the PIONEER

Volume 5, No. 2: April 2018

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

This history journal is presented using original researched material wherever possible. Articles and quotes are taken from original sources as they were published at the time and reproduced by optical character recognition (OCR), the conversion of scanned images of handwritten, typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded text. This means that grammar, old English, spelling mistakes, etc. are not usually changed. However, long paragraphs are sometimes split for easier reading; any errors or explanations needed are noted in footnotes.

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

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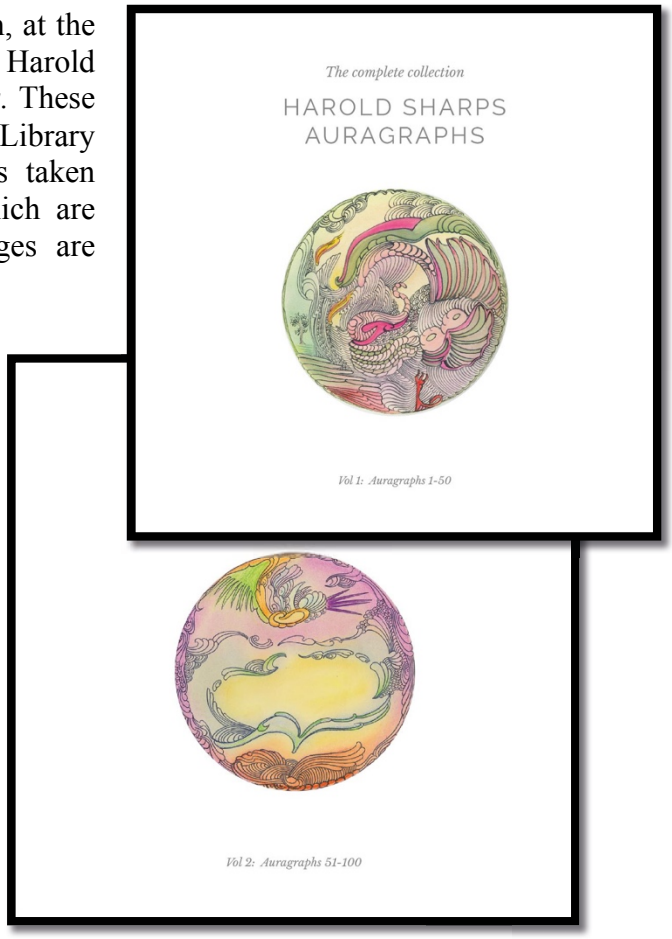
All references to Psypioneer in this issue are archived at http://psypioneer.iapsop.com/

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HAROLD SHARP

Symbolic Drawings – Auragraphs

This year's "Open Week", May 5th to 8th, at the Arthur Findlay College saw the launch of Harold Sharp's *Symbolic Drawings – Auragraphs.* These are published in two Britten Museum & Library booklets containing one hundred images taken from two of Sharp's bound albums, which are held in the Museum. Three of the pages are shown randomly in the article below.



Information on Sharp's remarkable drawings can be found in Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 5, October 2014. For over a quarter of a century Sharp worked at the Marylebone Spiritualist Association, founded in 1872, today known as the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (SAGB). He was also programmed in the early days of the Arthur Findlay College.

In the 1970s Harold moved into a health home for elderly people in Golcar, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. He died soon after his 90th birthday, on February 22nd 1980.

Below is taken from the "Two Worlds", February 20th 1948:

He Portrays the Soul in Colour

THE MEDIUMSHIP OF HAROLD SHARP

By CHARLES Y. STROMBERG F.Ph.S.(Eng.)

Harold Sharp is a kindly, simple man, with more than twenty years' experience of the outworklngs of the spirit world. He is not just another auragraph medium—for his graphs are unique, and the profundity of their interpretation is rarely met with elsewhere.

The human aura, distinct from the etheric and spiritual bodies, is a field of magnetism surrounding the physical body, registering vibrations of character, mentality, health and environment. Sharp's first indication of his gift was during the air raids early in the war. Whilst on the telephone, or playing the gramophone, he "doodled" an unusual combination of rhythmical lines. He then experimented with pieces of blank paper of varying sizes, and found that whatever the size sheet, the design was completed with the sounding of the "all clear."



Aura: 4

Reproduction of Auragraph by Chan Shih through the Mediumship of Harold Sharp
© 2018 The Britten Museum & Library

The early graphs were mostly in pen and ink, whilst later colour pictographs were designed. The medium is unable to draw or paint, and the striking resemblance of his work to the mystical designs of William Blake reminds one of the latter's saying that "he could only draw a line when an angel was standing by."

Sharp's Chinese Medium

The medium's Chinese Guide, Chan Shih, was a metal engraver on earth, which accounts for his particular aptitude. He sees the sitter as a radiant human being, raying a magnetic flow from all the body cells. We are informed that there are seven different wavelengths to which man responds, and that every word, thought and deed uses some of the magnetism.

To allow the guide to work, the medium concentrates his conscious mind on the sitter, who is often anonymous, losing control over his hand which designs quite independently of his will. First the hand picks up colour, which accords with the magnetic vibration of the sitter. The aura is not seen in colour but Chan transposes magnetism into the different medium. The same underlying principle may apply to colour and music, these being the expression in different keys of an inward pulsating rhythm. The colouring completed, Chan draws in ink the lines and whorls representative of the emotional aspect of the aura, then he takes the medium in trance and reads his interpretation of the graph from the base upwards, line by line.

How the Graph is Built

Lines may be rhythmic, fluid or hard, depending on emotional or intellectual conditions. Colour represents the rate of vibration. The graph is usually built up from a base in three divisions; material conditions, development of the personality, and the state of the mental and spiritual planes. A balanced person would have low red vibrations at the base gradually increasing in rate through the centre to the upper zone, where spiritual yellow should be apparent. The picture is often symbolical as in one example, when from a heart grew a tree which was linked to a church, this indicating the love from which proceeds true growth in life and finds expression in worship and service. Character trends may similarly be depicted.



Aura: 53

Reproduction of Auragraph by Chan Shih through the Mediumship of Harold Sharp
© 2018 The Britten Museum & Library

X-ray of the Soul

Chan's psychological understanding enables him to advise and treat many in need. The diagnosis of health would in itself form a valuable aid to healing and medicine. Natural ability corresponds to magnetic radiation, and its pictorial discernment helps the sitter to find out whether he is in his right vocation. One pertinent example shows an actor, whose graph inclination a marked inclination to architecture and inherent inability to act. This sitter, though a failure as an actor, would have been brilliant as a playwright, they could follow their natural life patterns, thus alleviating much pain and

avoiding the wasteful trial and error methods through which they now pass. The auragraph provides an X-ray of the human being on the three planes of body, mind and spirit.

Authenticity is confirmed by the remarkable speed with which the work is executed. The speed with which colour is selected and the design drawn is beyond the capacity of any artist. This type of auragraph can enrich mankind, and opens a wide field of research. Similarly as character is now portrayed, so the hidden fastness of the soul may in time be revealed.

Book Tests

Harold Sharp is also a noted demonstrator and speaker. Possessing a flair for clear expression and infectious enthusiasm, he now wishes to devote his public life to propaganda. Privately, he is especially interested in book tests, which perhaps beyond all else can prove conclusively the existence of the discarnate worlds. Evidence precluding all telepathic theories has been given based on facts quite unknown both to medium and sitter, which were most unlikely in the experience of either, and yet proved incontestably true.

Spiritualism Clarifies

Spiritualism, Mr. Sharp believes, stimulates and clarifies the individual philosophic bent. Its true value will only manifest when the "doorstep" people pass into a wider philosophical understanding. Phenomena are indeed necessary, but only to point the road whence philosophy, both abstract and applied, may commence.

As medium and man, Harold Sharp is endowed with a rare combination of spiritual gifts. His influence may lead to considerable advances in human health and well-being.

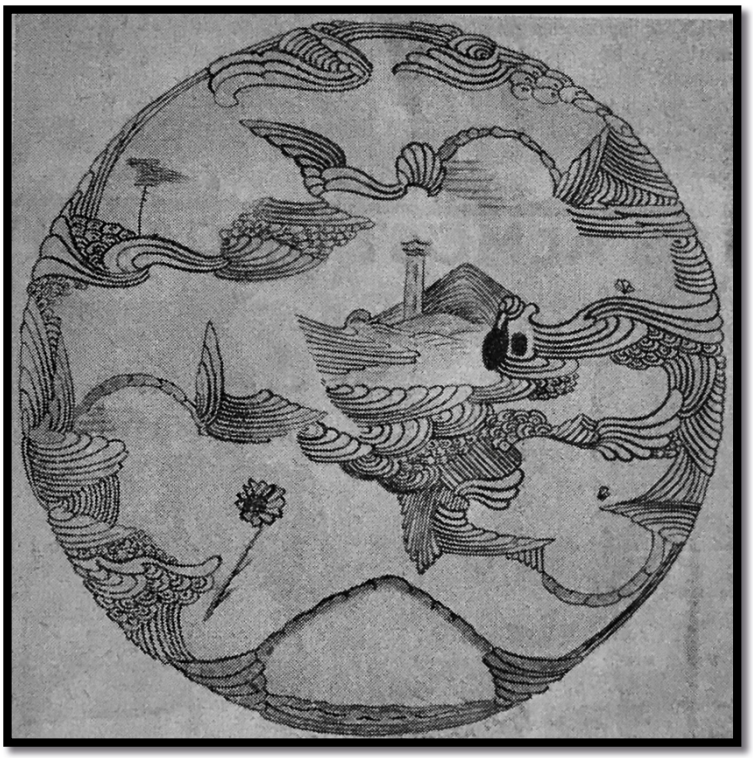


Aura: 2

Reproduction of Auragraph by Chan Shih through the Mediumship of Harold Sharp

© 2018 The Britten Museum & Library

Within the above "Two Worlds" article this Harold Sharp image was included but the readers then did not benefit from the stunning colours of Sharp's work; a sitter explained the auragraph on page 62:



In the black and white reproduction of one of Harold Sharp's auragraphs it is impossible to give any idea of the exquisite colouring and dainty blendings of shades as shown in the original. The work is done by the controlling hand of a young China-man who, when upon earth was a skilled metal engraver. And as everyone knows, the oriental engraver fills his work with a very significant symbolism.

In the auragraph from which the illustration on the front page is taken the prevailing colours are pale blue, gold, green and mauve, indicating a strong spiritual personality with a progressive outlook and courage to deal ruthlessly with wrongs and injustices. In contrast to the pale shades of the background the rocks and bridge in the foreground are a bright scarlet in colour, indicating a practical approach to all material problems.

Details of Sitter's Character

Bridges of one kind or another appear repeatedly in various parts of the graph showing that the "sitter is a bridge-builder." Ever seeking to bridge folks' difficulties for them. It is true that sometimes the bridges are upside down and come to naught—all the same the intention is good.

Her guide is a Chinaman (note the Chinese pagoda) but the padlock she has fastened to the gate indicates that her self consciousness prevents the guide helping her to the degree he otherwise might.

The tall lone pine, upper left zone, indicates that much of her life is spent alone. Yet she does not chafe or grumble. Indeed she prefers to be alone, and because of her active mind she never feels lonely.

Mental Outlook

The mind is active and the imagination strong. Sometimes she feeds upon happy memories; sometimes she builds great castles in the air. Her truly fitting symbol is the sunflower, for, ignoring doubt she ever looks upon the bright side of existence; facing life with faith, hope and confidence.

Small butterflies flit through the picture showing that she is rather inclined to flit from subject to subject as a butterfly flits from flower to flower, without pausing to drain the rich honey nectar.

This sitter is fond of listening to music but has little creative ability, and a large inferiority complex, so it is to be expected that her enjoyment is rather in listening than in performing.

Religious Trends

She is a lover of the countryside and of the sea and has travelled abroad. Three seas are clearly indicated. She is impatient and would rather do a job herself that watch anyone fumbling. There is a little yellow zone; but it is chiefly in the very centre of the picture. This shows that the sitter needs no *shrine* in which to worship. Brick and mortar religion is unnecessary to her though she might very readily feel the Divine presence in the wild places of nature or even in a garden.

Creeds would mean little in her life. Ethics much! At the age of 22 there was a formidable barrier across the pathway, partly caused by her own folly. The way seemed hopelessly blocked until a way out "over the ocean wave" was discovered. There has been but little sickness except headaches which have from time to time proved troublesome.

These are some of the things indicated and explained by Mr. Sharp's guide to the sitter, who acknowledged the correctness of the reading.

Harold Sharp Auragraphs - The Complete Collection: Vols 1 & 2 are available at the Arthur Findlay College or on-line at £8.99 per volume. [1]



Mr Sharp being presented with a gift as oldest man present.
Harold Sharp - Derek Everitt & Miss Gracie Haigh
(as written on reverse of photograph - details unknown)

[1] https://www.snu.org.uk/shop/harold-sharp-auragraphs-the-complete-collection-vol-1
https://www.snu.org.uk/shop/harold-sharp-auragraphs-the-complete-collection-vol-2

DID HARRY HOUDINI

EVER BELIEVE IN SPIRITUALISM?



This article is inspired by a casual comment made by my historian colleague, Leslie Price, the founder editor of Psypioneer, who presently sub-edits this journal with former SNU Secretary Charles Coulston.

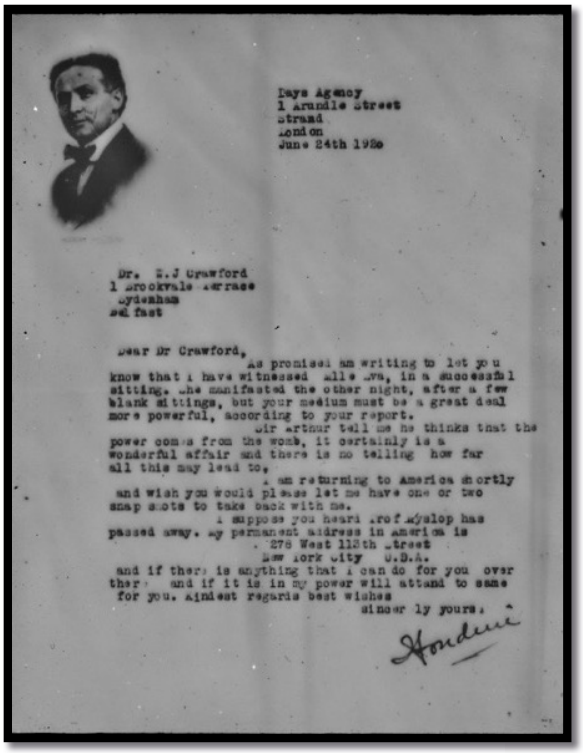
Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 5, October 2017, published "Letter from Harry Houdini to Dr W. J. Crawford – Dr. W. J. Crawford & the Goligher Circle".

Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 2, April 2016, published "Houdini & Conan Doyle – Story of Strange Friendship and an Historic Quarrel". It was Sir Arthur's wife's mediumship in 1922 that would instigate an irreparable breakdown in the friendship of Harry Houdini and Conan Doyle.

This sent Harry Houdini on a mission for the rest of his life to prove Spiritualism a fraud; he died on October 31st, 1926.

This public hostility, however, was not always privately the case, as shown in a letter dated June 24th, 1920 to Dr W. J. Crawford, which appears on one of the glass slides.

Below is the glass slide, followed by the text:



Hays Agency
1 Arundle Street
Strand
London
June 24th 1920

Dr. W.J Crawford
1 Brookvale Terrace
Lyndhurst
Belfast

Dear Dr Crawford,

As promised am writing to let you know that I have witnessed alle ava, in a successful sitting. She manifested the other night, after a few blank sittings, but your medium must be a great deal more powerful, according to your report.

Sir Arthur tell me he thinks that the power comes from the womb, it certainly is a wonderful affair and there is no telling how far all this may lead to.

I am returning to America shortly and wish you would please let me have one or two snap shots to take back with me.

I suppose you heard Prof Mylop has passed away. My permanent address in america is

276 West 113th Street
New York City U.S.A.

and if there is anything that I can do for you over there and if it is in my power will attend to same for you. Kindest regards best wishes

Sincerely yours,

Houdini

Days Agency
1 Arundle Street
Strand
London
June 24th 1920

Dr. W. J. Crawford
1 Brookvale Terrace
Sydenham
Belfast

Dear Dr Crawford,

As promised am writing to let you know that I have witnessed Mlle Eva in a successful sitting. She manifested the other night, after a few blank sittings, but your medium must be a great deal more powerful, according to your report.

Sir Arthur tell [sic] me he thinks that the power comes from the womb, it certainly is a wonderful affair and there is no telling how far all this may lead to.

I am returning to America shortly and wish you would please let me have one or two snap shots to take back with me.

I suppose you heard Prof Hyslop has passed away. My permanent address in America is

278 West 113th Street
New York City U.S.A.

and if there is anything that I can do for you over there and if it is in my power will attend to same for you. Kindest regards best wishes

sincerely yours.

Signed Houdini [2]

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My comment: "It was Sir Arthur's wife's mediumship in 1922 that would instigate an irreparable breakdown in the friendship of Harry Houdini and Conan Doyle. This sent Harry Houdini on a mission for the rest of his life to prove Spiritualism a fraud." Also Houdini's letter "that I have witnessed Mlle Eva in a successful sitting…"

However, Leslie commented to me that he doubted that Harry Houdini had never believed in Spiritualism.

In 1924, a couple of years before Houdini's death, he wrote "A Magician Among the Spirits", published by Harper & Brothers, New York:

"*So I have gone to investigate the knocks, but as a result of my efforts I must confess that I am farther than ever from belief in the genuineness of Spirit manifestations and after twenty-five years of ardent research and endeavor I declare that nothing has been revealed to convince me that intercommunication has been established between the Spirits of the departed and those still in the flesh.*"

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[2] Houdini's letter would be referring to Crawford's work with the Goligher Circle. Around 1914 he began to investigate the physical phenomena of Kathleen Goligher and the group around her, known as the Goligher Circle. His investigation continued until his death in 1920. Within a month of receiving this letter from Houdini Dr W. J. Crawford was dead.

INTRODUCTION

FROM my early career as a mystical entertainer I have been interested in Spiritualism as belonging to the category of mysticism, and as a side line to my own phase of mystery shows I have associated myself with mediums, joining the rank and file and held seances as an independent medium to fathom the truth of it all. At the time I appreciated the fact that I surprised my clients, but while aware of the fact that I was *deceiving* them I did not see or understand the seriousness of trifling with such sacred sentimentality and the baneful result which inevitably followed. To me it was a lark. I was a mystifier and as such my ambition was being gratified and my love for a mild sensation satisfied. After delving deep I realized the seriousness of it all. As I advanced to riper years of experience I was brought to a realization of the seriousness of trifling with the hallowed reverence which the average human being bestows on the departed, and when I personally became afflicted with similar grief I was chagrined that I should ever have been guilty of such frivolity and for the first time realized that it bordered on crime.

As a consequence my own mental attitude became considerably more plastic. I too would have parted gladly with a large share of my earthly possessions for the solace of one word from my loved departed—just one word that I was sure had been genuinely bestowed by them—and so I was brought to a full consciousness of the sacredness of the thought, and became deeply interested to discover if there was a possible reality to the return, by Spirit, of one who had passed over the border and ever since have devoted to this effort my heart and soul and what brain power I possess. In this frame of mind I began a new line of psychical research in all seriousness and from that time to the present I have never entered a seance room except with an open mind devoutly anxious to learn if intercommunication is within the range of possibilities and with a willingness to accept any demonstration which proves a revelation of truth.

It is this question as to the truth or falsity of intercommunication between the dead and the living, more than anything else, that has claimed my attention and to which I have devoted years of research and conscientious study. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says in one of his lectures:

> When one has a knock at the door, one does not pause, but goes further to see what causes it and investigates, and sooner or later one discovers that a message is being delivered.

So I have gone to investigate the knocks, but as a result of my efforts I must confess that I am farther than ever from belief in the genuineness of Spirit manifestations and after twenty-five years of ardent research and endeavor I declare that nothing has been revealed to convince me that intercommunication has been established between the Spirits of the departed and those still in the flesh.

I have made compacts with fourteen different persons that whichever of us died first would communicate with the other if it were possible, but I have never received a word. The first of these compacts was made more than twenty-five years ago and I am certain that if any one of the persons could have reached me he would have done so. One compact was made with my private secretary, the late John W. Sargent, a man of mature years. We were very much attached to each other. The day before he underwent an operation he said to me:

> "Houdini, this may be the end. If it is, I am coming back to you no matter what happens on the other side provided there is any way I can reach you. And if I can come, you will know it is I because I am going to will it so strong that you cannot be mistaken."

He died the next day. That was more than three years ago and there has been no sign. I have waited and watched believing that if any man ever could have sent back word he would have been the man. And I know that our minds were so close to each other that I would have received the signal that my friend wanted to call me. No one could accuse me of being unwilling to receive such a sign because it would have been the greatest enlightenment I could possibly have had in this world.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a sincere and confirmed believer in Spirit phenomena whose acquaintance. I esteem, advises me that I do not secure convincing results because I am a skeptic and I therefore want to make it clear that I am not a scoffer. I firmly believe in a Supreme Being and that there is a Hereafter. Therefore since their departure from this earth it has been my practice, as a final duty, to visit the sacred resting places of my dearly beloved parents, and ask their protection and silent blessings through the Omnipotent Almighty.

The very first place I visit when I return from a trip is this same hallowed spot. Both promised me faithfully innumerable times in this life that if they could aid and protect me from their graves or from the Great Beyond, they would do so. My mind has always been open and receptive and ready to believe. In attending seances I have always made a pledge of honor with myself to banish all profane thoughts from my mind to the utmost of my ability. I further pledge myself to concentrate. I have persuaded my whole soul, brain and thought to a point where the medium has my attention to such an extent that at the finish I feel as much exhausted as the medium who shows to those present the effects of great strain irrespective of its cause.

Thus it must be seen that I am not a skeptic. However, it has been my life work to invent and publicly present problems, the secrets of which not even the members of the magical profession have been able to discover, and the effects of which have proved as inexplicable to the scientists as any marvel of the mediums, and I claim that in so far as the revelation of trickery is concerned my years of investigation have been more productive than the same period of similar work by any scientist; that my record as a "mystifier of mystifiers" qualifies me to look below the surface of any mystery problem presented to me and that with my eyes trained by thirty years' experience in the realms of mystery and occultism it is not strange that I view these so-called phenomena from a different angle than the ordinary layman or even the expert investigator.

A memorable incident in my life and one that shows how little the world at large understands the methods by which my mysteries are produced and also shows how easy it is for even a great intellect faced with a mystery it cannot fathom, to conclude that there is something supernatural involved, has to do with Madame Sarah Bernhardt.[3]

During one of my various engagements in Paris she had witnessed my performances and was anxious to see one of my outdoor exploits, so, when we were both playing at the same time in Boston, out of good camaraderie I gave a special performance at my hotel adding a few extra experiments for her benefit. As we seated in the motor car on the way to my demonstration she placed her arm gently around my shoulder, and in that wonderful speaking voice with and which she was gifted and which has thrilled thousands of auditors, but now stilled forever, she said to me:

[3] Pioneer notes: Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) was a French stage actress, who starred in some of the most popular French plays of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including 'La Dame Aux Camelias' by Alexandre Dumas, fils, Ruy ... On 22 February 1915 a surgeon amputated her leg almost to the hip.

"Houdini, you do such marvellous things. Couldn't you—could you bring back my leg for me?"

I looked at her, startled, and failing to see any mischievous sparkle in her eye replied:

"Good heavens, Madame, certainly not, you cannot be serious. You know my powers are limited and you are actually asking me to do the impossible."

"Yes," she said as she leaned closer to me, "but you do the impossible."

We looked at each other; she, the travel-worn, experienced woman of the world; I, the humble mystifier, nonplussed and thunderstruck at the extraordinary, unintentional compliment she was paying me. Then I asked:

"Are you jesting?"

"*Mais non, Houdini, j' ai jamais été plus sérieux dans ma vie*," [4] she answered she slowly shook her head.

"Madame, you exaggerate my ability," I told her.

Each of the marvels of modem scientific achievement such as the telephone, radio, flying machine, radium, etc., were at one time classed impossible and would have been looked upon as supernatural, if not Spiritual manifestations. Similar mysteries, but more frail in principle and constructive detail, were the instruments used by the priestcraft of ancient religious cults for the purpose of holding the mass of unintelligent beings in servitude.

It is not unusual for the eye or ear to play tricks with one but when such illusions and delusions are taken for the Spirit forms of the departed and voices of the dead instead of being recognized as some subjective phenomena brought about by a physical cause the situation takes on a grave aspect. It is this transfer of an inner reaction to an external object which constitutes practically all that is necessary to be placed in the category of "psychics," who represent the priests and ministers of Spiritualism.

Distressed relatives catch at the least word which may remotely indicate that the Spirit which they seek is in communication with them. One little sign even, which appeals to their waiting imagination, shatters all ordinary caution and they are converted. Then they begin to accept all kinds of natural events as results of Spirit intervention. This state of mind is productive of many misfortunes, including suicides by those who think they are going to happiness with loved ones beyond the pale.

When in Europe in 1919 finishing an engagement interrupted by the World War I was impressed by the eagerness of grief-stricken parents for the solace of a word from the boy who had passed on and my desire for the truth was renewed with fresh vigor. I am informed that so great has the "medium" craze become in Berlin that the grief-stricken residents have spent great sums of money in the hope of discovering mediums who will "guarantee them a glimpse behind the veil." It is with the deepest interest and concern that I have watched this great wave of Spiritualism sweep the world in recent months and realized that it has taken such a hold on persons of a neurotic temperament, especially those suffering from bereavement, that it has become a menace to health and sanity.

Professor George M. Robertson, eminent psychopathologist, and Physician-Superintendent of the Royal Edinburgh Mental Hospital, made the danger of insanity

[4] "Oh, no, Houdini, I never was more serious in my life."

resulting from strong belief in Spiritualism by neurotics the subject of a part of his annual report in 1920. He says:

> "Those who had sustained bereavements during the war and bore them with equanimity in the days of crowded incidents and amidst the pressure of war activities, such as Red Cross and other work, find it much harder to bear up now, although time has elapsed. Some have broken down since the war came to an end. Many, as a solace to their feelings, have taken an interest in Spiritualism. Since Dr. Charles Mercier quoted in the preface of his book 'Spiritualism and Sir Oliver Lodge' my warning on the danger of neurotic persons engaging in practical inquiries of a Spiritualistic nature, I have received many requests to say more on the subject. I have little to add save to reaffirm the statement then made.
>
> "I do not consider either Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or Sir Oliver Lodge to be safe judges, whose opinion should be accepted on this difficult and important subject, in view of their bereavement and unconscious desires. If the wish be father to the thought, it is mother to the hallucination of the senses.
>
> "The tricks the brain can play without calling in Spiritualistic aids are simply astounding, and only those who have made a study of morbid as well as normal psychology, realize the full truth of this."

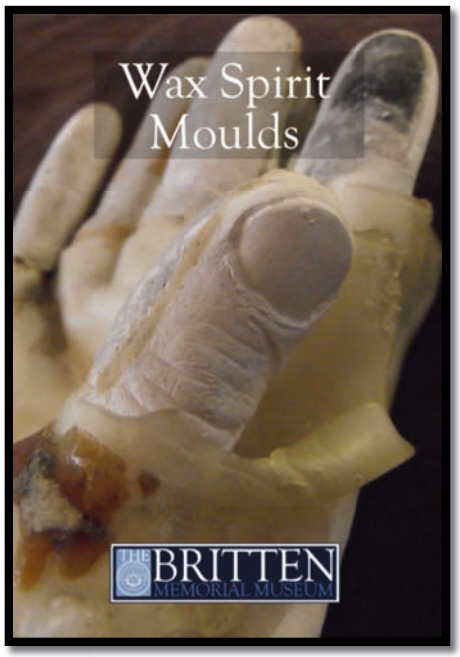
I have read with keen curiosity the articles by leading scientists on the subject of psychic phenomena, particularly those by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge, in which they have discussed their respective conversions to a belief in communication with the dead. There is no doubt in my mind that some of these scientists are sincere in their belief but unfortunately it is through this very *sincerity* that thousands become converts. The fact that they are scientists does not endow them with an especial gift for detecting the particular sort of fraud used by mediums, nor does it bar them from being deceived, especially when they are fortified in their belief by grief, for the various books and records of the subject are replete with deceptions practised on noted scientists who have essayed to investigate prominent mediums. It is perfectly rational to suppose that I may be deceived once or twice by a new illusion, but if my mind, which has been so keenly trained for years to invent mysterious effects, can be deceived, how much more susceptible must the ordinary observer be.

During my last trip abroad, in 1919, I attended over one hundred seances with the sole purpose of honest investigation; these seances were presided over by well-known mediums in France and England. In addition to attending these seances I spent a great deal of time conferring with persons prominently identified with Spiritualism. In the course of my intense investigations I have met most of the famous mediums of our time. I have submitted to conditions imposed by them and religiously awaited results, but I still question any so-called proof of the existence of Spirits who are interested in any way, physically or mentally, in the welfare of mortal men. It is not within the province of this book, which is the result of my years of investigation, to give all the historical detail concerning every medium mentioned, though enough are furnished in each instance to establish my claims, each of which is based on a thorough study of the records as are also my statements many of which are supported by documentary evidence in my possession.

I have spent a goodly part of my life in study and research. During the last thirty years I have read every single piece of literature on the subject of Spiritualism that I could. I have accumulated one of the largest libraries in the world on psychic phenomena, Spiritualism, magic, witchcraft, demonology, evil spirits, etc., some of the material going back as far as 1489, and I doubt if any one in the world has so complete a library on modern Spiritualism, but nothing I ever read concerning the so-called Spiritualistic

phenomena has impressed me as being genuine. It is true that some of the things I read seemed mystifying but I question if they would be were they to be reproduced under different circumstances, under test *conditions*, and before expert mystifiers and open minded committees. Mine has not been an investigation of a few days or weeks or months but one that has extended over thirty years and in that thirty years I have not found one incident that savoured of the genuine. If there had been any real unalloyed demonstration to work on, one that did not reek of fraud, one that could not be reproduced by earthly powers, then there would be something for a foundation, but up to the present time everything that I have investigated has been the result of deluded brains or those which were too actively and intensely willing to believe.

HOUDINI.



Houdini in his lifetime made bold claims that he could reproduce all Spiritualist phenomena; one of the most convincing phenomena in our history is the production of wax moulds. This subject is well represented in Psypioneer, Vol. 11, No. 06/7, June-July 2015: "Paraffin Wax Moulds" and "Wax Gloves Procured from Materialized Hands".

The Britten Museum & Library has produced an informative booklet on this rare phenomenon titled "Wax Spirit Moulds". The booklet was reviewed by the Society for Psychical Research's Tom Ruffles and published in the above issue and reproduced below.[5]

Reviewed for the SPR by Tom Ruffles

The Britten Memorial Museum, named after Emma Hardinge Britten, is housed in the Arthur Findlay College at Stansted Hall, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex.[6] The College is administered by the Spiritualists' National Union, and the museum contains a wide range of exhibits relating to Spiritualism. Among these are a number of casts made from wax moulds, artefacts said to demonstrate the reality of spirits. The museum's curator, Paul Gaunt (also editor of both the Psypioneer [7] and The Pioneer electronic journals) has compiled this informative booklet which discusses the museum's collection of casts, other instances of them in the literature, and the debate that took place within the Society for Psychical Research over the evidential value they provide.

The theory behind the moulds is that a spirit would be able to produce one by materialising a portion of itself, usually a hand but also part of a foot or even its face, and pushing it into a bowl of warm paraffin wax. The resulting wax sleeve could be set in cold water, leaving a mould that would be undamaged upon the limb's dematerialisation. Repeated immersions, building up layers, would serve to increase the thickness and strength of the mould. As wax is so fragile, it can be filled with plaster of

[5] The booklet is available at the Arthur Findlay College and also at the SNU online shop at: https://www.snu.org.uk/shop/spirit-wax-moulds

[6] Now called The Britten Museum & Library.

[7] Psypioneer officially ended in August 2017: however, Marc Demarest and the International Association for the Preservation of Occult and Spiritualist Periodicals (IAPSOP) have kindly offered to host all back issues of Psypioneer in a dedicated section of the IAPSOP website. http://www.iapsop.com/psypioneer/

Paris which upon setting retains (leaving aside distortions and damage from handling) the shape and detail of the materialised body part in a more permanent form.

Wax moulds date from as early as the 1870s, but those at Stansted Hall were donated by Sutton-in-Ashfield Spiritualist church in Nottinghamshire, where they had been on display since 1938. These, Gaunt suggests, may well have been the last done by mediums (as opposed to researchers). An article in the 16 December issue of Two Worlds, which is reprinted, describes their production through the mediumship of William and George Finney, uncle and nephew, at Sutton-in-Ashfield.

According to the Two Worlds article, the moulds were created by the pair in informal conditions, not during a séance but sitting in the dark in a cupboard under the stairs with buckets of melted wax and cold water. The booklet contains three colour photographs of the museum's casts, wax still adhering, showing them in all their strange beauty. One is of a pair of hands with interlinked fingers presented in a way that, it has been argued, would be more difficult to fake than it would a single hand.



FIG. 79.—CAST FROM A WAX MOULD WHICH HAD SUBSIDED AND FLATTENED WHILE STILL WARM.
Walls thin and defective. Accidentally marked across the middle.

The article is followed by an outline history of wax moulds, placing them in the context of the development of Spiritualist phenomena. Wax moulds were preceded by impressions left in putty and flour, but paraffin offered a more suitable material, and the technique was used by a number of mediums. Gaunt gives a short overview of some of them, but notes that each generally only tried the procedure for a brief period, and after becoming fashionable in the 1870s it went into abeyance until revived by the remarkable Franek Kluski, subject of a recent book by Zofia Weaver. Weaver and Gaunt both mention that at least in Kluski's case it was a messy business, with splashes of wax everywhere, which perhaps made it unappealing for sitters even though the results were startling.

Gaunt includes sections on experiments with Kluski at the Institut Métapsychique International in Paris and in Warsaw conducted by Gustave Geley (three photographs, two of hands and one of a foot, from Geley's 1927 Clairvoyance and Materialisation are shown, the hands revealing remarkable skin features), and on the rather fractious debate that took place in the pages of the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research in the early 1990s over whether it was possible to reproduce moulds like Kluski's by normal means.

Gaunt's conclusion from the debate is that a living hand can be removed from a wax mould IF the wax is of a reasonable thickness caused by repeated immersion; but the thinness that Kluski is reported to have achieved through a single immersion, and without setting in cold water, should make the operation impossible as the mould would be too fragile for withdrawal without its destruction. His verdict is that, pending further research which adheres to Geley's precise method (which recreations so far have failed to do), Kluski's moulds can be considered good evidence for the return of spirits.

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Earlier, in Psypioneer, Vol. 10, No. 12, December 2014, Garth Willey turned attention to Arthur Conan Doyle and Harry Houdini on the subject of wax gloves; Doyle exhibited wax gloves in his psychic museum. Below is the account regarding Harry Houdini taken from "Searchlight on Psychical Research", by Joseph F Rinn, London, Rider & Co, 1954:

Harry Houdini, in ACD's presence in America in 1923, had proclaimed that he could do anything which a medium had ever done. I don't know of any public attempt Houdini may have made to replicate the phenomenon of 'wax gloves,' but he certainly made a valiant attempt to find a way to do so… at least to be able to replicate the exhibition of wax gloves, let alone replicate the physical phenomenon of producing them before reliable witnesses. Houdini's long-time pal and fellow (amateur) conjurer/magician, Joseph F Rinn, wrote of it many years later.

The following is the 2 page chapter he wrote regarding the production of wax gloves: [8]

WHILE Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was lecturing here in 1922, Houdini paid me a visit and, in the course of our conversation, said: "In talking with Doyle about the wax gloves mentioned by Richet and others as having been produced at séances through psychic power, I asserted that they had been produced through fraud. Doyle challenged my statement and dared me or any other magician to produce similar hands by trickery."

"Doyle is quite gullible," I replied.

"I'm not so sure of that when it comes to the wax hands," said Houdini in a serious tone. "I've tried and failed to make them. What do you know about that stunt?"



"About everything necessary to produce them, Harry," I replied, as I led him into a laboratory I had in my office.

"Well, I tried at first to make one by putting my hand in heated wax—and look at my hand," said Houdini ruefully.

"I'll bet you put your hand in the wax without soaping it," I said laughing.

"Yes," said Houdini, "I did, but I know better now. I tried tying a cord to my finger and pulling it through the wax on the back of my hand, but I could never get my hand out of the cast without breaking it."

"Well, Harry, forget those old methods; they're not used now. They produce wax casts now with rubber gloves."

[8] *Searchlight*, Chapter 36, pp. 278, 279.

"With rubber gloves, eh?" said Houdini, as he looked at his burnt skin. "I wish I had known that."

"I was going to make a wax hand for you, as, fearing I might some day be challenged to do the trick, I have all the paraphernalia here, but I had better explain the method to you and let you practise making them. The rubber glove must be filled with air to duplicate a hand. Fill in the part of the glove at the wrist with a solid piece of wood with a hole in it, so that with a bicycle pump you can fill it with air. Put a peg in the hole to keep the air in. Dip the glove in the hot wax several times to give it a body, so that it will not collapse when you dip it in cold water, and let the air out of the glove."

"But such a cast would be a straight hand," said Houdini, after a moment's thought, "and Doyle's pictures show a clenched fist."

"Oh, that's easy also," I said. "Instead of filling the glove with air, use a syringe and fill it with hot water. Then, after dipping the glove in the hot wax several times, let the hot water out, and while the wax cast is still soft, you can press the wax fingers into any position you wish. After that, dip it in cold water, and you are all set with a perfect cast of a clenched fist."

"I can fool Doyle easily with that stunt," Houdini replied. "Oh, no I can't," he added despondently, "for Doyle had photographs of many unclenched hands that showed perfect finger-prints of the spirit or medium."

"Well, what of that? I know that Albert Welde, a Chicago engraver, had perfected a method of engraving whereby he can duplicate the fingerprints of anybody perfectly."

"But nobody could fake finger-prints on a wax cast," protested Houdini.

"For a mystery man, Harry, you're quite dumb," I replied, with a laugh. "If you make a mould of a hand in dental wax or in plaster of paris, it can easily be transferred to a wax cast."

"But you couldn't get your hand out of such a mould without breaking it," protested Houdini.

"You could if you made a mould of half your hand at a time, first the palm side and then the back-of-the-hand side. Join the two halves together and seal the cracks. With that mould any rubber manufacturer could make you a rubber glove having on it all the finger-prints."

"I get you. What a medium you'd make!" said Houdini admiringly. "Just wait until Doyle gets back, and I'll have the laugh on him. He certainly is an easy mark for any trickster. Sir Arthur still believes what Dr. Crawford wrote about Kathleen Goligher's psychic powers, in spite of the fact that Dr. Fournier d'Albe exposed her as a fraud. I met him in England in 1920 and had a letter from him to-day. I brought you a copy, as it may be of use to you some day when that business of yours permits you to find time to write about your experiences with psychic fakers."

Dr. Fournier d'Albe's letter read as follows:

"Kingston-on-Thames,
Oct. 10, 1922.

Dear Houdini,

Yours of the 26th ult. just received. Yes, the Goligher legend has lost its glamour. I must say I was greatly surprised at Crawford's blindness.

Sincerely yours,
D'ALBE."

"When was the nearest time in your career, Harry," I inquired, "that you were close to being defeated?"

A grim look appeared on Houdini's face and he replied: "I'll never forget the agony I went through in one test in Europe. A group of locksmiths got together in an endeavour to trip me up. They constructed a lock without a keyhole, and it could not be opened with any jemmy I possessed. They had me sweating for hours trying to get out of my bonds, and I thought I was licked. Sometimes a performer gets a lucky break, and that time I got mine. In my struggle to release myself, the lock, without any help from me, sprung open. Of course I got credit for opening it." [9]

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Editor's Note:

To my knowledge, Houdini was never to produce wax moulds fraudulently; Rinn gives no explanation as to how such a long-winded process could take place in a séance room under test conditions! Franek Kluski sat under strict test conditions. On occasion cholesterin was introduced into the bath of wax without the medium's knowledge; this would show the researchers that the moulds produced at the experimental séance were in fact from the melted wax produced at the time of the séance.

However, one would consider that Houdini was one of the most knowledgeable researchers into Spiritualism, given his statement in the introduction of his book published above:

> "I have spent a goodly part of my life in study and research. During the last thirty years I have read every single piece of literature on the subject of Spiritualism that I could. I have accumulated one of the largest libraries in the world on psychic phenomena, Spiritualism, …"

Houdini believed in the hereafter without doubt but he stated in his Preface: "GLADLY would I embrace Spiritualism if it could prove its claims, but I am not willing to be deluded by the fraudulent impositions of so-called psychics or accept as sacred reality any of the evidence that has been placed before me thus far" (dated Spring 1924).

To my mind, a good, knowledgeable researcher would give a balanced overview of the phenomena or its history, taking in all aspects, most importantly the original sources of its origin.

The foundation of Spiritualism is generally accepted as the events of Hydesville in 1848, albeit the phenomena at the Hydesville house started around five years previously according

[9] Garth Willey notes: Rinn's vernacular account (above) of how he helped Houdini with his attempts to reproduce the wax gloves phenomenon demonstrates his personality and clearly shows he continued as a friend and confidant for Houdini through 37 years until Houdini's death.

to the signed statements of those who actually witnessed the unfolding events, which became the foundation of Modern Spiritualism.

A MAGICIAN AMONG THE SPIRITS

CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDERS OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM

"THE story of modern spirit manifestations, so called, dates from 1848 and the "solitary farmhouse" of John D. Fox and his wife in the village of Hydesville, in New York State, and centres around their two little girls, Margaret, eight, and Kate, younger by a year and a half. Successfully exploited while still children; credited with occult power; becoming world-famous as "The Fox Sisters,"—their record is, without exception, one of the most interesting in the history of spiritualism.

"John Fox and his wife appear to have been of the "good, honest," but not mentally keen type of farmer folk. Of the two, the wife was the more "simple minded," and when the "nervous, superstitious woman" began to hear unusual noises which she could not account for, and which seemed in some peculiar manner connected with her children, she concluded at once that the sounds were "unnatural" and began to brood over the matter. Her fears increased with the persistent recurrence of the mysterious sounds, and before long she took some of the neighbors into her confidence. They were as puzzled as the mother, the Fox home became an object of suspicion and the neighborhood set itself the task of solving the mystery.

"With the increase of interest came a proportionate increase in the noises, which commenced to be known as "rappings," and which, in spite of the positive denials by the children of any knowledge of how they were produced, regularly answered by an uncanny code questions asked the two girls. The possibility of duplicity in such children never occurred to any one in Hydesville, with the result that the timid hint of a "disembodied spirit" soon became a theory. Some one asked the girls if a murder had ever been committed in the house. The ominous sounds of the code answered in the affirmative and at once to the eager investigators, the theory became a proven fact and there flashed up in their minds the vision of a personality in the Spirit World endeavouring by crude means which somewhat resembled telegraphy, to give to human beings the benefit of its vaster knowledge, the whole affair in some obscure manner being connected with two little girls.

"At this critical moment a married daughter of John D. Fox and his wife came home to Hydesville for a visit. Twenty-three years older than little Margaret, of a very different type than either father or mother, she seems to have grasped instantly the possibilities in the "occult" powers of her little sisters and to have taken complete command of the Fox family's affairs at once. Her first move was to organize a "Society of Spiritualists" and encourage crowds to come to the house to see the children, Hydesville became famous almost overnight.

"News of the peculiar "rappings" spread with lightning-like rapidity and soon became an absorbing topic of conversation, not only in the United States, but in England, France, Italy, and Germany as well. Women like Harriet Martineau and Elizabeth Barrett Browning were said to have given their whole thought to it, and men of the strongest intellect and will to be "caught in the meshes it had woven in contemporaneous thought."

"Hydesville became too small a field for the operations of Mrs. Fish, the older sister, very quickly, and soon she appears in Rochester with the girls, publicly exhibiting their feats to great crowds for money, realizing from one hundred to a hundred and fifty dollars a night in profits, which she pocketed. From Rochester she took them to …"

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What Houdini has written at the start of his book hardly warrants comment, as it does not represent what is recorded as to the events which unfolded. It appears that much of this information is taken from the time when the Fox sisters denounced Spiritualism as a fraud forty years later in 1888.

For example, Mrs Margarete Fox, of whom Houdini records as "the wife was the more "simple minded," and when the "nervous, superstitious woman" began to hear unusual noises which she could not account for, and which seemed in some peculiar manner connected with her children…" It was Mrs Fox, along with a former tenant, William Duesler, who formulated the story and communicated with the spirit.

The two young girls at this time played no significant part in the story and were not named in the original report. The general code was utilised by Mrs Fox in the questioning of the communicator. The alphabet code was devised by William Duesler and would later at Rochester be used by the now developing Fox sisters.

The "married daughter" Houdini refers to is Ann Leah, who *did not come* to Hydesville until after the family had left. So this is a remarkable *un-factual* comment by Houdini:

"Her first move was to organize a "Society of Spiritualists" and encourage crowds to come to the house to see the children, Hydesville became famous almost overnight."

So this remarkable claim never took place!

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Leslie Price in sub-editing this issue pointed out to me a book review of *A Magician Among the Spirits*, published below by the Society for Psychical Research, possibly written by Dr Dingwall, highlighting other errors made by the book's author:[10]

I THINK it was Johnson who pointed out the fact that knowledge is of two kinds: we know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it. Though Houdini's knowledge of psychical research may he most profound, he has successfully hidden this fact from the reader of *A Magician Among the Spirits*. And the historian of the future who has to refer to the "impartial results of many years of careful study", will deserve all the pity he gets.

When I opened the volume and found two pages of "errata and addendum" I feared the worst. Another two pages could easily be compiled. What are we to think of the claim (*vide* jacket) that the book "forms a valuable chapter in the crusade for truth," when we are told that Crawford's book was "published by David Gow" (P. 177), and that the "Crewe Photographers" consist of "Mr. Hope. Mrs, Buxton, Mrs. Deane, and Mr. Vearnacombe" [sic] (p. 123)?

[10] Taken from the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, November 1924; pages 339/40 reviewed Houdini's book, *A Magician Among the Spirits,* by HOUDINI [*pseud*. i.e. Weiss, Harry]. (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1924, pp. xix. 294. $4 net.)

Houdini tells us on page 63 that Mr. Dingwall had caught Eusapia Palladino cheating and “stated positively” that he knew her to be a fraud. For the sake of posterity we will inform Houdini that Mr. Dingwall never saw Eusapia in his life, and that he is not at all certain that she was always fraudulent. On page 128 we are told that Mr. Harry Price had a sitting with Mrs. Deane, whereas the fact is that Mr. Price has never had a sitting with this particular photographic medium. These are only a few of the silly mis-statements in Houdini’s “crusade for truth,” and none of those mentioned has been corrected in the list of errata. We are almost tempted to say with Macbeth: “And be these juggling fiends no more believed”!

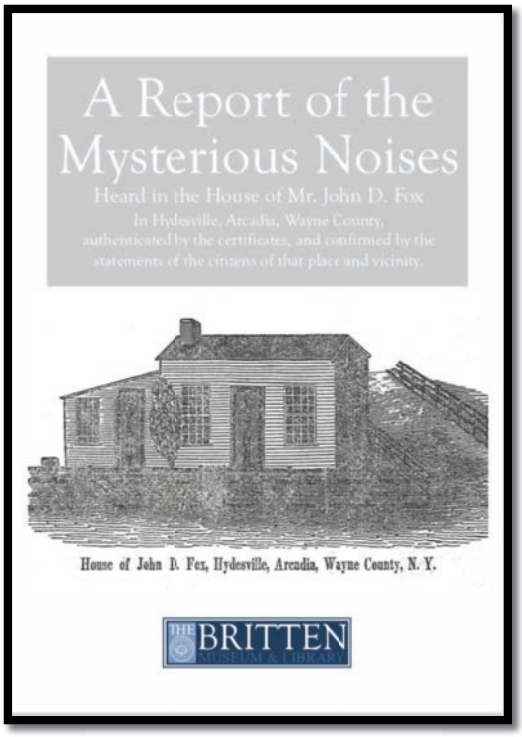
There is an interesting chapter on Slade, and an alleged confession extracted from the slate-writing medium by a namesake of Houdini’s—Remigius Weiss. The “confession” is printed on page 99, but why this most important document has not been reproduced in facsimile is a mystery not elucidated by the author. As there are no fewer than six portraits of Houdini scattered throughout the pages, it is to be regretted that photography was not brought in as a witness to this very strange “confession.”

Houdini records (p. 20), another confession by Ira, the survivor of the two Davenport brothers, that their “phenomena” were produced by perfectly “by natural means.”

Houdini gravely warns us (p. 189) that not the least of the evils of Spiritualism is the insanity which it causes," and informs us that an “English doctor,” wisely unnamed, “has estimated the number of such cases at a million.” I am afraid that the perusal of Houdini’s book will not effect any cures.

Students of the “nu speling” will find many choice examples in *A Magician Among the Spirits*. We read of Eva C. and the Villa “Carmine”; Mlle. “Tomchick”; Mr. "Baggley,” etc., etc. The author informs us in his *Introduction* he doubts “if any one in the world has so complete a library on modern Spiritualism” as Houdini. What a pity he did not make use of it!

Over the last few years the errors in the Hydesville story have been corrected within the SNU education courses. To my knowledge, the SNU is the only major Spiritualist organisation which has updated the Hydesville history as a result of the recovery of the *original* 1848 Hydesville Lewis report. This report contains the twenty-two signed witness accounts; the Union used it to update and correct errors. For further information please see Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 2015: "When Did Modern Spiritualism Begin? 1848?" In addition, the Spiritualists' National Union has republished the 1848 Lewis report, available at the Arthur Findlay College or at the online shop.[11]



Another problem with the Fox sisters which will probably remain unsolved is their precise ages. In the various censuses during their lifetimes they continually lied about their ages. We may note that Houdini states "Margaret, eight, and Kate, younger by a year and a half".

But in the original Lewis report Mrs Fox states: "The youngest girl is about 12 years old…" "The other girl, who is in her 15th year…"



Minister Steven Upton recently sent me some photographs of the Fox sisters' tombstone at Cypress Hills cemetery, Brooklyn, New York.

These three examples of their ages at the time of Hydesville, March 31th 1848:

Margaret: 8 years, 14 years (15th year), gravestone 10 years old.

Kate: 6 years, 12 years, gravestone 9 years old.

However, the dates of death are correct.

[11] https://www.snu.org.uk/shop/a-report-of-the-mysterious-noises

For further information please see Vol. 4, No. 9, September 2008:

"The Fox Sisters: Riddle of The Records", by Lis J. Warwood

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However, in adding Lis's excellent research my eye caught reference to the tombstone, which reads (see original article for references, etc.):

When Margaretta died, her body was placed for a year in a receiving vault at Greenwood cemetery. Later, Joseph La Fumee, who had first met the Fox sisters in New York in 1850, offered to have the remains of Margaretta and Catharine placed in his plot at Cypress Hill cemetery.
The tomb stone records a birth date of Oct. 7, 1833, for Margaretta and March 27, 1837, for Catharine. The dates were provided by Titus Merritt, friend and confidante of Margaretta Fox.

Today, the inscriptions on the Fox sister's grave markers are all but worn away, and the burial site is sadly neglected.

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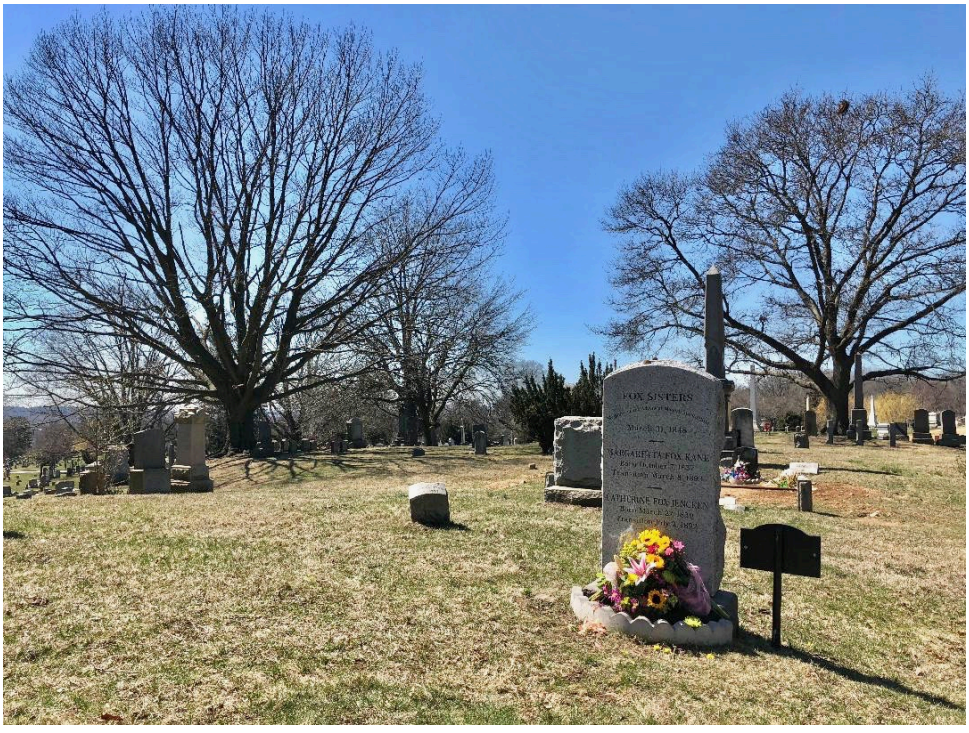
We can note Lis's comment that the "grave markers are all but worn away."

But the gravestone has been restored and all the inscriptions are clear.

BUT THE RIDDLE OF THE RECORDS CONTINUES!

The two birth dates have been changed?

<u>More in the next issue</u>





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SPIRITUALIST HEALERS OF THE PAST

JOHN BRITNELL

Father of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers

It is said that John Britnell gave his first demonstration of spiritual healing in late 1948, forming a band of healers under his leadership. A year later Britnell created the Essex Healers Association. Among other important groups founded was "The Bristol Society of Spiritual Healing" (1952); Dennis Fare drew up the constitution.

In summer 1954, at the initiative of John Britnell, Gordon Turner and two others held a meeting and minuted the start of the "The National Federation of Spiritual Healers". After the meeting they wrote to Harry Edwards (1893-1976) and asked him to be President, which Harry accepted, and "The National Federation of Spiritual Healers" (NFSH) was formed.

Great advances were later made by the NFSH Chairman, Gordon Turner, in 1960 for medical authorities to allow spiritual healers to visit and give healing in hospitals. This has been previously published in Pioneer: please see Vol. 4, No. 1, February 2017: "Spiritualist Healers of the Past – Gordon Alan John Turner – Medium in TV debate with surgeon over healers in hospitals" and "Why Does Healing Work – and Fail?"

It is reported that in 1970 Harry Edwards asked Dennis Fare to start the "Bristol District & Somerset Association of Healers", as the "Bristol Society of Spiritual Healers" was no longer in existence. Edwards continued as NFSH President until the Annual Meeting on 21st July 1973, when he was appointed as Hon. Life President. He had said in 1972 that he would stop being the active President. Dennis Fare was elected at the AGM as the second President of the NFSH.[12]

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

Today the "The National Federation of Spiritual Healers" is now known as "The Healing Trust".

I would like to thank Charlie Kennedy from the "Healing Trust" for much of the information used above. Charlie is planning on having a book published on the history of the NFSH, which will be a most valuable contribution to healing history.

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

Below is taken from the "Two Worlds", December 28th 1957:

HEALER WHO DEFIED DEATH TO CARRY ON

BY passing on in harness last week, John Britnell, MBE,[13] got his wish. A healer in his own right with many striking successes to his credit, he was president of Essex Healers Association and chairman of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers, two organisations which were the result of his energy and organising ability.

At his last public appearance in October, when the Association held its dinner and dance, he was able to announce that, after nine years, it had over 400 fully-qualified healers at work and more than 100 associate members. The Federation, he said, had over 1,000 fully qualified healers with members in several overseas countries.

Britnell, a dedicated man, was a puzzle to doctors because he should have died years ago. A thrombosis victim, he had suffered three infarctions, a type of haemorrhage so serious that his hospital told him no one had lived after having had two of them.

Breaking the law

Last year sheer overwork dictated that he had to give up his eight-hour job which involved two hours' daily travelling. At that time he was spending the evenings treating patients and weekends visiting sufferers who were unable to call on him.

He learnt that even healers had to pay the price when they broke nature's laws. The result of overwork was a thrombosis—and three more followed. Told to rest, he ignored the medical advice, made up his mind to die in harness and continued his healing, though on a smaller Scale.

Last year he helped with our Royal Festival Hall meeting at which Harry Edwards gave a healing demonstration. Britnell was responsible for having on the platform the 60 white-coated healers who supplied a battery of psychic power and played an essential part in the demonstration.

He organised an aftermath meeting which all patients present at the Festival Hall were invited to attend. Scores received treatment from 100 healers.

Highest honour

Last year the Federation, which regarded him as its "father," presented him with a "scroll of fellowship," which, said Gordon Turner, was the highest honour obtainable in healing.

His passing, within a few days of his 51st birthday, followed seven attacks in 24 hours. It was the fifth time that illness had overtaken the doughty warrior who always presented a cheerful, smiling and imperturbable face.

"He set a pattern for all of us to follow," said Mrs. Marie Peacock, who was associated with him in all his healing work. He started something that we must carry on."

There was no funeral service because Britnell had arranged for his body to be presented to a hospital for research.

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[13] According to his Memorial Service pamphlet this should read B.E.M (British Empire Medal), not M.B.E.



The above article and the two following are taken from Ursula Roberts' scrapbook, along with other items which were donated to the Britten Museum & Library.

Ursula was a Minister of the Spiritualists' National Union and well-known for her trance discourses by her control/guide, Ramadahn; another inspirer was Rushing River.

The image shown is an early photograph of this popular medium.

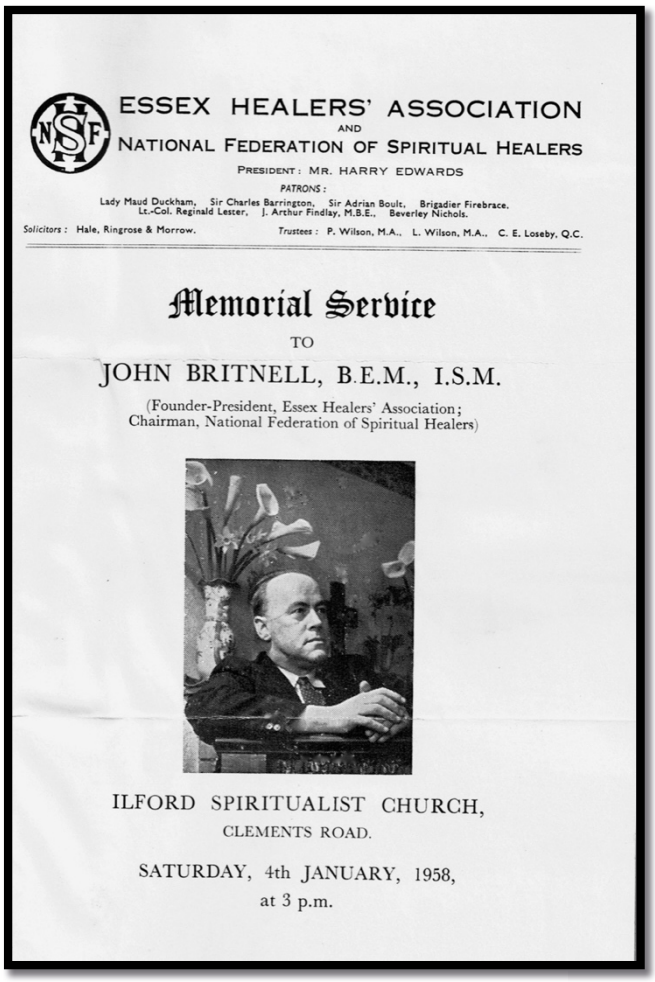
The following article from her scrapbook has the details cut off but is from “Psychic News”.

HEALER SPEAKS AT HIS OWN MEMORIAL SERVICE

John Britnell fulfils prophecy to colleagues by message through Ursula Roberts

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John Britnell, the healer who passed three weeks ago, spoke at his own memorial service last Saturday. He controlled Ursula Roberts and gave a trance message through her lips to Harry Edwards.



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AND
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SPIRITUAL HEALERS

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JOHN BRITNELL, B.E.M., I.S.M.
(Founder-President, Essex Healers' Association;
Chairman, National Federation of Spiritual Healers)

ILFORD SPIRITUALIST CHURCH,
CLEMENTS ROAD.

SATURDAY, 4th JANUARY, 1958,
at 3 p.m.

Unknown to Ursula Roberts, the “dead” healer had indicated to colleagues that he would speak at the service.

This is the sequence of events that culminated so dramatically:

Four people had been made aware of John Britnell’s presence before the service at the Ilford Spiritualist Church.

Mrs. Jose, 70-years-old registrar of the Essex Healers Association, had a vivid dream very recently in which she saw him enter the church where his service was being held, and mount the platform from the opposite side to the one he usually used. He disappeared “in a light like from an explosion,” she told her husband and members of her home circle that evening.

Mrs. Marie Peacock, registrar of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers, was sitting quietly on the morning of the ceremony itself when she saw clairvoyantly the seats on the church platform.

She then saw John Britnell at the side of the platform and heard him say that he intended to address the congregation that afternoon. She asked him not to use her as the medium as she felt sure it would upset her.

She told a member of Psychic News on the telephone that, prior to the beginning of the service she did not know how the seating would be arranged, but was surprised to find herself in her vision sitting in the centre of the platform. At the ceremony this was where she was placed.

Interrupted Tribute

In the course of a phone conversation with Psychic News, Ursula Roberts stated that she could hear John Britnell's voice above the noise of the little bubble-car in which she and her husband were driving from their home to the church on the afternoon of the ceremony. But it was too indistinct to understand.

This sequel of unusual happenings culminated when the memorial service was well under way.

Sidney Richardson was on his feet, just about to pay his tribute to John Britnell, when he was interrupted by a voice at the extreme end of the sixteen foot wide platform.

"John…John…it's John."

The voice was coming from the mouth of his wife, well-known trance medium and healer, Ursula Roberts.

As he continued to speak many who knew him identified the personality of John Britnell.

Speaking slowly and with difficulty, he gave messages to his erstwhile colleague Marie Peacock and fellow-healer Harry Edwards.

It was known to some of his friends that Britnell, because he had been liable to sudden heart attacks, carried a small bottle of brandy with him wherever he went. This he used jokingly to call his "spirit helper." His old friends were clearly amused when he told them he "no longer needed his spirit helper."

Did Not Know

When questioned on this point over the telephone, Ursula Roberts was completely baffled by the significance of this joke. Neither she nor her husband knew that Britnell had had to carry this brandy in his pocket.

In his address Harry Edwards had described Britnell as a man worthy of sainthood.

Referring to this remark, Britnell chided Edwards saying, "don't call me a saint!"

It was obvious that he was controlling Ursula Roberts with considerable difficulty. He said that it had been far easier for him to pass from this life than to re-enter his earth conditions and speak through a medium.

Ursula Roberts, who told Psychic News that she could not recall at all what had been said, admitted that she took on John Britnell's heart conditions and that she was extremely pleased that Harry Edwards was standing by her when she came out of her trance.

JOHN BRITNELL CONCLUDED HIS ADDRESS BY SAYING: "THE NATIONAL FEDERATION MUST GO ON."

To conclude, published below is the "Two Worlds", January 11th 1958:

Healer returns at his memorial service

"It is easier to die than to come through." These were the words used at his own memorial service by John Britnell, the man who banded British Spiritualist healers together into a National Federation.

He was speaking through the entranced Ursula Roberts, medium wife of Sydney Richardson, president of the world's largest psychic centre, Marylebone Spiritualist Association.

The memorial service was held at Ilford Spiritualist NSC last Saturday. Leo Bliss, an officer of the Federation of Spiritual Healers, had just ended his tribute to Britnell, who, despite grave warnings from doctors had continued to work hard for recognition of spirit healing after severe thrombosis attacks.

"The next speaker," said Bliss, "will be…"

He never finished. Through the lips of Ursula Roberts came the voice of Britnell…"John."

"Carry on"

At first he found it an effort to speak. Then he urged his friends to carry on with the work of healing. He said: "I shall not be far away. I shall be present with you at all times when I am needed."



Ursula Roberts on the platform, seated on the left is Harry Edwards

Earlier, world-famous healer Harry Edwards, the Federation's president, paid this tribute: "If I were to look for saints in this life, I would not go to Mayfair, nor would I look to the leaders of religion. I would go to the homes of humble people. In Ilford, a saint has been living and working among you. That man was John Britnell."

Through Ursula Roberts, Britnell answered: "Do not call me a saint. I never was a saint and I am not one now. I was just an ordinary man and that is how I would like you to remember me."

Edwards recalled Britnell's great work in inaugurating the first-aid movement in the Post Office, for which he was granted the British Empire Medal.

Several well-known Spiritualists also paid tributes to Britnell.

The name of Harry Edwards, now just over forty years after his death, needs little introduction as a remarkable healer. In 2008 his daughter, Felicity Joan Medland, wrote a biography, "Life Around My Father, Harry Edwards", published by Burrows Lea Country House Limited.

Below is a delightful short report of a visit by the writer of the article of his party's trip in 1947 to Burrow Lees shortly after it opened. The article is by Herbert Hampson F.V.C.M., published on the front page of the "Two Worlds", August 15th 1947:

"BURROWS LEA" THE SHRINE OF HEALING
A VISIT TO HARRY EDWARDS

—~—☼—~—

"Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases."

Luke 9, verse I.

"And they departed, and went through the towns preaching the Gospel, and healing everywhere"

Luke 9, verse 6.



The name of Harry Edwards is fast becoming a household word in many parts of the country. His wonderful spiritual healings are now being accepted, even by a reluctant National Press. His daily postbag has grown to enormous proportions including appeals for healing from many parts of the world. When he attends meetings in the provinces, crowds flock to see and hear him, and many sufferers have to be turned away disappointed. This happened at his last meeting at Leeds a few weeks ago. He is verily a true disciple of Jesus.

Let us watch him at work in his Sanctuary at Burrows Lea, near Shere, in the heart of Surrey. I had this wonderful experience quite recently. Arriving by train from London at Dorking, where, Charles Dickens tells us, Tony Weller's widow kept "The Markis o' Granby;" we are met by a taxi which is to convey us the eight miles to "Burrows Lea."

We travel through luxuriant Surrey country lanes, made famous by such great writers as Georg Meredith, R. L. Stevenson, and the poet Keats. I imagined the processions of Pilgrims which in years gone by would traverse these same lanes on their pilgrimages to Canterbury. My travelling companions had, many of them, come from long distances, one of them from Wales, all anxious to receive an influx of the spiritual healing power which flows through this gifted medium. There is very little conversation. All are absorbed in the peaceful atmosphere of the beautiful natural scenery; every mind point—The Sanctuary at "Burrows Lea,"

We Arrive

An unexpected turn along a short drive brings our car to the door of this Shrine of Healing. We enter a beautiful room permeated with the scent of flowers profusely arranged. On the Altar stands the Emblem, cut from a wind-screen of a fighter bomber—

a circle enclosing a cross—denoting the continuity of life actuated by the Christ Spirit from within.

Many have arrived previous to our party. Others are continually arriving, several of them having to be almost carried in. We watch, fascinated by the Medium's confident treatment of each patient. There is a lady who can hardly lift her feet from the floor. She tells him she cannot. "Oh yes, you can!" he asserts. "Lift up your right leg." She makes the attempt and looks very much surprised to find she can. "Now the other leg," he commands. This is done also, to the patient's great astonishment. Soon the lady is lifting each leg in turn on to the seat of the Medium's chair.

Another patient has lost the use of her arms. After treatment she walks about the Sanctuary, throwing her arms about and over her head, speechless with joy.

Made her a New Girl

A pretty little girl, suffering from 'nerves' takes her turn. She appears very nervous, but the Medium soon puts her at ease and commences his "laying on of hands." This is not her first visit, and her mother informed me that Harry Edwards "had made a new girl of her." The lady from Wales also tells us that he "had made a new woman of her."

Very bad cases are asked to stay behind after their first treatment, for a second one. There are two such cases on this occasion. From personal experience, I know what it feels like to receive spiritual healing power through this medium. He can find the exact spot where the disease is located, without assistance from the patient. Having placed his hands on this spot, the power can be felt like an electric battery, and very often instant ease is experienced.

Loving Personality

A short acquaintance with Harry Edwards soon reveals the fact that he is no ordinary man. He is a forceful writer as his books on healing and spiritualistic phenomena will testify. He possesses a loving personality which endears him to all who have the pleasure of meeting him.

Before leaving, patients take a cup of tea in the summer-house adjoining the Sanctuary, and we hear from each wonderful accounts of the remarkable cures effected by the Healer.

The deaf and the blind have had sight and hearing restored; cripples have thrown away their crutches after treatment. Personal attendance is not absolutely necessary, for Harry Edwards can give Absent Healing Intercession to all who apply for it. I have seen many of my personal friends make remarkable recoveries through Absent Healing. Many Ministers of Religion are amongst his patients, as well as members of the medical profession, and all testify to "the wonderful healing power" which flows through Harry Edwards, and his brother healers. This is not a new thing. Biblical history is full of such accounts, and "As it was in the beginning 'tis *now*, and ever shall be."

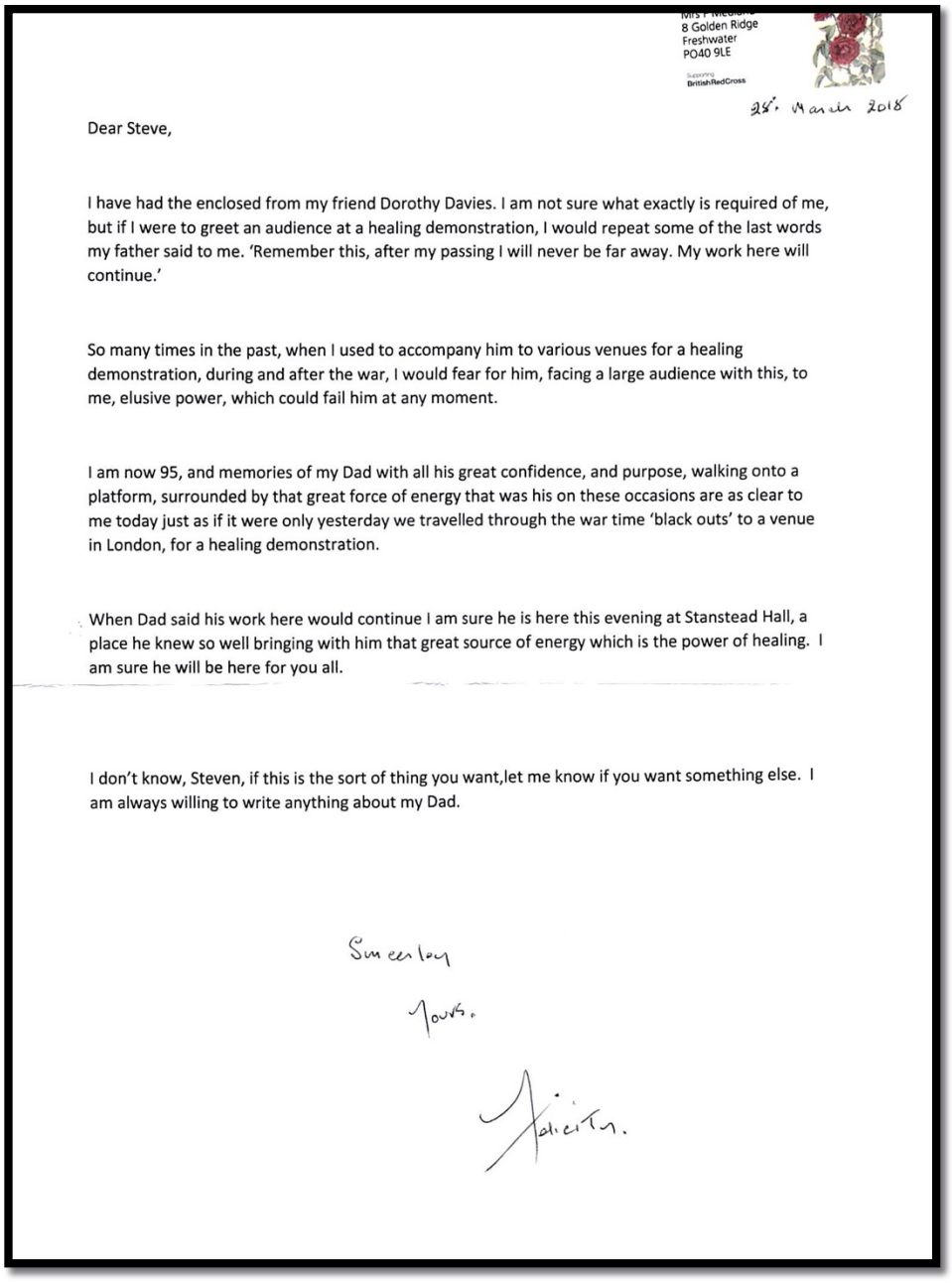
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This year, at the Arthur Findlay College "Open Week", May 5th to 8th, Minister Steven Upton reconstructed a large healing demonstration on the Saturday night in the Sanctuary. It was on similar lines as John Britnell instigated with Harry Edwards, insomuch as it had many healers on the platform "who supplied a battery of psychic power and played an essential part in the demonstration." This style was demonstrated by Harry Edwards in 1956, at the Royal Festival Hall meeting, which was noted in Britnell's obituary published in this issue. The 2018 meeting also was a great success.

It can be noted in Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 2, January 2014, "The J. Arthur Findlay College for the Advancement of Psychic Science – The early years", that it was Harry who opened the Sanctuary almost 50 years ago:

> College manager Tom Harrison reported the conservatory's condition as unsafe, and it was subsequently roped off from the terrace walkway. Many items within the conservatory were in a very poor condition due to woodworm but thanks to numerous monetary donations and a draw amounting to £332, plans were under way to convert the conservatory to a Healing Centre etc. Provisional arrangements were made by the Principal for an official opening and dedication ceremony of the Sanctuary, to take place on July 12th 1969, with Harry Edwards agreeing to perform the official opening.

Harry Edwards' daughter, Felicity Medland, sent Minister Upton the letter shown below:



8 Golden Ridge
Freshwater
PO40 9LE

Supporting BritishRedCross

28th March 2018

Dear Steve,

I have had the enclosed from my friend Dorothy Davies. I am not sure what exactly is required of me, but if I were to greet an audience at a healing demonstration, I would repeat some of the last words my father said to me. 'Remember this, after my passing I will never be far away. My work here will continue.'

So many times in the past, when I used to accompany him to various venues for a healing demonstration, during and after the war, I would fear for him, facing a large audience with this, to me, elusive power, which could fail him at any moment.

I am now 95, and memories of my Dad with all his great confidence, and purpose, walking onto a platform, surrounded by that great force of energy that was his on these occasions are as clear to me today just as if it were only yesterday we travelled through the war time 'black outs' to a venue in London, for a healing demonstration.

When Dad said his work here would continue I am sure he is here this evening at Stanstead Hall, a place he knew so well bringing with him that great source of energy which is the power of healing. I am sure he will be here for you all.

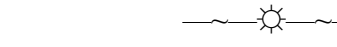
I don't know, Steven, if this is the sort of thing you want,let me know if you want something else. I am always willing to write anything about my Dad.

Sincerely

Yours.

Felicity.

THE PRESIDENT'S BADGE AND FARTHINGS AGAIN!



It's always nice to receive feedback on the various Pioneer articles. Some of the research and subjects are open-ended, rather like a jigsaw puzzle, with vital pieces of information not yet uncovered or lost. I wrote an article on the President's badge, which was published in Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 3, April 2014. This noted that SNU President Robert A. Owen had been presented with a new Presidential badge at the twenty-fifth Annual General Meeting of the Union, held at Caxton Hall, Westminster and the Artworkers' Guild, Queens Square, Southampton Row, London, on July 2nd and 3rd 1927.

For convenience, I publish the statement again:

> The report below is taken from the first official journal of the SNU, the *National Spiritualist*, August 1927:
>
> **PRESENTATION OF A NEW PRESIDENTIAL BADGE.**
>
> One of the most interesting events of the Conference took place on Sunday morning, July 3rd, when Mr. and Mrs. Richardson, of the York Spiritualist Church, presented the Union with a gold Presidential Badge. The Badge is in blue enamel on gold, with the name of the Union round the edge, the centre design showing the Setting Sun over the Book of Nature, with the words Light and Truth standing in relief. The back is suitably inscribed to commemorate the gift. It has a bar above on which is inscribed the word President.
>
> Mrs. Richardson, in making the presentation, said that two farthings were once found in the collection at an annual meeting. She had discovered that one of them was put in by a resident of York. Whether the actual coin, which had served as a President's Badge for many years, was the York coin, she did not know, but it was appropriate that since the humblest coin of the realm had come from her city, a gift of the pure metal, gold, should also come from that ancient city, so closely identified with the introduction of Christianity into England. Mr. Richardson took up the thread and expressed the pleasure it gave him to have the honour of bestowing upon the Union some token of adornment to mark the growing honour and dignity of the great Movement of Spiritualism.
>
> By the unanimous desire of the Conference Mrs. Richardson pinned the badge on the coat of Mr. Owen, who had been elected the previous day to the office of President for the third year in succession.
>
> Mr. Owen returned thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Richardson for their generous gift; Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Greenwood heartily supporting.
>
> G.F.B.[14]

[14] George Berry, former SNU President 1920-1922.

Later, in Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 5, October 2016, a profile of SNU President Harry Dawson (1953-1958) was published, and quoted from a profile originally published in the "Two Worlds", April 7th 1956:

> "So he set out upon the road that was to lead him to the highest office among the Spiritualists of Britain—and an inheritance of one farthing. For many years that most humble of coins was the symbol of office carried by the president of the Spiritualists' National Union—the post now held by the salutary septuagenarian of whom you are reading."

I noted: "*Can any reader shed any more light on this historic farthing, which once served as the 'symbol of office'?* [15]

Then in Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 4, August 2017, it was reported:



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

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

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

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

The reverse side of the badge stated:

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

Thus the original badge presented to the Union in 1927 was now safely reunited with the Union; at the time of the article it was ninety years old and worn by many of our Presidents, holding immense historic value to the SNU.

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

A happy end to the lost President's Badge! I then received an e-mail regarding the Pioneer article just referred to by Stephen Taylor which is quoted below:



"I was fascinated to read in your excellent 'The Pioneer' about 'The President's Farthing' because it does at last shine some light on a mystery that has puzzled me for quite a few years now but also opens up a few new mysteries, I feel.

Briefly, my godfather Harold Barnett was ordained as a Minister by Gordon Higginson on 3 December 1972 at College Road Church in Doncaster. Picture 1 shows them shaking hands after the ordination but there are a couple of things to notice about the picture.

Firstly, Gordon wore the 'President's Badge' on a blue sash around the neck with a solid connecting piece between the banner and the medallion, as can be clearly seen if you zoom in; this was, I recall, how he thought the badge was intended to be worn, since he thought it far too large for the lapel.

Secondly, Gordon asked that my godfather don his 'Sunflower' medallion with a blue sash for the ordination, because, as I recall, he did not seem to care for the purple sash that the Minister's medallion was historically presented with.



Picture 2 shows both the Minister and Sunflower medallions (not shown), as well as the other object that was stored in the box with them, a 1916 George V farthing, which I have tried to show in better detail.

Until reading your writings I had never had a clue as to what this coin was doing in the box, and I cannot say if Gordon gave it to my godfather, but it does seem more than a little coincidental that such an old farthing should be in there as well."

Editor's note:



The original 1927 report clearly states that it was a badge which was presented to the then President Robert Owen; today it is still a badge insomuch as it has a pin to attach to the lapel. I guess it could have been worn or adapted to be worn "on a blue sash around the neck", as shown in the ordination of Harold Barnett conducted by Gordon Higginson in 1972.

It certainly appears to be the original badge, with its shape, etc.

The most important and interesting aspect of the e-mail is: did Gordon pass on to Minister Harold Barnett the "President's Farthing", carried by the previous Presidents of the Spiritualists' National Union as "the symbol of office"?