The PIONEER

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



SNU Presidents

the PIONEER

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or via: www.pauljgaunt.com

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

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Below is taken from *The National Spiritualist*:—[6]

MRS. JESSY GREENWOOD, J.P.

(Chairman Hebden Bridge U.D.C.)



Mrs. J. Greenwood was born at Cawkwell, Lincolnshire May 8th, 1860, and spent all her girlhood's days in these surroundings. At the age of 19, she left home to take a teaching post at Calder, Yorkshire. Here she met Mr. William Greenwood,[7] and was married two later, settling down at Sowerby Bridge, from which centre and the neighbouring town of Hebden Bridge has emanated all the activities which has made and useful to her.

At Sowerby Bridge, Mrs. Greenwood was attracted to the Lyceum, and in her enthusiasm gave her best efforts successively in all the offices it offered. She was elected President of the Lyceum Union in the Jubilee year 1897–8. Together with Messrs. Kitson, Kersey, Venables, Morse, Mason, Todd, Miss Naylor and others she was instrumental in laying the foundation of the organisation now known as the B.S.L.U.[8]

Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood were indeed both active workers locally and nationally, and in the Yorkshire Federation. Later when the S.N.U. was formed under guidance and activity of Hanson G. Hey, Mr. Greenwood became the Treausrer of the Union, which he held until his passing in 1905. Mrs. Greenwood was elected to the S.N.U. Council in 1906, and served two years. Re-elected in 1912 she served continuously until her retirement in 1925. Elected Vice-President 1922, and President 1924-5. She was granted Honorary Membership in 1928.

The year of her election as President concided with the facts that the Union celebrated its 21st birthday, and elected its first woman president. Mrs. Greenwood's greatest service on the Union was work on the Propaganda Committee.

Outside Spiritualism, Mrs. Greenwood has rendered conspicuous service in many directions. In 1905 she was elected a Guardian of the Poor on the Todmorden Board, and remained for six years the only woman member. From this position she passed to service on the Local Education Committee and has been a Governor of the Secondary School some years, and has occupied the Chairmanship of that body.

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[6].—*The National Spiritualist*, No. 61, Vol. VI, July 1929. The photograph in the article is poor quality; the image shown is from Psypioneer archives, date unknown.

[7].—William Greenwood, aged only 44, died on Saturday, April 22, 1905. "The Passing of William Greenwood, Treasurer of the British Spiritualists' National Union." See Psypioneer, Volume 6, No 11: November 2010, pages 317-318.

[8].—B.S.L.U: British Spiritualists' Lyceum Union; the history of this will be given in the next issue.

For 19 years Mrs. Greenwood has been an active worker in the Co-operative Movement, serving on the local Co-operative Society as a Director, and is at the present time Vice-President.

Again in 1921, fresh honours came in her elevation as a County Magistrate, being the first and only woman J.P. to sit on the Todmorden Bench. Four years earlier, Mrs. Greenwood became a member of the Hebden Bridge Urban District Council, and in May of this year the crowning honour was bestowed on her by election as chief Citizen, viz., Chairman of the Urban District Council.

An active life, full of service to her fellow citizens of town and country, and a type of that Spiritualism, which finds religious consolation and inspiration for the daily life of service to humanity.

Below is taken from *The National Spiritualist*:—[9]

MR. R. A. OWEN

(Past President of the S.N.U.)



Mr. Robert A. Owen was born at Bootle, Lancashire, Oct. 27th, 1881. His father was a native of North Wales. Robert was educated at St. John's Church Day School, which he left at the age of 12 years to become a wage earner. When 9 years of age, he was brought into contact with the Lyceum at Daulby Hall, Liverpool and there began the life-long friendship with his colleagues, Mr. E. A. Keeling. In these early years the gifts of clairvoyance and Clairaudience were developed, and helped to conviction to his parents of the reality of a life beyond the tomb.

In 1896, a Spiritualist Society and Lyceum was opened at Bootle, and young Robert transferred his membership to the new Lyceum. Here he graduated in the various offices of both Lyceum and Church. The Church was closed within a few years, and Mr. Owen went back to Daulby Hall, where he remained until his removal to Dublin in 1924.

An ardent spiritualist throughout his life, Mr. Owen saw the birth of the South West Lancs and Cheshire Group in July 1904. He was appointed Secretary, a position he held for many years. When the Lancashire District Committee came into existence, Mr. Owen was elected its President, which he retained until his removal to Ireland.

[9].—*The National Spiritualist*, No. 63, Vol. VI, September 1929. The photograph is taken from the article.

He was elected to the National Council in 1908, and only retired this year after filling in succession the office of Vice-President, 1923–25, President 1925–28, and one year as Ex-President of the Union. He has thus completed 21 years, successive service on the National Council.

His interests have been particularly directed to organisation, propaganda, finance and education. As secretary of the Organisation Committee he was instrumental in getting a census of the Churches and their activities. Out of these labours there came the institution of two-fold membership, the Study Groups Scheme, and re-drafting of Rules for Churches, District Councils, and for the National Council.

He has been no less active in the Lyceum movement. He became District Visitor in 1904, and held all offices in the Liverpool Lyceum District Council. In 1907 he became Secretary of the United Lyceum District Council, and later its President. In 1908 he was elected to the Management Committee of the B.S.L.U. and was Vice-President prior to his election as President in 1911. Later in 1919, he became Treasurer to the Union, holding that office until his removal to Dublin.

Below is taken from *The National Spiritualist*:—[10]

MR. ERNEST ALLAN KEELING, A.N.S.C.

(President: Spiritualists, National Union).



It is with pleasure that this month we present a picture of Mr. Ernest A. Keeling,[11] who was re-elected President at the recent Annual General Meeting. Born in 1877, Mr. Keeling was educated at St. Margaret's (Anfield, Liverpool) Higher Grade School, and during his early years attended the Sunday School connected with the Church. His schooling was unfortunately curtailed through the loss of his father whose transition took place in January 1890. Economic necessity made it imperative he should help in maintaining the home and he started to work shortly after his 13th birthday. Within a few months he joined the Lyceum at Daulby Hall, which at that time was conducted by Mr. S. S. Chiswell, to whose training, together with the influence of Mr. Chiswell, much of his past and present usefulness must be attributed. Before long he became an active worker in the Lyceum and after filling several minor offices eventually became

[10].—*The National Spiritualist*, No. 62, Vol. VI, August 1929.

[11].—The photograph is taken from the Britten Memorial Museum, Stansted Hall; the article photograph (different image) is poor quality.

secretary. It was while holding this office that he was cited as a co-defendant with Mr. Chiswell and others in a case tried in the High Court of Justice before the late Mr. Justice Phillimore, as a result of which it was established that a Lyceum is an integral part of a Church and subject to its authority.

While still in his teens he suffered several severe illnessess and was ordered to take a sea voyage, being unable to afford such a luxury he joined the S.S. New England as a steward and for nearly two years sailed between Liverpool and Boston, U.S.A. When in the latter city he paid occasional visits to Mr. A. J. Davis and spent happy and profitable hours in his company.

In 1903 Mr. Keeling was elected to the Executive Committee of the B.S.L.U. and, except during a protracted attack of neurasthenia, has since been an enthusiastic worker on behalf of the Lyceum movement, of which he was President for two years. As time, went on he added Church work to his Lyceum activities. He was elected as auditor to the S.N.U. in the year 1925, and the following year was promoted to be Councillor, which position he filled till 1919. He was re-elected in 1925, passed to the Vice-Chair in 1926, and in 1928 followed Mr. J. Greenwood to the Presidential Chair, and was re-elected without opposition this year.

Among other interests which have claimed attention mention should be made of the Workers' Educational Association with which Mr. Keeling was associated for some years, being branch secretary for a brief period. He is chairman of one of the largest amateur sports organisations in the Liverpool district and has been connected with amateur football for upwards of 20 years.

For recreation—oh yes, he does have recreation—Mr. Keeling adopts gardening during the summer months and enjoys an evening with spade or hoe, while for the darker evenings he prefers amateur operatics, in which connection he has successfully played many minor parts.



Below is taken from *The National Spiritualist*:—[12]

MR. J. B. McINDOE



The newly-elected President of the Spiritualists' National Union is a native of Paisley, and is the son of a Free Church Minister. As a young man he felt no desire to follow a ministerial career, preferring the profession of Electrical Engineering. At this period his qualities of leadership were in abeyance. He took no part in public affairs until he went to reside in the City of Glasgow in 1917. In the next year he became a member of the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists.[13] His interest in its management was aroused and, in 1919, he was elected to the important office of Secretary, and continues to fulfil the duties associated therewith.

In his capacity of Secretary, Mr. McIndoe did a full share in the activities that brought into existence the new Church Hall in Holland Street. The official opening in 1923 was the fulfilment of a long-cherished ambition.

When the Area Scheme was adopted by the Union in 1921, Mr. McIndoe became the first secretary of the newly-created Scottish District Council and continued in office until 1925, when he was elected President. He still retains that office. The same year which saw the creation of the District C o u n c i l carried him to the Council of the National Union as Area Representative. He has now relinquished that office to take on the highest office in the service of the National Union.

Mr. McIndoe is a man of untiring energy and of great force of character. He possesses all the fighting instincts of the Scottish people, never knowing defeat in his advocacy of any Cause he has espoused. As a committee man he is invaluable in his remarkable capacity for details. He has rendered conspicuous service on Trust Property and Pooling Committees, and on Publications and the Finance and General Purposes Committees. On the Pooling Committee he undertook a great part of the work of preparing the Draft Scheme, and watches very closely all pool transactions to safeguard the interests of the Union and the funds deposited by the Churches. Again, on the Publications Committee he brings the business mind to bear. To his indomitable courage in the face of discouragements is largely due the continued existence of the NATIONAL SPIRITUALIST MONTHLY. In the Finance and

[12].—*The National Spiritualist*, No. 74, Vol. VII, August 1930. The photograph is taken from the Britten Memorial Museum, Stansted Hall; the article photograph (different image) is poor quality.

[13].—For information see Psypioneer, Volume 7, No 10: October 2011 – *The Glasgow Association of Spiritualists – Paul J. Gaunt* & *Historical Notes (Glasgow Association of Spiritualists) – The Two Worlds*. Also see Psypioneer, Volume 8, No 8: August 2012 – *Mr. J. B. Conklin and the Founding of Glasgow Association of Spiritualists – Paul J. Gaunt* & *Early Glasgow Spiritualism – The Medium and Daybreak.*

General Purposes Committee his aim is ever to secure the utmost efficiency in the organisation with due economy.

These manifold duties occupy a very large portion of his time, and involve frequent absences from home, which would not be possible but for the cordial sympathy and sacrificing encouragement of Mrs. McIndoe and his three daughters. An accident which befel him thirty years ago gravely impaired his eyesight.[14] It is a tribute to his sterling qualities that, in spite of this very serious handicap, he has been able to accomplish so much for the Cause of Spiritualism.

G. F. B.[15]

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In the *National Spiritualist* for November 1925 we read of a 'Glasgow Investigator' achieving astonishing results from a non-professional physical medium in direct voice:

THE TESTIMONY OF A GLASGOW INVESTIGATOR

Experiences of psychic phenomena were related before the Birmingham and Midland Society for Psychical Research on October 1st, by Mr. J. Arthur Findlay, vice-president of the Glasgow Psychical Research Society. The lecture was largely a record of a series of sittings the speaker had had with Mr. John C. Sloan, the Glasgow trance and direct voice medium. Mr. Findlay said in his careful investigations, which had lasted over seven years, he found from his notes of 44 different seances that 77 separate voices had spoken to him, or to personal friends he had taken with him; 271 separate facts had been given to him or to them, 169 of which facts he classed as Al, as it was impossible for the medium or anyone else present to have known them. The other facts he classed as A2, because by means of newspapers or reference books the medium could have found them out.

Mr. Findlay gave examples of the communications which he and his friends had received, and described how, in his opinion, it was possible for the departed to re-materialise their vocal organs sufficiently to communicate with this world. He said his father had given him good evidence of his continued existence on a number of occasions. In relating the communications he had received, the speaker declared them to be fraud-proof and telepathy-proof.

[14].—John Brown McIndoe, who was known as Mac, died on the eve of his 84th birthday in May 1958, then virtually blind, and for the last few years could hear only with the use of a mechanical aid. It was Mac who launched Helen Duncan on her career as a materialisation medium. There is a wealth of information on McIndoe which can be found on Psypioneer – via its online search engine.

[15].—George F. Berry, General Secretary of the SNU and former SNU President 1920-1922, will be featured in the next issue.

The founder of the Glasgow Psychical Research Society was James Arthur Findlay. Details can be noted below as published in the weekly journal, *Light*, on April 8th 1922 (p. 22):

GLASGOW SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

We have received a copy of the first Annual Report (1921) of this Society. It records the origin of the Society on October 27th, 1920, when, after the reading of a paper on Psychical Research, by Mr. J. Arthur Findlay, a resolution was passed that the Society be formed from those present with power to add to its numbers. A further resolution appointed a Provisional Committee to draft a Constitution, outline a scheme of work, and nominate officers. The proposals of this Committee, together with the Constitution, were adopted at a subsequent meeting of the Society, held on December 14th, 1920.

The Report expresses its recognition of the honour conferred upon the Society by the acceptance of its Presidency by Sir Arthur Balfour, and records the series of addresses delivered to the Society by Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir William Barrett, amongst others,, The generosity of Mr. Edward J. Thomson, one of the Vice-Presidents, Mr. J. McLennan Boyd and other members and friends has resulted in the establishment of a library of substantial size, which is growing daily under the direction of Dr. Knight. Of the work of the Investigations Committee it is stated that it has been so far without substantial results. The Council acknowledges with thanks the services of the Honorary Secretary, Miss Irwin; of Mr. John G. Findlay, the Honorary Treasurer; and of Mr. J. Ronald Young, C.A., for auditing the accounts. The Balance Sheet shows that the financial position is very satisfactory.

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We can note from the report that the Honorary Treasurer was Arthur Findlay's brother, John Galloway Findlay;[16] Findlay's investigations with John Campbell Sloan (1869-1951) were featured earlier in an address given at the London Spiritualist Alliance[17] on Thursday, April 3rd, 1924, titled "The Independent Voice. A Critical Examination of the Phenomena." This was published (over a number of issues) in their journal, *Light*, starting on April 19th, 1924; Findlay's typed lecture draft and his handwritten amendments/corrections, etc. are held in the Britten Memorial Museum at Stansted Hall.

John Sloan's mediumship is mostly associated with Findlay through his investigations, lectures and books but in the Psypioneer journal for December 2012[18] we find a rare report on Sloan's mediumship in London at the British College of Psychic Science (BCPS).

[16].—John Galloway Findlay died on Saturday, 24th November, 1956 at Bournemouth; his health had deteriorated since an attack of thrombosis five years earlier.

[17].—Arthur Findlay would later become President of the London Spiritualist Alliance; today it is called the College of Psychic Studies, 16 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2EB, UK.

[18].—Volume 8, No 12: December 2012:—*John Campbell Sloan (1869-1951) – Paul J. Gaunt* & *A Scotch Materializing and Voice Medium – Mrs Hewat McKenzie*.

ERNEST WALTER OATEN

1875-1952

His contribution to Spiritualism was long and notable, giving almost 60 years' service

In the last issue of "The Pioneer Journal," we noted the significant part the *Two Worlds* played in the formation of the Spiritualists' National Federation (SNF), which brought about the Spiritualists' National Union (SNU). This was together with an article by James J. Morse, who gave an informed and detailed overview of the early developments of the SNF: "Spiritualism in Great Britain."

The Two Worlds was co-founded by Emma Hardinge Britten and Edward Wallis in 1887.[15] The first issue was published on Friday November 18th 1887, under the editorship of Emma Hardinge Britten.[16]

In the same issue of "The Pioneer" a brief mention was given to the former SNU President Ernest Walter Oaten.[17] Here is a short biography taken from 'The National Spiritualist' of October 1929:[18]

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



Mr. E. W. Oaten

President, International Spiritualist Federation.

Editor, "Two Worlds," Past President, S.N.U.

Mr. E. W. Oaten was born at Bristol, in 1875. His father was a Nonconformist lay preacher, and a keen politician with a gift for platform oratory, and this gift was handed on to his son like Elisha's mantle. He began work in a printing establishment at the early age of eleven years. By the time he was seventeen, he had left Bristol, and was assistant secretary of a large Band of Hope in South Wales.

His attention was attracted to Spiritualism the following year when he was a youth of 18 years.

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[15].–See Psypioneer Volume 9, No 5: May 2013:—*After Forty Years – An Outline of the History of "The Two Worlds*."

[16].–Early editors were Emma Hardinge Britten (1887-1892), Edward Walter Wallis (1892-1898), Peter Lee (1889-1899), Will Phillips (1899-1906), James Johnson Morse (1906-1919), and Ernest Walter Oaten (1919-1945).

[17].–For more on Oaten see Psypioneer Volume 5, No 6: June 2009:—*The B.B.C. Gives in at Last. Ernest Oaten to Broadcast* & *The Personal Side* – pages 190-195.

[18].–*The National Spiritualist*: Vol. VI. No 64., October 1929 – the first official journal of the SNU edited by former SNU President George Berry.

He was fortunate in the many phases of phenomena he came in contact with at this easy stage in his career. Among physical phenomena he witnessed independent levitation, apports, independent writing (without contact) and materialisations in good light through the mediumship of Mr. W. Jeune and others. He listened to such orators as Mrs. E. H. Britten, J. J. Morse, E. W. Wallis, Florence Marryat and others. He then sought development which speedily resulted in Trance Mediumship. Joining the Cardiff Society, his services were sought in the district, and Pontypridd, Newport, Barry and Merthyr platforms were acceptably filled. In 1900 he moved to Portsmouth, and helped in the re-organising of the local psychical society, and in founding the Portsmouth Spiritual Temple. In these years, he gave valuable assistance in founding the Spiritualist Churches in Southampton and the surrounding areas.

For a brief space between 1905 and 1909, Mr. Oaten was back in Bristol, and took up political work, acting as assistant registration agent for a number of years.

During 1909 he responded to a call from the Sheffield Spiritualist Societies, to become resident organiser. In 1911, he secured a seat on the S .N .U., and has been continuously a member of the Council from that date onwards. In 1915, he was elected to the Presidential chair, and occupied that important position through all the trying period of the war years.[19] After three years service as organiser of the Sheffield D.C. Mr. Oaten spent two years as the resident speaker of the Attercliffe Church, a position which he only relinquished in Sept. 1914, in consequence of war conditions.[20]

In 1919 on the passing of Mr. J. J. Morse,[21] Mr. Oaten succeeded to the Editorship of the "Two Worlds," which he continues to edit with marked success. As Secretary of the Two Worlds Company he has disclosed keen business instincts. In 1928, he was unanimously elected President of the International Spiritualist Federation and in the interests of International Spiritualism he recently visited Holland and Belgium.[22]

As a speaker in the Spiritualist Movement, Mr. Oaten commands universal respect, and has won popularity unique in our movement. On the National Council,

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[19].–Note his Presidential address, looking back at the War, delivered at the SNU Annual Conference held at the Mechanics' Hall, Nottingham, on July 5th 1919 – see Psypioneer Volume 7, No 6: June 2011.

[20].– Attercliffe Spiritualist Church: A Rededication ceremony was held on September 20th 1999 at the Attercliffe Spiritualist Centre, Bold Street, Sheffield by SNU President Minister Judith Seaman. Ten years later in December 2009 they celebrated their centenary. Note the church's history page and Oaten's early connection with the church:—http://www.attercliffespiritualistchurch.co.uk/history.php

[21].–for more on James Morse see Psypioneer Volume 8, No 10: October 2012:—*James Johnson Morse – Paul J. Gaunt*, & *J. J. Morse – Julia Schlesinger*.

[22].–An early sketch of the ISF was given at the sixth Congress of the International Spiritualists' Federation in Glasgow, in September 1937 by M. Beversluis who was the only original member of the Executive Committee. Beversluis was from Schiedam, Holland and had been a minister of the Dutch Reform Church for 46 years; he was in his 81st year. It can also be noted that Rev. M. Beversluis had played a substantial part in the early history and foundation of the ISF. See Psypioneer Volume 4, No 3: March 2008:—*A sketch of the History of the I.S.F. – M Beversluis* – note also the following article *The International Congress of Spiritualists*. [Please note: "Presented to the ISF's 1948 Congress in London," was incorrectly inputted]

his most enduring work has been on the Trust Property Committee and Pooling Scheme.

In 1909, Mr. Oaten took to wife, Miss A. Johnson, of Cardiff, a well-known platform clairvoyante. For 20 years he has been sustained and strengthened by loving comradeship and loyal support in the manifold duties that have fallen to his lot.

In the *Two Worlds* February 3rd 1939 Oaten makes – An Appeal:

The History of The Two Worlds

OVER fifty years ago, *The Two Worlds* was formed to record the Phenomena, present the philosophy, and report the activities of modern Spiritualism, and to popularise a growing Movement. At that time Spiritualism was little known and much misunderstood; the weight of public opinion was dead against it, and even the Press treated it only with ridicule or contempt. The subscribed capital was just over £1,500, and on this limited sum the paper has been carried on for half a century. During that time it has materially assisted to overcome prejudice and opposition, has helped to popularise modern Spiritualism, and has become known and respected in every civilised country. Articles from *The Two Worlds* are translated and published in the foreign Spiritualist Press month by month.

What We Have Done!

Founded in 1887, it experienced heavy struggle. The first 25 years of its existence showed a consistently adverse balance sheet, but the paper was a brilliant success in that it did the work for which it was founded. *The Two Worlds* was largely instrumental in originating the Spiritualist National Federation and, later, in securing its incorporation as the Spiritualist National Union, Ltd., thereby enabling Spiritualist Churches own and control their own property. The National Fund of Benevolence was initiated by Mrs. Wallis during the time her honoured husband was the editor of our paper. The National Hymn Book was compiled and published at the expense of the *Two Worlds* and nearly a quarter of a million copies have been sold. By 1910 *The Two Worlds* had just become a paying proposition.

Then came the Great War, which put scores of newspapers out of circulation; costs rose steadily, paper was difficult to obtain and during the succeeding five years 1914 to 1919 its resources gradually dwindled. During the war the Company lost £400 of its capital, but *The Two World* readers subscribed for a fleet of six ambulances for the Red Cross at a cost of £1,100.

We asked nothing for ourselves.

In 1919, I took over the editorship after the transition of my old friend J. J. Morse. The financial position was then difficult and during twenty years I have had a continual struggle. *I know* I have friends throughout the country who appreciate the work I have done. I ask nothing for myself—I have no other desire than to see *The Two Worlds* placed upon a firm and solid foundation, and enabled to carry on its work of disseminating Light and Truth and showing Spiritualism to the world.

The Actual Facts

It has been stated that *The Two Worlds* is controlled by the Spiritualist National Union. That is not true. (The fact is, the Union was started as the result of agitation *in The Two Worlds*.) When the paper started in 1887, many Spiritualist Churches subscribed to its capital; they are *still* on the list of shareholders, so that many of the Churches rather than the Union have an interest in the paper. Further, every editor of *The Two Worlds* has been a member of the National Council, and *several* of them have been its President. Members of the Council of the Spiritualist National Union have *always* been invited to a position on its Board of Directors. There is no obligation in the matter, but *The Two Worlds* has always considered that an organised Movement is essential to the well-being of Spiritualism, and has considered it wise to work in the closest collaboration *with* such organisation. While individual effort can be useful in propaganda, we believe that organisation is necessary for consolidation.

Help Us To Expand

The growing popularity of Spiritualism in these days presents an opportunity for the development of Spiritualist activities which the company are largely hindered from taking advantage of, and I am therefore appealing to the readers of *The Two Worlds* and lovers of a clean and dignified Spiritualism to assist in raising a Sustentation Fund of £1,000 to enable *The Two Worlds* to maintain and extend the service it has rendered and to extend its usefulness in many directions.

I have devoted the whole of my life to the spread of the Movement, in return for a mere subsistence, I have conducted thousands of meetings in every part of the country, many of them without fee or reward, at the call of the spirit. Will you now help me to continue and expand the work for which *The Two Worlds* was founded? All contributions will be gratefully received and acknowledged in our columns.

ERNEST W. OATEN.

A year later in the *Two Worlds* March 15th 1940, Oaten tells us how through Spirit Guidance his position as Editor was orchestrated by the spirit of Emma Hardinge Britten:

Twenty-one Years

ON March 16th I shall complete twenty-one years as the Editor of *The Two Worlds*.[23] They have been years of struggle and difficulty, in which I have been heartened and sustained by the loyalty of my readers, the co-operation of contributors, and the good-will of the whole Movement.

When I entered upon my Editorial duties, the circulation of *The Two Worlds* was small, and the financial position critical. There have been many, times during the interim when it has been difficult to see a clear path, but through all those years I have been very conscious of the help and assistance of that noble band of pioneers whose successor I have tried to be. It would have been easy to have obtained material success by lowering the standards set by these pioneers, but I

[23].–Article is taken from *The Two Worlds* March 15th 1940 page 96.

have always been conscious of the fact that the maintenance of religious and philosophical standards is the only way to present Spiritualism deteriorating to the level of sensationalism, wonder-mongering, and fortune- telling. I have tried to make The Two Worlds the voice of the spirit world, to avoid credulity, and to maintain the standards of evidence. My object has not been to persuade people that Spiritualism is true, or plead for their adherence to the Cause, but to present such evidences as would leave them no alternative but to accept the Spiritualist position by the sheer weight of' evidence.

The story of my appointment may interest readers. When in February, 1919, Mr. J. J. Morse was suddenly called to the higher life, I was on tour in South Wales. I took an all-night journey to officiate at his interment. Standing at the graveside Councillor J. Ward, then Chairman of *The Two Worlds*, intimated that the Directors would like to see me the following week to discuss its future.



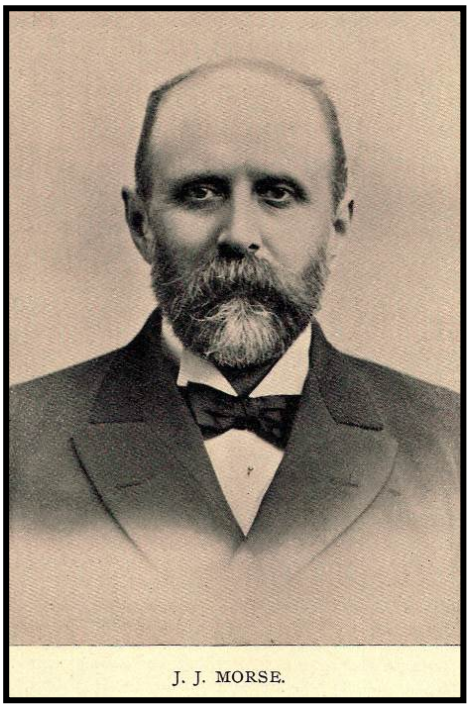
In September of the previous year I had attended a seance at the home of Mr. James Coates, at Rothesay. Mrs Coates was a fine trance medium. She was controlled by Mrs. Britten, and informed me that I had better take up writing, as she had selected me to succeed her in certain work which was dear to her heart. I told her that in accordance with my custom I was seeking nothing for myself, but if the call came to any phase of work, I would do my best. I suggested that she might confirm this message through another medium. It was confirmed two months later at a meeting at Derby. Then, at four successive meetings, I had a description of James Robertson, of Glasgow,[24] and on each occasion he was described as bearing an enormous pen. This description came at four different towns and through different mediums. I wondered what it meant. At that time I had never written an article in my life.

On arriving at my home in Sheffield after Mr. Morse's funeral, Mrs. Britten spoke to me through the mediumship of my wife, saying: "The call has come. I have selected you as Editor of *The Two Worlds*. The banner is entrusted to your keeping."

A few days later I set out to Manchester to meet the Directors. It was a cold day in early March. There was a thick misty drizzle, and I was chilled to the marrow.

[24].–James Robertson was President of the Spiritualists' National Federation in 1893, his work was mainly in Glasgow and his association with the "Glasgow Association of Spiritualists" founded in 1866. See Psypioneer Volume 7, No 10: October 2011:—*The Glasgow Association of Spiritualists – Paul J. Gaunt*, & *Historical Notes (Glasgow Association of Spiritualists) – The Two Worlds*. Jas Robertson died on October 9th 1913 at the age of 69

As I was a stranger to Manchester I had brought my wife with me to have a look round the city. Entering a restaurant for a hot coffee, a man tapped me on the shoulder. “Aren’t you Mr. Oaten.” I agreed. “What are you doing in Manchester?” “Oh! I have come over to see some friends.” He said: “I hear a rumour that you are likely to be the Editor of *The Two Worlds*.” I admitted that I was going to see the Board that afternoon, and he quickly replied. “You’ll want a house. I know just the one that will suit you.” Houses were difficult to obtain in 1919. He took me to his home, where we had a bite of lunch, and my friend. Mr. Charles Rickard, introduced us to a man who was just leaving his villa to reside at a distance. The house suited me; there were certain fixtures to take to, and I had taken the house and paid for the accessories before I had even interviewed the Board or got the post.



J. J. MORSE.

At the Board Meeting, I discovered that in the previous November, when J. J. Morse was apparently in good health, Mrs. Britten had communicated with two of the Directors to say that Ernest Oaten was to be the next Editor; and a few weeks before his passing, Morse himself had intimated that he would like me to succeed him in the event of his health compelling him to resign.

Through those twenty-one years I have been in close communication both with Mrs. Britten and J. J. Morse, and every message received through any medium has always been confirmed through another and independent one before I have acted on the advice. In the most difficult times (and the present ones are amongst the most difficult), I have always been sure of their companionship and advice. Readers will excuse this personal note, but I thought the story worth telling.

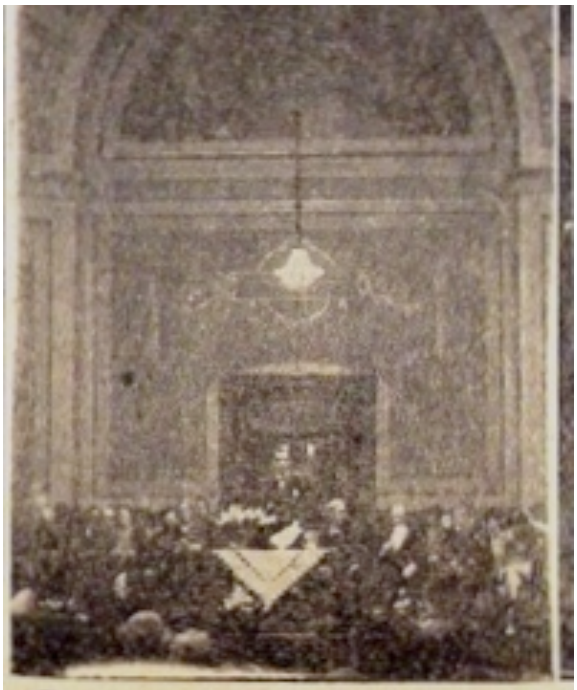
During the past twelve months, the loyalty of my readers and their contributions to our Sustentation Fund have been a help and an encouragement. Paper and other difficulties still beset the path, but the war will not last for ever.

With the assistance of my many friends, and the consistent support of the spirit world, I look forward with every confidence to a greater future for Spiritualism, *The Two Worlds*, and for the world in which we live.

As the AGM this year returns to the Manchester District,
where it all began in 1890,
we pay tribute to our first President



John Lamont



Co-operative Hall, Ardwick, Manchester, S.N.U. Birthplace

John Lamont was a tireless pioneer of National Spiritualism from the early struggles in the 1870s to establish a national organisation of Spiritualists. This was fulfilled in 1890 at the 'National Conference of British Spiritualists', held in the Co-operative building. The large assembly room, large hall and anterooms were all booked for the Conference on Sunday July 6th 1890.

The Conference was reported over several issues of "Two Worlds". July 11th reported:

> "… the finest, most thoroughly representative, and successful gathering of spiritualists took place that has ever been remembered in the short but busy annals of spiritualism in Great Brittain. The three sessions announced during several past weeks in the Two Worlds were thronged with delegates from far and near, representing the entire country from London to Glasgow. By the untiring exertions of the self-appointed and self-sacrificing committees *pro tem*, every preparation was complete, every devoted worker was in his or her place, and the extensive advertisements and notices issued brought together a large number of strangers and visitors from all quarters."
>
> "By the admirable arrangements that had been organised, and thanks to the zeal, tact, and energy of the noble president, John Lamont, Esq., of Liverpool, every item of the "agenda" was carried out to the letter. The discussions on each resolution were bright, sharp, and pointed, and in every instance, notwithstanding the large numbers and divergent minds present, were carried UNANIMOUSLY, and often amidst prolonged and heartfelt cheers."

This Conference is accepted by the Spiritualists' National Union as their foundation; fine tributes to our *first* President have been given in the past but they were mistakenly given to Emma Hardinge Britten, who was never the President. For further details please see "Pioneer", Volume 1, No. 1, August 2013: "The Formation of the Spiritualists' National Union". Today Emma is deservedly one of our Presidents-in-Spirit.

John Lamont entered Spiritualism in 1870 as a result of a lecture given by Emma Hardinge Britten; Lamont become a close family friend. One of his last tasks was to fulfil Emma's request for him to conduct her funeral. Lamont had previously acted in the same role following Emma's mother's and husband's deaths. Emma died (aged 76 years) on the night of October 2nd 1899, at her residence at 2 Winfield Terrace, Chester Road, Old Trafford, Manchester. Her funeral took place on Saturday October 7th 1899, commencing in the study of Emma's house, where she lay, joined by a few close friends and relatives.[1]

[1] Continued: James J. Morse followed with "a brief but impressive oration", then Walter Howell spoke, concluding the ceremonial at the house. The coffin was then removed to the hearse; the funeral cortege was long and contained representatives from all parts of the country. At two o'clock the cortege left the house, passing

The "Two Worlds", July 6th 1900, covers the eleventh Annual Conference of the Spiritualists' National Federation held at Bradford, Yorks, under the presidency of James J. Morse, on Saturday and Sunday, 31st June and 1st July. The Conference paid tribute to their first President, who lay dying. Former three times Federation President Samuel Southern Chiswell (1852-1910) stated:

> Mr. S. S. Chiswell said that on the last occasion they met it was their sad privilege to send a telegram to Mrs. Britten, who then lay upon a bed of affliction. On this occasion he was sorry to have to inform them that the 'grand old man' of Spiritualism, Mr. John Lamont, was passing away. They would all feel with him how much they would lose by the passing from the physical of Mr. Lamont, and he felt that they would all be in agreement with him when he suggested that they should send a telegram of sympathy, of love, and of affection to him who had done so much.
>
> Mr. Smedley seconded this proposition from his very heart. He last saw him, their father and brother John Lamont, at the graveside of Mrs. Britten, and little thought that so soon he would be called upon to follow her.
>
> The President, in putting the vote, spoke of his lengthened acquaintance with Mr. Lamont, and of the tender sympathies which were aroused within him when he thought of the noble labours and sacrifices of their suffering friend.
>
> The motion was agreed to unanimously by a standing vote, and the following telegram was despatched at once:—
>
> Hodge, 5, Laburnum-road, Fairfield, Liverpool.
>
> The Spiritualists' National Federation, in Conference assembled at Bradford, send heartfelt sympathy to you and Mrs. Archie Lamont, in the regretted illness of John Lamont, and desire you to convey to him their loving sympathy and esteem.—MORSE, President.

Lamont was active in the 'Lancashire District Committee' and presided over several Conferences. The 'Lancashire District Committee' was the first district association to be formed at a Conference in Bury in August 1875. Its aim was to promote Spiritualism in new Districts, places of weak or non-existent Spiritualist activity, supply experienced speakers and distribute literature. "The Spiritualist", February 2nd 1877, records their efforts:

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through the heart of Manchester and attracting widespread attention. "The line of carriages was so extended that when the wreath-car was well out of Albert-square into Cross-street the last conveyance was just entering the square at the other end."

Upon arriving at Harpurhey cemetery, Manchester, the entrance pathway was lined with Lyceumists clothed in white. Around the grave gathered a great concourse of people, with the Lyceum children in the centre. John Lamont gave out the hymn; James J. Morse gave the invocation, then Lamont spoke briefly in committing the coffin to the grave. Edward E. Wallis also spoke, and then after another hymn was sung, "Tell me not in mournful numbers", Mr Lamont pronounced a closing benediction, "and the assembled crowd surged toward the grave to take a last look at the coffin besprinkled with lovely flowers."

Taken from "The Britten Memorial Museum – A Brief History", by Paul J. Gaunt.

> "Organisation is the basis of all efficient movements, whether social or political. The Lancashire Spiritualists have determined that a more vigorous organising policy shall be commenced at once, for the purpose of enabling every town where there are a few Spiritualists only, to hold regular Sunday services and week-night classes for research and discussion in connection with the subject. There is scarcely a town or village in the district which the Lancashire Committee has not already visited, and sown the first seeds. Organisation would aid the progress of Spiritualism in these places."

The work of the Lancashire Committee can be noted in a report from the fourteenth quarterly Conference held in the Temperance Hall, Grosvenor Street, Manchester, on November 3rd 1878; the president was John Lamont. In *Spiritual Notes*, p.77, Lamont explained:

> "… a scheme which the Liverpool Psychological Society wished to enter into with the Committee, for the Lancashire Committee to supply the Liverpool Society with speakers every Sunday for six months, except on the five-Sunday months, when they would supply their own speakers on the fifth Sunday of such months. The Liverpool Society desired that Mr. Morse should be sent them one Sunday and one Monday in the month at least.[2] On one of the Sundays in each month the society would not object to a local speaker (that is, a resident of Liverpool). The other Sundays to be filled up by other speakers. For this the Society offered the Committee £27 for the six months. The proposal was unanimously adopted."

Much of Lamont's work was based at his home in Liverpool. He was President for numerous years of the Liverpool Psychological Society; in 1894 the name changed to the Liverpool Society of Spiritualists. His connection with Daulby Hall is outlined in his obituary, which follows. Today it is known as Liverpool Spiritualist Church and is affiliated to the Union.[3] Lamont presided at the historic occasion when Emma Hardinge Britten laid the first corner-stone at the Oldham Spiritual Temple in 1887 and read a paper titled, "What has Spiritualism taught, and what good has it done for Humanity?" It contained twelve short statements, the last one being a summary of her creeds/principles. In 1901 they became the foundation of our Seven Principles; please see "Pioneer", Volume 1, No. 1, August 2013: "The Laying of the Oldham Spiritual Temple Corner-Stones".

On December 29th 1887 John Lamont suffered the loss of his wife, Mary, after almost fifty years of marriage; Emma Hardinge Britten took the funeral service on New Year's Day:

Released at last, even those who most loved the gentle invalid,
and will sadly miss her patient face and grateful smile,
cannot grudge her the exchange from a life of hopeless suffering
to one of eternal sunlight and bloom,
"where every tear is dried and pain and sorrow vanish."

[2] In June 1879 Morse entered into a second six months' contract with the Lancashire District Committee to give ten lectures per month (*Spiritual Notes*, p. 157).

[3] Liverpool Spiritualist Church, 14 Daulby Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L3 5NX.

Below is published John Lamont's obituary from the front page of the "Two Worlds", July 13th 1900:

THE PASSING OF JOHN LAMONT

On Saturday, July 7th, 1900, there departed from the mortal form our old and beloved friend, John Lamont, of Liverpool. To know him was an education in toleration, strenuousness, and all virtues that help to build a true manhood. To have his friendship and affection was to hold prizes indeed. A true son of 'Caledonia, stern and wild,' he had all the tenacity and energy of the Scots disposition, and being progressive by nature, small wonder he outgrew the creed of his youth, and though remaining for many years in association with a religious body he was ready for a wider interpretation of the problems of Life, Death, and Immortality than he was there taught, though until 1870 he was not at all prepared to look for such widening views in connection with Modem Spiritualism.

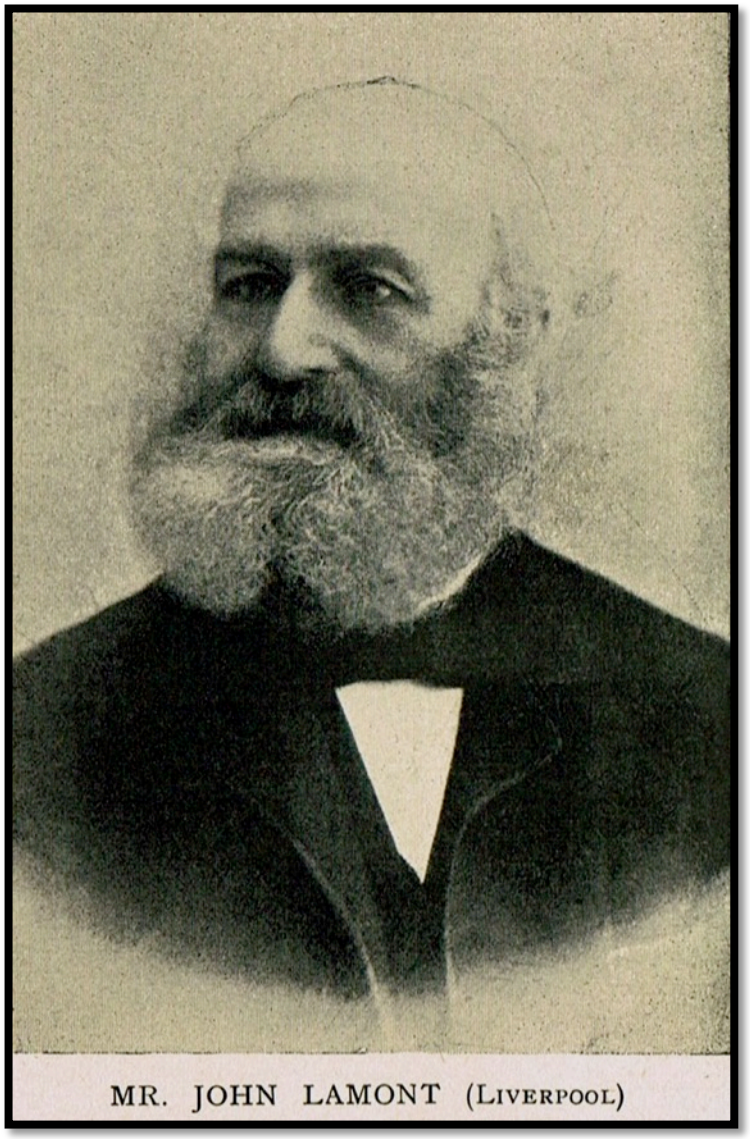
However, in the year named he was fortunate enough to listen to a lecture by Mrs. Britten, in Hope Hall, Liverpool. He was much impressed by the 'cleverness' of the woman, but not at all as to the spiritual side of the matter. Subsequently, meeting a friend, he was induced to investigate, and his first surprise was over the company he encountered, for, to his astonishment, he found included therein, two Quakers, a Churchman and a Churchwoman, and a lady! Subsequently, through the mediumship of his brother's wife, Mrs. Susan Lamont, Mrs. Everitt, Mr. Taylor, then of Swinton, Miss Fowler, Mr. D. Duguid, Miss Barlow, and several others of the early workers, he became positively satisfied of not only the reality of the facts and phenomena, but of the personal identity of spirits communicating with him. He visited the United States and Australia, meeting all the most noted mediums in his travels, and gaining a wide, varied, and intensely interesting series of experiences and information.

Shortly after he became convinced he entered into the local work with energy and enthusiasm. First with the old Liverpool Psychological Society, then with the Liverpool Society of Spiritualists, the reformed and remodelled Psychological Society, and for many years filled the position of President to both bodies with conspicuous credit to himself and the work. The creation and erection of Daulby Hall was the outcome of his love for the cause and his tireless energy in serving it, and he it was who purchased the hall when the mortgagor foreclosed on the property, and so for many years secured it to the service of the cause. For reasons still too acute to deal with, he sold the property for exactly the sum for which he purchased it, thereby relieving himself of much anxiety and trouble, which advancing years and physical weakness rendered him disinclined to continue to encounter. Spiritualism in Liverpool never had a more faithful friend, devoted servant, or more liberal supporter. Literally, 'his left hand' never knew what 'his right hand' did, and few outside his own domestic circle knew the many sacrifices in money and friendships his association with our cause entailed upon him.

As a speaker he was often a volunteer on our platforms. Always clear, cogent, forcible, and at times with a rugged eloquence, not unmixed with native shrewdness, his addresses were helpful, refreshing, and full of the experience of a careful and thoughtful investigator. Whether addressing an ordinary meeting, an anniversary, a Lyceum, or presiding at any public function, he was quite at home, and ever had something racy and original to propound. Children loved him, young men respected him, the mature admired him, for he diffused an atmosphere of love wherever he went. We may travel far and wait long before we meet his like again.

To us who knew him intimately he has been for years ‘dear Grandpa,’ and many are his loving grand children! His wise counsel has blessed many, his generous hand has aided many, his home has been as a haven of rest to many, and indeed, many are they who will miss him more than words can tell.

Now the old and well-known form is cold and still, the sparkle has left those kindly eyes, the erstwhile warm hand lies cold and nerveless, those lips no longer part with the old familiar smile. Silent is the mortal voice, blanched the cheeks; the sweet infinite calm of the White Angel has left its imprint on those dear features. The worn and pain-racked form rests from the strife, and the sacred duet will soon be reduced to its primal elements. Stricken on Thursday, May 31st, the imprisoned spirit was released from bondage and suffering on Saturday, July 7th. For thirty-eight days our beloved brother endured all the pain that paralysis can inflict, and though all that the devoted niece, Miss Hodge, and the equally devoted sister-in-law, Mrs. Archie Lamont, could do, the pain was too intense to be relieved to any considerable extent. Mercifully the Angel came; the white glory descended and enwrapped the tortured form in its embrace, and gently and sweetly as a babe at rest came the end of the struggle. Thou art not gone from us, dear brave soul. Heart so tender and true, thou art with us yet, and ever. Thousands lay their tributes of love above thy mortal garment, and in the sweet silence of the spirit thy own silvery voice proclaims, ‘Rejoice!



MR. JOHN LAMONT (LIVERPOOL)

HARRY DAWSON

Spiritualists' National Union President 1953 – 1958

The "Two Worlds" announced, July 4th 1953:



HARRY DAWSON, who becomes the new president of the Spiritualists' National Union, is one of the old guard, for he has already served under six presidents.

He was reared in the Church of England, but his questioning mind could not accept its doctrines and he became more or less an agnostic. His introduction to our subject was his reading of "Spirit Teachings," by Stainton Moses, regarded by many as our bible.

This was followed by study of another great book, "Harmonial Philosophy," by Andrew Jackson Davis, founder of the Lyceum movement, which caters for Spiritualist youth.

VARIED OFFICES

Dawson joined a Spiritualist church at Crewe, where he met the famous Billy Hope, the psychic photographer. Then he was moved north and gave years of service in various offices at Gateshead. Here he made his mark on the Northern District Council, which led to his appointment as its area representative to the national council.

For some years he acted as president of the Northern District Council. Together with Ernest Thompson, former Editor of *Two Worlds*, he founded the Newcastle Psychical Research Institute.

Because of his interest in healing, a subject to which he has devoted many years, Dawson was asked by the S.N.U. to take over the secretaryship of the committees which looked after education, exponents and healing.

During his years of service to our cause, he was always puzzled by the unhappy relationship that existed between the S.N.U. and the Lyceum movements, now happily a memory of teething troubles, because both organisations have been cemented in a bond of understanding.

EDUCATION'S APPEAL

His own children were trained in the Lyceum and absorbed teachings which were of great value not only to them but to him. It is thus understandable that Dawson has spent so much time on the S.N.U.'s educational activities.

He is fortunate in that his wife is just as an enthusiastic Spiritualist as he is and has been his faithful companion in all his years of service.

"I am an admirer of Emma Hardinge Britten, A. J. Davis, Hudson Tuttle and, Alfred Kitson, pioneers of an age which to many is but a distant memory," he says.

Today the name Harry Dawson is little known and it is difficult to find any significant biographical information on him and his mediumship. Dawson came into Spiritualism in 1913. Some indication of Dawson's mediumship can be gained from the "Two Worlds", April 23rd 1937, on the "Readers Page", by A. Reynolds (D.N.U.), Ipswich, quoted below:

"I joined the Movement, and became a member of Eden Progressive Church in Gateshead, where Mr. Dawson was president.[9] He was perhaps the most outstanding trance speaker and healing medium in the North. Fine addresses in big, rolling sentences, illustrating spirit-life, laws and philosophy, were expressed through him on the platform. These lectures by the spirit-doctor were very illuminating—a joy to all thoughtful spiritualists, but like other prophets the honour which was his due was not accorded him. He was too near to us and our times.

"I shall never forget the uniquely intimate conversations we had with Mr. Dawson's controls—Red Eagle, the Doctor and Joe; as well as numerous other entities who were passed through the medium for instruction, awakening and rescue. The weekly circles, held in my home for some years, were characterised by simplicity, friendship and tolerance. There was nothing "religious" about them, no hymn-singing or prayers; just conversation on the subject so near and so dear to our hearts—Spiritualism.

"While talking or tinkering with the wireless—then in its infancy,—for Dawson is an electrician, he would slip quietly under control and a spirit-visitor would be joining in the conversation.

"His body, which I often felt in the first stages of control, was of icy coldness, and hard and solid as frozen meat. The characteristics of the controlling entity followed. With the Indian Chief a lengthening by some 8 inches or 9 inches, so that trousers became almost knee breeches, and waistcoat almost bursting with chest and shoulder expansion; the Doctor produces slimming and contraction, with concave chest; and Joe, foreshortening, stooping, etc."

"Joe, another control, was although perhaps less progressive, a very valuable guide regarding mundane affairs. Joe loved to predict when allowed to do so. The higher guides, however, believed Joe's predictions tended to make things too easy for us. They would, they said, weaken rather than strengthen our character. We must face up to life and solve our own problems. We learned more of the lower spirits and their struggles towards the higher spheres from Joe than from any of the others. They had progressed—he was still too near the earth."

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[9] Eden Progressive National Spiritualist Church, Rectory Hall, Cuthbert's Place, Bensham, Gateshead was founded in November 1897. On September 22nd-28th 1997 it celebrated its Centenary; the speakers, demonstrators, etc. included SNU President Judith Seaman, Duncan Gascoyne, Mary Duffy and Coral Polge. Spiritualism in Gateshead can be traced back at least to the early 1880s with the 'Gateshead Society for the Investigation of Spiritualism'.

Below is an interesting profile by Philip Paul, published in the "Two Worlds", April 7th 1956, page 7:

HARRY DAWSON



THE case of the First Gentleman of British Spiritualism provides an example that time works many wonders.

In his childhood, well-meaning parents invested him with their own faith and an adherence to Church of England orthodoxy. But the passage of the years bestowed the ability to reason, and dissatisfaction replaced his unthinking acceptance.

For a time he cast about in search of a rock upon which to build a new belief, but none was forthcoming. In the course of his quest he encountered the claims of Spiritualism. Perhaps it was because they offered too much hope that they were rejected, unexamined.

Became agnostic

Though arbitrary, it was a determined verdict. He decided that he was "very opposed" to Spiritualist practices and beliefs. Thereafter, he became an agnostic, adrift, like so many others among his fellow-creatures, without port or anchor against the storms of life.

It was his wife who wrought a change. One day, she told him they were to be visited by a friend of hers, a medium who would provide them with private sittings. He did all but refuse the visitor admission to the house. But having succumbed to one feminine blandishment it was a foregone conclusion that he would weaken to another. He had his sitting—and amazing evidence of the survival of his father, who had passed 20 years before.

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

Born in Bolton, Harry Dawson was the first of seven children. Soon after his "arrival" in Spiritualism came the first world war. He was stationed in Gateshead and given work in connection with the development of apparatus for warning the public of approaching Zeppelins.

At the end of 1918, he joined the Gateshead Rectory Hall Spiritualist Church, where he later became president. Next, he was elected to the northern district council of the SNU. Again, he climbed to presidency.[10] Twenty-one years ago, he joined the national council. And once more he has attained the presidential chair.

[10] It can be noted that on the Northern District Council web page it gives H. Dawson, President 1943-1947.

He has a touching memory of this last achievement. “My wife was weeping but smiling when she brought me the telegram. It said, ‘Congratulations to the new president.’ ” Alas, Mrs. Dawson was to share her husband’s success for only a few months. She passed in October, l953—leaving instructions that there were to be no flowers at her funeral and asking that the money which would have been spent on them be donated to the SNU fund of benevolence for which she had striven for many years.[11]

There was early evidence of his wife’s survival. At a seance with Elsie Hardwick, he received a communication which he remembers as “just as if my wife had been there, speaking in the room.”[12]

William Hope, the psychic photographer was instrumental in encouraging Harry’s interest in the Movement. Since those days of introduction. Harry has taken a keen interest in direct voice and materialisation activities. Once, at a sitting with a male medium, there was a full-length materialisation of an unclothed female figure. When Harry subsequently announced himself as satisfied of the genuineness of this phenomenon; he was told that what he had seen might, in fact, have been a masquerade by the medium himself.

Harry laughed. “That isn’t so,” he said, “and I should know.” Having spent most of his working life as a professional physiotherapist, he has some pride in his ability to distinguish the anatomy of the female from that of the male!

With thinning hair and aquiline features, he retains traces of his northern accent. Shrewd and with an underlying energy that makes nonsense of his years, he carries high hopes for the future of Spiritualism. Last year, his presidential duties involved him in 300 journeys all over the country. Not once in the 12 months was he at his Wragby, Lincolnshire, home for two weeks in succession.

His inquiring mind prompted a number of experiments by way of combining spiritual healing with his physiotherapy. A number of successes were achieved. Another result of these experiments is Harry’s conviction that many of the hand-passes used in healing are unnecessary.

Each of his children—a son and two daughters—has been “born and bred in Spiritualism.” Convinced that the future of the Movement rests with the young people of today, Harry emphasises the importance of educational activities and implements his belief in his Union policy. In addition to his SNU duties, he is a member of the executive council of the International Spiritualist Federation and SNU spokesman on the Spiritualists’ Council for Common Action.

Despite the legislative achievements attained on behalf of British Spiritualists in 1952, Harry does not consider Spiritualist freedom complete. “We have much to fight for yet,” he says.

Among his recent activities has been participation in negotiations which have resulted in J. Arthur Findlay’s promise to bequeath his country home, Stansted Hall, to the movement for

[11] The Fund of Benevolence (FOB) was founded by Mrs Minnie Harriet Wallis (1854-1939) in the 1890s. For further details please see Pioneer, Volume 1, No. 3, April 2014: “Badges, Symbols, and Emblems of the Spiritualists’ National Union”.

[12] A photograph of Bert and Elsie Hardwick with Harry Dawson (as well as former SNU Presidents John Stewart and Harold Vigurs) laying the foundation stone of Croydon National Spiritualist Church; Bert Hardwick was the Church President (1948-1957). Please see Pioneer, Volume 3, No. 3, June 2016.

use as an educational establishment. Now, Harry devotes some of his energies to swelling the endowment fund which has been launched by Findlay to provide towards the cost of equipping this psychic school of the future.[13]

Told by a gypsy that he will live to 88, Harry seems to have many more years of service to Spiritualism before him. But he has definite advice for mediums which he would like to see acted upon now: "Do all in your power to enhance the natural gifts with which you have been endowed. Find your true bent in psychic work and specialise in that line."





[13] January 1966, SNU General Secretary Richard Ellidge: –"It was early in 1945 that Mr J. Arthur Findlay first approached the Union regarding Stansted Hall when it was occupied by the Red Cross as a Convalescent Home and when he resided at Rockingham Castle, Market Harborough. This was followed in 1950 by personal contact with W. Lorraine Haig, then President of the Union, who appointed a President's Committee to investigate and report on a College for Spiritualism. But it was not until January, 1954, that Mr Findlay wrote to Mr H. Dawson, who had been elected President six months previously, followed by meeting at Stansted, that a direct and close liaison between the Hall and the Union was established. [...]" Dawson notes, regarding the photograph shown of himself and Arthur Findlay, that it was taken in 1953 or 1954: "during discussions on the future of Arthur's Gift". Given the above information it would appear to be 1954.

The ‘President’s Farthing’

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* It can be noted in the above profile of Harry Dawson:

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

It is interesting to note that some 26 years earlier, at the twenty-fifth Annual General Meeting of the Union, held at Caxton Hall, Westminster and the Artworkers’ Guild, Queens Square, Southampton Row, London, on July 2nd and 3rd 1927 respectively, SNU President Robert A. Owen was presented with a new Presidential badge. Below is quoted from Pioneer, Volume 1, No. 3, April 2014:

PRESENTATION OF A NEW PRESIDENTIAL BADGE.

One of the most interesting events of the Conference took place on Sunday morning, July 3rd, when Mr. and Mrs. Richardson, of the York Spiritualist Church, presented the Union with a gold Presidential Badge. The Badge is in blue enamel on gold, with the name of the Union round the edge, the centre design showing the Setting Sun over the Book of Nature, with the words Light and Truth standing in relief. The back is suitably inscribed to commemorate the gift. It has a bar above on which is inscribed the word President.

Mrs. Richardson, in making the presentation, said that two farthings were once found in the collection at an annual meeting. She had discovered that one of them was put in by a resident of York. Whether the actual coin, which had served as a President’s Badge for many years, was the York coin, she did not know, but it was appropriate that since the humblest coin of the realm had come from her city, a gift of the pure metal, gold, should also come from that ancient city, so closely identified with the introduction of Christianity into England. Mr. Richardson took up the thread and expressed the pleasure it gave him to have the honour of bestowing upon the Union some token of adornment to mark the growing honour and dignity of the great Movement of Spiritualism.

By the unanimous desire of the Conference Mrs. Richardson pinned the badge on the coat of Mr. Owen, who had been elected the previous day to the office of President for the third year in succession.

Mr. Owen returned thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Richardson for their generous gift; Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Greenwood heartily supporting.

G.F.B.
(George Berry, SNU President 1920-1922)

Can any reader shed any more light on this historic farthing, which once served as the ‘symbol of office’?



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

Below is a short profile of our former Spiritualists' National Union President (1909-1910), Frank Hepworth; this was originally published in the "Two Worlds", Friday, June 28, 1895, front page:

MR. FRANK HEPWORTH, OF LEEDS.



[While Yorkshire has been a prolific field for the development of mediums, and has given a number of workers to the Cause, it is curious to note that the majority have been ladies, and comparatively few men have exercised the gift of trance mediumship. Among the few who have developed of recent years, Mr. Frank Hepworth has won honourable mention. The addresses of his spirit inspirers are thoughtful, suggestive, high in tone, and delivered with earnestness. There has been marked improvement of late years, both in matter and manner of delivery, and friend Hepworth is now a most acceptable speaker. He has also developed good powers as a clairvoyant. We have heard him give good, clear, and convincing descriptions, and this feature of his mediumship would repay constant exercise. Mr. Hepworth has considerable ability as a singer, and would undoubtedly have been most successful as a comedian had he given his natural abilities in that direction full scope, but he has preferred to subordinate them to the more serious and spiritually beneficial, though less financially remunerative, labours of the advocate of Spiritualism. —ED. T.W.[5]]

HAVING BEEN PERSONALLY ACQUAINTED with the original of the photo which appears on the cover this week, and hearing that you would be glad of a few particulars concerning his life generally, and his conclusions regarding Spiritualism in particular, it was with little difficulty that I was able to glean from him information calculated to be of interest to your readers.

In answer to questions regarding his early life, Mr. Hepworth said: —I was born on March 6, 1859, in a little village called Clayton West, some eight or ten miles from Huddersfield, but I have no recollection of my birthplace, inasmuch as 1 left that locality with my parents, I understand, within two years of my birth. I was reared in a pretty little village named Meanwood, in which place I underwent the boyish experiences common to country life, viz., modest schooling and romping in the fields, and subsequently started my working career as groom and errand boy to the vicar of the parish. When I reached sixteen years of age I had my first bitter sorrow—my father passed away very suddenly. This was the first acute manifestation to me of the sad and uncertain side of existence here. Within three years from this time the remaining members of the family drifted in different directions, through various causes, and I found myself, the youngest member of the family, standing practically alone in the world.

"Had you by this time formed any conclusions on religious questions?"

[5] The Editor was Edward Walter Wallis (1893-1899), co-founder of the "Two Worlds" with Emma Hardinge Britten in 1887. Wallis was one of our former Presidents in 1898.

Yes, I was carefully nurtured by the Church of England, attending all services, first in the capacity of choir-boy for seven years, and subsequently discharging the duties of "assistant organist," *in the shape of "blower,"* for nearly four years. During those years my plastic mind had been so aptly moulded and fashioned by the desires of my church that I had no hesitation, in my inexperienced condition, in saying "Amen" to all her incongruous beliefs and inconsistent declarations.

"How, then, did you become acquainted with Spiritualism?"

Very simply, yet unexpectedly. At twenty-two years of age, I had then been "on the world" some years, I was actively connected with an Amateur Dramatic Club in Leeds, and it was customary to hold periodical "socials" at the homes of the various members. On one of these occasions, in the autumn of 1881, the conversation turned upon "table-tilting," and our host, a writing master at the Grammar School, had witnessed, he said, remarkable phenomena. As is usual upon such recitals, everyone smiled incredulously, and indicated, by pointing to the head surreptitiously, that the poor old man was demented. His strange story, however, haunted me for some time, and my curiosity continued to increase until eventually I suggested to two intimate friends—man and wife—who were present at the social" mentioned, that we should try if we could "do" the same thing as our host had done. To show you how ignorant we were concerning the whole subject, we at once agreed to a limit to the time to be spent in investigation. We arranged to sit at the table one night a week for one month, and if we did not succeed in what our host had prophesied, we should arrive at the conclusion that we had been the victims of a huge joke. We commenced our sittings. Nothing occurred until the last night of the four, when the table, to our bewilderment, moved. Assuring ourselves that none of us were personally responsible for the movements, we began to put questions, and by the slow, but at that time deeply interesting, process of "tilts" in response to the use of the alphabet, we each received personal messages from the supposed dead. Some of these were recognised as correct when given; others were afterwards verified.

"Were you then the medium?"

Not to my knowledge. We groped along in the dark (metaphorically speaking only) to the best of our ability, guided in our researches solely by the intelligence governing the table until, one evening, some three months after our first sitting, I felt a strange, yet not unpleasant sensation, possess me. I was entranced by some strange influence, and remained in that condition nearly half an hour. At each subsequent seance the strange power controlled me, until eventually the sitters were able to determine the nature of the influence. Relative and friend, one after another, long passed away, were absolutely identified, either by the delivery through me of messages of personal interest, or by demonstrations of the circumstances under which they passed away.

"Being the medium of these manifestations I presume you were quickly convinced of spiritual phenomena?"

Not so quickly as you may think. I believe it is a matter of common admission that the medium is the greatest sceptic.

"How do you account for that?"

In this way: In the early experiences of mediums the majority are entranced. Manifestations of spirit-power, whilst the medium is in this condition, carry strong conviction to the investigator, but when recounted to the medium they serve rather to astonish and bewilder than to convince.

"What then, did convince you of the claims of the spirits?"

A host of sterling facts which occurred during two years' experience as a medium for "healing." During that time I would enter the sitting-room, to meet from twelve to sixteen people in one evening, who had come to be "healed" of some more or less serious complaint. Personally, I had no knowledge of either allopathic, homœpathic or botanic treatment of disease, and yet under the influence of spirit-power, (for I could give it no other name) scores of people received successful treatment at MY(?) hands. In addition to this I have had descriptions of relatives on the other side, given to me by other mediums, and personal messages from these relatives, which have been of the greatest importance to me, but which by reason of their exclusiveness could not interest you.

"How did you reconcile the teachings of Spiritualism in regard to a future life with the teachings you had been accustomed to receive in Church upon the subject?"

I never did reconcile them; I even made no attempt. I simply wished to know the truth concerning that life if there was any method of its disclosure. A considerable time had passed ere I fully comprehended what was involved in the study of Spiritualism, although a strange, yet beautiful philosophy had been revealed to us in our little circle at intervals. I was most deeply impressed from this standpoint on hearing Mrs. E. H. Britten speak in Leeds in the early part of 1882, and since that time, through personal conviction and as an instrument in the hands of higher intelligences, I have constantly endeavoured to the extent of my limitations to expound a philosophy of life, which I sincerely believe to be (on its adoption by mankind) capable of emancipating man from social wretchedness and evil and spiritual darkness—a philosophy which breathes a spirit of true brotherhood into the souls of men.

"How long have you been a public speaker?"

I commenced platform work in 1882, my first experience away from home being at Halifax, where I was most generously entertained and greatly encouraged to future work by our staunch and good brother (now passed on), Mr. J. Culpan. Since that time I have travelled thousands of miles; have, under influence, delivered over 1,500 addresses; have given hundreds of clairvoyant descriptions, most of which have been readily recognised, and have otherwise tried to make myself useful in the dissemination of knowledge of a fact and a philosophy, the preface even of which, I believe, is but vaguely comprehended by millions of men and women all over our little world.

Much more interesting information regarding the subject of Spiritualism generally I gleaned from Mr. Hepworth, but I must withhold it, and even already apologise for encroaching so much upon your valuable space.

A FELLOW-WORKER.

Our former President continued his Spiritualist work for many years. In the "Two Worlds", March 10th 1939, we can note the headlines, "80 Not Out A Healthy Veteran", although in the report above it states Hepworth commenced his platform work in 1882 but below suggests two years earlier. Whichever is correct, it can be seen that he dedicated around six decades to Spiritualism and to the formation of the Union from its earliest days!

On Monday last we had a call from Mr. Frank Hepworth, of Bury; it was his birthday. He has completed his eightieth year. He was just returning from taking the services at Belper.



Frank Hepworth is the veteran of the Movement. On March 5th he celebrated the 59th anniversary of his first public meeting. He was then living in Leeds, and had started development in his own home. He and a couple of friends had gone for a walk, and acting on a sudden impulse they were led to a Spiritualist meeting just in time to hear an announcement from the platform that the speaker of the day had disappointed them. While sitting in the audience, Frank passed under control, went to the platform, and gave the address and clairvoyance. From that day he has been a regular platform worker. In the last ten years he has not had half a dozen Sundays free of the platform, and judging by his bright, breezy personality, he appears to have many years of active service before him.

Forty years ago, Mr. Frank Hepworth was a missioner for the National Federation; for many years he served on the Council of the S.N.U., and for twelve months occupied the presidential chair.

Nearly half a century ago he married the daughter of Joseph Armitage, of Dewsbury, a man who, in the early days of the Movement, regularly appeared on the platforms in Yorkshire, always accompanied by his little table. Instead of giving clairvoyance, Joseph would get the names and addresses of relatives of people in the audience by tilts through his table, and many hundreds of veridical messages and descriptions were given by him in this fashion.

Quite recently, Mrs. Hepworth was knocked down by a car and had to enter Bury Hospital. We are glad to hear that she is now at home and making a good recovery, though it will be some weeks before she is fit again. Many friends in the North will be glad to hear that despite a few recent colds, Frank is fit and well.

HAROLD VIGURS

Spiritualists' National Union President 1943-1948

He was an important civil servant who brought his expertise to bear within the Union, particularly during the problems of Helen Duncan's trial.

He was well-known for his exposition of the Seven Principles.

Below is taken from the "Two Worlds", March 24th 1956, page 7:



TRYING to persuade him to talk about himself becomes a kind of biographical strip-tease. He peels the facts off one by one, only in answer to questions and then with obvious reluctance. But his is one of the outstanding stories of modern Spiritualism.

The elder of two sons, Alfred Harold Leonard Vigurs comes of Celtic forbears. He was born in Portsmouth, where his father was in business. His mother was "naturally psychic. She used to see her father after he had passed."

Harold evidently inherited some of his mother's sixth sense. His clairvoyant experiences often terrified him. At two o'clock one morning, he awoke to see an erect figure standing at the foot of my bed. It was radiantly luminous—so much so that it paled the moonlight shining into the room.

Vision fulfils wish

"Then I saw the figures of four children on each side of my bed, kneeling in prayer. They appeared solid, blocking out the furniture and wallpaper behind them. The message they gave me was: 'You have had your vision. Now always remember that you are a child of many prayers.'"

At that time he was a member of a Baptist church. The minister had been preaching about seeing visions and dreaming dreams. Harold, then 14, had thought that he would like such an experience. The vision, he believes, was the answer to his wish. But there was a strange sequel.

Just before his mother passed, she told him of her conversation with the Baptist minister. "He told me I should be a very proud mother," she confided. "He said you are a child of many prayers."

He wanted to know

Then, as now, Harold had an inquiring mind. He wanted to know more of the how and why of these strange occurrences. Studying science and mathematics at Portsmouth College, he was delighted to discover, in the library, some copies of the "Proceedings"

of the Society for Psychical Research. Thereafter, much of his time was spent in poring over their pages.

Having left school, he entered the legal branch of the Inland Revenue—the profession he has retained throughout his business career. He is due to retire in August. The black clouds of the first world war gathered and, 12 months after joining his office, he was in the army.

His ideas concerning military activity were quite clear—"In l9l4 I belonged to the old school and thought that war was very stupid. Then I realised I had to take my own share in it." A ranker, he found the army "one of the finest universities in the world. Rubbing shoulders with human nature made up for a Victorian type of education."

Prompting proved right

He was sent to France in 1917, then on to Belgium. Serving with a unit of assault troops, he went through the bitter fighting of Passchendaele. During the advance, he dropped into a shell-hole to rest and consolidate his position. He made himself a seat and sat down, but was at once prompted to move.

Sitting in another position in the hole, he was joined a quarter of an hour later by a comrade who seated himself in Harold's old place. He laughed away Harold's pleadings that he should not remain there. A few minutes later, he was struck in the arm by a piece of shrapnel from a shell-burst.

Harold cut away his uniform and dressed the wound which though not unduly serious, resulted in the man being sent back to England for treatment. Harold followed him on Christmas Eve, 1917, ill with fever contracted through the hardships of the battlefield. Eight months' hospital treatment and convalescence were needed to restore him to normal.

After the war, he became a Rationalist. Then he attended a number of physical seances, during which he was able to see many examples of materialisation and levitation in good red light. Next, he contacted a medium living near his Croydon home. A series of experiments, conducted under "purely domestic circumstances" followed.

"Among the results achieved, an object in a sealed box was shifted a distance of three miles. The seals remained untouched." Others among his outstanding memories of this period are recollections of the impressive phenomena he witnessed at seances given by the physical medium, Lynn.

Held high office

Harold has always had a great interest in music. Through this hobby he met his attractive, intelligent wife. They married in 1926.

His service to the Movement came when he was elected to represent Croydon on the district council of the Spiritualists' National Union. Soon, he was serving on the executive. Then he was elected to vice-presidency. He occupied the presidential chair during the difficult years 1943-48.

He looks back upon many years of rich experience in physical seance rooms up and down the country. Etta Wriedt, Murphy Lydy, Arthur Ford, William Hope, Helen Duncan and Mary McCallum are some that he names as the rocks upon which his convictions are founded.

It is not well known that photography is among his hobbies, nor that he is something of an expert in that field. Thus, his views upon Hope's famous photographic mediumship are of value. "I was entirely convinced of his genuineness."

In this light, it was not surprising that the conversation should turn to Hope's "exposer"—Harry Price. "Yes," said Harold. "he gave a lecture to the SNU once. Afterwards, he told me, 'Of course I'm a Spiritualist. but I don't publish it because then people wouldn't read my books."

Rich in oratory

Shrewd and stolid, the cherubic Harold views the world acutely through his keen, hazel-coloured eyes and makes few gratuitous comments. But when he consents to mount a platform any journey is worth the travelling in order to hear his words. Spiritualism is not rich in orators. Harold Vigurs is rich in oratory and in Spiritualism.

He is satisfied that liquids and salads form a diet "conducive to the unfoldment of psychic faculty." He is convinced of the reality of astral travel, remembers "once, when I was in hospital, I visited a meeting by projection and tried to control a person there. Unfortunately, all I could get were small physical reactions."

He has found his personal answers to two basic Spiritualist controversies: "As you get older you come to accept reincarnation and karma."

Met in sleep-state

Once, when he entered a shop in Drury Lane to buy some hinges, the shopkeeper, a total stranger, greeted him with the words: "I have been waiting for you for three weeks! I want to talk to you about music in the after life!" "It appeared," Harold recalls, "that we had met in the sleep-state."

Virtually all his leisure is spent in psychics. "I take most things in my stride," he says, "but the road winds uphill all the time."

Yet he is always ready for more. He looks forward to the greater freedom which will follow upon his forthcoming retirement from Her Majesty's Service as an opportunity to "give more time to the Movement, to do some writing and to do some work on healing."

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Alfred Harold Leonard Vigurs was known as Harold Vigurs. He was closely associated with Croydon National Spiritualist Church and was the church's president from 1957 until Harold's passing in 1970. Croydon church is featured in "Pioneer", Vol. 3, No. 3, June 2016.

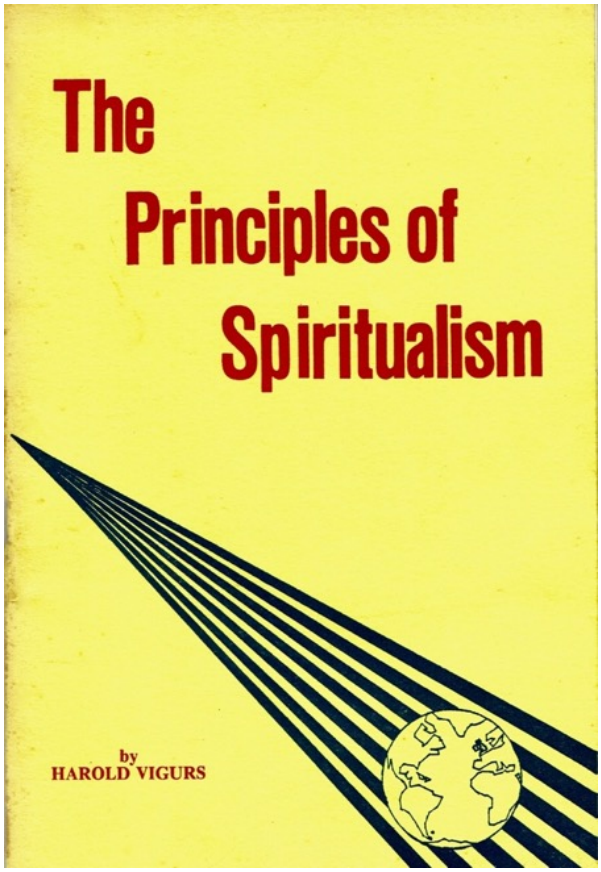
In the 1950s Harold Vigurs was chairman of the "Fourteen Group", which consisted of a group of leading Spiritualists who met monthly to discuss the various aspects of Spiritualism. All were chosen for their personal contribution to the Spiritualist movement, not as representatives of any of the organisations. The group included Brigadier Roy Firebrace, Lord and Lady Hugh Dowding, Maurice Barbanell, Ralph Rossiter, Gladys Osborne Leonard, Meurig Morris, Ivan Cooke and Harry Edwards.

Each member produced a paper on the subject under discussion; these were then considered and discussed over several meetings and on reaching agreement were published in various publications. These all now seem to be unobtainable; some titles included "The process of spiritual healing" and "Spirit healing and its implications: a spiritualist symposium", by Edwards, Cooke and Vigurs, Fourteen Group 1958 and circa 1959 respectively, and "Spirit

communication and the mind of the medium, the sitter, the communicator: a Spiritualist symposium", by Fourteen Group 1958.[8]

The above information regarding the "Fourteen Group" is taken from Vigurs' "The Principles of Spiritualism", first published in 1984 by the Headquarters Publishing Co. Ltd, London. Later in 1996 it was republished by SNU Publications, Stansted. The first publication on the Union's Seven Principles was by the SNU General Secretary Hanson G. Hey shortly after the Spiritualists' National Federation was reconstituted in 1901, when National Federation President William Johnson added the Seven Principles; for further information please see "Pioneer", Vol. 3, No. 1, February 2016, "National Federation to National Union".

It is unknown when Vigurs wrote "The Principles of Spiritualism"; Harold had given the manuscript to his long-standing friend Connie Ransom around 1960 but the MS became mislaid. Vigurs wrote in the Author's Preface:



Do we always fully realise what we are letting ourselves in for when we pledge acceptance of Spiritualism's basic principles? I know I didn't, at least at first. Understanding came later when, mulling over my boyhood knowledge of the Apostles and Nicene creeds, I recalled how I used to "rattle them off" without having the slightest idea of what I was professing, even after declarations of acceptance at confirmation ceremonies. So I began to examine the basic principles in detail and in depth, first each in turn then collectively as a unified whole, and I was amazed at the spiritual importance of the information presented by them for consideration, which had hitherto escaped me.

But first of all, what is a principle? The dictionary definition is "a fundamental truth on which others are founded, or from which they spring", whilst another definition, based on Spiritualist philosophy, is a "teaching which everyone knows or can believe to be true, although different opinions can be held about its lesson". In other words, freedom of interpretation, which is the crux of the matter.

This aspect is unique to Spiritualism. Consider the strict adherence to, and unquestioning acceptance of, creeds and dogmas demanded by other religious groups and sects throughout the ages—and even up to the present day—which have resulted in persecution, massacres and wars, together with causing untold suffering to mankind, so that, in comparison, we can be extremely grateful to our spirit-world inspirers, who make no such claims upon us. On the contrary, their love, wisdom and understanding is expressed in the fundamental teachings imparted through the mediumship of Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, and on which on what is now the National Union of Spiritualists are based, formulated and adopted as basic principles.

[8] The only surviving copies I am aware of are at the College of Psychic Studies, which holds fourteen copies.

These are:

1 The Fatherhood of God
2 The Brotherhood of Man
3 The Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels
4 The Continuous Existence of the Human Soul
5 Personal responsibility
6 Compensation and Retribution hereafter, for all good or evil done on earth
7 Eternal Progress open to every Human Soul

Careful examination revealed to me a glorious promise of mankind's spiritual destiny and of the spiritual goals possible of attainment by all who earnestly desire to make progress and are prepared to persevere in striving for it. And it was not long before I reached the following conclusions:

The first and second principles are statements of out ideal of God, and of our consequent human relationships; the third and fourth declare our discovery that conscious personality survives so-called physical death, and that we are able to communicate and commune with discarnate human spirits, who have imparted knowledge of afterlife conditions; the promise and the warning of the fifth and sixth are a summary of spirit teachings regarding our spiritual nature and our freedom to choose our mode of life, with the grand objective towards which we should all aim, and at which nobody but ourselves prevent its realisation.

Let us now examine each principle by itself and conclude by trying to summarise our understanding of the task. From there each of us will be in a position to continue the search for a deeper and wider comprehension of the Universal Plan and the part each of us must play in bringing about its realisation.

THE PRESIDENT'S BADGE

SNU Presidents

Robert A. Owen
1925 – 1928



David R. Bruton
2010 -

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

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

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

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

The reverse side of the badge stated:

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

—~—☼—~—

The history of the President's badge is indeed solved. It was not forty years old, as previously considered, but ninety years old almost to the day of the 2017 AGM!



At the twenty-fifth Annual General Meeting of the Union, held at Caxton Hall, Westminster and the Artworkers' Guild, Queens Square, Southampton Row, London, on July 2nd and 3rd 1927 respectively, SNU President Robert A. Owen was presented with a new President's badge. For many years, a farthing coin[1] was the symbol of office carried by the President of the Spiritualists' National Union; the story was already recorded in the Pioneer and partly quoted below:[2]

PRESENTATION OF A NEW PRESIDENTIAL BADGE

One of the most interesting events of the Conference took place on Sunday morning, July 3rd, when Mr. and Mrs. Richardson, of the York Spiritualist Church, presented the Union with a gold President's Badge. The Badge is in blue enamel on gold, with the name of the Union round the edge, the centre design showing the Setting Sun over the Book of Nature, with the words Light and Truth standing in relief. The back is suitably inscribed to commemorate the gift. It has a bar above on which is inscribed the word President.



Mrs. Richardson, in making the presentation, said that two farthings were once found in the collection at an annual meeting. She had discovered that one of them was put in by a resident of York. Whether the actual coin, which had served as a President's Badge for many years, was the York coin, she did not know, but it was appropriate that since the humblest coin of the realm had come from her city, a gift of the pure metal, gold, should also come from that ancient city, so closely identified with the introduction of Christianity into England. Mr. Richardson took up the thread and expressed the pleasure it gave him to have the honour of bestowing upon the Union some token of adornment to mark the growing honour and dignity of the great Movement of Spiritualism.

By the unanimous desire of the Conference Mrs. Richardson pinned the badge on the coat of Mr. Owen, who had been elected the previous day to the office of President for the third year in succession.

Mr. Owen returned thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Richardson for their generous gift; Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Greenwood heartily supporting.

G.F.B.[3]

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

[2] See Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 3, April 2014: "Badges, Symbols, and Emblems of the Spiritualists' National Union" and Vol. 3, No. 5, October 2016: "The 'President's Farthing'".

[3] George Berry, former SNU President (1920-1922). In 1922 the Union's General Secretary, Mr. Yates, was taken ill and the Union asked Berry to take up his position. He resigned as President to take up the position of SNU General Secretary, which he held from 1922 to 1932. He then continued as Organising Secretary and was the first

At the 1928 Annual General Meeting of the Union, held at Barry, Wales, July 7th, Robert Owen noted in his President's address on this day that he had completed 20 years' service on the Council, further stating he had decided on this occasion not to accept nomination for President and Vice-President, although he would continue as a member of the SNU Council.

It can be noted in some of the AGM reports that the retiring President passes on the Presidential Badge, which would have served:

Robert Owen
Ernest Keeling
John McIndoe
Frank Blake
John Stewart
Harold Vigurs
Lorraine Haig
Percy Wilson
Harry Dawson
Charles Quastel
John Winning
Charles Quastel
Gordon Higginson

It appears that with the sudden death of Gordon Higginson the badge was not passed down in the traditional way. Given his long term in office, the historic significance and origin of the badge was probably lost. President Bruton informed me, "I know Eric wore it when he became Honorary President of the Union;" what is clear is that President David Bruton has restarted, albeit unknowingly, the tradition of wearing the *original* President's Badge in the official role of SNU President – I have no doubt President Bruton, when the time comes, will pass the badge on to his successor.

I will take this opportunity to give a brief profile of our former President, Robert A. Owen, which is taken from the "National Spiritualist", September 1929, No. 63, Vol. VI:[4]

> Mr. Robert A. Owen was born at Bootle, Lancashire, Oct. 27th, 1881. His father was a native of North Wales. Robert was educated at St. John's Church Day School, which he left at at the age of 12 years to become a wage earner. When 9 years of age, he was brought into contact with the Lyceum at Daulby Hall, Liverpool and there began the life-long friendship with his colleague, Mr. A. Keeling. In these early years the gifts of clairvoyance and clairaudience were developed, and helped to bring conviction to his parents of the reality of a life beyond the tomb.
>
> In 1896, a Spiritualist Society and Lyceum was opened at Bootle, and young Robert transferred his membership to the new Lyceum. Here he graduated in the various offices of both Lyceum and Church. The Church was closed within a few years, and Mr. Owen went back to Daulby Hall, where he remained until his removal to Dublin in 1924.
>
> An ardent spiritualist throughout his life, Mr. Owen saw the birth of the South West Lancs and Cheshire Group in July 1904. He was appointed Secretary, a position he held for many years. When the Lancashire District Committee came into existence, Mr. Owen was elected its President, which he retained until his removal to Ireland.

President of the International Federation of Spiritualists (ISF). Under his presidency in 1925 the Council adopted the Sunflower Badge as an "International Spiritualists' Badge".

[4] See Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 1, "The First SNU Journal".

He was elected to the National Council in 1908, and only retired this year after filling in succession the office of Vice-President, 1923–25, President 1925–28, and one year as Ex-President of the Union. He has thus completed 21 years, successive service on the National Council.

His interests have been particularly directed to organisation, propaganda, finance and education. As secretary of the Organisation Committee he was instrumental in getting a census of the Churches and their activities. Out of these labours there came the institution of two-fold membership, the Study Groups Scheme, and re-drafting of Rules for Churches, District Councils, and for the National Council.

He has been no less active in the Lyceum movement. He became District Visitor in 1904, and held all offices in the Liverpool Lyceum District Council. In 1907 he became Secretary of the United Lyceum District Council, and later its President. In 1908 he was elected to the Management Committee of the B.S.L.U. and was Vice-President prior to his election as President in 1911. Later in 1919, he became Treasurer to the Union, holding that office until his removal to Dublin.

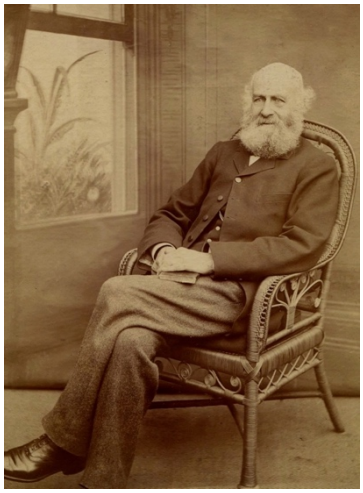
This article, I believe, emphasises the importance of recording our history in the Britten Museum & Library and in publications like "Pioneer".

Otherwise the story of the "President's Badge" today would have remained unknown!

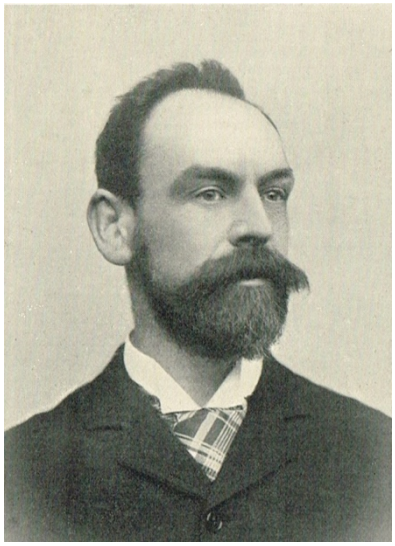


President David Bruton at the 2017 AGM wearing the "President's Badge"

PRESIDENT OR CHAIRMAN?



The foundation of the Spiritualists' National Union began with the National Conference of British Spiritualists held in the Assembly Room of the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Manchester on July 6th, 1890. They nominated the veteran Spiritualist, John Lamont, of Liverpool as their first Conference President. [1] Lamont was again elected for their second Conference. However, Lamont was unable to fulfil his commitment owing to illness, resulting in the Executive and Bradford Committees appointing Samuel Chiswell as their Conference President.



The second Conference was held on July 4th and 5th 1891; after a meeting at the Temperance Hall on the Saturday evening the Conference commenced on Sunday the 5th at the Prince's Theatre, Bradford, Yorkshire, with around 2,000 people present.[2] It was here that the Spiritualists' National Federation (SNF) was formed and constituted under the Conference President, Samuel Chiswell. He would later serve as SNF President the following year and in 1895 also; for that year he was the second President of the British Spiritualists' Lyceum Union. Chiswell was a former chairman on the Two Worlds' Board of Directors.

It has been previously noted in the Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 5, "British Spiritualists' Lyceum Union – Lyceum Archives moved to Stansted Hall", how the Lyceum Union were so very closely entwined in the early days of the establishment of National Spiritualism.

Some of the Presidents of the Spiritualists' National Federation" (SNF) were also Lyceum Presidents:

> Samuel S. Chiswell (1891, 1892, 1895), John Venables (1901), James J. Morse (1899, 1900), William Johnson (1902).

Later, the SNF was reconstituted into the Spiritualists' National Union (SNU); for details please see Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 1, "National Federation to National Union".

This continued with SNU Presidents:

> Jessy Greenwood (1923–25), Albert Wilkinson (1910), William Johnson (1902), Ernest Keeling (1928–30).

[1] Photograph of John Lamont: see Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 3: "John Lamont – Our first President – The Passing of John Lamont."

[2] It should be noted that Emma Hardinge Britten was never the President of the National Federation, as is often assumed. After the 1891 Conference Emma seems not to have attended any other meeting or Conferences of the Spiritualists' National Federation and in February 1892 she resigned as editor of the Two Worlds.

However, there is some confusion in the old SNF Conference reports, etc. as to the position of: ***President*** – ***Chairman*** – and these were used interchangeably in the many different reports to mean the ***same position***.

At the tenth Annual Conference of the Spiritualists' National Federation, held at Blackpool on Saturday and Sunday, July 1st and 2nd, 1899, a Committee Meeting of the Temperance Section was held on the Sunday morning; owing to a small attendance it was postponed to the following morning. We can note in The Two Worlds, July 7th, 1899:

> The Conference was called to order by the President at 10-5, and after a hymn and invocation by Mr. Thos. Grimshaw, the President delivered his official address.

The President at this Conference (and the following year) was James Johnson Morse and within his Presidential address Morse makes an interesting comment on the official position of their "President". During this period of time Morse and his colleagues were pushing for legal changes within the Federation via a Deed Poll. Please see, as previously noted, Pioneer, Vol. 3, No.1: "National Federation to National Union".

Morse stated during his address:



One year ago, at our Conference in the historic town of Keighley, the highest honour our movement can confer on a worker was conferred upon your presiding officer. That he fully appreciated it you will rest assured.

But the Federation founded upon what it is common to describe as 'democratic' lines has no President, and, one of the difficulties your speaker has had to contend against has been the frequent incorrect description of him as the 'President of the Federation,' though at all times he has endeavoured to avoid the appearance, even, of, using a designation to which he is not entitled.

One result of the lack of a Federation President is that the organisation is a body without a head, which, though it may enable us to avoid some, largely imaginary, dangers, may yet cause certain real disadvantages. If our new Constitution becomes operative, an opposite condition of affairs will exist, as therein a President of the Federation is provided for, and, may it be said, wisely so? However, owing to the fact as stated, and that your Executive have held their sessions strictly for business only, and at one place always, there have been no official visits paid to any centres of our work during the past year, nor has your presiding officer felt it right to claim official recognition during his term on the Executive, when visiting societies in the course of his public duties. Should the Walsall resolution be passed, it will help to popularise and strengthen the Federation in many places.

Below is a more detailed list of all the Chairmen – Presidents:

National Conference of British Spiritualists – July 1890

Spiritualists' National Federation (SNF) July 1891 – July 1902

1890 John Lamont (-1900), Liverpool
1891 Samuel Southern Chiswell (1852-1910), born Barleston, Leicestershire
1892 Samuel Southern Chiswell (1852-1910), born Barleston, Leicestershire
1893 James (Jas) Robertson (1844-1913), Glasgow
1894 Peter Lee (1841-1908), born Bolton
1895 Samuel Southern Chiswell (1852-1910), born Barleston, Leicestershire
1896 A.J. Smyth (-1913), Birkenhead, died aged 60
1897 Joseph Armitage (1843-1924), born Dewsbury Moor, Yorkshire
1898 Edward Walter Wallis (1855-1914), born Teddington
1899 James Johnson Morse (1848-1919), born Strand, central London
1900 James Johnson Morse (1848-1919), born Strand, central London
1901 John Venables (c1853-1931), Walsall (incorporation into the SNU) [3]
1902 William Johnson (1838-1914), born York – last elected SNF – First SNU President

Spiritualists' National Union (SNU) July 1902 – present

1903 John James Parr (1860s-1946), born St. Helens, Lancashire – First elected President
1904 John Adams (1841-1922), born Devon
1907 George P. Young (-c1928)
1909 Frank Thomas Hepworth (1859-), Clayton West, Huddersfield, Leeds
1910 Albert W. Wilkinson
1911 George P. Young (-c1928) (term not completed moved), British Columbia, Canada
1912 George Tayler Gwinn (sometimes spelt Taylor)
1915 Ernest Walter Oaten (1875-1952), born Bristol
1920 George F. Berry (1873-1947), Birmingham
1922 Ernest Walter Oaten (1875-1952), born Bristol
1923 Jessy Greenwood (1860-1958), Cawkwell, Lincolnshire – First woman President
1925 Robert Anderson Owen (1881-), Bootle, Lancashire
1928 Ernest Allan Keeling (1877-1958), Anfield, Liverpool
1930 John Brown (Mac) McIndoe (1875-1958), born Paisley, Scotland
1938 Frank Thomas Blake (1875-1941), born Bristol – First President to die in office
1941 John Macintosh Stewart (1883-), Glasgow
1943 A.H.L. (Harold) Vigurs (-1970)
1948 W. Lorraine Haig (1891-1953), Glasgow
1950 Percy Wilson (1893-1977), Halifax area, West Yorkshire
1953 Harry Dawson (1886-), born Bolton
1958 Charles Ivan Quastel – First Jewish President
1965 Dr John Winning (c1886-1975), Scotland

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[3] Mr. James J. Morse, on behalf of the Executive, proposed: 'That this Conference* adopt the advice of Mr. Bateman that the Federation be incorporated under the Joint Stock Companies' Act, with liability limited under guarantee, under the style of 'The Spiritualists' National Union Limited.' Mr William Johnson seconded. In the afternoon session after it was debated and amendments made: James Morse moved the adoption of the Memorandum and Articles of Association. Mr. J. Burchell seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously. When the registration was affected the body would be known as 'The Spiritualists' National Union Limited.'

(Information taken from the Conference report published in the *Two Worlds*, Friday, July 12th, 1901.)

*Held on Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th July, 1901 at the Music Hall, Surrey Street, Sheffield.

1968 Charles Ivan Quastel – First Jewish President
1970 Gordon Mons Higginson (1918-1993), Longton – Second President to die in office
1993 Eric Leslie Hatton (1926-2015), born Brierley Hill, West Midlands
1996 Judith Jane Seaman (1946 -), Methley, near Leeds –Second woman President
2000 Duncan P. Gascoyne
2010 David Robert Bruton (1960-), born Sutton Coldfield



President David Bruton at the 2017 AGM wearing the "President's Badge"

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Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 4:

The President's Badge – Robert Owen 1925-1928 – David Bruton 2010

At the twenty-fifth Annual General Meeting of the Union, held at Caxton Hall, Westminster and the Artworkers' Guild, Queens Square, Southampton Row, London, on July 2nd and 3rd 1927 respectively, SNU President Robert A. Owen was presented with a new President's badge.

For many years, a farthing coin[4] was the symbol of office carried by the President of the Spiritualists' National Union.[5]

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

[5] See Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 3, April 2014: "Badges, Symbols, and Emblems of the Spiritualists' National Union" and Vol. 3, No. 5, October 2016: "The 'President's Farthing'". See also Vol. 5, No. 2, April 2018: "The President's Badge and Farthings Again!".

JOHN ADAMS

SNU President 1905 - 1907

Below is taken from *Light*, January 6th 1923 page 12:

> OBITUARY.—Just as we are going to press we learn with regret of the decease of Mr. John Adams on the 29th ulto. Mr. Adams was for two years President of the S.N.U., and for many years President of the Battersea Spiritualist Society.

Continued on January 13th 1923 page 27:

THE LATE MR. JOHN ADAMS



We referred briefly in our last issue to the decease of Mr. John Adams, and are now able to add further particulars. Mr. Adams was born in Devonshire in 1841, and was for many years a prominent tradesman in Devonport. From an early age he was greatly interested in religious propaganda and was a Wesleyan local preacher. He became attracted to Spiritualism in 1898, and very soon was an active and enthusiastic worker. He was associated with the Spiritualist Society at Battersea and became its President. He was also attached to the Spiritualists' National Union and held Presidential office for two years. He was a man of fine character and his faith in spirit communion and guidance was an inspiration to those with whom he came into personal contact. His broad views and generous tolerance were the chief characteristics of his nature. He was a life abstainer, a non-smoker and vegetarian. The close of his earth life took place at Morden College, Blackheath, where he had spent his declining days in peaceful and happy retirement.

Mr. H. Fielder writes:—

It is with mingled feelings that we have heard of the transition of good John Adams. We regret that never again on earth shall we enjoy his kindly, radiant presence. But we may be glad also, knowing that he had evolved to that inward correspondence with the conditions of the higher life that will ensure for him joy unspeakable. I knew John Adams about twenty-five years ago, when under the able guidance of Mr. and Mrs. Boddington the Battersea Society was a credit to our movement.[1] John Adams was as a pillar of fire, a pioneer enthusiast of the first order.

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[1].–Mr and Mrs Harry Boddington founded Battersea Lyceum and Church in 1897, Mrs Boddington was the medium. In 1902 Boddington founded the Clapham Society; he was the President of the London District Council of the SNU 1925-27 and Vice-President for some years resigning in 1937. Harry Boddington was a well-known lecturer and authored a number of books such as "Materialisations," 1938 and later in 1947 "The University of Spiritualism". This will be available as an e-book as part of "Happy 1st Birthday to 'MySNU' celebrated with SNU Publications first eBooks.."—http://www.snu.org.uk/newsevents/news2014/ebooks.html

Emerging through the Salvation Army, to the quieter and deeper Christianity of Spiritualism, he won the respect and love of crowds of people on Clapham Common and Battersea Park by his deep spirituality and ardent work for humanity. The movement owes much to such brave spirits.

I tender my sincere sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Adams, knowing that there must always be *some* pangs at parting from those loved, if only temporarily.

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On January 12th 1923 the *Two Worlds* reported:

Translated: Mr. John Adams (London)

We regret to record the passing of Mr. John Adams, well known both in London and the provinces as one of the Spiritualistic stalwarts of a decade ago, which occurred on Friday, Dec. 29th last, at Morden College, Blackheath, where he had been residing quietly for some few years.

Mr. Adams was a Devonian, in which county he was born in 1841, and was thus in his 83rd year. He was for many years a prominent tradesman in Devonport. Froth an early age he was greatly interested in religious work of a propaganda nature, and laboured with the Wesleyan body and became a local preacher. He subsequently became interested in the work of the late General Booth, which appealed to his enthusiastic nature. He threw himself wholeheartedly into the effort to uplift the outcast, and became an officer in the Salvation Army, where he laboured for some years.

Some 28 or more years ago his attention was attracted to Spiritualism, and we remember with what clarity he was able to tell of wonderful evidences obtained through the mediumship of the late Mrs. Weedemeyer and others. He was soon an active and enthusiastic worker for the spirit world. For many years he was associated with Mr. and Mrs. Boddington at the Battersea Society, of which he was the President for a number of years. His Spiritualism was a joy to him—it was ever in his thoughts and on his tongue, and he was enthusiastic in open air work. On Clapham Common and in Battersea Park his voice was often heard in conjunction with Messrs. Hough, R. and H. Boddington, and Mrs. Annie Boddington.[2] These were strenuous days, but they laid the foundation of present-day success.

He was one of the founders of the London Union of Spiritualist Societies, which has done much to unite the many Societies of the Metropolis in fraternal

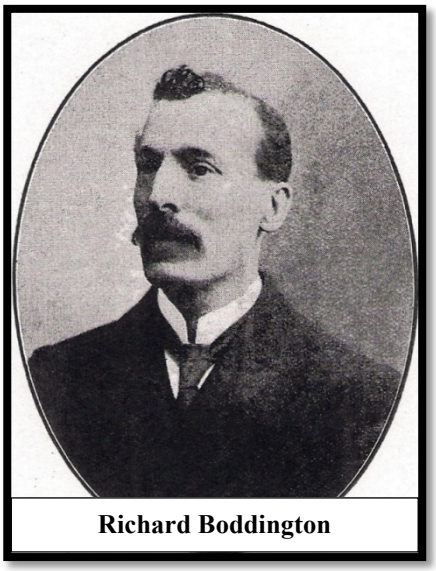
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[2].–R. is Harry's brother Richard who was well-known within the Spiritualist movement and the SNU. He was the father of Muriel Boddington (1900-1989) Muriel's estate was used to furnish the Spiritualist Lyceum Union (SLU) Museum, first at Hafan y Coed, then later at Darlington (presently being relocated). See Pioneers of the Lyceum:—http://www.snu.org.uk/lyceum/pioneers.html

Some of Richard Boddington's reminiscences can be read in Psypioneer Volume 4. No 1. January 2008: —*The days when it was difficult – A pioneer looks back*.

bonds, and successively filled the position of treasurer and vice-president. With Mr. Adams there was no thought of what office he could obtain—office was merely taken because it enlarged his field of usefulness. At the S.N.U. Conference held at Burnley in 1905 he was elected to the honoured position of President of the National body, and in the following year at London was appointed for a second term.

Mr. R. Boddington writes: "A man of generous instincts, possessed of religious fervour and. spiritual insight, allied to a keen ability to read men and women, he was seldom at fault in judging men. Our Movement has lost the earthly service of one who, to within a few weeks of his peaceful end, was alert, and watchful of our National outlook. Often has he said to me, 'My voice I cannot now use, take this little cheque as my deputy.' And so another has gone to join the great band of our colleagues in the spirit world."



Richard Boddington

Mrs. Wesley Adams writes: "His entire Confidence in the elevating influence of spirit communion and guidance was ever an inspiration to those with whom he was in personal contact. His broad views and generous tolerance were the chief characteristics of an intensely sympathetic nature—he had help for all. Personally I owe him deep and grateful thanks for the help and encouragement given to me in the early days of my mediumship, and, after long and close association, have the warmest admiration for his unsparing devotion to all things and people concerned in the progression of spiritual truth. I know that he looked forward with great Joy to the re-union with his wife and three sons, and with his old comrades of the crusade that was so dear to him."

Mr. Adams was a life abstainer and non-smoker, and for many years a vegetarian. His last years were spent in quietude and peace in the beautiful environment of Morden College. The writer called upon him some 18 months ago, and sitting in the well-kept grounds, even the shyest of the wild birds came to him to be fed, one perky thrush even perching on his knee. Our thoughts go out to him in Congratulation upon his attainment of the larger freedom.

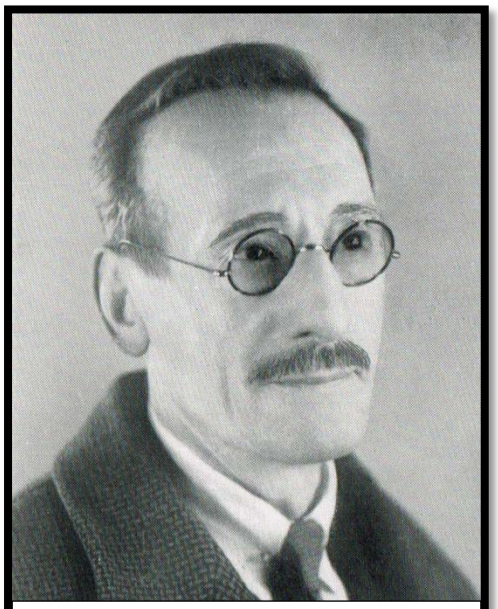
On Tuesday, January 2nd, the earthly body of the pioneer Spiritualist, Mr. John Adams, was laid away at Streatham Park Cemetery. The beautiful service was conducted (by request of our arisen brother) by Mrs. Annie Boddington and Mr. R. Boddington. The company present included Mr. Geo. Adams, Mrs. Wesley Adams, Mr. P. C. Denson. Miss Anderson, Mrs. Charles Adams. Miss Yeo and Mr. H. Boddington. The beautiful floral tributes included one from the S.N.U. and London District Council. Owing to short notice the number present was not large, but, that did not prevent the whole-hearted singing of the hymns our brother loved.

And thus, at, the advanced age of 83, our colleague has entered into that inheritance he so worthily laboured to deserve.

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Below is taken from the *Two Worlds* for January 19th 1923:

A Tribute by Mr. H. Boddington



Harry Boddington

JOHN ADAMS was one of the few men who make it quite impossible for you to quarrel with them. Deliberate insult or definite contumely he would treat as a joke, and ever refused to recognise any who constituted themselves his enemies. Every man was treated as a friend and a brother, and that, too, in the most practical way. His Salvation Army training and keen business qualities made him at once sympathetic without permitting emotionalism to run away with his common-sense.

These qualities made him on ideal co-worker. His favourite text, which I commend to many pushful aspirants, was "In honour preferring one another."

I first met him in Chepstow Hall, Peckham, in 1895. The loss of a son induced him to test the comforts which Spiritualism could give. Often on the platform have I heard him recount the story of his earliest experiences with Mrs. Spring, and how his soul leaped for joy at the realisation which both his Salvationism and Methodism had failed to yield.

He was our vice-president and treasurer at Battersea from 1896 to 1901. My wife and I, at his suggestion, founded the work at Clapham.[3] The unselfishness of the man was apparent even here. He badly wanted to still be with us and act in a subordinate part, but stayed at Battersea in consequence of our fear lest the five years' work there might fall to pieces if we all left at once. He was President of Battersea for many years, also of the London Spiritualist Union, and finally the honour of representing Spiritualism as President of the Spiritualists' National Union for two years was but a just recognition of his sterling worth.

Failing memory at last induced him to retire to Morden College, but his last thought was for the beloved Spiritualism which had become the mainspring of all his actions. This tribute will yet be found in a material form when lapse of time permits his last requests to bear fruit.

[3].–According to Harry Boddington in his book "Materialisations" (1938) he states Battersea Lyceum and Church was founded in 1897 and the Clapham Society in 1902 as earlier noted in footnote 1.

Right up to the end he was bright and ready for the journey to the Summerland, and took keen interest in every phase of the work, his one regret being that he could no longer compel his old body, now aged 83, to work with its accustomed vigour.

He passed away on Friday, December 29th, 1922, and I know that his joy in emancipation from the thraldom of the body will only be equalled by the joy of being once more able to work for his beloved Spiritualism.

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Below is an interview with John Adams published in the *Two Worlds* on December 30th 1904 where Adams explains his introduction to Spiritualism, the paper's Editor (1899-1906) was Will Phillips:

MR. JOHN ADAMS.

AND so, Mr. Editor, you wish me to tell your numerous readers the tale of my conversion to Spiritualism. Well, if you think it may do good, I certainly have no right to withhold the same. Like thousands of others now associated with Spiritualism, I was born into and brought up a Wesleyan Methodist. From my early boyhood I can remember being taken by my parents to the Methodist school and chapel, and in the course of time became thoroughly saturated with the doctrines of this denomination, amongst them the belief in eternal torment. I have a very lively remembrance of the terrible dreams that haunted me—the nights of horror that I sometimes spent, even in those early days.

In due time I became what is called 'converted'—in fact, many times over. Then, joining a class meeting, when about nineteen years of age I became a local preacher on the Plymouth and Stonehouse Circuit; later on, on the Buckfastleigh and Ashburton, then on the Colchester plan. I was made a class leader, steward, trustee; then for six years was connected with the Salvation Army.

Nearly ten years ago, when we were residing in Suffolk, we received a wire from Dover, where our son, William Arthur, twenty-eight years of age, and a young man of great promise, was engaged in business. The wire told us that he was very ill indeed, and that if we wished to see him alive we had better come at once. His mother and I went, and found him suffering from a severe attack of typhoid fever in the hospital there. We remained with him for some days, when, to our great grief, in the presence of his mother, brother, and myself, he passed on to the higher life.

We returned to our home in Suffolk, but in passing through London I obtained a situation as manager of a large clothing firm on Holborn Viaduct, London.

One Thursday morning, about a fortnight after I had entered upon my duties, I went to the newsagent's to get my daily paper, and saw on the counter a peculiar-looking paper, with pictures of angels on the top, called the TWO WORLDS. I asked the newsagent what the paper was about. In quite an indifferent tone he replied, 'Oh, about Spiritualism.' But somehow I felt I must have that paper. I purchased a copy, and while my 'daily' did not get opened, the TWO WORLDS was read from cover to cover, advertisements and all. On the last page of this paper

I saw it advertised that a seance would be held that night in Kentish Town-road, London. I was a stranger in London, and did not know where Kentish Town-road was to be found, but on inquiring I found out how to get there, and made up my mind to attend the seance and see what these Spiritualists were up to.

Now imagine, Mr. Editor, a Wesleyan Methodist of over forty-five years' standing, crammed with creeds and dogmas, whose knowledge of Spiritualism was very limited, having rather strong prejudices against it, which is usually the case. I believed 'Old Nick' to be the commander-in-chief of the Spiritualist army; that it consisted of certain people deluded by designing tricksters; and to suppose that any intelligent person could be so deluded as to believe in it was altogether beyond my comprehension. Thus, you will observe, I went to this seance thoroughly prejudiced against it, and fully determined to expose the whole business.

After some difficulty, I found the upper room in which the seance was to be held. I noticed that the people, about twenty-four in number, were sitting in a circle. They very kindly offered me a seat. While they were getting ready to commence I took a survey of the people, etc., and was surprised to find an intelligent lot of men and women. However, I keenly watched every move, and was exceedingly careful not to drop a word that would give them the slightest idea who I was. I had never been in Kentish Town-road before, nor in this house, and did not know any person present, and no one knew me.

Now for the seance—a seance that meant so much to me. A hymn was given out, and sung heartily. I could not find any fault with the hymn or singing. Then two of them prayed very nice prayers. Then they sang again. 'Why,' I thought, 'this is a sort of a Methodist prayer meeting.' But while these thoughts were passing through my mind, a middle-aged lady, sitting on the opposite side of the room, was acting very peculiarly. I expected every moment to see something happen to her, and was debating whether I ought not to render her some help; but on looking at the persons forming the circle I noticed they were treating the lady's actions with smiling interest and expectancy, so I waited, but only for a moment. The next moment the lady was on her feet, and, with her eyes closed, came straight over to where I was sitting and stood in front of me. I can't say but that I felt peculiar, and was wondering what was going to happen. She began to speak, and this is what she said: 'Ah! you know very little about Spiritualism; in fact, you have never attended a seance before.' 'Well,' I thought to myself, 'that is a good guess,' for it was quite true. Then she went on to say, 'I see a young man standing by your side.' I looked round to see the said young man, and when I did so I saw upon the countenances of the persons composing the circle a very strong resemblance to a smile.

Then followed a detailed description of this young man, his age, his person, his clothing, his characteristics—a complete and perfect description of my son, whose body, three weeks before, we had buried in Dover Cemetery. The lady also told me of the institution in which he had passed on; that the snow was on the ground outside, and many other details which were all true. I was somewhat staggered, I must confess. However did this strange lady know so fully and completely all the details of my son's illness and death? But there was more to follow still more astonishing. The lady continued by saying, 'Your son tells me that you are now wearing something that belonged to him. I went mentally through each article of

clothing I was wearing, and informed the lady that she was wrong, but she replied, 'He tells me you are wearing them now. Wait a moment. He is telling me what it is. Links! Links! What does "links" mean? I had forgotten that I was then wearing a pair of gold cuff links formerly worn by my son. The lady then requested that one of the links should be handed to her. I gave it to her. She immediately went out of the circle with the cuff link in her hand, and laid down on the couch at full length, and then, Mr. Editor, one of the most painful and thrilling experiences of my life was again passed through, for the lady on the couch enacted the death-bed scene of my precious boy, as I had seen it in Dover Hospital. When apparently about to expire, she announced in a weak voice, 'Let us sing.' Someone in the circle started a hymn, but immediately the lady stopped her, and, as she lay on the sofa, said, 'I will start the hymn,' and in a short time she began to sing—what? The very hymn that his mother, brother, and I sang at his bedside when his spirit passed over. The lady then got up from the couch, came over to me, and handed me the links, and as she did so said, 'Your son wishes to send a message to his mother,' and the message, I can assure you, was of consolation and upliftment. I have by no means exhausted all the statements made by this lady medium, every one of them true.

You can imagine the State of my mind when at the close of the seance I descended the stairs and wended my way home. One thing stood out very prominently. I came away from the seance thoroughly convinced that there were 'more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in my philosophy—thoroughly convinced that there was something in Spiritualism, and what that something was I determined to find out. My conceit and prejudice were gone, and there came a determination to honestly investigate.

The result of my investigation finds me to-day a convinced Spiritualist, prepared to advocate its claims and to preach its glorious truths. Spiritualism has delivered me from the prison-house of creeds and dogmas; has brought into my life more of joy and sunshine than I ever before experienced. All anxiety as regards the future has been swept away, and in place of doubts and fears I have the calm and joyful peace that assurance and knowledge give; so much so, that my life now is a foretaste of the life that is unspeakable and full of glory. My only regret is that this glorious gospel of truth was not mine fifty years ago—a gospel so exactly adapted to satisfy the craving of the great throbbing heart of humanity.

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Please note:

All the above material has been taken from original reports as they were published at the time and reproduced by "Optical Character Recognition" (OCR), the conversion of scanned images of handwritten, typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded text. This means that grammar, old English, spelling mistakes, etc. are not usually changed. However, long paragraphs are sometimes split for easier reading; any errors or explanations needed are noted in footnotes.

Anyone who would like this article, please contact:—pioneer@snu.org.uk

PERCY WILSON

SNU President 1950 - 1953

Below is taken from *Psychic News* May 7th 1977 front page:

‘Elder statesman’ Percy Wilson promoted to higher service

LEADING MEDIUM FORETOLD HIS PASSING YEAR AGO



PERCY WILSON, 84, rightly regarded as Spiritualism’s elder statesman, passed peacefully last Saturday into the spirit world whose distinguished exponent he had been since he was a teenager.

The long list of offices he held in the Movement is an indication of the unique service he rendered. They include being chairman of Psychic Press Ltd, the company owning PN, from 1956 to the time of his passing.[1]

Of Percy it can be said he was cradled in Spiritualism. His grandfather was a Unitarian minister who became a Spiritualist medium and preacher.

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[1].–**HAS ANYONE HELD MORE OFFICES?** IT WAS typical of Percy, who was thrice married, to prepare these biographical notes: He was born in Halifax, W Yorks, in 1893. At its Heath Grammar School he obtained a scholarship to Queen’s College, Oxford, in 1911.

Four years later he was awarded the BA degree with first-class honours in mathematics, followed in 1918 with an MA degree.

From 1915 to 1919 he was an instructor lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

During part of that period he was a Lecturer in Applied Mathematics at the Royal Naval Engineering College, Devonport.

This was followed by becoming an administrative officer at the Ministry of Education from 1919 to 1938; Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Transport, 1938 to 1946; Principal Assistant Secretary, Roads Department, Ministry of Transport, 1946 to 1949. He retired because of ill-health.

Percy was SNU president from 1950 to 1953. He became an SNU minister in 1941. From 1958 to 1964 he was a vice-president of the College of Psychic Science (now College of Psychic Studies).

He was managing director of Psychic Press Ltd, from 1951 to 1962. He was also a trustee of the Spiritual Truth Foundation since its inception in 1965 and acted as a trustee of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers from its foundation in 1951.

Percy also listed his record in the audio field. He was technical adviser to “The Gramophone” magazine from 1924 to 1938, and its technical editor from 1953 to 1966.

He wrote two books, “Modern Gramophones and Electrical Reproducers,” in 1929, and “The Gramophone Handbook” in 1957. He was a founder-member of the British Sound Recording Association, and also a member of the Audio Engineering Society, USA, with a citation award in 1966. (P.N. May 7th 1977.)

His father was a Spiritualist, so was his uncle. Naturally his three sons, one a barrister and the others leading scientists, were brought up as Spiritualists.

Percy also achieved fame as an audio expert. His knowledge and experience in this field were used to instal equipment in several Spiritualist churches.

No one was more familiar than Percy with Spiritualism's history. He could quote from tributes written by pioneers in the last century. His library of books on the subject – they included many out-of-print classics – was extensive. It is a pity he never found time to write a history of Spiritualism.



Percy's passing was foretold at PN's annual dinner in May last year. The forecast, which of course was not told him, was known to his wife Winifred and several close friends.

It was given by leading Scots medium Albert Best, one of the guests at this function.

Albert told Winifred, when she saw him, that he was horrified to realise while Percy was speaking that he had cancer and would not be able to attend another PN annual dinner.

Later she wrote Albert to say: "I have known for about two months that Percy had lung cancer – since he had a chest X-ray and an investigation of his sputum in fact. Percy does not know."

All he was told by his doctor and William Lang, the surgeon guide who regularly gave him treatment through his medium George Chapman, was that he had congestive heart failure and must limit his activities to a minimum.

It is a credit to Winifred that she bore with fortitude all the problems and difficulties involved in tending Percy during his illness. Winifred's conduct has been admirable, and the perfect example of how a Spiritualist should behave in such circumstances.

She accepted his passing as a merciful release from pain, which restricted his activities, and as a promotion for his long, dedicated service. Of course she will be attending our dinner on May 14.

Winifred, like Percy, was "born" into Spiritualism. Her father, George F. Berry, was an SNU secretary for many years.

In her letter to Albert she referred to some of the evidence he gave her at last year's dinner. The medium had mentioned the spirit presence of Cora Tappan, a pioneer, eloquent trance orator.

Winifred wrote that Cora Tappan opened the Sowerby Bridge Spiritualist Church, W Yorks, and Percy's grandfather presided at the ceremony. Percy received his spirit name at the same church from the guide of another famous medium, J. J. Morse.[2]

Percy's funeral service will be conducted by Maurice Barbanell on Friday, May 6 at Oxford Spiritualist Church, 39b Oxford Road, Cowley, at 3 pm, and at Headington Cemetery at 4 pm.

Winifred and the family request that no flowers be sent. Instead they suggest donations be made to Branden Lodge, the old people's home. It is run by the Spiritualists' Housing Association, from our offices. Percy was one of its trustees.

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The issue quotes a profile from 1956:

'I was dedicated to the spirit world's service'

WHEN he was interviewed for his profile in 1956, Percy said: "I was dedicated to the service of the spirit world many years ago.

"That being so, when the need arises for me to be given advice on psychic matters it is always forthcoming in unexpected ways and through more than one channel. Again and again this has happened in my life."

He told his interviewer that, despite his family connections with the Movement, he did not attend a Lyceum. "It was more convenient for me to go to a Unitarian Sunday School."

Percy said that his active entry into Spiritualism came in 1912 when he attended an SNU national conference at Liverpool. Thereafter he participated in many Spiritualist activities for 12 years.

In 1938 he was elected secretary of the propaganda committee of the SNU's London District Council. Two years later he became LDC president.

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[2].–Cora Tappan: Married four times, and adopted the last name of her husband at each marriage, and at various times carried the surnames Hatch, Daniels, Tappan, and Richmond. She was mostly known as Cora L. V. Richmond (1840-1923). Duncan Gascoyne the second longest serving SNU President (2000-2010) wrote a booklet in 2010: "Historical Aspects and Personalities Attached to the Early Years of Sowerby Bridge SNU Church" as quoted below:

"BUILDING THE CHURCH – Building work commenced in the latter part of 1873 and finished in June 1874. If it had not been for Mr John Harwood who gave his name as being responsible for any monies drawn from the bank, the work would have stopped. The Lyceum, the rooms and two cottages underneath and six adjoining houses were completed.

"The cost was £1,800 of which £1,500 was borrowed, the rest being raised by members. The Lyceum building was opened on the second Saturday in June by Mrs Cora Richmond, with Abbey Wilson presiding. The choir which had been trained by Abbey Wilson and noted as the best choir in the district rendered special music.

"Abbey Wilson must have been a very proud man that day, as well as being the friend of Emma Hardinge Britten, Cora Tappan, J J Morse and many other well known Spiritualist workers. He also gave talks and wrote articles for the local press and wrote several hymns, one of them being 'Forward press to Conquer'."

In 1941 he served as a member of the SNU national council and chairman of its education committee.

The interviewer described Percy as being always active but sometimes forbidding of expression.

"He is a man of decision and stubborn will. But those who ask his help find in him a sympathetic listener – and a strong arm for their aid, once he is satisfied the cause is right."

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The following week's front page:

THEY COME FROM FAR AND WIDE TO HONOUR PERCY WILSON

'He was truly a servant of the spirit'

Called 'sound' man of two worlds

PN Reporter



OXFORD'S Spiritualist church was packed last week to honour veteran Percy Wilson, now in the spirit world. Only hours before his funeral service, taken by Maurice Barbanell,[3] two of his sons, Professors Geoffrey and Richard, arrived from America to attend it.

Also present was his third son Laurie, who arranged the whole service.

For Percy – he was the church's founder president – it was truly a family occasion. The first hymn sung was written by his grandfather. One grandson, Hugh, sang a solo. The piano accompaniment was played by his daughter-in-law.

Keynote is simplicity

Percy's coffin was flanked by two simple bouquets from the family. And simplicity was the ceremony's keynote.

At the church and the crematorium, Barbanell quoted from the spirit-inspired funeral service written by "that splendid pioneer medium, J. J. Morse."[4]

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[3].–Maurice Barbanell was one of the first SNU ministers in the late 1930's - see the SNU Pioneer issue two "Who were the first Ministers of the Union?" He was the founding editor of *Psychic News* whose first issue was on May 28th, 1932. (He continued until 1946 when he left; sixteen years later on June 20th, 1962 he returned as editor until his death). He was born 3rd, May 1902 and died July 17th, 1981 at the age of 79. The photograph is from the Britten Memorial Museum at the Arthur Findlay College.

Barbanell paid tribute to Percy, whom he knew for 40 years. Here are extracts from his words:

Being individualists, we did not always see eye to eye. But I can say our disagreements were few but our agreements many.

One of the best tributes to Percy is that he bore no malice. Nor was he capable of telling a deliberate untruth.

Percy would always go out of his way to do a kindness, particularly to visit old workers who had retired from the fray and thought they were forgotten.

Always persevered

Percy would stick to his guns if he thought he was right. With great foresight Morse's guide gave Percy the spirit name Perseverance.[5] He always persevered.

If you agreed with him, you admired his determination. If you disagreed you would complain of his obstinancy! It's the same quality every time.

Percy had a great sense of humour, loved jokes and could always tell some about Spiritualism's early days.

He can be described as a "sound" man of two worlds. I refer to his distinction in the audio world. He used this knowledge and experience to equip without charge many Spiritualist churches.

Percy was fortunate in that he was born into Spiritualism as were his three sons. Because of his long experience and wide reading he should have written a modern history of Spiritualism. He was always going to do this.

Perhaps in the higher life, where there is more time and he is not subject to the limitations that cramp us, he will find an automatic-writing medium to communicate this history.

To the nth degree, Percy had loyalty and dedication to Spiritualism. He was truly a servant of the spirit.

Percy was a personality. Today, humanity seems to have been manufactured on assembly lines. He was an individualist, a Spiritualist who required no prefix or suffix.

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[4].–James Johnson Morse can be found under the Spiritualists' National Federation Presidents page. Barbanell had previously used this reading, as he notes in the Two Worlds: "I conducted the cremation service for an old friend, the healer George Jessup. He is the second member of Hannen Swaffer's home circle to pass to the higher life. The first was Nettie Abrahams, whose cremation service I also conducted." Barbanell edited the TW's from around 1957 (jointly with PN from 1962) until his death in 1981 and re-publishes Morse's funeral service in the February 1977 issue: "When the spirit bids adieu to mortality" Morse's service was much admired by Percy and is re-published at the end of this article.

[5].–When six weeks old he was named at the Sowerby Bridge Church by J. J. Morse and Tien Sien Tie.

Spiritualism satisfied his reasoning and provided him with a religion, philosophy and science.

His service to our movement provides a luminous chapter in its history.

Percy laboured for over six decades to help others to become aware of the truth that enriched his life.

His virtues were far greater than his blemishes. He earned that respect of Spiritualists not only in Britain but all over the world who regarded him as their elder statesman.

Co-operation goes on

We give thanks for a life well lived. We are aware there is a physical loss for his family, colleagues and friends.

It is inevitable that, with time's passing, the ranks of Spiritualism's pioneers on earth grow thinner.

How fortunate are we to have the certainty that the ranks grow larger on the Other Side and that death does not separate: we can still co-operate and give service.

As the ceremony ended, Barbanell stepped to the coffin and on it placed a single white carnation. Like the flower, he said, Percy was still living.

The SNU, of which Percy was past-president, was represented by the current holder of this office, Gordon Higginson. Harold Cox attended for the Greater World.

At a buffet after the service, I told Percy's wife, Winifred what a wonderful ceremony this, my first Spiritualist funeral, had been. "You could not have started with a better person," she replied.[6]

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[6].–SOME travelled many miles to attend the service. For David Dutton, Psychic Press director, chairman of the Spiritualists' Housing Association and a Spiritual Truth Foundation trustee, it meant a long journey from his Herne Bay, Kent, home.

Sylvia Barbanell, like David, a Spiritual Truth Foundation trustee, was also present. Quoted was one of her poems, "Some Call Him Death."

Leicester journalist Charles Bullen and his colleague Win Wood attended. London Spiritualists present included Wilfred Watts, Connie Ransom, veteran Muriel Boddington and Walter Earrey.

Midlands Spiritualist Eric Hatton, recently ordained as a Spiritualist minister, was accompanied by his wife Heather. Eric, noted for his beautiful voice, sang two hymns.

And the Saxons, husband and wife, from Huddersfield, Yorks – Percy installed the sound recording equipment at their Spiritualist church – made the long journey as their tribute.

Former SNU president Charles Quastel tried to be present, but found that travel from the Isle of Man proved impossible.

Pioneer Norfolk Spiritualist Jim Duffield was also unable to make the journey from Norwich because his wife has not recovered from an illness.

Healer M. H. Tester, a PN director and STF trustee, was prevented from being present because he contracted influenza. (P.N. May 14th 1977)

It was further noted:

SIGN OF THE TIMES

IT was a surprise to see in the "Times" last Saturday an obituary notice, measuring ten inches, to Percy Wilson! The writer was an unnamed "correspondent."

This began by saying he was well known here and abroad in the field of sound recording and reproduction, "and as a leader of the Spiritualist movement as well as having had the distinguished career as a civil servant…"

Details of all these activities were printed.

Then came, "The spiritual name 'Perseverance,' given him in infancy as his dedication to Spiritualism (his grandfather and uncle having been leading Spiritualists of their time), certainly typified his life."

The obituary added that Percy became active in the Spiritualist movement during the last war, when he persuaded Lord Dowding to appear with him at public meetings, and was president of the SNU from 1950 to 1953.

"His guidance ensured the successful passage of legislation on 1951 to relieve Spiritualists of harassment under the ancient laws on witchcraft and vagrancy."

Readers were told that Percy stimulated the formation, on a non-denominational basis, of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers and persuaded Harry Edwards to become its president.

Finally it said, "He established the Spiritual Truth Foundation to control the weekly newspaper Psychic News, of which he was the chairman of directors."[7]

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Percy Wilson's eldest son Laurence (known as Laurie) had previously given this tribute for his father's 80th birthday:

I blew family trumpet for my father's 80th birthday

We reprint extracts from the tribute by his barrister son Laurie to Percy (PN March 10, 1973) who became an octogenarian in that month. An introduction stated that famous healer Harry Edwards was not the only veteran Spiritualist about to celebrate an 80th birthday. Percy was Harry's senior in this respect by two months.

AS 80th birthdays appear to be in fashion, dare I blow the family trumpet by pointing out that Percy Wilson reaches that age on March 8?

He will be celebrating the occasion, as on his 75th birthday, with friends in the world of acoustics. Here his eminence is at least as great as in the world of psychics.

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[7].–The "Spiritual Truth Foundation" is mentioned numerous times in the article for more details please see the end of the article.

Percy's grandfather, A. D. Wilson was one of the founders of the Spiritualists' National Federation 83 years ago, having already served the Movement for 20 years and sacrificed his career to it.

Percy's uncle, Hanson G. Hey, was one of those who transformed the federation into the Spiritualists' National Union. For 20 years he served it as general secretary for a trifling honorarium.

Percy – named indirectly after the poet Shelley, but given the spirit name "Perseverance" – began his service to the Movement over 60 years ago as an interpreter at an international conference. He has been a subscribing member of the SNU for over 55 years.

The heyday of his service to the Movement was in the later 1940s. As a top-flight civil servant and a back-room boy for Government-sponsored Bills in Parliament, he found himself in a unique position to solve the political and legal problems which had baffled earlier generations of Spiritualists.

A series of lawsuits in the 1860s and 1870s had made Spiritualism an illegal religion (or so it appeared). They subjected Spiritualists to prosecution under the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts.

In 1944 Helen Duncan, the materialisation medium, was jailed under the Witchcraft Act. The real reason, it subsequently appeared, was that information given through her mediumship revealed war secrets.

Legal proceedings in the first world war had failed to secure exemption from military service for Spiritualist ministers.[8] A legacy for training mediums had been quashed in the High Court. Political campaigns had got nowhere.

Where political and legal action failed Percy's administrative know-how succeeded.

His familiarity with the ways of Whitehall showed how administrative action could circumvent adverse legal decision, take advantage of existing laws, and finally gain the confidence of those in authority so as to get the law changed without opposition.

The secret of his success was quiet persuasion and absence of polemic; stress on the religious aims of genuine Spiritualism and dissociation from sensationalism and charlatanry.

The recognition which he won from many Government departments for Spiritualist churches as religious charities was no mere status symbol.

It meant fair treatment in taxation and in war damage compensation, and – especially in recent years – generous compensation on the basis of "equivalent reinstatement" for churches demolished for town improvement schemes.

[8].–See the SNU Pioneer issue two: "Who were the first Ministers of the Union?"

It overcame the adverse effects of earlier lawsuits by distinguishing between the genuine and the spurious in Spiritualistic activity.

He analysed the reasons underlying political and administrative opposition to previous attempts to repeal the Witchcraft Act and parts of the Vagrancy Act, and worked out ways to meet both points of view.

These were the foundation of the new confidence, built in parliamentary and governmental circles by Tom Brooks, MP, which finally enabled the Fraudulent Mediums Act – the real mediums' charter – to pass in 1951 without opposition.

Percy's presidency of the SNU (1950-53) was marked by unusual progression from financial red to black. This was achieved mainly by his securing the co-operation of Harry Edwards in promoting healing demonstrations throughout the country

He later stimulated the creation of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers.

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We note in Laurie's tribute to his father the name Helen Duncan. At a Conference organised by the College of Psychic Science (formerly called the "London Spiritualists' Alliance," today called "The College of Psychic Studies.") at Brighton on November 28th – 30th 1958, Percy was one of the lecturers and relates his involvement in the war time problems involving Helen Duncan re the sinking of the H.M.S. *Barham* in 1941 leading to her 1944 trial. Quoted below from Psypioneer Volume 5. No 1. January 2009, originally published in Light (Special Conference Number) Spring 1959:

EVIDENCE FOR SURVIVAL

The Historical Significance of Physical Mediumship

By Percy Wilson, M.A.

The next case I wish to draw your attention to is one within my own experience: there are many more but I think it is time to reveal some of the things of this particular experience, relating to Helen Duncan's mediumship, during the last war, and leading up to her trial. The story so far as I am concerned began with an invitation to me to have lunch with Maurice Barbanell. During that lunch he asked me if I had heard what had happened at a Helen Duncan séance at Portsmouth the previous evening. He told me that he had had a message that morning to say that at this séance a figure had appeared of a sailor with a capband H.M.S. *Barham*;[9] and the information was given that the *Barham* had been sunk in the Mediterranean but that the fact was not to be announced for three months because of the political and military situation. I went back to my office. I was then what you might call a senior official of the Ministry of War Transport. I was in a detached building, Devonshire House, whereas the main office was in Berkeley Square House; so I deliberately went along to Berkeley Square House to ask some of my senior colleagues and

[9].–Note some of the problems and myths surrounding Helen Duncan in Psypioneer, for example in Volume 2. No 6. June 2006: *We Shall Fight Them on the Web Sites? – Leslie Price*.

remember, the Ministry of Shipping was part of the Ministry of War Transport whether they had heard of the sinking of the *Barham* in the Mediterranean. No one had heard, but one of them said he would make an enquiry; and he told me later that afternoon that it was not known in the Ministry of War Transport. That was on the day after the message had been given in Portsmouth.



Well you will find, as I found, that in fact the news of the sinking of the *Barham* was only released three months later and the explanation was given that it was not in the public interest to reveal the fact at the time. You can imagine the consternation and feeling in Portsmouth when this piece of rather colourful information had appeared at a séance with Helen Duncan. In passing I would have you observe that although this was a physical séance, it contained evidence at the same time, rather straight evidence, of the survival of the particular boy who came back to speak to his mother.

Nothing further happened until, I think it was about a year later, Mrs. Duncan paid another visit to Portsmouth, and gave another séance.[10] In the course of that she was seized, and a white sheet, so called, was seized but was never heard of afterwards; and then the prosecution under the Witchcraft Act of 1735 began. The defence under that Act was really conducted from my house, where Mr. MacIndoe stayed with me.

At the beginning of the trial I got a message from two of my sons, who were then undergraduates in Oxford, and had visited the Cowley Spiritualist church. There they met a man called Spencer who asserted that at the Cowley Works of Morris Motors in the previous year a young man had made a bet that the next time Mrs. Duncan appeared at Portsmouth she would be arrested. That bet was taken, the side stakes were given to a third party, and when Mrs. Duncan was arrested the bet was paid. It transpired that the principal witness on behalf of the police against Mrs. Duncan was the uncle of the man who had made the bet.

I immediately saw the value of this testimony and with a lot of last-minute effort we managed to get Mr. Spencer up to the Old Bailey during the trial; but for some reason he was not called as a witness. I would ask you, however, if you ever read the record of the trial, to look at the concluding remarks, after the conviction, of the Chief Constable of Portsmouth, which seem to me to shed a lurid light on the circumstances of that trial. The only conclusion I can come to is that the police and the naval authorities did not want Mrs. Duncan about in Portsmouth before D-Day or during D-Day.

[10].–The time line is slightly out, the Barham sunk in November 1941 – Duncan was arrested in January 1944

Séance During Trial

During the trial one of my sons, Geoffrey, acted in the court as a messenger for the defence, and when it was half-way through, after prosecution evidence had been given, we arranged (it was a Friday afternoon) that he should collect Mrs. Duncan straight from the court at four o'clock, take her to Holborn Viaduct station, bring her through to Wimbledon and then by taxi on to my house. This he duly did. She had had no opportunity of going anywhere else from the court on the way. And I had my usual home circle gathered there.

So, we gave Mrs. Duncan a good tea, I don't advocate this before a physical circle, but there was a reason for it on this occasion because we included some really good red jam in it, thanks to the regurgitation theory of Harry Price. Shortly afterwards, we went upstairs to my own séance room and held a seance. I was seated next to the curtains of the cabinet, and there was a red light behind me on the ceiling. (I could not see it but it was shining behind me, so that my eyes were not inhibited by it.) In the course of the séance Mrs. Duncan stood up and ectoplasm poured in streams, in ribbons, from her nose and her mouth, on to her massive bosom, curled up in a ribbon on her bosom, and dropped to the ground; and then, as she was standing with her arms akimbo, I suddenly saw it leap up two ways to her hands. I was within a yard of her with a light above my head and I saw everything that happened. Shortly afterwards the whole mass of ectoplasm disappeared in an instant. I could not tell you when: it was there and then it was not. It just disappeared.

Now that evidence was sufficient for us to conclude that it was safe, even in the hard circumstances of the court at the Old Bailey, for Mr. Loseby to offer the judge and jury a personal demonstration when he opened his evidence for the defence. That offer, as you will remember, was refused.

Those are the circumstances which I want to put on record now, relating to the Helen Duncan prosecution. I think they tell a story of their own, and I need not dot the i's or cross the t's.

Now these testimonies, all that I have quoted, are so positive that I suggest that only three conclusions are possible. (a) The facts are substantially as I have related them, or were related by the witnesses, or (b) the people testifying were unworthy of credence, which is precisely the criterion, I may remark, which Professor Sidgwick himself, in his first presidential lecture to the S.P.R. on its foundation, had postulated as being one of the desirable positions to get into. Here are his words: "We must drive the objector into the position of being forced either to admit the phenomena as inexplicable, at least to him, or to accuse the investigators either of lying or creating, or of a blindness or forgetfulness incompatible with any intellectual condition except absolute idiocy".

Or (c) that the people who deny the testimonies are like the Irishman who was brought before a judge on a charge of stealing a kettle. Three witnesses gave full personal testimony that they had seen him steal the kettle; whereupon he said to the judge, "Surely, Your Honour, you are not going to convict me on the evidence of three witnesses? I can produce fifty who did not see me steal that kettle!"

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To conclude:

Albert and May Saxon, from Huddersfield have donated numerous items of historical value to the Britten Memorial Museum. Part of their generous donations includes an envelope of information on Percy Wilson, and his links with former SNU President George Berry, and Hanson Hey. Apart from the last article all material used in this article is thanks to Mr and Mrs Saxon.

For more information on Percy Wilson and his family see "Our New President – Wilson family tradition goes back to 1870," Psypioneer Volume 6. No 1. January 2010. Percy's uncle Hanson Hey, whose premises the SNU held as its first registered office; see Psypioneer Volume 6. No 10. October 2010: "Hanson Gledhill Hey 1866-1921 Paul J. Gaunt," and "The Passing of Mr. Hanson G. Hey – The Two Worlds".

Please note:

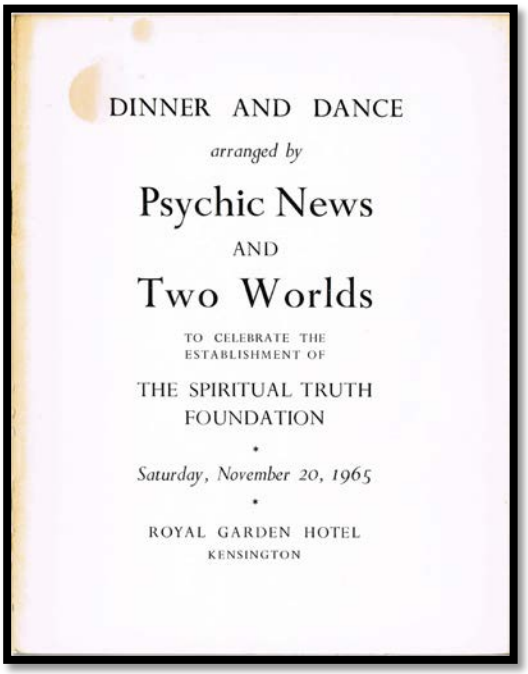
> All the above material has been taken from original reports as they were published at the time and reproduced by "Optical Character Recognition" (OCR), the conversion of scanned images of handwritten, typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded text. This means that grammar, old English, spelling mistakes, etc. are not usually changed. However, long paragraphs are sometimes split for easier reading; any errors or explanations needed are noted in footnotes.

Anyone who would like this article, please contact:—pioneer@snu.org.uk

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Below are the two articles referenced in the footnotes:

Deed that makes psychic history


DINNER AND DANCE

arranged by

Psychic News

AND

Two Worlds

TO CELEBRATE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF

THE SPIRITUAL TRUTH FOUNDATION

•

Saturday, November 20, 1965

•

ROYAL GARDEN HOTEL

KENSINGTON

This important announcement, signed by Percy Wilson, as chairman of Psychic Press Ltd., which publishes "Psychic News," our companion weekly periodical, was printed in its columns.[11]

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.

[11].–Article taken from the *Two Worlds* July 1965 page 220

I announced that the control of the company had passed to a body of London Spiritualists whose intention was, to form a charitable trust.

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 trustee's are: Gordon H. Adams, Maurice Barbanell, Sylvia Barbanell, R. David L Dutton, Maurice H. Tester; Laurence Wilson and myself.

Influential support has already been promised for the trust, which will not 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.

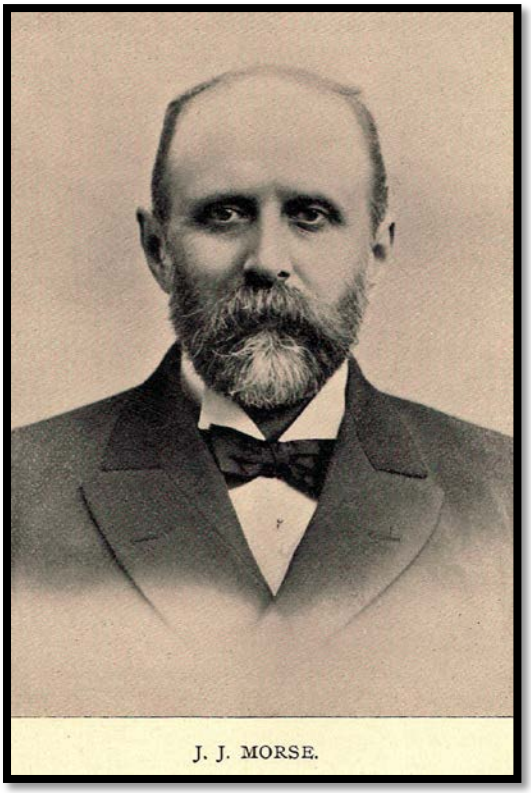
The support of well-wishers is earnestly sought, whether in prayer; in conscious thought, or in the more material ways of gifts to the trust of shares in any of the subsidiary enterprises, of donations or of legacies. Communications should be addressed to Gordon Adams at 23 Great Queen Street, London,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

This is the most hopeful adventure in the expansion of Spiritualist philosophy and chartable 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 break-through of spirit power to the denser atmosphere of this sorely stressed material world.

The motto of the trust will surely be that of the Prince of Wales, "Ich Dien" (I serve).

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J. J. MORSE.

A famous medium was inspired for this service

When the spirit bids adieu to mortality

by J. J. MORSE

AS promised I conducted the cremation service for an old friend, the healer George Jessup. He is the second member of Hannen Swaffer's home circle to pass to the higher life. The first was Nettie Abrahams, whose cremation service I also conducted.

I take no credit for the fact that non Spiritualists always volunteer how impressive and uplifting they find these funeral services because of their marked contrast to the sterility of orthodox ones.

I use what I consider the ideal one written over 60 years ago by J. J. Morse, a former editor of this magazine who was also a brilliant trance medium. I reproduce it with a very few revisions so that you can read the heights of inspiration and beauty achieved by a man who had practically no education. M.B.

For use at the house

IN the fulness of time comes the harvesting. The golden sheaves are garnered, and the husbandman rejoices that his labour has not been in vain. He thanks the giver of all good whose laws have thus fulfilled His purposes.

We are ears of corn in the fields of life, ripening for the Great Reaper to gather us in for the harvest home in the sweet homeland beyond.

Man, too often ignorant regarding his heritage of continued existence, sees but gloom and sorrow in death. He notes the drooping of the young, the failing of early prime, the steadily advancing snows of age. His heart aches, the brevity of life seems so pitiful, the dread ending so swift that, in anguish, he asks, "What is there beyond?"

He muses that if life be all, then all too brief is life. The little span of three score years and ten scarce affords him time to know he truly lives. Youth and age alike ever feel the coming of the white angel all too soon. But, truly, God knows best, for assuredly His will and wisdom rule all things wisely and well.

Death is the gateway of life. In very truth to die is to gain. In all ages the eye of faith has caught glimpses of the serener regions of the life beyond. Prophets, poets, seers and soul-illumined thinkers of all lands have upheld the hope of immortality, while visions, trances and open visitations from the spirit realms have added knowledge to faith, giving man the certainty that death does not end all.

But human life is not all suffering and strife. To each of us comes something of gladness and sweetness. The tender ties of blood bind hearts in loving unison, while those still holier links of human love hold us firm and true to each other when trials and disappointments fret us almost beyond endurance.

Our children comfort us in age, soothing our pains of body and mind. Tenderly they minister to us when the spirit bids its adieu to mortality as it goes to realise its greater freedom.

Sad it is when death comes to the accompaniments of pain and anguish, but then sweet are the ministries of those nearest and dearest to us.

Let us then give thanks with heart and soul, for the love that blesses and soothes in our hour of separation.

But a greater comfort is ours in the certain knowledge that death, as men call it, is truly a part in the great plan of life. As the rose buds and blossoms, making summer airs fragrant and the days beautiful, so, in due time, the human spirit buds, blossoms and is made ready to be transplanted to the more congenial life of the Summerland beyond. To die is as natural as to live.

As the bud contains the potentiality of the flower, so we each contain the finer elements which are fashioned into our supernal forms. Those forms, fashioned in life, are liberated by death that they may evermore grow beautiful under the clearer skies of the spheres of glory and light towards which each and all of us are surely tending.

How can we say there is no death? Because those whom we once counted dead are oft about us, not as phantoms of our dreams or articles of our faith. They are realities, the arisen ones of our hearts and homes, the friends of former years, parents, children, the loved and the loving.

Today, as of old, the gates are ajar. Messengers come and go. Loved ones come to the aching and hungry-hearted to console them, to add further proof of life hereafter to those who already hold such testimony, to cheer those who have it not. Tears may flow. We are but human, for the great poet has truly said, “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”

Not cleansing fires, but cleansing tears remove ills and hatreds, cleansing our minds, our loves, freeing us from the impurities of unkindness and uncharitableness. The tears of joy are also shed, of joyful thankfulness that wounds are healed, that the haven has been gained.

The tears that give ease to sorrow, that relieve the overcharged breast, are nature’s means to ease her children’s griefs. Be not ashamed to receive our great mother’s kindly help.

This silent form is to be removed from its accustomed home. One face will be absent from the family circle. There will be a vacant chamber, an unused chair, a

voice no longer heard. Reverently take away the discarded garment; quietly bear it to its final resting place.

It is but the casket that hid the beauteous jewel. That which made this form so wonderful, the form we knew so well, has gone. The immortal jewel it contained has now a richer setting, one more fitting to its nature and high destiny.

Bowing to the wonderful mystery of death, yet lifting our faces that they may be flushed with the glory of life, let us rejoice that another has gone a little further along the road our feet are treading.

But the home is not vacant of the presence of the arisen. The dead do not all depart; they are with us often, to help and cheer us on our way. The blessing of heaven be upon us, and the hallowedness of this hour remain a sweet memory for many days to come.

At church or chapel

LIFE and death are the servants of God, love and duty the incentives that link people to their higher selves. A well-spent mortal life is man's best acknowledgement of indebtedness to God and nature.

Now in this place let each search his heart in silence that the good or ill therein may be discerned, that one may be fostered, or the other overcome.

(*Let the company indulge in silent prayer*.)

We have not assembled to grieve, but rather to rejoice that the arisen one has escaped from darkness and found the light. We pay soulful tribute to the eternal power. Within these walls there is no insensate grief, no uncontrollable terror. We know that death is liberation, a step "Nearer, my God, to Thee," an uplift in the divine order of eternal progression.

God's laws heed neither creeds nor rituals. His only ritual is the order of His laws; His church, the universe, its members all mankind; His ministers the souls that are seers, the hearts that live, the minds that serve. His altars are human hearts sanctified by love and service.

In honouring the departed, let us not forget our duty to the living. Unwisely to bemoan our loss is to becloud our judgement. It is not pleasing to the arisen, nor is it helpful to the living.

Rather than unduly lamenting, let us recall the goodness of the departed, that we may emulate it. If we needs must remember their ill, let it be that we may avoid its like in ourselves, and do our best to prevent it in others.

(*Here introduce appropriate personal comments to the arisen one*.)

Out from these walls, for the time being sanctified by our sympathy and love, let us follow this mouldering flesh, that it may be decently returned to the great mother from whose vast stores it was first compounded.

She will resurrect its elements for her further purposes. The late dweller in this silent form will never need it, or its like, again. It has done its work, it has served its purpose.

*(*For cremation services substitute the three paragraphs beginning with the one marked with an asterisk.*)

Committal

LEAVES have their glad recall. Flowers bloom and die, but they come again. Night and silence bring quiet and rest. Death smoothes out the creases from the faces of those who have suffered, leaving the face as tranquil as if an angel had said, "Poor, tired frame, be at rest."

With the trees as sentinels we leave this empty tabernacle, while flowers, like silent watchers, keep their guard. Summer suns and winter snows will come and go. Oft our memory will turn towards the grassy mound that presently will rise above the form we leave beneath the earth.

But life is growth and change, as in the great order of the universe. Life never ceases, it only varies in its moods and forms. We know death is but the doorway to a larger life. Up- ward lies the pathway of the deathless soul. Earth and its limitations are left behind, sense and time no longer thrall.

To nature then what nature loaned.

For cremation

*THE life-containing spirit having finally departed from its temporary earthly tenement, the body is now to be resolved into its original elements, for mother earth to use again in her own way.

The one who occupied it will never need it again. It has done its work. It has served its purpose. We are about to hasten and sweeten the process of disintegration by committing it to the purifying flames.

As fire and smoke ascend, so too does the deathless spirit. Earth and its limitations are left behind. Sense and time no longer thrall. To nature then what nature loaned. The body is dead, but the spirit still lives.

After interment

FAREWELL to thee thou raiment of mortality, so wondrously fashioned to serve the purposes of our earthly life, thy task is done. May we who still wear thy semblance learn to use our garment ever wisely and well, that we may return it undimmed by aught dishonouring to our God, our fellows, or ourselves.

All hail to the enfranchised soul that lately left this tenement. Let us, dear friends, rejoice in the knowledge that giveth strength, the knowledge that there are no dead.

The silver cord is loosened, the golden bowl is broken. The bond has been freed. Never again shall the flesh be the prison-house of the soul now released.

I always find it helpful to include in the service these highly appropriate verses written by my wife which she titled, "Some call him Death."

SOME call him Death whose hands efface,
With swift and certain skill,
The lines of pain that marked a face
Now mercifully still.
At the appointed hour comes he,
As envoy of the Lord;
With gentle touch he tenderly
Severs the silver cord.
Arise bright soul with living breath,
Vanished is mortal strife;
Greet then thy friend whom some call Death —
His other name is Life.



JOHN VENABLES

SNF President 1901



John Venables gave considerable service in the building of the Spiritualists' National Union; in 1901 he was the Spiritualists' National Federation (SNF) Annual Conference President at the Music Hall, Surrey Street, Sheffield on Saturday and Sunday July 6th and 7th. It was at this Conference James J. Morse, on behalf of the Executive proposed:

> 'That this Conference adopt the advice of Mr. Bateman that the Federation be incorporated under the Joint Stock Companies' Act, with liability limited under guarantee, under the style of 'The Spiritualists' National Union Limited.' Mr. Johnson seconded, thinking it was the best scheme possible.[1]

At the end of this article the full SNF Annual Conference, as reported by the *Two Worlds* is published. Similar Conference reports with all the SNF Presidents are being chronicled, so a clear perspective is given of those Pioneers who worked so tirelessly to build the Union as it proudly stands today.

John Venables died on August 25th 1931 at his residence, aptly named "Hydesville" Walsall, and the obituary below is taken from the SNU's *The National Spiritualist* journal for October 1931:

THE TRANSITION OF JOHN VENABLES, J. P.

> With the passing of Mr. John Venables, of Foden Road, Walsall, at the age of 78 years, the movement of Spiritualism loses one more of its old pioneers. More than 50 years ago he helped to found the Walsall Spiritualist Church, acting as the President for many years. He was active in the National Movement and was President during the critical years which saw the birth of the S.N.U. and the transference of the rights and properties of the National Spiritualist Federation in 1901. The Lyceum Movement was served by him with enthusiasm, and in its early years he rendered service to Mr. Kitson. He was one of its Presidents, and at the time of his passing a trustee and administrator of the Ainsworth Trust.

[1].–SNU Yearbook 2014:—"… in October 1901 the Spiritualists' National Union Limited was incorporated under the Companies Acts as a company not for profit and limited by guarantee, and in July 1902 it succeeded to, and took over the property, rights and obligations of, the Spiritualists' National Federation.

Mr. Venables sat as a Liberal on the Walsall Town Council from 1902 to 1921, and was Chairman of the Gas Committee for 11 years. He was Mayor two years in succession, Nov. 1911 to Nov. 1913. He took an active part as a Guardian of the Poor, and was made a Magistrate in 1916. He was a trustee and life member of the Walsall General Hospital, and in 1905 defrayed the entire cost of installing an X-ray apparatus, and in 1911 bearing the cost of additions to its equipment.



By the kind permission of the trustees and officers of the Stafford Street Baptist Chapel, the funeral service was conducted there, Mr. H. V. Lawton, Treasurer of the Midlands D.C. and Mrs. Jessy Greenwood, J. P., jointly officiating.[2] Representatives of the Town Council, Magistrates and Police, as well as many Spiritualists from the Midland Churches, followed the cortege to the Ryecroft Cemetery, where around the grave lay a very large number of beautiful wreaths, including those from the Mayor and members of the Town Council; Walsall General Hospital; Town Mission; Borough Justices; Midland District Council of the Spiritualists' National Union; Walsall Schools' Swimming and Life-Saving Association (of which the late Mr. Venables was a generous friend); Britten Memorial (Manchester); Trustees of the Spiritualists' Central Hall (Bradford St.); South Midland Subsidiary Committee of the Spiritualists' National Union; Walsall Liberal Club; Walsall Winter Convalescent Fund Committee, and the Spiritualist Churches of Walsall, Bloxwich, Wolverhampton, Brownhills,[3] and Darlaston.

Below is taken from the *Two Worlds* September 4th 1931, page 570:

GONE HOME! JOHN VENABLES, J.P.

We have to record the transition of Mr. John Venables, who crossed the bar on Tuesday, the 25th August last, at his residence, "Hydesville," Foden Road, Walsall, aged 78 after a long and tedious illness, which was borne with becoming patience.

Mr. Venables was fully entitled to be called a pioneer of the Spiritualist Movement. Over fifty years ago he was one of the founders of the Walsall Spiritualist Church, and had been its President during the major portion of its

[2].–Sometimes spelt:—Jessie.

[3].–Photograph:—"John Venables, Esq., J.P., Opens the Door of the New Church at Brownhills. THE opening ceremony of the "Excelsior" National Spiritualist Church took place on July 22nd last. The proceedings opened with a hymn, when the Rev. H. Leonard, of Smethwick, gave the invocation. At the opening a Lyceumist, Miss Florence Yates, presented the key to Mr. John Venables, J.P., who, upon opening the edifice, gave a hearty welcome to one and all to enter." Quote taken from the *Two Worlds* August 13th 1926, page 476.

Please see the SNU website for current details on the "Brownhills Excelsior Spiritualist Church."

existence. He was one of the founders of the "Spiritualists' National Union," and was on its panel of Trustees. He was President of the "Spiritualists' National Federation" during the trying period when it was becoming incorporated as the "Spiritualists' National Union," and occupied the chair in 1901 at the Annual Meeting at Sheffield, which finally decided on its incorporation. Coming into the Movement fifty-two years ago, he was for many years one of the front rank of the fighting brigade.

The Lyceum Movement amongst the young, as well as the adult Movement of Spiritualism, was very dear to his heart, and his services rendered to the "British Lyceum Union" will evoke the gratitude of everyone who knows the history of that body. He was associated with Mr. Kitson during the early days of the Lyceum Movement and by voice and prose rendered valuable assistance.

He was in business in Walsall as a spring hook manufacturer, and had been a member of the Town Council for a long period of years, and occupied the Mayoral Chair for two successive years, 1911-12. In politics he was a prominent Liberal, and was at one time President of the Walsall Liberal Club. He had a very deep interest in the welfare of the sick, and associated himself closely with the Walsall General Hospital, to which he presented an X-ray apparatus.

For over sixteen years he had been a Borough Magistrate, and his home was the public enquiry office for all his townsmen who were in difficulty and distress.

It was largely through Mr. John Venables that the Spiritualist Society at Walsall built the Central Halls, now used as a Labour Exchange, and from their opening it was his hand which guided the destinies of the church.

In addition to the Presidency of the S.N.U.,[4] Mr. Venables had also been President of the B.S.L.U.[5] He was one of the Trustees who are administering the Ainsworth Trust.[6]

At the funeral on Friday, August 28th, which was conducted by Mrs. Jessy Greenwood and Mr. V. Lawton all the civic heads were present, with deputations from all the local authorities. The Trustees of the Baptist Chapel in Stafford Street spontaneously offered their church and organ for a short service before going to the Ryecroft Cemetery, where the final obsequies took place.

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[4].–In some older reports the Spiritualists' National Federation was refered to as the SNU.

[5].–British Spiritualists' Lyceum Union – President in 1899.

[6].–At the first SNU AGM in 1903:—"Mr. John Ainsworth, of Blackpool, stated that it had long been his desire to do something to help the Lyceum children, and he now proposed, subject to the decision of the Conference and its legal adviser, to hand over to the Union his house in Blackpool, and the furniture it contained, to be used as a convalescent home for Lyceum children and indigent Spiritualists. He had a strong impression that he would not long remain on this side of life, and he wished to see the transfer accomplished during his lifetime. If possible he would do something also towards its endowment."

It is later recorded:—"1928: The Ainsworth Home of Rest Scheme was accepted by the Charity Commissioners in this year. They allow the interest on the capital to be used to defray the expenses of accommodation at seaside places for Lyceumists who are in need of convalescence."

Mrs. Esther Venables preceded her husband into the Summerland some few years ago, and one of the comforts ever present to Mr. Venables' mind was that the time would come when he would rejoin his partner of nearly fifty years companionship.

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John Venables wife Esther was also a dedicated worker in the growth and development of National Spiritualism, Esther passed into spirit a few years earlier. Below is taken from *Light* November 3rd 1923, page 699:

THE LATE MRS. JOHN VENABLES.

THE PASSING OF AN OLD AND FAITHFUL WORKER.



MRS. VENABLES (WALSALL).

We made a brief reference last week to the decease of Mrs. John Venables, of Walsall. By the courtesy of Mr. Ernest Oaten, Editor of the "Two Worlds," we are now able to add some further particulars.

Mrs, Venables, who passed away on the 19th ulto., was born at Dudley on November 7th, 1854. She and her husband, Mr. John Venables, J.P., became interested in Spiritualism soon after their marriage in 1873, and the two eventually became adherents of and workers for the movement. They were widely known for their untiring service and hospitality; they were active in every humanitarian work. They founded the Walsall Society and went through the persecutions and general campaign of hostility which beset the pioneers of Spiritualism in earlier years. Nevertheless Mr. Venables gained the respect of his fellow-townsmen and held several public offices, including the mayoralty of Walsall, while Mrs. Venables' work in the cause of education, charity, nursing and social reform won for her a high place in the public esteem. The failure of her health was attributed primarily to over-work during her period of office as Mayoress of the borough.

Before the funeral at Walsall Cemetery on the 23rd alto., a short service was conducted at the house, in the presence of about one hundred persons by Mr. Ernest Oaten, assisted by Mrs. Jessy Greenwood, J.P. (President of the S.N.U.). Many hundreds of people were present at the interment—so great was the popularity of the deceased lady. Amongst those who attended were the Aldermen and Councillors of Walsall; the ex-Mayors and Mayoresses of Walsall, Wolverhampton and Coventry, and representatives of many churches, societies and other associations, including some thirty Spiritualist organisations. Some eighty floral offerings from these and other public bodies, in addition to individual tributes, testified to the wide affection and respect Mrs. Venables had won by a life of service and self-sacrifice.

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The tribute below by the Unions first lady President Jessie Greenwood (1923-1925) includes the transition of Mrs F. A. Chiswell, her husband was Samuel Southern Chiswell three times President of the Spiritualists' National Federation who passed April 12th 1910; in 1895 he was joint Federation and Lyceum Union President. Below is taken from the *Two Worlds* October 23th 1931, page 682:

THE PASSING OF TWO VETERANS.

MRS. JESSIE GREENWOOD'S APPRECIATION AND NOTES.

IN our issue of September 4th we announced the transition of Mr. John Venables, J.P., whose passing occurred at his residence, "Hydesville," Foden Road, Walsall on August 25th, at the age of 78. We then referred briefly to Mr. Venables' career and close association with the work of Spiritualism.

Last week we announced the transition of another veteran worker in the Cause of Spiritualism, namely, Mrs F. A. Chiswell, of Liverpool, who also passed out in her 78th year.

We append herewith an appreciation of their many labours by Mrs. Jessie Greenwood, J.P., who was personally acquainted with both over a very long period, and who is therefore, peculiarly fitted to speak of their labours:—

"The transition of old and dear friends always brings a feeling of sadness at the parting, but it also brings the thought of that 'other time' when we shall meet again. Spiritualism made my friendships with Mr. Venables and Mrs. Chiswell possible. For more than forty years I have had the greatest possible pleasure of meeting them at Conferences of the B.S.L.U. and the S.N.U., and at ordinary Societary gatherings, also at 'Hydesville,' Walsall, the rendezvous of Spiritualists far and near.

"Many speakers have happy memories of this 'home from home,' and Midland Spiritualists will miss its hospitable shelter. Visitors from the Continent often found a welcome here, and enjoyed the generous hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Venables and Mrs. Brown—the triangle of intimate influences that dominated the home.[7] I am forcibly reminded of these things by the passing forward of two dear friends—Mr. John Venables, J.P., and Mrs. Chiswell, of Wallasey.

"The former was well known in the Midlands as a pioneer Spiritualist, and the Society at Walsall loses a stalwart supporter, Trustee and President and further afield through the above Unions. He has gone, and left a fine record of work done for his fellows, especially in our own Movement.

"Mrs. Chiswell, together with her husband Mr. S. S. Chiswell, did a splendid work in the Lyceum and Society at Daulby Hall, Liverpool, the influence of which still lives in the lives of young men and women in that city who gladly admit that their present status in the Movement is due to the gracious influence of these two dear souls.

[7].–Mrs. Brown was John Venables sister-in-law.

"It was at 'Hydesville' that I learned to love Mr. and Mrs. Venables, Mr. and Mrs. Chiswell, and 'Auntie' Sallie Brown, and many more who sheltered there, and who brought tidings from the 'other side.' Indeed, 'Who's Who' in the Movement gravitated to this homestead to be blessed with a friendship that gave them courage and cheer, and now through changes which must eventuate the home must go into other hands, and all its associations. The memory of it all will live in our hearts and minds. As I think of these old-time friends, I register a 'God speed you. Re-union for you both with those other dear ones who went forward ahead of you.'

"The company on the Other Side grows bigger as one after another of the old friends slips away. The two worlds meet! Is there any wonder that Spiritualism is making good? My appreciation is inadequate, but my love for these and many, many more valiant defenders of Spiritualism remains firm."



The service on the occasion of Mr. J. Venables' funeral was held at the Baptist Chapel, Walsall, when the officiating ministers were Mr. V. H. Lawton and Councillor Mrs. Jessy Greenwood, J.P.[8] There was a large and very representative attendance.

Mr. Venables was an ex-Mayor of Walsall, and for nearly twenty years represented Birchills on the Town Council.

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It can be noted in the above tributes to Venables' long connection with the Walsall Spiritualists; on Sunday May 20th 2007 the second longest serving SNU president (2000-2010) Minister Duncan Gascoyne rededicated the church which Venables helped to found and who was its former President:

Duncan noted in his rededication:

"So how did it all start in Walsall? Going back through the old archives we can build up an picture of what actually happened over a hundred years ago.

"In the First Annual Census of Spiritualist Societies taken on 28th December 1868 Walsall is listed as meeting at the Exchange Buildings. They had 50 members, the seating capacity was 120, average attendance was 45, Lyceum membership was 58, 3 public mediums, 7 private mediums and 7 circles.

"In October 1878 a Midlands District Committee of Spiritualists was established at a Conference held in Derby. A representative from Walsall was present, which indicates that there still was a Society in Walsall at that time.

[8].–We can note Lawton on the left of Venables in the photograph shown, which is kindly supplied by the Walsall Spiritualist Church.

"In 1880 the Walsall Society met in rented rooms, had 37 members, had an average of 90 persons at each of their Services which were held on a Sunday and Monday. They also had a library and held one public and nine private circles. In addition they had one public and 20 private mediums, the estimated number of Spiritualists in Walsall were around 100."

"In 1887 the Walsall Society still met in the Exchange Rooms, High Street."

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In 1889 the foundation stones were laid for their New Hall, this was a grand achievement at this time, the result of long and arduous labours. The ceremony took place on December 16th at 2.pm under the presidency of Mr W. B. Barr. James (Jas) Burns well-known for his Spiritual Institution and his weekly journal the Medium and Daybreak (London) gave an eloquent speech, and then seven foundation stones were laid by well-known Spiritualists: Mr J. Bent, Mr Aldridge, Mrs Groom, Mrs Barr, Mrs Roberts, Mrs Venables, and Mr Burns. Each was presented with a silver trowel, and equally introduced by well-known Spiritualists which included the Treasurer of the Walsall Society John Venables and Mr Lawton.[9]

Quoted below are the details of the New Hall given in the *Medium and Daybreak*, December 20th 1889. The image as shown – is taken from the front page of the journal:

THE NEW HALL AT WALSALL.

LAYING FOUNDATION-STONES.



SPIRITUALISTS' NEW HALL, WALSALL.

Monday was described by various speakers at Walsall as a "Red-letter Day," and truly it was so. A unity of spirit actuated all, and a work was boldly instituted, such as has been seldom attempted in other places. A very few friends, who may be almost described as "working men," have resolved on building a hall and other offices for Spiritual Work. Though the outlay will be something over £1000, yet they are sanguine of success. First, they make a liberal donation of their own means, and then they ask with some degree of confidence for the support of their brethren in the Cause. In addition to their pecuniary contributions, the amount of work and care bestowed on the project is incalculable, and saves the outlay of considerable money. Men of mechanical skill and willing hands can do a great deal in such matters. For weeks past it has been meetings and conferences till

[9].–The full *Medium and Daybreak* report is available for any interested parties please contact:—pioneer@snu.org.uk

late at night, or rather, early morning. Several houses are local "Spiritual Institutions," where all connected with the Cause rush in as if they were quite at home.

The New Hall is being erected in Bradford Street. It is only a little way from an acute angle where Bradford Street meets Midland Road. The Hall has thus two entrances, but as the two streets rapidly part from one another, one side of the building is about 26 feet longer than the other, leaving a large triangular space at Midland Road end, which has been devoted to committee rooms, and two sets of retiring rooms for ladies and gentlemen, and on the third story, a residence for the hallkeeper.

There will be two halls, each capable of seating from 300 to 400, the area being 33 by 62 feet. First, the basement, underground, is 7 feet high, and extends under the whole of the building. On the ground floor is the School height of ceiling, 11 feet. Over it, up one stair, is the Hall, having an elevation of 23 feet. Such is the accommodation indicated by the plans which have been drawn. The architect is Mr. W. Jackson, Walsall; and the builders, Messrs. Evans and Morgan, Walsall and Darlaston.

The foundation walls are now level with the street, and on Monday the ceremony took place of laying stones, bearing the names of those who laid them, and which inscription may be read from the outside. Suitable scaffolding had been placed, and the site was decorated with flags and banners, one large white sheet bearing the word "TRUTH."

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The new building was known as Central Hall. The Walsall Society was one of the first Societies to join the newly formed National Federation in 1890 later becoming the SNU. In 1955 Central Hall was sold for £7,500.

Various venues were used until its present location was found at Caldmore Road, Walsall at the cost of £10,000. On September 28th 1957 the laying of the foundation stones took place,[10] and the Church was opened on March 29th 1958 then known as the Walsall Spiritualist Church.

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[10].–"In an afternoon of sunshine this ceremony was completed, the builders had made suitable arrangements for everything to be satisfactorily carried out. The form of service was as previously detailed in our last minutes. Mr. Wiggin consecrating the ground with most satisfying words for the occasion and finally laying the stone in memory of the pioneers of Spiritualism in Walsall. Following this oration your Secretary spoke of the Trustees past and present, giving details of the original trust drawn up in 1923 and emphasizing that your Chairman was the only surviving member of same, he then laid the stone in remembrance of them, the Architect, Mr. Close presented both the Chairman and Secretary with silver trowels suitably engraved to commemorate the auspicious occasion. We had the support of many members of our existing congregation and friends who laid 100 bricks as a sign of their love and understanding of our cause.

"Friends from the surrounding Churches were present and they. Included Bloxwich, Darlaston, Sutton Coldfield, Great Bridge, Wolverhampton and Smethwick.

"Thanks were expressed to the Builders and Architect for their co-operation."

Report from the Church minutes – supplied by Walsall Church



The Dedication/Church opening photograph is kindly supplied by the Walsall Spiritualist Church. The present Church secretary John Blackwell has endeavored to answer who the people are in the image he informed me left to right:—

Mr. Close (architect I think!) Mr. Ray Kirby (treasurer, also organist he designed and had installed the organ that is in our Church now), Mr. E Moylan Mr. Sam Wiggin (chairman he was also a president of Bloxwich and involved in the building of that Church I believe) Mr. N Hughes and Mr. Ray Pearce (secretary of trustees and life president of the Church)



The Church today

Thanks are due to Walsall Spiritualist Church for their assistance and generous help with their Church history – a further acknowledgement is due to their secretary John Blackwell who kindly researched some of this article.[11]

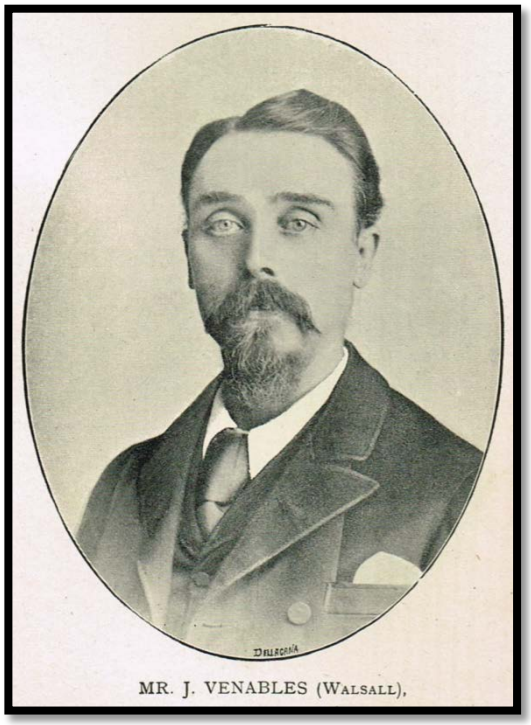
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[11].–For contact details, Church services, and healing etc please see the SNU website: Walsall Spiritualist Church, Caldmore Road, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 3NQ.

Spiritualists' National Federation Presidents sometimes refered to as Chairman were elected for the yearly movable Conferences[12]

Below is reported on the 12th Annual Conference of the Spiritualists' National Federation held at the Surrey Music Hall, Surrey Street, Sheffield on Saturday and Sunday 6th and 7th July 1901 under the presidency of John Venables. The report is taken from the *Two Worlds* Friday, July 12, 1901 pages 456-459.

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MR. J. VENABLES (WALSALL),

SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL CONFERENCE.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, ASSOCIATES, DELEGATES, AND ESTEEMED Co. WORKERS,—For the twelfth time in the history of this Federation we are assembled for our Annual Conference. On the last occasion we met within sound of the surging sea; to-day we meet within this busy centre of the steel industry. A year ago you honoured me by electing me as President of this our National Federation, and during the year that has passed your Executive Committee, with myself, has given its best thoughts for the future of our movement. Many meetings have been held, and most exhaustive discussions have taken place with regard to a legal status, and the best methods whereby the future well being of our cause could be assured; and unity of purpose has characterised all the meetings, with one desire in view, that of the future welfare of Spiritualism.

I am privileged to welcome you here in the name of the Federation as its presiding officer for the day, and you will, I am sure, unite with me in expressing the pleasure I feel in once more meeting together to consolidate our Federation in closer bonds of union. Thanks to your

[12].–There is some confusion in the listing of the Presidents. The early SNU diaries e.g. 1939 stated the first elected SNU President John James Parr, was in 1902. This was later changed to 1903, which is correct. For at least the past twenty years the Yearbook/diary does not start with the *first* SNU elected President (Parr) but drops back to the *last* elected National Federation President William Johnson as President which shows 1901-1903. Confusion arose because the National Federation Presidents were originally elected for the next Conference. E.g., 1894 Conference President/Chairman Peter Lee – "Mr. S. S. Chiswell was elected president for next year's conference." – 1897 Conference President/Chairman Joseph Armitage – "Mr. E. W. Wallis was unanimously elected president of the Conference for 1898," and so on.

Although the voting system did not appear to change there was more work to be done as noted in this report, nevertheless Venables was the 1901 Conference President, and Johnson was the 1902 Conference President which appears to be not correctly reflected in the listings. In July 1902, the newly constituted SNU co-opted the Federation President William Johnson and the executive with the exception of James Morse (working abroad) as their first Council (1902-1903). The first SNU elected President John Parr and the Council were elected at the AGM in July 1903.

confidence in myself this is the second time I have had the pleasant duty of welcoming you to our Annual Parliament. When we look on the past twenty-seven years and the changes which have taken place in our movement, the contrast between the state of the local work than and now is startling indeed. Formerly it was backyards and stables. Now it is churches, noble halls, and building funds. Then there was no Lyceum Union. Now we can rejoice that all this is in existence, showing the great progress we have made. In rejoicing upon the grand work done we must not forget the noble band of workers who took the lead against great odds in paving the way for those who were to follow. Sometimes we feel how unworthy we are to follow the fine men and women who fought many a hard battle for the privileges we now enjoy. Let us, brothers and sisters, emulate the lives of those who have gone to receive their reword for the faithful discharge of their duties.

Pleasant as it is to recall these happy memories and pay an ungrudging tribute, this enjoyment must give way, for matters of importance must be dealt with.

To turn your attention into other channels. Since our gathering last year the movement has lost the outward services and advice of some of our splendid workers. The first is that noble, high-minded, full-souled champion, brave old John Lamont, of Liverpool.[13] Then we have our Brother Foster, of Preston, and many others who have filled their place in our movement, and have left a gap that is not easy to fill. Then we have Matthew Fidler, whose name for many years past has been so well known, and whose noble work will to remembered by many who came under his inspiration. Lastly, we have Brother James Swindlehurst, our respected late organiser. His services on behalf of the Cause he loved so well have been of such a trying nature as few men would have undertaken.

It is pleasing to see the generous response made to the appeal on behalf of this widow and family—a noble recognition of the valuable services he has rendered to this Federation and to humanity. He has gone to receive his reward. These warm-hearted men and women have answered the roll call; they have tested by experience the value of their Spiritualism. The old guards are passing one by one. The new ones must see to it that they do their utmost to retain the traditions of unselfishness, usefulness, and loyalty to truth and comradeship which they have left behind.

Now a word or two as to our business on this occasion. Our agenda presents that which is of vital importance to our movement. The report of the Propaganda Committee is in your hands, which shows the good that has been accomplished by the little band of workers who have faithfully striven to further our glorious Cause throughout this country, and whose efforts have been the means of some societies being formed, and others whose interest was gone being strengthened, and having life infused into them, and enabled to go on their way rejoicing.

The Hon. Secretary of the Fund of Benevolence submits a separate report as to the work of his department.[14] One would desire to see more funds at the disposal of this Committee for the worthy object of lightening the burdens of some who have grown old and feeble in the

[13].–John Lamont was the first Conference Chairman/President 1890.

[14].–The Fund of Benevolence was founded by Mrs Minnie Harriet Wallis, and was developed from her introduction of the 'Order of Progressive Spiritualists – Sick Benefit and Pension Fund,' this is detailed in the SNU Pioneer Volume 1. No.3:—*Badges, Symbols, and Emblems of the Spiritualists' National Union*.

service of the spirit world, and whose weary bodies will soon pass from our material sight; and as they are nearing the borderland it should be our duty to lighten and brighten in the paths as much as possible. It needs no words of mine to commend this part of our noble work to your notice, and I would ask for your generous help in the words of the worthy Hon. Secretary, 'Generosity is a noble virtue; the angels teach it, man is blessed by its observance, and those who benefit from it bless all who put it into practice.' It is truly to-day, as of old, 'more blessed to give than to receive,' so we ask all to earn this blessing by supporting this truly good effort for the sick suffering and aged in our midst.

Another noble effort is not receiving the attention and support it deserves, viz,, the Britten Memorial. Considering that when this project is accomplished it will provide this Federation with a home of its *own*, and that it will create a national headquarters for both the Federation and the *Lyceum Union*, it should receive your generous assistance in memory of the distinguished worker its name represents, whose whole life was spent in helping to make the world better.[15]

Friends, there it much cause for regret when we consider the miserable response our societies have made during the past year in annual subscriptions. £17 7s, 9d, is the sum total that has been contributed towards the building up and disseminating of our glorious gospel of Spiritualism. It makes one feel ashamed to read such an account of a year's work from societies. With regard to associates' annual subscriptions, these can be considerably augmented if the following suggestion be carried out, viz., that out Secretary, have a printed circular issued annually to those friends who have promised an annual fee. In conversation a few days ago with one of the oldest members of this Federation deploring the poor response to our fund, he said, 'I promised a sum annually, and paid the first year, but have heard no more since that time.' Four pounds would have come in this one instance had a gentle reminder been sent. Men engrossed in their businesses cannot think of these things, whereas such a circular ought to be the means of bringing funds for the work of our Federation. This question should be taken up by your Executive Committee.

Some two years, ago we passed a resolution at Conference that the Federation Executive should, at their quarterly meeting or oftener, have public demonstrations on the Sunday following their labours on the Saturday. This, I regret, has been a failure. Why, one can scarcely, understand, considering the great success that has attended similar efforts of the Lyceum Union Executive. The great good in this respect is found in the desire for more frequent visits to Lyceums. What can be accomplished by the Lyceum Union can be accomplished by this Federation Executive, and a source of income instead of an expense

[15].– Britten Memorial Trust:—On the night of October 2nd 1899, Emma Hardinge Britten, at her residence 2, Winfield Terrace, Chester Road, Old Trafford, Manchester died aged 76 years. Shortly after her death, a memorial was suggested to commemorate her life; this resulted in the formation of a provisional committee at Manchester on December 15th 1899. On March 24th 1900, Solicitor's C. T. Tallent-Bateman legally put the Britten Memorial Fund into motion, later they with other partners would be instrumental in the legal side of the transition of the Spiritualists' National Federation to the Spiritualists' National Union making it possible for the Union to own property. James Burchell, Samuel Butterworth, Samuel Chiswell, James Morse, John Venables and Arthur Orr as Hon. Secretary were the elected Trustees of the Britten Memorial. Venables would continue his work in the Britten Memorial for over thirty years until his death.

The BMT gave substantial help to the Union in Manchester by securing property for its registered office at Tib Lane around 1948; later the Union moved to Stansted, and with the sale of Tib Lane the Trust purchased the Annex – naming it Britten House. The original purpose of the Trust was fulfilled after many years of struggle. Today as a result of our past workers, the Union also holds a fine library and museum: The Britten Memorial Library and Museum.

would be the result. Not only would that be a financial gain, but by these visits you would be binding together more closely the bonds of fellowship and strengthening the hands of your fellow workers; helping weak societies, and bringing back those latent energies to a recognition of their duties to their fellows. I wish to impress upon our societies the benefit such visits would be to them. I am convinced that if carried out this scheme would be of vital importance and a source of strength to the societies.

We have again before us that all important question of Legal Status. As you are aware, at our interim Conference held last February in Blackpool we had this under consideration, with the able assistance of our legal friend, Mr. Bateman. After exhaustive labours you passed what we then thought to be something tangible, whereby we could have legal security for holding property. But the result has not been as we could have desired. When we arrive at this stage of our Agenda, Mr. Bateman will fully explain the legal portion of this matter, and we shall be guided by his superior knowledge and he will lay before you for your consideration a method whereby the result that you desire will be attained. So I hope your calm judgment will be used, and that the result of the Conference will bring the greatest blessing upon our labours, that it will be the means of building up the God-given cause of Spiritualism, and that the spirit of unity will increase and remain with you, as it is only by unity of purpose that our truths will have that lasting blessing so much desired by all. So let us hope that every one of us has come here this day not in a spirit of fault-finding, but with the desire to so improve our Status that will bring a blessing upon our Conference here assembled.

Your Executive has had no thought but for the best interest of the movement, and with this spirit in our midst nothing but good can follow the labours of this Conference.

In conclusion, friends, I make no apology for introducing one important matter to your notice, and I should fail in my duty here today as your President did I not urge you to seriously consider our position as a Federation relative to our Lyceum work. As Spiritualists, if we are to be that mighty force in our land we desire, we must look to the building up, and that creative energy must come from the rising generation in our Lyceum. I know many here to-day are alive to the necessity of this, and are furthering it with all their power. But there are many who, I am sorry to know, are stumbling blocks to this progress in our ranks, and even go so far as to say Spiritualism is too advanced for our children. I hope and trust we have none under this head in our Conference. If so, I would like you to consider that the noble men and women who once were the leaders in this our glorious movement, who have passed beyond the veil and are now summering on the spirit side of life, come to us at this hour and appeal to us as workers in the Father's vineyard to train up these tender plants in all that is true, noble, and good. If we neglect this opportunity who have we to take their place unless we, as the Spiritualists' Federation, look well to it that our first duty into is to the Lyceum work! Just as the Sunday school is to the Church so must our Lyceums be the training ground to prepare our sons and daughters to take our places in this Federation of Spiritualists.

Let us then see to it that we strengthen the noble band of workers who are doing this mighty work to build up and preserve the traditions of those whom we have succeeded in this God-given cause of Spiritualism. There ought not to be a society in our movement without a Lyceum where our teachings are inculcated, so that we may prepare our children for the battle of life. Let us show to the world what Spiritualism has done for us. If it has been a

blessing to us, so will it be to our children. Then let as, brothers and sisters, all arise to the occasion, and, through our Spiritualism, make the world better than we found it.

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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS.

THE Twelfth Annual Conference of the National Federation was held on Saturday and Sunday, last, at the Surrey Music Hall, Surrey-street, Sheffield.

The local friends had made great preparations for the comfortable reception of all the delegates, and were extremely successful. The ladies had worked well, and the organising force had done its duty almost perfectly.

The hall in which the meetings were held was that in which the regular meetings of the Sheffield Centre Spiritualists' Society are conducted. The edifice seats 1,200 people, and is comfortable and well-seated. There is a fine pipe-organ, which is being used week by week, and it is pleasing to learn that the meetings are being well attended. This is one of the largest meeting places regularly occupied by Spiritualists in the United Kingdom.

The delegates began to assemble soon after three o'clock, and at four a goodly number partook of tea provided by the local friends.

At 5-35 the President (Mr. J. Venables) called the Conference to order, and the proceedings opened with the singing of the hymn, 'Father of All,' after which Mrs. Stair offered a sweet invocation.

Mr. T, Aldridge and Mr. Collins were appointed tellers for the Conference, Mr. Sibson being voted to the office of sergeant-at-arms.

The President stated that the painful news had reached him of the very serious illness of Mr. A. Smedley, of Belper. They all deplored his absence, and he felt that their sympathy *in tote* went out to him and his family, and he proposed a resolution in accordance with that feeling. The vote was unanimously carried, a deep feeling of grief at the news being evidenced. Mrs. Wallis seconded, Mr. Burchell supported, and a wire was sent at once.

Mr, Venables further spoke of the losses of the past year, and among that number who were esteemed so much were Mr. Foster, of Preston, Mr. Dexter, of Nottingham, Mr. Fidler, and two other notable names he would mention, viz. that great and nobly full-souled man, John Lamont, of Liverpool, who had fought [a few words missing] they all esteemed as a noble brother with whom they had worked shoulder to shoulder. Some of the relatives of these friends had received votes of condolence, but he moved that a letter be sent to the friends of each from the Conference.

Mr. G. H. Smith (Manchester) said that unfortunately the women had been left out of the category. Manchester had just lost Mrs. Ross. He thought sympathy ought to be extended to the families of these also, and he said if that name were added he would second. The women of the movement had worked in silence, but none the less effectively.

Mr, Wm, Johnson supported. His comrades had gone on, each one of them. They had fought many a battle together, but they were giving strength that day, those two old

comrades, John Lamont and James Swindlehurst. When they saw what those men had done they felt as though they would try and go out and do likewise. If they felt the loss as much, how much more must the relatives feel the same.

Mr. J. J. Morse also supported, and spoke in high terms of the work of John Lamont and especially of Robert Foster. He had shouldered the banner and faced Proud Preston, and there pursued the study and propaganda of Spiritualism.

Mrs. Wallis said she could not refrain from offering her tribute, Messrs, Phillips, Pemberton, and Macdonald also supported. The vote was carried by Conference standing.

Mr. J. J. Morse spoke of the serious illness of Rev. Chas Ware, who is lying in the City Hospital of Exeter. It would cheer him if a message of sympathy and good wishes went to him. Mr. Musgrave (Blackpool) seconded, and a wire was sent.

The minutes of the last Conference were than read by Mr. W. Harrison (Secretary). Mr. Thos. Dabbs moved, and Mr. Macdonald seconded, that the minutes were a correct record. Carried.

The minutes of the Blackpool Conference were then read and confirmed on the motion of Mr. Burchell, seconded by Mr. Jones (Attercliffe).

Mr. Will Phillips proposed that a copy of the proposed Memorandum and Draft of Association as presented and amended at Blackpool be posted in the minute book. Mr. J, J. Morse seconded, with the addition that the Draft be signed by the President of the interim Conference and the solicitor. Carried.

Mr. Aldridge (Walsall) proposed that the minutes be adopted, and Mr. Jones (Attercliffe) seconded.

Mr. Johnson moved that the Secretary's report as printed be accepted; seconded by Mr. Burchell. Secretary's report adopted.

The Secretary, reported that Mr. Briggs had asked that the Treasurer's balance sheet should be left over until he arrived.

Owing to the fact that Mr. Taylor would be away, Mr. Thos, H, Wright had been requested by the Secretary to take the post of auditor, and the Conference approved of the action of the Secretary in asking Mr. Wright.

The report of the F.O.B. was accepted a read, and Mr. Morse corrected the working expenses to £1 11s 1d., the error having been caused by the printers.

Mr. Will Phillips proposed the best thanks of the Conference to Mr. Morse for his labours as hon. secretary of the F.O.B. Committee, which was seconded by Mr. Back and supported by Mrs. Wallis. Mr. Morse thanked the Conference in suitable terms, and expressed his willingness to continue the work.

Mr. Clarke asked how the sum of 12s. 7½d. had been arrived at as the average cost of meetings held. Mr. Parr explained, and the discussion was continued by several speakers.

The representative of Greenfield said there was an error in calling Greenfield a new society. Mr. Johnson pointed out that at any rate good work had been done by the Committee. Mrs. Verey spoke of the opposition in the district and of the work which could be done.

Mr. Macdonald spoke of the work of propaganda and of his earnest gratification at meeting with the change of spirit and the great desire for knowledge on Spiritualism.

Mr. Searby (Grimsby) bore testimony to the work done by Mr. Macdonald.

The representative of Padiham thanked the Propaganda Committee for the work done in Padiham.

Mr. Wheatley (Leicester Liberal Club) said he thought propaganda work may be assisted by present societies extending a helping hand to societies round about them.

Mr. Parr reported that the amount received for Mrs. Swindlehurst totalled £149 18s. 10½d. He thanked subscribers to the fund, which had been received from all parts of the county.

Mr. Collins spoke of the amount contributed by the Yorkshire Union Fund.

It was stated that the money received would he invested in a business for the benefit of Mrs. Swindlehurst, and Mrs. Butterworth suggested that the money should be handed to her direct. Mr. Johnson [a few words missing] point. Mr. Harrison also joined in the discussion. Mr. Hanson Hey spoke further on the matter,[16] as also did Mrs. Place and Mr. Pawson.

Mr. Will Phillips proposed that the Propaganda Committee's report be accepted, and that the Committee be empowered to continue the honorarium received by Mr. C. Ware. This was seconded by Mr. Jephson (Sheffield), and supported by Mr. J. J. Morse, who stated that Mr. Ware was receiving another £18 per annum from the Fund of Benevolence.

Mr. Will Phillips proposed a sincere vote of thanks to Mr. Parr for his honorary work on the Propaganda Committee. Mr. Jones (Barrow) seconded, and it was carried with acclamation.Mr. Parr replied, and stated he was very hard worked, but still prepared to do his best.

Mr. Bateman, of Tallent Bateman, and Thwaites, solicitors, Manchester, then proceeded to deal with the question of the Constitution. In a speech of considerable length the legal gentleman pointed out that unfortunately the Board of Trade had refused to sanction the registration of the Union with the word 'Limited,' as sought by the Conference. It was therefore necessary that a new course should be adopted. It would be quite possible to register the Union with the word 'Limited' affixed, but there might be some little prejudice against the use of the word. To his mind this was more of a sentimental objection than a real one. He went on to speak of alternative schemes, viz: an unlimited company or a subsidiary company within the present Federation for the purpose of holding property. He left these schemes with the Conference to think over during the night, and there were some delegates who would undoubtedly have chosen a softer pillow upon which to repose their weary heads.

[16].–Hanson Hey was the uncle of SNU President Percy Wilson; please see his Presidents page for more information. Hey's home would become the SNU's first 'Registered Office' at Crown Street, Halifax.

The Credentials Committee reported the presence of 15 Members of Executive, 33 Delegates, 22 Associates, 5 representatives of Unions, and Mr. Bateman.

The taking of a collection brought the evening meeting to a close.

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SUNDAY MORNING SESSION.

On Sunday morning the president took the chair at 10 20, and the proceedings commenced with a hymn. Mr. Caunt, of the Sheffield Centre Society, presided at the organ. Mrs. M. H. Wallis then offered a beautiful invocation.

A telegram had been received from Mr. Smedley, saying he was a little better, and conveying fraternal greetings.

Mr. J. K. Jones, on behalf of the Sheffield and Attercliffe Spiritualists, gave the Conference a hearty welcome. All the Sheffield Societies had combined to work for the well-being of the Conference. He, on their behalf, trusted that the Conference would be memorable and of the greatest service, and he trusted that all the sessions of the Conference would be in perfect harmony, and be the means of great usefulness to the Cause.

The President replied on behalf of the Executive and Conference.

The President then read his address, and Mr. J. J. Morse moved that the address be printed in the Spiritualist press. Mr. Burchell seconded.

Mr. J. J. Parr moved, and Mr. Macdonald seconded, the best thanks of the Conference to the President for his address, and this was carried with acclamation and responded to by the President.

Mr. Venables then presented to Mr. Morse, on behalf of the Blackburn friends, a hammer, in memory of the laying of the foundation stones of the Blackburn Spiritualist Church.[17]

Mr. J. J. Morse replied, and thanked the Blackburn Spiritualists for their kindness.

Mr. Johnson moved, ‘That the balance sheet as printed be accepted.’ Mr. Parker seconded.

Mr. Greenwood (treasurer) explained a few amounts on the balance sheet to the satisfaction of the Conference.

Mr. Morgan and Mr. Croasdale joined in the discussion.

The question was asked whether movable Executive meetings were still being carried on. Mr. Harrison pointed out that Societies did not extend the invitations. The President spoke of the good work done by the Lyceum Executive on its visit. Mrs. Greenwood pointed out that the Executive was so much larger than that of the Lyceum, and that the Executive being largely

[17].–This is displayed at the Britten Memorial Library and is inscribed:—“Presented to Mr J. J. Morse, by the Spiritualists’ of Blackburn, on the occasion of laying the Foundation Stone of the Spiritualists’ Temple. June 29 1901”.

composed of speakers there was another difficulty, as the speakers had their own Sunday engagements. Mr. Hanson Hey said he saw no real difficulties in the way. Mr. Harrison showed that the difficulties were not merely imaginary. The discussion was continued by several speakers.

The balance sheet as printed was carried.

The Propaganda Committee's balance sheet was adopted, on the proposition of Mr. Macdonald, seconded by Mr. Chorley, Hadfield.

Mr. Briggs stated that the accounts had been found entirely satisfactory by himself and fellow auditor. The Treasurer's balance sheet was then carried.

Mr. Macdonald moved, 'That the best thanks of this Conference be given to the auditors.' Mr. Shillitoe seconded, it was carried, and acknowledged by Mr. Biggs.

Mr. J. J. Morse, on behalf of the Executive, then proposed, 'That this Conference adopt the advice of Mr. Bateman that the Federation be incorporated under the Joint Stock Companies' Act, with liability limited under guarantee, under the style of 'The Spiritualists' National Union Limited.' Mr. Johnson seconded, thinking it was the best scheme possible.

Mr. Jephson spoke on the question of the limitation of liability.

Mr. J. C. Kenworthy moved an amendment, 'That in the opinion of this Conference the work to which we are set is entirely in antagonism to the principle of legal status.' He stated that for Spiritualist purposes legal organisation was fatal. They were constituted mediums for the giving to the world of the knowledge of spirit communion. They were trying to legalise themselves, and consequently to crystallise. The only law which could help the movement was the law of love, and it was only by its observance they could hope to succeed in their mission.

Mr. Croasdale supported Mr. Kenworthy, and argued they should not adopt the legal status.

Mr. Morse, Mr. Hilton, and others joined in the discussion, showing the need for practical as opposed to theoretical methods.

The Solicitor then explained the advantages of incorporation.

Mr. Hanson Hey, in a strong speech, pointed out that while ideals were noble, and he was quite in sympathy with Mr. Kenworthy's ideals, they were living in a material world, and must use the material tools in their building. Greater good would accrue from abiding by the law than by refusing its assistance—great good had never been gained by resistance, but by leavening from within. This sphere was not heaven yet by a good way, and until men had more of love than they now possessed it would be necessary for them to protect themselves from the rogues and frauds by which they were surrounded, and this could only be done by obtaining legal status.

Messrs. Hargreaves, Heaton, Pawson (as representing the Yorkshire Union), W. Johnson, Phillips, and Jephson all supported the resolution. Mr. Phillips suggested that a clause

embodying the idea of spirit communion should be inserted in the declaration of principles, and this was agreed to, and inserted by the Solicitor.[18]

AFTERNOON SESSION.

The discussion of the Articles of Association was proceeded with after the adjournment for dinner, which meal was thoroughly served and enjoyed.

The question of right of final appeal from the Council to the annual meeting as to who should be considered Spiritualists was raised by Mr. Will Phillips, who declared that the right had been voted for and carried at Blackpool, and should be upheld. A long discussion followed, and ultimately there was unanimous agreement that an aggrieved person should have the right of appeal to the annual meeting through any existing member.

Another discussion waged around the amount of fee for membership of the Union, and ultimately it was decided, on the motion of Mr. J. J. Parr, that the fee be 5s. all round for every representative or ordinary member. Mrs. Wallis, Messrs. Morgan, Smith, Holgate, Johnson, and others spoke to the question.

It was decided that the number of trustees to be appointed for the purpose of holding property over the two acres allowed by law should be in the maximum thirty, minimum ten.

A very important question was next spoken to by representatives of Sowerby Bridge, Barrow, Keighley, Oldham, and other places. This was a question which has not been understood generally throughout the country, and which the press was asked to make clear. Many have been under the impression that if a society held property, owned a church or building of any kind, and then sent representatives to the Union, their buildings would become the property of the Union. It was emphatically and clearly pointed out by Mr. Bateman that this would not be so, but that the property of every society would be as much its own after as before the gaining of legal status. If their trust allowed of the same it would be quite within the power of a local society to hand its building over to the central body in trust, but this was quite a matter to be settled by such local societies themselves. The Union could not, neither did it so wish without their express desire, become trustees of the local properties.

It was decided that the qualification for trusteeship should be a five years' membership of any Spiritualist Society or of the Union or Federation.

Mr. J. J. Morse moved the adoption of the Memorandum and Articles of Association. Mr. J. Burchell seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. J. J. Parr moved, 'That the consideration of the bye-laws be deferred to the next Conference, and that they take precedence of all other matters,' and this was agreed to.

Mr. Greenwood spoke of the necessity of raising funds for the purpose of meeting legal charges. He heartily hoped that there would be a good response to his appeal.

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[18].–Presumably the third Principle "The Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels." It should be noted the basis of this principle was not included in the summary of Emma Hardinge Britten's principles/creeds as given at Oldham in 1887 – See the SNU Pioneer Volume 1. No.1. It can be further noted on Sunday April 30th 1871 at Cleveland Hall London, Emma gave a similar principle: *I believe in the communion of spirits as ministering angels*.

Mr. Allen spoke to the resolution on agenda: ‘That though the philosophy of Spiritualism is based upon its phenomena, this Federation is of opinion that, whilst it would be unwise to entirely exclude the public presentation of the phenomena from our platforms, the time has arrived when its presentation at Sunday meetings should, as far as possible, be discontinued, or, if presented, such presentation should take place after the conclusion of the ordinary service or services.’

Mr. Parr seconded, and spoke of the success of Bootle Society, and the necessity for the presentation of the higher phases of Spiritualism.

Mr. Back spoke of the necessity of a protest being made against the presentation of bad phenomena on the public platform.

Mr. Pemberton and others also spoke in this strain, but the discussion really left the track of the resolution, and resolved itself into one upon the merits and demerits of phenomena rather than upon the real suggestion that *phenomena* should be discontinued on the Sunday platform.

Things began to wax warm when Mr. Johnson proposed the adjournment of the question to next Conference.

The election of officers, etc., was then proceeded with. Mr. Wm. Greenwood was cordially re-elected as treasurer, Mr. Harrison as secretary, and Messrs. Wright and Briggs as auditors.

Mr. Hey asked that in future, for the prevention of misunderstanding, the auditors should be voted upon separately, and Mr. Phillips suggested that to save time it would be well if the Executive arranged a time table for the Conference; with the usual times for adjournment stated.

The members of Executive elected were Mrs. Stair, Messrs. Jas. Parker, J. J. Parr, J. J. Morse, W. Johnson, S. Butterworth, S Featherstone, A. Kitson, and H, Holgate.

Mr. J, J. Morse then in a sympathetic speech proposed Mr. Wm. Johnson as president for the ensuing year. The old pioneer should be honoured, and he hoped the Conference would so honour him. Mrs. Wallis seconded, and the Lancashire sledge hammer was elected by acclaim to wield the gavel at the next Annual Conference.

Mr. Johnson was quite overcome by the unanimity of the call, and said that he preferred pushing behind to being a figure-head; but: as he had been called to this duty he would do it with all his might.

Mr. Allen then invited the Conference to Bootle for its next meeting. Mr. Parr seconded, saying they would do their best to give the Conference a right royal welcome.

There being no other suggestion before the meeting, the invitation was thankfully accepted.

The Credential Committee, through Mr. A. Wilkinson, reported present—Executive, 16; delegates from 33 societies, 45; delegates from Unions, 6; associates, 28; and Mr. Bateman, solicitor.

Mr Johnson moved a hearty vote of thanks to the Sheffield friends for their great kindness and generous provision. Mr. A. Kitson seconded, and the vote was heartily carried, Mr. W. Harris, President of the United Committee, replying.

Mr. Hanson Hey proposed a vote of thanks to the retiring President, and, Mr Parker seconding, this was also carried with unanimity.

The Conference proceedings then terminated.

EVENING MEETING.

Between time of tea and the evening meeting the delegates, friends, and Lyceumists, accompanied by an efficient band, paraded through some of the principal streets, and made a most effective display of the strength of the movement represented, quite 300 persons joining the procession, and on returning the hall was speedily filled. The combined Lyceums occupied the raised seats at the rear of the speakers, and greatly assisted by leading the singing, conducted by Mr. Bownes.

On the platform supporting the President, Mr. J. Venables, were Mesdames Stair and Wallis, and Messrs. W. Johnson, J. J.. Morse, W. Appleyard, A. Kitson, W. Searby, and Jas. Lingford.

After a hymn, Mr. J. C. Macdonald gave the invocation.

Mr. Wm. Johnson, President-elect, then addressed the meeting in his old, vigorous style.

It was not quite 36 years since Spiritualism trapped him from Atheism. In those days it was dangerous to be a Spiritualist. There had been a great change; the world wanted that change; they wanted it, and if they searched they would find the pearl of great price as he had found it.

Mr. J. G. Macdonald spoke do behalf of the Propaganda Fund, He was said to have propaganda on the brain, and would be willing to plead guilty to the same. Spiritualism appealed to all classes and kindreds, and he pleaded that this blessing should be given to all. The Propaganda Fund was a home mission one, and they did not ask for funds with which to spread a gospel to far-away savage islanders, but to the people of these islands.

Mrs. M. H. Wallis was then called upon, and proceeded to emphasise some of the thoughts of the previous speakers. To know that death was but a change, that life was continuous, that all that made life beautiful and sweet was carried on, was to cast the radiance of a lovely truth over all of the present life, Spiritualism had compelled conviction by the living evidence presented.

After a collection had been taken Mr. Jones, of Barrow, spoke of the splendid labours and great trials of Mr. Procter, of Barrow, who had done such a noble work for the cause of Spiritualism. He had been hissed even by the children who had been taught by him in the orthodox Sunday school. Would that there were more men in the movement like William Procter. To the speaker, as a Welshman, he believed that if Spiritualism could reach Wales its clarion tones would soon ring through the hills and vales of his native country.

Mr. E. Marklew then addressed the meeting, and spoke of the rapid advance of physical science and the healthy growth of a vital scepticism; but the advance of psychical science

would be as marked as that of physical science by the future historian recording the events of the past century.

Mr. Searby, of Grimsby, spoke of his conversion to Spiritualism, He had opposed Spiritualism in the past, but Spiritualism to him, as well as to all men, was 'the power of God unto salvation.' He spoke of the reformative influence of Spiritualism, which was capable of saving men without a baptism of blood.

Mr. J. Pawson followed with an interesting address. Spiritualism had not only found its way to the minds of the speakers on the platform, but also to those of the people of Sheffield.

Mr. Owen, of Barrow-in-Furness, as a child of Spiritualist parents, had had the opportunity of proving all things.

Mr. Walter Appleyard felt that he caught an inspiration from the splendid audience before him. He was not a member of the Spiritualist societies, but from careful experimentation he was convinced that Spiritualism was true. He felt the necessity for an appeal to the higher intellect of the human race, and was sure that Spiritualism was permeating Christianity. He extended his sympathy to them, and expressed his loyalty to Spiritualism.

Mr. J. J. Morse, in his usual clear-cut style, addressed the meeting, and warmly espoused the cause of the F.O.B., on behalf of which a collection was taken at the door at the close of the meeting.

All agreed in declaring the Sheffield Conference, a record one. With fine weather, happy smiles, and harmonious conditions, the anticipations of a pleasurable Conference were fully realised, and a general feeling of satisfaction found unanimous voice.



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