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Contents list:

160 – Maurice Barbanell, the S.N.U. and his Propaganda Work
175 – Britten Memorial Research Weeks at the Arthur Findlay College
176 – Marcel Poncin – Artist Paints Medium Giving Clairvoyance
177 – Marcel Poncin, psychic artist, passes on
178 – Lady Doyle Was The Family Medium
181 – Doyle Memorial Fate?
183 – The Effect of the Vagrancy & Witchcraft Act (Part IV) – The Work of the Spiritualists' National Union

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

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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.

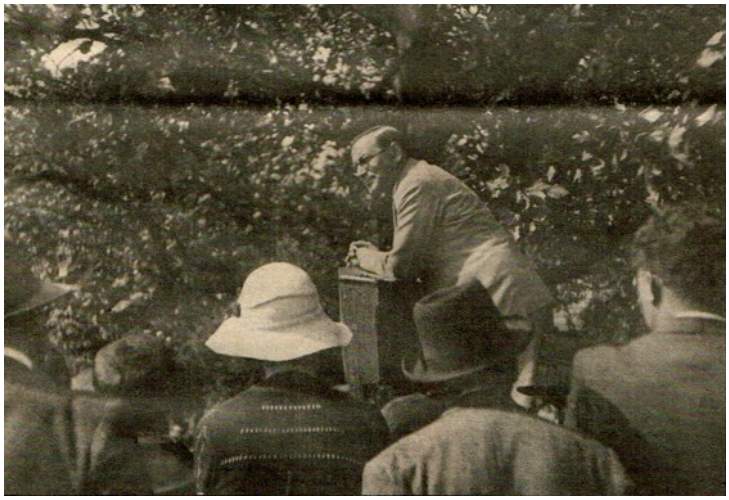
I had to wind up my own business and my income came from one directorship, but as that meant attendance at a board meeting for a few hours once a month I was virtually unemployed.

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!

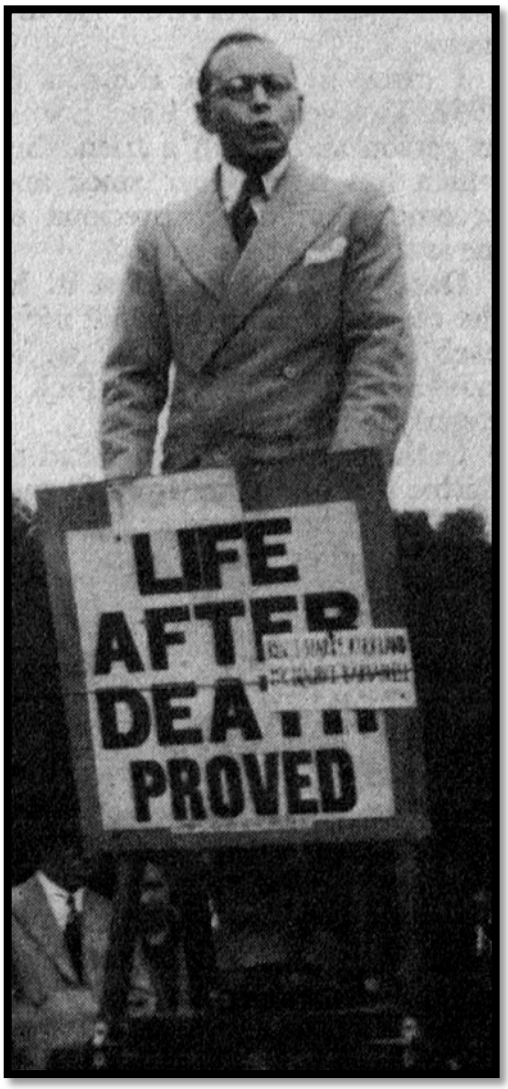
Maurice Barbanell, the speaker, after complimenting the opponent on his "nerve" in daring to criticise Spiritualism after such inadequate experience, pointed out that the theory put forward could not explain such phenomena as direct voice, materialisations, spirit photographs, levitation, the movement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

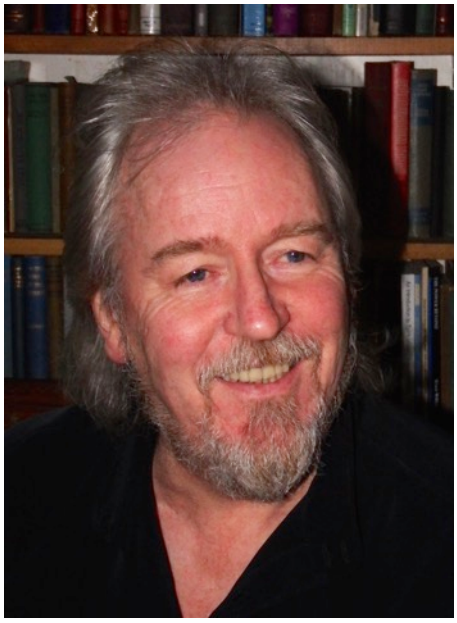


The questions, though very slow in coming, were varied. There were such queries as: "What is your definition of a psychical researcher?" "Do you think dreams have any bearing on the future?" "Where do you draw the line between those beings who consciously survive, and those who do not?" "Who is responsible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



Britten Memorial Research Weeks at the Arthur Findlay College

A Unique Opportunity – Exploring Spiritualist History

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£25.00 per day 09. 30 – 20. 30
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Your study visit will be supported under the guidance of the Museum Curator and Librarian, Mr Paul Gaunt. Students will have access to the important major Spiritualistic journals of the day, books and the Museum, where you can study the many aspects of our history. Scans/photocopies will be available on some material.

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

All those intending to book should contact Paul first to make sure any specialised subject material is available
curator@snu.org.uk

*** Additional costs if required:**

Lunch £10, Dinner £12.50.
Bed & Full English breakfast is £90.00 per room per night for an ensuite room. Bed & Full English breakfast is £70.00 per room per night.
Alternatively, accommodation is available in the village, list available

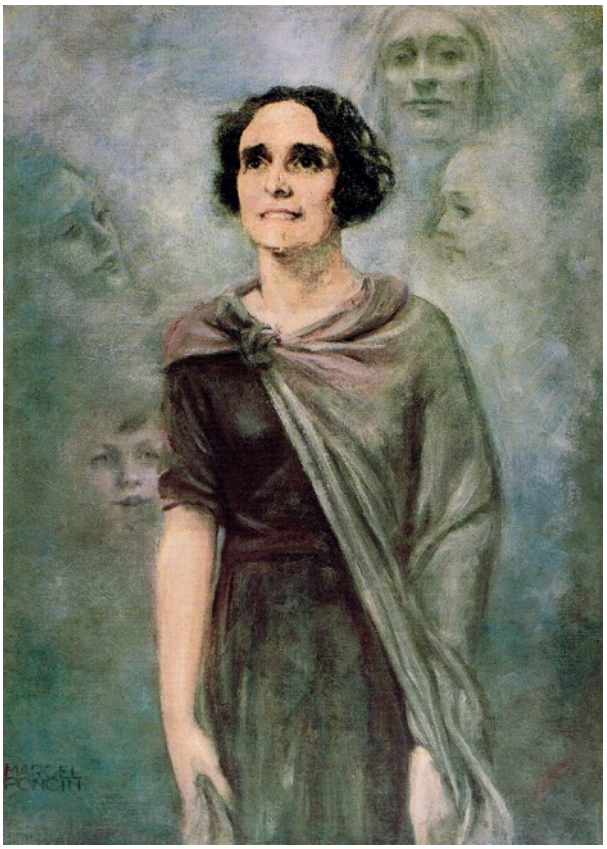
Spaces are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment

MARCEL PONCIN

It appears the image of Estelle Roberts giving clairvoyance as seen by the artist Marcel Poncin was his first *inspirational painting* reported in 'Psychic News', December 4th 1937. The original painting hangs today in the 'Mediums Room' at the Arthur Findlay College. Shortly after, Poncin would paint the well-known image of Silver Birch, followed by others such as healer William (Billy) Parish; see "Pioneer", October 2014.

SOME DISCERN SPIRITS . . .

Artist Paints Medium Giving Clairvoyance



"SOME discern spirits," said St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians. The Churches are still puzzled by his words. He meant, of course, clairvoyance—seeing spirits.

In this inspirational painting, a French artist, Marcel Poncin, shows Estelle Roberts, Spiritualism's best-known public clairvoyant, surrounded by faces of the "dead."

When he had the urge to paint this picture, the artist had no idea of featuring Estelle Roberts. He wanted it to be a symbolical picture which he intended to call "The Medium."

The face of Mrs. Roberts persistently intruded itself. So he decided to paint it.

Then came the head of the Indian spirit, not supposed to represent her guide; Red Cloud, but meant to depict the guide who is always in the background of a medium.

Those who have watched Estelle Roberts giving public demonstrations know how she declares that she often hears the spirit voices and, even when she is describing one of the "dead," others try to attract her attention.

THE WHISPERED MESSAGE

In this painting you see one spirit whispering a message in her ear, while others bring themselves within the range of her vision in the hope of being described.

Marcel Poncin has been an artist for over twenty-five years. He has exhibited in the Salon des Artistes Francais, which is the "Royal Academy" of France.

Painting psychic pictures is a new departure for him and the urge began about four months ago. These inspirational paintings are all executed in the same tones, in a style that is different from his usual oil colours. He feels that he is the instrument of some higher power. When the artist is finished, he is exhausted.

Two years ago, Thomas Wyatt predicted that Poncin would execute psychic paintings, but as he had felt no urge to do so he dismissed the idea.

More recently Rosie, Bertha Hirst's spirit control, mentioned the psychic paintings again and prophesied that one would be published in a Spiritualist newspaper.

Poncin died in 1953. It can be noted in his obituary, published in the *Two Worlds*, June 13th, 1953, that he was urged by the spirit of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle *to acquaint Lady Doyle of his spirit return*:

Marcel Poncin, psychic artist, passes on

MARCEL PONCIN, who was rightly esteemed for his outstanding psychic paintings of spirit guides, including Silver Birch, passed on early last Monday morning after an operation.

For a quarter of a century he worked as an artist, achieving distinction in France. Blasco Ibanez, the celebrated Spanish author, commissioned him to paint his portrait and asked him to do all the illustrations for his famous book "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse."

Like most Frenchmen, Marcel was brought up a Roman Catholic, but even in his youth he was attracted to Spiritualism. Both his mother and grandmother were psychic. He was present at a seance at his home when he was four.

His interest in the subject was aroused after his marriage to Sumurun, the best-known mannequin in Paris. She was a great friend of Raoul Montandon, the most distinguished Spiritualist in Switzerland.

At seances held at Geneva, using a home-made ouija board, there was spelt out "ACD." In reply to a question, it was stated that the communicator was Arthur Conan Doyle. A message stated that Poncin would do some work connected with Spiritualism, but the nature of the work was not indicated.

Conan Doyle urged the artist to acquaint Lady Doyle of his spirit return. This he did and received an invitation to meet her and her son when he visited England.

In this country several mediums told him that he would be doing psychic work. Not long afterwards there came a succession of psychic paintings, each in a style different from his own normal work. These were all painted in delicate blue and silver tones and were executed speedily.

One unique feature of all these psychic paintings is the vivid, liquid and limpid eyes, which seem to hold you with their gaze.

In more recent years the films and the stage claimed his attention. He played character parts on London's West End stage and in scores of films.

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Lady Jean Doyle was herself a medium; details are given in her obituary. Jean Elizabeth Leckie was born on March 14th 1874 and was the second wife of Arthur Conan Doyle, who married her on September 18th 1907. Lady Doyle died on June 27th 1940, almost ten years to the day her husband had died, on July 6th 1930. Below is the 'Two Worlds' obituary published on the front page, July 6th 1940:

Lady Doyle Was The Family Medium

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Lady Doyle who passed on last week was for many years the medium of the family's home Circle. Through her psychic powers there came spirit messages which cheered Sir Arthur in his great propagandist campaign for Spiritualism.

There was counsel from the spirit world. There were teachings which inspired Doyle to champion what he called both "The New Revelation" and "The Vital Message," and there were intimate proofs for members of family.

Referring to her inspired writing, Arthur has placed on record a tribute to his wife's mediumship. "In her intense honesty and deep modesty," he said, "she somewhat retarded it at first by holding back her impulses in the fear lest they should come from her own subconscious self.

"Gradually, however, the unexpected nature of the messages and the allusions to be found in them showed both her and me that there were forces at work which were outside herself. Sentiments were expressed quite foreign to our own."

The first written communications, which started nine years before Sir Arthur's passing, came from "dead" relations and friends. Then there were visits from strangers.

A year later, Pheneas, Doyle's spirit guide, came through for the first time, and took chief control. The next development was that the writing mediumship changed to what Doyle described as "semi-trance inspiration talking."

Though Lady Doyle never completely lost consciousness, her hold upon her own organism was slight. The messages increased in power as fuller control was gained.

Sir Arthur stressed that much of the teaching was absolutely foreign to his own and to his wife‘s conscious convictions. Pheneas gave glimpses of life in the spirit world which Sir Arthur found particularly interesting. They closely corroborated other descriptions which he was sure his wife had never read and could not therefore have lingered in her subconscious memory.

Their three children, Denis, Adrian and “Billie” treated Pheneas like a wise and tender elder brother. “To all of them he has been a guiding star in their young lives,” wrote Sir Arthur.

Because the name of Conan Doyle was inseparably associated with Spiritualism Lady Doyle, for years after her husband’s passing, was besieged by correspondents from all over the world. They all sought information about our case.

Doyle’s “death,” ten years ago, was the testing-time for a family which was so intimately associated with Spiritualism. The world wondered how they would stand the strain of so great a bereavement. There was no doubt about the answer.

It was supplied by Lady Doyle herself, who wrote on the fourth anniversary of her husband’s passing, in *Psychic News*, “Knowledge was surely never put to a more severe test than when the one who was life itself to me was taken from me.

“At such a time, only spiritual and concrete *truth* in its highest and greatest form can help the human soul—no shadowy faith, no make-believe, can uphold and carry on the stricken heart—only a great vitalising knowledge of living and God-inspired comfort can bring balm to the heart and peace to the stricken soul.”

Then she gave her own testimony: “I can never be grateful enough for the blessed knowledge of Personal Survival and for the beacon of light that knowledge has been to me during the four years I have had to carry on since my beloved husband was taken to another higher sphere in which great work awaited him.

“In those four years, my children and I have had the most marvellous evidence of my husband’s continued love and care of us. My boys’ lives have actually been saved through his warnings of the dangerous condition of certain parts of their racing cars, which they had intended to drive—warnings which were later proved to be absolutely correct.”

She ended her article with these words, “I thank God with all that is in me for the guidance and help and inspiration I have received through my knowledge of Personal Survival—the source of which is God’s love. It has brought balm to my stricken soul and joy and comfort to my heart and mind. It has enabled me to carry on through four most strenuous years, and to be able to say on this fourth anniversary of the passing of my beloved husband. ‘Praise be to God—all is well.’ ”

Doyle, the great propagandist for Spiritualism, continued his self-imposed mission from the spirit world. To the day of his wife’s passing he showered on her and their family an abundance of evidence. He left them in no doubt that he continued to guide and inspire them. This is how Lady Doyle summed up these proofs:

"I have seen handwriting produced by the spirit of my husband which tallies exactly with his writing while alive, stroke for stroke, flourish for flourish.

"I have held conversations with him that prove that the life beyond death is the ordinary human life raised to a higher level in a higher sphere. I am in constant communication with my husband."

She knew from long association how to deal with orthodox opposition. "How little regard you have for the truth, when you speak or write against this subject," she declared in a series she wrote for the "Daily Sketch." "How you will twist and turn words uttered by a Spiritualist if you think you can by doing so influence people against Spiritualism.

"How carefully you will hide all the beautiful new knowledge and inspiring information which the Spiritualist has derived from his contact with the higher world. Why do the Churches not realise that they have utterly failed humanity? It is time that they ceased to follow the letter and that they should begin humbly to follow the spirit."

When Dr. Winnington-Ingram was Bishop of London he attacked Spiritualism in a diocesan leaflet and banned the holding of seances in all London church buildings.

In a trenchant reply Lady Doyle wrote in a daily newspaper, "I would say to him that Spiritualism is the greatest support of what the clergy are teaching in the churches at the present time. If the Church kept in touch with the spirit world, it would be a living thing, and the world would not be in such a materialistic state.

"There are people who have been driven to the depths of despair, but who have found comfort and inspiration in the teachings of Spiritualism. It would be as well if the Bishop of London turned his attention to the wrongs in his own Church instead of attacking Spiritualism, which is a religion that has given comfort to suffering humanity."

For the past four years she suffered from a succession of illnesses which necessitated operation after operation. Throughout this trying period she was conscious of her spirit husband's care and watchfulness

Sir Arthur, who was formerly a medical man, once gave proof of his nearness by diagnosing his wife before an X-ray examination was made. The medical examination tallied with his spirit diagnosis.

During one of these operations she had a remarkable psychic experience. "My etheric body" she said, "separated from my corporeal body, which I saw as if lying dead upon a table. Then my etheric body moved away from this plane to a region of light and calm, the portals of a marvellous other world. I saw my beloved husband, his features radiant with love and understanding."

Lady Doyle once described the story of her 23 years of marriage with Sir Arthur as a "continuous and perfect honeymoon." It was interrupted by his passing, and she had to wait 10 years before it could be resumed in another world.

The funeral service was conducted on Monday by the Rev. G. Maurice Elliott.

Her body was buried by the side of her husband's in the garden of their Sussex home.

Adrian Conan Doyle told a reporter: "We know quite definitely that we shall be in communication with her. The night before she 'died' she was holding long conversations with my father."[3]

In the same issue the intended 'Doyle Memorial' is updated:

Doyle Memorial Fate?

LADY DOYLE unfortunately missed a splendid opportunity after her husband's passing. Representatives of the Spiritualist movement all agreed to have a memorial to him—a half-crown volume describing his life and work, a book that could have gone into every Spiritualist home all over the world.

It was suggested that the proceeds should found a home for mediums, where psychic gifts be developed.

Instead, Lady Doyle insisted on fostering a scheme for public contributions to build a Doyle Memorial in London. Her plan, she was told, would only duplicate the work done by London Spiritualist societies, who offered all the facilities to inquirers that she proposed.

In any case, declared leading Spiritualists, the money would not be forthcoming for her ambitious project. Nevertheless, she insisted, and a public appeal for funds was launched.

As predicted, the response was disappointing. The Doyle Memorial did not materialise and for 10 years the money raised has never been used for Spiritualist purposes.

Now that Lady Doyle has passed on, the trustees of this fund should meet to consider how it can be used to help our movement. Unless some move is made, the fund will eventually pass to the State.

[3] The paper's editor Maurice Barbanell commented: B.B.C. Omission: WHY did the B.B.C., in announcing the passing of Lady Doyle, make no mention of her spiritualism?

Is this part of the strangle-hold exercised by its Religious Advisory committee, which has declared that Spiritualism is not "in the mainstream of Christian tradition"?

Lady Doyle's passing was "news" because she was the wife of the man whom the public identified with Spiritualism.

Doesn't the B.B.C. know this? Or does the Religious Advisory committee censor the broadcast news?

At present, I do not know what happened to the fund. It is speculated by one source that the small sum raised ended up going with Doyle's Psychic Bookshop, Library & Museum to the Friendship Centre, 85 Lancaster Gate, London W.2.; for further information on the Friendship Centre please see Psypioneer Archives. In an earlier article published in "Psychic News", June 11th 1932, Barbanell states (some repetition in the above article):

> As for Sir Arthur's memory, it was Lady Doyle who prevented the movement from having the memorial that was at first generally agreed upon – a half-crown volume describing his life and work, one that could have gone into every Spiritualist home all over the world.
>
> It was suggested that the proceeds should found a home for mediums, where psychic gifts could be developed.
>
> Nearly everybody, knowing the poverty of the movement, agreed that it was wrong to attempt to build a Doyle Memorial in London. They knew there were too many societies already – and too few mediums.
>
> Both Swaffer and I opposed the building idea. He started objecting at the very first meeting, when he demanded that all the most prominent Spiritualists should be consulted. At the second meeting Ernest Oaten opposed it. So did the heads of the different societies.
>
> The result was that we were not called to the next meeting of the Doyle Memorial Committee.
>
> More than that, when Oaten, who was the chairman, came back to London to preside, he asked, in astonishment, "Where are the members of the committee?" He then insisted on the original members being called next time.
>
> Ultimately, in order that Lady Doyle should not be offended, the scheme was agreed upon, but only for that reason.
>
> Even then, several of us, Swaffer and I particularly, told the meeting quite frankly that the money would not be forthcoming. We were right.



THE EFFECT OF THE VAGRANCY ACT

THE WORK OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION

Continued from the July issue:

The last issue brought us up to, and covered the period of, the Helen Duncan trial under Section 4 of the Witchcraft Act of 1735; Duncan was tried (the first Spiritualist medium by a jury) at the Central Criminal Court, known as the Old Bailey, in 1944. For a period after the trial and the imprisonment of Duncan it did appear there might be further lasting repercussions with this section of the Witchcraft Act. Another medium, seventy-two-year-old Jane Rebecca Yorke, was also prosecuted and tried at the Central Criminal Court and was found guilty on September 12th 1944 on seven counts. Yorke was fined and bound over to be of good behaviour for three years; the light sentence appears to have been due to her ill-health and age. It is interesting to note that Sir Gerald Dodson was the same Recorder (trial judge) as for Helen Duncan. Shortly after Yorke's conviction police banned a Spiritualist meeting scheduled to be held on October 8th 1944 in Altrincham near Manchester to hear a trance address by healer William Lilley's spirit guide "Dr. Letari" on "The Science of Spiritual Healing". A police superintendent in Altrincham declared the meeting illegal under the Witchcraft Act. The meeting was in aid of Altrincham General Hospital, and the Ravenswood Spiritualist Society's building fund. The Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison treated the matter as a "joke", in the House of Commons ridiculing the Spiritualists fight for religious freedom.

The full story can be read on line, or downloaded from Psypioneer Vol.9 No.03 March 2013.

Shortly after, there was an incident against the President of Redhill Christian Spiritualist Centre Mrs Emily Johnson, Ernest Oaten editor of the "Two Worlds" reported in the February 9th 1945 issue:

> On the 12th December, two police officers, in plain clothes, called on Mrs. Johnson at her home, stating that they had been sent by the Superintendent of Police. They stayed for nearly an hour. They asked a series of questions concerning the Church, Mrs. Johnson's position therein, and its various activities, which were frankly replied to. They stated that they had been collecting evidence for some time. When Mrs. Johnson asked what she had done wrong, she was told: "It's not what you have done—but what you might do!"
>
> The senior officer then produced some papers and said he was reading from the Witchcraft Act, 1735. He told Mrs. Johnson that trance speaking, trance healing, clairvoyance and psychometry were offences, as they amounted to "conjuration"; that if these activities continued she was liable under the Act, and that if other mediums were employed they would be liable as well as her.

Although nobody was arrested, it resulted in the Centre's closure. A new Church was formed at Redhill a few months later. Below is taken from the "Two Worlds", January 26th 1945 in this earlier report Oaten had referred to Emily Johnson as "Mrs. Thompson"; he had received the news by phone and made an error publishing the name as Thompson, I have corrected

this. The article sums up the confusing contradictory issues of the time, to which the movement was subjected:

Spiritualism Prohibited

The police strike again

THE plot thickens! That there is a deep and well-conceived plan to crush Spiritualism and close the doors of communication with the spirit world is becoming increasingly evident by the course of events.

There seems little doubt that the resurrection of the Witchcraft Act was deliberately invoked for this purpose. The latest development has arisen at Redhill, Surrey. Mrs. ~~Thompson~~ Johnson, President of the Christian Spiritualist Church, in High Street, has been notified by the local police that unless demonstrations of trance mediumship, clairvoyance and psychometry are stopped, at meetings of the church, the said church must close down, as these demonstrations are a form of conjuration and are an offence under the Witchcraft Act, 1735.

From which it is plain that all evidential forms of mediumship are prohibited under the Act. This ancient Witchcraft Act was taken out of its dusty pigeon hole for the purpose of obtaining a conviction in the Duncan case. Counsel has expressed the opinion that genuine mediums have no valid defence under this disreputable Act. If spirits appear, a medium is guilty of conjuration; if they do not appear the medium is guilty of pretence.

In the Duncan trial, the Recorder, Sir Gerald Dodson, said "If Mrs. Duncan, by simulating trance, pretended to hold communication with spirits, that was the kind of conjuration referred to in the statute. This prosecution, as framed against these persons, in no way attacks Spiritualists as a sect, and by no possible exaggeration can this case be magnified into anything more than a common-place prosecution alleging fraud. There is no religious persecution even remotely connected with it."

In a reply to Mr. Loseby, Sir Gerald intervened with the remark: "This case involves no attack upon Spiritualism." And again, in the course of his summing-up, he said: There is nothing in this prosecution directed against Spiritualism as such, and all those who believe in genuine manifestations of a spiritual kind will, I imagine, welcome the expulsion of fraud. In law there is no uncertainty at all about the position of Spiritualists, amongst whom there are many sincere and devoted persons. They are free to go their way, and they are only responsible to the law when fraudulent practices are proved."

Mr. Herbert Morrison has adopted a similar attitude. Replying to a question in the House of Commons, on October 31st, 1944, Mr. Morrison said: "Although the Witchcraft Act, 1735, is over two hundred years old, it is not an archaic or obsolete statute. It abolished proceedings for witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment, or conjuration, and substituted a provision penalising fraudulent pretences to exercise or use such arts or powers. The question whether an offence against the Act is committed is a matter for the decision of the Courts, and I see no reason to introduce amending legislation."

In view of these statements it would seem that a medium is not liable under the law until an offence has been committed, yet the police take a totally opposite view and threaten proceedings before the event. They evidently take the view that the actual claim

to obtain communication with spirits is a pretence. At Altrincham, a meeting was advertised at which Mr. W. H. Lilley was to give a trance address. The police notified the promoters of the meeting that if such meeting were held, they would prosecute, as such procedure contravened the Witchcraft Act.

The police at Redhill have adopted the same interpretation of the Act; consequently we are faced with the position that the claim that spirits may communicate is evidence of pretence. A medium is thus convicted before trial, guilt being taken for granted. Such a view is the direct negation of law and of commonsense. Thus it would appear that there is a direct clash between the Home Office and the Recorder and the Police Administration. Such confusion among the administrators of alleged justice is deplorable and cannot but bring the law on this matter into disrepute. The common citizen is expected to know the law, yet the authorities are divided in its interpretation.

In the circumstances it would appear that the demand of the Spiritualists' National Union for the appointment of a committee to enquire into the state of the law is reasonable and justifiable. The Home Office refuses to appoint such a committee. What can be the objection? The Witchcraft Act and the Vagrancy Act were both placed upon the Statute Book before modern Spiritualism was known. In those days it was evidently the opinion of legislators that communication between men and departed impossible, and that opinion determined the nature of the Acts. We have progressed since then, and to-day such communication is one of the certainties of modern research. There are thousands of volumes recording well-sifted evidences on the matter. The Home Office is supporting the view that Modern Research should be strangled with the rope of ancient theological error.

Make no mistake about it, the hidden hand of theological prejudice is behind this continued persecution. I have reason to believe that there are murmurings in the sacred precincts of the Home Office concerning the wisdom of resurrecting this ancient Act. I had thought that the days of the Spanish Inquisition ended before the Witchcraft Act was passed, but it is evident that the placid submission of the public to restrictions on freedom of thought and action are encouraging a system of repression reminiscent of those days. One of the Four Freedoms, proclaiming the objectives of this war, was Freedom of Religion. Spiritualists demand this fundamental right and are determined to obtain it. We shall fight, in every legitimate way, for this freedom. The Freedom Fund Committee of the S.N.U. have taken up the case at Redhill and will fight to the end. We may lose in the Courts, but we shall win in the minds of all free men. I understand that public meetings of protest are to be held in the locality.

This is a matter which should engage the sympathetic attention, not only of Spiritualists, but of all men and women who love freedom. All such are heartily invited to attend and support these meetings, if only to discover the facts of the situation at first hand. The result can be confidently left to their sense of justice. This fight for freedom will be costly. We are sometimes told that justice applies equally to the rich and the poor, but experience shows that a well-filled purse is essential to the proper presentation of a case. The Secretary of the Freedom Fund, Mr. A. J. Raffill, 3, Lake Road North, Cardiff, will gladly acknowledge all contributions.

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It is noted Mr Raffill was the Secretary of the Freedom Fund he was the vice-president (1943-1945) of the Union, and had taken over control of the Fund of Benevolence in 1938. His first move was to increase the amount of benefit which was being paid to the existing "pensioners". He also started a vigorous campaign to publicise the fund among the Churches and individual Spiritualists. The result was that sufficient support was enlisted within twelve months to maintain the Fund on a sound financial basis, and to widen the scope of its benevolence; he was assisted by his wife. He was part of the SNU delegation to the Home Office on July 27th 1943.

The Spiritualists' National Union 1944 AGM was held on July 1st at Leicester Spiritualist Church, Causeway Lane; today it is situated at 82 Vaughan Way. Below is the report from the "Parliamentary and Freedom Committee". Although it briefly coves our ground it outlines the beginnings of a more "active and aggressive campaign on constitutional lines":

> Perhaps the work which has loomed largest in the minds of the general public during the year has been that of the Parliamentary and Freedom Committee. The outstanding events of the year were the conviction of Helen Duncan at the Old Bailey under the Witchcraft Act, 1735, the rejection of our strong plea of a miscarriage of justice by the Court of Appeal and the refusal of the Attorney General to allow an appeal to the House of Lords. These events constituted a set-back to the Movement, and when they were followed almost immediately by a second case under the Witchcraft Act, and then the Altrincham ban, it became abundantly clear that a determined attempt was being made to stamp out mediumship.
>
> By means of legal articles, Declarations, and in other ways the Committee has endeavoured to make known the seriousness of the position. The urgent need was and still is to correct wrong ideas about Spiritualism in the public mind. We are much indebted to Mr. Hannen Swaffer for his letters and articles in the National press and also to the "Psychic. News" [Maurice Barbanell] and the "Two Worlds" [Ernest Oaten] for their valuable co-operation by continuously emphasising and keeping our legal and other disabilities a live issue.
>
> The policy laid down by the Council is that the Committee should pursue an active and aggressive campaign on constitutional lines. Working through the agency of Area, Local, and Church representatives, an endeavour is being made to create a live and efficient organisation, ready to meet whatever situation arises. A pre-election campaign has been launched and plans have been approved for the General Election and the campaign to follow. Reports to hand show that our representatives are exercising initiative and resource and that the work is being pursued with keenness and energy.
>
> Our ultimate remedy is legislation and all M.P.'s have been informed of our position under the law. By means of personal approach in the constituencies and in the House of Commons a list of M.P.'s who are prepared to help us has been compiled. This list of 38 M.P.'s should be considered augmented as a result of the "Memorial" Scheme. Mr. Hannen Swaffer and Mr. C. E. Loseby addressed a meeting of M.P.'s at the House of Commons and a further meeting was agreed upon. The Committee is deeply indebted to Dr. Sidney J. Peters, M.P., Alderman T. J. Brooks, M .P. and Mr. Clement Davies, K.C., M.P., for their valuable assistance.

All the forgoing activities require money as well as enthusiasm. A reference to the published accounts show there would be only a small balance in hand at the end of l944, after discharging the liabilities. Finance is the touch-stone whereby the campaign can be given effective expression. We shall need a fighting fund of not less than £10,000.

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With WWII drawing to a close and the prospect of a change of government with the general election in July 1945, the Union's "Parliamentary and Freedom Committee" published its Annual Report, updating the committee's work as shown below. It is interesting to note at the end of 1945: "… there were 460 Churches affiliated to the Union, with a total membership of 14,924, thus recording an increase of 60 Churches, and 1669 members over the previous twelve months. An increase of 407 in the number of Class B. members also shows some development during 1945."

GENERAL ELECTION. Following the pre-election campaign the bulk of the candidates at the General Election were approached by means of a Questionnaire and of those elected to Parliament, pledges were obtained from over 100 of full support and about an equal number promised qualified support. The post election campaign is now in full swing and will continue until we have secured our freedom which we are not likely to get without a fight, for which funds will be required.

Mr. Hannen Swaffer addressed a meeting of 12 M.P.'s at the House of Commons on the 21st February and as a result, Mr. Clement Davies, K.C., M.P., with other 8 M.P.'s saw Mr. Morrison on the 8th March when he promised to consider certain suggestions put to him with regard to prosecutions. Mr. Morrison took the matter a stage further when in reply to a question in the House by Mr. T. J. Brooks on the 3rd May he said that the police had been advised by the Home Office "that proceedings should be instituted only against persons whose activities had been the subject of complaint by members of the public and where there is sufficient evidence that the person is an imposter and is taking money or other valuable consideration." When Mr. F. Montague pointed out that under the existing law it was criminal to undertake a seance, Mr. Morrison replied in the negative and referred to the Lord Chancellor's letter to Lord Dowding in which he said that "there must be evidence that the medium is an imposter and is pretending to have powers which he is conscious of not having." This is not confirmed by the earlier Judgments of the Courts and the Lord Chancellor's statement will not be admitted in any Court proceedings. It is clear that under the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts mediumship is an offence apart from any element of fraud.

The pre-election campaign was well publicised in the "Two Worlds", June 8th 1945 issue "Our Election Campaign". This gave a full template of instructions issued by the Freedom Committee for all Church Representatives "for the launching of a vigorous campaign among all Candidates for the General Election.[4] This is the "Scheme B," it suggests:

(A) Letter to each Candidate, enclosing
(B) Questionaire, calling for signed acknowledgment.
(C) List of questions for Election Meetings.

[4] Approaching candidates prior to a general election had been enthusiastically done in previous elections, but not on such a large scale.

Letter templates were included together with a long list of questions. Former SNU President (1941-1943) John Stewart, who was now the Hon. Secretary of the Freedom Committee stated: "Bombard the candidates with questions". Some of the letters and replies to the various Churches, and replies from Election candidates were published in the "Two Worlds". Charles Loseby, defence counsel for numerous mediums charged under the Vagrancy Act, and also the defence at the Helen Duncan trial the previous year, was co-opted to the Committee. He understood the legal position and had Parliamentary experience as an M.P. it was decided that the campaign should be directed by a Council of Action in London, on the policy laid down by the Committee. Loseby was appointed chairman of the Council of Action, and John McIndoe continued as Chairman of the Freedom Committee.

Previously on Friday September 22nd 1944, Helen Duncan, after serving 172 days of her nine-month sentence, was released from HM Prison Holloway. In March 1945 Duncan resumed her materialisation séances, reports were very poor and allegations of fraud were presented, Barbanell stated in "Psychic News", "This time the sentence is likely to be not nine months, but five years." Duncan was placing the S.N.U., in a great dilemma, as she held their diploma as a physical medium and so was sponsoring her seances. Given the arduous work in hand by the Union to secure religious freedom, another high profile court case would no doubt cause untold damage. In the previous issue of "Pioneer" September 2015, the full story is given: "Why did the S.N.U. remove Helen Duncan's diploma in 1945?" The whole matter was kept in low profile, though an official SNU statement was published in the "Two Worlds" "S.N.U. News" August 24th 1945:

> Mrs. H. V. Duncan's Diploma.[5]
>
> The withdrawal of Mrs. Duncan's Diploma was mentioned in the Press Reports of the Union's Annual Conference at Paignton. It is felt, however, that a fuller statement is desirable.
>
> The National Council, for some time, has been investigating reports by various sitters of seances given by Mrs. Duncan in Lancashire and North Wales early this year.
>
> It was clear that these seances were held under conditions of which the Union could not possibly approve and the results indicated that Mrs. Duncan's mediumship had apparently deteriorated so seriously that, for the time being, it was most undesirable that she should continue to give sittings as a professional medium.
>
> After correspondence with Mrs. Duncan, the Council felt reluctantly compelled to withdraw her Diploma.
>
> This decision must not be regarded as in any way altering the opinion previously expressed by the Council that Mrs. Duncan has genuine powers as a materialising medium.
>
> Until, however, she has re-developed her mediumistic gifts and is prepared to sit only under conditions approved by the Union, conditions desirable alike in the interests of the medium, the sitters and the Spiritualist Movement generally, the Union cannot give any official recognition to her work.

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[5] This should read V. H. Duncan (Victoria Helen)

On August 1st the Union was devastated to learn the news their vice-President, and former Hon. Secretary of the Freedom Committee Arthur James Raffill, who was the chief regional officer at the Ministry of Pensions in Wales, was found hanged in a room at the Headquarters of the Ministry at Cardiff.

The Questionnaire submitted by electors in each Parliamentary Division was as follows:—

1. Are you in favour of religious freedom?
2. Are you in favour of Spiritualists having the right to practise their religion without interference?
3. Will you support legislation designed to remove legal handicaps which interfere with the right of Spiritualists to practise their religion?
4. Will you support an effort in the House of Commons to bring about the repeal of the Witchcraft Act, 1735, and the Vagrancy Act, 1824, in so far as they apply to mediums?
5. Do you favour the principle that Spiritualists and members of other unorthodox religions should be allowed to broadcast?

Out of 450 Questionnaires and letters of support returned to-date, 163 are from successful candidates. About half of these have answered "Yes" to all the questions, others have qualified their replies, and the balance have given letters expressing sympathy and general support.

For convenient reference I have divided the pledges into the S.N.U. Areas as follows:—

	Yes to all.	Qualified	Letters of support	Total
London	28	16	17	61
Midlands	9	5	8	22
Northern	13	1	4	18
NorthWestern	10	5	7	22
Southern	3	4	6	13
South Wales	5	1	—	6
Yorkshire	4	—	3	7
Scottish	7	5	2	14
	79	37	47	163

The qualified replies relate, in the main, to questions 3 and 4, and may be summarised under three heads as follows:—

(a) The proposed legislation must provide adequate safeguards against imposters.

(b) Unable to say "yes" owing to lack of knowledge.

(c) Would like to see and study the legislation before committing themselves.

(d) The mischief aimed at in the 2 Acts in question was imposture and fraud and the Home Office had so advised the police.

We can have no objection to the first three qualifications, but the forth needs correction. Neither the Witchcraft nor the Vagrancy Acts assist in the smallest degree in dealing with imposture. There is ample provision for that under the Common Law.

The names of the M.P's, in alphabetical order who have pledged support in each S.N.U. Area, are as follows:—

In the "Two Worlds", September 7th 1945 the Freedom Committee issued their Interim Report on the General Election. A list was published of the M.P's who had pledged their support in the amendments of the two Acts to make mediumship legal. The list is too long to include. Any one wanting a copy of the names please contact the editor.

In the list for the "Northern Area", who said "Yes" to all questions is the name J. Chuter Ede, South Shields (Lab).

The 1945 General Election resulted in the election defeat of the government led by Winston Churchill and the landslide victory of the Labour Party led by Clement Attlee, who won a majority of 145 seats.

James Chuter Ede, Baron Chuter-Ede (1882-1965) was a British teacher, trade unionist and Labour politician. He would serve as Home Secretary under Clement Attlee from 1945 to 1951.

On the surface it may have seemed to many Spiritualists that they had won the long battle which started in 1876 with a medium being sentenced to three months hard labour, under the Vagrancy Act; because in 1935 the newly elected Prime Minister Clement Attlee had pledged his support, that he was "in favour of freeing spiritualists from restrictions on their liberty and of repealing obsolete Acts."[6]

Maurice Barbanell founder editor of "Psychic News", summed up the political situation with the new elected government under the leadership of Clement Richard Attlee, later 1st Earl Attlee. Attlee took up office on July 26th 1945, having previously served under

[6] "I HAVE received the manifesto, draft Bill and questionnaire. The Labour Party stands for the complete freedom and equality of all religious bodies.

"I should, therefore, be in favour of freeing Spiritualists from restrictions on their liberty and of repealing obsolete Acts.

"I am in general agreement with the purposes expressed in the Bill and would support legislation designed to give freedom under proper conditions in those engaged in psychic research."

Winston Churchill in the coalition government formed in 1940 to fight the Second World War Attlee was Britain's first ever Deputy Prime Minister in 1942.

Below is quoted from "Psychic News", front page August 4th 1945:

WILL LABOUR GIVE US OUR LIBERTY?

Attlee Has Pledged His Support: Morrison Is Concerned About Our Freedom

ARE our chances of getting religious freedom increased or lessened with the advent of the Labour Party to power? Though Spiritualists would not agree on the answer to this question, we think that our prospects have improved, largely because so many new M.P.s have given written pledges of support.

Though many are sceptical about pledges made during an election, it does seem, for the first time, that we have in the House of Commons many M. P.s who are not only sympathetic to Spiritualism but also convinced of its truth.

One welcome newcomer is Viscount Corvedale, the Labour M.P. who is perhaps better known as Oliver Baldwin, son of the former Prime Minister. Corvedale has made no secret of his Spiritualism.

Up to last Monday the parliamentary committee of the Spiritualists' National Union had received about a hundred pledges and there are still those to come in which were collected by area representatives.

CAMPAIGN GOES ON

As soon as opportunity permits, Clement Davies, the Liberal, whom all Spiritualists are glad to see re-elected, will be asked to continue our campaign in Parliament. Of the 14 M.P.s who gave us great help in the last House 10 have been re-elected. Seven of these represent Labour. One of these is our own T. J. Brooks, the Spiritualist who rendered great service in the last House.

Naturally, we must not look for speedy results from the new Government. It is pledged to certain priorities like housing, to give one example, which will take precedence over our demand for religious liberty.

The fact that Herbert Morrison is the Lord President of the Council, in charge of Parliamentary business, will assist us. Though for a long time Morrison was recalcitrant, he had the courage to change his mind when he met the deputation of non-Spiritualist M.P.s headed by Clement Davies.[7]

[7] M.P's. Interview Morrison: A deputation of M.P's. saw the Home Secretary in his room at the House of Commons on the 8th of March, 1945. It was an all-party representation, consisting of Mr. Clement Davies, K.C., Sir Herbert Williams, Mr. S. P. Viant, Col. A. M. Lyons, K.C., Mr. T. E. Naylor, Mrs. S. S. Silverman, Mr. Edward P. Smith, and Mr. T. J. Brooks.

Mr. Morrison was accompanied by Miss Ellen Wilkinson and officials of the Home Office.

Mr. Clement Davies, K.C., who led the deputation, took his stand on the general ground of liberty, of conscience, which was a cardinal principle of the Liberal Party. Every man, he said, should be free to state his opinions without fear of prosecution. [Continued on the next page footnote]

Previously he had contented himself with repeating the stereotyped formula prepared by Home Office legal experts. When he realised that our religious freedom was involved he expressed his deep concern and said he would do his utmost to get things put right.

LATEST LEGAL VERDICT

Formerly he upheld the Witchcraft Act, declaring that it was not obsolete. Last May he stated in the House of Commons that the holding of seances was not illegal. He had advised the police not to prosecute mediums unless there were complaints by the public and the persons concerned were impostors taking money. The police, of course were not bound to accept that advice.

The interpretation that Morrison gave to the Witchcraft Act, "after consideration of judgment in the courts," was contrary to the one held by all the judges concerned in the Helen Duncan case. When this contradiction was pointed out to him, Morrison stated that his view was supported by the Government's legal advisers, which included Lord Simon, then the Lord Chancellor, "no mean lawyer."

And Morrison insisted in reply to a further question, "I am advised that there is no real dubiety about the law."

Naturally, with the end of that Parliament in sight, it was too much to expect fresh legislation to be introduced. It was clear, however, that, despite Morrison's sympathy with our just claims, the position would not be clarified until the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts were repealed or altered in such a way that they no longer penalised us.

The position of Clement Attlee, the new Prime Minister, is in a different category. He is no stranger to Spiritualism. We hold from him a written pledge, given at the time of the 1935 election, when he was Leader of the Labour Party.

Attlee announced, "The Labour Party stands for the complete freedom and equality of all religious bodies."

He added that he was "in favour of freeing Spiritualists from restrictions on their liberty and of repealing obsolete Acts." He announced his general agreement with the wording of a Bill drawn up by Spiritualists to secure religious freedom.

This freedom did not apply to Spiritualists because of the use made by the police of the Witchcraft Act, 1735, and the Vagrancy Act, 1824. Under these Acts, as interpreted by the Courts, deception and fraud were not material. The mere fact that mediums assumed or professed to communicate with the spirits of deceased persons rendered them liable to prosecution.

Mr. Davies told Mr. Morrison that he, and the other M.P's present were deeply disturbed by this state of affairs. It meant that in the practice of their religion, the fear of prosecution hung over thousands of decent citizens, a thing which was most objectionable, apart altogether from any subsequent action which might be taken by the police.-

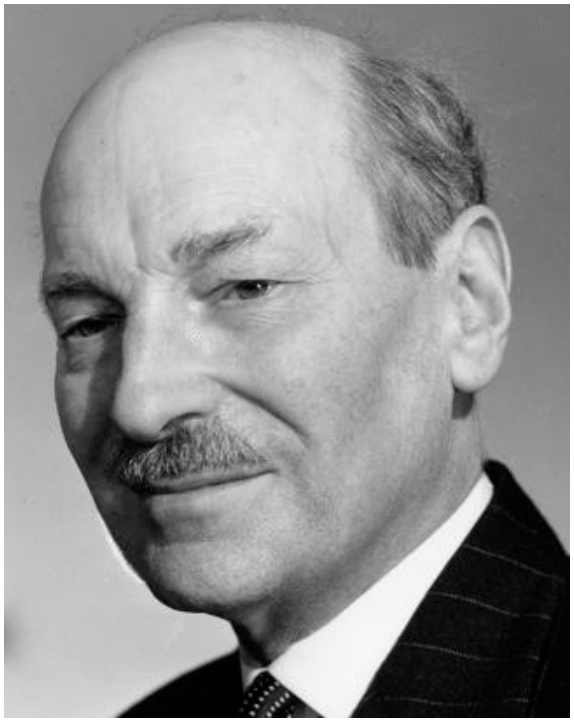
Sir Herbert Williams, Conservative, and Mr. S. P. Viant, Labour, strongly supported Mr. Davies. Although they could not speak for their parties, they felt that there would be overwhelming support for the views expressed by Mr. Davies.

Mr. Morrison, in his reply, was most sympathetic and understanding. He referred to the request made by a previous deputation for a Committee of Enquiry but did not think that would be of much help. The real remedy was legislation but he could not hold out any hope of that at this late stage in the life of the present Parliament.

He was open to consider any helpful suggestions and Mr. Davies outlined several to which a Mr. Morrison promised to give careful consideration, in consultation with his legal advisers.

The other M.P's. added a few words and the meeting lasted for over an hour. Although nothing tangible resulted, it marks another step forward in the campaign which will be followed up. JOHN M. STEWART. *Hon. Sec., Freedom Committee*. Taken from the "Two Worlds", March 16th 1945.

When he was reminded of this pledge, at a time when he was Deputy Prime Minister in the Coalition Government, he made the excuse that any such legislation was likely to prove "highly controversial" and would not be "directly related to the war effort or to the post-war social or economic problems." He added that he remained "in favour of complete freedom and equality for all religious bodies."



Then he resorted to the stereotyped formula, obviously prepared by the anti-Spiritualist legal advisers of the Home Office. In fairness to Attlee, it must be stated that his reply was given last January, at a time when Morrison had not then changed his mind.

Now, with Attlee's pledge in our hands and Morrison's promise of help, it should not prove difficult for the new Government to give Spiritualists that freedom for which so many have laid down their earthly lives. Included in that "great sacrifice" are the Spiritualists who fought in the three Services.

Attlee has announced that his new Government is pledged to social justice. In one of his election broadcasts he stated that it was part of Labour's gospel to make Britain a land "where men and women may live finally and happily, free to worship God in their own way, free to speak their own minds, free citizens of a great country."

If words mean anything these certainly must include Spiritualists, the only body of people in this country whose religion is illegal and whose activities are subject to police interference and arrest.

Our case for liberty is unanswerable. We shall not go cap-in-hand begging for it. We shall demand it as part of our right as citizens of this country.

If the Labour Government refuses to give us our freedom, then we shall go to the people of Britain, the same people of Britain who gave Labour its overwhelming majority, and enlist their support throughout the length and breadth of the countryside.

We know what their answer will be, for freedom is precious to the people of Britain whose record for toleration is unmatched in the annals of history.

To be concluded in the next issue …

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Photograph – Prime Minister:
Clement Richard Attlee who took up office on July 26th 1945