of the blue, said, "It has today been suggested to you what you should do." I did not realise what he meant, and said so. His immediate reply was to refer to Rubens' suggestion of starting a psychic paper. This was remarkable evidence, seeing that I had not mentioned the matter to the medium.

Red Cloud then made what I thought was an extraordinary statement. In a past life, he said, I had promised to return and devote my career to psychic activities. He added that I must redeem my promise.

Forgotten pledge

Naturally I had no recollection of making the promise—I still do not remember it—but Red Cloud said that spirit plans were already made and I had my part to play.

My reply was to tell him that to abandon a commercial career when I was hardly 30 was an important decision that required time for reflection.

Thinking over the matter I realised that if such a promise and the spirit plans it involved were known to Red Cloud, they should be known to other guides. I decided,

[3] See Pioneer: Vol. 2, No. 6: November 2015: "Maurice Barbanell, the S.N.U. and his Propaganda Work".

without telling Estelle, or Red Cloud, to sit with another medium and see if confirmation came.

I had to find one who was a complete stranger. Kathleen Barkel fitted all my requirements. We had never met. She had not done any public work. Her seances were held at her home, which I had never visited. My photograph had not appeared and she could not know me. Through a mutual friend, who did not divulge my identity and who was unaware of the reason for the seance, it was arranged for me to go anonymously.



Kathleen went into trance, and her lovable guide, White Hawk, took charge. Almost his first words were that he knew I had come for confirmation of what "my brother Red Cloud has told you."

Then White Hawk also referred to the promise which Red Cloud said I had made in a past existence. As Red Cloud had done, he mentioned spirit plans for my future.

Northcliffe's sign

At an early part of the seance White Hawk asked to handle some object belonging to me, doubtless to obtain closer contact with my conditions. I handed him my fountain pen.

A few moments later I noticed it was leaking—the first time it had ever happened—and that the ink was staining the medium's hands. When I drew the guide's attention to this happening, he laughingly replied: "I know. Northcliffe is here and he is responsible. He says he always upsets pens"—an ingenious reference to his newspaper career. Northcliffe, he added, was interested in the new paper. [4]

At the end of this memorable seance White Hawk struck an impressive note. In a farewell salutation he said: "I make for you the Sioux sign. With my mind, with my lips and with my heart, I serve."

As he spoke, with outstretched right arm he touch in turn his medium's forehead, lips and heart. I was moved by this little ceremony which I had not witnessed before.



Naturally I refrained from mentioning to Estelle that I had visited Kathleen Barkel. Imagine my surprise when at my next seance with Red Cloud [5] almost his first words were, "Are you satisfied now that you have been to my brother White Hawk ?" This, of course, was said to show that he knew.

Feeling somewhat guilty I asked him, "Do you mind ?" He answered, "No I am glad that you sought and obtained confirmation." Having done so, I said I was now ready to fall in with the spirit plans which Red Cloud had declared were essential to redeem my ancient promise.

"Money will come"

I must break in to tell you that the climax of this seance was that Red Cloud made the same Sioux salutation, using the identical words spoken by White Hawk ! He must have known how they impressed me. Even though I later sat with Estelle scores of times, that salutation was never repeated.

[4] See Pioneer: Vol. 12, No. 1: "Hannen Swaffer, Lord Northcliffe & Big Jump –"Lord Northcliffe's Return" "

[5] This is a well-known image of Estelle Roberts's guide "Red Cloud" however, it is not generally known that it was produced by Madge Donohoe as a 'Skotograph'.

When I told Red Cloud that I was prepared to go ahead with the paper, I said that frankly there was a problem because we would not have enough money. His answer was that if I supplied the faith the money would be forthcoming.

Rubens and I started the company with £666 16s. 8d. It was to be £1,000, but our third subscriber dropped out. [6] For the first issue of "Psychic News" I invited Findlay to contribute an article telling why he wrote "On the Edge of the Etheric." After six months it was already a best-seller.

"That is your man"



Findlay called to see me to discuss the article. That night I was sitting with Estelle when Red Cloud recalled our previous conversation about faith and money. Though I had not mentioned—there was no reason to do so— Findlay's call, Red Cloud named him, mentioned his visit to me and said that he would put up the capital.

I wrote Findlay telling him what Red Cloud had said. His reply was that he was interested. He suggested that we meet to discuss the matter. A few days later I saw him at his home and he agreed to supply the necessary capital. By then, of course, the paper had made its appearance and created tremendous interest.

Findlay took up £1,500 worth of shares. A few months later, because more capital was needed, he put up a further £1,150, making a total of £2,650. The following year his investment totalled £3,175.

It took three years for "Psychic News" to become a paying proposition. Arrears on its preference dividends were then paid, as were regular annual dividends for the 14 years that I acted as Editor and managing director.

Thus "Psychic News" errs in stating that I approached Findlay, when the paper was a week old, "to enable its publication to continue," and that had he not subscribed for shares it "would probably have died at birth." And the "considerable sum of money" was £3,175.

None of this is written to belittle the great contribution made by Findlay, but merely to have the facts rightly recorded.

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[6] This was Hannen Swaffer and is explained elsewhere in this article.

Barbanell's last sentence was "… but merely to have the facts rightly recorded." However, this is not in full agreement with Findlay. In the Britten Museum archives is a carbon copy of a letter written by Findlay to the SNU General Secretary, Richard Ellidge, dated October 25th 1956:

25th October, 1956.

Mr. Richard Ellidge,
The Spiritualists' National Union,
Britten House,
12, Tib Lane,
MANCHESTER, 2.

Dear Mr. Ellidge,

"The Two Worlds" of 2lst July last contained a very interesting article by Mr. Barbanell entitled "Do you know of a more amusing case of spirt guidance ?" about the origin of "Psychic News". I think that this should be filed away for future reference along with this letter I am now writing to you.

I cannot remember whether it was a week or a fortnight after the paper was started that I put up the necessary money to keep it going, but I am certainly correct in saying that if it had not been for my money "Psychic News" would have died at birth.

As to the money that I have paid out, Mr. Barbanell is correct up to a point, but he forgets that I subscribed £1000 over and above the figures he gives as a loan to the company to tide it over the time when it was short of money. This was eventually repaid to me. It will therefore be seen that altogether I subscribed a sum of £4,175. I look upon this as a considerable sum of money, especially in those days when it was more valuable than it is now.

I just mention this to you in view of what was said in the article. It is not something which I myself would have mentioned, but seeing that Mr. Barbanell has made such a point of it, I think this letter should be filed away along with the article from "The Two Worlds" as a matter for reference, should it ever come up.

Finally, he is wrong in saying that the annual dividends were paid, for the 14 years that he was editor and managing director. Ordinary dividends only commenced (so far as I can trace in my books) from 1947 onwards, after he had resigned.

Yours sincerely.

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The story here continues with the introduction of Percy Wilson, whose name is well known within the pages of Pioneer, for example in the last issue we published: "The Tragedies of Mediumship – Percy Wilson".

Below is taken from a hand-typed undated document by Percy Wilson held in the Britten Museum on his introduction by J. Arthur Findlay to join him as a director of Psychic Press, Ltd: [7]

[7] I note that this was later published in Psychic News on June 1st 1957, albeit edited and slightly changed.

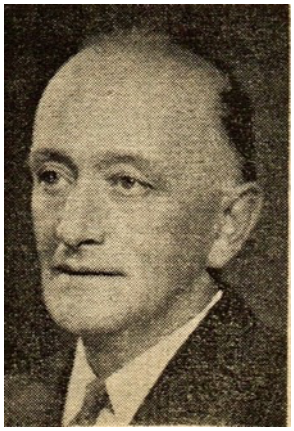


THE POLICY OF PSYCHIC NEWS

By Percy Wilson, M.A.

When I was told in my Home Circle way back in 1941 that within a few years I should be in association with Psychic News and with Arthur Findlay, though not with Maurice Barbanell, I just didn't believe it. At that time I had never met Mr. Findlay and, to be frank, I was not particularly enamoured of Psychic News. I had met Mr. Barbanell in his capacity of Editor of Psychic News and the various little tussles we had had with each other had led to a mutual respect, perhaps not untinged with a certain wariness, But my sentimental attraction was to Ernest Oaten and the Two Worlds whom I had known, and with whom my forbears had been intimately associated, for many, many years. And now Maurice Barbanell is Editor and Managing Director of the Two Worlds, and I am Chairman and Managing Director of Psychic News.

How little we know what lies in store for us ! When, in May 1945, Mr. Findlay rang me up, arranged a meeting, and then suggested that I might join him as a director of Psychic Press Ltd, I was completely taken by surprise. Had it not been for the positiveness of the earlier message, I think I should have made my excuses. As it was, I was persuaded that here was a job of work that I had to do and the following day I was duly appointed director along with Mr. B. Abdy Collins. [8]



Within a year Mr. Barbanell had left us and we had to find both a new Editor and a new Managing Director. For the latter, we were fortunate in having the services of Mr. Collins himself, who had just retired from his war-time post of Assistant Secretary to the Ministry of Home Security (after an earlier retirement from the Government of India). For the former, we decided on Mr, Kenneth Ulyett, who had been Editor of a National Weekly before the war and was then a Squadron Leader in the Air Force. I had met him journalistically before the war, but I also knew him as the son-in-law of Mr. & Mrs. Frank Brown with whom I had worked at the Brixton Spiritualist Church. Unfortunately, he was unable to secure demobilisation in time to succeed Mr. Barbanell in February 1946, and he introduced us to Mr. Stuart Martin.



Stuart Martin

So in March 1956, we began a new regime with Mr. Collins as Managing Director and Mr. Martin as Editor; and Psychic News put on a New Look and went from strength to greater strength. Circulation increased and the financial stability was greatly improved.

At that time, and for two more years, enthusiasm for Spiritualism was at its peak, and Mr. Martin knew how to ride on the crest of the wave. I myself was then President of the London District Council of the S.N.U. and can well recall the fervour that characterised our public meetings – a fervour that no doubt was tremendously stimulated by the rapprochement

[8] Image shown: Abdy Collins was a staunch supporter of the physical medium Helen Duncan. He was one of the defence witnesses at her trial held before the Recorder of London, Sir Gerald Dodson, at the Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey, E.C.4., commencing on Thursday 23rd March 1944

that Mr. Bendall, then President of the "Greater World", and I had fostered between our respective organisations. [9]

It was perhaps this that suggested to Mr. Collins that the Board of Directors of Psychic Press should draw up a Policy statement for the guidance of the staff of Psychic News. Whether that be so or not, a statement was in fact drafted by him, approved by the Board and accepted with alacrity by the Editor and his colleagues. It has remained in force as a directive to this day and was welcomed by Mr. Austen, who succeeded Mr. Martin as Editor on the latter's death,[10] and by our present Editor, Mr. Fred Archer, when he succeeded Mr. Austen on his emigration to Australia.[11] So far as I am aware, it has never been published but I think it might well be brought to the notice of readers as an indication of the essentially practical way in which the present policy of Psychic News which is embodied in the Charter has been built up. Here it is:

A POLICY FOR PSYCHIC NEWS

(1) To work for Unity in the Movement

(a) Not to allow anyone to attack anyone else in the paper. Properly phrased and sensible criticism is different but it must be moderate in tone and based on reasonable premises.

(b) To encourage all forces making for Unity.

(2) Religion should be handled so as not to wound feelings and genuine beliefs.

Criticism of dogmas may be drastic but should be worded so as not to insult and provoke. Emphasis should be on the proofs of survival and the messages from beyond, on the ignorance of opponents, &c., and motives should not be impugned.

(3) Care should be taken not to exaggerate the value of evidence given at public meetings and elsewhere. Claims of celebrated persons to return should be handled with reserve. We should avoid the reasonable imputation of credulity and sensationalism.

(4) Too much publicity and space should not be given to London mediums and constant repetition of the doings of a small group should be avoided. Correspondents should be appointed in the big towns, especially in the North and reporters sent out to cover events of importance outside London, Northern Ireland should not be neglected nor the Dominions, News should be sought from abroad especially the continent and North and South America.

(5) We should do all we can to put down charlatans and discourage commercialisation of Spiritualism.

We should support the S.N.U. in its Diploma system for mediums; also in its campaign for new legislation.

(6) Unity Meetings should be sponsored

But we must avoid seeming to try to run the Movement and setting up as a rival executive organisation.

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[9] See Pioneer: Vol. 7, No. 5: October 2020: "Why I Resigned—by Greater World president" (H. F. Bendall).

[10] Stuart Martin died on January 10th 1947.

[11] Arthur William (Billy) Austen previously was assistant editor to Maurice Barbanell and Stewart Martin. Austen had been with the paper since its inception in May 1932; he would continue as the paper's editor to 1953. He and his wife moved to West Perth, Australia and became involved with *Psychic Science News Magazine.* Austen was the first official stenographer for the teachings of Big Jump, publicly known as Silver Birch.

During the ten years that these objectives have been before us, we may not have entirely succeeded in achieving our purpose. Thus we have had difficulty in securing suitable correspondents in various parts of the country and even more difficulty in obtaining reports of local events in a form which represents news value.

We should be happy to hear from readers, in the provinces and abroad, who have a flair for news. People do want to know what is happening in other parts of the country; but a bare statement that "Mrs. Bluebottle gave an acceptable address last Sunday evening" is of no value to anyone.

The Policy continues. Each Editor has followed it and I too inherited it when I became Managing Director in October 1951 on the death of Mr. Abdy Collins. [12] At that time I was President of the S.N.U., but there was clearly no sort of clash between the two functions. Psychic News has always supported the Seven Principles which are the basis of the Union's constitution; and through the years, the S.N.U. has declared again and again that individual freedom of thought and liberty of interpretation [13] are fundamental to Spiritualist philosophy; and, of course, they are vital to the conduct of a newspaper such as Psychic News, which traces through the philosophy as it permeates all realms of human thought.

With the presentation of Mr. Findlay's shares to the Union (which is, of course, the only Trust Corporation in the Movement) the association becomes closer. But I hope that as the years go on, and those of us who know how the association has come about and what its purpose is, no longer remain at hand to direct the day-to-day business, the principles of freedom of thought and expression will still remain a guiding light both for Psychic News and for the S.N.U. As Emma Hardinge Britten so eloquently demonstrated in her Autobiography (which, by the way, I hope everyone of our readers will study), that was the torch that lit the way for our pioneers from the narrow dogmas of the past; and it is important that it should be kept brightly burning for the benefit of those who will come after us, lest we too should be tempted to allow our thoughts and opinions to grow into dogmas which might enslave them.

Spiritualists, of all people, should remember that the source of inspiration never dries up. It is in the Unseen World and the flow from it is not confined to a church or an organisation, or a holy book or a library of books. It can never be dammed up into reservoirs by the creation of dogma, but must be expected to find multiple channels for itself.

During the twelve years that I have been a director of Psychic Press Ltd, there has never been anything approaching a disagreement on this or any other matter that has come before the Board; complete harmony has prevailed and there has never been occasion at any time to take a vote. This was so when Mr. Collins was with us and it has remained so since I succeeded him and Mr. David Dutton joined us. I hope it will continue to be the case for the future, now that Mr. Findlay has resigned and Mr, Dawson and Mr. Fowler, the present President and Treasurer of the S.N.U., have joined the Board of Directors.

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[12] In 1951 J. Arthur Findlay wrote Bernard Abdy Collins' obituary notice, published in Psychic News, November 3rd: This is published in Pioneer, Vol. 8, No.3: "Judge Converted Him to Spiritualism: Discussions on Golf Course – J. Arthur Findlay".

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

Mr. Findlay told us in March 1956 that he thought the time had come for him to lay down the responsibility of chairmanship and he suggested that I should assume that position as well as continue to act as Managing Director. We were aware, of course, at the time that he was proposing to transfer his shares in trust to the S.N.U. But we saw then, and see now, no reason at all why that should change our policy, though it should enlarge our field of service.

When I was a young student, my uncle, Hanson Hey, then General Secretary of the S.N.U., gave me a book on Spiritualism as a Christmas present. It was Sir William Earnshaw Cooper's "Spiritual Science". I have treasured it ever since, more particularly for the motto which Hanson inscribed on the flyleaf. This was:

"GOD NEVER LETS A TRUTH DIE"

As Chairman and Managing Director of Psychic Press Ltd., I commend that motto to you all.

PERCY WILSON.

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Wilson here has clearly outlined the development of the Psychic News policy. J. Arthur Findlay drew up the Psychic News Charter at Stansted Hall on May 16th 1956, which would come into force on the date his shares were passed on to the Spiritualists' National Union. It was:

"Signed, sealed and delivered by the said James Arthur Findlay in the presence of *John Deans Blair, Accountant, Halfway, Millfield, Stansted, Essex. Constance M. Eden, Secretary, Durrells Wood Cottage, Stansted, Essex*. The Common Seal of the Spiritualists' National Union Ltd. was hereunto affixed in the presence of *Harry Dawson, and W. S. Fowler*."

The Charter was hung in the editorial room of Psychic News at 144, High Holborn, London W.C.1. Quoted below is the main body of the Psychic News Charter signed by J. Arthur Findlay, dated etc., as above noted. This was published in a commemorative issue of Psychic News on June 1st 1957:

MAURICE Barbanell is the founder of "Psychic News." Nevertheless, "Psychic News" would probably have died at birth had I not financed its publication after the first issue and some years thereafter, when I supplied the necessary money to carry it over its early years of financial difficulties until it was on a profit earning basis.

Consequently, we both, in our respective spheres, were responsible for the foundation and subsequent development of "Psychic News."

This being so, I am as much concerned about its future as anybody, and, for that reason, as the holder of the majority of the shares, which give me control over its management and policy, I have given careful thought about its successful maintenance after my death. I have consequently passed over my shares in Psychic Press Limited (the proprietors of "Psychic News") to the Spiritualists' National Union, and this I have done in the expectation that the following provisions will always be respected:

(1) "Psychic News" is always to remain an independent newspaper, and is not to be transformed into one only for the expression of Spiritualists' National Union policy.

(2) To ensure this the Board of Directors should be constituted accordingly, and the Editor should not be a Spiritualists' National Union official, he to be always free to express opinions which have the approval of the Board of Directors.

(3) The qualification of future editors must be their journalistic ability, besides their full acceptance of all that Spiritualism stands for, and their complete detachment from orthodox supernatural credal religion.

(4) As orthodox supernatural religion has always been, and always will be, an enemy of Spiritualism, the duty of "Psychic News" is to expose its false claims and lead the people into the knowledge derived from natural religion as expounded by Spiritualism. This has always been the policy pursued by Psychic News during my lifetime, and I hope that it will always been maintained.

(5) If the Spiritualists' National Union does so, it will amply fulfil the trust and confidence I have placed in its leaders who, if they continue steadfastly to the end, will some day win the people over to the knowledge of the truth of natural religion as revealed through mediumship.



At Psychic News Office
Martin Lindley and Fred Archer,
the Editor, in his room when the
Psychic News Charter was hung.
1957

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Editor's Note:

Here I would like to fill in some gaps in the information, or at least extend the information already given to make it as comprehensive as possible in the space given.

Some of us older Spiritualists who attended the early days of Stansted Hall back in the 1970s may remember the Arthur Findlay Weekends. These, if memory serves me correctly, were at the end of the year, as the College closed at this time for a few months. These weekends consisted of the "Arthur Findlay Memorial Dinner", together with the "Arthur Findlay Memorial Lecture".

In November 1973 Maurice Barbanell gave the first "Findlay Memorial Lecture"; on a personal note I was present at this lecture, not as a guest but to serve drinks to the guests. Barbanell was a fine, often humorous public speaker who would fully engross his audience. I will here quote some of the points he touched on; I will only quote in connection with Psychic News that he gave a fine tribute to Findlay's life. [14]

He addressed the following points which expand on some of the information mentioned in this article: [15]

"When the invitation came I hesitated before accepting, as my close relationship with Findlay for 14 years ended when we disagreed on PN's future. Finally I decided to accept because I could pay him a deserved tribute for his unique contribution to Spiritualism."



"We [Barbanell & Swaffer] had just completed a three-year tour of Britain addressing propaganda meetings with audiences totalling 250,000.

"During this tour I acquired my theoretical knowledge of journalism. Swaff talked about practically nothing else in cars, trains and hotels. Jack was then Swaff's accountant and acted in a similar capacity for several Fleet Street personalities.

"A few months earlier a financier named Merrifield, who was a Spiritualist, had suggested the time was ripe to enliven psychic journalism. He was prepared to help financially.

"Ernest Oaten, then editing "Two Worlds" in Manchester was asked if he would bring it to London where Swaff and I, free of charge, would help to enlarge its sphere. Ernest refused to leave Lancashire."

[14] This can be read online as noted elsewhere in this article: see Psychic News, November 10th 1973.

[15] Maurice Barbanell in the original dinning room at Stansted Hall, where he gave the first "Findlay Memorial Lecture".

It has been noted that Barbanell's meeting with Kathleen Barkel and White Hawk was *arranged* by a mutual friend:

> "Her sittings were arranged through Frank Hawken, secretary of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association, as it was then called. [16] Alas, she was engaged for many months to come. I said I would take the first cancellation. Soon one came.
>
> "Frank assured me that, following normal practice, sitters' names or identities were not revealed to the medium. I called at her Crystal Palace SE London, home where we met for the first time."

Another prediction was also given via Vyvyan Deacon: [17]

> "Later I learned that at a Vyvyan Deacon voice seance, Stead had communicated and foretold accurately that within six months there would be a Spiritualist newspaper called "Psychic News."

Here at this Findlay Memorial Lecture for the first time, Barbanell gives the reason for his falling out with Findlay resulting in his resignation:

> "My break with Findlay came at the end of the war. I told the story for the first time, I said, because I was speaking in Stansted Hall.
>
> "I happened to ask him what he proposed to do with his controlling shares in PN. I thought I ought to know because its success was largely due to my work.
>
> "He shocked me by saying he proposed to leave these shares to the SNU. His idea was also to bequeath Stansted Hall to the same body, so that it could be used as the Arthur Findlay College, with training mediums as one of its main functions.
>
> "When I asked where the money would come from, he shook me, because of his acute financial brain, by saying the dividends on the shares, plus the amount paid by potential mediums for training, would be the answer. My insistence that this scheme would never work had no effect on him.
>
> "I pointed out that official newspapers had no chance of being viable. They had to follow the party line, were usually dull and thus ceased to be bought except by a few.
>
> "I offered to buy his shares. His reply was to place a highly exaggerated figure as their value, and to say this must be provided within seven days. This, of course, he knew was impossible. We parted company after I ended the year's notice I had given."

Barbanell continues beyond this article's time frame of the 'First 25 Years' but gives the foundation of the next phase of PN:

> **"Name is given**
>
> "The spirit plan, however, was still to be fulfilled. Just over a dozen years ago, I had a private sitting. Red Cloud gave the full name of a friend of mine to whom he wanted to talk.
>
> "This man's name was unknown to the medium, nor at that time to anyone connected with Spiritualism. I told my friend, who arranged to sit with Red Cloud.

[16] Berkshire born English exponent Vivian (later Vyvyan) Deacon (1895-1938).

[17] Red Cloud also gave reference to William T. Stead but not referenced in this article.

"The guide told him it was his task to arrange for "Two Worlds" and PN to be brought together as part of the spirit plan and to function as one enterprise.

"I was then editing "Two Worlds," having been asked by veteran Spiritualist J. B. McIndoe to come to its rescue when it seemed on the point of foundering in Manchester. To do so, I had moved it to London.

"Future assured

"My friend, when he conveyed Red Cloud's words, first met with rejection after he approached those directing PN, even though it had reached a low stage in a chequered career.

"Finally, faced with the possibility of insolvency, my friend's offer to buy the SNU shares was accepted. I must say that Findlay was wholeheartedly in agreement that I should return to the PN editorial chair as part of this arrangement. [18]

"My friend transferred the PN shares to "Two Worlds." In turn there was formed the Spiritual Truth Foundation, a registered charity, to which these shares were transferred.

"This ensured that no individual could ever obtain control of this newspaper. It also assured PN's future and incidentally, that of ''Two Worlds'' where a similar arrangement was outlined.

"I ended my address by saying that all this was part of the plan. It means, I told my hearers, that all of us engaged in promoting Spiritualism had our part to play in teaching mankind how to save itself."

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The development of the Spiritual Truth Foundation brings us forward to 1965. The Chairman of Psychic Press Ltd., Percy Wilson, published on May 29th 1965 an article in Psychic News:

Will this deed make psychic history?

IN front of me is a document that I am firmly convinced is historic, one that will make a tremendous contribution to the future of Spiritualism.

Three main objects

I announced that the control of the company had passed to a body of London Spiritualists whose intention was to form a charitable trust. This transfer had the full support of J. Arthur Findlay, M.B.E., who was for many years chairman of the company. Only a few weeks before his passing he wrote to me approving both the terms of the trust and the proposed trustees.

That trust has now been established, under the title "The Spiritual Truth Foundation". It is being registered with the Charity Commissioners. Its objects are stated in the trust deed to be:

1. The promotion and advancement of the religion and religious philosophy of Spiritualism.

2. The promotion and advancement of spiritual healing.

3. The relief of poverty.

[18] Sixteen years after resigning on June 20th1962 Barbanell returned to his previous role and continued as editor of Psychic News and The Two Worlds jointly until his death in 1981.

The trustees are: Gordon H. Adams, Maurice Barbanell, Sylvia Barbanell, R. David L. Dutton, Maurice H. Tester, Laurence Wilson and myself.

For the full article and further information please see Pioneer, Vol. 11, No. 1: “Spiritual Truth Foundation”.

To conclude:

Published in Psychic News, December 17th 1966:

HE HELPED TO FOUND PSYCHIC NEWS

JACK RUBENS, who played a vital part in founding *Psychic News*, left £139,018 (gross £140,478, duty £72,067), his published will revealed last week.

Rubens, described as “a well-known figure in Fleet Street”, was an accountant who acted as financial and tax adviser to leading journalists and authors. These included Hannen Swaffer. Rubens, who died last March, aged 65, was a former president of the Magicians’ Club.

Despite his religion

Because of his friendship with Swaffer he became associated with founding *Psychic News* in 1932, though he was then an orthodox Jew and not a Spiritualist.

Psychic News was launched from some rooms in his London office in Bishopsgate. He became its business manager. He and Maurice Barbanell provided the initial capital, £688 16s. 8d., which speedily proved inadequate.

Rubens attended many seances, some of which he described in *Psychic News* as “really astonishing”. He volunteered that conjuring could not explain them.