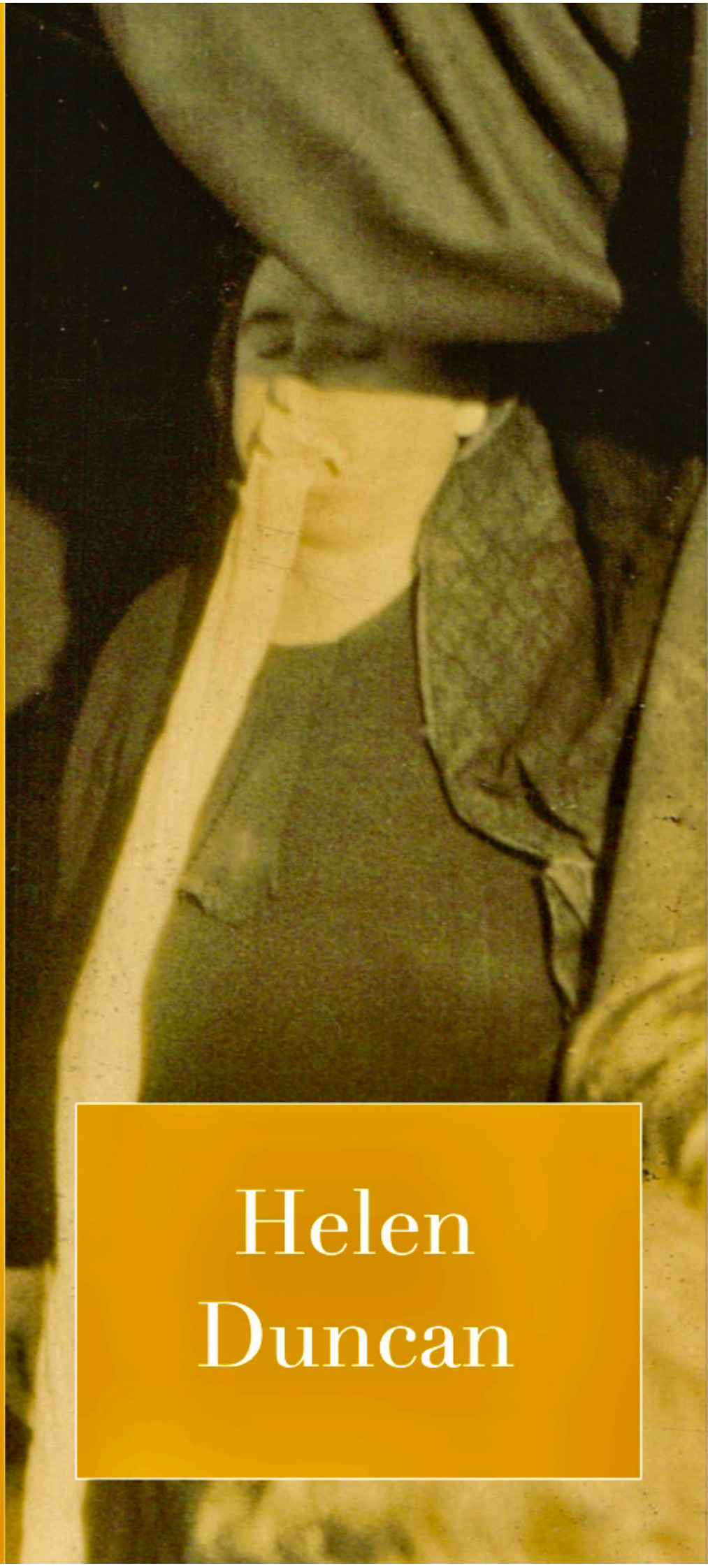
The PIONEER

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



Helen Duncan

the PIONEER

The Pioneer is now part of the recommended reading for the Spiritualists' National Union's education courses. Please reference: "Pioneer, volume, issue and page numbers"

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All references to Psypioneer in these issues are archived at http://psypioneer.iapsop.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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HELEN DUNCAN – TRANCE MEDIUMSHIP

Helen Duncan was well-known for her physical mediumship, especially producing full-form materialisations. She also on occasion demonstrated psychometry and took church services. Below is a rare report on a trance address at Fleetwood Spiritualist Church,[20] given through Helen by her main control, Albert Stewart. This was published in the *Two Worlds* weekly of March 13th 1942:

BUILDERS OF BRIDGES

A trance address given by "Albert" through the mediumship of Mrs. Helen Duncan.



DURING a recent visit to Fleetwood, at which several successful seances for materialization were held, "Albert Stewart" (Mrs. Duncan's guide) volunteered to address the Sunday evening service at Fleetwood Spiritualist Church. Mrs. Duncan gladly co-operated without fee or reward. Despite the Medium's Scottish upbringing, it was particularly noticeable that never once was there a trace of a Scottish accent. The clear liquid colonial speech of "Albert" was maintained throughout the address. The following is a short summary of his remarks, which lasted about half an hour.

I can assure you that it gives me pleasure to come and talk to you for a short while. I want to assure you that I am no radiant angel but

[20] A quote from the Two Worlds, February 1st 1924: "THE Fleetwood Spiritualist Society was founded, with the assistance and co-operation of the Blackpool Spiritualist Society, in October, 1911, and rented the Old Bethel Hall in Kemp-street, for their services. The Society decided to become affiliated with the Spiritualists' National Union, and were taken into affiliation in October, 1916, and was then called the Fleetwood National Spiritualist Church, becoming registered as a place of worship and for the solemnising of marriages. The Lyceum was founded in July, 1912, becoming affiliated with the British Spiritualists' Lyceum Union in October, 1913."

Further information: In October 1922 it was decided to work for a church of our own, this was achieved in 1924. The stone-laying ceremony was on February 2nd when stones were laid by E. W. Oaten, S.N.U., George H. Mack, B.S.L.U., and Mrs. J. Butterworth, S.N.U. An impressive grand opening of the church took place on September 13th and 14th 1924. The president was Mr. C. T Batley who we can note chaired the meeting for Helen Duncan. For further information on the history of Fleetwood please contact the editor. Fleetwood Spiritualist Church: http://www.snu.org.uk/community/churches/fleetwood.html

just a humble human being like yourselves, endeavouring to be a servant of the greatest Spirit of all. Let us for a while shut out the everyday troubles of your world and spend a short time in the effort to bring your world and mine together.

If all men the world over could be sure that there is another phase of existence when earthly death takes place, what a different world yours would be! I have not —like some—spent hundreds of years on this side of life. I have lived in the same age as you, and know its difficulties. There are many in this church, myself included, who have been indifferent to the existence of a spiritual world. When life flowed on like a stream, with few rocks and cross currents, few of us ever troubled to find out whether there was anything beyond the Bridge of Death. The question never entered into our consideration. But when the current has swept away someone who was part of you, whom you loved and cared for, you were struck dumb. Sorrow roused you, and caused you to say: "I must find out whither they have gone!" There are many such in my audience. You refused to accept the idea that death was the end of all and so you have set out to find out if there is anything substantial in Spiritualism.

My Chairman (Mr. Batley) will have had far more experience in Spiritualism than I had before I came to this side of life, and I am sure he will agree with me that few people realise when they start their investigations that they must start Bridge Building. You yourself must lay foundations for the bridge which will unite your world with ours. First seek out the firmest footing you can find—it may be a small Spiritualist Church or a select circle, but you must build regularly week by week. Kind words and actions, sweet smiles and sincerity, are the stones which will help you to build your bridge. We build from our side in our desire to meet you, and then you find a medium who can form the central pillar, or keystone, and this is the first indication you have that building has been going on from this side as well as yours.

Now success depends on the strength of your Bridge, and whether it is erected on solid pillars and constructed of good material. Do not be surprised if you do not always get the results you expect—or that you do not get evidence every time you attend your church. The strongest pillar sometimes breaks, but once the bridge is completed and you have proved that your loved ones live, then, with the knowledge you have obtained, try to improve your environment. Lay out plantations on the banks of the stream, plant the seeds of knowledge you have gained, and cultivate the flowers of kindness and service. Tell out to others the knowledge you have obtained, that death is not an end but a new beginning. As I wander amongst you, I often hear people say: "Why did God punish me by taking away my loved one?" I venture to say that most of you have had such thoughts. Some day, when you come to this side of life, you will see from another point of view; you will wonder why you ever sorrowed and know that death is just freedom from a physical burden.

There are many differences in our outlook from this side, and the chief of them is that we are only attracted to those we care for. Love is the key to everything!

The more experienced of you will agree with me that many who come to investigate this question of survival have no knowledge of the fact that behind all this phenomenal evidence there are deeper teachings, deeper truths. Many of them are looking for sensation, for something which will flood them with limelight. They must learn that substantial Bridges are not sudden thrills—they are not built in a night. Bridges often take years to build on solid foundations. The true developing circle can be a valuable aid in approaching the spirit world. I know the thoughts that are going through many people's minds here: "Oh! such and such a person does not live a good life, how can *they* get in touch with anybody?" I listened to the words which were read from the Bible just now. It is a fact that the Nazarene did not take His disciples because they were good men; He took them because they could become Bridge Builders for Him. Just analyze yourself and find if you are a capable person, and just feel that those around you are there for the purpose of Bridge Building. Never mind what Mrs. So-and-So does. Get down and say to yourself, "Well, I know what I am."

You know, you people have queer ideas about what you call sin. I know what those ideas are, for I only left your world in I913. It is not the taking of a glass of beer, provided a man knows when to leave it, or an explosion which produces vulgar words (although such things are unwise and unnecessary), that constitute sin. Probably the greatest sin of all is to talk lightly of others who are not there to defend themselves. The people who cannot mind their own business, and defame others in order to distract attention from their own weaknesses, are probably the biggest sinners of all. Such conduct means bad thoughts, and thoughts are real and living things. When you think, let clean thoughts go out from you, and they will return like doves—not as vultures. If you do that you will find that the bricks with which you build will last for all time. Even after you come to our side of life your bridge will still stand and enable you to return to those you love, with comfort and encouragement.

I remember as a young man I had my opinions on religion. Many Sundays I walked the streets of Sydney and watched congregations leaving the churches. I saw their faces: some of them looked as though they had lost their all. They looked miserable, and it was no advertisement for their faith. Some were engaged pulling others to pieces. I want you to go from this church into your everyday life with smiles on your faces and kindness in your hearts: joyous because the bridge between earth and heaven is a reality.

I can stay no longer. I have just explained in a few words the message I would leave with you. Sometime we shall all have an opportunity to meet over here. It will be nice to walk the higher bank

of the stream and find joy in surveying the bridges we have built: to find them easy to cross so that we shall not have to struggle through the mud and slime of ignorance to greet the dear ones we have left. Thank you for your spirit of friendship and your attention. “God be with you till we meet again.”



Helen Duncan & John McIndoe


John (Mac) McIndoe

Psypioneer holds a considerable amount of information on Duncan's mediumship and it is strongly recommended that these pages be consulted while looking into her mediumship, as there is a lot of incorrect information and speculation given about her on the internet and in some published reports. The SNU web page, "SNU Presidents", is still not completed at present; we have profiles and information on John Venables (1901), John Adams (1905-1907), George Berry (1920-1922), Frank Blake (1938-1941) and John (Mac) Brown McIndoe (1930-1938). It can be noted in his obituary (May 31st 1958), "It was Mac who launched Helen Duncan on her career as a materialisation medium."[13]

In Psypioneer's issue for February 2015 we looked into Duncan's "Early reports of her mediumship" and found the available accounts of her controls/guides somewhat sketchy and contradictory. The early development of Helen took place in the Duncan's home circle, which consisted of just a handful of sitters, including Helen's husband, Henry, who appears to have started the circle and encouraged the development of his wife's physical mediumship. Hence the early reports of her development and her various controls/guides have surfaced through the Duncan family, for example from one of Duncan's daughters, Gena, who would marry George Brealey and in 1985 published *The Two Worlds of Helen Duncan* with Kay Hunter, originally published by Regency Press.[14]

I believe Gena was born in 1926, so she was only a small child during her mother's development of her physical mediumship in the 1920s. Gena would rely in part on her father Henry's records of his wife's development but after Henry's death circa 1967 much of the documented material was lost in a house fire. Included in the Psypioneer article is what is considered the *first* independent published report on Helen Duncan's physical mediumship, by James Souter, who came into contact with Helen in June 1929. Souter's short article states: "Guides, three in number, are good hard-headed, canny Scotsmen…" John McIndoe was present at the séance reported by Souter and this was published in *Light*, October 19th 1929.

Another independent account can now be added on the early development of Helen's physical mediumship, written by John McIndoe and published in the first Spiritualists' National Union journal, "The National Spiritualist", which was edited by SNU Secretary George Berry.[15] The valuable McIndoe account does not give the medium's name but he is without doubt talking about Helen Duncan.

[13] SNU Presidents' Page: http://www.snu.org.uk/spiritualism/presidents

[14] This was republished in paperback in 2008 by Saturday Night Press Publications and is normally available at the Arthur Findlay College shop and via Amazon.

[15] For details see the first issue of "Pioneer": http://www.snu.org.uk/spiritualism/pioneer

Below is the full account published in "The National Spiritualist", October issue, 1929:

A Scots Materialising Medium


Helen Duncan in 1942

Scotland has produced not a few notable mediums. Recently I was privileged to sit twice with one who gives promise of being worthy to rank with the best of them.

Mr. J. J. Darby also sat at the first seance, and his opinion as to the outstanding quality of the phenomena is similar to my own, and it is gratifying to be able to make the first published report of a sitting with this medium, in the columns of the NATIONAL SPIRITUALIST, where such matter should figure more prominently than it does.

The name of the medium is meantime withheld, she resides—somewhere North of the Tweed.

We ascended an attic stair, to an "upper room" with the ceiling so low that the writer could not stand erect. It was a hot sultry night, ventilation was *nonest* and the noise of passing traffic frequently drowned the voices from the Beyond. The medium suffered bad health for a number of years, but it has considerably improved since this phase of her phenomena began. With the cares of a house and seven children on her shoulders, there seems little opportunity for psychic development. Certainly these conditions do not seem at all conducive to psychic manifestations, especially that particularly delicate, complex, and rare type,—full form materialisation, with the materialised forms moving about in the circle talking to the sitters, in red light.

My first sitting—the 22nd at which this phase has been in evidence lasted just three—quarters of hour. It opened with prayer, a hymn, and a brief period for silent prayer, at the end of which the medium was seen to be in trance, limp in her chair, and breathing heavily. The curtains of the cabinet were then closed, the candle extinguished, and only a red lamp left burning.

It gave sufficient light for the sitters to see one another and observe what occurred, though the features of the forms would scarcely have been distinguishable when they came had they not been self luminous, with a peculiar soft radiance.

There were ten sitters, six ladies and four gentlemen, two of each of these groups were entirely new sitters at the circle, while other two of each group, including the medium's husband were regular sitters. The small sector of a circle in which we sat in two rows, nearly filled the room. Those of us in the front row were not more than four feet from the curtains. We could easily have touched most of the forms when they came out.

There were no test conditions asked for, though the medium has been stringently tested by others. Why should we want test conditions more or less humiliating to the medium, and implying doubts as to her honesty, and inevitably reacting on her, engendering feelings of resentment.

In any case no test conditions could have increased our conviction as to the genuineness of the phenomena we witnessed. They bore the hall mark indelibly stamped on them. They simply could not be counterfeited by any means I can imagine.

The forms were distinctive, varied, lifelike and noiseless in their movements, not one of them remotely resembled the medium in build. Their voices were also distinctive and quite different from the medium's. Nothing in any way suggesting trickery of any kind was observed.

During the singing of a hymn, and very shortly after closing the curtains, a voice was heard in prayer in the cabinet, and a man's face pushed the curtains apart, remained a few moments and disappeared.

The ladies in the circle commenced singing in low tones whenever the various forms returned to the cabinet.

Soon another voice is heard calling "Mother" and a young girl emerged from the curtains, came over and spoke to one of the new lady sitters, who recognised her as her daughter. She conversed with her in a low tone, apparently giving a comforting message, and handed her mother a rose, taken from a bunch placed in the cabinet.

Then another girl form of different build took her place, coming from the other side of the cabinet, and was claimed as her sister by one of the ladies. She also brought a rose with her.

A short interval, and a child's head peeps round the edge of the curtain timorously, disappears, but returns quickly, and finally the full form comes right out, apparently somewhat frightened, at first. It looked about 21 inches in height, moved gracefully and quickly, and came close up to the lady next to me. It appeared to me to be more solid, and "finished" than most of the other forms.

I need not describe all the forms who appeared. There were eight of them, one child, two young girls and an older woman, and four men. Six of them came right out in front of the curtains, and seven of the eight spoke to us. One of the controls "Donald" had quite a conversation with us. He was a well built man. By request he brought a mandoline from the cabinet, and twanged the strings. We could easily see the hand which held it, but not the one which touched the strings. Finally he handed it to a sitter. He was asked to touch my outstretched hand. This has not previously been done. He appeared to make several attempts to do so. On the last his hand was plainly visible above mine, but he failed to touch it, and disappeared very suddenly, while the medium gave vent to a groan as if in pain. At the conclusion of the sitting there was blood on her mouth and chin, and some had trickled down on her dress. This had

occurred on previous occasions when a form suddenly vanished for some reason or other.

At the second sitting "Donald" was asked about it and explained that he had come out too far. On that occasion something did touch my hand, held close up to the curtain. It had the appearance of a stump with two fingers, and was rather hard, but the contact was too brief to allow any definite opinion to be formed.

The notable features of the second seance were that there were two children right out moving in the circle at the same time. They came one from each side of the curtains. Later on by request of a sitter two apports were brought. One was a small ornament from the room below.

The other was a small brass washer, with three scratches on it for identification. It had been placed in a drawer in a roll top desk in his own house some distance away, about six weeks earlier, by one of the regular sitters, who had frequently asked, as he did on this occasion, that it should be brought. This was the first time that it was done. The owner is absolutely certain of the identity of the washer.

An unusual feature is the signal that the phenomena is being brought to a close—an arm appears stretched out, with the hand closed. The seances close with a brief prayer by one of the materialised controls, but at my second sitting while the doxology was being sung, and the medium had become at least partially conscious, we observed that the curtains were being distended in a peculiar way. It gave the impression of an attempt to help the medium who was in a state of profuse perspiration, by producing a current of air.

Lest the sceptic suggest that I and the other sitters were all simultaneously and similarly hallucinated, I may say that this account is compiled from notes written continuously by myself during the seances.

The medium is naturally psychic, of Highland blood. Her physical phenomena commenced with table movements, then voice phenomena, and finally the materialisation phase which has reached its present development in about six months. She also occasionally has had slate writing, and possesses remarkable psychometric gifts.

With a little more development the phenomena should be stabilised sufficiently to stand the strain of more public presentation, but it is most earnestly to be hoped that it will not be checked by too early public sittings.

J. B. McINDOE.

McIndoe's account of his two séances is the first *detailed* independent account of Duncan's early development in physical mediumship. Both Souter and McIndoe refer to multiple controls/guides and Duncan's most famous control, Albert Stewart, is not mentioned by name, so it appears that in 1929 he was not yet present or not in full control.

Why did the S.N.U. remove Helen Duncan's diploma in 1945?

Special Introduction:

The Union is sometimes asked why (70 years ago this year) it withdrew its certificate as a physical medium from Helen Duncan shortly after her release from prison. Officers of the Union had assisted Mrs Duncan in her trial and the Freedom Fund provided considerable financial help.

After her release, experienced sitters with Mrs Duncan reported that she had resumed frequent sittings and that the quality of her mediumship showed a marked decline. Attempts to help her establish a safer mode of work were rejected by her. The Union became concerned that in the event of a further arrest and trial the good name of Spiritualism would be damaged. Any medium who holds a certificate from the Union is in effect sponsored by the Union.

Recently the Executive Committee has re-examined the surviving documentation. It has given permission to Paul Gaunt, the curator of the Britten Memorial Museum and editor of the Union's own historical journal, 'The Pioneer', to publish this, so that Union members and the public can have the facts before them. We welcome any further information.

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Although at the time the Union published an official statement in the 'Two Worlds', seven decades on the reasons for the Union withdrawing the diploma that Helen Duncan had held from circa 1931 are shrouded in mystery. The various biographies and websites give no information on the actual events which resulted in the removal of her diploma.

On Friday September 22nd 1944, Helen Duncan, after serving 172 days of her nine-month sentence, was released from HM Prison Holloway. As published in the 'Two Worlds' for October 20th 1944, Helen wrote from the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh:

I am likely to be here for some time as my heart is affected . . . .My Spiritualism is my life, and for all the laws of the country I could not and will not give it up. I will not sit again under the same conditions, but intend to keep my mediumship active.

There are numerous reports that Helen had broken away from the SNU shortly after her release from prison; this claim appears not to be strictly true. Helen was a friend of Percy

Wilson[1] and his family, who gave support to Helen at her 1944 trial. Dorothy Wilson was the Secretary of the Exponents and Education Committee[2] and her husband Percy was a National Councillor of the Union and also (I believe) the Chairman of the Exponents and Education Committee.

In September 1944 the National Council appointed Miss May Price as General Secretary of the Union, taking over from Ernest Allan Keeling in October. The Union had inaugurated a 'National Register' of Exponents and Mediums, using the 1944 Diploma list as a basis.[3] Miss Price sent out the documentation in December 1944 and as part of the Union's campaign for religious freedom Helen was asked to sign the declaration and return it with her Class B subscription for 1945.

Dorothy Wilson wrote to Helen on February 1st 1945, as the General Secretary had had no reply and the signed declaration, etc. were required by February 10th. A few days later Helen's reply was received, thanking Dorothy for her nice letter and giving her regards to Percy and the boys. Helen stated: "I did not think it worth my while signing it as I am not working. I am not in a position meantime to renew my membership fee. I did think the S.N.U. would have made me a member free meantime." She returned the signed (V. H. Duncan) declaration dated February 4th 1945.

Dorothy Wilson replied on February 7th thanking her for the declaration and commenting: "I thought you were not working at present but did not know if you intended to take up work again. With regard to your membership fee, I am afraid that the Union could not pay, but my husband and I will gladly pay it for you this year. I think you are wise to take a long rest from seance work. I hope you will soon get back to health and strength…" Wilson notes: "subs 5/- sent to office".

The following month SNU Minister and founder editor of 'Psychic News', Maurice Barbanell, received news that Helen was again working. Below is taken from 'Psychic News', March 31st 1945 – "All Worlds Are One" feature: -[4]

> **Warning To Helen Duncan**
>
> Once again it falls to my lot to issue a public warning to Helen Duncan. If she had paid attention to my previous warnings, I doubt whether she would have been prosecuted.

[1] SNU President 1950-1953.

[2] Today we have the Dorothy Wilson Prize: this is for the highest marks over a completed range of subjects required for the award of a Diploma as a Speaker, Demonstrator or Administrator.

[3] 1943: A New Scheme by the Exponents' Committee for a National Register approved by the National Council. Percy Wilson exhibited this to the Conference at the following AGM at Leicester (July 1944), with a printed copy of the Exponent's Certificate, which had been approved by the Exponents' Committee. During this year "Applications from platform workers for inclusion in the National Register have been coming in steadily. During 1944 365 Certificates were granted, bringing the total on the Register, including Diploma Holders, up to 514. There were no educational examinations held during 1944," as the whole Educational Course was in the process of being revised.

[4] Kindly supplied courtesy of Psychic News, Suite 6, Thremhall Park, Start Hill, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM22 7WE.

Soon after her release from prison, she was approached by the Spiritualists' National Union, whose freedom fund paid the entire cost of her defence, with the suggestion that the Union should take charge of her seances. Mrs. Duncan refused to agree.

She has been giving "materialisation" seances in Lancashire, and the results, as they are described to me, are very poor. Whatever they are, they are not materialisations. That does not surprise me in view of the ordeal through which she has passed. The reports are sent me by sympathetic Spiritualists who attended her seances in the old days.

Heading For Trouble

I warn Helen Duncan that she is asking for trouble. To travel the country, giving seances without competent supervision by the S.N.U. or some similar body, will land her again in jail. This time the sentence is likely to be not nine months, but five years. In any case, she ought to wait till her powers return.

At least as a gesture to the S.N.U., which has done so much on her behalf, Mrs. Duncan ought to place herself under their auspices.

Besides, she is placing the S.N.U. in a great dilemma. She holds their diploma as a physical medium and therefore they are sponsoring her seances.

Maurice Barbanell informed the Spiritualists' National Union of concerns surrounding Helen's mediumship, giving contact details of a séance held in the Wigan area. On March 31st Dorothy Wilson wrote to the complainant regarding a séance held on March 5th. Asking for full details and a statement confirming the report if possible from some other person, Mrs Wilson stated: "It is highly important particularly at present, that everything should be done that is possible to safeguard the movement generally."

On April 2nd Dorothy Wilson received a copy of the report of the séance in question and the next day she received another report of the séance signed by the complainant, with signatures and addresses from four of the sitters at the March 5th séance. Although the report is seventy years old the personal details of all parties are not here published.

Below is the full report printed for the first time. The complainant sent what he called the 'First report', signed by four of the sitters, and in a 'Further report' he gives more information about the séance and his own personal views. The First report is inserted into the Further report as instructed by the writer.

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Report of a seance held in Lancashire on 5th March, 1945. With Mrs. Helen Duncan as the Medium

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The subject-matter of a tentative report forwarded to the Editor of "Psychic News" on 21st March, 1945, having received mention in the columns of that paper and resulted in a request for further details for consideration by the Exponents Committee and the Council of the Spiritualists' National Union, the following facts, comments and theories are to be read in conjunction with that report as the personal observations and statements of the undersigned, and are not to be embodied above any other signature which may be appended to the First Report, unless application is made to such other signatories for confirmation.

Experience of Spiritualism.--I have been interested in Spiritualism for more than 20 years, and in addition to clairvoyance, clairaudience and Psychometry, have had the experience of seeing levitation, Transfiguration, cold lights, slate writing, trance and other kinds of control, pictures in the crystal (whether or not this can be considered as part of Spiritualistic phenomena), hearing voices from the trumpet and direct voice, trance and inspirational addresses, and exponents of Spiritualist philosophy. In addition I have seen materialisation with Mrs. Helen Duncan dating from pre-war days and one other medium for materialisation.

I have read much Spiritualist literature, and received messages of great importance from mediums as well as a lot of messages which have never come true. At the risk of unpopularity I have always insisted upon the recipients of messages and the witnesses of phenomena keeping to the actual facts of their experience.

Events before the seance now under consideration.--The party for the seance on March 5th consisted of 14 women and three men, and apart from the householder, I was the only male present who had witnessed materialisation, though several of the ladies had attended such seances. On one occasion I saw as many as three figures walking and talking to members of the audience at a seance in Lancashire, but Mrs. Duncan was not the medium that day. However, I have seen figures materialised and walking about when Mrs. Duncan was seated in her chair, there being no doubt that the figures were entirely separate from Mrs. Duncan. I know Mrs. Duncan personally, having had long conversations with her and there is no possibility of mistaken identity in this case.

Lunch was taken at an hotel situated some half mile from the meeting place. All were in good humour, for the journey had been pleasant, the day was fine though not too warm, and the lunch was quite enjoyable. One or two of the party had a small whisky with tea or coffee, but the majority had nothing intoxicating, and approximately three hours elapsed between the end of lunch and the commencement of the seance. I must leave it to others to comment on the possibility of this liquor having a detrimental effect upon the proceedings which were to follow.

The medium was not on hand when the meeting place was reached and during the wait of almost two hours many of the party became restless and anxious. Some were fortified with tea but the sigh of relief when the arrival of the medium was announced was indicative of the strain under which most of the party had been labouring.

The medium arrived in a taxi and was unaccompanied. I thought she looked younger and fresher than when I had seen her before. Despite the advisability of a rest being urged upon her, the medium decided to carry on without delay, and the party moved into the séance room, the accommodation proving to be only just sufficient. Although testimony was given as stated in the first report (inserted below) that the cabinet had been examined it was not examined during my presence in the seance room, and as I was one of the first in the room to take my place at the farthest end, there had been opportunity after such examination to carry out any irregularities had such been intended. Mrs. Duncan did not change into seance robes as was her former custom, indeed she said she did not intend to change, but invited a search to be made of the clothes she was then wearing and retained during the séance.

I had an opportunity to look into the cabinet after the seance, and a glance revealed the presence of a cupboard or drawer behind the curtain, and this, along with the perfunctory search of the medium, came in for adverse criticism after the meeting.

The First Report should be read here. - ⇓

The seance was held in a cottage situated in a remote part of Lancashire. The meeting room about 12’ x I5’, contained furniture appropriate to the premises, while the cabinet was formed by dark draw-curtains across one corner. About 20 people were present, some of whom had had experience of materialisation. Lighting was provided by means of an electric torch and a storm lamp, both being dimmed by red material.

In answer to a question by the medium one of the sitters testified that the cabinet had been examined. The medium then left the room to be searched and, on returning, entered the cabinet immediately, sinking down into the chair with her eyes closed, whereupon the curtains were drawn. At once a voice from the cabinet asked for the light to be reduced, and the electric lamp was extinguished. The storm lamp (which was suspended from the ceiling), continued to give illumination sufficient to enable all the sitters and the contents of the room to be seen with ease and in detail.

A voice from behind the curtain described a visitor and, after being invited to come forward, a figure appeared holding the curtains apart. From the farthest end of the room the figure was plainly that of the medium draped in something white, her face, hands and dress being distinguishable.

The announcer from the cabinet spoke in a voice unlike that of the medium, and the figures which appeared had intonations in keeping with their age and sex. The voice of the announcer sounded very tired and dropped to a weary whisper at the end of each sentence. The figures were not announced by name, and the sitters concerned were found by the voice from the cabinet asking for someone near the centre, or someone near the back, and so on, and first one sitter and then another would speak up until the right one was found, signified by: “Yes, that is the voice”.

The only information volunteered from the cabinet was man, woman or child, and the nature of their passing. “Came to our side of life under very tragic circumstances”, “The cause of passing was due directly to child-birth”, “Died from consumption”, “Invite the lady out, please,” “Sing a hymn”. These few sentences, each repeated more than once,

comprised the conversation from the announcer, and every languid utterance trailed off--a low rallentando, with a kind of despair, which persisted even in the closing remark when the announcer "Hoped he had made everyone very happy".

The figures, when they did talk, often failed to address a single remark directly to the sitters who had claimed them, reserving their conversation for those people near to the cabinet, while the voices, dialects, expressions of speech and mannerisms sometimes proved a hindrance rather than an aid to recognition. On more than one occasion when the visitor fai1ed to display any of the characteristics which should have served as identification, a dumfounded sitter would be further embarrassed by the visitant's remark—"Is that all you have to say?"

One of the sitters asked after her own guide--an Indian of exceptional height, and the medium appeared holding her left arm aloft, with the hand turned palm downwards over her head, whilst a quantity of white stuff draped the hand--a representation of the head of a tall man. Unlike the more averaged-sized figures, this head seemed to be featureless, the majority of the faces being well formed and of a good colour - healthy looking in the rosy light, and belonging to figure which was the medium in her black dress (really dark navy Blue), scantily draped in white stuff--often transfigured to fit the part, but still the same.

The announcer had already intimated that the power was failing when someone in the audience asked for the medium's child guide. A figure appeared and made an attempt to sing and give some semblance of gaiety, but it was a failure, and the figure withdrew.

Through the sitting the moving of feet inside the cabinet was to be heard and sometimes distinct footsteps sounded, as the figures approached the curtains or shifted position whilst in full view of all present.

The meeting was very orderly, (*and though it was obvious to both the experienced sitters and those unacquainted with the phenomena what was taking place,) no attempt was made to interrupt the proceedings.

Signed … . … & four of the sitters.

End of First report inserted.

In the last paragraph of the First Report (marked*) the words in brackets should be deleted and read here (*and though it was obvious to both the experienced sitters and those unacquainted with the phenomena what was taking place,) for it was only after the seance was over that it became obvious that all present knew what had been taking place, and I wished to keep the First Report free from all comment.

Being in a private house I, for one, did not wish to create any disturbance, and along with the others paid the fee (12/6), with as good a grace as possible, and the party returned to the hotel for tea.

Behind closed doors tongues became loosened, and opinions about the seance were expressed with great candour. One or two claimed to have seen the irregularities of such a nature that they were reluctant to make unsupported statements. These I must leave for further verification.

Comments and opinions by the sitters.--All who spoke up at the meeting over the teacups were emphatic that every figure was Mrs Duncan draped in white stuff. Those nearest to the cabinet confirming what I had seen from a greater distance. Only one claimed to have received anything evidential and that was in a single remark said to be characteristic of the person who was supposed to have materialised. One gentleman received a long speech upholding Roman Catholicism from his returned 'father', who claimed to be a Roman still, but as the real father was never a Roman Catholic it was not evidential.

Figures claiming to be my wife's mother and an Uncle John of mine followed one another. Neither spoke directly to us, and both would have made us blush with their coarse speech and dialect, for my wife's mother was a gently reserved woman, full of warm love for both of us, while the Uncle John referred to was an author, poet, linguist, historian, of mild speech and ready but kindly wit.

This example proved to be typical of practically all the 'visitors' as the following comments will show.

(1). The whole show was a hoax.

(2). Mrs. Duncan brought the white stuff into the room.

(3). The white stuff was hidden in the drawer or cupboard in the cabinet.

(4). Mrs. Duncan was conscious all the time and faked the trance.

(5). Mrs. Duncan is a ventriloquist.

(6). Mrs. Duncan is a transfiguration medium.

(7). The white stuff was muslin or some such material.
Etc. Etc.

As such remarks as these were passed by sitters who had previously been convinced of the genuineness of Mrs. Duncan's powers as a materialisation medium, the Portsmouth affair takes on another aspect if it was a séance of similar quality.

Each of the above comments presents its own difficulties, and, as I do not accuse the medium of any one of the above suggested 'frauds', I will pass on to my own speculations as to the why and wherefore of the matter, but must first mention further comments made: -

(8). The white stuff was apported material.

(9). Conditions were poor and an attempt was being made to please the sitters.

Personal opinion.--of the above (1) Too crude. (2) Foolish to bring insufficient. (3) As No. 2. (4) No evidence that Mrs. Duncan is so cunning or so clever. (5) No evidence—would do well on the stage. (6) Possible, but useless without other factors already dismissed in (2). (7) Again, why bring an insufficiency. The medium was never fully draped. (8) Why poor show at materialisation when gifted as apport medium? (9) A poor excuse for all the sitters were displeased.

Those in a position to know stated that the medium smelled of whiskey. I do know that this applied on former occasions. I also know that the medium is sometimes draped when genuine phenomena also takes place at the same seance.

My problems are somewhat different. The lighting was greater than I have ever seen before. The voice of Albert, allowing for the tired tone described was, in my opinion, the same tone and manner of expression as formerly. If Albert was in charge why should he allow such a travesty? The attempt at vivacity was very like the former Peggy, as was the voice.

I therefore conclude that Mrs. Duncan was unconscious of the proceedings, and under the influence of a subconscious power with the clairvoyance of the hypnotic state, with ectoplasm present as the automatic result of training by external powers, i.e., Albert and his assistants, the insufficiency of ectoplasm being due to the power required to move the medium physically.

I may be completely wrong, and would appreciate any further suggestions or findings of the Exponents Committee or Council.

(Signed)…. . ….

The complainant added another five points to his report:

(I) The seance lasted somewhat under half an hour.

(2) The sound of footsteps referred to were slippered or booted feet.

(3) During the seance the remark “Don’t do that!” was made inside the cabinet as though one person was remonstrating with another. The voice was not Mrs. Duncan’s normal voice.

(4) About two-thirds way through the seance a request was made from the cabinet for the light to be lowered and a gentleman turned the storm lamp lower, but there remained sufficient light to see clearly all that was taking place. The storm lamp, though covered round the side allowed a considerable amount of white light to escape, throwing a ring of clear light onto the ceiling.

(5) One sitter near the cabinet declared that when a child’s figure was presented the medium was definitely stooping down, her back, in a horizontal position being clearly visible. I did not see his myself.

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On April 13th 1945 a typewritten letter signed by May Price, the General Secretary of the Union, was sent to Helen Duncan outlining the complaints against her:

Dear Mrs Duncan,

The Council of the Union has received reports that you have recently held a number of seances in North Wales and in Lancashire in circumstances which might have brought grave consequences to yourself and to the Spiritualist Movement as a whole.

One report, signed by a number of the sitters who were present, contains details of a seance which you attended unaccompanied at a certain village in Lancashire. It is stated:

(1) that at this seance a number of supposed materialised forms appeared but that the particulars of identity given by these forms and by the voice from the cabinet – ostensibly that of 'Albert' but very tired and dropping to a weary whisper at the end of each sentence – were fictitious and in no wise evidential:

(2) that all these supposed materialised forms were plainly yourself in your dark dress, scantily draped in white stuff; your face and hands and dress being distinguishable from the farthest end of the room;

(3) that throughout the sitting the moving of feet inside the cabinet was heard and sometimes distinct footsteps (as of booted feet) sounded as the figure approached the curtains or shifted position whilst in view;

(4) that some sitters identified the form of a small figure as yourself bending to a horizontal position and partly draped in white.

The council also understand that some of the sitters allege;

(a) that when you arrived at the cottage your breath smelled of whiskey.

(b) that before the seance neither you nor the cabinet was searched in the presence of witnesses;

(c) that the white material was introduced by yourself.

(d) that the whole sitting was a hoax.

Other sitters, whilst not accusing you of conscious fraud or deliberate attempts to deceive, nevertheless regard the seance as entirely, and even dangerously, unsatisfactory and indicative of a very serious deterioration in your mediumship.

The Council has learned of these reports with great regret since the holding of seances of the kind, and in the conditions of these to which the reports relate, cannot but be regarded as "likely to discredit the cause of Spiritualism" (see Regulation 5 enclosed).

In view of the warnings already given to you, privately by the Union's legal advisor after your discharge from Holloway gaol and publicly in the Declaration of the Freedom Committee, the Council has been obliged to consider the question of the continuance of your Diploma. In this connection, it is prepared to take into account any representation

you may wish to make provided these are sent to me within the next 28 days. For the present, however, having regard to the serious position created by your conduct, the Council must ask you to regard your Diploma as being suspended.

Yours sincerely,

p.p SPIRITUALISTS' NATION UNION LTD.,

General Secretary.

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A handwritten reply was received from Mrs Duncan on April 18th 1945 as shown below:

Dear Miss Price,

I have received your letter with the same post I received the enclosed from Wigan.[5] I do think in all fairness to me they might have complained at the time and have given me a chance to defend myself anyway I have not been giving sitting, only there it is the first & last I can assure you. I have come to the conclusion it is kick a dog when it is down. I feel very indignant about the past smelt drink what a dam cheek & I can get those who were in contact with me to prove otherwise. I have never touched any drink in no way since before I was at Portsmouth & I resent it very much. Anyway I am having nothing more to do with the movement so that is final & for Mr. Quastel of Meersbrook he has a very short lived memory he had plenty of me & now he talks about something he knows nothing about.[6]

I am yours faithfully,

V. H. Duncan

P.S.

Oh & by the way who in the S.N.U. offered me any work. I have always worked for S.N.U. churches & for Portsmouth it was a district councillor who took me there first & the one who said I said I would not work for them for £20 is a liar.

Please don't trouble to reply.

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[5] "Wigan, Lancs. Dear Mrs. Duncan, I have read with deep regret the account in the "Psychic News" & I am writing to tell you that the people of Wigan know nothing at all about it. I was dumb founded when Ella came back from Blackpool & told me that they wondered if it was from here, on my oath it was not, for although you have disappointed me so many times & I have been put to a lot of trouble it would be the last thing in my head to do you a dirty trick. We are still expecting you. Sincerely, (signed).. ….."

[6] **Warning To Helen Duncan:** "I AGREE absolutely that if Helen Duncan does not toe the line and stop giving seances until her mediumship is A1 again, and until she agrees to let the S.N.U. "mother" her the S.N.U. should *not* defend her if she gets into trouble again.

"If mediums realise that S.N.U. money will only be spent when *justified* by circumstances, they will work much more wisely.—C. I. Quastel. Sheffield."

Taken from *Psychic News,* 14th April 1945, 'Dear Sir' (letters) feature. Kindly supplied courtesy of *Psychic News*.

Around this time Maurice Barbanell furnished the Union with some more reports, which showed that at around the time of the above-reported séance Duncan had conducted at least six others, some in North Wales, some at Blackpool, and others in the Wyre district of Lancashire. Barbanell was informed on April 22nd 1945 that the matter had been taken up with Mrs Duncan but there was no decision as yet on the course of action against her. There appears to be only one surviving report from the Wyre district of Lancashire dated April 3rd 1945; it states that Duncan gave two séances on the same day, March 5th, and it is reported: "Mrs. Duncan was drunk and the phenomena very unsatisfactory, every entity smelling of whisky." There were nineteen people present at the afternoon séance. A further séance was arranged for the next day, Tuesday March 6th, but Duncan never arrived, as she was in Blackpool and gave two séances.

The combination of these reports resulted in the removal of Helen Duncan's Spiritualists' National Union diploma.[7]

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What can be concluded from these reports?

It is clear these allegations were of a serious nature for the Spiritualist movement as a whole, especially to the SNU, as Helen Duncan was one of their diploma-holders, in essence representing the Union. We can note that Maurice Barbanell did not make these allegations headline news in 'Psychic News' but passed the main bulk of the complaint to the Union to deal with. At this time the Union's 'Freedom Committee' were very active on the Parliamentary pre-election pledges made by candidates that they would, if elected, help change the law on mediumship, and in February of this year Hannen Swaffer had addressed a meeting at the House of Commons. Helen had been released from Holloway prison for less than six months, so another full-scale criminal investigation would have had a devastating effect on the movement and would put the Union in poor light.

As already noted by Barbanell, Helen would not work fully under the auspices of the Union and in the past she had ignored the advice of experienced Spiritualists like John McIndoe and Maurice Barbanell about over-sitting. It may appear that this is one of the major problems in these allegations. No doubt Helen's response to the claims put against her did little for the SNU Council[8] and the Exponents and Education Committee to reach a more favourable decision regarding the removal of her diploma. It is presently unclear whether the Union made further investigations into these claims, which I believe to be doubtful, as Helen makes no other defence than her letter. We should recall also the long efforts of the 'Parliamentary and Freedom Fund'; it is reported that the Duncan trial cost the Fund, originally started in 1916, around £3,000 (I have not confirmed this figure). As the efforts to gain freedom from the Vagrancy Act and the Witchcraft Act were now more realistic with a change of government, it may have been felt, given the limited response of Helen to the allegations, that the Union had no option other than to withdraw her certificate!

[7] All the documentation (unless otherwise stated) is held in the Britten Memorial Museum at the Arthur Findlay College, Stansted Hall, Essex.

[8] Harold Vigurs, President; Mr A. Raffill, Vice-President; John McIndoe, Treasurer.

But what if the allegations had been more fully investigated?

For example:

The Union's complaint no. 5 stated that "when you arrived at the cottage your breath smelled of whisky." The Wyre district of Lancashire report stated: "Mrs. Duncan was drunk…"

Helen's response was:

> "I feel very indignant about the past smelt drink what a dam cheek & I can get those who were in contact with me to prove otherwise. I have never touched any drink in no way since before I was at Portsmouth & I resent it very much."

I am not sure how one can distinguish the different types of alcohol consumed from a person's breath and state it is whisky rather than, say, rum. In June 2015, during an exchange of information with one of Helen's granddaughters, Maggie Hahn, Maggie mentioned to me: "My sister knows how I feel about my gran and she sent me her address book and it had the letter, a medical statement about grandma emitting the smell of alcohol because of her diabetes." On further investigation it appears that diabetics can display symptoms similar to drunkenness and have a smell of alcohol on their breath.

The Séance:

Given the complex structure of physical mediumship and the physical depletion it causes in the medium's body with the extraction of ectoplasm, or, as Duncan's control, Albert, calls it, 'psychoplasm', over-exertion reduces the necessary energy required in the production of a successful séance, especially where full-form materialisation is demonstrated, as in the case of Helen Duncan. If we consider the séance which is at the centre of the complaint, neither the sitters nor the medium sat in what may be considered *conducive* and *harmonious* conditions to achieve the best possible results; it appears that that significant fact may have been overlooked!

The séance party of seventeen persons had been out to lunch and one or two had drunk alcohol. When they reached the séance location the medium had not arrived; in fact she was almost two hours late! The sitters "became restless and anxious". Helen arrived by taxi, unaccompanied; she was urged to rest but the medium "decided to carry on without delay". All moved into the séance room. The first report states that the "cabinet had been examined" (curtains across the corner of the room). The medium did not change into her séance clothes, generally part of her pre-séance procedure. The medium invited a search of her clothes she was wearing again; generally she was stripped and searched (the two reports are slightly conflicting).

Generally speaking, Duncan's séances were fairly well-lit and the séance procedure was quite consistent throughout her years of work. The séance in question is not typical. Duncan's control would announce himself as Albert, ask Mrs Duncan (how he addressed her) to stand up, then he would show himself and his medium together, a prayer would be said and a singing of a hymn. None of this is mentioned in the reports.

The first report, signed by four of the sitters, shows the phenomena were very weak and unsatisfactory. The actual séance is reported to be less than thirty minutes in duration! Given the above problems the circumstances were not *conducive* and *harmonious*.

Despite warnings already mentioned by McIndoe and Barbanell for over-sitting Helen would still conduct two séances in a day; in fact, on the two occasions she was arrested, in Edinburgh in 1933 and Portsmouth in 1944, this was the case! We can note that Helen actually conducted three séances on March 5th! She gave two séances in the Wyre district, possibly one in the morning, followed by an afternoon séance, when nineteen people were present. This goes a long way to answering why Helen was so late and rushed when she attended the Wigan area. It is possible that this séance was her second again, hence the rush and short séance to return to the first venue for an evening séance. The actual séance times are not recorded. The distance between the two locations is forty-two miles! Given that she had three séances booked the following day but only attended two, this helps explain the poor results of the séances, which can only be looked upon as reckless and justifies the concerns about her conduct towards the movement and the SNU.

Did Helen resort to fraud or, given her drained physical constitution, did she become subjected to a subconscious influence, as concluded by the writer of the report? Do mediums consciously premeditate fraud or do low, mischievous spirits carry out the fraud unconsciously? Some will argue that the medium premeditated the fraud and is therefore conscious and responsible for their actions, whilst others would say that owing to the influence of low, mischievous spirits or of the sitters in the séance the medium is totally unaware of their actions, as they are in a somnambulistic state and therefore cannot be accountable for their *unconscious* actions. For example, in August 1877 Catherine (Kate) Elizabeth Wood (1854-1884) was headlined "Miss Wood Caught Personating a Spirit". The report stated: "During the unconscious state the medium is made the victim of the circumstances by which she is surrounded, and either through the perverted action of some of her own controls, or the intrusion of other spirits, she is reduced to the disgraceful position in which she was found."

However, whatever conclusion is reached by the reader, not all the accusations levied against her are fair or correct.

For example:

SNU complaint no. 4 (b): "that before the séance neither you nor the cabinet was searched in the presence of witnesses." This is not strictly true.

Sitters suggest fraud: Duncan brought the "white stuff" into the room – the "white stuff" was hidden in the drawer or cupboard in the cabinet – the "white stuff" was muslin or such.

It was the sitters who searched the medium, as signed by five sitters (including the writer of the report): "…medium then left the room to be searched and, on returning, entered the cabinet…" It is very strange to consider that a cabinet (curtains across a corner of the room) would in fact have these convenient hiding-places: how would Helen know this in advance or did she enter the cabinet before the start of the séance? There is no evidence to support this; as Mrs Duncan stated in her letter: "I do think in all fairness to me they might have complained at the time and have given me a chance to defend myself anyway."

The list of the allegations could be further discussed but what degree of fraud was involved, if any, will remain speculative, given the passing of seven decades. If Helen Duncan had stood her ground, giving further explanations, and had invited investigations to be carried out by the SNU, the outcome would have, at the very least, been more balanced and definitive. The greater concern in the removal of her diploma may have been her recklessness, having

little regard to the management of her own mediumship, as is evident in the reports and comments. Helen's mediumship never regained the quality and support of her pre-trial days.



HELEN DUNCAN SÉANCE DURING HER 1944 TRIAL

New séance evidence!

In 1958 a conference was organised by the College of Psychic Science in Brighton on November 28th-30th on "The Problem of Survival"; the principal speakers were Brigadier R.C. Firebrace, Percy Wilson and Professor H.H. Price. A report of part of the discussion can be read in Psypioneer, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2009.



Helen Duncan circa 1941

Percy Wilson and his family were friends with Helen Duncan and during his 1958 lecture he wanted to put on record the circumstances relating to the Duncan prosecution. Below is a short quote relating to a séance during the trial at Wilson's house; as a result of this séance he considered "…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."

Further information of the Duncan trial can be found in the "Pioneer", Vol. 2, No. 4, July 2015: "The Effect of the Vagrancy Act (Part III) – The Work of the Spiritualists' National Union" – Helen Duncan in Court – Was Helen Removed by the British Intelligence Services? – Eighth Day – Monday 3rd April 1944 – Sentences

The quote below is taken from *Light*, vol. LXXIX, No. 3438 – Spring 1959:

EVIDENCE FOR SURVIVAL

The Historical Significance of Physical Mediumship

By Percy Wilson, M.A.

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 seance 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 seance 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.

The prosecution (John Maude, KC, and Henry Elam) concluded on the second day of the trial, Friday March 24th 1944, the day the above séance was held at the Wilsons' home at 3 Sheridan Road, S.W.19. It can be noted below that in fact there was a second séance at the Wilsons' house on Monday March 27th 1944, the third day of the trial, the day Charles Loseby and J. Simpson Pedler began their defence. The sitters named are Mr and Mrs John McIndoe (former SNU President), Joseph Newton, Mrs Lyon, Percy Wilson's sons, Laurie and Geoffrey, and a nurse. It may appear the nurse was the daughter of one of Duncan's co-defendants, Christine Homer, whom McIndoe refers to below as a court witness on March 28th.

This new valuable document was given to the Britten Memorial Museum & Library by Linda Smith, President of Norwich Spiritualist Church;[6] Linda is the mother of Tanya Smith, the General Manager of the Arthur Findlay College. The typed séance report was found in David Dutton's old papers; David was born circa 1917 and first took to the Spiritualist platform in 1941 at Croydon Church (where he lived for some years), becoming a well-known and respected orator. He became well acquainted with the Wilson family with his involvement in "Psychic Press Ltd"; Percy Wilson was the Chairman from 1956 to his passing in 1977. "Psychic Press Ltd" published "Psychic News", ran a bookshop and published books, including Arthur Findlay books. "Psychic Press Ltd" was formed to finance the newly-formed "Psychic News" in 1932 by Maurice Barbanell and Jack M. Rubens, who received shares for the part they played; Findlay put up the necessary money

[6] Norwich Spiritualist Church, affiliated to the Spiritualists' National Union: http://www.norwichspiritualistchurch.org.uk/html/pictures.html

and so controlled the company. In 1965 the charity, "The Spiritual Truth Foundation", was founded; David Dutton was the Chairman, the trustees included Laurence Wilson and Maurice Barbanell, and the Foundation is still going today.

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NOTES MADE AT SEANCE HELD WITH MRS. HELEN DUNCAN AT 3 SHERIDAN ROAD, S.W.19. ON 27TH MARCH 1944

Albert:[7] It's difficult for me to get the amount of power I would like to get. I have got a person here who I am going to try and build. It's for the gentleman towards the back (Joseph Newton). It is a gentleman who passed with abdominal trouble – kidney. Neither old nor young. George.

(A form appeared but dropped down very quickly)

Albert: Did you notice his moustache? (Mrs. Lyon – the sitter nearest the cabinet – "I caught a glimpse of it") George is not his name.

(The form again appeared at full height but, unable to retain the power, soon dropped to the floor again)

Albert: The next form is for the lady in the corner (Mrs. Lyon). Go out, sir, do not stand in here.

(Tall figure appeared, bowing his head and turning it from side to side slightly.)

Albert: Did you notice he wore a turban of some kind? (Mrs. Lyon: "Yes and he had a small beard and moustache") I have now got a child here. (Mrs. Lyon: "Please come out; I know who you are") It is a coloured child.

(Small form appears but quickly sank down. Then a bunch of ectoplasm on the floor came out of the cabinet reaching forward until it reached a point almost level with Mr. McIndoe, sitting two places from the cabinet)

Albert: They are not holding.

(White bunch on the floor again – rose up high as though trying to build a form, curtains closed and then opened again but the form sank to the floor).

Albert to Mr. McIndoe: What on earth possessed you to pick this day? (McIndoe: "Because one or two witnesses are going in tomorrow and we don't want the other side to say they only saw Mrs. Duncan seven or eight years ago")

(Curtains opened. Large white expanse of ectoplasm shown which covered the medium, Albert to medium: Stand up. Then ectoplasm was seen coming from the region of the medium's mouth in a thick fold which went down to the floor and up again towards the edge of the cabinet.

After ectoplasm had disappeared, Albert walked Mrs. Duncan right out of the cabinet. (Mrs. McIndoe: There's nothing to be seen in the cabinet")

When Mrs. Duncan was back in cabinet and curtains closed Mrs. McIndoe said "Somebody is pulling at my chair")

Albert: I am going to show it is quite a solid material. (Big knock heard). May I ask a favour of one of you young men. (Laurie Wilson). I want you to stand up and then I

[7] Albert was the main control of Helen Duncan for around twenty-five years.

am going to ask you to put your foot on a rod that will come out, to prove to you that no cloth could do what this is going to do.

(Laurie stood up and moved forward from his chair about four feet. He was then about four feet from the cabinet. He put his right foot on the white rod which had come out in front of him. Suddenly he staggered backwards. The rod had pushed upwards, nearly throwing him off his balance. After the seance he said the rod had been about 9" above the floor and when he put his foot on it he pressed it down and inch or two. When it pushed up under his shoe it forced his foot up to about the height of his thigh which threw him back off his balance. The rod continued to move upwards and disappeared over the top of the curtain. Of its nature he said afterwards that it felt like cylindrical tube of perhaps 4" or 5" diameter with a hard core of 2" or 3" and soft covering.

During séance Laurie described it in these words "It felt soft and spongy as would a thin steel rod, thickly bound round with cotton wool". Albert: Would not you say it was like rubber?" Laurie: Perhaps like sorbo rubber.)

Albert: I am going away now but I know that I had to produce something and I had a reason for doing that. Mrs. Duncan sat in that court all day today and was escorted here by an outsider. (Geoffrey Wilson). You did not let her out of your sight did you young man? (Geoffrey: "No") You are quite sure she was not swallowing something. ("Yes"). There is my reason that I did that. I did not want to let Mr. McIndoe down and I have not done so. I want to say "God be with you till we meet again". And by the way, Nurse, I still adhere to my prophecy. That is all and I will now say Au revoir.

(Mrs. Duncan in a very few seconds came out of the cabinet, still partly under control. Lights raised. Mrs. Duncan's eyes were open but had a staring expression)

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Reference to a strong "steel" rod can be noted on another occasion almost two decades earlier, involving the original small Duncan circle, which would be around 1926, prior to the introduction of Albert. Then under the direction of Dr. Williams, he is the least-known control but it appears he was the first in laying the foundations of the home development circle at the Duncan residence, introducing the direct voice. The quote below is taken from "The Two Worlds of Helen Duncan", by Helen's daughter, Gena Brealey, and Kay Hunter, published in 1985 (reprinted in 2008), page 52:

As he spoke [Dr Williams], out through the curtain surrounding the corner of the room which served as Helen's cabinet, came a substance not unlike cheesecloth or butter muslin. The material continued to flow until there seemed to the sitters to be at least ten yards in a soft pile in the room. Henry [Helen's husband] asked if he could touch it and was told he could. He said afterwards that it was dry and soft to touch. The other sitters remarked that there was no odour. Throught the opening of the curtains they could see Helen sitting in her hard-backed chair, and the ectoplasm flowing from her nose and ears. They were amazed to see the substance flowing down the front of her dress on to her lap, then down on to the floor and out to the centre of the room. The curtains were drawn together, then the substance started to recede until the entire volume had gone back into the cabinet.

There now appeared a rod about three feet long. It came all round the sitters and stopped at Jim Murray. Dr. Williams told him to take hold of the rod and bang it on the floor. When he had done this, he was asked if the rod felt solid.

"Solid as steel," he replied.

He was then told to place the rod so that it rested on two chairs two feet apart, and to sit in the centre of the rod. He did as directed and was lifted up above the heads of the other sitters, who were asked to stand up and check that there was no rope or anything else holding Jim up.

The sitters were very careful in their examination of any spirit phenomena. Joe Souter and Frank Murray stood on chairs to make sure nothing was holding Jim from above. The voice asked if they were certain there was nothing holding Jim up so high, "no material substance", as Dr. Williams called it. He then thanked them, and told Jim he would be lowered, and would they please watch carefully.

Jim was lowered gently to the floor, the rod disappeared, and Jim was left standing in the middle of the circle. Dr. Williams' voice then said, "I will leave you for the present. Good-night, and God bless you all."

During this stage of development much phenomena was witnessed–voices, lights, and the continuing development of the ectoplasm, which at times resembled a spider's web, and at other times solid steel.



Helen and her husband, Henry Duncan

MADAME VICTORIA DUNCAN

Helen Duncan needs little introduction as a materialisation medium. Without doubt the best resource of researched original material on Helen Duncan is the free online journal, "Psypioneer", edited by Leslie Price; details are on the index page. We have noted in the "Pioneer" that Helen Duncan occasionally took Spiritualist meetings, with a trance address given through Helen by her main control, Albert Stewart; please see Vol. 1, No. 5, October 2014, "Builders of Bridges".


Madame Victoria Duncan.

However, it is little known that Duncan wrote about her experiences in her own weekly column, "My Second-Sight Secrets", published in "The People's Journal" of Dundee in 1933. In part what we would commonly refer to today as an "agony aunt", Duncan referred to herself as a "counsellor and friend" in psychic matters; she would also work in a role as "Psychic Detective", revealing some of the "Disappearance Cases I Have Solved".

Below is published one of her cases in psychic detection published in "The People's Journal", Saturday November 11th 1933, page 24:

> MANY people have consulted me, often as a last resort, in their anxiety to trace relatives who have disappeared. I have been remarkable successful in solving mysteries of this kind.
>
> A young Glasgow woman visited me, expecting that I would provide her with confirmation of her husband's death by drowning. On the contrary, I was able to tell her that he was alive and well, but I had to add that he had become involved in trouble which was to lead to police action.
>
> This young woman was accompanied by a lady friend. She told me she had called regarding her husband, who was missing, and who, she had good reason to believe, had committed suicide by drowning.
>
> "He was acting queerly for some time prior to his disappearance," the young woman told me, and I feel sure he won't come back."
>
> "You have already taken clairvoyant advice in regard to this matter," I said to her, and she agreed.

"And you were told your husband was dead; that he had been drowned in a quarry hole."

"Yes, out at G—." She mentioned the name of the disused quarry on the outskirts of Glasgow.

"Then, why come to me?" I asked.

Motive for Leaving Home.

The young woman hung her head, but suddenly she raised it and said, "Oh, two heads are better than one, aren't they?"

"The head has nothing whatever to do with clairvoyance," I replied. "The messages I received do not come from my brain in the ordinary sense of the word. I do not think back or think forward. I see."

Observing that my client was becoming flustered, I hastened to add, "But don't let us worry about these things. I shall help you to the best of my ability. Have you brought any article belonging to your husband with you?"

"Yes," she said, with relief in her voice, "I've brought a linen collar; the collar he took off just before he went away. Will that do?"

"Splendidly," I replied.

As soon as I received the collar into my hands I sensed that the man who had worn it was still alive, and I told my client so, adding, "I do not like to say that I am right and that someone else is wrong, but I certainly must tell you that your husband is alive. He had a motive for leaving home," I proceeded, but the young woman interrupted me saying, "Oh, no, we were perfectly happy, Mrs Duncan."

"This has nothing to do with his home life or his domestic happiness," I explained. "He had a motive for going away. Wait a minute. I'm getting it. Didn't he act as a treasurer for an employees' holiday fund?"

My client nodded.

"There was a sum of about £50 in the fund?"

"I cannot tell you the exact amount," she said.

"He had spent some of the money and taken the remainder with him."

"I know he was treasurer of the fund, and that the money was yet to be paid out, but I don't think he has been spending any of it."

"Well," I said, "I wish to assure you that your husband is not dead. He is living at—" (I mentioned the name of a village on the outskirts of the city.) "He is afraid to communicate with you just now in case he should provide the police with a clue to his whereabouts. You have had a visit from the police, haven't you?" My client nodded.

"And they asked you if you had been in touch with your husband, and you truthfully replied that you had neither seen him nor heard of or from him since he went away."

"That is so," she replied.

"Your husband has a sister who lives not very far from where you stay, but you have not called on her."

"No, we are not on speaking terms."

"In a few days your sister-in-law will call on you to say she has had a communication from your husband."

"Well, I think if he is going to write to anyone it will be to me."

Arrested By Detectives.

"Your house is being watched by the police, and he will not write to you. Your husband will return home, but—and I do not like to tell you this—he will almost immediately be taken into custody on a charge of appropriating the holiday fund to his own use."

"If only he comes back," she replied with emotion, "everything will be all right. We will make up the money somehow."

"That is an honourable thought," I said, "but I regret to say you will find it impossible to make good the loss of £50. You will try hard nevertheless. He will go before the Court and be found guilty and sentenced to a short term of imprisonment. But do not grieve too much over it. This will be a lesson your husband will never forget, and, so far as I can see at the moment, your troubles will be over."

A fortnight or so later my client's companion appeared at my consulting room.

"Did you see it in the paper?" she asked me.

"See what?"

"About the sentence on—," she explained.

I then recollected the visit of her friend and what I had predicted in regard to her husband, but had to confess that the court case had escaped my notice.

"It all came out as you said," my visitor stated. "The exact amount of the money missing was £50 18s. He wrote to his sister and she went over to his wife with another letter he had enclosed for her. In this letter he said he was returning home that night. Detectives were watching for him, and when he returned about midnight they followed him upstairs and arrested him just after he had entered the house."

Some more examples of Helen Duncan's psychometry (a psychic way of seeing through touching the object) and clairvoyant consultations in the next issue.

MADAME VICTORIA DUNCAN

It was noted in the previous issue that it is little known that Helen Duncan wrote about her experiences in her own weekly column, "My Second-Sight Secrets", published in "The People's Journal" of Dundee in 1933. Duncan referred to herself as a "counsellor and friend" in psychic matters; she would also work in a role as "psychic detective", revealing some of the "Disappearance Cases I Have Solved". In the last issue one of her cases in psychic detection was published; I noted at the end of the article that there would be some more examples of Helen Duncan's psychometry (a psychic way of seeing through touching the object) and clairvoyant consultations in the next issue.

However, I found a more valuable article in "The People's Journal", November 18th 1933. The early development of Helen's physical mediumship is somewhat contradictory in the various biographies about her development; these were looked at in Psypioneer, Vol. 11, No. 2, February 2015, "Helen Duncan: Early reports of her mediumship". The article below gives a first-hand account of her trance mediumship and her control of two years, Matthew Douglas, and the introduction of Albert Stewart.

In the "Two Worlds", September 30th 1932, James Leigh interviewed the alleged materialised form of Albert, republished in Psypioneer, Vol. 6, No. 2, February 2010. Albert refers to "Matthew Douglas" as "Marklew Douglas":

"When were you first brought into contact with the medium, and what attracted you?" was the first question submitted him. His voice, coming from the head of the form—personally, I was unable to distinguish the features—was both clear and pronounced.

"It is a most difficult question to answer briefly," he said. "When I had resided on this side a number of years, I was approached by a person interested in establishing communication with earth, and I was asked whether I would like to participate in a series of experiments. The man who addressed me was called Marklew Douglas. 'You seem to be very clever in making things,' he said. 'Probably you would be useful,' I was shown the process of building materialised spirit forms so that they become visible to people in the material world. Douglas suggested that I might possibly have the gift of moulding the



Artist's impression of Albert Stewart

substance—which I call psychoplasm—into recognisable forms, and at his invitation I consented to conduct some experiments.

"I made many attempts, with varying success. Sometimes I was more successful than at others, but I persevered with the work. Later I discovered that I was not to make the semblance of a human form at all. I had only to clothe the thoughts of the people who presented themselves for materialisation. My task was simply to clothe the thought-form with psychoplasm so that it should become, for a short period, tangible and visible and 'real' to your senses.

"It was this work which brought me into contact with Mrs. Duncan. For her I have the highest regard; and I am grateful to the Higher Powers that this channel has been opened out to me, so that I can occasionally render strength and comfort to those who suffer the temporary loss of loved companions."

It can be noted that what is generally referred to as "ectoplasm" in the quote above is called "psychoplasm" (on other occasions Albert also used the term "the substance"). When Helen was tested in the early 1930s at the London Psychical Laboratory, the research department of the London Spiritualist Alliance (today the College for Psychic Studies), the researchers called it "teleplasm".[9]

J. Arthur Findlay in his book "The Torch of Knowledge", referenced in the previous issue of Pioneer, stated, page 95:

We call it ectoplasm and our friends on the other side mix it with what they call psychoplasm, a composition of their own, and the finished product they call teleplasm. As teleplasm it can be seen and felt, and it is by means of this teleplasm that they manifest their presence to us earth people.

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[9] See Psypioneer, Vol. 9, No. 3, March 2013: "Spirits of the Trade: Teleplasm, Ectoplasm, Psychoplasm, Ideoplasm – Marc Demarest".

My First Experiences in Trances

By Madame Victoria Duncan

I HAVE already told you my experiences at materialisation seances after I had begun serious investigation of spiritualism. This week I propose to tell you of incidents that occurred at trumpet seances, which was the next stage in my progress as a spiritualist.

It was from the "other side" that the circle to which I acted as medium was advised to secure and utilise a trumpet. The reason given was that by means of a trumpet the spirit intelligence would be able to communicate more evidence.

Its use, we were informed, would enable the spirits to conserve their energy and thus ensure communications from a great number of persons who had passed on. It was added that the new method would involve less strain on the medium.

Having been instructed to exclude all white light, we began our first "trumpet séance" in utter darkness, but so that any movement of the trumpet would be visible we had the top and bottom of it painted with luminous paint. The trumpet, by the way, was in two sections, which fitted telescopically.

Trumpet's Peculiar Movements.

We had not long to wait for the first movement of the trumpet. I confess I was somewhat startled when it rose at a great speed from the floor.

After a momentary pause it moved in a circle with amazing rapidity. In its progress it seemed to graze the head of each sitter. Next it soared close to the ceiling, where it remained stationary for a few moments before descending as quickly as it had risen.

As soon as the trumpet came to rest invisible hands removed flowers from their vases and gently touched the heads of several of the sitters.

Voices were heard. They sounded as if they came over a telephone wire, not as if the speakers were in the room.

At the outset a strange sort of buzz came from the mouth of the trumpet, but this cleared to a certain extent, and the words became fairly distinct and intelligible.

The first voice we heard claimed to be [that of?] the controlling intelligence. He gave [the?] name of Matthew Douglas and stated he was a native of Kirkcaldy. That a gentleman of that name did at one time live in Kirkcaldy we were able to confirm at a later date. He urged us to continue our trumpet sittings and promised some wonderful manifestations if we did so.

For some time afterwards we sat regularly twice a week, and, at Matthew Douglas's suggestion, we widened the circle by bringing in more friends.

A Joyful Answer.

Just before one of the seances my youngest boy contracted measles. It was a serious attack and he was really very ill. In the circumstances I decided we must abandon the seance, but I found it impossible to get in touch with all the people who had been invited to attend. I sent word to as many as I could and decided I would crave the indulgences of the others when they arrived.

This I did, whereupon one of the guests remarked, “Why, Mrs Duncan, this is the very time to hold a seance. Let us ask if the boy is going to get well.”

“All right,” I agreed. My husband and I and four guests were standing in the bedroom where the boy was sleeping. The room was lit by incandescent gas.

Suddenly I felt something drop at my feet. I looked and saw a snowdrop. Next instant a snowdrop fell on the bed. You may imagine my feelings. I concluded these to be signs that the boy would not recover.

In an overwrought condition, I said “Let’s hold a seance. I must find out what is going to happen, whether it be good or bad news.”

We adjourned to the next room and sat in darkness. One of the little circle, having offered up a prayer, asked, “Is Mrs Duncan’s boy going to be all right?”

How relieved I was when the answer came in the affirmative in form of three very heavy raps on the table in the centre of the room. So loud and pronounced were the raps that it seemed as if they had been registered with a heavy sledge-hammer.

Lifted from the Floor.

Then came a sound which was like the flapping of the wings of a large and powerful bird. Right round the room the bird seemed to fly. When the sound ceased the voice of one of the sitters broke the stillness.

“Oh,” she exclaimed, “see what I’ve got – a flower. It was placed in my hand.”

“Oh, I’ve got one, too,” shouted another of the sitters.

The gas was lit, and it was discovered that in the hand of each of the circle had been placed a snowdrop. We then examined the table, on which the heavy raps had been registered, and found that not the slightest mark had been made.

I felt tremendously bucked up by this seance. I was certain my boy was going to recover, and in this I was not disappointed.

By the way of an experiment it was decided to rope me to a chair to see if this would in any way interfere with the manifestations. This done the lights were extinguished, and in the darkness the trumpet was seen to move about the room just as it had done previously.

The controlling intelligence then instructed us to light up the room, and when this was done it was seen that my bonds remained intact.

“Remove the bonds. Do not put out the light; just turn it down low,” was the next instruction we received, and no sooner had this been complied with than I had a feeling that the floor was receding from under me. I understand one has the same feeling when rising in an aeroplane for the first time.

At a loss to explain my sensation, I asked the sitters, “Did any of you feel any difference in the floor?”

There was a chorus of negatives, to which I replied, “Well, I did. I feel it yet. The floor seems to be going farther and farther away from me.”

“It is imagination on your part,” a member of the circle suggested.

“Is it my imagination?” I remarked derisively, “Look now. I cannot touch the floor with my toes. The floor seems to sinking under me.”

“There is nothing to worry about,” interposed my husband. “You are being lifted up. Keep perfectly calm.”

By this time I was fully a foot from the floor, and I felt greatly alarmed.

“Great goodness,” I exclaimed. “They might let me fall. Think of my weight in this easy chair.”

“There is no fear of their letting you fall,” said my husband, “you will be all right.”

“Will I?” I countered. “I’m not risking it,” and with that I slid forward to the front of the chair and dropped down. The drop gave me a good shake up.

What was even more alarming, however, was the fact that no sooner had the chair been relieved of my weight than it flew right over my head to land without a sound on a big table in the centre of the circle.

Went into Trance.

The chair was lifted by two male members of the circle and returned to its original position. Then from the trumpet came a voice telling us to extinguish the light. When this had been done we heard a noise which indicated that the rope with which I had been bound to the chair was being gathered up by someone.

This was confirmed when, from the trumpet, came the voice of Matthew Douglas, telling the circle that the medium was to be tied by spirit intelligences.

Quite clearly we heard the handling of the rope. I realised that my hands were being tied, and then consciousness left me.

When I regained consciousness I had the feeling of waking from a short sleep. I imagined I had just “toppled over” for a few seconds whereas I had been “away” for nearly half an hour. My hands and feet were benumbed.

“Have I been asleep?” I asked the circle.

“No, you have been in a trance,” one of the sitters replied.

“What has been happening?”

I had no recollection or knowledge of what had taken place from the moment I felt the rope on my hands. Here is an account of the seance as given to me by several of the sitters.

They had heard the handling of the rope, and next the trumpet began to circle round the room.

When the movements of the trumpet ceased a voice said, “Put up the light. Good-night.”

The gas was lit, and I was found bound to the chair and in a trance for the first time since I had begun my investigation of spiritualistic phenomena.

The sitters carefully examined my bonds. They found that the roping had been most methodically carried out. For a time they were at a loss to discover the knots, but eventually they were located under the chair. They were three in number, and were unmistakably the work of an intelligence who had had seafaring experience.

The unravelling of the knots took a considerable time, and it was during this operation that I awoke to what was going on around me.

First Real Trance.

This experience, of course, was only a partial trance, and now I propose to tell you of the first occasion when I went into a complete trance, that is to say, from the beginning to the end of the seance, and when I awoke to find that I had absolutely no recollection of what had taken place in the room.

The sensations I experienced as I was falling into the trance were unforgettable. I felt as if I were going to faint, yet I felt as if I were rising into the air, not dropping as one feels when in a fainting condition.

When I became normal again I was convinced I had just recovered from a faint. I imagined I had been unconscious for only a few seconds, and was amazed when I was informed that I had been in trance for almost an hour and a half.

Visitors from the "Other Side."

As I have explained, I had no recollection of what had transpired, and for details of the seance I was indebted to the sitters. Many voices were heard, and from the "other side" several visitors had come to comfort relatives in the circle.

The last to appear was the mother-in-law of one of the sitters. She had passed on in a village in Fife only a week previously, and the ailment to which she succumbed was made plain to every member of the circle. Unfortunately I, for the time being, took on the woman's health condition, and when I awoke I was feeling far from well.

A gentleman, whose wife had passed on twenty years ago met her again, and he was extremely happy because of the experience.

"Are you sure it was her voice you heard?" I asked him.

"Certain, absolutely certain," he replied with sparkling eyes. "You see she mentioned things that were known to no one but ourselves. She spoke of money that I had invested in a small business and asked me if I was still getting a return for it."

A lady told me her husband had come to her and spoken about a book she had given him as a present. She said to him, "But that book has disappeared out of the house."

"Oh no" came the reply. "I lent it to Major –"

The lady made inquiries and confirmed the message she had received from her husband. The book had been in Major – 's possession for nearly two years. It was very valuable, and she was glad to get it back, especially as it was a memento of her husband.

Another lady was told by her husband to consult a certain doctor, who was named, in regard to a pain in her chest. "You will require to undergo a major operation," he explained, "but do not hesitate. There is no cause for fear. I shall be with you."

The lady acted on this advice, and three weeks later she underwent a serious operation, from which she made a splendid recovery. She told me she felt her husband very close to her when she lapsed into unconsciousness under the anaesthetic.

Visited by Investigation Committee.

After this I went into trance regularly. One night whilst I was attending a meeting of the Spiritualist Church, of which I had become a member, a gentleman approached me and asked for an invitation to the next seance to be held in my house. He was not a member of the church, but I knew he was interested in spiritualistic phenomena, so I at once complied with his request.

A day or two later I was asked to give a test sitting for the committee of this Spiritualist Church, who proposed to send an investigation committee to my house for the purpose. I agreed to this, and was surprised when the gentlemen I had invited to the seance proved to be a member of the investigation committee.

This was explained by the fact that he was an intimate friend of a committee-man of the Spiritualist Church. The deputation numbered seven, the majority of them being professional men.

"Isn't it strange that after you had invited me here I should be asked to act on this committee?" the gentleman remarked to me.

"It is rather strange," I replied.

The committee brought with them two ladies, and I was asked if I had any objection to their examining my clothing in an adjacent room before the seance commenced.

I said I had no objection, and the ladies carried out a very rigorous search of my clothing and person.

I was then conducted back to the room in which the seance was to be held, and placed in a chair, after which they encircled me with paper streamers. These were placed round my hands and feet in such a way that even the slightest movement would have broken several of the strands.

Shortly after the light was extinguished, I went into trance. At the conclusion of the seance it was found that not a single streamer had been broken, and the investigators, one and all, expressed their satisfaction with the results obtained.

A New Controlling Intelligence.

Naturally I inquired as to the nature of these. I was told that several manifestations had taken place. A sister-in-law had appeared to one gentleman, to another a son, while a third had seen his wife. The best manifestation of all was of a little girl who had appeared and spoken to her mother and father.

For fully two years I acted as medium for seances conducted on the foregoing lines, and then came a change where Matthew Douglas intimated that he was leaving us and that another controlling intelligence would take his place. The reason for the change, he explained, was that we might be enabled to obtain a different kind of phenomena.

Matthew Douglas's successor proved to be a Colonial Scot, who gave the name of Albert Stewart, and who explained that he had passed on in Sydney, Australia.

He further informed us that prior to emigrating to Australia he lived in Dundee.

Albert stated that he emigrated as a youth of 18, and had passed on 17 years later. On his instructions we used a red light at our seances, and presently we were getting some remarkable phenomena.



AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION

In the early Helen Duncan test séances



In early 2015 I tried to establish when Helen Duncan's main control, Albert Stewart, who would serve Helen for around a quarter of a century, first took over full control of the medium. My main agenda at the time was to try to find some explanation as to why her previously independent recorded *full-form materialisation* mediumship was not apparent in the early scientific test séances at the London Spiritualist Alliance (today it is known as the College for Psychic Studies). The LSA research department was called the "London Psychical Laboratory" (LPL).

From October 1930 the first series of test séances were conducted with Helen Duncan by the LPL, and later (in a different building) by the National Laboratory of Psychical Research (NLPR), starting their séances in May 1931. These series of test séances at the two institutions would damage the name of Helen Duncan for the rest of her life.

The name of Helen Duncan at the start of these test séances would not have been generally known outside Scotland. The initial séances with the LPL later led in March 1931 to Duncan being engaged under a contractual agreement for a series of regular séances, commencing on March 13th, exclusively for the LPL, with the Duncans temporarily moving to London from Dundee at the expense of the LSA.

During the initial séances in 1930 at the LSA Helen and her husband Henry met the director of the National Laboratory of Psychic Research, Harry Price. The NLPR laboratory was then situated on the top floor of the LSA. At the end of December 1930 the NLPR moved a short distance away. On May 4th 1931, apparently without the knowledge of the LSA, Duncan sat for the NLPR, effectively breaking the contract with the LSA. Duncan would sit for the NLPR on five occasions (the final séance on June 4th), resulting in the LPL bringing their contractual agreement to an end on June 12th 1931.

Both subsequent reports were very unfavourable towards the medium – owing to the analyses of "ectoplasm" and the suggestion of "regurgitation" mentioned in both reports.

My 2015 research to establish when Helen Duncan's main control, Albert Stewart, first took control was not straightforward, as until October 19th 1929 there are no independent reports on Duncan's mediumship and her development. The biographies, etc. had to use the Duncan family information, which is very contradictory and generally unreferenced. My initial conclusions were published in Psypioneer, Vol. 11, No. 2, February 2015; below is quoted from this issue:

Early reports on the development of Helen Duncan's mediumship and of her controls/guides are somewhat sketchy and appear contradictory in the published accounts of recent years. These accounts are:

Alan Crossley *The Story of Helen Duncan*, 1975, reprinted 1999

Gena Brealey The *Two Worlds of Helen Duncan*, 1985, reprinted and revised in 2008

Manfred Cassirer *Medium on Trial – The Story of Helen Duncan and The Witchcraft Act*, 1996

Mary Armour *Helen Duncan, My Living Has Not Been in Vain*, 2000

Malcolm Gaskill *Hellish Hell Last of Britain's Witches* 2001

Nina Shandler *The Strange Case of Hellish Nell*, 2006

Robert Hartley *Helen Duncan The Mystery Show Trial*, 2007

The development of Duncan's physical mediumship took place in the 1920's. A circle formed on Thursday nights, and the first sitters according to Brealey (Duncan's daughter) were Helen's husband Henry, brothers Jim & Frank Murray, and Joe Sauter. The circle was halted, according to Brealey, due to Henry having a heart attack; when it resumed, it included another sitter Mrs MacLain.[11] This made a total of five sitters, but Crossley adds another unnamed lady (p.19).

It is difficult to say when the circle began. Crossley gives the early part of 1926, however, this does not fit in with Brealey's account as Crossley states Henry and Helen were married in 1918, and three years later Henry had his heart attack. This would mean the circle had begun in the early 1920's (Brealey states her parents were married on May 27th 1919, Cassirer, Hartley, Shandler & Gaskill give 1916 but the general date remains as May 27th),[12] Hartley states the home circle began in September 1925 but there is no direct reference to this account.

The first circle control was "Dr. Williams," agreed by: Gaskill, Armour, Shandler, Brealey, and Crossley. Gaskill states "Matthew Douglas" followed Dr. Williams "… a deceased gentleman of Kirkcaldy, advised the circle to invest in a trumpet, …" He continues: "After Matthew Douglas came the spirit of 'Donald', a controlling intelligence they all found unbearably lewd, not least Henry, …" (p.81); only Gaskill states this actual order of controls.

Cassirer and Hartley state the first control was: "Matthew Douglas". That Donald followed Dr. Williams is stated by: Crossley, Brealey, Shandler. Gaskill states: Dr. Williams recalled Donald and replaced him with Albert Stewart. Hartley further adds (p.30), "He [Stewart] organised the séances from the spirit side of life initially along with another spirit control Dr. Henry James Williamson, another Scot, purported to be a former Unitarian Minister from Mint Street, Dundee. Henry claimed to have verified these details." It can be noted in the previous issue of Psypioneer "Seven Sittings with Mrs Duncan L.S.A. – 1930-1" at the fifth sitting, on 28th November 1930:

[11] Known as Mac, or Auntie Mac, to the children.

[12] Lis Warwood confirms: "I have found the marriage record for Helen Duncan – she married Henry Duncan on May 27, 1916, when both were just 19 years old."

> The control declared himself to be not Albert, but Henry James Williamson, and that he liked everything but stubborn men and women. Albert, however, presently reported that the new control was no good, and that he would take the control over.

The development of full form materialisation is again uncertain; for example, Crossley states on p. 27 that it was after Albert and Peggy had arrived:[13]

> "The materialisations had by now developed from small, jelly-like forms to full human figures capable of independent thought and speech."

Hartley states on page 30:

> "Fully formed human figures that could speak and think independently were produced at her seances. This coincided with the appearance of a control named Albert Stewart in 1929".

Brealey gives a vivid account of full materialisation when the circle was under the control of Donald page 53:

> "He [Donald] would begin the seance by opening the curtains of the cabinet, standing at one side while the entranced Helen sat in her upright chair. He would then ask the sitters if they could see them both, after which Helen would be asked to stand up, sit down, walk around the room, then return to sit again on her chair in the cabinet while Donald remained beside her chair …

The circle members around this period were asked by Donald to invite two or three visitors to the weekly circle so evidence could be given to a wider audience:

> "By this time materialisation was a regular occurrence. As each materialised spirit appeared, Donald could give full name, cause of so-called death, and date of passing."

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As we can note, no firm, referenced information can be gained as to when Albert Stewart first took full control of Helen Duncan. Robert Hartley speaks of "the appearance of a control named Albert Stewart in 1929" but there is no reference or information given.

However, it does appear that full-form materialisations were being produced by Duncan. In February this year my appetite was again awakened when I found an article by Helen Duncan, "My First Experiences in Trances", republished in Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 1, February 2017. In the article Duncan mentions only two controls; firstly she states, "The first voice we heard claimed to be Matthew Douglas and stated he was a native of Kirkcaldy […] He urged us to continue our trumpet sittings and promised some wonderful manifestations if we did so."

Duncan further stated:

> For fully two years I acted as medium for seances conducted on the foregoing lines, and then came a change where Matthew Douglas intimated that he was leaving us and that another controlling intelligence would take his place. The reason for the change, he explained, was that we might be enabled to obtain a different kind of phenomena.
>
> Matthew Douglas's successor proved to be a Colonial Scot, who gave the name of Albert Stewart, and who explained that he had passed on in Sydney, Australia.

[13] Page 27, reprint edition, 1999 – page 34, first issue, 1975.

Unfortunately, no indication of the date is given. The first published independent report previously mentioned was by James Souter, published in "Light", October 19th 1929. The report notes that Duncan "is a remarkable trumpet Medium, but what is more important is the materialisations which have taken place since she developed this type of phenomenon in March of this year." The short report states:

> The forms build up clearly and distinctly (as many as fourteen have manifested at one sitting); they speak clearly, giving their names and other convincing particulars, answer satisfactorily all questions put to them, they handle objects both light and heavy play musical instruments. They have brought articles from other rooms and other houses at a distance apart. The Guides, three in number, are good hard-headed, canny Scotsmen who know what they are about, carry out their part with precision and dignity and have a right sense of their responsibility. Mr. J. B. McIndoe, of Glasgow, and Mr. Herbert Hill,[14] president of the Bon Accord Spiritualist Church witnessed these materialisations and were so impressed that they have invited Mrs. Duncan to give a series of séances in Glasgow.

John McIndoe, SNU President 1930-1938, would give the first detailed independent report on two sittings he attended. He published a report on the Duncan mediumship in the SNU journal, "The National Spiritualist", October issue, 1929; this was republished in "Pioneer", Vol. 2, No. 3, May 2015.


John Brown McIndoe

The article does not mention Duncan by name, McIndoe records:

> "The forms were distinctive, varied, lifelike and noiseless in their movements, not one of them remotely resembled the medium in build. Their voices were also distinctive and quite different from the medium's. Nothing in any way suggesting trickery of any kind was observed"

> "Soon another voice is heard calling "Mother" and a young girl emerged from the curtains, came over and spoke to one of the new lady sitters, who recognised her as her daughter. She conversed with her in a low tone, apparently giving a comforting message, and handed her mother a rose, taken from a bunch placed in the cabinet.

> "Then another girl form of different build took her place, coming from the other side of the cabinet, and was claimed as her sister by one of the ladies. She also brought a rose with her"

> "I need not describe all the forms who appeared. There were eight of them, one child, two young girls and an older woman, and four men. Six of them came right out in front of the curtains, and seven of the eight spoke to us. One of the controls "Donald" had quite a conversation with us. He was a well built man. By request he brought a mandoline from the cabinet, and twanged the strings. We could easily see the hand which held it, but not the one which touched the strings. Finally he handed it to a sitter. He was asked to touch my outstretched hand. This has not previously been done. He appeared to make several attempts to do so. On the last his hand was plainly visible above mine, but he failed to touch it, and disappeared very suddenly, while the medium gave vent to a groan as if in pain. At the conclusion of the sitting there was blood on her mouth and chin, and some

[14] Scottish District Council: Aberdeen Bon Accord National Spiritualist Church, Room No. 2, Shepherd's Hall, Union Terrace, Aberdeen. President: Herbert Hill. Hon. Secretary and Treasurer: Mrs Bowman, 4 Claremont Place, Aberdeen.

had trickled down on her dress. This had occurred on previous occasions when a form suddenly vanished for some reason or other.

"At the second sitting "Donald" was asked about it and explained that he had come out too far. On that occasion something did touch my hand, held close up to the curtain. It had the appearance of a stump with two fingers, and was rather hard, but the contact was too brief to allow any definite opinion to be formed.

"The notable features of the second seance were that there were two children right out moving in the circle at the same time. They came one from each side of the curtains. Later on by request of a sitter two apports were brought. One was a small ornament from the room below."

It can be noted that Souter and McIndoe refer to multiple controls/guides; however, Albert Stewart is not mentioned by name. It may appear that in October 1929 he was not yet present and not in full control or named!

A critical point of observation may have been overlooked!

It may well be assumed that at some unspecified date later than October 1929 Albert Stewart was to take full control of Helen Duncan. We have seen that the history of the alleged controls is far from precise, with many contradictions. The most precise, on the surface, would be the independent reports by former SNU President John McIndoe, who mentions Donald as "one of the controls", which does give some consistency to the various reports that Albert followed Donald. However, the medium in her own words contradicts this by stating quite precisely that after two years with Matthew Douglas Albert followed. The truth is at present not within our grasp.

What is clear is that full-form materialisation was in force and vouched for by the independent reports regardless of who the control/s were – which was not demonstrated at any of the test séances of 1930-1931.

At present, it seems that the name 'Albert Stewart' did not appear (at least publicly) until around August 1930 in an article by Harvey Metcalfe. The preliminary reports from the London Psychical Laboratory did start with satisfactory encouraging results for the investigators, for example as published in "Light", May 16th 1931:

The production of "ectoplasm" has taken place at all sittings but varies in quantity from time to time. The ectoplasmic emanations usually issue from the mouth of the Medium.

The substance is as a rule white, but may be sometimes described as grey or slate colour, and a few times has appeared a dark brown. It is motile and seems to possess a sort of vitality. It bunches, folds and unfolds, divides into portions and joins up again.[15]

The "ectoplasm" has been produced in such quantities that the Medium when standing up has been covered over the head, round the shoulders, and over the whole of the body down to the feet. On two occasions it was produced while the Medium stood under the light.

[15] The second sitting at the LSA on October 30th 1930 records: "Sir Oliver Lodge went up to the medium and held the substance in his hand, and he and the sitters saw it gradually with a slightly wriggling motion withdraw, sliding slowly over his hands towards the position of the medium [and] disappear while he was holding it." The full report is published in Psypioneer, Vol. 12, No. 2, March 2016.

The Medium came out of the cabinet with no "ectoplasm" showing and stood under the red light at a distance of about eighteen inches; the mouth opened and the substance was seen gradually forming on the tip of the tongue until it resembled a cherry. It afterwards swelled up in the mouth unfolded and hung down about eight inches from the mouth. The substance moved slightly and remained for about one minute; then it began to retreat into the mouth, and gradually disappeared until the mouth, wide open, was seen perfectly empty. The Medium, still in trance, then backed into the cabinet.

It was clearly observed that, during the emergence and disappearance of the substance, no movement of the Medium's throat, neck or body was apparent. No muscular contractions suggesting swallowing or vomiting occurred.

It should also be realised that when the substance retreated into the mouth, it diminished at the tip of the tongue into the likeness of a cherry as it at first appeared.

The cherry-like mass disappeared into a small point and finally vanished altogether. None of the substance appeared at any time in the pharynx.

Sometimes, when large masses of the substance begin to lessen in bulk, it appears to melt away first at the edges.

Throughout all the sittings with both laboratories the phenomena were generally *ectoplasmic formations*; they did not reach to full-form materialisations, with different independent voices of materialised forms – including children's voices or trumpet phenomena, as the quoted independent reports suggest. Only the Metcalfe report of a séance on August 20th 1930 names the alleged Albert Stewart, so we know from this date that he was operational and using Mrs. Duncan.

The séance was held in a house, possibly at the Duncans' home in Dundee. It is apparent that Albert's practice of showing his medium and himself standing together at the beginning of each séance had begun by the report republished in Psypioneer, Vol. 11, No. 2, February 2015. It can be noted in the report that other materialisations with Albert were being produced in the circle.

An Important Consideration – In Helen Duncan's Early Test Séances

Although the exact dates are not established we *know* by the independent October 1929 reports that Albert was not the main control and may not always have been active.

We also know he was the last control to take over!

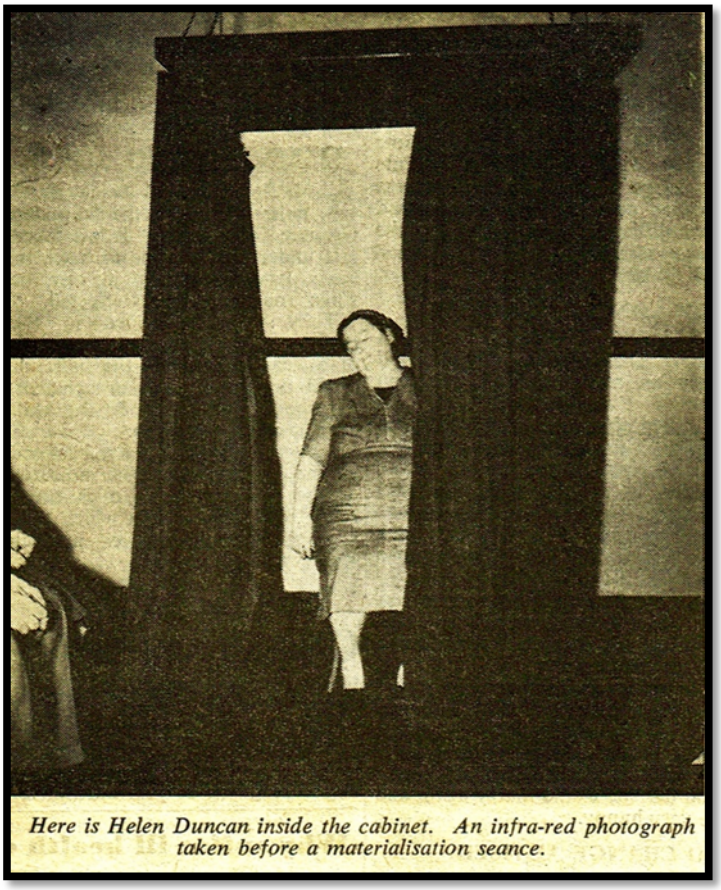
This may go some way to explaining why there was a decline or drop in the phenomena exhibited to the researchers! It was because Albert (on the present known information) would be basically out of the development/home circle, as the most prominent full-form materialisation mediumship, etc. through Helen Duncan was exhibited by Donald and Matthew Douglas over some years, not by Albert.



HELEN DUNCAN SEIZED AT A SÉANCE IN 1956

Police searching for beards, masks and a "shroud"

On November 10th 1956 the "Two Worlds" reported that Helen Duncan had been grabbed in a police raid at a private seance in Nottingham on October 28th, this time not because the medium was breaking the Vagrancy or Witchcraft Acts, as they were changed/repealed six years previously, in 1951.[5]



Here is Helen Duncan inside the cabinet. An infra-red photograph taken before a materialisation seance.

POLICE RAID HELEN DUNCAN SEANCE

Medium grabbed and searched after cabinet is torn down

NOTTINGHAM police broke into a Helen Duncan seance last week, grabbing the medium, searching her, taking flashlight pictures in a series of happenings "reminiscent of an American gangster film," says our correspondent.

They shouted that they were looking for beards, masks and a "shroud" which they alleged were the fraudulent means by which she produced her materialisations. But they found nothing.

The seances were held in the home of J. Timmins, a physiotherapist and healer. On the Saturday night a patient, later discovered to be a policewoman, attended with a man she said was her husband, but who was a policeman in disguise. Nobody materialised for them.

When it was all over and they were chatting over a cup of tea with the rest of the sitters they said how wonderful the sitting had been. These two people had also booked for the Sunday night seance for themselves and for two friends.

[5] The image shown is said to be an infra-red photograph. This is interesting, as I am aware of only one other image of Duncan using infra-red photography, which was in Belfast in 1932 by Mr Donaldson. Please see Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 1, February 2017. We can note in the image shown that Mrs Duncan is in in her later years, but it appears it was not taken at the residence of Timmins in Nottingham, as they used the corner of the room where Duncan was seized.

In many of Duncan's seances the cabinet was in the corner of the room, with a makeshift cabinet comprising a curtain-pole and two curtains. We can note in this photograph that it seems to be a purpose-built room, not using a corner, and the cabinet is suspended from the ceiling.

Law interrupts

After this seance had been in progress for 20 minutes, banging was heard on the outside door accompanied by the bell ringing. Albert, her control, who was speaking through the medium, asked Mrs. Timmins and Mrs. G. Hamilton, the medium's friend who had accompanied her, to take care of Helen Duncan.

When the door was opened the police came in. According to Timmins' account they made a dive over the sitters in the front row and tore down the curtains which formed a cabinet in a corner of the room.

Then two policewomen grabbed the medium while policemen took flashlight photographs. By this time the lights were put on. One policeman ran downstairs to admit other officers, among them an inspector.

Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Timmins tried to pull away the policewomen who had started to search Helen Duncan. They said they were looking for the "shroud." This presumably referred to the white mass of ectoplasm out of which figures usually materialise at her seances.

Mrs. Duncan, as part of her normal seance procedure, wore black undergarments—she never wears white to prevent confusion with the ectoplasm.

The inspector ordered everyone to stay where they were. Then he changed his mind, told them to go to another room and not to leave until their names were taken.

Mrs. Duncan's burns

In all this excitement Timmins forgot to ask the police whether they had a search warrant. He insisted, however, that every sitter should be searched, but the inspector said that if he interfered with the proceedings it would be his duty to arrest him.

Timmins went over to Helen Duncan and saw that she was ill. Later there were two burns on her stomach. She was controlled by Albert, who asked for a doctor to be called. The medical man arrived within five minutes.

Seeing how ill the medium was, he obtained police permission to take her to a bedroom where he treated her for shock. Even then the policewoman insisted on accompanying him.

The doctor was then allowed to make a search. He said he found nothing on her that could have produced any fraudulent results.

The police questioned Mrs. Duncan for about one and a half hours. In turn, every one of the 20 sitters was questioned. All the time the police kept asking for masks, beards and shroud.

Timmins and the others replied that the seance proceedings had been genuine and that no matter how much the police searched they would not find evidence of fraud.

None of the sitters left till 11.45 p.m., about two and a half hours afterwards. Even then the inspector later telephoned Timmins to ask if he could arrange a seance with Helen Duncan at which he could take another photograph by infra-red or otherwise.

If this proved to be genuine, he said he would drop the case and they would hear no more about it. It was suggested by him that the flashlight photographs had revealed nothing that could be construed as incriminating.

Timmins replied that the police had no evidence of fraud against Helen Duncan. In her present condition he was sure the doctor would not sanction another seance, as the police had already done her a lot of harm.

A police search of the house and the luggage of both the medium and her companion revealed nothing.

The police returned again two days later to question Helen Duncan and Mrs. Hamilton. Again and again they asked the medium to "come clean," to tell them where she kept the beards and moustaches with which the forms had appeared—this time there was no mention of any shroud.

The police suggested that as she was "getting old" they would "make it easy" for her. When they left they said she might be charged under the Fraudulent Mediums' Act of 1951 because they alleged that one materialised figure which came for a policewoman was that of a man who was still alive.

If the medium were charged, said the police, Timmins would also be prosecuted with aiding and abetting.

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The following week the "Two Worlds" continues these dramatic events:

POLICE USE "GESTAPO METHODS" TO BREAK UP SEANCE?

ON Monday, four days after *Two Worlds* printed exclusively the account of Nottingham police raiding a Helen Duncan materialisation seance, grabbing the medium and searching her, the story was printed by most of the leading national newspapers. Some published headlines across six columns.

The medium is now in Edinburgh's Western General Hospital, "obviously the result of these terrible happenings at Nottingham," says her husband.

A "Daily Herald" reporter was told by the hospital that she was receiving treatment for diabetes. A "Daily Mail" reporter was told that she was "comfortable." A "Daily Telegraph" reporter said that immediately she returned home she became ill. A "News Chronicle" reporter said she suffered so badly from shock that she was now "very ill" in hospital.

A police official denied to the "Daily Express" that there was any rough handling and said, "The matter is still under consideration."

This followed its account that John Timmins, in whose house the police raid occurred, said, "I protested to the police about the manner of the search."

Several newspapers stated that Spiritualists were angry over the police interruption while the medium was in trance and "are protesting against what they call Gestapo methods."

"Surely my wife will have a champion from among the thousands to whom she has been the humble means of bringing solace and comfort in their hour of sorrow," says the medium's husband, who refers to her "terrible and ignominious ordeal" at the hands of the police.

He understands, he says, that the papers concerning the case have been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Meanwhile an attempt is being made to get a question asked of the Home Secretary in the House of Commons.

A Taunton Spiritualist says that three years ago, after Helen Duncan had given three successful materialisation seances in that town, they were visited by the police and "found ourselves in the midst of investigations which went on for six weeks."

Their home was turned upside down. Nothing material was found and the matter was "shelved as no cause for complaint."

Typical of the sentiments expressed in letters and telephone calls we have received is the following.

"Shocking methods"

I WAS so shocked by the inhuman treatment meted out to Helen Duncan by the Nottingham police that I feel the matter must not be allowed to rest there.

The police acted illegally, and overstepped the bounds of their duty in manhandling a woman, who is presumably innocent until proved guilty. They also apparently accused her of fraud.

These shocking methods on the part of the police should rouse the whole Spiritualist world to action.

If illegal and brutal methods such as these are to be tolerated there will slowly be no freedom in anything. Heaven knows what will be the results on Mrs. Duncan's health, through shock.—J. Allen, l5 Sunderland Terrace, London, W.2.

Further, the “Two Worlds” continues its coverage on December 15th, 1956:

Helen Duncan's husband to sue police for damages

She dies five weeks after they raided seance

BY MAURICE BARBANELL

HELEN DUNCAN’S husband decided, on my advice, when I saw him in his Edinburgh home last Saturday, to bring an action for damages against the Nottingham police. They raided and broke up the medium’s last materialisation seance, while she was still in trance, five weeks before she passed on.



Helen Duncan died on December 6th 1956

The family lawyer had urged Henry Duncan to institute proceedings and vindicate his wife’s name. But Duncan was concerned, among other problems, about the costs. I told him not to worry. The Movement, I said, would be behind him.

He then telephoned the lawyer and instructed him to take the necessary legal steps. They will also press for a public inquiry into the police conduct.

After discussing all the issues involved with Duncan, I was delighted to find the whole large family unanimously agreed on these steps.

Helen’s passing, two days earlier, at the age of 59, ended what many Spiritualists regarded as the martyrdom she had endured since 1933, four years after her psychic career began, when she was convicted and fined for fraud in an Edinburgh court.

“The verdict was against the weight of the evidence,” said the SNU’s exponents’ committee, an opinion endorsed by the Union’s next annual general meeting.

Eleven years later she was convicted under the notorious and antiquated Witchcraft Act of 1735 and sent to prison for nine months. In the opinion of leading Spiritualists this was a gross miscarriage of justice.

Up to the court

Now that legal proceedings against the police are being instituted it will be for the court to decide to what extent Mrs. Duncan’s passing was due to the raid.

“MEDIUM’S DEATH BLAMED ON RAID” was the “Daily Express” headline last Saturday. “TWO BLAME SHOCK IN TRANCE FOR MED1UM’S DEATH” was the one used by the “Empire News.”

Her death certificate cited “diabetes and heart failure” as the causes.

The family maintained, “There can be little doubt that the police action hastened her death.

“Despite long ill-health.” They added in their statement, “she continued to put Spiritualism before self and personal discomfort, which mattered little in the furtherance of what she believed to be her duty.”

Even when Helen was in Holloway jail in 1944 she had constant medical attention for diabetes, angina pectoris and valvular disease of the heart.

The Rev. Thomas Jeffrey, a Church of Scotland minister who conducted the cremation service last Monday, has described her as “Scotland’s Joan of Arc.” His conviction of Spiritualism was partly based on attending her seances for about 15 years.

“The shock suffered by the police interruptions at a private seance on October 28, 1956,” said the family, caused such mental suffering that she was not the same woman from that hour. We feel that her faith in human justice was so shaken that there was nothing more to live for.”

“Come home to die”

When Mrs. Duncan left home, the family told me, “she looked well, with colour in her cheeks.” After Nottingham, she looked as if she had “come home to die, with all the world’s cares on her shoulders.”

Ever since her return home Helen had constant medical treatment, both in hospital and at home.

Her shock was increased a few days before her passing when Nottingham’s Chief Constable wrote her saying that all the papers in connection with her last seance had been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions. His letter was surprising, as there had been no communication between them.

Henry Duncan described the letter as “cruel—after a month’s lapse to send this to her, knowing the state of her health.”

She had to have medical attention for shock after the police broke up the seance while she was in trance, grabbed her and shone white flashlights on her. They searched her and subjected her to 90 minutes’ questioning.

Spiritualists who were present described the raid as “Gestapo-like” and “reminiscent of an American gangster film.” But a police officer denied that anybody had been handled roughly.

Though Mrs. Duncan, her luggage and the house were all searched—the police said they were looking for false masks, beards and a shroud—nothing incriminating was found.

I was able to give Henry Duncan a spirit message from his wife when I called. On the previous night in Glasgow, Margaret Lyon, the healer who is also clairvoyant, told me that Helen wanted me to give her love to “Hen,” the nickname she always used for her husband.

Though it was only a day after her passing, she had met her beloved daughter, Nan, and had been greeted by Albert, her chief control at all her seances, who had sustained

her through all the dark hours. Finally, Helen commented that the spirit world was even more wonderful than she had hoped.

Margaret knew about Helen's passing before the news was published. On the day of her death the healer was conscious of the unmistakable odour of the ectoplasm, as she had experienced it at the many seances Helen had given in her home.

The Duncan family were delighted to get the message. The husband, the three daughters, the two sons, and their husbands and wives are all Spiritualists—Helen's extraordinary mediumship convinced them long ago.

And their behaviour was impressive. They were performing all their household duties with a calmness of demeanour that was admirable. They were a magnificent example of how Spiritualists should behave when faced with bereavement's acid test.

Soon after I arrived, Henry Duncan quoted his lawyer's opinion that he had excellent grounds for action against the police. Henry—I have known him and his children for 25 years — sought my opinion on instituting proceedings.

In view of the long controversy that had raged round his wife's mediumship, he asked, would he have the Spiritualist movement behind him? I assured him that the overwhelming majority would support him.

As a typical example of his wife's selflessness, he said that when she came home she was worried about whether news of the police seizure had caused anxiety to her family.

"I can't leave you"

Soon after the raid, and before she returned to Edinburgh, Helen's astral form appeared to him. "What's wrong?" he asked. Sobbing, she replied: "I was going to leave you, but I can't." This he understood to mean that she fought against dying.

He recalled a statement she had often made: "I will never live to see another trial." I reminded him of another saying, prophetically fulfilled: "I will survive those who accused me." She named these antagonists who had all passed over.

I was surprised to see her coffin. It seemed too small for the body of a woman who weighed 20 stone when last we met. But, I learned, her weight had gone down to 12 stone towards the end.

Helen was one of the most remarkable mediums to appear on the Spiritualist scene. Her seances, held in good red light during the past 27 years, must have been attended by thousands. Many of them testified to seeing loved ones materialise and hearing their typical voices.

This accumulated evidence from apparently solid forms, who reproduced their earthly bodies, included their speaking in foreign languages that the medium did not know.

Mrs. Duncan always insisted that she be searched by women sitters before every seance.

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The article continues about her trial at the Old Bailey, which does not concern us now…

Editor's endnote:

Without doubt this is one of the most disturbing stories in our history; Charles E. Loseby, her defence barrister during her 1944 Old Bailey trial (assisted by Mr. T. S. Pedler), was appointed by the Spiritualists' National Union solicitor, Godfrey A. Elkin. Loseby from his Guernsey home was outspoken after the Nottingham police seizure and the death of Helen Duncan, stating in law that any person who by "gross negligence accelerates the death of another is guilty of murder. I personally, therefore, am satisfied that Helen Duncan was murdered."

One of the most important functions of "Psypioneer", and now of the Spiritualists' National Union's publication "Pioneer", is to present the CORRECT FACTS concerning Spiritualist history, etc.

In the first of these articles concerning the seizure of Helen Duncan I removed the footnote at the end of the article which stated:

> **Footnote.** Helen Duncan was convicted wrongly in the opinion of Spiritua1ists—a few years ago under the old Witchcraft Act. It was this conviction that led to Spiritualists campaigning to change the antiquated law that robbed them of religious freedom. The Fraudulent Mediums' Act was the result.

This conviction in *fact* had nothing to do with the *campaigning to change the antiquated law.* The petitioning of Parliament had been in progress since the arrest of Henry Slade, shortly after the first imprisonment of a Spiritualist medium, Francis Monck, under Section 4 of the 1824 Vagrancy Act. The British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS) 'Spiritualists' Defence Committee' was the first to challenge the Conservative government's Right Honorable R. A. Cross, Secretary of State for the Home Department, as to the rights of Spiritualist mediums in November 1876.

In 1916 the Spiritualists' National Union, under their President and Vice-President, Ernest Oaten and James J. Morse respectively, set up the "Spiritualist Parliamentary Fund", which was inaugurated at the July AGM; it was this fund (under later name changes) which would pay for all of Helen Duncan's court costs.

"Pioneer" has published in six parts, beginning in Vol. 2, No. 1, January 2015: *The Effect of the Vagrancy Act – The Work of the Spiritualists' National Union*.

Recap on the police raid:

The above articles hinge on the police raiding the private residence of Mr and Mrs Joe Timmins, violently breaking up a private Helen Duncan séance, grabbing the entranced medium, taking flashlight pictures and searching her and the premises. The police shouted that they were looking for beards, masks and a "shroud" which they alleged were the fraudulent means by which Duncan produced her materialisations. But they found nothing. It was later found on the previous day's séance held on Saturday October 27th that an undercover policewoman (PC Cutts) with a man she said was her husband attended.[6] They both booked for the Sunday séance and for two friends.

At the Sunday séance, after twenty minutes banging was heard on the outside door accompanied by the bell ringing; according to Joe Timmins' account:

[6] Joe Timmins' account is published in "Helen Duncan: My Living Has Not Been in Vain", by Mary Armour, 2000 pages. On pages 77-88 Timmins states that he was aware the lady was a policewoman, as he had previously treated her for a foot condition; she had recently married Mr Cutts.

> "… they [Cutts and three others] made a dive over the sitters in the front row and tore down the curtains which formed a cabinet in a corner of the room. Then two policewomen grabbed the medium while policemen took flashlight photographs. By this time the lights were put on. One policeman ran downstairs to admit other officers, among them an inspector [Detective Inspector Smalley]. Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Timmins tried to pull away the policewomen who had started to search Helen Duncan. They said they were looking for the "shroud." This presumably referred to the white mass of ectoplasm out of which figures usually materialise at her seances."

The sitters were ordered into another room and detained for about two and a half hours after the raid; Timmins forgot to ask the police whether they had a search warrant. He insisted, however, that every sitter should be searched, but the inspector said that if he interfered with the proceedings it would be his duty to arrest him.

Duncan was clearly ill and still allegedly under the control of Albert Stewart; Albert asked for a doctor to be called, who arrived within five minutes. The doctor obtained police permission to take Duncan to a bedroom and she was treated for shock, accompanied by a policewoman. The doctor searched Helen; he found nothing on her that could have produced any fraudulent results. The police questioned Duncan for around one and a half hours and searched her and her companion's luggage.

The inspector later telephoned Timmins to ask if he could arrange a seance with Duncan "at which he could take another photograph by infra-red or otherwise."[7] According to Timmins, the inspector further said that, if this proved to be genuine, he would drop the case and they would hear no more about it. It was suggested by him that the flashlight photographs had revealed nothing that could be construed as incriminating.

Two days later the police returned and again questioned Duncan and her companion, Mrs. Hamilton, asking the medium to "come clean", to tell them where she kept the beards and moustaches with which the forms had appeared—this time there was no mention of any shroud.

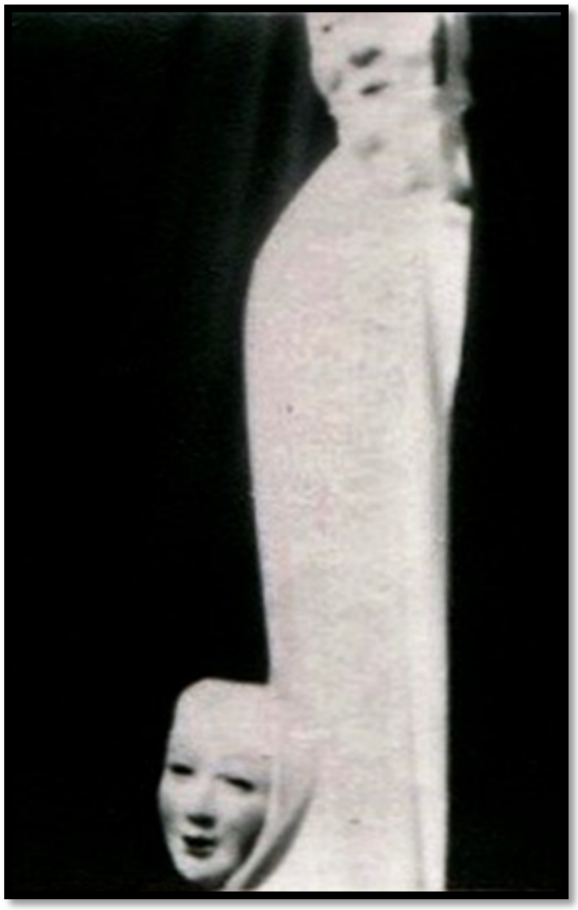
Helen was warned she might be charged under the Fraudulent Mediums Act of 1951 because they alleged that one materialised figure which came for a policewoman was that of a man who was still alive. If the medium was charged, Joe Timmins would also probably be prosecuted for aiding and abetting. Shortly after Duncan ended up in Edinburgh's Western General Hospital she died five weeks later from diabetes and heart failure on December 6th 1956 at her home in Edinburgh.

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[7] This comment may suggest that, as well as flashlight bulbs, infra-red was used; it would be of interest to know whether these photographs are still archived by Nottingham police at present; I am looking into this.

What can we make of these unprecedented events under the Fraudulent Mediums Act of 1951 – which led directly or indirectly to Duncan's death?

It may be considered by some that this is reminiscent of the police undercover officers in the previous seances in 1944 and the seizure of the medium – resulting in Duncan being sentenced to nine months' imprisonment under a clause in the Witchcraft Act.



The police raid in 1944 at Portsmouth showed that no incriminating evidence was found; this was also the case at Nottingham. At Portsmouth the sitters asked to be searched; the police refused. This appears to be the case at Nottingham. We can note that Timmins "insisted, however, that every sitter should be searched…" Timmins was told not to interfere.

One can only speculate as to why at Nottingham there was such a police presence, including four undercover officers and a Detective Inspector. A month later, a few days before Duncan's death, Nottingham's Chief Constable wrote to her informing her that all the papers in connection with her séance had been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

As no material, incriminating evidence was found, all that remained was the undercover police testimony that one materialised figure which came for a policewoman was that of a man who was still alive.



The photographs shown here were taken at a Helen Duncan séance on March 8th, 1939 in the Cheltenham area. It was common for Duncan's materialisations to show beards, etc.; we can note the gentleman has a rather well-established moustache. Depending which side of the fence we sit, some could suggest the faces are mask-like. The figures are shrouded, so one can understand why the police were *searching for beards, masks and a "shroud"* if Duncan was considered a fraud.

But, of course, no such items were found. The images are part of the Britten Museum & Library, housed at Stansted Hall.

Nothing is noted in the reports about payments made to Duncan. The undercover police officers witnessed two séances and booked for two friends on the evening of the raid. This was Duncan's income, so no doubt fees would change hands. If

the police had previous evidence of any fraudulent activity on an ongoing inquiry and of money being taken, this could put their action into a better perspective. [Duncan's fee[8]] Any pre-existing evidence would not be revealed until the inquiry was completed and charges brought forward. Duncan died before any charges existed.

Malcolm Gaskill, in his book, "Hellish Nell", makes reference on page 352:

> "… it is likely that either the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Chief Constable contacted the Home Office, because on 15 November Helen Duncan files from 1944 were called up from the archive."

As noted, Nottingham's Chief Constable wrote to Helen Duncan a few days before her death informing her that all the papers in connection with her last seance had been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions. So, for whatever reason, it appears the police were once again out to get Helen Duncan and the prosecution was ongoing to her death, but, unlike in 1944, holding a séance in 1956 was perfectly legal.

Maurice Barbanell makes a valuable comment in his column, "All Worlds Are One", in the "Two Worlds", November 17th, 1956, as quoted below:

> THE medium was warned privately by us some months ago from information received that the police were after her again and that she should be on her guard.
>
> It behoves her, and the organisers of her seances, to take rigid precautions to ensure that nobody attends her sittings unless they can be vouched for. They should be on their guard against agents provocateurs, police officers in disguise, seeking material for a prosecution.
>
> The methods invoked by the Nottingham police, described as "reminiscent of an American gangster film," must have had their origin in some "complaint." This may be genuine or, as in the past, due to the malice of vested interests, too often belonging to opposing religions that wish to destroy mediumship.
>
> THE Nottingham case has been referred to the Spiritualists' National Union and the Spiritualist Council for Common Action to see if any legal or constitutional issues are involved.
>
> It must be pointed out, however, that Helen Duncan no longer works under the aegis of the SNU, having withdrawn from that organisation. Neither were the Nottingham seances held in a Spiritualist church where, if there is police interference, the cry of religious freedom can be raised.

Regarding the break between Helen Duncan and the SNU which resulted in the suspension of her certificate in 1945, the full story is published in "Pioneer", Vol. 2, No. 5, September 2015: "Why did the S.N.U. remove Helen Duncan's diploma in 1945?"

The reasons behind the police raid and whether or not a prosecution would have been undertaken against Helen Duncan if she had lived remain a mystery.

[8] Timmins, in his statement referred to in footnote 6, gives the details: "We usually have about eight sitters who pay from 10-11 shillings, then many of our personal friends who come free …" Duncan received free accommodation, etc. and kept all the fees paid.

To conclude, Malcolm Gaskill raises a few interesting points on page 356 of his book:

> The drive to remember Helen Duncan, and to see justice done, started from the moment she died. Within a week, *Two Worlds* was inviting contributions to a memorial fund and the Home Secretary, Gwilym Lloyd George, was pestered until he replied that the matter had to be taken up with the Chief Constable of Nottingham. In the end the fund money was not spent in the intended manner. Henry, a man crumbling inside, was being cared for by Gena and was in no state to organize his own affairs, let alone a lawsuit. In any case his solicitor, who at first had been optimistic about their chances, now advised him to drop the case due to insufficient medical evidence to suggest that the police had caused Helen's death.
>
> In addition, Percy Wilson was concerned that if the case was made *sub judice*,[9] it might hold up action and comment in other quarters. Mr Timmins dropped his action too, announcing piously that turning the other cheek was behaviour more befitting a Spiritualist. Why Helen Duncan had been raided again after all these years therefore remains a mystery. There were no rumours of conspiracy, as in 1944, and probably local police simply heard about the seances, perhaps after receiving a complaint, and intervened to protect the public. That said, prosecutions under the Fraudulent Mediums Act were very rare.
>
> And there is one final intriguing piece of evidence: the Anglo-French landings to reclaim the Suez Canal, which involved the Secret Service, were the largest British seaborne military operation since D-Day. The coincidence — and it is surely no more than that — is stranger because the police raid occurred less than thirty-six hours before the assault against Egypt began.

—~—☼—~—



Victoria Helen MacFarlane & Henry Duncan married on May 27th 1916

[9] Under judicial consideration and therefore prohibited from public discussion elsewhere.

THE "OLD BAILEY" COMES TO STANSTED HALL

A spectacular re-enactment of the events of the 1944 trial which would bring about the imprisonment of Helen Duncan



On Tuesday December 12th 2017 the Arthur Findlay College lecture room was transformed into the Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey, E.C.4. Paul Gaunt explains the set-up to SNU President David Bruton, who was to play the SNU defence of Helen Duncan and her fellow defendants.

After the primary introductions by the College Manager, Tanya Smith, the total re-enactment lasted two hours and twenty-five minutes. Throughout the proceedings a continued silence prevailed from the audience, with only a short adjournment.

The four defendants and counsel had entered the court room, shortly followed by the court rising as the Recorder of London, Sir Gerald Dodson, entered.[1] The Clerk of the Court[2] read the plea:

> Helen Duncan, Ernest Edward Hartland Homer, Elizabeth Anne Jones, and Frances Brown, you four are charged upon an indictment which contains seven counts.


Helen Duncan

> In the *first count* that between the 1st December, 1943, and the 19th January, 1944, you conspired together and with other persons unknown to pretend to exercise or use a kind of conjuration, to wit, that through the agency of the said Helen Duncan spirits of deceased persons should appear to be present in fact in such place as the said Helen Duncan was then in, and that the said spirits were communicating with living persons then and there present, contrary to section 4 of The Witchcraft Act, 1735.


Ernest Homer

> In the *second count* you are all four charged that on the 19th January of this year you pretended to exercise or use a kind of conjuration, namely, that spirits of deceased persons should be present in fact in the place where Helen Duncan then was, contrary to section 4 of The Witchcraft Act, 1735.

[1] Dr David Saunders, PhD, MSc, BSc (Hons), FHEA, PGCAP. University of Northampton

[2] Rachel Evenden, Lecturer in Positive Psychology (MBPsS, BSc Psychology). University of Northampton


Elizabeth Anne Jones

In the *third count* you are charged that upon the same day, 19th January of this year, you with intent to defraud caused Stanley Raymond Worth to pay 25s. to Ernest Homer (that is, the said Ernest Edward Hartland Homer) for the use or benefit of yourselves by false pretences, the pretence being that you were then in a position to bring about the appearance of the spirits of deceased persons and that you then bona fide intended so to do without trickery.

In the *fourth count* you are charged with a similar offence upon the 19th January of this year in respect of causing Bessie Lock to pay 7s. to Ernest Homer for the use or benefit of yourselves upon the same false pretences with intent to defraud.

In the last *three counts* you are charged with effecting a public mischief, in each count upon the following dates respectively, namely, the 14th day of January, the 17th day of January, and the 19th day of January of this year, the particulars being that you effected that public mischief by holding a meeting to which His Majesty's liege subjects were admitted on payment, and at which meeting the said Helen Duncan professed that the spirit of a deceased person was in fact present and visible through her agency. Those particulars are the same in each of those last three counts.

Helen Duncan, are you guilty or not guilty?

PRISONER DUNCAN: Not guilty.[3]

THE CLERK OF THE COURT: Ernest Edward Hartland Homer?

PRISONER HOMER: Not guilty.[4]

THE CLERK OF THE COURT: Elizabeth Anne Jones?

PRISONER JONES: Not guilty.[5]

THE CLERK OF THE COURT: Frances Brown? PRISONER BROWN: Not guilty.[6]



PRISONER'S DOCK


Frances Brown

[3] Tanya Smith, General Manager of the Arthur Findlay College (AFC)

[4] Torsten Nyquist

[5] Sandie Baker, AFC Tutor

[6] Lynn Cottrell, AFC Tutor

The prosecution was played by Paul Gaunt; in the opening address it was stated:


Prosecution

May it please your Lordship, members of the jury: I appear with my learned friend Mr. Elam to prosecute these four persons. We appear for the Crown, and my learned friends Mr. Loseby and Mr. Simpson Pedler appear together for all four prisoners.

I daresay you noticed that when the indictment was read out the Witchcraft Act was mentioned; you may have heard that. I want to make it abundantly clear at the very commencement of this prosecution that this is in no way connected with witchcraft; it is in no way aimed at the honest beliefs, whatever they may be, of any man or woman. What it is aimed at is something quite different.

It is aimed at just ordinary common fraud.

In the first two counts of this indictment you will find that the Witchcraft Act has been used; it is an old Act, it is two hundred years old, and in this particular case the Act has remained in the Statute Book untouched since the reign of George II, and you may think for a very good reason indeed.

In olden days, that is to say, in the times of our forefathers, yours and mine, it was almost a popular matter to chase poor deluded creatures who were thought to be witches, and the mass of the public believed in that sort of thing being possible.

Witchcraft was not the only means known in those times of playing upon the imagination of the public. There was sorcery, enchantment, spells, and one particular thing which was called conjuration, that is to say, conjuring up spirits: but times changed and our forefathers began to think it was all nonsense, and that it was ridiculous to prosecute people for practising something which was utterly impossible, and, when the reign of George II was reached, the law was altered to say that people were not to be prosecuted for witchcraft.

Therefore the Act of 1736 says this: "From and after the 24th day of June no prosecution, suit or proceedings shall be commenced or carried on against any person or persons for witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration in any court whatsoever in Great Britain"; so that stopped that, and everybody thought that that had been packed up. The Act also says: "And for the more effectual preventing and punishing any pretences to such, arts as are before mentioned . . . being lawfully convicted on indictment, shall, for every such offence suffer imprisonment"—that, of course, means 'may'. It would be a matter in the discretion of the judge; it does not mean that they have to go to prison.

So we reach a position in 1735 which would no doubt be welcomed by any person who may call himself to-day a Spiritualist.

The other matters in this indictment that do not concern the Witchcraft Act, are allegations that these persons caused money to be paid by false pretences, that is to say, the false pretence that I have already indicated to you and which you have heard in the indictment: that Helen Duncan was in a position to bring about the appearance of the spirits of the dead, and the false pretence that they intended to do that bona fide without any trickery.

And that, in the allegation of the Crown, led to the payment of monies by persons for admission to such entertainment. Perhaps 'entertainment' is the wrong word—exhibition.

Finally it is alleged by the Crown here that such behaviour—not necessarily particularly at this time when the dead are no doubt anxiously sought after by persons who have lost their boys—that such conduct as pretending to call them up when it is a false and hollow lie, is nothing more than a public mischief.

—~—☼—~—


Clerk of the Court

After the primary opening the court called the Crown prosecution witness, Stanley Raymond Worth.[7] Stanley Worth was a lieutenant in the R.N.V.R. It would be his account that would form the basis of the prosecution, although he initially claimed to be an honest researcher into Spiritualism; on meeting Helen Duncan he soon decided she was a fraud and reported her to the police. On police instructions, he would attend meetings, reporting back to the Portsmouth police, establishing that monies were paid for materialisation séances.

On January 19th 1944 Worth also purchased a séance ticket for 12s. 6d. for War Reserve police officer Thomas Cross[8]. As the third materialisation was taking place Cross rushed forward from the second row, knocking Mr Homer to the ground. From his chair he claimed to seize the form with the aid of Stanley Worth shining a torch, both claiming in the evidence box that the spirit form was in fact Helen Duncan holding a white sheet!


Dorothy Constance Gill

However, defence witness Dorothy Constance Gill[9] claimed this account to be false insomuch as the form Cross claimed was indeed Helen Duncan was in fact ectoplasm, and Duncan was sitting where she was supposed to be in her chair. She stated that in fact Cross fell through the curtains, sprawled across Duncan and the ectoplasm had gone, not snatched away by somebody in the audience as claimed by the prosecution.


Defence

[7] Professor Chris A. Roe Perrott-Warrick, Senior Researcher Director, Centre for the Study of Anomalous Psychological Processes. University of Northampton

[8] Darren Hart, an AFC student and professional actor.

[9] Janette (Jan) Marshall, AFC tutor.

It was this debate between counsel that the re-enactment was centred around by the defence and prosecution.





Defence and prosecution arguing the claims of Stanley Raymond Worth



The full re-enactment was as far as possible taken from the trial transcripts which were put together, thus giving a unique insight into the actual proceedings of the trial. Many had not realised the facts of the trial, such as that Helen Duncan did not sit at the dock alone but there were three other co-defendants charged on the same seven counts in the High Court. Naturally, there was some editing but nothing was changed, added, or removed to change the balanced overview of this extraordinary trial.

Mr. John Maude, K.C., and Mr. Henry Elam appeared on behalf of the prosecution and Mr. C. E. Loseby and Mr. J. Simpson Pedler appeared on behalf of the defence. For the purpose of the re-enactment there was just the defence and prosecution.

Prosecution witness Thomas Cross









Thomas Cross's testimony is challenged by the defence



Defence witness Dorothy Constance Gill leaving the witness box

The trial started on Thursday March 23rd 1944 and closed with the verdict on the seventh day, Friday March 31st 1944.

The jury retired to consider their verdict at 4.32 pm and returned into court at 4.56 p.m:


Foreman

THE CLERK OF THE COURT: Members of the jury, are you agreed upon your verdict?

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY:[10]

Yes, sir.

THE CLERK OF THE COURT: Do you find the prisoner Helen Duncan guilty or not guilty on the first count of this Indictment for conspiracy to contravene the Witchcraft Act?

THE FOREMAN: Guilty, sir.

THE CLERK OF THE COURT: Do you find the prisoner Ernest Edward Hartland Homer guilty or not guilty on that count?

THE FOREMAN: Guilty.

THE CLERK OF THE COURT: Do you find. the prisoner Elizabeth Anne Jones guilty or not guilty on that count?

THE FOREMAN: Guilty.

THE CLERK OF THE COURT: Do you find the prisoner Frances Brown guilty or not guilty on that count?

THE FOREMAN: Guilty.

THE CLERK 0F THE COURT: You find all four guilty on the first count,- and that is the verdict of you all?

THE FOREMAN: Yes.

THE CLERK OF THE COURT: You are discharged from giving a verdict on the other counts.





[10] Benny Illemann

On day eight, Monday April 3rd 1944, sentencing was passed:

SENTENCES



THE RECORDER: Helen Duncan, Ernest Homer, Elizabeth Jones and Frances Brown, you have been found guilty of conspiring together to commit an unlawful act, namely, of pretending to recall spirits of deceased persons in a visible and tangible form; the emphasis, of course, is upon the word "pretending". Whether genuine manifestations of the kind are possible, the verdict of the jury here does not decide, and this court has nothing whatever to do with any such abstract questions. The jury found that the methods adopted by you in the exhibitions covered by the charge amounted to a fraud upon those who witnessed them.

It has been argued that the Statute of 1735, which makes false pretending an offence, is old and out of date, but fraud existed long before that Statute was passed and has prevailed in one form or another ever since. It was also suggested that Mrs. Duncan should be allowed to give a demonstration of her powers. Well, as I have said already, if this had taken place and nothing had appeared, Mrs. Duncan would have been condemned even before she had been tried. It would have been in effect a reversion to the dark ages, and to something very akin to trial by ordeal. It was not a question of Mrs. Duncan taking the risk; it was a question of her being tried according to the laws of the land, and there was nothing in this Prosecution directed against Spiritualism as such; and all those who may believe in genuine manifestations of a spiritual kind will, I imagine, welcome the expulsion of fraud from any of its observances. In law there is no uncertainty at all about the position of Spiritualists, among whom there are many sincere and devout persons. They are free to go their own way, and they are only responsible to the law when fraudulent practices are proved. In this respect they are no different from any other section of the community.

In this case the jury appeared to have little hesitation in finding that all of you had participated in a common fraud, and I must deal with the case upon that footing. There are many people, especially in War-time, sorrowing for loved ones. There is a great danger of their susceptibilities being exploited, and out of this yearning for comfort and assurance there are those unfortunately who are ready to profit. Many of those persons who seek that solace are trusting by nature and poor in circumstances, and the law endeavours to protect such persons against themselves. Now in this case Mrs. Duncan made £112 in six days, which is some indication of how willing people are to dabble in the occult. That being so,

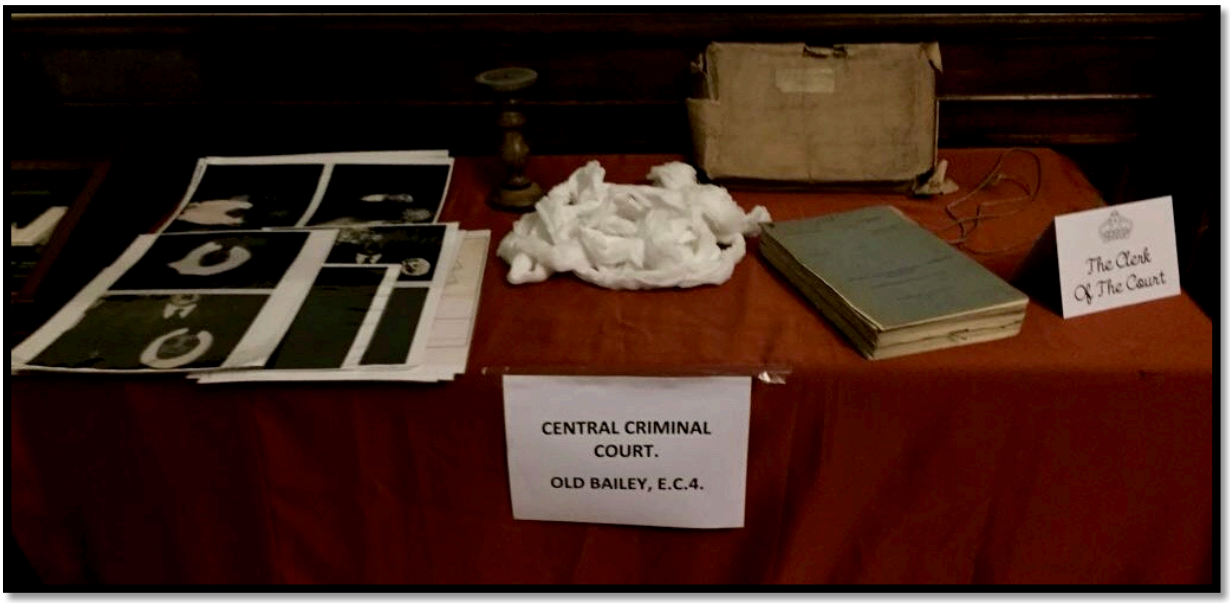
it is highly important in the interests of the community as a whole that these demonstrations should be conducted without fraud.

I have considered very anxiously the course that I should take, and I have come to the conclusion that, as the jury have found this to be a case of plain dishonesty, I can make no distinction between the accused and others who are similarly convicted. In the case of Mrs. Duncan, she has made the most out of this, and the sentence of the Court upon her is that she be imprisoned for nine months.

So far as you, Frances Brown, are concerned, it is a long time ago since you were convicted of shoplifting, and I dismiss that from my mind altogether. It is quite plain that you took an active part in this, particularly by the exhibition of these photographs. But you were active in trying to impress upon them the genuineness of these exhibitions by the handling of these photographs. The matter cannot be therefore passed over in your case without there being some penalty, but I make it as lenient as I can, and the sentence of the court upon you will be one of four months' imprisonment.

So far as you, Ernest Homer, and you, Elizabeth Jones, are concerned, I think you are in a somewhat different position, both of you. I think it may well be that, like other people, you engaged Helen Duncan, and it may well be that your enthusiasm for what you may believe led you to close your eyes to what was going on. You both of you have good characters, and under those circumstances I do not think it is necessary to pass any sentence of imprisonment upon either of you, but I trust in future you will be on your guard against those who are only too ready to make money at the expense of credulous people. I am willing to believe that you belong to that class, although it is not a matter which can be regarded as altogether a matter without doubt. However, I am going to give you the benefit of that doubt, having regard to all the circumstances of the case, and particularly with regard to your good character hitherto, and I trust you will guard against such a situation in future to the utmost of your power.

In those circumstances you will both be bound over to be of good behaviour for a period of two years in your own recognizances in the sum of £5, which means you will hear no more about this if you behave yourselves and keep out of trouble; otherwise consequences are apt to follow, you understand.



Items shown above are copies of evidence used by the prosecution in the trial, which consisted of Frances Brown's psychic photographs, the séance seating plan for January 19th 1944 when Helen Duncan was seized, and some cheesecloth/butter-muslin.

Also on the table are part of the original typed trial notes which belonged to the SNU defence, Charles Loseby.

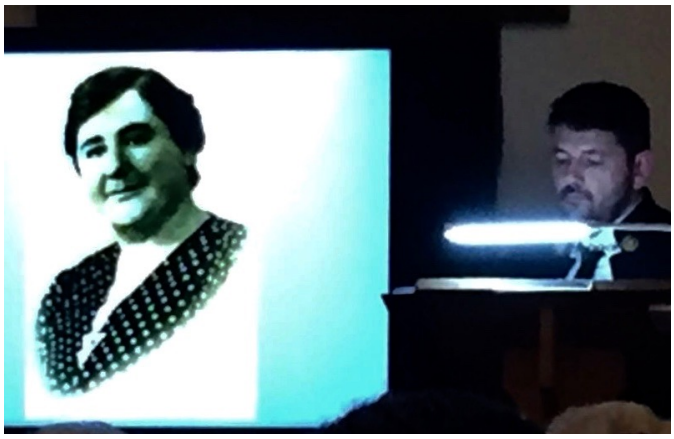


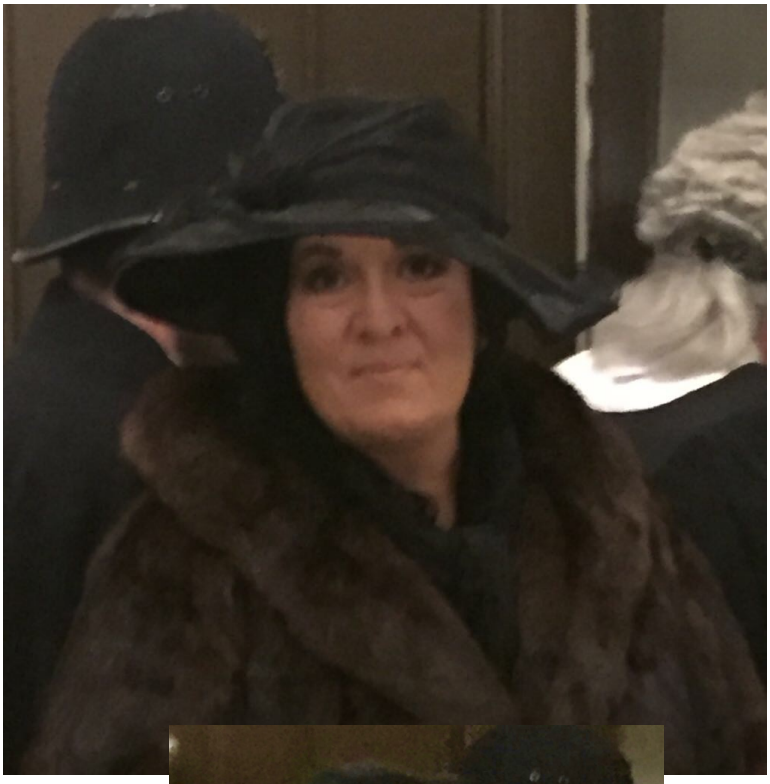
An overview of the re-enactment showing the defence seated, the Recorder at the bench, witness Lieutenant Stanley Worth, the prosecution in cross-examination and the Clerk of the Court seated with the items of evidence behind her.

Helen Duncan, after a failed appeal on Monday 19th June 1944, was released from HM Prison Holloway on Friday September 22nd 1944 after serving 172 days of her nine-month sentence

Pioneer has previously published the problems with mediumship and the Vagrancy Act - Helen Duncan being the first and only Spiritualist medium to be sent to prison under the clause from the Witchcraft Act. Please see Pioneer from Vol. II, No. I in six parts: "The Effect of the Vagrancy Act – The Work of the Spiritualists' National Union."

Thanks are due to all those who played the characters, my wife Cindy for her many hours of help with the script, and the staff at the Arthur Findlay College for making this historic event such a success. Thanks are also due to Janette (Jan) Marshall for taking all these wonderful photographs of the trial re-enactment of Helen Duncan and her co-defendants.











SIR OLIVER LODGE & HELEN DUNCAN



It is not generally known that Sir Oliver Lodge was one of the first psychical researchers to sit in an experimental séance with Helen Duncan and handle the ectoplasm under test conditions. This took place at the "London Psychical Laboratory" [9] in late October 1930, where a series of séances had started. The official verbatim records of the second séance, which took place on October 30th, is published in Psypioneer, Vol. 12, No. 2: "Notes of Second Materialization Sitting with Mrs Duncan on 30th October 1930 – LSA"; please refer to this for details of the conditions, restraints, etc., placed on the medium.

I note here the sitters, as their names are abbreviated in the quoted full séance report below—Dr Rust, Mrs Rust, Dr Fielding-Ould, Miss Phillimore, Sir Oliver Lodge, Miss Baggallay, Lord Charles Hope, Mrs Baggallay, Dr Hector Munro, and Sir Ernest Bennett—Albert being the spirit control; the séance started at 3.40pm:

> Seven minutes after the medium was put into the chair a strip of white substance, about a foot in length, appeared between the curtains.
>
> ALBERT Would anyone care to feel the substance here now?
>
> DR R. Can Sir Oliver feel it now if he comes?
>
> ALBERT Anyone. Ready now.
>
> SIR O.L. You mean that line of light?
>
> DR R. Can Sir Oliver come forward and touch it now, Albert?
>
> ALBERT Certainly.
>
> DR R. Can I draw the curtain a wee bit?
>
> (h.w.n. with permission) Sir Oliver Lodge went up to the medium and held the substance in his hand, and he and the sitters saw it gradually with a slightly wriggling motion withdraw, sliding slowly over his hands towards the position of the medium [and] disappear while he was holding it.
>
> ALBERT Who do you say you were?
>
> DR R. Sir Oliver Lodge.
>
> ALBERT What a nice name, I hope he is quite as nice as his name---Sir Oliver and Mercy--- all nice names.
>
> DR R. Well, we have come here specially for you to give us a good demonstration of the ectoplasm and anything else you like.

[9] The Research Department of the "London Spiritualist Alliance" (LSA); today it is known as the "College of Psychic Studies" (CPS) and is still located in the same building at 16 Queensberry Place, South Kensington, London.

ALBERT I do not like this bag affair. [10]

DR R. Well, take her out.

SIR O.L. Does the bag interfere with you?

ALBERT No, but it interferes with her comfort. You see, when I start to work, the perspiration and heat are too much.

SIR O.L. She cannot get enough air.

Mr Duncan put on another record and the ectoplasm is again seen at the opening of the curtains.

DR R. Can another gentlemen feel the ectoplasm now, Albert?

ALBERT Name?

DR R. Lord Charles Hope.

Pause.

ALBERT Is he the third from the end?

DR R. From the left he is...

ALBERT I am saying left---one, two, three, and then he is next. Let me have a look at you now. (Short pause) Come along, son of mine.

DR R. Can you feel the substance?

LORD C.H. Yes, I can feel it.

ALBERT Don't be afraid.

LORD C.H. I don't wish to hurt the medium.

(h.w.n. Lord Charles Hope was also permitted to touch the ectoplasm. Then followed from? Albert complaint about the sack on account of the heat suffered by the medium.)

ALBERT I wish there were someone here to take this blinking bag off.

SIR O.L. The bag interferes with the ectoplasm coming from the body.

ALBERT I don't want to be sitting an hour waiting for anyone to come. She is really very warm.

Sir Oliver Lodge, finding it difficult to hear 'Albert' asks permission to change places with Sir Ernest Bennett.

ALBERT (after a short pause) Certainly.

They change places.

DR R. Will you try to get the sack off as you did on Sunday night?

ALBERT You must remember my part of the work is giving the figures, and I must wait for some person to come and get her out of here and take the atoms to pieces.

One of the sitters asked how long he might have to wait.

[10] Duncan was put into the sack, which was used at the previous séance; see the referenced report.

ALBERT I don't know, just till they come---may be short, may be long.

Pause.

I will do everything and leave her where she is. Never mind about her comfort for once. (to Mr Duncan) What about you and me changing places for a little time?

DR R. We want you to have her out of the bag, Albert.

MR D. I think the light is too bright, how is the light?

ALBERT Very good. But I would like you to come in here and feel how she is.

Sir Oliver goes to the cabinet and feels the head of the medium.

SIR O.L. She is just asleep, she is rather in a perspiration. I don't see anything else about her. She was still completely enveloped in the sack.

Sir Oliver said that he saw no ectoplasm when he went to examine the medium.

ALBERT Ask Sir Oliver if he would like to come while the ectoplasm is here?

SIR O.L. Yes, I should.

ALBERT Well, I will prepare her.

Very heavy breathing is heard from the cabinet.

ALBERT (after a pause) You can come in now.

SIR O.L. (opening the curtain) I can see it coming from her mouth, it is like a bundle of strings. (Both times I felt it, it lay on my hand. The first time the visible part was about a foot long, the second time only a few inches. It was heavy, cold and clammy, its texture was like a number of the parallel threads forming the bundle two inches thick. It might have been separated out into strands. It was not like woven material but was stringy. A curiously unpleasant slight odour remained either on my hand or in my nostrils as an occasional whiff for 12 hours afterwards. O.L.)

DR R. Warm? Clammy?

SIR O.L. No, it was drier than I expected.

DR R. Do you notice any smell?

SIR O.L. Yes, a kind of smell, but I don't know how to describe it, it is just like a lot of threads, there is no formation in it at all. Now it is beginning to go back into the mouth, I think.

Dr. Rust closes the curtains again and the medium is heard to be breathing heavily and groaning. Gramophone is playing.

SIR O.L. It does not leave anything on the fingers, it is fairly dry.

Gramophone still playing and medium's groans and uneasy breathing still heard.

Dr Fielding-Ould goes to the medium, the curtains are pulled back as she appears to be suffering great discomfort, rolling her head from side to side, and Dr Fielding-Ould finds it necessary to cut the tape round the neck of the sack which, though not originally drawn too tightly, has got caught.

When the curtains were open the medium's hands were outside the sack.

ALBERT Has anyone a handkerchief?

DR R. Yes.

ALBERT You might clean her forehead.

DR R. My goodness, she is perspiring.

Pause.

Dr Rust sees a figure at the side of the curtain near him and asks Albert to change it round the other side so that Sir Oliver can see it.

ALBERT You mustn't touch until I tell you.

SIR O.L. Right, I won't touch it unless you tell me, but I don't see anything yet.

After a short pause a mass of ectoplasm about three feet high was seen by a few of the sitters.

SIR O.L. I can see a sort of luminosity.

ALBERT You are in shadow.

The curtains were opened and a formation is seen standing in the cabinet.

MR D. It looks like a baby's head.

ALBERT It isn't a baby's head, do you think I have no brain!

(Pause)

ALBERT (seeming to talk to an invisible entity) You are what?---Savage? Do you call the gentleman Savage?

DR R. Does anyone know a gentleman called Savage?

DR F.-O. I can think of half a dozen I know at the moment.

ALBERT Tell them who you are.

Heavy breathing again heard and choking sounds coming from the medium. Gramophone plays again.

The curtains are opened and a mass of ectoplasm is again seen coming from the medium's mouth. Curtains close again.

Sir Oliver and Sir Ernest Bennett change places again.

MR D. I think there is too much light.

ALBERT The light is all right, I want to get it better and better so as to get it in a good light. You all seem to be under a shade of night to me.

The curtains are opened again and an unformed mass of ectoplasm about three feet high is showing. The curtains close again.

Pause.

The curtains again open and a small form appears, swaying rhythmically to the music of the gramophone. Curtains again close. They open again and a large mass of ectoplasm is seen with two pieces hanging down---a sitter remarks that it looks like a cloth over the

medium's head. Curtains close again.

A smack is heard behind the curtain.

DR R. Good, another one, not too hard now. He hit me with something.

Something dark, rather bigger than a hand, was seen striking Dr. Rust's hand.

DR R. It might be something like a bundle of cloth.

ALBERT Oh, Rust, you are a fool like all the rest----a bundle of cloth---by gum.

DR. R. Give Sir Ernest Bennett a smack now.

ALBERT Yes.

He does so. One of the sitters remarks that it might almost be anything.

ALBERT I have not been able to form a hand, it is only part of an arm---hold it. Now let go.

DR. R. Get a good grip of it.

SIR E.B. Yes, the stuff I had the other night.

DR R. What about asking him to bring the medium out with ectoplasm?

MR D. I don't think he can get the medium out.

The bag is carefully taken off the medium, and she stands up, slowly walks forward into the circle, finally lying back in Dr Rust's chair and gradually waking from her trance.

TIME: 5.5 p.m.

HELEN DUNCAN

REGURGITATION

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by Paul J. Gaunt



Some researchers and critics claim that Helen Duncan used a cheesecloth-like material which she used to fake her materialisation séances. When we read the many *negative* websites, unresearched posts, articles and suchlike, the claim made is that she could produce the material by means of regurgitation. When these claims are challenged and more details are asked for, the general answer is simply quotes like this: "She was famous for producing ectoplasm which was proven to be made from cheesecloth." When asked who *proved* it or where the *evidence* is and for further referenced details, most of the claims naturally more or less dry up: some may throw in the name of Harry Price for safe measure.

These sweeping statements are immature and hold little or no value for the earnest enquirer. If one cannot back up claims with reliable referenced materials and some basic knowledge of the foundation for the claims, it becomes pointless, misleading and scandalous.

Firstly, where did these claims of regurgitation originate from? The simple answer is jointly between:

The London Psychical Laboratory, which was the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance Ltd, [31] and the National Laboratory of Psychical Research.

Naturally, to suggest that Helen Duncan regurgitated her *ectoplasm* in the form of a cheesecloth-like material requires conclusive proof to make a public statement to this effect; it requires that evidence is shown fully supporting this claim which will need to stand up to show that this was *actually* the case—that the researchers have proved it beyond reasonable doubt. Pioneer will publish the two reports from the two investigating parties which *publicly* brought forward the claim:

Helen Duncan used regurgitation

It will make this into a long article, but it will be seen how these two well-known professional research faculties arrived at their conclusions. The story starts with a series of séances which commenced late October 1930, later resulting in Helen, her husband Henry and their family temporarily moving to London from Scotland to undertake extensive, contractually controlled séances with the London Psychical Laboratory (LPL) (the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance Ltd (LSA)), starting on March 13th, 1931 and abruptly ending on June 12th, 1931.

To my knowledge the London Spiritualist Alliance's Research Department, the London Psychical Laboratory, never made its full report public, only what is reported in its in-house journal, *Light*. The LSA's publication, *Light*, for July 17th, 1931 published its Research Department's conclusion on the mediumship of Mrs Duncan:

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

MRS. DUNCAN'S MEDIUMSHIP

ADVERSE REPORT AFTER EXAMINATION BY LONDON PSYCHICAL LABORATORY

INVESTIGATIONS into the mediumistic claims of Mrs. Duncan, of Dundee, have been completed by the London Psychical Laboratory (the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance) and the report states that on nearly all points the conclusions are disappointing to those interested in psychical research.

In consequence of representations received from Scotland, the London Psychical Laboratory invited Mrs. Duncan to come to London and to submit her mediumship for investigation. Mr. and Mrs. Duncan accordingly agreed and entered into a binding contract to sit exclusively for the London Psychical Laboratory for a period of eighteen months. This contract the Duncans had no scruple in breaking.

The most striking phenomenon which Mrs. Duncan claimed to produce was the exhibition of "ectoplasm" and the Committee—which included Dr. Robert Fielding-Ould, M.A., M.R.C.P., Lord Charles Hope, and Sir Ernest Bennett, M.P., —concentrated attention on the nature of this substance and the means of its production. Careful analyses were from time to time made, chemical and microscopical, by three competent authorities, and at last the Committee were obliged to believe that the so-called "ectoplasm" was an artificial substance produced by the ingenuity of Mrs. Duncan herself.

"It was proved," says the report, "that the material was swallowed by Mrs. Duncan at some time previous to the sitting and subsequently regurgitated by her for the purpose of exhibition."

In all, five fragments of so-called "ectoplasm" were obtained—the fifth being cut off while it depended from the mouth of the Medium and received into a dish.

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

Two of these earlier specimens were submitted for analysis. One authority described the substance as resembling tissue paper with traces of bacteria. The second report (February 9, 1931) was as follows:

"We have made a very careful examination of the material which was submitted to us and we are of the opinion that it consists of paper, cloth, and such everyday materials mixed with an organic substance which is in every respect similar to coagulated white of egg."

The report on the fourth fragment (received in a prepared sterile container) was as follows:

"The specimen consisted of a piece of surgical gauze soaked in resinous fluid. The gauze consisted of typical cotton fibres. The resinous fluid had the odour of Canada Balsam or one of the pine resins." (April 10, 1931)

The report on the fifth fragment (April 15, 1931) was in similar terms.

The dried gauze, it is added, is in the possession of the Laboratory and can be seen by those interested, and a portion of the third fragment is still preserved hermetically sealed in pure spirit.

The report adds that on May 29, 1931, Mrs. Duncan left behind her in the dressing room a towel which was noticed to be made of a fabric resembling the third specimen of "ectoplasm." A piece was cut off and on comparison with the bottled specimen it was found to be identical in texture and pattern.

On May 29th the alleged control, "Albert," was asked if he would bring the Medium out of the cabinet under the red light and show the emergence and re-absorption of the "ectoplasm." The Medium came out to within about twelve inches of the red light while both her hands were held. She opened her mouth and "ectoplasm" was extruded by obvious movements of the mouth and throat muscles. It was about two inches wide and hung down about eight inches. After a few seconds the Medium, by movements of the lips and throat, sucked it back again. The material when extruded showed signs of having been folded by compression.

On June 12, the last of the sittings, Mrs. Duncan was asked to swallow a pill of sugar-coated methylene blue. She did so and had any so-called "ectoplasm" emerged which came from the stomach, it would have been coloured blue, but at this seance none appeared the single occasion during the whole series when there was a total absence of "ectoplasm."

"The Medium put out her tongue during the sitting," says the report, "and this was claimed by 'Albert' to be 'ectoplasm.' It was, however, only the Medium's tongue which was quite clearly seen."

Being aware that the Committee were anxious to discover the nature of "ectoplasm" and the means of its production, Mrs. Duncan stated that her urine was abnormally full of albumen, and suggested that that condition was a peculiar physiological condition related to her "ectoplasm." Several specimens were obtained for analysis and these, on being tested by acidifying and boiling, always coagulated and the total specimen solidified.

A medical report stated that Mrs. Duncan did at one time suffer from nephritis which was accompanied by the usual symptoms, namely, presence of albumen in the urine and high blood pressure. In London, during the sittings, her blood pressure was tested several times and found to be subnormal.

An opportunity was awaited for the verification of this abnormal physical state, and this opportunity presented itself when Mrs. Duncan was in St. Thomas's Hospital with a sceptic boil on the wrist. Her urine was tested and found to be normal. A signed medical report to this effect is in the possession of the Laboratory.

These facts and the appearance of the specimens supplied to the Committee suggest that these specimens were "faked" by the addition of white of egg.

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN

The report explains the precautions taken by the Committee in the way of examination of the Medium before the sitting. Stress is laid on the fact that from the beginning of the experiment, every care was taken to respect the feelings of Mrs. Duncan, and not to hasten too rigid test conditions which might be interpreted by her as a doubt of her genuineness. It was observed that as closer vigilance was exercised and the test conditions tightened, including hand and foot control, phenomena rapidly lessened and finally came to a complete cessation.

For the seances Mrs. Duncan wore a one-piece suit which clothed the whole body, including the feet. It had only one opening at the back from neck to waist, which was sewn before the sitting. Buckram fingerless gloves were introduced and sewn to the

wrist-bands. More than once, and apparently in trance, Mrs. Duncan got out of the dress, which was found apparently as it had been stitched on her before the sitting. Later, "code sewing" was used, and it was then found after the sitting that the original stitching had completely disappeared and that the opening had been re-stitched in a different manner.

"When so-called full forms appeared," says the report, "they were indistinct in outline, resembling masses of 'ectoplasm' draped over a structure of some kind, which suggested the human form."

On one occasion three hands were seen, two of which were identified as those of the Medium, and a third, of a dark and apparently solid character. "The only possible explanation," says the report, "is that Mrs. Duncan had previously secreted about her person a rubber glove which was used for the exhibition of the third hand."

The Committee record that Mr. Duncan, husband of the Medium, was always present at the sittings, but that he never approached the cabinet, and remained at the back of the sitters and manipulated the gramophone at least nine feet from the Medium's chair. On the morning of the last sitting, Friday, June 12, Mr. Duncan asked if he could interview the Research Committee, and, after the sitting, he made a statement to the effect that he had come to the conclusion that the "ectoplasm" was the result of regurgitation. He added that Mrs. Duncan was in the habit of "losing her will" for a time about three hours before a sitting, and said he believed that in a state of unconsciousness, resembling that of hypnosis, Mrs. Duncan secreted things in or about her person and that she could retain these things in her stomach and eat and digest food.

"At this interview," says the report, "Mr. Duncan anticipated the discoveries of the Committee . . . and to sum up, Mr. Duncan at all times tried to save his own face at the expense of his wife's reputation."

When the sittings were terminated, the Committee went beyond their legal obligations and at a cost exceeding £40 returned the Duncan family and their furniture to Edinburgh.

It should be observed that at the time of the publication of the first abridged report no phenomena were recorded which there was any justification at that time for assuming to be other than supernormal, having regard to the possibilities in such states as hypnosis and somnambulism.

At the time of the publication of the second abridged report (May 16th) the Committee were less united in their assent to the possibility of the *whole* of the manifestations being capable of supernormal interpretation, although nothing had occurred *upon which a definite accusation of deception* (conscious or unconscious) could be based.

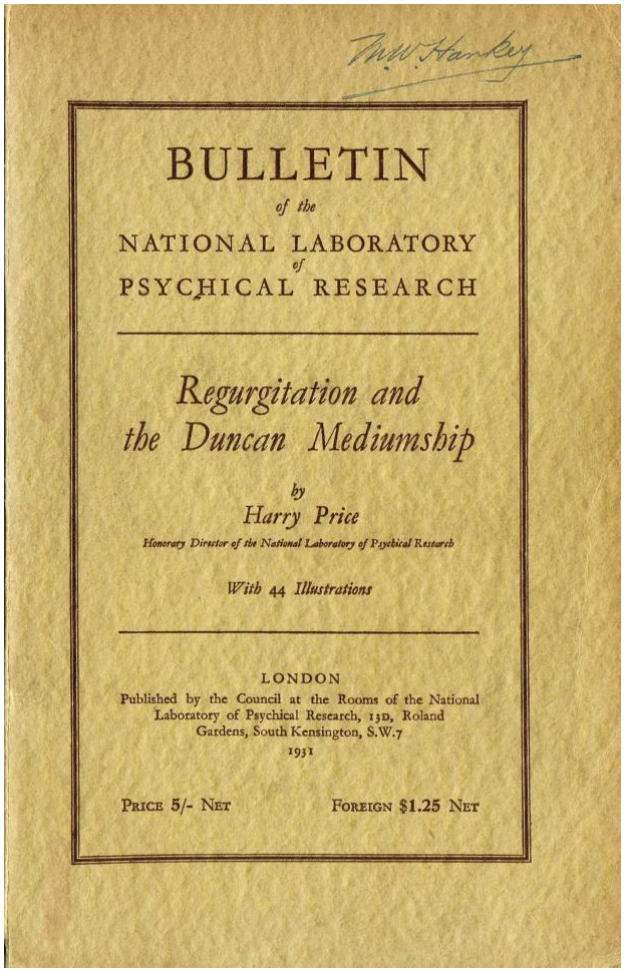
No paid sittings were held after the Committee agreed upon the final report.

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The above article notes:

> "Mr. and Mrs. Duncan accordingly agreed and entered into a binding contract to sit exclusively for the London Psychical Laboratory for a period of eighteen months. This contract the Duncans had no scruple in breaking."

Indeed, the Duncans did break their signed contract, tempted by a financial reward from the National Laboratory of Psychical Research (NLPR), namely by its Honorary Director, Harry Price. As with the London Psychical Laboratory, their researchers were eminent men of the day such as Professor Dr William McDougal, Dr William Brown and Professor J.C. Flügel, to name but a few. Five experimental séances were conducted under the NLPR's chosen conditions. Once the London Spiritualist Alliance became aware of the Duncans breaking their contract giving them exclusive working for the LPL, it all came to an end. Hence their report quoted above.


BULLETIN

of the

NATIONAL LABORATORY

of

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship

by

Harry Price

Honorary Director of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research

With 44 Illustrations

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The Council of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research published its full report, I believe, in July 1931, as shown in the photograph, which contains 116 pages plus illustrations. The first suggestion of regurgitation was mooted by Professor McDougall within the Council; this was after its first séance on May 4th, 1931. The quote below is found in the Notes, Comments and Impressions of the first séance, dated Saturday May 9th, 1931:

"Professor McDougall expressed the opinion, which was endorsed by members of the Research Council, that one of two hypotheses might account for the extraordinary manifestations which we had witnessed. These theories were (1) that the 'teleplasm' was really some fine fabric such as cheese cloth, capable of being compressed into a small compass and then secreted in the genital passages; and (2) that the medium possesses a false or secondary stomach (an *æsophageal diverticulum*) like the *rumen* or first stomach of a ruminant, and that she is able to swallow sheets of some material and regurgitate it at leisure—like a cow with her cud."

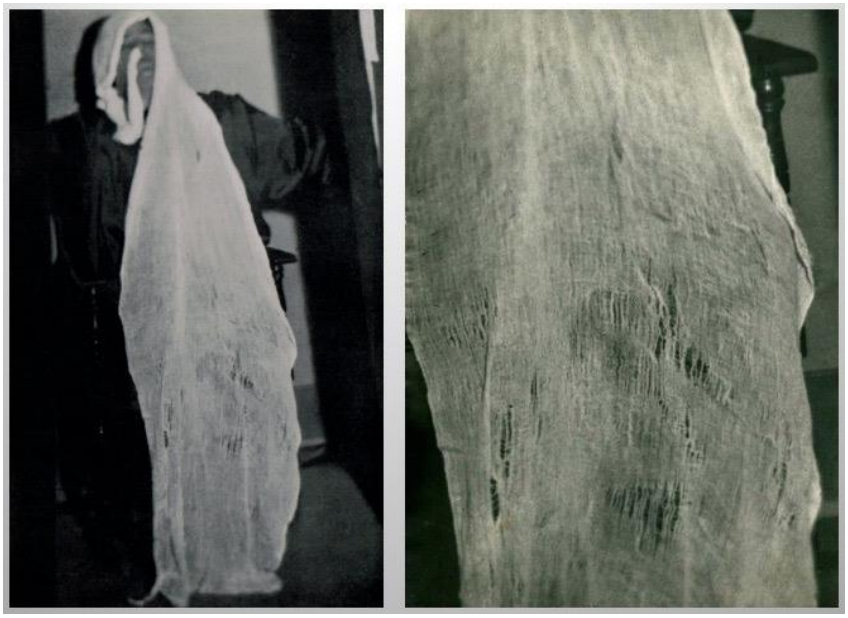
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The National Laboratory of Psychical Research first published its claim of regurgitation in the "Morning Post" on July 14th, 1931. I do not have access to this article, so below is published Appendix B, pages 96-104, from its published report in the NLPR Bulletin, as previously indicated. It contains the full (complete) interview with Helen Duncan's husband, Henry, and gives a rather in-depth insight into the investigation, its conclusions, the problems faced, etc.; I have also included some of the illustrations used in Henry's interview:

APPENDIX B

VERBATIM REPORT OF MEETING BETWEEN MR. HENRY DUNCAN AND THE COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL LABORATORY, HELD ON THURSDAY, JUNE 11TH, 1931, AT 3.30 P.M.

Present: Mr. H. E. Dennis, Professor Dr. D. F. Fraser-Harris, Mr. Harry Price, Mr. I. C. Gröndahl, Mr. H. G. Bois, Mrs. J. G. Robertson, Mrs. Clarice Richards, Captain H. W. Seton- Karr, Mr. Henry Duncan. Miss Beenham recording in shorthand.



Mr. BOIS opened the proceedings by telling Mr. Duncan of our suspicions. He said: 'We are rather suspicious as to the genuineness of the phenomena, and we have had photographs taken, and in the photographs it appears that the material which was apparently extruded by the medium is of an exactly similar nature to butter muslin. Now there are two or three points shown in the photographs which I should like you to explain: The threads of the weft and warp show very clearly—there are interlaced threads. Secondly, there are apparently holes. Thirdly, in one of the photographs it will appear that there is a dirty dust mark made, probably, through trailing on the floor, and last and by no means least, the substance appears to have a selvedge mark.[32] Can you question these facts?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'I cannot. This material which I have here' (taking hold of our piece of paper 'teleplasm') 'is, I would say, the first stage; the second stage is of pretty much the same nature, but there appear to be threads running through it, it is much the same in texture. The third stage is of muslin-like texture. I believe they have a piece at the L.S.A. Sometimes it is thick in places and at other times very thin, and it has the appearance, under the light, of being like muslin. On some occasions, I have witnessed what you refer to as a selvedge, and it appeared to be, when felt, like a curtain—rough.'

Mr. BOIS: 'Assuming this substance which is extruded is genuine, is it possible that it can take the form of butter-muslin and also appear like muslin to the sight and touch? At the last sitting there was no production of this butter-muslin, but a certain substance was extruded from the mouth of the medium. This substance was torn off by one of the medical men there, and on being shown to the expert analysts, they say it is paper and it is composed of vegetable fibre, and that it is 60% chemical and 40% mechanical wood pulp, and not only does it look like paper, *it is paper*. How do you explain that?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'God only knows. Now, Mr. Price, what was it that you had analysed?'

[32] Taken from the fourth séance on May 28th, 1931: the second image (Stereogram 12) is an enlarged portion (a little darker to show the details) to indicate what Mr Bois is referring to—showing rents in the cloth, warp and weft, etc., and selvedge indicated.

Mr. PRICE: ‘That, of course, was white of egg, and we have made up a similar substance which gives the same reaction to tests and reacts the same way. This “teleplasm” is wood-pulp.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Do you think for one moment that I would get Mrs. Duncan to come here and by some means or other (say Mrs. Macleod passed it to her) produce fraud? That I would allow her to come here and get you to test her? The whole idea is preposterous!’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Yes, that is what is in your favour. But we cannot get away from the fact that this is a piece of paper folded over and glued—it is folded in the form of a concertina—or cracker.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Where do you think it could be secreted? I believe in automatism of the will. Previous to *séances*, two or three mediums seem to have gone into that hypnotic state, and it is quite possible that they would pick up something (I have seen it done with Mrs. Duncan). She might have done it.’

Mr. PRICE: “But she was searched thoroughly and led into the cabinet. If she picked anything up, she must have secreted it.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes, and these photographs. Well, in the first place in examining these photographs, it does look like threads; but the point is this, how in the name of anything, and after you have examined her, could she secrete this substance?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘That is exactly what we want to know.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘I do not know.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Also, there is an identical tear in the substance, seen in the photographs, which appeared at different *séances*.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘I do not know. It is a complete puzzle to me. I know nothing about it. If you accept the evidence of your witnesses, I cannot say where she could possibly secrete it. There is about seven or eight feet of substance. That means bulk.’



Mr. PRICE: ‘We have some of the identical stuff here, and it can be rolled up very small.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘I confess that is the puzzle—where she has been able to secrete that stuff after the very thorough examination she has had.’

(Mr. Duncan looking at photographs.)

Mr. PRICE: ‘That is frayed at the edge’ (pointing to one of the photographs). [33]

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘To me, this hand looks like a glove’ (he examines one of the photographs).

Mr. BOIS: ‘To me, they look exactly like a surgeon’s (very thin) rubber glove which has been blown out. It would have the same appearance.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘To me, these look different’ (looking at some pictures of trailing cheese cloth).

[33] Fourth séance, May 28th, 1931, showing a frayed edge bottom of the right.

Mr. PRICE: ‘That is merely the same roll of muslin twisted into a trail, but you do not get the criss-cross warp and weft as when spread out. It is very difficult to photograph, as the white stuff requires one-tenth the exposure the *séance* garment does.’



Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes, you do see the rents and tears. The curious fact is that you say that that was a rubber glove, then how is it held up straight like that?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Of course, that is what we want to know.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘These gloves do stand up, in any case.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘You forget this, gentlemen. You would need to have a tube in it—to hold the glove out like that.’

CAPT. S.-K.: ‘You would not need anything to support it. It would stand out when blown up.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘But there must be something in it to support it.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘In two of these photographs there are distinctly safety-pins. These are in the “glove” pictures. They are in the stuff that is wrapped round the glove. Curiously enough, it has lost something by being enlarged, but in the stereoscope the pin is very distinct. In the other picture the pin is, of course, viewed from a different angle.’



Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Did you say there was a pin in this one?’ (picking up a ‘glove’ photo).

(Mr. Price points out the positions of the pins to Mr. Duncan.)

CAPT. S.-K.: ‘The whole thing is quite easy. I have done these sort of things for years. You would only have to blow the glove out and it would be identical with the one in the photograph. The only question is where the stuff is hidden.’ [34]

Mr. PRICE: ‘At the first *séance* we heard the stuff being jerked off the curtains. I won’t say anything about the other pin that was found in the tuck of the *séance* garment.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘That is the substance here, is it not?’ (pointing to a cheese cloth photo).

Mr. PRICE: ‘I think it might possibly be thinner just there, as it is worn and torn and would show the black garment through more clearly; and perhaps it was not then dirty.’

[34] Two of the photographs showing the glove from the third séance, May 21st, 1931; the safety-pin on the top photo (hand hanging down) is the little dent on the left side just below the loose piece of the alleged teleplasm hanging down.

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘You mean that mark down at the bottom?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Yes.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘The real point is this: What is the explanation of all this?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘God knows. I do not. You are asking me a puzzle. In the first place, you say she was examined, and on two occasions I have examined her before she came up here. I have taken her into the bathroom and made her take all her clothes off, and I have on two occasions given her a vaginal examination. I have got the maid to look through her clothes and hand them to her one by one.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Is that necessary? Has she secreted things on other occasions?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘I have told you. I call it “automatism”. If that is butter muslin, how did she secrete it?’

Mr. BOIS: ‘That is exactly why we have met here this afternoon.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘The same thing happened in the Eva C. *séances*.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘There has been a great deal of controversy over those pictures. Not one person in a hundred accepted Eva C. as genuine. When Eva C. was at the London S.P.R., the “teleplasm” was proved to be chewed paper. By a strange coincidence the same analyst who analysed the Eva C. “teleplasm”, analysed the piece of “teleplasm” I received from the piece cut from Mrs. Duncan soon after she arrived in London.’



Mr. BOIS: ‘That is the whole trouble. I might say that teleplasm may take the form of paper or butter muslin; I might admit there may be holes in it; I might admit there may be dirt on it; but when it comes to having a selvedge, it is more than I can swallow. All these things are puzzling.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘I understand.’ [35]

Mr. PRICE: ‘Professor Fraser-Harris has made some slides of our piece of teleplasm, and I can even show you the machine marks on the wood pulp as it was passed through the machine. When the wood is cut up, it is treated (*a*) mechanically, or (*b*) chemically. Actually, as the analyst has told us, there is 60% chemical and 40% mechanical wood pulp. What are we to make of it?’

Mr. BOIS: ‘Obviously this is paper’ (pointing to our specimen). [36]

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘The point is this, gentlemen. It seems silly that anyone would come here and deliberately produce fraud.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Unless that person thought that he, or she, would run the risk.’

[35] Showing various rents/tears, warp and weft, fold or crease marks, and selvedge. The photo was taken at the second séance, May 14th, 1931.

[36] This is shown further in the article.

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘But we allowed these photographs to be taken. You know I am not a spiritualist. Here is my explanation: I believe in an animistic theory that the idea has, through the ages, become impressed upon our minds that there is a god, and naturally then that there is a life after death. To support that theory—man has got into a groove with the result that some persons can easily go into an hypnotic trance, are open to suggestion, and the idea of immortality is so much impressed within that mind that the subconscious will do anything to prove it.’

PROF. F.-H.: ‘But what has the production of the paper teleplasm to do with an afterlife?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘That is my idea. These ideas which are impressed within the mind of that subject will become an obsession, and that person will do anything towards gaining that end.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘So the medium is quite prone to take any steps to back up her belief?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Not consciously.’

Mr. PRICE: “Then it is very difficult to say when the medium is acting subconsciously or consciously.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘This should be for further research work. It should be studied by every research worker.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘The Hon. Everard Feilding wrote to me only the other day and quoted a case of a man swallowing frogs and goldfish and “God knows how much water”.’

PROF. F.-H.: “What has this substance’ (pointing to our ‘teleplasm’) ‘to do with psychic powers?’

Mr. BOIS: ‘It is to prove the existence of beings outside ourselves, and therefore the medium tries to back up her theory by producing something which she has already arranged normally.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘All mediums whom I have come in contact with have struck me as being of a very childish disposition. I would then say that under trance conditions the child mind comes to the surface. That is why we get so many childish pranks during a *séance*. And therefore that childish mind produces these things.’

Mrs. ROBERTSON: ‘Where does she produce them from?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘God knows!’

Mr. PRICE: ‘That X-rays incident the other night was very suspicious, and when it came to the X-rays, she broke down all our controls by rushing out of the house, and that afterwards she insisted upon the X-rays *after* she had been in the street with you. Also, you would not be searched. It is very suspicious.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes, I admit that. But I told you about the diapers.’

Mrs. ROBERTSON: ‘It is suspicious that Mrs. Goldney says that Mrs. Duncan was not unwell that night.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes, but it was due for that night.’

Mrs. ROBERTSON: ‘Were they soiled diapers you had on you?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘No, clean ones.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘Well, what is the next step?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘I think the best thing would be to hold another three *séances*.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘But are we not wasting our time?’

Mr. DENNIS: ‘Do you swear that you do not know where that stuff is concealed?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Of course, I do swear.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Of course, it is not an anatomical impossibility for her to conceal it in her body. I have seen a man swallow a watch and chain and regurgitate it two or three times. I mean that if regurgitation can be done several times a day for a living, there is no reason why it is impossible in this case. Especially if she has an œsophageal pouch.’

PROF. F.-H.: ‘It could go into the real stomach.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘That is where we think all these things are secreted.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘But you cannot get anything from the X-rays?’

Mr. PRICE: “That is absolutely useless because she is so thick, and in any case, muslin or rubber gloves would not register.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘But if you gave her a bismuth meal or something like that?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Yes, but I do not think that it would do. It is possible that it would reveal a secondary stomach, but it is only a small chance.’

Mrs. RICHARDS: ‘Has Mrs. Duncan ever had an operation where she was cut open?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes, she has, but it is too far down. It would not show anything in the X-rays.’

Mrs. ROBERTSON: ‘Do you believe that she is genuine?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Oh, yes. But I also believe in automatism of the will.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘He thinks it is genuine sometimes, but that she is quite capable of humbugging. So far, to me, we have seen the humbugging.’ (Pointing to the photographs and ‘teleplasm’.) ‘We cannot get away from these things. Is it worth our while to continue?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes. I should have two or three more *séances* under a physical control, the sitters going in the cabinet.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘You very kindly offered us that first séance. I was very impressed by what I had been told by other sitters, and you did not come here with any idea of our showing you up. On the contrary, I had received such good reports from various people that I wanted to have you for a long period. But we simply *cannot* believe it now. We have been forced into this attitude owing to the evidence we have accumulated.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘We will assume these things are secreted somewhere we do not know. Supposing she was immobilized so that she could not move hand or foot?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Just a minute. I asked you, Mr. Price, to immobilize her at the last sitting.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘In any case, that would have been useless the other night, as the paper “teleplasm” could have been produced with a dozen people holding her. A funny thing,

but we all thought we were going to get that piece of "teleplasm", because at previous *séances* we were promised it and you were always urging Albert to give us a piece. As this one was a test *séance*, I was sure that we should get it. Everybody had scissors, and it was a curious sight to see the glint of light shining on the steel. It reminded me of a sewing bee. Everybody was prepared to cut off the stuff in case Albert picked upon him or her.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'As far as I know, the doctor tore it off.'

Mr. PRICE: 'Yes, the scissors slipped.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'What about the bleeding?'

Mr. PRICE: 'She could easily have knocked her nose.'

PROF. F.-H.: 'The bleeding had nothing to do with the stuff being torn from her mouth.'

(Mr. Price explains how the piece of 'teleplasm' was torn.)

Mr. BOIS: 'Assuming that the medium is tied hand and foot, is there any way of checking her from bringing up the substance normally?'

Mr. PRICE: 'Not the slightest. If you put a net over her head, it would only fall into the net. I think perhaps you might check part of it.'

Mrs. ROBERTSON: 'Has she never produced it anywhere but from the mouth?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, the ear and the vagina.'

Mrs. RICHARDS: 'But if we get a bit from the floor?

Mr. PRICE: 'Yes, but that is not much use to prove that the medium has secreted it somewhere. You admit she does secrete it?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, unknown to me.'

Mrs. RICHARDS: 'How is it she got out of that suit?' [At another society.]

Mr. DUNCAN: 'God knows. Assuming that she could get out of it normally, how could she sew it up the back again?'

Mr. PRICE: 'If she could secrete things, as obviously she can, such as rubber gloves, butter muslin, etc., she could easily secrete a needleful of cotton. It is admitted that the stitches are not the same at the end of a sitting as at the beginning.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Not every time. But on two occasions.'

Mr. PRICE: 'Well, it is quite easy for her to get out of the thing.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'I do not mean that. Supposing she is tied up and the curtains are open and you see her tied up? 'You can hear the tying up going on at the same time as the voice.'

Mr. PRICE: 'But the talking is nothing. We have never heard Albert at the same time as we have seen the medium.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, but the talking and the tying going on at the same time. How could she tie herself up? It is impossible.'

Mr. PRICE: ‘It is not. Tying up a medium is the worst possible form of control. But in any case we are talking about what we have seen.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes, but the entities purport to tie her up. How a person tied at the back and sewn up from the waist and the tapes over the buckram gloves tied tightly, and the feet also tied and the chair screwed down to the floor, how is she able to tie herself up in such a manner?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘You are asking me about something I have not seen. There are a number of mediums whom you can tie up as hard as you like and yet they can get out and back again into the ties. The tying up of a medium is the worst form of control.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘You do not think it is possible to get out of surgical tapes?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘No. The time we tied Mrs. Duncan up with surgical tapes, Albert said they were too tight and they had to be loosened. That is how they get away with it.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘Supposing we get her tied up so as to immobilize her absolutely. Is that going to stop her regurgitating? We want something that will prevent her from doing it normally. Has teleplasm ever gone through a net?’ [37]

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes. The point is, has it gone through or has it gone underneath the net? I think that it has gone underneath.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Mrs. Duncan has such a thick neck that it is impossible to tie the tapes tight enough to stop her putting her hand through the neck opening of the garment.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘Supposing we hold her hands and feet, she can only get these substances from her inside by some power of regurgitating. If she could not use her hands, would that stop it at all?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Can you explain this to me? We have had an extrusion about six or seven feet long, which holds a trumpet up in the air and from which voices issue forth. The medium has been searched. How is it done?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘We do not know. I have never seen such a thing done. We are not concerned with what we have not seen.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘Are you referring to this having been done with Mrs. Duncan?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes, we have seen it done with Mrs. Duncan.’

Mrs. RICHARDS: ‘Has that been done at the L.S.A.?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘No, never.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Have the L.S.A. ever questioned the phenomena?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘No. But you are surely not suggesting that a person can swallow a rubber glove?’

PROF. F.-H.: ‘Yes, it is quite possible.’

Mrs. ROBERTSON: ‘Is it possible to regurgitate very silently?’

PROF. F.-H.: ‘Yes. But it would need very long practice. Swallowing rubber gloves, paper, and muslin would not make a noise. It is the air that makes the noise.’

[37] See Pioneer, Vol. 10, No.1: “The “Substance” ”.

Mr BOIS: ‘I certainly have never heard any noise. What are we going to do? Shall we sit again with this net test, or shall we just leave it?

Mr. PRICE: ‘Mr. Duncan has suggested that if Mrs. Duncan produces the stuff normally, he is not aware of the fact.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘No.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘And the fact that on two occasions Mr. Duncan has searched Mrs. Duncan.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes. I would not go by one sitting. I would like to impress upon you that for Heaven’s sake do not want this and that at a sitting. I quite believe that she is in a trance. I think that the collective minds of the sitters impress the subconscious with the thought that she is doing it normally; and she might not do it at that one sitting, but might try it the next time.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘I am prepared to admit that this is a hypothesis, but what are we going to do? We do not want to go on in the same way.’

CAPT. S.-K.: ‘We would not get any further evidence of its being normal if we had any more sittings.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Of course, the stuff is produced from a portion of her anatomy which is exceedingly difficult to control.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘These things we are all agreed about. Would it be any use our having another sitting? If we get nothing, it would simply confirm our opinion that these things are secreted?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Now you have put these bad ideas into my mind, and she is likely to get them from my subconsciousness. I think I know as much about mediumship as anybody. I would say that that would not prove anything either for or against. After the first *séance*, you could see whether the control was all right or not. She is genuine sometimes. She has produced psychic phenomena under the best of controls. If this is butter muslin and has been all the time, how are we going to explain, unless on the supposition of my first hypothesis that the production of the so-called butter muslin is due to automatism of the mind? We get mental phenomena which is absolutely startling at times.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘It is not a bit of good talking like that. In that case she might be a good mental medium, but not a physical one.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘At the moment we are only talking about physical phenomena.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘The whole thing is very interesting. But there is nobody who will accept these things as abnormal.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘I am quite agreeable to any test. I want to know the truth. I am not a spiritualist.’

Mr. BOIS: ‘Now, the thing is whether we are going to drop the whole thing or not.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘I say if you can prove that these things are produced either by regurgitating or other fraudulent means, it proves that B. [mentioning a certain person] is right.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘What has B. to do with it?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘He says that Margery, Eva C., and Rudi Schneider are frauds.’

Mr. PRICE: 'No, that is wrong. Mrs. Duncan and Rudi Schneider are not in the same street. Rudi produced phenomena under electric control at a distance of several feet from him. I have never heard that he considers him to be a fraud, or that he knows anything at all about it.'

(It was decided to have another sitting on July 2nd, with the medium held by two persons, a net over her head, and taped to the chair.)

(Signed) ETHEL BEENHAM.

N.B.—Without informing the National Laboratory, the Duncans left for Leith on Tuesday, June 23rd, 1931.

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On the surface, the reports with their conclusions of regurgitation appear to show rather damaging evidence; permission to take the samples of teleplasm/ectoplasm provided to both research laboratories was granted by Helen Duncan's control, Albert Stewart, but were all found to be basic household materials. Even more damaging still is the photographic evidence of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, for which the Duncans gave their full permission. In my opinion there is no doubt as to the authenticity of the testing which agencies used to break down the compounds of the said teleplasm, being found in general to be paper, etc., and in the photographic evidence published.



Helen MacFarlane and Henry Duncan married on May 27th, 1916. Henry was interested in psychical research but, as he stated in his interview with the National Laboratory, he was not a Spiritualist. He appears to have accepted the many questions presented to him in the interview by the NLPR Council philosophically. Mr Duncan did not particularly question what was shown to him in *their* evidence, for example the paper-made teleplasm, the photographic evidence showing the cheesecloth-like material with clear indication of the rents, the cloth's warp, weft, frayed edge, the selvedge, the rubber gloves, etc. The following day after the interview (June 12th) the NLPR Council told Henry Duncan that they had concluded that the effects they had witnessed over their investigations were caused by regurgitation; on the same day, possibly in anticipation that the London Psychical Laboratory had also reached similar conclusions, Mr. Duncan asked if he could interview the Research Committee, where he made a statement to the effect that he had come to the conclusion that the "ectoplasm" was the result of regurgitation.

However, does the above body of *proof* from the two laboratories conclusively prove regurgitation as the means and the method employed by Helen Duncan to provide her with her required séance materials, as is concluded by the two investigating authorities? From this point onwards the stigma of regurgitation will follow her for the ensuing decades of her mediumship:

"She was famous for producing ectoplasm which was proven to be made from cheesecloth."

So, is regurgitation proved as claimed in these two reports?

Starting with the first report in this article by the London Psychical Laboratory, the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance Ltd, in the first place, it can hardly be taken as a report covering its investigations of the fifty or so controlled séances in the periods given elsewhere in this article by the same committee. The article quotes from an unpublished report by the London Psychical Laboratory, giving very little or no information and no mention of the earlier *positive* results it had previously had, stating:

> "… on nearly all points the conclusions are disappointing to those interested in psychical research."

Leading researchers Dr. Robert Fielding-Ould, Lord Charles Hope and Sir Ernest Bennett, M.P. concentrated their attention on the nature of this substance and the means of its production, resulting in the LPL's conclusion:

> "… the Committee were obliged to believe that the so-called "ectoplasm" was an artificial substance produced by the ingenuity of Mrs. Duncan herself."

The report further stated:

> "It was proved that the material was swallowed by Mrs. Duncan at some time previous to the sitting and subsequently regurgitated by her for the purpose of exhibition."

Their claimed proof is all the five samples of ectoplasm taken from different séances over the time of their investigations that were made up from general household materials and put together by the medium, Mrs Duncan. This was then swallowed by the medium at some earlier time to be regurgitated at the séance when required. Her husband Henry Duncan's statement was no doubt damaging by stating that his wife:

> "… was in the habit of "losing her will" for a time about three hours before a sitting, and said he believed that in a state of unconsciousness, resembling that of hypnosis, Mrs. Duncan secreted things in or about her person and that she could retain these things in her stomach and eat and digest food."

It further stated:

> "… that he had come to the conclusion that the "ectoplasm" was the result of regurgitation."

To my knowledge no photographs exist of any of their experiments, unlike those of the National Laboratory. One may consider, given the severity of their conclusion, why there was no hint or doubts of the possibility of fraud in all their published reports leading up to their conclusions, given that the first controlled séances started in October 1930, resulting in the London Psychical Laboratory (London Spiritualist Alliance) continuing their interest in the mediumship of Helen Duncan to the extent of eventually paying substantial costs in moving the Duncan family from Scotland to London, renting a house, employment of a maid and financial support for living costs, etc.!

In their conclusion, it is stated:

> Two of these earlier specimens were submitted for analysis. One authority described the substance as resembling tissue paper with traces of bacteria. The second report (February 9, 1931) was as follows:
>
> "We have made a very careful examination of the material which was submitted to us and we are of the opinion that it consists of paper, cloth, and such everyday

materials mixed with an organic substance which is in every respect similar to coagulated white of egg."

It is clear that at the time these samples of the alleged ectoplasm were collected there was no or, at best, little doubt as to their authenticity, as this was prior to the removal of the Duncans to London, the contract not being signed until March 9th, 1931; surely any doubts at this time would be considered, as the contract was for potentially eighteen months! [38]

It was further stated in their conclusion as evidence:

"On May 29th the alleged control, "Albert," was asked if he would bring the Medium out of the cabinet under the red light and show the emergence and re-absorption of the "ectoplasm." The Medium came out to within about twelve inches of the red light while both her hands were held. She opened her mouth and "ectoplasm" was extruded by obvious movements of the mouth and throat muscles. It was about two inches wide and hung down about eight inches. After a few seconds the Medium, by movements of the lips and throat, sucked it back again. The material when extruded showed signs of having been folded by compression."

Let the reader now compare this report with the above account, [39] with an account published just thirteen days earlier in their journal, *Light*, May 16th, 1931:

"Sittings with Mrs. Duncan"

"The Medium came out of the cabinet with no "ectoplasm" showing and stood under the red light at a distance of about eighteen inches; the mouth opened and the substance was seen gradually forming on the tip of the tongue until it resembled a cherry. It afterwards swelled up in the mouth unfolded and hung down about eight inches from the mouth. The substance moved slightly and remained for about one minute; then it began to retreat into the mouth, and gradually disappeared until the mouth, wide open, was seen perfectly empty. The Medium, still in trance, then backed into the cabinet.

"It was clearly observed that, during the emergence and disappearance of the substance, no movement of the Medium's throat, neck or body was apparent. No muscular contractions suggesting swallowing or vomiting occurred.

"It should also be realised that when the substance retreated into the mouth, it diminished at the tip of the tongue into the likeness of a cherry as it at first appeared.

"The cherry-like mass disappeared into a small point and finally vanished altogether. None of the substance appeared at any time in the pharynx.

"Sometimes, when large masses of the substance begin to lessen in bulk, it appears to melt away first at the edges."

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

[39] However, it is stated: "At the time of the publication of the second abridged report (May 16th) the Committee were less united in their assent to the possibility of the *whole* of the manifestations being capable of supernormal interpretation, although nothing had occurred *upon which a definite accusation of deception* (conscious or unconscious) could be based.

If we look at the first abridged report published in *Light*, February 28th, 1931 by the Executive Committee of the London Psychical Laboratory, we note they:

> "… have pleasure in submitting to the readers of LIGHT their first abridged Report on a series of sittings held under test conditions with Mrs. Duncan of Dundee."

Pioneer publishes here the unedited account below:

> The following were the conditions under which Mrs. Duncan sat:
>
> All her clothing was removed in the presence of two witnesses. Her hair, ears, mouth and surface of body were examined. For the first three sittings a vest, pair of knickers and sateen overall were provided and reserved exclusively for seance work. Thus attired she was placed in a sack.
>
> In preparation for the last four sittings, Mrs. Duncan was examined as before, and wore only one garment. This garment was made of fine black wool material in one piece; it formed a pyjama suit with coat and trousers all in one piece, the ends of the legs being fashioned as boots and with long sleeves fitting closely at wrists. The whole body except face, head and hands, was entirely covered. The only opening in the garment was in the centre of the back from the neck to the waist.
>
> After Mrs. Duncan had stepped into this one-piece suit the back opening was strongly sewn up from neck to waist.
>
> Attached to this garment were strong tapes at the neck, the wrists and the ankles.
>
> Before leaving the dressing room for the seance room Mrs. Duncan's hands were controlled by those who stripped her. She was led to the seance room and had no opportunity of handling anything after she had been examined and dressed as described. She was then placed in the chair in the cabinet; the neck and wrist tapes attached to the garment were always tied to the chair and sealed. When time permitted, before the Medium fell into trance the feet were also tied and sealed. The hands and feet thus controlled retained a range of movement of three or four inches. At the end of each sitting the seals were examined and on every occasion were found intact.
>
> At every sitting a good red light was maintained, of sufficient intensity to enable members of the circle to see each other plainly, and even to read the time by small wrist watches.
>
> The sitters were arranged in a semi-circle in front of the cabinet. The Medium sat in the cabinet behind closed curtains. The curtains stretched from within a few inches of the ceiling down to the floor, being attached to curtain rings on a brass rod opening in the centre of the cabinet and at the sides adjoining the walls.
>
> The "Cabinet" merely consists of a corner of the room enclosed by the curtains. There is no mechanical device for the control of the curtains. Gramophone records were played intermittently throughout the sitting; no singing was required except for an opening hymn as specially desired by the Medium.
>
> It should be noted that ectoplasmic formations appeared, sometimes in the centre and sometimes at the sides of the curtains. It was therefore impossible for all sitters to witness every manifestation simultaneously. Each type of manifestation was however corroborated by two or more witnesses, and occasionally by all.

Among the various manifestations the following are the chief items briefly described. Complete detailed records and shorthand notes are filed. Two observers only attended all seven sittings. The average attendance was seven.

1) Invisible control and movements of heavy velvet cabinet curtains.

2) Quality of the "control's" voice answering to the name of "Albert Stuart"; [40] intelligence displayed by original observations and answers to questions.

3) Extrusion of "ectoplasm" in various masses, shapes, movements and texture.

4) Rapid and complete disappearance of ectoplasm after the Medium was hidden by the curtain; this was proved by her quick re-appearance either without ectoplasm or with a different formation of the material.

5) The appearance roughly resembling a human form, on one occasion over six feet high, on another not more than two feet high with a childish voice, swaying rhythmically with the music.

6) The detaching and depositing of ectoplasm for analysis subsequent to a promise by "Albert" that this would be done. At two later sittings further specimens were provided.

These specimens of ectoplasm were at first placed in distilled water at the request of "Albert" to prevent disintegration. At the time of writing they are still to be seen at 16, Queensberry Place, hermetically sealed and preserved in alcohol.

One of the most dramatic occurrences took place at the first of the sittings.

The Medium was dressed as described above and placed in a sack of strong material. A strong tape in slot opening at neck was attached, and a strong strand at each side at the line of the waist; the head only of the Medium protruded.

These tapes were tied to the chair and sealed. The tape at the neck was drawn as tightly as the Medium could conveniently bear, and carefully sealed.

During the sitting the Medium walked out of the cabinet in deep trance dressed in her special seance clothes but *without* the sack. She walked across the room trailing behind her a band of ectoplasm approximately four inches broad and three yards long. Walking close up to the light she paused for examination to be made within eight inches of the light in full view of everybody, and the substance was clearly seen to emanate from her nostrils.

The Medium did not return to the sack.

On examination the sack was found attached to the chair, each of the three seals unbroken, including the one at the neck.

At the end of two sittings the Medium was found securely bound by a rope, some four yards long, which had been provided. On one occasion it was found wound round the Medium's neck with a running noose—twice round the waist with several knots—round the ankles and finally taken up the back and tied very tightly round the wrists, binding the back of one hand into the palm of the other. The manner of binding was so tight that rapid cutting was necessary in order to release the Medium from discomfort and pain.

[40] The correct spelling is Stewart.

Similar binding of the Medium on the other occasion occurred while the Medium was bodily enclosed in the sack with head only protruding. It had been lashed and knotted round the Medium's body inside the sack.

On examination the seals were found to be unbroken on each occasion.

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The first, and the quotes from the second abridged reports above, compared to their conclusion on July 17th, 1931, a few months later, of fraud and regurgitation, without doubt raises many questions, as of course it did at the time, given the quote from the second report of May 16th, where it is clearly noted:

> "It was clearly observed that, during the emergence and disappearance of the substance, no movement of the Medium's throat, neck or body was apparent. No muscular contractions suggesting swallowing or vomiting occurred."

However, one of the charges against the medium is made on May 29th, less than two weeks later—a complete reversal:

> "She opened her mouth and "ectoplasm" was extruded by obvious movements of the mouth and throat muscles", "After a few seconds the Medium, by movements of the lips and throat, sucked it back again."

Apart from Henry Duncan's claim of regurgitation one can understand the researcher's assumption and speculation as to how the results could be achieved by fraud, but nothing is mentioned. For example, the rather stringent restraints the research committee put into operation would not in themselves prevent regurgitation; however, the restrictions, for example, of the stiff buckram fingerless gauntlets [41] would make it difficult for the medium if regurgitation was the case, as the large amount of substance (as the alleged control, Albert, sometimes called it), long lengths and up to a metre wide, would be needed to be made usable after being regurgitated, whereas various accounts record the quick production of ectoplasm of the commencement of the experimental séances, though no explanation is given.

Further still:

The February 28th report as published in this article states:

> "She walked across the room trailing behind her a band of ectoplasm approximately four inches broad and three yards long. Walking close up to the light she paused for examination to be made within eight inches of the light in full view of everybody, and the substance was clearly seen to emanate from her nostrils."

Regurgitation from the nostrils?

The numerous reports mention that ectoplasm is seen in reasonably good light; there is no indication mentioned of any rents, warp and weft, dirty marks and selvedge as recorded and indicated on the photographs by the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. However, the concluding report of the LPL on July 17th mentions at one séance on May 29th, 1931: "The material when extruded showed signs of having been folded by compression"; the NLPR mentions and photographed a fold/crease in the material. The London Psychical Laboratory's report in *Light*, May 16th, 1931 mentions the ectoplasm:

[41] "Sittings with Mrs. Duncan", a further abridged report by LPL in Light May 16th 1931: "A further restriction has, however, been added lately at both kinds of sittings, by the Medium's hands being encased in stiff buckram fingerless gauntlets which are sewn to the sleeves of her suit. These make it impossible for the Medium's fingers (even if the hands move) to grasp anything through them.

"The production of "ectoplasm" has taken place at all sittings but varies in quantity from time to time. The ectoplasmic emanations usually issue from the mouth of the Medium.

"The substance is as a rule white, but may be sometimes described as grey or slate colour, and a few times has appeared a dark brown. It is mobile and seems to possess a sort of vitality. It bunches, folds and unfolds, divides into portions and joins up again.

"The "ectoplasm" has been produced in such quantities that the Medium when standing up has been covered over the head, round the shoulders, and over the whole of the body down to the feet. On two occasions it was produced while the Medium stood under the light."

Given the *claimed* composition of the alleged ectoplasm and the conclusion of the London Psychical Laboratory (LPL) that it was presented by means of regurgitation by Helen Duncan, it leaves a lot to be explained in their apparent contradictory reports, albeit one would hope that it was explained more fully in their own report. For example, the committee's earlier report on the alleged ectoplasm:

"It is mobile and seems to possess a sort of vitality. It bunches, folds and unfolds, divides into portions and joins up again."

Psypioneer published three of the First Series verbatim reports in Vol. 11, Nos. 10/11, and Vol. 12, Nos. 2 & 3. The second materialisation sitting was on October 30th, 1930 and one of the sitters was Sir Oliver Lodge; this is republished in Pioneer, Vol. 12, No. 2: "Notes of Second Materialization Sitting with Mrs Duncan on 30th October 1930 – LSA".

Sir Oliver Lodge was permitted by the alleged control, Albert, to hold the substance:

Sir Oliver Lodge went up to the medium and held the substance in his hand, and he and the sitters saw it gradually with a slightly wriggling motion withdraw, sliding slowly over his hands towards the position of the medium [and] disappear while he was holding it.

Later he was asked to go inside the cabinet with the medium.

Sir Oliver goes to the cabinet and feels the head of the medium.

SIR O.L. She is just asleep, she is rather in a perspiration. I don't see anything else about her. She was still completely enveloped in the sack.

Sir Oliver said that he saw no ectoplasm when he went to examine the medium.

ALBERT Ask Sir Oliver if he would like to come while the ectoplasm is here?

SIR O.L. Yes, I should.

ALBERT Well, I will prepare her.

Very heavy breathing is heard from the cabinet.

ALBERT (after a pause) You can come in now.

SIR O.L. (opening the curtain) I can see it coming from her mouth, it is like a bundle of strings. (Both times I felt it, it lay on my hand. The first time the visible part was about a foot long, the second time only a few inches. It was heavy, cold and clammy, its texture was like a number of the parallel threads forming the bundle two inches thick. It might have been separated out into strands. It was not like woven material but was stringy. A curiously unpleasant slight odour remained either on my hand or in my nostrils as an

occasional whiff for 12 hours afterwards. O.L.)

DR R. Warm? Clammy?

SIR O.L. No, it was drier than I expected.

DR R. Do you notice any smell?

SIR O.L. Yes, a kind of smell, but I don't know how to describe it, it is just like a lot of threads, there is no formation in it at all. Now it is beginning to go back into the mouth, I think.

Dr. Rust closes the curtains again and the medium is heard to be breathing heavily and groaning. Gramophone is playing.

SIR O.L. It does not leave anything on the fingers, it is fairly dry.

Gramophone still playing and medium's groans and uneasy breathing still heard.

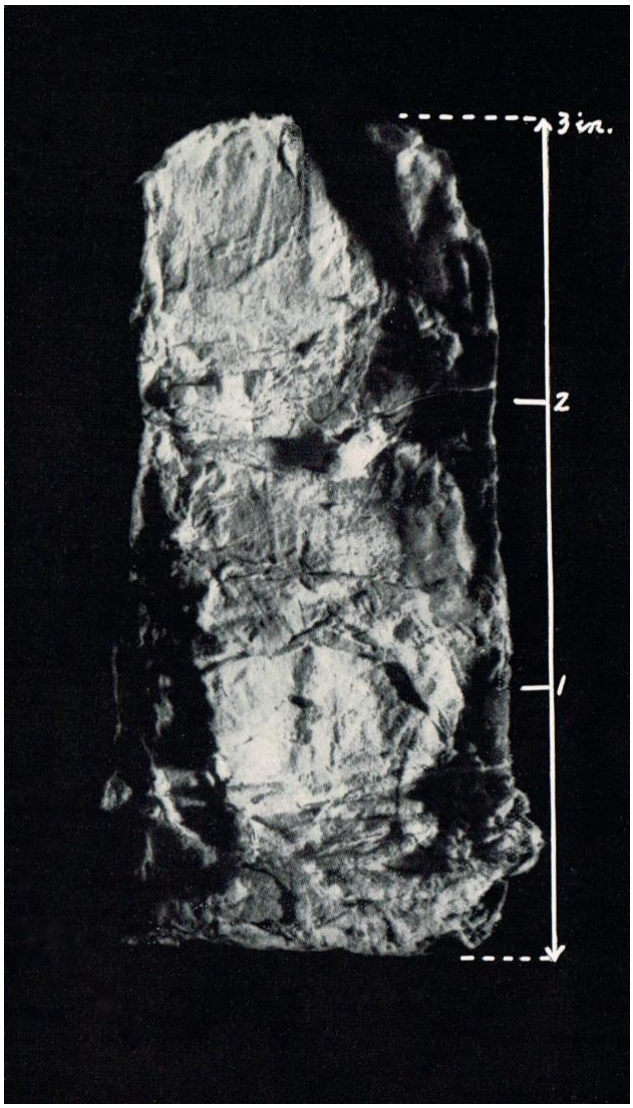
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What can be concluded?

What can be concluded? The article has shown how the two independent research organisations viewed some of their evidence, and both concluded *independently* that all the phenomena they witnessed under their own full conditions were produced by *normal* means. They both concluded that the teleplasm/ectoplasm was made up by man-made materials and that this was produced from the medium, Helen Duncan, by means of regurgitation. However, it cannot be stated categorically despite their claims that it was proven conclusively by any means. The medium was not *actually* caught in the act of fraud; this was pure speculation due to the results of the various teleplasm/ectoplasm samples given to both parties and no doubt the frustration of both parties at the infringement by the medium; after the most stringent precautions were put in place by both laboratories *against* the possibility of fraud, even so the medium still produced the teleplasm/ectoplasm or the cheesecloth-type material which they could not *explain* the production of.

The London Spiritualist Alliance Ltd.'s Research Department, the London Psychical Laboratory, had given good, positive abridged reports, the last one published in their journal, *Light*, on May 16th, 1931, as quoted in this article. Their last sitting with Helen Duncan was on June 12th, 1931; it was on this day either before or after the final controlled séance with the medium that her husband, Henry Duncan, asked to interview the Research Committee. He had been informed that day by the National Laboratory of Psychical Research Council's conclusion: "…that the effects we had witnessed were caused by regurgitation…" I suspect that it was at this point that the London Psychical Laboratory became aware that their contract of the *exclusive* séances with Helen Duncan had been broken by the Duncans, given Henry's statement to them to the effect that he had come to the conclusion that the "ectoplasm" was the result of his wife's regurgitation (as previously quoted).

One can imagine the frustration at the breaking of the contract in this way and the fact that the National Laboratory's Honorary Director Harry Price was earlier denied to have sat with Helen Duncan by the London Psychical Laboratory. This must have caused understandable distaste and anger within the LPL, given this situation. The reader may consider that this in part, and along with Mr Duncan's statement, may have reflected on their damning report and its conclusion of regurgitation without any mention to their (at least on the surface) reported positive results—with no hint of fraud!



Both the London Psychical Laboratory and the National Laboratory of Psychical Research show similar results from the samples of teleplasm/ectoplasm taken at the various stages of their experimental controlled seances: their submitted specimens for analysis showed basic everyday materials mixed with organic substances, e.g. coagulated white of egg. The following is one of the reports published in the NLPR Bulletin referred to earlier in this article. The sample was obtained on June 4th, 1931 at the fifth and last séance, as shown in the image [42]. In short, the teleplasm was cut off. Albert asked surgeon Dr X to perform the task but when Dr X made the cut the medium moved and the scissors slipped. Still firmly holding the teleplasm, Duncan moved her head again and the piece in his hand came away; it tore across and Duncan gave one or two little screams. The remainder went back into her mouth. Dr X explained: "It was exactly like tearing a wad of damp paper." He immediately dropped it into a jar of absolute alcohol – a tiny portion placed in water.

The official analysis was undertaken by Messrs Sindall and Bacon, Consulting Chemists, London. It was collected on June 9th from the National Laboratory by Mr William Brown; his preliminary remarks on collection were that it was folded layers of paper. On June 17th, 1931 it is noted on page 78 of the NLPR Bulletin:

ANALYST'S REPORT ON THE PAPER 'TELEPLASM'

June 17th, 1931

I have now received the official report from Messrs. Sindall and Bacon as to the analysis of the piece of 'teleplasm' which Mr. Bacon removed from the Laboratory.

Mr. Bacon confirms his preliminary opinion that the stuff is merely a cheap kind of paper containing 40 per cent. mechanical wood pulp, and 60 per cent. chemical wood pulp. As Mr. Bacon points out, the medullary rays can be seen in the microscopic slide he prepared of our specimen, and in the slide of a special paper he made up as a control slide to the original. Both of these slides are in the possession of the Laboratory. The medullary rays, I should add, are the vertical bands or plates of cellular (parenchymatous) tissue proceeding from the pith to the surface.

Mr. Bacon kindly prepared photomicrographs (x 120) from the slides of both our specimen and that of the wood pulp mixture which he produced as a 'control'. These photomicrographs are reproduced in Plate XXVII. To all intents and purposes, these photomicrographs are identical. The bonding used to stick the folds of paper together was egg albumen, *i.e.*, white of egg. Here is Messrs. Sindall and Bacon's report:

[42] "Length 75 mm (3 inches), Width at Base, 34 mm, Width at Top End, 30 mm, Thickness 1.5 mm., Average Weight, 36 Grains".

27, Walbrook,
London, E.C.4.
June 16th, 1931

HARRY Price, Esq.,

The National Laboratory of Psychical Research,

13[d], Roland Gardens, S.W.7.

Dear Sir,

Confirming the report that I made at your Laboratory on the 9th inst., the analysis of the sample of paper handed to me is as follows : —

Mechanical ground wood pulp 40%

Chemical wood pulp consisting of sulphite and soda wood 60%

I have had a sample made up approximating to the above composition for the purpose of having photomicrographs for comparison. The prints show the papers to be practically identical in character and medullary rays can be seen quite plainly in both specimens.

The sample of paper handed to me appeared to be of a class known as M.G. Cap Printing and the binding medium used to prevent the paper disintegrating when swallowed I find to be Egg Albumen.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) WILLIAM BACON.

—~—☼—~—

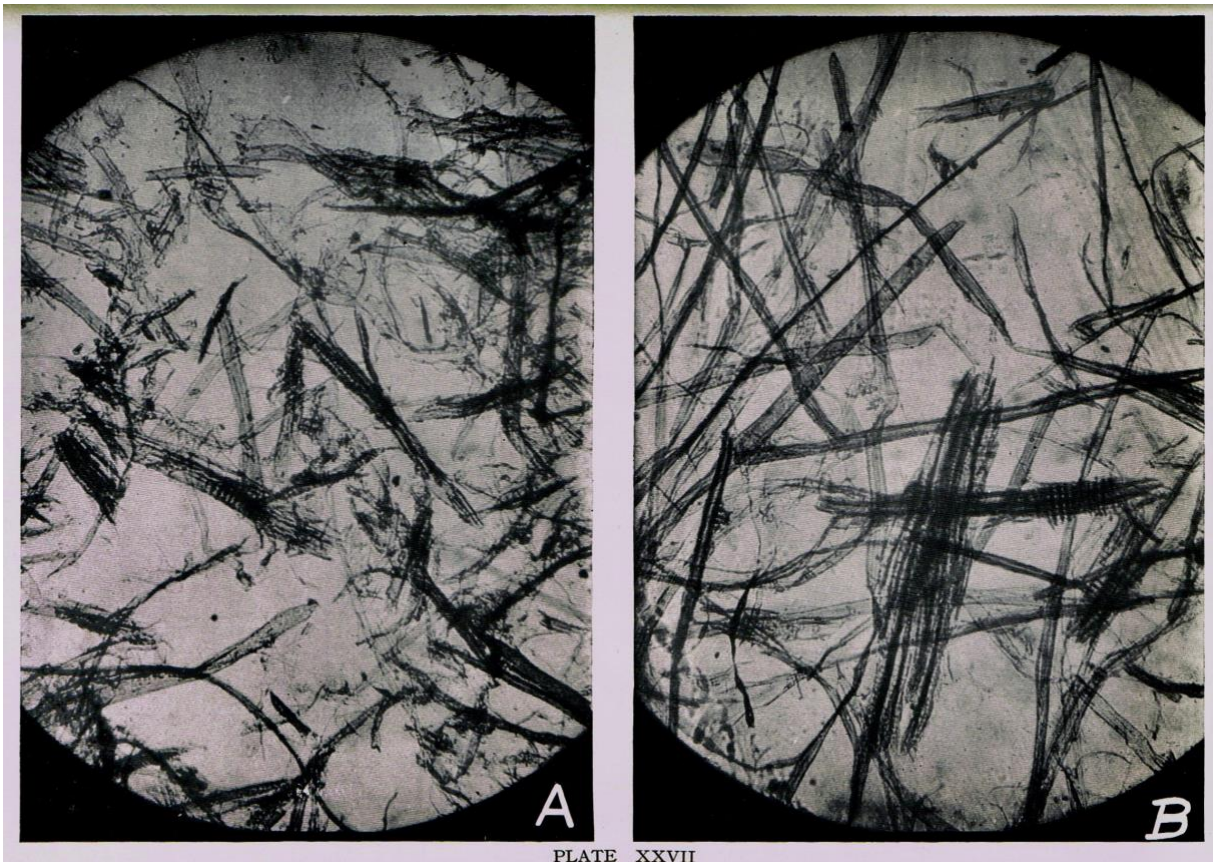


PLATE XXVII

Photomicrographs (x 120) of *A*, the paper 'teleplasm' secured from Mrs. Duncan on June 4th, 1931, and *B*, control mixture of 60% chemical and 40% mechanical wood pulp. The fibres, medullary rays, etc., are identical in both photographs

We can note in Mr Duncan's interview his possible explanations of the three types, or stages, of the ectoplasmic substance which exuded from his wife. The first is the *paper—wood pulp* type, as analysed by Sindall and Bacon, Consulting Chemists, London. The second was categorised by the National Laboratory as the *white-of-egg—albuminoid* type. The laboratory somehow obtained a sample from the London Psychical Laboratory at the conclusion of a séance. Mr Duncan stated that a damp object was between the medium's chest and the garment into which she had been sewn; this was verified by all who were present and this was removed with a pair of forceps. The portion of alleged teleplasm was in the form of a strip around five inches long, its appearance like some sort of tissue; it was placed in distilled water and afterwards cut into pieces.

The National Laboratory received the specimen on January 7th, 1931 in a two-ounce bottle and noted that it was a pity it had not been immediately immersed in absolute alcohol or a formalin solution. Harry Price, its Honorary Director, described the sample:

> "In appearance the substance was amorphous, greyish-white tissue, apparently of a gelatinous nature, with many small fragments which had become detached from the mass. It appeared slightly fibrous. In size, it was roughly 20 mm. square and 3 mm. thick. It weighed, with the surface water adhering to it, 3.5 grams. To the touch it felt spongy and rather slimy, like hard-boiled white of egg."

This was to be analysed by the National Laboratory, with Messrs. C. Baker, of Holborn, a well-known optical instrument manufacturer, and microscopists prepared slides of the substance. A portion was given to Dr X, a distinguished London consulting and analytical chemist, for analysis (not the same Dr X who cut off the teleplasm). The National Laboratory was not at liberty to reveal his name without permission, given the nature of the claimed teleplasm, and the chemist wanted no association with its connection. The bottom line of the report was:

> "You will notice that I have found some facts, namely, the conjunction of protein, iron chloride, and sulphate, and I have given you some additional information as the properties of such mixtures. I do not say positively, however, that the protein in the specimen brought to me was white of egg." [43]

The National Laboratory, namely Mr Price, on page 95 of its Bulletin report gives details of how the Laboratory produced a strip of 'synthetic teleplasm' of *white-of-egg—albuminoid* type similar in appearance and makeup to the portion they had received from the Duncan séance. This was made up of the following substances in varying proportions: white of a new-laid egg, ferric chloride, phosphoric acid, stale urine thickened with Nelson's gelatin, and hot acid from olive oil. Any interested reader who wishes the full reports should contact me, as owing to space I cannot publish them in full here.

Very few specimens of any ectoplasmic substance have been obtained by researchers but, in the case of those whom I am aware of, the reports of its makeup are of similar composition, i.e. paper-based. There have been numerous decades of warnings by Spiritualists that it is dangerous for a medium to have ectoplasmic substance taken, and the said substance would disappear in white light as a general rule. The medium is said to be at high risk of serious injury and even death if the substance is grabbed or touched without permission from the spirit control, and the National Laboratory had a commendable general policy not to seize teleplasm without the medium's permission. The warning of death and/or serious injury to the medium dates back to a statement made by the alleged spirit Katie King circa 1873/4, whose

[43] I have noted in the article that the LPL had another specimen examined; the analyst report dated February 9th, 1931 states: "We have made a very careful examination of the material which was submitted to us and we are of the opinion that it consists of paper, cloth, and such everyday materials mixed with an organic substance which is in every respect similar to coagulated white of egg."

materialisation through her medium, Florence Cook, was dramatically seized twice, as were other numerous famous mediums of the period, without any serious injury, etc. [44]

The third stage of the teleplasm is the *cheesecloth* type or, as it was suggested by Mr Duncan:

> "The third stage is of muslin-like texture. … Sometimes it is thick in places and at other times very thin, and it has the appearance, under the light, of being like muslin. On some occasions, I have witnessed what you refer to as a selvedge, and it appeared to be, when felt, like a curtain—rough."

It can be clearly noted that the first two so-called stages of the teleplasm (*paper—wood pulp*, then the spongy *white-of-egg—albuminoid*) were nothing like the appearance of the third stage (*cheese-cloth*—muslin-like texture). So we may ask how one accounts for Sir Oliver Lodge's clear comments when he attended the séance at the LSA on 30th October, 1930; he noted:

> SIR O.L. (opening the curtain) I can see it coming from her mouth, it is like a bundle of strings. (Both times I felt it, it lay on my hand. The first time the visible part was about a foot long, the second time only a few inches. It was heavy, cold and clammy, its texture was like a number of the parallel threads forming the bundle two inches thick. It might have been separated out into strands. It was not like woven material but was stringy. A curiously unpleasant slight odour remained either on my hand or in my nostrils as an occasional whiff for 12 hours afterwards.
>
> DR R. Warm? Clammy?
>
> SIR O.L. No, it was drier than I expected.
>
> DR R. Do you notice any smell?
>
> SIR O.L. Yes, a kind of smell, but I don't know how to describe it, it is just like a lot of threads, there is no formation in it at all. Now it is beginning to go back into the mouth, I think.

As previously noted, Sir Oliver had nothing to do with Spiritualism, but he was an experienced psychical researcher along with the many eminent persons named in this article. It may be suggested, on the *positive* side, that the above quote is the start of the transformation from stage two to stage three in the structure of the plasm! Its formation in Lodge's brief but detailed first-hand recorded description is in itself impressive and is not recorded in any positive light by either of the two laboratories' conclusions.

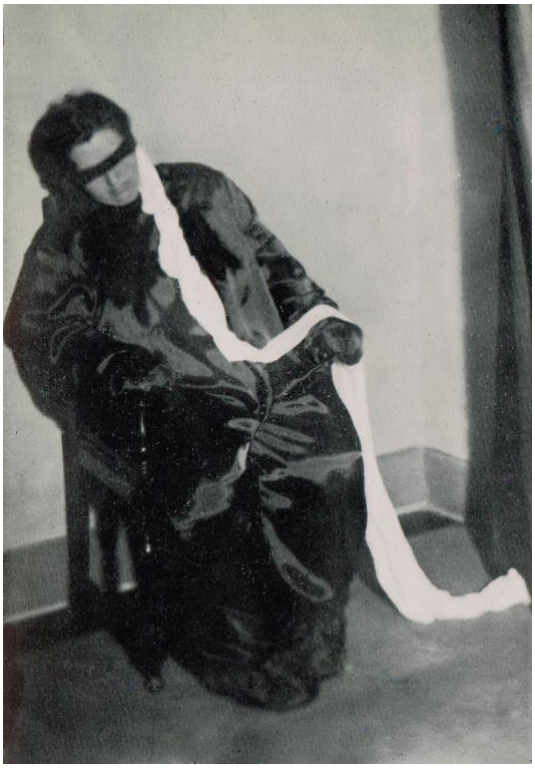
After the first Duncan sitting at the National Laboratory on May 4th, 1931 its Notes, Comments and Impressions of the séance, dated May 9th, 1931, notes on pages 20-26:

> The reader will see from the protocol that 'teleplasm' (this is a convenient name to call it—at present we do not know what it is) appeared after we had tied up the medium a second time. It likewise disappeared. A long stream of it was produced, like a bride's veil twisted into a rope.
>
> "The teleplasm appeared many times and in many shapes. It fell in a long festoon from the medium's mouth and nostrils; it coiled itself and squirmed upon the floor; it entangled itself round the chair; it came out of the cabinet to my feet; it appeared like a large veil completely covering the bulky form of the medium except for a slit in front of the mouth; it shortened itself and lengthened itself; it twisted itself up into a short, thick rope, slightly damp and with an odour. Of course, all these transformations were caused

[44] See the Pioneer pdf booklet: "A Question of Fraud" (details on the last page of this issue).

by the medium who was manipulating it. Sometimes it appeared semi-transparent and with a sheen; sometimes it appeared opaque."

"But the production of teleplasm was so frequent, and the stuff was in view for such long periods, that the exact timing of the various appearances was no longer a necessity. On and off, the substance was in view for one and a half hours." [45]



As with much of the reports there is little explanation as to *how this was done*. "Of course, all these transformations were caused by the medium who was manipulating it." Was the medium *actually* caught doing this, seen by one or more of the researchers? It would be very doubtful, as it would have been no doubt in the conclusion's report. But in the following paragraph the above quote is *further* downgraded:

"In the protocol it is stated that the teleplasm was 'issuing from her mouth', 'coming from her nostrils', etc. This is a little misleading, and is of course what was dictated. Actually, we did *not* see it coming in a stream from the medium's facial orifices as the protocol suggests. It was exactly as if it had been placed in the mouth and ends tucked into the nostrils."

The photographs, some shown within this article, of the *cheesecloth*-type teleplasm or, as Mr Duncan put it, muslin-like texture, speak for themselves. The photographs were taken at the second, third and fourth sittings and it seems apparent that the same *cheesecloth*-type material was used in two, if not all three, photographed séances, together with the rubber glove, some form of tubing and safety-pins, which were all photographed. The problems of explanation were confronted with some amazement by the NLPR Council; it can be noted in their report:

> Although we have concluded the investigation of the Duncan mediumship to our entire satisfaction, several things are still puzzling us. One is why these people ever came to the Laboratory at all, entirely of their own volition. Secondly, why did they allow us to photograph the series of cheese cloth *tableaux?* Thirdly, why did Albert hand us out a piece of egg bag or toilet paper and tell us it was teleplasm? Why were we permitted to photograph a safety-pin? And a rubber glove, complete with glint? And why did the medium *dare* to pirouette among us, in a bright light, with a teleplasmic tail trailing round our feet? We have been accused of being 'too proud to pinch'—but even then, the medium ran a great risk of the stuff accidentally catching in something and finding herself back in the cabinet minus a yard or two of cheese cloth. It is all very puzzling.
>
> A distinguished psychist who read the MS. of this Report said that it will put psychical research back fifty years. But I am sure he is mistaken—at least, I sincerely hope so. Every case must be judged on its merits, and certainly there has been no other mediumship quite like the Duncans', which is destined to become classic.

—~—☼—~—

[45] In the same report: "An amazing feature of Mrs. Duncan's mediumship is the fact that, in the bright light I have described, the psychic comes out into the circle, with several feet of teleplasm trailing behind her, and the stuff never gets caught up in the sitters' feet, and the medium never treads upon it. Even young *débutantes* have to be taught or coached how to carry their train; one would imagine that it would be no less difficult to manage a 'train' of teleplasm under all sorts of changing conditions."

I have tried to put as much information into this article as possible, which has inevitably led to some of the points being repeated. But the surface, I believe, has been scratched well enough for the reader to gain some factual insight into, and knowledge of, the nine decades of the accusations that Helen Duncan used the artificial homemade teleplasm-ectoplasm which she would later regurgitate when required to materialise spirits. The so-called third stage process in the production of the *cheesecloth*-type teleplasm was not offered to the researchers of the NLPR as a sample for analysis by the alleged control, Albert Stewart.[46]

However, the *physical* evidence of analysts and photographic material cannot be denied in itself—circumstantial evidence resulting in a roller-coaster of contradictions, speculation and assumptions made by some researchers, albeit we should be mindful of the extreme difficulties the investigators faced in the case of the Duncans. But is the claim of fraud justified? One may well presume their claim is unjust and is *not* proven, given that *no* items she is said to have *concealed* and used as props, e.g. yards of some cheesecloth-like material, rubber glove, etc. were recovered—nor could they satisfactorily explain how these were produced by *normal* means after all the controls imposed by the NLPR and the LPL, with Duncan stripped naked, full body searches, and the medium severely restricted in her movements. Is it not the researcher's duty presumably to prove beyond reasonable doubt the means of fraud rather than conjecture?

However, of course, in a court of law one can be found guilty with circumstantial evidence if it is overwhelming—I leave it to the reader to decide whether the evidence would be enough to prove regurgitation. One of the National Laboratory researchers was Professor William McDougall, an eminent British psychologist, who in a court of law would be regarded as a *sceptical* researcher; it was McDougall who suggested to the NLPR Council after the first séance the possibility of regurgitation by the medium. He attended two of the five séances and his impressions are without doubt: **a charge of fraud!**

The following was published in the NLPR Bulletin (Appendix F):

> Having been present at two sittings with the medium, Mrs. Duncan, at the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, on the invitation of Mr. Harry Price, I record that my impression during and after the sittings was that the whole performance was fraudulent. The manner of secreting and producing, for exposure in red light, the material claimed as teleplasm was not clear to me.
>
> On the first occasion I suspected an *æsophageal diverticulum*; on the second, Dr. William Brown's observations [47] led me to suppose the material might have been packed in the nostrils and nasal cavities.
>
> My general comment is, that here is another case which justifies the general principle that, when the general procedure and circumstances demanded by the medium are such as

[46] The LPL reported some cotton fibres in their analysed report: "The report on the fourth fragment (received in a prepared sterile container) was as follows: "The specimen consisted of a piece of surgical gauze soaked in resinous fluid. The gauze consisted of typical cotton fibers. The resinous fluid had the odour of Canada Balsam or one of the pine resins." (April 10, 1931) - The report on the fifth fragment (April 15, 1931) was in similar terms."

[47] Dr. William Brown attended three of the Duncan séances and noted (Appendix G):

"I was able to take part in May and June last, I never for one moment felt that the phenomena she produced were supernormal.

The so-called 'ectoplasm' or 'teleplasm' which she seemed to produce (behind closed curtains) in the first two sittings was apparently a long strip of light fabric, which she may have previously swallowed and then regurgitated, or—more probably—have concealed during the previous search by clever prestidigitation. On the third and last occasion the preliminary search of the medium was exceptionally thorough, and on this occasion, as I anticipated, she produced nothing more than a very short piece of stuff which was probably regurgitated paper."

suggest fraud and favour fraud, the observer is justified in regarding the phenomena as fraudulent—even if he is not able to suggest any plausible explanation of the phenomena; and, still less, to demonstrate the truth of any hypothesis he may entertain as to the manner of their fraudulent production.

July 12th, 1931 (Signed) WILLIAM McDOUGALL.

There is little here, I would suggest, to pronounce such a positive conclusion of fraud which could be responsibly made from these eminent men of science. It can be further noted at the first séance on May 4th, 1931 that Professor McDougall himself carefully examined the medium for any secreted items Mrs Duncan could use:

"The medium and her husband arrived punctually at 7.30 p.m., and were introduced to a number of our Research Council who were present, including Professor Dr. William McDougall, F.R.S., the distinguished psychologist, who was spending a long vacation in England after his strenuous work at Duke University, U.S.A.

"*Fore control*. —At her own suggestion, Mrs. Duncan offered to strip entirely nude and subject herself to any examination. This she did in my office in the presence of Mrs. A. Peel Goldney, a member of the National Laboratory Research Council (who has worked in a large midwifery hospital), Professor McDougall, and the present writer [Harry Price]. Mr. Duncan was not in the room during the examination.

Mrs. Duncan was thoroughly examined externally, and Professor McDougall (who holds a medical degree) very carefully examined her throat, mouth, and teeth. Everything appeared normal. Mrs. Goldney combed her (bobbed) hair in order to see that nothing was concealed there. No vaginal inspection was made, though I understood that the medium would have permitted this, had we expressed the desire."

"Having thoroughly examined the medium's body externally, we dressed her in a pair of black sateen knickers, a coat (like a man's) made of the same material, and a pair of black stockings. These garments belonged to the medium, and were brought in case we had no similar clothes large enough. All these articles were minutely examined, turned inside out, and held up to the light. They were exactly what they purported to be. The medium donned them in our presence, consumed a glass of water, and was led into the *séance*-room by Professor McDougall and myself. The sitters (including Mr. Duncan) had already taken their places. We led her to the 'cabinet', placed her in an arm-chair in the recess, closed the curtains, and in fifteen seconds the medium was apparently asleep and quietly snoring."

—~—☼—~—

The sole purpose of this article is not to show whether or not Helen Duncan was genuine or a fraud but to give the reader an informed opinion of the long-standing allegations of regurgitation. We can see the long-standing Spiritualists' claim that it was *all* down to Harry Price, but it *was* actually the opinion of two separate organisations, as well as the medium's husband to some extent, which brought about the, albeit unproved, claim of regurgitation against the medium. It is true, however, that in the following years Harry Price would stick to this explanation and become the medium's nemesis.

Of course, what is not taken into *any* consideration in these reports is the Spiritualists' side of the story or hypothesising other possibilities of explanation. Given that we do not know the full makeup of what is generally referred to as ectoplasm, it has over many decades been referred to as semi-physical. Ectoplasm, for want of a generally accepted term, is taken *mostly* from the medium, an extension of their life-force—called psychic force in the days of William Crookes—in the process of materialisation, which demands possibly more fluids than other physical mediumship, and is, in part, said to be taken and added to from elsewhere.

The first full-form materialisation medium in Britain was Florence Cook. The spirit which is said to have materialised was Annie Morgan, better known as Katie King (Jr). At this early stage of this new phase of phenomena questions were put to the spirit on November 28th, 1873: [48]

> "Katie says she makes this draper out of mater obtained from the dresses of all the sitters in the circle. She says that when she is forming herself she materialises the drapery fist, and her own body afterwards: …"
>
> "When you dissolve, which part disappears the first, the body or the dress?" "The body, of course; it's material power goes back to her and then the dress goes into the elements"

It is well established that materialisation mediums have, in the past, struggled to produce enough drapery; for example, Duncan's materialisations generally had no feet, the bottom parts of the legs being missing. Another medium was the Polish physical medium, Franek Kluski, sometimes referred to as the "King of Mediums". Born in Warsaw in 1873, he was unique. From around 1918 to 1925, he gave psychic science some of the most puzzling evidence on record with his wide spectrum of physical mediumship. He did not give public séances and never charged for private seances, and only sat for around 350 people, generally psychical researchers such as Professor Charles Richet, Dr Gustave Geley and Colonel Norbert Okolowicz, so there are records of his seances. His final period, 1921/1925, was his most powerful phase of physical mediumship—producing better materialisations of human spirits. [49]

He was one of the first mediums to show ectoplasm coming from his body, unlike earlier mediums such as Florence Cook, Annie Mellon, Kate Woods, etc. It was reported that a "fluid" emanated from Kluski frequently like a stream, a metre wide, of human height; some of the materialisations looked like cardboard or made with rags and were preceded by sounds of rubbing cardboard or fabric, tearing of paper—but never a trace of paper, etc. was found after the séance. The forms would often have problems dressing themselves, rubbing various objects prior to full materialisation—transforming the "raw material" into what was required, e.g. an officer's materialisation had a clearly detailed military cap but the uniform would be a blur, vaguely resembling the medium's clothes. However, when attention was paid to the uniform the materialisation would grow one.

Officers in Russian uniforms appeared; the Officers present at the séance felt their epaulettes and buttons being rubbed and after the materialised forms buttons and epaulettes would shine. The materialised forms rubbed against the sitters, and Kluski in particular. After the séance, their clothes showed signs of wear; sometimes the figures approached the sitters and vigorously rubbed their shoulders and back, causing intense physical and mental exhaustion to the persons involved; the result of this, however, was the materialised form being very clear and fully visible. The materialised form would target the young, healthy sitters—avoiding the elderly and those who had consumed alcohol prior to the séance.

This is only a candid overview in my own words but it gives some idea of how Kluski's drapery was formed, like Florence Cook, who would get her materials from this world to make the clothing! The researchers investigating Helen Duncan claimed her as a fraud on the grounds of the man-made ectoplasm/teleplasm, assuming that she secreted it on her body either externally or internally and then regurgitated it when required. However, apart from what the two research laboratories were given by Albert, naturally knowing that the

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[48] Published in "The Spiritualist Newspaper", dated December 12th, 1873; for the full account please see the Pioneer pdf booklet, "A Question of Fraud" (details are on the back page of this issue).

[49] See Pioneer, Vol. 6, No.3: "Franek Kluski".

researchers would rigorously test the specimens, *not* a trace of the three categories of ectoplasm/teleplasm were found by the researchers!

Some readers may wonder why no full materialisations appeared in the investigations, given the report published in Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 3: "Helen Duncan & John McIndoe – A Scots Materialising Medium"; the report was around a year prior to going to the London Spiritualists Alliance (LSA):

> "Soon another voice is heard calling "Mother" and a young girl emerged from the curtains, came over and spoke to one of the new lady sitters, who recognised her as her daughter. She conversed with her in a low tone, apparently giving a comforting message, and handed her mother a rose, taken from a bunch placed in the cabinet.
>
> "Then another girl form of different build took her place, coming from the other side of the cabinet, and was claimed as her sister by one of the ladies. She also brought a rose with her."

It is not often realised that the alleged Albert Stewart was *not* then Duncan's control (perhaps in the background but not named); there were around three before Albert, who appears to have taken over circa 1930. At the time of the 1930/31 investigations it appears that he was using the medium's vocal cords, whereas later reports show that he was an independent materialisation with his own voice-box. Later, full materialisations would appear with Albert in full control; perhaps, on a *positive* note, the change of controls affected the intensive controlled séances.



Victoria Helen McCrae Duncan
(née MacFarlane)

November 25th, 1897 – December 6th, 1956

HELEN DUNCAN—AGAIN!

November 25th, 1897 – December 6th, 1956

—~—☼—~—

By Paul J. Gaunt.



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

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

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

However, the story does not end there:

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

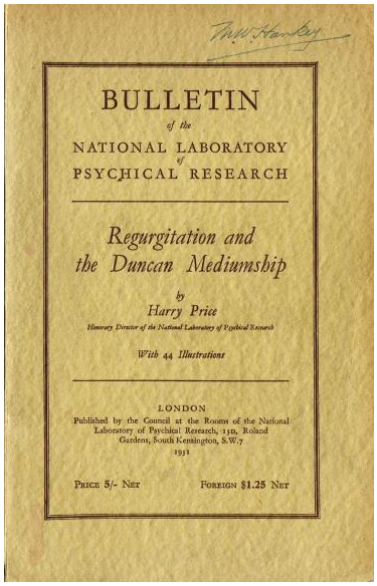
As detailed in the Pioneer article, "Helen Duncan –Regurgitation", previously referenced, the LPL invited Mrs Duncan to come to London and to submit her mediumship for investigation. Mr and Mrs Duncan accordingly agreed and entered into a binding contract to sit exclusively for the London Psychical Laboratory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

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

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

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

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


BULLETIN
of the
NATIONAL LABORATORY
of
PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship

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

With 44 Illustrations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The following is Miss McGinlay's Statutory Declaration:

—~—☼—~—

Below I have printed the Declaration from the original copy:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

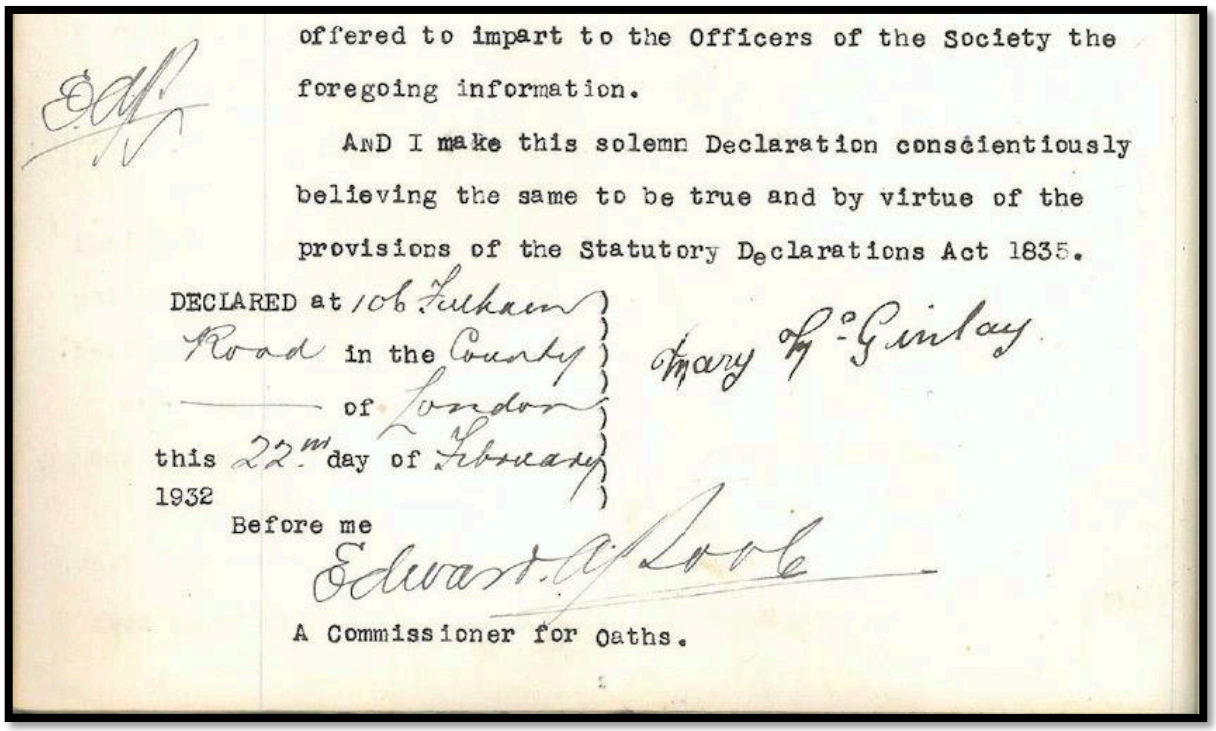
DECLARED at 106, Fulham Road
in the County of London this 22nd day of February, 1932.

Before me,

(Signed) Edward A. Poole,

A Commissioner for Oaths.

(Signed) MARY McGINLAY.



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

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

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

Before me

Edward A. Poole

A Commissioner for Oaths.

Mary McGinlay

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

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



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

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

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

Mrs. DUNCAN'S MEDIUMSHIP

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

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

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

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

DUNCAN MEDIUMSHIP

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

"WOMAN'S TELEPLASM TRICKERY"

To the Editor of the "Daily Mail."

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

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

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

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

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

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

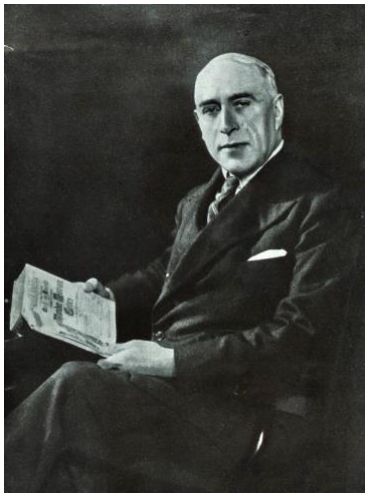
Obviously, this butter muslin must either have been distorted out of all possible recognition by the alleged repeated regurgitations and washings, or else must have been carefully preserved and, by some strange coincidence and extreme stupidity on the part

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

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

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What can be concluded?



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dear Mr. Price,

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

Yours Sincerely,
Molly McGinlay

signature

PS Give my regards to Ethel

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

Dear Miss McGinlay,

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

Trusting that you will have every happiness for the future.

Yours sincerely,
Harry Price





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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

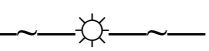
> Harder to deny was the suggestion from other quarters, not least from the Duncans, that Price had set the whole thing up. The machinery of entrapment – advertising for sitters who would be credible witnesses, ensuring that Mrs Duncan took the money (and left a receipt), [19] securing the signed evidence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

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

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

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

Victoria Helen McCrae Duncan
(née MacFarlane)
November 25th, 1897 – December 6th, 1956



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

[20] Gaskill quote, pages 161/162.

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

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

[23] Gaskill quote, page 202.