the PIONEER

Volume 11, No. 1: 2024

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

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

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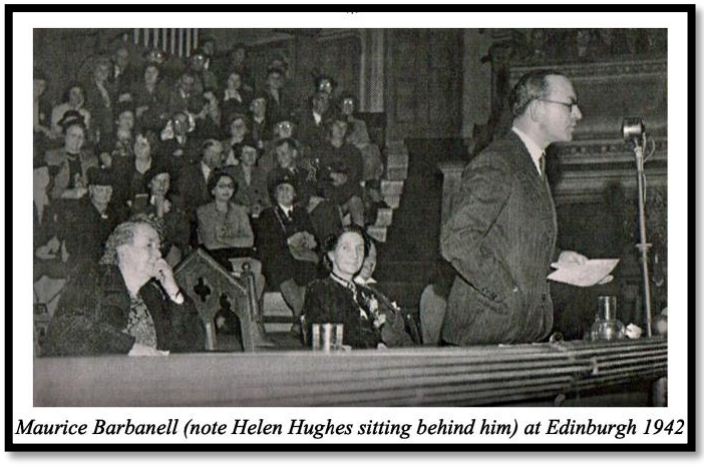
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DID THE SNU MISS OUT?!



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

During its formative years the SNU was sometimes heavily criticised for not using or at least taking advantage of the likes of Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding and some of the leading speakers and mediums prior to and post WWII. In a *general* sense at this period the Union did not support large propaganda meetings. Maurice Barbanell had long argued over the importance of propaganda meetings, [1] often at loggerheads with the Union, which regarded its churches as the best way to secure a more long-term avenue for new people coming into Spiritualism to become members of a national organisation. For much of 1942 the Psychic News editor had kept the Union under pressure; the following article, published in Psychic News, November 14th, was no exception: [2]

KEEP IT DARK !
IS POLICY OF THE S.N.U.

Though it does not mention "Psychic News" by name, the Spiritualists' National Union is obviously referring to us in the following comment that it makes on propaganda in wartime.

FROM time to time we hear of people who are so full of the idea of publicity that they give the impression that the only means of bringing comfort and consolation to the bereaved is by means of huge propaganda meetings, and they appear to delight in adverse criticism of the S.N.U. because it does not display greater activity in that particular direction.

There is no doubt that large propaganda meetings serve a useful purpose in calling public attention to the claims of Spiritualism and, in some instances, they may induce a few individuals to look further into those claims, but beyond that their value is problematical.

Generally speaking these meetings will comprise from 1,000 to 2,000 people and in, say, half an hour's clairvoyance, not more than 20 will receive any personal evidence of life after death. This fades into relative insignificance when it is remembered that every week the Spiritualist churches throughout Great Britain are attended by some 25,000 to 50,000 people. In addition many churches provide facilities for private sittings and group seances, each of which offers an opportunity for personal evidence of survival.

It may be quite true that the work of the churches is neither sensational nor spectacular and for this we should be thankful. On the other hand we think it is equally true that the really solid lasting work on behalf of Spiritualism is not done by the holding of propaganda meetings, but by the faithful activities, year in and year out, of those responsible for the maintenance of the churches.

[1] See the Pioneer PDF booklet, "Maurice Barbanell", as shown on the last page of this issue.

[2] See the Pioneer PDF booklet, "The SNU & World War II", as shown on the last page of this issue.

OUR ANSWER

WE are amazed that the S.N.U. disparages wartime propaganda. Surely it realises that its churches are very largely preaching to the converted.

We regard Spiritualism as pre-eminently a propaganda movement. Its purpose is to spread the knowledge of Proved Survival and all its implications. Every means of propaganda should be utilised especially in wartime. There may have been an excuse during the blitz for not holding large meetings, but that excuse no longer obtains.

Though it is true that probably not more than 20 people receive evidence for Survival at a meeting where 2,000 are present, the fact remains that 2,000 people witness the evidence being given and, as a result many will start their own inquiry. Indeed, that is how a large number of Spiritualist churches came into their existence.

If the Union fails to conduct largescale propaganda, it is not fulfilling its mission today. Does it intend to ignore the thousands who now yearn for information on Spiritualism ? The ranks of the bereaved have been swollen by wartime casualties. Thousands of the Servicemen want information about our truths. There have been eager discussions on our subject in hundreds of camps, Air Force stations and on board ships. More psychic books are being bought than ever before.

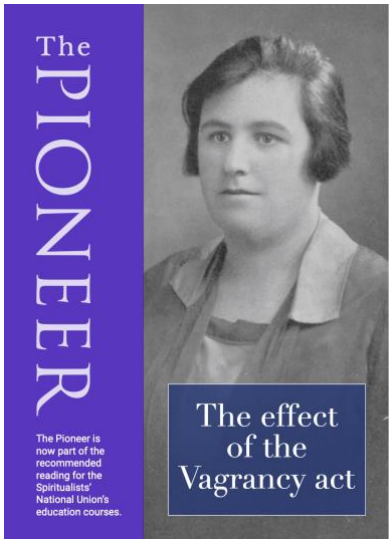
Thousands who have met with sudden "death" are eager to return to their loved ones to prove their survival. That is our task—to reunite the "dead" with the ones they have left behind.

If the S.N.U. will not help in that great task, then it must be done by other Spiritualist bodies who are concerned with proving Survival at a time when this country needs it most.

The S.N.U. is "thankful" because the work of its churches is "neither sensational nor spectacular." What a Victorian attitude ! Too many of them languish in the rut of self-satisfied complacent obscurity. The least they can do, if they fear sensation, is to make their existence known. We often have to tell inquirers that we do not know if there is a Spiritualist church in their locality, because the Spiritualists take no steps to publicise their meetings.

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This naturally raised a great deal of debate within the Union for those for and against large propaganda meetings. One could consider other possible advantages: for example, these large public meetings presented a strong platform to fight the Vagrancy Act, which was causing the Spiritualist movement so many problems.[3] Pioneer over the years has published some snippets of these meetings. Highlighted below is another with the medium Estelle Roberts, taken from the Two Worlds, June 8th, 1934; the reader may wonder what evidence there was for Mr Shaw Desmond's rather sweeping statements on the numbers of Spiritualists!



[3] See the Pioneer PDF booklet, "The effect of the Vagrancy act", as shown on the last page of this issue.

PUBLIC CLAIRVOYANCE

Verbatim Report of a Demonstration

By ROY BRANDON

The author of the following article, Mr. Roy Brandon, has recently been investigating Spiritualism, and his experiences will shortly be published in the "Weekly Pictorial." Meanwhile, he records the evidence of survival afforded by a recent public demonstration of clairvoyance.

MR. SHAW DESMOND delivered a forceful address to a large audience at the Express Hall, Edgware, London, on Tuesday of last week. The occasion was a propaganda meeting organised by the Golders Green Spiritualist Society, of which Mr. Arthur Challis is president.

The clairvoyant was Mrs. Estelle Roberts, and the chair was taken by Mr. Frank Whitmarsh. Every seat was occupied.

"Spiritualism is spreading rapidly," said Mr. Desmond. "In the course of my travels I have visited every country in Europe, and only recently have toured Africa and Canada. I have gathered facts which are unchallengeable."

100,000,000 Spiritualists !

The speaker went on to state that distributed throughout the world were one hundred million Spiritualists. In England alone there were four million people interested in the Movement.



Commencing her demonstration of clairvoyance, Mrs. Estelle Roberts spoke to a man seated in the body of the hall. She gave a detailed description of an elderly lady in spirit, and eventually got the names "Anne Maria."

"This lady tells me," she said, "that for the last two years you have been passing through sadness and sorrow. She has come along to-night to get through a message to help you. In the last twelve months you have had a passing of someone very near to you."

"That is quite correct," answered the man.

"She has brought with her John, William, Elizabeth, and Harry."

"Yes, I know them all."

"They tell me that they have met Emily, Sarah, Jenny, and Bert, all on the other side."

"Quite true."

The medium went on to give a number of other names, all of which were recognised. Then she added, suddenly:

"They tell me that your name is Jack."

"That's quite right, it is."

Flow of Names

A murmur of astonishment went round the hall. The man himself seemed dazed at the constant flow of names and evidence.

"All the people I have named are supposed to be 'dead'! " Mrs. Roberts added.

Continuing with the same man, she next described a young soldier, who gave his age as 24, said that he passed over at the end of 1916, and that he was blown to pieces and reported missing. The name "Horace Marshall" followed.

"I know him," the man declared immediately.

"He has met Arthur Lee," said the medium.

"Yes, I know him, too."

"And he gives me this name—Bill Layton."

"I'll tell you why he's giving that name," the man exclaimed, excitedly. "Bill Layton was our sergeant. I carried him out of the line, and he died soon after."

This statement brought another gasp of astonishment from the audience.

"Horace," the medium continued, "is shouting: 'Hi ! sergeant, Tommy Brown's with us !' He had ginger hair."

"That's true."

"And you remember Charlie Hatton, known as 'Squibs' ?"

"Yes, I do," said the man. Then added: "I wonder if they could tell you what became of the doctor ?"

"They say," the reply came at once, "that he is on the spirit side of life."

"Would it be possible for them to give me his name?" asked the man.

Thirty Names

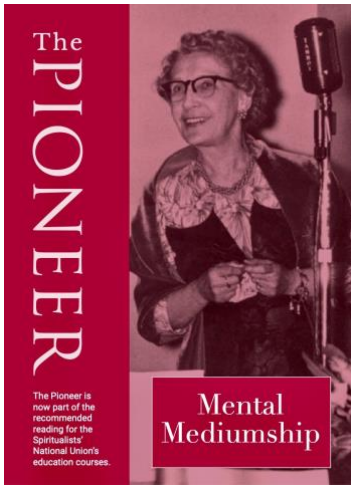
The name eventually came through: "Dr. Lloyd Robinson."

"I am also getting two other names," said the medium. "They are Lieutenant Kerr and John Hardwick."

"Quite correct," said the man.

He had been given 30 Christian names and surnames, all of which he had recognised.

See the Pioneer PDF booklet, "Mental Mediumship", as shown on the last page of this issue.

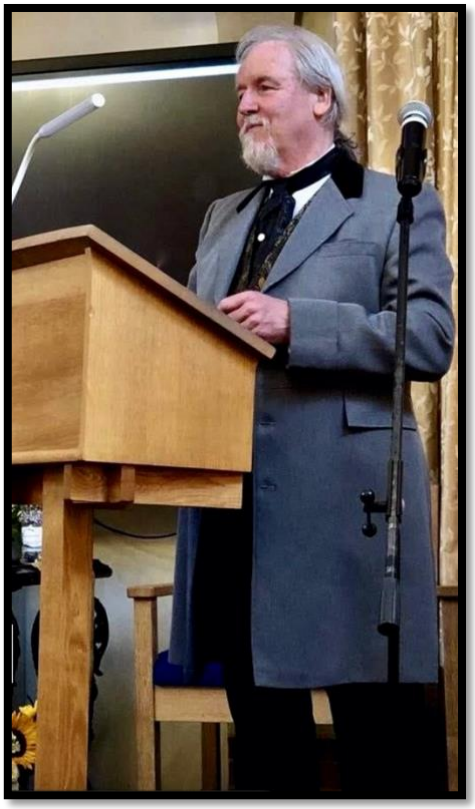


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Also, a link to all "Psypioneer" issues often referenced in Pioneer

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SPIRITUALIST HEALERS OF THE PAST

Molly Ursula Richardson (née Roberts) was better known as

Ursula Roberts

Ursula was born sometime during the First World War and died on Saturday, October 26th, 1996.

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Ursula, like many well-known mediums, healers and speakers, was closely associated with the Marylebone Spiritualist Association (MSA), London, founded in 1872, being one of the earliest societies in London. On February 24th, 1960 the MSA changed its name to the 'Spiritualist Association of Great Britain' (SAGB). [4]


SYDNEY RICHARDSON
Dedicated but always modest.

Sydney Richardson was president of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association from 1956 to 1959. Sydney became interested in Spiritualism with the passing of his wife in 1930, resulting in the development of healing. He joined the MSA's healing band under the trance medium Kathleen Barkel, who also on occasion would give direct séances at the Association; she died in 1954. The MSA had in those days a branch at Golders Green, where Richardson regularly gave healing; in 1945 he met Ursula Roberts, who was also giving treatment to patients, and in 1946 they were married by their mutual friend Ralph Rossiter, who had been instrumental in building up the Association. He was its secretary from 1945 to 1969 and died the same year. Sydney Richardson was also known as a speaker and sometimes contributed to the columns of Psychic News. In October 1964, the tall, silver-haired, smiling figure dropped dead while he was talking to his friend Ralph Rossiter. Today, at the SAGB, there is a beautiful stained-glass healing window as a tribute to him as their former President and Spiritual Healer, 1931-1964.

Ursula's style of healing was Absent Healing, which she would become well-known for. The article below is from the MSA's in-house publication, "Service", which I found in Ursula's scrapbook housed in the Britten Museum at the Arthur Findlay College. Ursula dated the clipping February 1948; I have quoted from this as a point of historical interest of the forming of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association's "Absent Healing Organization". At the invitation of the Council, Miss Ursula Roberts, who was the leader of the Friday Healing Group, accepted the control of the new Absent Healing Organization:

[4] See Pioneer, Vol. 6, No. 1: "Visit to the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain".

Absent Healing

"A meeting of great importance was recently held in the Lecture Hall at Marylebone House, and as a result the Association is organising one of the largest and most efficient Absent Healing Centres in the Country.

"The Council are now engaged in creating this particular branch of our work in accordance with our reputation and position as the largest Spiritualist Association in the world.

"In recent weeks we have received many hundreds of letters crying for help from all parts of Great Britain and these urgent appeals from people have strengthened the Council in their determination to give all possible assistance to those in need. No effort will be spared in our endeavour to bring health to the sick and peace to those who are nearing the final hours in their physical bodies. We are sure that Members and Associates will give their blessing and approval to this work, and share the hope of the Council that together with our Spirit Helpers we shall bring forth happiness in the lives of our less fortunate comrades during their earthly pilgrimage.



Nan Mackenzie, entranced by "Running Water" treats a patient

"Until recently, Absent Healing was only a small unorganized part of the work of the Association. Our devoted Healers had their own patients for concentration, and good results have been achieved, but suddenly and in startling fashion we found the situation changed. The Sunday Empire News printed a full page article on the Healing work of this Association, and paid splendid tribute to the results obtained by Mrs Nan Mackenzie, who as most Members know, is one of our leading Healing Mediums.[5] The article was written by Mr Jack Thomas, who has had years of experience in psychic matters in many parts of the world, and was anxious that the general public should know of some of the work that is being done within the Spiritualist Movement of this Country.

"The day following the article in this Sunday Paper, our Secretary was astonished to find the letter-box at Headquarters filled to capacity with letters from sufferers in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and as each daily post arrived more and more letters were received, until hundreds had been delivered. The Office Staff soon found themselves overwhelmed with correspondence. Day after day willing helpers assisted in the work and acknowledgements were sent to all who wrote. In a great many cases the sender stated that all hope of further medical assistance had been abandoned and the letter was written to us as a last resource.

"It was at this time that our President called together some of the Council who were vitally interested in Healing, and the present Absent Healing organization began to take shape. Shortly afterwards the Council formed an official Healing Committee to deal with this great work and everything possible has been done to facilitate its efficiency.

"At the invitation of the Council, Miss Ursula Roberts, the leader of the Friday Healing Group, accepted the control of the new Absent Healing Organization and has entered into her new duties with enthusiasm. Miss Roberts is an outstanding Healing Medium and as she has had considerable experience of the varied methods of Absent Healing, the Association is very fortunate in having a director with such capabilities.

[5] See Pioneer, Vol. 5, No. 5: "Spiritualist Healers of the Past – Nan Mackenzie".

"The next step was to call a meeting of the Healers in the Association, together with those known to be anxious to help, and to explain the complete scheme for the organization of the work. Appropriately, and as befitted this important occasion, our President, Mr Percy J. Hitchcock, spoke first of the opportunity we now had of helping those in distress and pain, and stated that we must not fail in our desire to give our Unseen Helpers power to contact and heal. Miss Ursula Roberts then elucidated on the plan of Absent Healing in an address which was eloquent and inspired. She gave careful attention to the many questions put to her by her large company of listeners and imparted to them much of the enthusiasm with which she herself was filled, and at the conclusion of the meeting a powerful band of Healers had been enrolled, and will deal conscientiously and earnestly with all applications for assistance.

"All letters requesting Absent Healing will pass through the hands of Miss Ursula Roberts, and will then be allocated to one of the Healers under her supervision. Many of these Healers will be banded into Groups for concentration, and every month the complete band will meet together for the answering of questions and a general discussion. At these monthly gatherings, mass concentration of the Healers will also be given for difficult cases. Under the guidance of Miss Ursula Roberts, each Healer will be given a number of patients, together with the fullest possible information regarding the nature of the illness, and the Healer will establish his own daily time for entering the silence and concentrating on his patient. At the same time, the patient will be told at what time the Healer will be "tuning in" and will be asked to rest, relax and make contact at the same time so that the healing may be done."

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It can be noted that after her marriage to Sydney Richardson in 1946 Ursula would continue to use the title 'Miss Ursula Roberts'. The article below, published in the Association's publication, "Service", for September 1949, gives a short overview of her background leading up to the previous article:



OUR MEDIUMS

URSULA ROBERTS

When conversing with Miss Ursula Roberts, one is impressed by this Medium's varied experiences. Her first psychic illustration occurred when she was quite a girl, when she looked into a glass of water with two other friends "to see what they could see." To her astonishment she saw pictures foretelling war with Japan, and also of a dead warrior covered by a Union Jack. At the same time she received the impression that somehow or other she would have some connection with "dead" people after the war was over.

It was some years after the above experience that Ursula attended a Service at the Queen's Hall and became interested in Spiritualism. Then she joined the local Church and ultimately a developing class where she had the strange experience of going under control on her first visit. When visiting Eastbourne nearly twenty years ago she attended a local meeting but the Medium failed to turn up, and so she was asked to take her first Service. "It was awful," she said, "and if there had not been a rail in front of me I should have fallen down owing to my nervous state." Time and experience, however, quickly overcame her nervousness and she is now one of the finest women speakers in Spiritualism.

Ursula Roberts has also specialised in developing Automatic Writing, and the greater part of her book "Mary Baker Eddy" was recorded through this means. Sitting once a week, the book took her just over a year to complete, and the concluding chapters were recorded whilst the Medium was in trance. Each sitting commenced with a page or two of "Scribbling" which took various forms, usually a continuous line of circles and curves which filled the paper. This scribbling went on for several minutes and seemed to serve the purpose of getting conditions ready for the "scripts" proper. After the meaningless curves, there were frequently drawings of flowers or various kinds of symbols, and sometimes written explanations of these sketches.

"Mary Baker Eddy" is a book that everybody should read for its enlightenment and inspiration. Recently Ursula has written a booklet on "Hints for Healers" which gives valuable instruction to all interested in this vast subject. She smiled when she said that she had always wanted to be a writer but although she had written reams herself no publisher would look at it ! Her Guide for Automatic Writing is "Mananaman" who came from Illyria. When he first gave his Medium this information, it was not believed that there was such a place, but after referring to an encyclopaedia it was found to be correct. [6]



It was at a later stage in her development that she turned her thoughts to healing. One day when giving a message the recipient stated that she felt sure that if Miss Roberts would give her a treatment she would recover, and upon such treatment being given, the patient regained her health. Ever since that time, Miss Roberts has given more and more time to healing, until to-day she is one of the leaders of Healing at Marylebone House, and the director of the large and efficient Absent Healing band connected with the Association. The Guide mainly in charge of her healing work is Rushing River, an Indian who has become greatly respected by a large number of patients. On one occasion, a visitor did not catch the name of the Guide correctly, and afterwards informed Miss Roberts that "I do like your Guide, Russian Liver !"

All work of this Medium, however, is under the control of Chief Guide "Ram-a-dahn," whose wisdom and philosophy is profound. One night in the earlier days of her development she saw a vision of a great arc of brilliant light with nothing in the middle, and a voice called "Ram-a-dahn." A few weeks later the same vision was repeated but this time a mist appeared under the arc of light, and again the same name was called. At the third attempt the figure of "Ram-a-dahn" stepped out from beneath the arc, and she then realised that the Guide had been tuning down the vibrations to enable her to see him.

Miss Ursula Roberts has also had considerable experience in astral travelling. Early in her development she experimented to see if she could "will" herself to certain places, and she was often successful. On one occasion she was seen by some friends in Eastbourne when actually she was at home in bed. On another occasion a member of her circle failed to turn up so Miss Roberts decided to go and see what she was doing. She

[6] **Britannica: Illyria**, Ancient country, north-western Balkan Peninsula, south-eastern Europe. It was inhabited from the 10th century BC by the Illyrians, an Indo-European people who later practiced piracy on Roman shipping. After a series of wars with Rome, it was defeated in 168 BC and established as the Roman province of Illyricum. When the Roman Empire was divided in AD 395, Illyria east of the Drina River became part of the Eastern Empire. It was occupied by the Slavs from the 6th century, and its name changed in the 8th–11th centuries to Arbëri and finally to Albania.

succeeded and saw the member watering her garden with a watering-can. The member was prevented from attending the Circle because of domestic troubles, and at the time Miss Roberts visited her she was using a watering-can in the garden.



Miss Roberts finds that her work seems to go in cycles. At the moment demonstrations seem to be put in the background in favour of healing and lecturing. Asked if she considered she had completed her development, Miss Roberts replied: "I shall never complete my development, I am only at the beginning." These words of wisdom closed an interview which was full of charm. We know that her excellent work will continue to give comfort and help to many who will bless the day they were brought into contact with Ursula Roberts.

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It is noted in the previous article that Ursula Roberts was well accomplished in astral projection, or astral traveling as it is sometimes called, which is often referred to in Absent Healing either by the healer or the patient. Published below is a report by the Two Worlds on Ursula Roberts' Absent Healing, published September 17th, 1949:

TUMOUR REMOVED FROM BRAIN

PARALYSED CHILD WALKS

URSULA ROBERTS GIVES ABSENT HEALING

THIS REMARKABLE CURE EFFECTED THROUGH ABSENT HEALING WAS ACHIEVED BY MISS URSULA ROBERTS, MEDIUM AND HEALER, WHO WORKS UNDER CONTROL.

THE AUNT OF A FOUR YEAR OLD CHILD, WHO LAY IN THE CHILDREN'S WARD AT A LONDON HOSPITAL, SUFFERING FROM A TUMOUR ON THE BRAIN, WROTE TO MISS ROBERTS ASKING HER IF SHE COULD DO ANYTHING FOR HER LITTLE NIECE.

Three Months to Live

In her letter to Miss Roberts the aunt stated that there was no faith or co-operation on the part of the child's parents, but she sincerely hoped that something could be done as her niece was partially blind and paralysed on one side of her body. The doctors had given their opinion that she might live three months.

Responding to this request Miss Roberts placed the child on her personal absent healing list, while other members of her healing band did likewise, endeavouring to create a circuit of power for the guides to use.

Watched Guides at Work

One morning, Miss Roberts, who has had a great deal of experience in astral travel, was privileged to watch the guides working on the child's head, and she saw something which resembled a great dark slug, being detached from the brain.

Similar treatment was continued on five more occasions, each with a lapse of four days intervening, the healer watching the guides slowly detaching this thing, until one day she saw it lifted right away from the head.

Miracle Cure

Later Miss Roberts was taken in her spirit body to the child, when she saw the guides working on the nervous system; they gently massaged the whole spine with spiritual magnetic forces.

A long time elapsed before the healer received any news about the child, but one day the aunt sent a letter which the parents had written containing the remark that a miracle had occurred and the child was now walking.

The doctors at the hospital said they had never known such a case and expressed the opinion that the tumour must have *dissolved*.

Psychic Operation

Another outstanding case was that of a friend of Miss W., who complained of blockage and swelling in the nose.

For a time the patient was treated by one of the healers who assists Miss Roberts, but the swelling did not respond to the rays used upon it.

The patient therefore decided to visit her doctor who informed her that there was a large polypus and he straightway gave her a letter to present at the hospital so that arrangements could be made for an operation.

At this stage Miss W., the patient's friend, intervened and told Miss Roberts what had been arranged, the healer then suggested that absent healing should be tried to see if the guides could perform a psychic operation.

Polypus Removed

The patient later reported that she awoke one night in so much pain that she cried out "Oh, what is the good of all these healing guides and mediums ! They don't seem able to do anything for me."

The next thing that happened was a feeling as if something was pulling at the swelling, and then she heard a click, like the sound a pair of scissors would make.

The patient then fell asleep and when she awoke there was no pain, and the blockage in her nose had *disappeared*.

This cure took place three years ago and the trouble has never returned; the letter which the doctor gave the patient to take to hospital still remains in her possession.

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Earlier in the same year as this above report on July 6th 1949, the Spiritualists' National Union wrote to Ursula, addressed to: "Miss Ursula Roberts, c/o Mrs S. Richardson…" The letter was from the Hon Secretary of the Healing and Exponents Committee, Mr Harry Dawson. I quote: "It is my pleasure to inform you that the recommendation of the London District Council to your appointment as a Minister of the Union had been approved at the July Meeting at Edinburgh". The National Council gave instructions for her name to be inserted in the National Register, Ministers section, as from July 1st, 1949.

Apart from her long association with the MSA/SAGB, Ursula was also well connected to Christian Spiritualism, namely the Greater World Christian Spiritualists League. Ursula was a

friend of its founder, Miss Winifred Moyes, who founded the GWCSL on May 30th, 1931; it was later known as the Greater World Christian Spiritualist Association, based on teachings given through the mediumship of Moyes from Zodiac, who claimed he was a scribe in the Temple in the time of the Christ. The Greater World holds Christ as its Leader and guided by Zodiac as its teacher.



Some guests at the first Arthur Findlay College dinner. From left: Dr John Winning, Derek Everitt, Grace Boyers, Gordon Higginson, Sylvia Barbanell, Hunter Mackintosh, Ursula Roberts, Maurice Barbanell, Mabel Hibbs, Coral Polge, Tom Johanson. (See story on p.8.)

Ursula was well respected within the Spiritualist movement. Generally, she would perhaps be best described as an all-rounder, being connected to numerous Spiritualist organisations; Ursula would on occasion be invited to the Arthur Findlay College. The photo shown here was taken in 1971, capturing a mixture of SNU and SAGB Spiritualists.

Finally, the following was written by Ursula Roberts circa 1949; the clipping is in her scrapbook previously referred to and I believe was published in the MSA in-house publication, "Service":

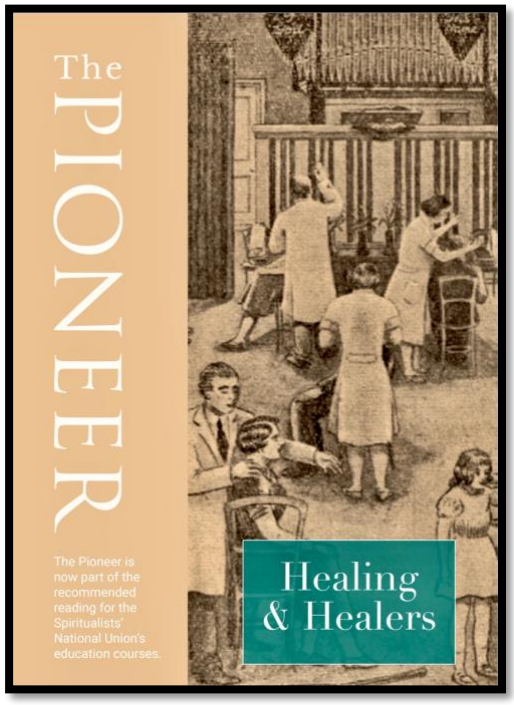
WHAT HAPPENS AT 10 O'CLOCK

At 10 o'clock every evening, the members of the Absent Healing band join together for a few moments in silent prayer, and those who are not otherwise engaged, give themselves into the care of the Healing Spirits so that the rays may be directed to those who are known to be in need. At the same time, a great host of sick people also join in prayer, so that a link may be forged between themselves and the Spirit World. Many wonderful instances of healing are recorded and often the sufferers testify that they see either the form of the healer, or of the guide. Some of them also testify to the sense of great Power and Peace which comes around them. This Power and Peace is known to me, for as the leader of the absent healing band, I find myself psychically registering the many phases through which it passes from week to week. There is a time in which the Power grows in an intensity of concentration, as numbers of people and guides join together in prayer, then after a little while there comes a Great Silence; a sense of tremendous Peace begins to grow and we try to spread it from one to another by thought and love, for I know that in Peace is our Healing.

There are many people who do not write to us, but I know that they are seeking healing. Sometimes the guides mention them, and when I look through the files for their names, I find that their name is not there. There are many people who try to draw the healing on behalf of people they know. Some of them have spoken to me, and it is for these people, and those who have not written to us, that these thoughts are expressed. I want you all to know that as you make yourself part of the great Power, by prayer and thought, so you can also lift into that Power anyone who is in need and hold them there

by your love, until the sense of Great Peace comes to you. You can also lift yourself into that Power and wait for the Peace !

Why is Peace a healing force ? In many cases the Power is the healing force, but in this case we have found, from experience that with the Peace comes Healing. We are told that Peace is Harmony, and that disease is a lack of harmony in the being of a man; if the harmony is restored, then the disease will cease to exist. Peace follows harmony and harmony creates peace ! As we join together in prayer, let us not be dismayed if we do not immediately see the loss of pain or disease, but let us most surely concentrate on Peace and Harmony, knowing that as this grows stronger, so at last will it restore Health; then Life and Happiness will once more brighten the faces of those for whom we pray.



Further information on Ursula Roberts is to be found in the Pioneer “Healing & Healers” pdf booklet. Please see the last page of this issue for details.

HELEN DUNCAN—AGAIN!

November 25th, 1897 – December 6th, 1956

—~—☼—~—

By Paul J. Gaunt.



Last year Pioneer published "Helen Duncan – Regurgitation",[7] giving an in-depth overview as to how, where and when psychical researchers in the early 1930s claimed that Helen Duncan used a cheesecloth-like material which she used to fake her materialisation séances. The claim made is that she could produce the material by means of regurgitation: this stigma would follow her until her death in 1956.

The article showed how two well-known London-based research organisations both concluded *independently* that all the phenomena they witnessed under their own full conditions were produced by *normal* means. They both concluded that the teleplasm/ectoplasm phenomena were made up by man-made materials and that these were produced by the medium, Helen Duncan, by means of regurgitation.

However, it was noted that it could not be stated categorically despite their claims that it was proven conclusively by any means. The medium was not *actually* caught in the act of fraud; this was pure speculation by the psychical researchers due to the results of the various teleplasm/ectoplasm samples given to both parties and no doubt the frustration of both parties at the infringement by the medium. After the most stringent precautions were put in place by both laboratories *against* the possibility of fraud, even so the medium still produced the teleplasm/ectoplasm or the cheesecloth-type material, which they could not *explain* the production of.

However, the story does not end there:

A further claim of fraud was made against the medium after the publication of the negative results of the two research organisations in question, namely the London Psychical Laboratory (LPL), which was the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance Ltd (LSA),[8] and the National Laboratory of Psychical Research (NLPR), whose Honorary Director was Harry Price.

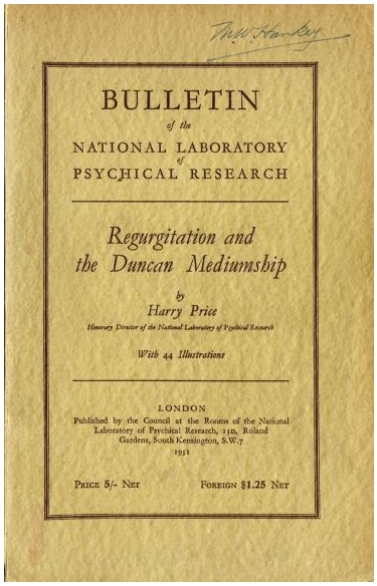
As detailed in the Pioneer article, "Helen Duncan –Regurgitation", previously referenced, the LPL invited Mrs Duncan to come to London and to submit her mediumship for investigation. Mr and Mrs Duncan accordingly agreed and entered into a binding contract to sit exclusively for the London Psychical Laboratory for a possible period of eighteen

[7] Pioneer, Vol. 10, No. 3: Included: "Mrs. Duncan's Mediumship–Adverse Report after Examination by London Psychical Laboratory", "Verbatim Report of Meeting Between Mr. Henry Duncan and the Council of the National Laboratory", "She was famous for producing ectoplasm which was proven to be made from cheesecloth", "So, is regurgitation proved as claimed in these two reports?" and "What can be concluded?"

[8] Today it still holds the same premises under the name of "The College of Psychic Studies" (CPS).

months.[9] However, the Duncans broke their signed contract, tempted by a financial reward from the NLPR, namely by its Honorary Director, Harry Price, and five experimental séances were conducted by the NLPR. Once the London Spiritualist Alliance became aware of the Duncans breaking their contract giving it exclusive working for the LPL, it all ended abruptly on June 12th, 1931.

In preparation for the family's move to London from Scotland Helen put an advert in the Dundee Labour Exchange for a maid for her upcoming engagement with the LPL and hired a young lady called Mary McGinlay. The Duncan family with their new maid moved to 8, Beulah Crescent, Thornton Heath, Surrey in early March 1931; a comfortable house had been arranged and paid for by the London Spiritualist Alliance at an annual rent of £85. Helen would also start to hold private séances for clients at the Thornton Heath home, further breaking the Duncans' contractually controlled séances to sit exclusively for the London Psychical Laboratory.


BULLETIN
of the
NATIONAL LABORATORY
of
PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship

by
Harry Price
Honorary Director of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research

With 44 Illustrations

LONDON
Published by the Council at the Rooms of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, 13B, Roland Gardens, South Kensington, S.W.7
1931

PRICE 5/- NET FOREIGN $1.25 NET

The Duncans, along with their maid Mary McGinlay, left London for Leith, Scotland on June 23rd, 1931. On February 2nd of the following year a letter was received at the Rooms of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, London, from Miss Mary McGinlay. The NLPR published the details in the form of a leaflet titled: "Appendix H Supplement to "Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship" (Bulletin of the NLPR) published October 1931 (to be inserted into the Bulletin's index)"; it stated:

On Tuesday, February 2nd, 1932, a letter was received at the Rooms of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, London, from a Miss Mary McGinlay, of Dundee, who stated that she had been a maid in the service of Mrs. Helen Victoria Duncan, the materialising medium, when the latter was in London during the spring of 1931.

The Officers of the Laboratory did not recognize the name of Mary McGinlay, but they recollected that Mrs. Duncan brought a maid to London when she fulfilled her engagement with the spiritualists.[10]

Miss McGinlay stated in her letter to the Laboratory, dated February 1st, 1932, that she wished to relate her experiences in London while in the service of Mrs. Duncan, and that she thought she could make things "clearer".

In a reply (dated February 3rd, 1932) to this letter Miss McGinlay was informed that the Officers of the National Laboratory would be grateful for any information that would enlighten them "either one way or the other, concerning Mrs. Duncan's mediumship". Miss McGinlay was invited to London to make her statement before the Council of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research.

Miss McGinlay arrived in London on the evening of Monday, February 15th, 1932, and on the afternoon of Tuesday, February 16th, 1932, met the Council at a special meeting convened for that purpose.

[9] The contract between the LPL and Mrs Duncan was from March 9th, 1931, for six months certain with the option on the part of the LPL of renewal for a further year, eighteen months in all.

[10] The London Psychical Laboratory (LPL), which was the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance Ltd (LSA).

There were present at this Council meeting the following Members: Mrs. E. F. L. Robertson, Mrs. Clarice Richards, Professor D. F. Fraser-Harris, M.D., D.Sc., B.Sc., Lond., F.R.S.E., Mr. John Evelyn, Captain the Hon. Victor Cochran Baillie, Mr. Alex. L. Dribbel, Mr. Harry Price.

Miss McGinlay made a long statement which was recorded verbatim in shorthand by the Secretary, and a number of questions were put and answered. Miss McGinlay afterwards read the typed copy of the verbatim report and agreed that it was correct in every particular.

The statement was subsequently incorporated in the form of a Statutory Declaration, and on Monday morning, February 22nd, 1932, the Declaration was read by Miss McGinlay, who agreed that it was true and correct in every particular. That same morning Miss McGinlay attended before a Commissioner for Oaths, and made the Declaration.

Miss McGinlay left London for the North on Wednesday, February 24th, 1932. No money or presents were paid to her for the information received by the Laboratory Officials: only her travelling expenses were given her and her hotel bill was settled by the Laboratory.

The following is Miss McGinlay's Statutory Declaration:

—~—☼—~—

Below I have printed the Declaration from the original copy:

I, MARY McGINLAY, of 210, Hilltown, Dundee, Angus, N.B. Domestic Servant, a spinster, solemnly and sincerely declare as follows:-

I. IN February 1931 I was out of a situation and a Labour Exchange at Dundee recommended a Mrs. Victoria Helen Duncan, who wanted a maid, to me. I entered her service on the evening of the same day that I applied for the situation.

2. WHEN Mrs. Duncan engaged me she told me that she was interested in spiritualism, about which I knew nothing. I afterwards learned that Mrs. Duncan had a big reputation as a materialising medium. She told me she wanted a maid to take with her to London, where she had a long engagement.

3. WE arrived in London on March 10th, 1931. After we had been in London about three weeks, Mrs. Duncan gave a sitting at the house in which we were staying, which had been secured for her by the spiritualists, at Thornton Heath. I was present at this sitting. Previous to the sitting I had mentioned to Mrs. Duncan that my grandmother was Irish, and at this first sitting a hazy figure, purporting to be that of my grandfather, showed itself. At the same time this figure was supposed to be talking Irish, but my grandfather was Scotch. Mrs. Duncan probably assumed that because my grandmother was Irish, my grandfather would be Irish, too.

The figure I saw was poked out of the curtain a little way. It was in a dim red light and I could see it rather imperfectly because I am a little short-sighted. This was my first sitting and I was rather nervous. Mrs. Duncan wore her ordinary clothes at this sitting, and they were covered with an overall. It was at this first sitting that her young baby (three of her children have died) was supposed to materialise. It was ever so wee and I thought at the time that it was much too small for a baby. It looked exactly like a doll I had seen the children playing with and which I used to dress up for them. I found the baby doll some days later in a cupboard and it was exactly the thing that we had seen at the sitting. I kept all these things to myself.

4. WHEN Mrs. Duncan came to London she had three pieces of butter muslin with her. They were not the same length. In one piece were more than five yards; the other two pieces were about three and a half yards in length. They were very worm and frayed at the edges, and this being so, she sent me out to get seven yards of butter muslin. This I purchased at a shop in Beulah Road, Thornton Heath. It cost, as far as I can remember, 2/8½d. She sent me for this butter muslin and told me to say nothing to Mr. Duncan about it. Mr. Duncan often asked me if I saw anything suspicious and I always said that I had not.

5. I have examined the Report issued by the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, on a series of sittings which it had with Mrs. Duncan in London. I have carefully examined the photographs reproduced in this Report, and I have also seen the original photographs, and the pieces of cheese cloth represented in those photographs appear to be the identical pieces which Mrs. Duncan brought to London with her, or which I purchased for her. I recognised the tears in the cheese cloth photographs as being identical to the tears in the pieces that Mrs. Duncan brought from Scotland.

6. AFTER a séance Mrs. Duncan used to get me to wash out a length of this muslin. The muslin had a rotten smell. It put me in mind of the smell of urine; it had a sour smell.

7. IN the National Laboratory Report, are photographs of rubber gloves. I never saw any rubber gloves at Dundee, but I saw them occasionally in London. Once I found a pair right at the top of a high shelf in a cupboard and I told Mrs. Duncan about them. She said they were used to examine her at the sittings, but I did not let Mr. Duncan know about this. Rubber gloves were never used for any purpose in our house at Thornton Heath. The gloves I found appeared identical to the pictures of the rubber gloves in the National Laboratory Report on Mrs. Duncan's mediumship. One day I was looking out of the bedroom window and saw Bella (Mrs. Duncan's eldest girl) bury a pair of rubber gloves in the garden.

8. IN the National Laboratory Report I noticed a picture of a head of a young girl apparently stuck on to a piece of muslin or cheese cloth, and I recognised this girl's head as having been part of the cover of a magazine - I think the True Story Magazine.[11] We had many magazines in the house and Mrs. Duncan would often get the children to cut out heads and figures from these magazines. Referring to the muslin again, which I had to wash sometimes, I noticed that occasionally it would only be stained a little as if it had been washed beforehand. At other times she would give it to me just as she had used it, and then it would be much stained and slimy.

9. ON one occasion I was asked to mix up the whites of two eggs. This I did, and was too frightened to ask her what the muslin and eggs were for. She volunteered the information that the white of egg had been recommended to her by a woman to put on an abscess on her arm in order to whiten the mark of the sore. She put a little on the sore but of course it did not whiten it. I never saw what happened afterwards to the white of egg.

10. JUST before leaving home for a sitting, Mrs. Duncan used to retire to a potting house or outhouse just outside the kitchen door and remained there for about five minutes. I do not know what she did there. She always had a bath before each sitting. Mrs. Duncan did not have a big meal before going to a sitting. She would have a cup of tea and a biscuit or two and would then go up to the bathroom and have a bath.

[11] This to date has not been published in Pioneer: Two photographs were taken at the fourth séance which "reveal two flat pictures of a young girl with a face in profile, features to the left, hair on the right, and with hair waved" (séance notes NLPR p65: "Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship").

11. ON the night of May 28th, 1931 (or rather very early the next morning), Mrs. Duncan was brought home to Thornton Heath in a car after an hysterical attack which she had had at a seance in London.[12] I took her into the drawing-room, but she would not lie down on the sofa, so she sat on a chair. Presently she said that she was all right. I went and fetched her a drink of water and she said that if Mr. Duncan asked me anything I was not to tell him anything. That night she told me that she thought Mr. Duncan wanted to ask me something and asked me if I would go out and meet Mr. Duncan who had gone for a walk (I think to telephone) after he had returned with Mrs. Duncan. So I went out and met Mr. Duncan in Beulah Road. He had been arguing with his wife and had gone out of the house. Mr. Duncan asked me again if I had ever seen anything suspicious.

I told him that I had not, as I had promised Mrs. Duncan not to say anything. He took a roll of butter muslin out of his pocket and said that Mrs. Duncan had passed it to him in the street when they had been alone for a few minutes after she had dashed out of the seance room at the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. He said that the people at the Laboratory had asked him to be searched and that he had made the excuse that his underclothes were very old, etc.[13] He told me that he did not know whatever they were going to do about it. He said that the game was all up now, but I said that I could not help it. He showed me the rolled-up muslin; it was not very big in size. He did not tell me anything else; I was too frightened to ask him any questions. He told me that his wife had been hysterical and had made a terrible scene in the street and had been aiming blows at people, and when in the street she had passed the stuff to him. He said that it was all up now and that Mr. Price had found her out. I do not know what Mr. Duncan did with the piece of cheese cloth which Mrs. Duncan passed to him in the street, but she still had three lengths left when I returned to Scotland with her.

12. A friend of the Duncan family, Mrs. McCleod, used to attend Mrs. Duncan's sittings and her (Mrs. McCleod's) daughter was supposed to materialise during the séances. This effigy of a child always wore a luminous star on her head or on her dress. Mrs. Duncan used to tell me about this star. One evening I was sent down to the drawing-room to look for some insurance books, and as I was rummaging about in a drawer I saw a white envelope. The room was rather dark, and when I held out the envelope, a luminous star could be seen shining through the envelope, and I recognised this star as being identical to the one that Mrs. Duncan had told me about as having been seen when Mrs. McCleod's child materialised. At a seance in Edinburgh at which this star was also seen, after the seance the lady of the house where the sitting was held, found some particles of luminous paint in the cabinet and drew my attention to this fact. I was convinced that it had come off the luminous star I had seen in the envelope.

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[12] At the close of the fifth seance Mrs Duncan was asked to submit to X-ray examination: "Mr. Duncan then spoke to the medium, advising her to submit. The approach of her husband seemed to infuriate her, and she became hysterical. She jumped up, and dealt her husband a smashing blow on the face; she then made a lunge at Dr. William Brown, who fortunately avoided the blow." […]

"Suddenly, without the slightest warning, she jumped up, pushed Mrs. Goldney aside, unfastened the door and dashed into the street where she had another attack of hysterics. Her husband dashed after her, followed by other sitters. She was found clutching the railings, screaming, and Mr. Duncan was trying to pacify her."

"After about half an hour in the street, the medium was induced to return to the Laboratory for her clothes (of course, she was still in her séance garment). As our test had now absolutely broken down (owing to the fact that the medium and her husband had been by themselves in the street for two or three minutes, and owing to the nervous state of the medium), we had decided to abandon the X-ray examination". (séance notes NLPR p 61/62: "Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship").

[13] See Pioneer "Helen Duncan –Regurgitation" as referenced in the issue: Mr. PRICE: 'That X-rays incident the other night was very suspicious, and when it came to the X-rays, she broke down all our controls by rushing out of the house, and that afterwards she insisted upon the X-rays *after* she had been in the street with you. Also, you would not be searched. It is very suspicious.' Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, I admit that. But I told you about the diapers.' Mrs. ROBERTSON: 'Were they soiled diapers you had on you?' Mr. DUNCAN: 'No, clean ones.'

13. ONE thing I noticed was that Mrs. Duncan was very subject to vomiting. She was nearly always sick in the mornings, and sometimes she would be sick in the evening too. On one of the lengths of muslin (which Mrs. Duncan always kept in her room) I noticed that it had been folded lengthwise and sewn at the top along half of its width, leaving a hole through which Mrs. Duncan could have put her head. During the latter period of my stay with Mrs. Duncan in London, I formed the opinion that the lengths of cheese cloth which I had sometimes washed for Mrs. Duncan had been swallowed by her. The conclusion was forced upon me that the cheese cloth was swallowed by her and then brought up again during a seance. I afterwards found that this same theory had been formed by the officials of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, and was afterwards published in their Report on Mrs. Duncan's mediumship.

14. I voluntarily and on my own initiative wrote to the National Laboratory of Psychical Research and offered to impart to the Officers of the Society the foregoing information.

AND I make this solemn Declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the Statutory Declarations Act, 1835.

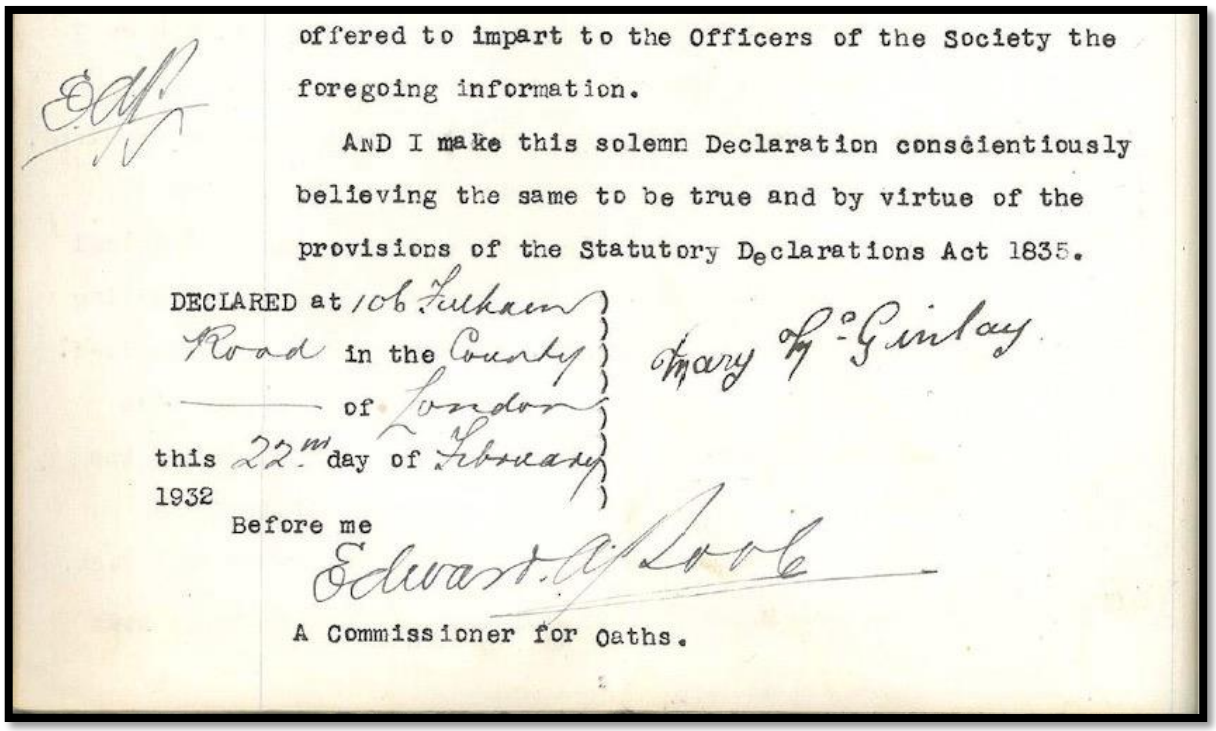
DECLARED at 106, Fulham Road
in the County of London this 22nd day of February, 1932.

Before me,

(Signed) Edward A. Poole,

A Commissioner for Oaths.

(Signed) MARY McGINLAY.



offered to impart to the Officers of the Society the foregoing information.

AND I make this solemn Declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the Statutory Declarations Act 1835.

DECLARED at 106 Fulham Road in the County of London this 22nd day of February 1932

Before me

Edward A. Poole

A Commissioner for Oaths.

Mary McGinlay

So, what is to be made of this further claim against Helen Duncan?

The unexpected letter was received by the NLPR on February 2nd, 1932 from Dundee in Scotland and subsequently a meeting was arranged in London, less than two weeks later, with the former maid of Helen Duncan, Miss Mary McGinlay, and the Council of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. This resulted in the above Declaration signed on February 22nd, all within twenty days after receiving the letter, which gave the Council of the NLPR, in particular, more fuel in their *speculation* of the medium producing her séance phenomena via regurgitation.



John McIndoe, SNU President 1930-1938, gave the first detailed independent report on two sittings he attended with Helen Duncan in 1929.[14] It was McIndoe who substantially helped launch Helen Duncan in her career as a materialisation medium under his management under the auspices of the SNU, where she was awarded her SNU Diploma as a physical medium around 1931. John McIndoe held some level of respect for the treatment and sympathetic kindness Harry Price afforded to the Duncans during their 1931 experiments. McIndoe noted in the Two Worlds, February 19th, 1932: "… the National Laboratory for Psychical Research, in a profusely illustrated volume of over 100 pages, entitled "Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship", by Harry Price. It appears to be a fair and careful record of the conditions and occurrences at the five seances with which it deals."

Naturally he did not agree and was strongly opposed to their conclusions; however, his remarks were not so complimentary regarding the other investigative organisation which tested the medium at the same period, the London Psychical Laboratory. Quoted from the Two Worlds as referenced: "…I disapprove of the L.P.L. methods of investigation, and of their treatment of the medium, and I totally disagree with their conclusions." At the time of McGinlay's revelations Helen Duncan had become well-known and respected in her work as a full-form materialisation medium within the Spiritualist movement. John McIndoe's congenial working relationship with Harry Price would be lost. It would appear from around this period of the Mary McGinlay declaration, at least publicly, that Price became set on a crusade to discredit Helen Duncan at every opportunity, becoming her *nemesis* until his death in 1948.

Mary McGinlay was soon picked up by the press, as published by Light on March 11th, 1932:

Mrs. DUNCAN'S MEDIUMSHIP

> IT is announced that Mrs. Victoria Duncan, the Scottish materialising Medium, is to visit Manchester next month to undergo a series of test sittings under the auspices of the local Spiritualist organisations. To a representative of the *Daily Dispatch,* an official said that although they had faith in Mrs. Duncan and believed her to be a genuine Medium, an "excess of caution" would be observed at the seances, which would not be open to the general public.
>
> In the *Daily Mail* of Monday this week, it is stated that Miss Mary McGinlay, who says she was formerly a domestic servant employed by Mrs. Duncan, has made a sworn statement before the solicitors of the National Psychical Laboratory (of which Mr. Harry Price is hon. director) and before a commissioner for oaths. In this

[14] Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 3: "Helen Duncan & John McIndoe – A Scots Materialising Medium".

statement she says Mrs. Duncan took three pieces of butter-muslin with her from Dundee to London where she underwent test sittings and that on examining the series of photographs taken at the Laboratory she (Miss McGinlay) recognised the "teleplasm" as consisting of these identical pieces of butter-muslin. She also states that Mrs. Duncan sent her to buy butter-muslin whilst staying at Thornton Heath, that after Mrs. Duncan's seances she was given strips of muslin to wash, and that before seances Mrs. Duncan "would retire mysteriously to a potting-house and remain there for about five minutes."

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McIndoe responded to the McGinlay comments published in the Daily Mail; however, it appears by reports that the Daily Mail never published his letter in response. Below was published by Light on March 25th, 1932:

DUNCAN MEDIUMSHIP

MR. J. B. M'INDOE, President of the Spiritualists' National Union, forwards us a copy of a letter which he has sent to the *Daily Mail* in regard to Mrs. Duncan's mediumship. It is as follows:

"WOMAN'S TELEPLASM TRICKERY"

To the Editor of the "Daily Mail."

Sir,—My attention has been drawn to the sworn statement under the above heading in your issue of March 7th, made to the Solicitors of the National Laboratory for Psychical Research, of which Mr. Harry Price is the Honorary Director.

During my investigations into the circumstances of Mrs. Duncan's return from London, immediately thereafter in June last I met a young woman who said she had been Mrs. Duncan's servant at Thornton Heath and had returned to Scotland with her. Mrs. Duncan confirmed this.

The statements this young woman made to me then are directly and utterly at variance with those in the sworn statement. These are:—That Mrs. Duncan took three strips of butter muslin with her from Dundee; that she sent the servant to purchase butter muslin at Thornton Heath; and that she gave her strips of it to wash after her seances.

It is really pathetic to think that Mr. Price, who poses as demanding a very high standard of evidence, attaches sufficient importance to it to publish it. Like his theory of regurgitation, it will not stand examination in the light of facts recorded in his book "Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship."

Mrs. Duncan commenced her sittings under the London Spiritualist Alliance early in March 1931, after submitting to a series of test sittings by them. Mr. Price's photos were taken at sittings towards the end of May. And now, months afterwards, we are asked to believe that this domestic identifies the "teleplasm" seen in these photographs "as consisting of these identical pieces of butter muslin."

Clearly, a domestic servant with such unique powers of observation or imagination is sadly out of her proper sphere. Mr. Price should enroll her on his staff of expert observers.

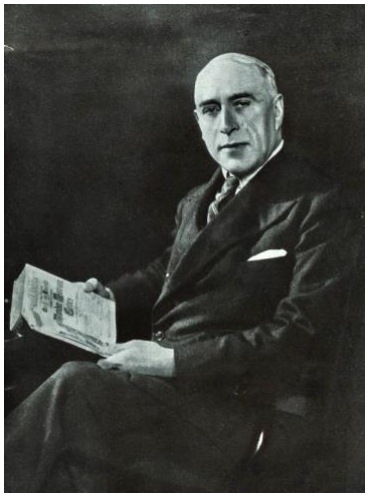
Obviously, this butter muslin must either have been distorted out of all possible recognition by the alleged repeated regurgitations and washings, or else must have been carefully preserved and, by some strange coincidence and extreme stupidity on the part

of Mrs. Duncan, used by her on those occasions when photos were taken, by prior arrangement of which Mr. and Mrs. Duncan were well aware.

This is the quality of the testimony which Mr. Price considers suitable for bolstering up the crumbling charge of fraud he has broadcasted against a poor woman. It is indeed appropriate.

—~—☼—~—

What can be concluded?



What value can be placed, if any, on these uncorroborated statements by Mary McGinlay? They were taken seriously, or at least used to their best advantage by Harry Price to keep the London Psychical Laboratory's (LPL), and the National Laboratory of Psychical Research's (NLPR) claim of regurgitation alive at Helen Duncan's expense.

Up until when the NLPR received a letter on February 2nd, 1932, the name of Miss Mary McGinlay was virtually unknown outside the Duncan household. The NLPR states (written by Price) in their added "Appendix H Supplement to "Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship" ":

> Miss McGinlay left London for the North on Wednesday, February 24th, 1932. No money or presents were paid to her for the information received by the Laboratory Officials: only her travelling expenses were given her and her hotel bill was settled by the Laboratory.

This statement is not strictly true; a letter was received by Harry Price on February 9th, 1932:[15]

> Dear Mr. Price,
>
> I have just received your letter, and I am very thankful to you, for your kindness I will certainly come on Feb. 15th I could come any day this week if you want me to. I don't know what the fare to London is, but I know it will cost about five pounds to get me an outfit, and Mr. Price if it is possible I would like to get work in London.
>
> Faithfully Yours
> Mary McGinlay

The following day Price replies and a quote from the letter reads:

> The ordinary return fare is 5 pound 13 0d.—but if possible, try and get a cheap ticket. But in any case, please catch the 8.20 train from Dundee next Monday morning.
>
> I am enclosing a cheque for 10 pounds for your return fare and for any clothes, etc. You want to get. But one of our Members, Mrs. Richards, has already sent some clothes which may be useful to you.
>
> I should think it would be very easy for you to get a situation in London.

After Miss McGinlay had her meeting with the NLPR, Price records in the Appendix H Supplement as previously noted: "Miss McGinlay left London for the North on Wednesday, February 24th, 1932". She travelled to Darlington to her future in-laws and noted in her letter quoted below, received by Price on February 26th:

[15] Copy of the Mary McGinlay's Declaration and letters: Harry Price Archive: Helen Duncan papers: Senate House Library (University of London) Document Supply Service, Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HU.

Dear Mr. Price,

I am writing to let you know I arrived in Darlington alright and I am sure I could not have done any better, my boy's Mother and Father have been most kind. I should like to get married some time next week but I need some money before we can do it. Please don't think I am trying to take advantage of your kindness Mr. Price, but I would be more than pleased if you could see your way, to give us a little help. I hope you won't be angry with me for writing you. But I would do anything to settle down with my boy I just can't go without him. I will close, hoping you will answer this few lines.

Yours Sincerely,
Molly McGinlay

signature

PS Give my regards to Ethel

Ethel was Miss Ethel Beenham, the secretary to the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. Price responded on February 29th:

Dear Miss McGinlay,

Thank you for your letter which I received on Friday morning. I am interested to hear that you are being married so soon and wish I could help you in the way that you suggest. But unfortunately, we have no funds for such a purpose and I regret very much that I cannot, myself, afford to pay any more. As it is, I have been compelled to pay for the expenses incurred through your visit to London.

Trusting that you will have every happiness for the future.

Yours sincerely,
Harry Price





To fully understand my comments here the reader needs to have read the Pioneer article, "Helen Duncan –Regurgitation", as referenced at the beginning of this article: [16]



It may seem rather *coincidental to the reader that Miss McGinlay's Declaration tends to touch on and strongly emphasises the key points which determined that Helen Duncan was fraudulent during their investigations! Primarily with mention of: cheesecloth / butter* muslin with tears, worn and frayed at the edges, etc, the rubber gloves, *whites* of eggs, urine, etc.; one may also mention the crafting of Mr Duncan's suspicions, and that his wife, on occasion, secreted stuff on her person and Mrs Duncan's comments not to tell her husband! It could be further suggested that Miss McGinlay was possibly consciously or subconsciously influenced or coerced by Mr Price and the NLPR Council by the showing of their reports and séance photographs of the rubber gloves and their scientific testing of the alleged teleplasm found to be containing egg and urine and, for example, the said butter-muslin/cheesecloth-like material, with remarks to the former maid, like: *Did the holes, tears, worn and frayed at the edges, etc. look like this*?

[16] Direct link to the first article:
https://www.snu.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=1f6d31fc-f4a1-4c6f-b026-d57b40f91f1f

One reason I mentioned the *possibility* of the maid's signed Declaration as being influenced is the phraseology she used, for example: "After we had been in London about three weeks, Mrs. Duncan gave a sitting at the house in which we were staying, which had been secured for her by the spiritualists, at Thornton Heath." Casual readers of the psychic press reading the NLPR reports would not necessarily understand the full meaning or understanding of the comment: … *secured for her by the spiritualists …*! This is how Harry Price in the reports referred to the London Psychical Laboratory, which was the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance; [17] it may appear strange that Mary McGinlay would also use the same phraseology in *her* statement.

It is also noted in the reports here published that the NLPR stated: *No money or presents were paid to her for the information received by the Laboratory Officials: only her travelling expenses were given her and her hotel bill was settled by the Laboratory*. After McGinlay left the NLPR to join her fiancé in Darlington she asked Price for additional money for her upcoming wedding. Price replied: *I regret very much that I cannot, myself, afford to pay any more. As it is, I have been compelled to pay for the expenses incurred through your visit to London*. So, one may ask what expenses did *he actually* pay himself which could give rise to some claims that the whole visit of Mary McGinlay was in fact orchestrated by Price himself.

Perhaps it is simply that Miss McGinlay felt she should travel from Scotland to London to give an honest account of what she experienced at the Duncan residence, leading to her recounting her story under oath to reinforce the findings of the researchers. But why did she approach the National Laboratory of Psychical Research and not the London Psychical Laboratory, which had investigated the medium for a longer period, had paid for housing at Beulah Crescent, Thornton Heath, Surrey, etc., and had come to the same conclusions as the NLPR?!

Why would Miss McGinlay bother, given that she was not a Spiritualist or a psychical researcher and appears to have held no special interest in the subject? One obvious motive would be to sell her story, or to get back at Helen Duncan for whatever reason, possibly a combination of both.

If the reader backtracks to John McIndoe's letter published in this article:

> During my investigations into the circumstances of Mrs. Duncan's return from London, immediately thereafter in June last I met a young woman who said she had been Mrs. Duncan's servant at Thornton Heath and had returned to Scotland with her. Mrs. Duncan confirmed this.
>
> The statements this young woman made to me then are directly and utterly at variance with those in the sworn statement. These are:—That Mrs. Duncan took three strips of butter muslin with her from Dundee; that she sent the servant to purchase butter muslin at Thornton Heath; and that she gave her strips of it to wash after her seances.

This was published by Light on March 25th, 1932. The Duncans, along with McGinlay, left London for Leith, Scotland on June 23rd, 1931. It is very confusing as to when McIndoe took the statements from the maid; it is apparent that she no longer worked for the Duncans. I mention this because historian Malcolm Gaskill notes in his 2001 book on Helen Duncan, "Hellish Nell Last of Britain's witches", chapter 4, p. 143:

> "… One day early in 1932 a man, probably a journalist, stopped Bella [18] and Mary in the street and for £10 — probably as much as the maid was paid in a month — was told

[17] Some of them, I understand, did not claim to be Spiritualists.

[18] Sixteen-year-old daughter of the Duncans (re Gaskill).

> that they kept masks and a dummy in the bathroom. At home the girls admitted this, causing Henry to remark that the price of Judas had risen, and adding to Gena's distrust of Mary who shortly afterwards was dismissed and went home to Dundee. Helen's belief that Harry Price was behind this incident may have contained some truth. In February 1932 Price received a letter from Mary McGinlay who had read a newspaper article of his and thought he might like to hear her stories …"

Further, Robert Hartley in his 2007 book on Helen Duncan, "Helen Duncan the Mystery Show Trial", p. 37, states:

> "… one day a neighbour told Helen that a man had come to the area and had been asking questions. The man had approached neighbours and had asked whether they had been to one of her seances and whether any suspicions had been raised. The man eventually spoke to Helen's daughter Bella and maid Mary McGinlay in the street outside their home. He asked questions about Helen's work and mentioned shop dummies, masks and white material. When confronted by Helen, Bella and Mary claimed that they regarded it as a joke that they had played along with him and said these items were kept in the bathroom. The man made notes and seemed very pleased and he handed them £10. Helen was very upset but there was not much she could do. She suspected that Harry Price might be behind it."

Both books are well-researched, compared to earlier books on Helen Duncan. Both quotes are similar; Gaskill references his information from the Daily Mail, March 7th, 1932, which John McIndoe replied to but his letter was not printed. Gaskill in his quote mentions "Gena's distrust of Mary", referring to Gena Brealey, who in 1985 published a book about her mother, "The Two Worlds of Helen Duncan". Unfortunately, little serious historical notice can be taken from this book, as it leans away from the facts of the story with numerous errors.

In Gena's recognition of the maid, who is only referred to as "Mary" in Chapter 13, p. 60, she incorrectly notes the reason for Mary's employment, which is evident as referenced within this article:

> "Bella, the oldest girl, had left school at fourteen and was working, but Henry and Helen felt she was still too young to be left alone, so they decided to employ Mary, a young girl they both knew, to look after the home and be company for Bella. The arrangement seemed to work quite well".

The story is similar to Gaskill's and Hartley's quotes:

> "Within a week of the episode Mary gave notice to the Duncans, saying she had found another position and wanted to leave. Later the family was informed that Mary had gone to London, all expenses paid for by a gentleman who was investigating psychic phenomena".

Whatever the *true* motives of the former maid were, they have been lost in time but the name of Harry Price is never far away when the name Helen Duncan is referred to, although in my opinion some of the claims about the extent of Price's involvement or interests are purely speculative. Not long after the McGinlay affair another allegation against the medium became public, leading to her first Edinburgh trial in May 1933.

The SNU President, John McIndoe, was arranging Duncan's bookings on the understanding that, for the present, she gave no sittings without his cognisance. However, she took bookings without agreement with McIndoe and became involved with Esson Maule, of Stafford Street, Edinburgh. On January 5th, 1933 at a séance, Miss Maule seized the form of Duncan's child control "Peggy", which was claimed by Maule and others to be Duncan's undervest. In court

Duncan was found guilty of fraud and fined £10. An SNU sub-committee was appointed to look at the situation which had arisen from the prosecution and conviction. Their unanimous conclusion was that the alleged facts of the case were not "supported by the weight of evidence at the trial." President John McIndoe agreed and after a lengthy discussion at the SNU Conference held in Doncaster on July 1st, 1933 a resolution was passed approving the sub-committee's report by fifty-seven votes to two, so that Duncan was innocent and her Diploma remained.

> Harder to deny was the suggestion from other quarters, not least from the Duncans, that Price had set the whole thing up. The machinery of entrapment – advertising for sitters who would be credible witnesses, ensuring that Mrs Duncan took the money (and left a receipt), [19] securing the signed evidence of the undervest, the making of a photographic record – all bore his trademark. [20]

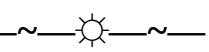
For further information please see "Helen Duncan, Esson Maule and Harry Price – Paul J. Gaunt". [21] At Duncan's second trial held at the Old Bailey, which started on Thursday 23rd March, 1944, Harry Price had to decline to be an expert witness as he had been suffering with angina, although he did attend on at least one day; however, he did contribute, sending Chief Constable West a copy of "Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship", previously referenced, this being passed on to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). The prosecutors were John Maude K.C. and Henry Elam. Maude considered that Mary McGinlay should be present:

> "… so that she could be 'called in rebuttal' should the Defence attempt to demonstrate Helen Duncan's good character and most especially if Helen went into the witness box. The stereograms in Price's book were also invaluable ammunition for cross-examination and would corroborate Cross's [22] assertion that the ectoplasm was really old cheesecloth."[23]

Mary McGinlay was not called by the prosecution and Harry Price's contribution of the "Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship" (Bulletin of the NLPR), along with some other items, were also not used in the prosecution of,

Victoria Helen McCrae Duncan
(née MacFarlane)

November 25th, 1897 – December 6th, 1956



[19] Receipts were also carefully documented by the prosecution for Helen's second trial held at the Old Bailey, which started on Thursday 23rd March, 1944; on day seven of the trial, Friday 31st March, 1944, Mrs Helen Duncan and her co-defendants were found guilty on the first count of the indictment for conspiracy to contravene the Witchcraft Act. The jury was discharged from giving a verdict on the other six counts. The Recorder considered his course of action over the weekend and sentenced the accused on the morning of Monday 3rd April, 1944. On Friday September 22nd, 1944, Helen Duncan, after serving 172 days of her nine-month sentence, was released from HM Prison Holloway.

[20] Gaskill quote, pages 161/162.

[21] See Psypioneer, Vol .11, Nos. 10/11, November 2015: "Helen Duncan Special"; see contents page for link.

[22] It was War Reserve Officer Cross who dived on to the alleged materialised figure and grabbed it but his account was that it was a piece of cloth over Helen's head and it was snatched away by a member of the audience.

[23] Gaskill quote, page 202.

JAMES JOHNSON MORSE

(1848 - 1919)

J.J. Morse became Hon. President of the Spiritualists' National Union for his immense contribution to national organisation. This welcomed honour was given at the 121st SNU AGM by its President, Jackie Wright, at Norwich on July 15th, 2023. Minister Jackie Wright in her Presidential speech stated of Morse

> "… that he was called by W.T. Stead the Bishop of Spiritualism. Morse was well known for his exceptional trance mediumship, inspired orations and his work in forming our Union, and it is for his work in the formation and administration of the Union that we are appointing Morse to the position of Honorary President.
>
> "Morse's legacy deserves to be recognised, so today I am unveiling an annual award presented on the birthday of the Union, the 18th October, which will be awarded to the District Council which has been the most active in helping the churches and promoting the religion of Spiritualism in their individual area."

Minister Jackie Wright, Chair of the Arthur Findlay College, commissioned a portrait of James J. Morse, together with his chief control "Tien Sien Tie," [24] by the psychic artist Richard Stuttle, who is the son of Alan Stuttle, a senior tutor at the College. Just prior to the birthday of the Union, on the 18th October, Richard is seen here presenting the SNU President with this wonderful oil painting of our Hon. President, which is now displayed in the corridor next to the Lecture Room at the Arthur Findlay College with an appropriate plaque.



[24] For the development of James Morse and when his lecturing control, Tien Sien Tie, first announced his presence, please see Pioneer, Vol. 5, No. 1: "First Public Developing Circles Robert Cogman Mrs. Mary Main".

THE FIRST J.J. MORSE AWARD was awarded to the South Yorkshire District Council; this was announced on the birthday of the Union, 18th October 2023, in the Britten Museum & Library housed at the Arthur Findlay College via a video recording by President Jackie Wright. [25] The Museum was indeed a perfect setting given that Emma Hardinge Britten was a long-time friend of Morse, who undertook part of Emma's funeral service with the veteran medium John Lamont. [26] Morse was also instrumental in the first stages of setting up a memorial fund for Emma Hardinge Britten, resulting in the "Britten Memorial Trust" after her death in 1899 and in part resulting in the Union's Britten Museum & Library, where in the video referred to Richard's striking oil painting of Morse was revealed.



In the same issue of the Pioneer of our President's announcement of the J.J. Morse award (Vol. 10, No. 3) an article followed, "The early years to establish a national organisation", where it notes the early districts where organisation was most prominent:

"The stimulus of organisation within the movement was always the North of England, as Morse reiterates in his abovementioned paper:

"The next, and as a working body, by far the most successful ever made, though distinctly local, instead of national, was the Lancashire District Committee, whose labours still bear fruit, while following, and upon similar, but not identical lines, is the Yorkshire Committee, now known as the Yorkshire Spiritual Union …"

Further noted by the editor in the article:

> "The Lancashire Committee had done much of the missionary groundwork of spreading Spiritualism but uniting the societies in their districts with the supply of good speakers, literature, etc. appears to have taken a back seat since its calling of the 1880 General Conference in an attempt to form a national organisation. This had not yielded the wider influence hoped for when urging societies to form themselves into district committees, etc. The most prominent to continue in its strength was the Yorkshire District Spiritualists' Committee, later renamed as the Yorkshire Spiritual Union."

The forming of a National Spiritualist Organisation was indeed an arduously long task by our pioneers, but we can note that, along with the Lancashire District Committee, Yorkshire was very prominent and active long before the formation of the Spiritualists' National Federation, later reconstituted as the Union.



The photograph shows SNU President Jackie Wright presenting the new annual J.J. Morse Award to the first ever recipient, the President of the South Yorkshire District Council, Minister June English, which was received at Barnsley National Spiritualist Church.

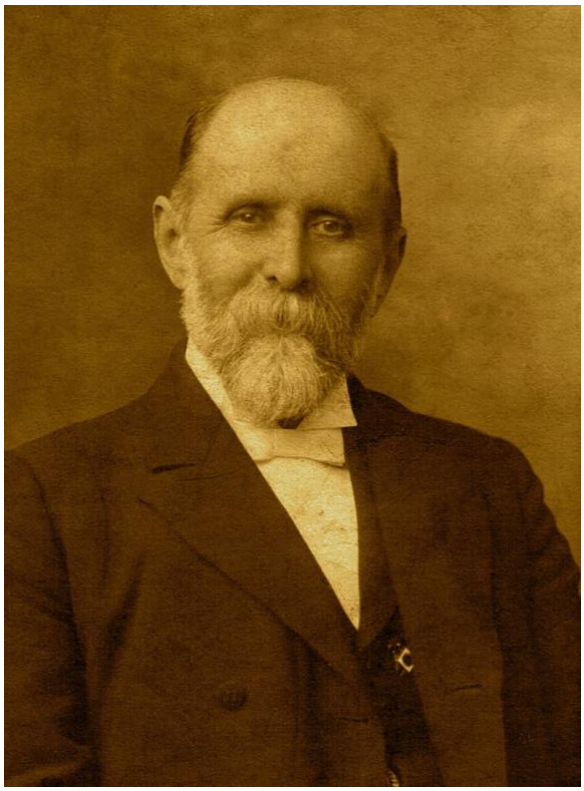
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[25] Available on the SNU Facebook page.

[26] See Pioneer, Vol. 8, No. 6: "Emma Hardinge Britten: Last public appearance", "Funeral", and "Editor's Note".

Below is a quote from a lecture by Tien Sien Tie through his medium, James J. Morse, which is taken from the Two Worlds, December 28th, 1934:

THE CITY OF RELIGION



Much is said in these days about the remarkable trance oratory which was a feature of the Spiritualist platform in the 'Eighties. But many of our readers are familiar with the claim only. Below we reproduce part of a hitherto unpublished address by a famous—perhaps the greatest—trance medium. About a quarter only of the whole address is published here.

IT would sound, perhaps, somewhat singular to assert that the study of superstition is the surest way to a knowledge of religion. Yet, startling as such a presumption might appear at first sight, it contains certain elements of essential truth, for out of the superstitions of the past the religions of to-day have been evolved.

But the study of superstition is usually pursued—for it is a real study in these times—for the purpose of exploding the superstition, based *a priori* upon the supposition that all superstitions are necessarily false.

If the study were directed to explain the superstition, to seek for its origin, and trace out its relation to different phenomena in nature correlated to it, we venture to assert the world's knowledge would be greatly enriched, and many of the perplexing questions that afflict the mind of modern thought would obtain an easier and earlier solution than appears to be probable to-day.

Value of Psychology

We have no desire to make this youngest—and yet, at the same time, as we have said on previous occasions, the oldest—of all the sciences—Psychology—a sort of universal medium for interpreting the experiences of the race at large on every question that affects mankind. Yet it is so far-reaching and so comprehensive in its character that we must needs run somewhat serious risks of apparently endeavouring to place the latter in the position we have just cautioned you against.

The study of psychology in its application to the progress of religious practice and to the evolution of religious belief, is so tempting a field of inquiry and research that one is almost inclined to say in that direction, at least, it has a far wider application and a far closer relationship to all that makes up religion, than any other science or form of thought with which the world is familiar.

Psychology, dealing as it does with the practical manifestations of the occult powers of man's soul, must necessarily be concerned in every question which involves the apparent operation of those powers. But we wish again to caution you that, when we speak of the occult powers of man's soul, we are not using that term "occult" in any superstitious sense, or in any magic sense; we simply and only mean occult because but little understood, becaused veiled through lack of knowledge; occult no longer when careful investigation has revealed the facts and brought to light the methods and operations whereby these psychical facts become realities. That is all.

Psychic Science and Religion

Observe, then, that with the occult facts of man's spiritual nature in the bringing to light of those facts which are rising to the surface as a result of the methods of modern inquiry, Psychical Science is indeed the hand-maid of real religious culture, is an aid and adjunct to the study of all doctrines concerning the nature of man's soul, and must inevitably be welcomed by the world of religion as one of the happy means whereby its own qualities may be resolved, and much of the rubbish which cumbers the path of religious life be swept away forever.

In tracing out the religious history of the world, as is frequently asserted, the farther you go back, the lower do you descend in reason, in spirituality—in all that adds grace and dignity to religious truth, in a word. There are those, too, who assert that even on an ordinary examination of the current religion in your midst, there are so many dark spots, so many remnants of superstitious beliefs, unproved assertions, unprovable assertions, and opinions that are more than questionable, that the sceptic is inclined to say, "The foundation is bad; the evil still remains. Culture is impossible in such matters. Let us rather trust to Nature and her laws than turn our thoughts to the examination of religion, which has so much of superstition and so little of verifiable fact."

We venture to assert that this argument is, to a large extent, fallacious; that it is a waste of time to put the question in such a form. That there are black spots, that there are remnants of superstitious ideas, that there are even evils connected with theology and its practices, we are willing enough to admit. But that there are other things besides, is what we are also bound to assert.

Let us put the matter before you in the form of an illustration that perhaps will to a large extent make our meaning even more clear. The development of the world's religious thought may be likened somewhat to the founding and building of a city. At first two or three men congregate in some spot that will apparently offer them the advantages they are in search of. Literally, they pitch their tents. For a time in simple life, without the complex regulations of civilisation, they pursue the even tenor of their way. They dig, they hunt, they perform such labour as their simple requirements call for.

Presently, however, the tent gives place to a better structure. The timber of the adjacent forests has been under contribution, and many a lordly giant of the ages lies prone upon the forest floor. The branches are cut off and the logs are gathered to where these few pioneers have pitched their tents. With laborious effort, their first rude home is built: the log hut supplants the tent. In time others join them. As their numbers increase, their social condition grows somewhat more complex. Their requirements increase, and their efforts to minister to those requirements have also to be increased. In time a log is split asunder, sawn into rough boards, and the first dim promise of the city stands disclosed. A rough board shanty usurps the old log cabin, and something of a street begins to show itself. Planks are laid for walks, and some attempt is made to create a road.

The fame of this Athens spreads abroad! Others are attracted, and as the years roll by the rough board shanty is supplanted by the frame building. The streets are run, roads are better made, and something of civil life and government begins to manifest itself. Trade increases, industries are established, and the hardy descendants of the first pioneers still labour on in the full trust that by and by they will build a city second to none. Presently brick and stone displace the frame buildings, as in turn they displaced the shanty, which in its turn displaced the humble log cabin of the pioneer, and helped to lay aside the memories, even, of the tents of those first settlers. Stable government, social life, civil procedure, trade, commerce, all begin to show themselves.

The Urge of Necessity

Here in the wilderness, where once was solitude, is now the hive of busy industry, singing aloud with the hum of active work. There comes a fire, which always comes when it is least required, it seems, and the best part of this rising city is devastated, and blackened ruins stare the astonished citizens in the face. But energy, resource, activity combine, and the charred remains are swept away and better buildings take their place. The city grows. The rush and whirl and worry of commercial life brings to this place a class who can afford better dwellings, not exactly a class of leisure, but a class who can command means enough to enjoy better facilities than they can find right within the area of their daily avocations. So, in answer to the demands of that class, there comes the suburban home, outside the rush and whirl of daily life and toil, in the quiet country circling about. And as the years roll by, the city grows on. Its residential suburbs increase in beauty and in area, and the fame of this city spreads still further abroad.

A certain traveller, shall we say, makes up his mind that he will visit this city. He comes from far, far away, to visit this wonderful city that has grown so fair and beautiful within so short a time. He comes prepared to see a city, wonderful indeed, of palaces. Undoubtedly, the very best is shown to him, this public building, that bank, this other noble edifice, this wide plaza, that magnificent fountain—all are pointed out, and he is in raptures with all he sees.

Poverty and Misery

Presently he takes a stroll by himself. Suddenly he comes to a poorer quarter of the city. Old houses, bad streets, poorly lighted, indifferent pavements, sanitation dreadful, hardly decent; poverty, tags, misery—vice, even. He begins to think that this is not very much of a city after all. He wonders if there are more spots like this. He travels afield, and finds other districts somewhat similar. He begins to entertain a very poor opinion of this city, and thinks that it is all outward show; that if the citizens had any real enterprise or public spirit in them they would never tolerate these spots and blots. He returns to his friends, and tells them of his discoveries. They do not appear to be particularly abashed. There are even city fathers who know these things, and simply say, in a sort of superior way, “Wait and we will show you the rest of our beautiful city life, and then leave you to judge.”

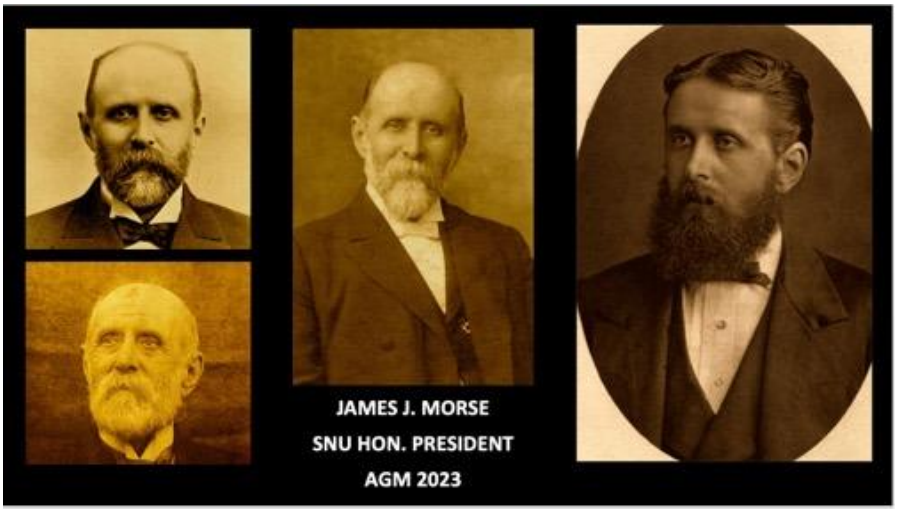
So the next day they drive him out into the suburbs. There he finds handsome homes, trim lawns, trees, flowers, fruits; every evidence of comfort, affluence, art, and beauty. He begins again to think it is a very beautiful city after all. But, those spots and blots! He asks an explanation for them, and the answer that we can give him is the keynote of the situation that we have sketched in parable as representing the growth of religion.

The Experience of Religion

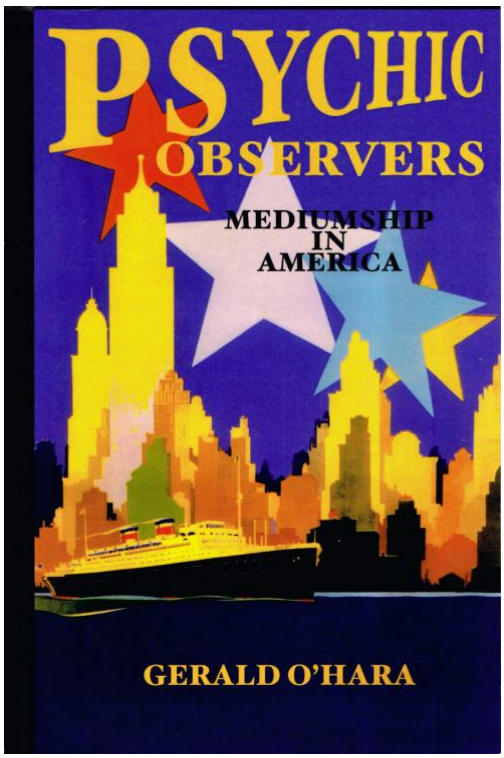
When men in primeval times sought for settled convictions, barren was the ground of experience. Little or nothing had they to house themselves with. But as intellect expanded, and the spiritual part of man asserted itself, the first dim outlines of spiritual truth, religion, began to shape themselves. And in the dim religions of bygone ages, men built the first log cabins of their faith, and were glad to live therein, knowing nothing better at that time. But as the religious life expanded, as the higher nature of man asserted itself, nay, even as these psychic possibilities—something of which we have spoken of, but much more of which still remains to be placed before you—these psychic faculties began to assert themselves, the philosophy of life and death was formulated. The board shanty of primeval thought was builded.

But ever and anon, there are those who still prefer to dwell in the foggy land of the past, who are incapable of keeping up with the march of progress, who are content because unfitted to rise beyond that which they have. Hence, in that fair city of religious

growth, you find these dwellers in the by-streets and alleys, these districts of superstitious thought and feeling, and old experiences, to which newer thoughts have given proper interpretations, are reverenced in these lower quarters, and still hold for their ancient value. And the traveller who wishes to explore the rise and progress of the world's religion must deal with these matters of ignorance and superstition, and relics of bygone barbarous thoughts, as part and parcel of the wholesome truths and wider knowledge that the world is blessed with to-day.



PSYCHIC OBSERVER



"Psychic Observer" was an American Spiritualist newspaper from 1938 to 1963, perhaps best explained as an American version of the London-based "Psychic News", which started in 1932. (Pioneer, Vol. 10, No. 2: "Psychic Observers: Mediumship in America – Gerald O'Hara B.Sc.") Gerald has published numerous books on Spiritualist history; more recently he has been focusing on "Mediumship in America". The first book in this series is "I Come to the Garden" in 2017, followed by "Ethel Parish Post" in 2020, bringing the reader to "Psychic Observers", which was reviewed in the above-mentioned issue of Pioneer. Psychic Observers tells the story of this important publication and the Spiritualist movement in America during this same period.

Gerald informed me that these valuable American newspapers have been further digitalised and are now freely available from "The International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals" (IAPSOP) website.

Author Gerald O'Hara notes below:

Spiritualism in the USA, Research Breakthrough

Mid-twentieth century American Spiritualism is, to most British people, something of an enigma. The nineteenth century is well documented and available for research via books, websites and notably via the International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals (IAPSOP).[27] The mid-20th century, up to now, however, has been neglected because of the difficulties of accessing research materials, especially the "Psychic Observer", America's homage to the British "Psychic News", upon which it was closely modelled.

The British movement, it has been assessed, was similar in size to the American but in a much smaller country. Structurally, British Spiritualism during the 1930s had two major Spiritualist movements (The Spiritualists' National Union and The Greater World Christian Spiritualists League, GWSL).[28] The culture of British Spiritualism was more coherent, yet diverse, and capable of national debate through its publications. In the mid-1930s, the UK and USA boasted approximately 1,000 churches, psychic colleges and psychical research societies.[29] The UK, because of its size, unlike the American movement, boasted several national newspapers and magazines.

[27] Historian Marc Demarest, who runs the excellent research website, "The International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals" (IAPSOP): http://iapsop.com/

[28] The Greater World Christian Spiritualists League (GWCSL), founded on May 30th, 1931, later known as the Greater World Christian Spiritualist Association (GWCSA).

[29] There have been numerous claims throughout the history of Spiritualism about the number of Spiritualists, churches, societies, etc. The sources of Gerald's information are (1) The National Spiritualist Association (NSA), now The National Spiritualist Association of Churches, (2) the various other larger organisations such as The International General Assembly of Spiritualists (IGAS), The Spiritualist Episcopal Church, etc., (3) State associations of Spiritualists, (4) Hartman's Directory 1930/1931, and, finally, (5) published lists from Progressive Thinker, Psychic Observer and Chimes. The local press listed churches in the larger cities, but that was mostly paid for, except for Sundays.

However, the USA, with a much greater landmass, had at least 27 organizations. Nationally in America, authority fractured and there was little cooperation between associations that competed for followers. The USA had no national press to speak of until 1938, when the Psychic Observer was launched as a national newspaper.

Research in the field of mid-century American Spiritualism opened up with the digitizing of archives of Camp Chesterfield by its archivist, Professor Todd Jay Leonard. The archive is available via the Indiana University library.[30] In the UK, the "Spiritual Truth Foundation" website hosts a collection of Psychic Observers. In recent years, Piet Nickle, a resident of Camp Chesterfield, has published "Chesterfield Exposé" and contributed a lot of material from his archives to researchers, including this writer.



The contribution to our understanding of mid-20th century American Spiritualism is greatly enriched by the digitization of Piet Nickle's personal holdings of Psychic Observer, 1938-1961. These are now available via IAPSOP and the field of mid-century American Spiritualism is now greatly widened to researchers.

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As a point of historic interest:

Spiritual Truth Foundation

The above article references the Spiritual Truth Foundation (STF), which is ongoing today and has played a substantial place in Spiritualist history; its website is well worth viewing. It owns the copyright of the teachings of Silver Birch and the books are available for purchase. There are three archived recordings, two by former SNU Presidents Harold Vigurs and Eric Hatton, a former trustee of the STF, and also a trance address by Estelle Roberts, with Red Cloud speaking. However, what caught my eye is their statement regarding the foundation of the STF:

> The Spiritual Truth Foundation was founded by Maurice Barbanell, medium for the legendary Silver Birch, on 15th February 1968. Its charitable purposes include the promotion of the religious philosophy of Spiritualism, the promotion and advancement of spiritual healing, and the making of grants to Spiritualists who are experiencing financial hardship.

It appears that Maurice Barbanell was not the sole founder of the Spiritual Truth Foundation. More importantly, it held legal and charitable status and was flourishing in 1965, much earlier than the date given. Given the historic importance of the STF, below shows its beginnings as outlined and published by Maurice Barbanell in Psychic News.

Psychic News published on May 29th, 1965 an article by former SNU President Percy Wilson (1950-1953), Chairman, Psychic Press Ltd:

[30] https://ulib.iupui.edu/digitalcollections/CampChesterfield

Will this deed make psychic history?

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

Some two years ago I made an announcement in *Psychic News* regarding the control of Psychic Press Ltd. This company is responsible for publishing *Psychic News*, for the running of our bookshop, for the Psychic Book Society and for publishing books on Spiritualism and allied subjects.

Three main objects

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

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

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

2. The promotion and advancement of spiritual healing.

3. The relief of poverty.

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

Free to help

Influential support has already been promised for the trust, which will not be linked exclusively to any existing organisation. It will be free to help all genuine Spiritualist and psychic activities, without emphasis on any niceties of interpretation. Arrangements are being made for the trust to have a controlling interest in Psychic Press Ltd., the Two Worlds Publishing Co. Ltd., and the Psychic Book Club Ltd.

It is the intention of the trustees to interpret the wide powers that are given to them in the trust deed in the most generous ways (provided they are legally "charitable") and so provide a medium for the fruitful expression of the benevolence of all concerned with the diffusion of the knowledge of spirit power.

As an example of their forward-looking policy the trustees have invited two of their younger members, David Dutton and Gordon Adams, to be chairman and secretary respectively of the trust.

The support of well-wishers is earnestly sought, whether in prayer, in conscious thought, or in the more material ways of gifts to the trust of shares in any of the subsidiary enterprises, of donations or of legacies. Communications should be addressed to Gordon Adams at 23 Great Queen Street, London, W.C.2.

This is the most hopeful adventure in the expansion of Spiritualist philosophy and charitable activity that I have witnessed in my earthly lifetime.

As the representative of a third generation of Spiritualists, and the father and uncle, grandfather and great-uncle of the next two generations, I commend it to the attention

and active support of all who long for the more effective breakthrough of spirit power to the denser atmosphere of this sorely stressed material world.

The motto of the trust will surely be that of the British Crown; "Ich Dien' (I Serve).

Percy Wilson
Chairman, Psychic Press Ltd.

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Psychic News further published on June 26th, 1965:

Registered charity

FAR more quickly than was anticipated, the Charity Commissioners have registered the Spiritual Truth Foundation. News of its official registration came last week.

This is the history-making trust which will have a controlling interest in Psychic News, "Two Worlds" and their associated publishing enterprises.[31]

Those of us intimately concerned in all the long and arduous preparations of this trust deed are convinced that it will be one of the most tremendous contributions to Spiritualism and is a splendid augury for its future.

Soon after preparations were well under way to celebrate the founding of the Spiritual Truth Foundation with a unique gathering of well-known mediums and Spiritualists, as well as leading figures in the movement, in the form of a dinner dance to commemorate the founding of the STF.

However, the dinner dance was not only to celebrated the establishment of the Spiritual Truth Foundation but also a special pioneer medium's retirement whose contribution to the Spiritualist movement lasted for four decades and who has graced the pages of Pioneer on numerous occasions, Helen Hughes.

The article below was published in Psychic News on July 10th, 1965:

Swan song for Helen Hughes

By Maurice Barbanell

AFTER 40 years' selfless service, Helen Hughes, one of our greatest mediums, is bowing out. Her swan song will be her appearance as a guest of honour at the dinner and dance we are organising in co-operation with "Two Worlds" on November 20.

This function will celebrate the establishment of the Spiritual Truth Foundation, with which these two publications are intimately concerned.

Helen, beloved by thousands all over Britain, will soon be leaving her home near Bournemouth and returning to the northern village where she lived for many years.

War-time work

Apart from being a septuagenarian, Helen has had semiretirement forced on her because of ill-health. This is primarily due to conditions which existed even before she began her mediumship, but were intensified during the war.

[31] From 1965 to 1995 Psychic News was owned by the Spiritual Truth Foundation; in 1995, when STF could no longer sustain PN, the SNU took the paper over, moving it immediately from London to Stansted.

She insisted on fulfilling all her engagements despite the privations involved in wartime travelling, black-outs, bombs, irregular meals and other discomforts. When so many were bereaved, Helen felt it imperative that her divine gift of mediumship should be utilised to give them the only real comfort — evidence of life and love persisting after death.

Brilliant medium

Rightly, she has earned affection in the hearts of thousands to whom she has been the great comforter because of her mediumship.

I remember the first time I appeared with her on platforms in Scotland and was astonished at the number of people who came to thank her — even stopping her in the street to do so. As a result I called her "Helen the well-beloved", a title which has persisted. Helen is a model of how a brilliant medium should behave. She has never exhibited the slightest trace of vanity but has remained modest and almost self-effacing.

She will look back, in her well-deserved retirement, on a long, distinguished service. The Spiritual Truth Foundation trustees felt they expressed the wishes of thousands of Spiritualists when they told Helen last week that they would like her to accept some tangible appreciation.

House as gift

Helen has decided to leave Bournemouth and live close to her daughter Mary in Co. Durham, in case there is need for family nursing in her growing disability. This will mark the end of her public career.

The trustees have asked Helen to buy a house in that area. This will be presented to her as a gift on behalf of the Movement. It will remain in her possession, and that of her devoted husband, Tom, for as long as their earthly lives, and thereafter revert to the trust.

Already this idea has become known to some leading Spiritualists who have expressed a desire to be associated with this gift. Readers who have a similar feeling should send their contributions to the secretary of the Spiritual Trust Foundation at our address, with a note that these should be earmarked for this special purpose.

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The following was published on November 13th, 1965:



Spirit intervention for Helen Hughes

THE debt of gratitude that the Spiritualist movement owes one of its most famous mediums was paid in some measure last week. Legal arrangements to buy a house in which Helen Hughes and her husband will spend the winter of their lives were finalised.

This is the first fruits of the Spiritual Truth Foundation, which has seven well-known Spiritualists as its trustees and with which *Psychic News* is closely concerned. There is in this connection a fascinating story of spirit intervention.

Wartime legacy

Because of increasing disability, mainly due to a wartime legacy of strain and stress in fulfilling her engagements all over Britain, Helen recently decided to spend the rest of her days in the Northern village where she lived for many years and where her married daughter Mary has a house.

Though Helen is surrounded by love and affection in Bournemouth (Hants), where her present home is, she felt she should not rely on strangers, however willing, for the increasing care and attention that her disability imposes and which reduces her mobility. Besides, she was hundreds of miles away from her daughter, a fact which could create a serious problem if urgent help were required.

On a recent visit to this Durham village where Mary lives, Helen made intensive inquiries to find a house in the locality. Alas, these proved fruitless. It seemed as if her cherished desire would not be fulfilled.

Unexpected request

On the last day of her stay, a woman who lives next door to Mary, came in unexpectedly and asked, "Do you know of someone who would like to buy my house?" She and her husband had decided to move elsewhere.

When this news was conveyed to the foundation's trustees, they decided to buy the neighbour's house, obviously the ideal one for Helen. Last week the decision became a fact. It will be a home for Helen and her husband and solves her problem until the end of her earthly days.

On Friday of this week Bournemouth Spiritualists are giving a farewell dinner to Helen. It will be a tribute to the splendid mediumistic services that she has given locally. On November 20 Helen will make her public farewell at the dinner organised by *Psychic News* and "Two Worlds' at London's Royal Garden Hotel. For this, all tickets were sold weeks ago.

Make it practical

The foundation bought this house in which Helen and her husband will live, though it had no funds. It has borrowed the money. Ever since we printed the news of Helen's imminent retirement, she has been inundated with messages of affection and friendship from some of the thousands to whom her superb mediumship has brought tremendous comfort, guidance and inspiration.

Psychic News suggests that these people show their appreciation in tangible form by making contributions to the foundation.

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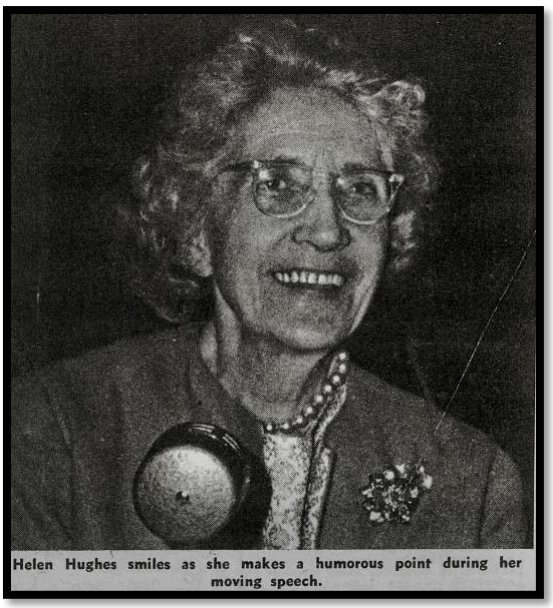
Finally, Psychic News, November 27th, 1965:

Biggest psychic galaxy at Helen Hughes farewell

'ONE OF THE GREAT SERVANTS OF THE SPIRIT WORLD'

'My work has never been a sacrifice'—*says famous medium*

BY ANNE DOOLEY



Helen Hughes smiles as she makes a humorous point during her moving speech.

THE past and the future shook hands last Saturday when 460 leaders and supporters representing every major Spiritualist organisation in Britain, and the greatest assembly of psychic talent, met in London's Royal Garden Hotel. They were there to celebrate the launching of the Spiritual Truth Foundation and to honour its first beneficiary, Helen Hughes, the veteran medium.

It was a notable occasion of goodwill and emotion. The emotion was symbolised in the tears of the diminutive, great hearted guest of honour as she sheltered behind the protective cover of a bouquet of red roses from the storm of applause which greeted her poignant speech-of-the-evening.

Welcoming the great gathering on behalf of *Psychic News* and "Two Worlds" which sponsored the inaugural dinner-dance, Percy Wilson, senior of the foundation's seven trustees and chairman of Psychic Press Ltd., described the evening as "a marvellous coming together."



PERCY WILSON
"A marvellous coming together."

The foundation, he said, was the most hopeful adventure in the expansion of Spiritualist philosophy and charitable activity he had witnessed in his lifetime. It came into being "to give help where help is needed." Its three main objects comprised the promotion of Spiritualism, spiritual healing and the relief of need.

It was a particular happiness to combine the launching of the foundation with a tribute to Helen Hughes, known and loved by all for her work over the past 40 years.

The first of three telegrams read aloud by Wilson produced great applause. Its message of congratulation and good wishes came from Michaela and Armand Denis, the TV personalities, from their Nairobi home.

Proposing a toast to the "guest of honour," Maurice Barbanell told her: "You have set for those who follow on an incomparable example. You took over the torch from Spiritualism's pioneers and gave it a greater and brighter illumination."



See how many of the eight mediums you can identify in this group. They are all at the back. Reading from left to right are: George McAllister, Jessie Nason, Estelle Roberts, Helen Hughes, Ena Twigg, Eileen Blaschke, Stanley Poulton and Joe Benjamin. In front, second from left, is Helen Hughes' daughter, Mary Wilson. Princess Herminder Kumari is in the middle. The others are some of Helen's friends.

Tribute to family

Welcoming the presence of Helen Hughes' daughter Mary, "as good a medium as her mother, if she would only practise in public," and her son George, "a jolly good healer in his own right," Barbanell also paid warm tribute to Helen's husband, Tom, unable to be present because of ill-health.

It was a great but sad occasion, he said, for Helen's own health disabilities, particularly increasing immobility, had decreed "the end of her public road." In the words of the song made famous by Harry Lauder, she had "kept right on to the end."

Amid prolonged applause Barbanell handed to the evening's shy guest the covenant of the foundation's gift. This ensured that Helen and her husband will be provided with a home "for the rest of their earthly days, without paying a farthing." It is sited ideally next door to that of her daughter Mary in the beautiful village of Dalton-le-Dale, Co, Durham.

Barbanell revealed that the foundation, started with a donation of £100 "from a Spiritualist friends of ours", had bought the house with the help of their bank manager. Amid laughter he added:

"He is with us tonight, but he will be surprised to learn on Monday that the foundation's balance is £2 0s. 5d., excluding the overdraft. So he will be glad to hear that a cheque for £100 was handed to me when I arrived this evening."

Where Churches fail

He described Spiritualists as "very privileged people, because we have a knowledge and conviction that cannot be evaluated in terms of money."

It was fitting that they should also be gathered to honour "one of the greatest servants of the spirit that Spiritualism has produced."

All religions were based on belief in an after-life, "Yet there is no Pope, archbishop, bishop, canon, vicar, rector, or rabbi, priest or minister who can *prove* there *is* one. It is only superb mediums like Helen who can do that for them."

Reminding Helen of the thousands of spirit messages she had given in her lifetime's service, he said: "Now I am going to give you one. It came through Lilian Bailey from one of her guides and was, 'Tell Helen that everyone in the spirit world loves her.' "

This was also true of those on earth who had met her, said Barbanell, because she herself always gave so much love wherever she went.

Replying to the toast, the frail bright-eyed, veteran medium said, "I sincerely thank you for being here tonight." For her it was a wonderful occasion, "one of great joy yet commingled with sadness, because I've come to the end of my work in public"

Recalling with deft humour the rigours of pioneering mediumship, she said she was particularly happy to see so many colleagues present, "especially the older ones, including Annie Brittain, Grace Cooke and Estelle Roberts."

Describing herself as "very happy to be the first beneficiary of the Spiritual Truth Foundation," she expressed the hope that it would "grow from success to greater success."

With a momentary break in her voice she added: "I cannot find words to express to you just how I really feel. My work was never a sacrifice, for I loved every moment. Each day brought something fresh."

Describing Spiritualism as "a beacon of light in our lives," applause greeted her expression of the philosophy by which she herself has lived:

"I say to everyone here you will get out of it what you put in. Spiritualism can be a joy to all of us. It has been so with me and I thank God for all of it."

Helen's last public act was to pick from a box the names of two guest speakers to introduce and second the toast to the foundation.

The first, Eric Stuart, Spiritualist Association president, spoke of the difficulties encountered in meeting growing requests from inquirers for free literature on our subject.

'Funds must be ensured'

"The foundation will meet a very great need if it can provide such material," he said. "If the foundation hasn't plenty of funds to back it, we must ensure that it gets them."

His good wishes for the foundation's success were echoed by Canon J. D. Pearce-Higgins, vice-chairman of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies and Vice-Provost of Southwark Cathedral, in the evening's wittiest speech.

His opening sally was that as a Church of England dignitary he was placed in the difficulty of being "on the fringe but not in your movement." When he added: "I have no doubt I am just as critical of your movement as you are of mine," he won the hearts of his hearers.



Canon J. D. Pearce-Higgins' wit and humour caused gusts of laughter.

Protestant phenomenon

More appreciative laughter greeted his view that it was no accident that Spiritualism was a "particularly Protestant phenomenon", since in such countries, for centuries there had been comparatively little teaching about the after-life.

"In Roman Catholic countries they have the after-life mapped out, I think that they have got it wrong, but at least no one in that faith can complain they have not been given some instruction."

The Spiritualist movement, he said, provided a "wonderful corrective". Amid more laughter he described himself as an active "unpaid worker" for the Spiritualist movement. In the last few months he had spent much time giving talks in various parts of England on the evidence for Survival.

His activities had included a "battle royal" with Dr. C. E. M. Hansel (senior lecturer in psychology at Manchester University), "who doesn't seem to believe anyone speaks the truth on this subject."

Welcoming the foundation's launching, the canon said, "Obviously, anything which can co-ordinate your work on the lines Barbanell has mentioned seems to me to be truly admirable. I wish your movement nothing but good."

'The work of the Lord'

Any effort by the foundation "to co-ordinate the activity of all the different movements in Spiritualism" seemed to him to be a thoroughly good thing. "If you can really make some impact you will be doing the work of the Lord in no uncertain fashion."

Urging the need for Spiritualists to be "in the forefront of all good social work", the canon said if he might venture a general criticism it was this "lack of a social gospel".

At present it appeared there was a little too much emphasis "on getting comfort for yourselves, I feel it would commend your purpose more if people could say: 'These Spiritualists are marvellous people. Look at the good work they have undertaken.' I believe this is sound strategy.

"I wish the foundation every good thing, as you have a great deal to teach us all."



David Dutton, in splendid form welcomes the guests of honour at our dinner.

Final speaker of the evening was David Dutton, chairman of the foundation's trustees. Describing himself as "an advertising man", Dutton, who is managing director of the London Press Exchange, assured his fellow-diners he was not going "to do any hidden persuading."

The foundation, he said, sought to promote Spiritualism everywhere. It also ensured the future of Britain's two leading Spiritualist periodicals: *Psychic News* and "Two Worlds".

He reminded them, too, that an overdraft had been obtained in order to buy the house for Helen Hughes. He had been concerned with a campaign 'to raise funds for a well-known London hospital. They used the slogan,—Hospital is falling down."

"I want you to show Helen that the house in which she lives will not fall down," he said. Asking for maximum pledges of financial support, he gave as his parting advice, "Do it now!"

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THE uniqueness of the occasion is demonstrated by the fact that the representatives of all these organisations were present:

The Churches Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, The College of Psychic Science, The Greater World Association, The International Spiritualist Federation, The London District Council of the SNU, The National Federation of Spiritual Healers, The Spiritualist Association of Great Britain, The Spiritualists' National Union, The Union of Spiritualist Mediums, The White Eagle Lodge.

The images that were published in the original article of the dinner dance, which I have reproduced in the above article, were originally taken by Marionne O'Gorman.



Jane Helen Shepherd was born on April 11th 1893 at Adolphus Street, Seaham Harbour, County Durham, the first born of Henry and Margaret.

Helen died in September 1967, aged 74.

NEW SNU PIONEER PAGE

Looking for a specific subject?



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

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

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

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

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



