

PsyPioneer Archives Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

ACD's Psychic Bookshop, Library & Museum (& subsequent relocation to The Friendship Centre)

In a letter to LIGHT, ACD announced the imminent opening of his Psychic Bookshop and Lending Library:

LIGHT JANUARY 24, 1925 page 41.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S PSYCHIC BOOKSHOP AND LIBRARY

SIR-It has long seemed to me that one of the weak points in our psychic movement is the complete disconnection between our splendid literature and the man in the street. He is as a rule absolutely unaware of its existence. In an endeavour to get past this difficulty I am engaged in starting a psychic bookshop and library in one of the most central positions in London. It is in Abbey House in Victoria street, opposite to Dean's Yard, and within a stone's throw of Westminster Abbey. I would ask the support of all psychic students for this venture, so far as it can be given without encroaching upon the trade in psychic books already done by the London Spiritualist Alliance, or by the office of the "Two Worlds." I wish to open up new fields, not to encroach upon the old ones. Nothing but psychic books will be sold, and a large stock kept in hand, while every effort will be made to meet the wants of customers. Should any reader have duplicates which he could spare for the library he would do me a service if, after the beginning of February, he would send them to the manager at the address given.-Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

January 16th.

And on page 47, LIGHT made a separate statement and request for donations of surplus books to the Library:

A PSYCHIC BOOKSHOP.-Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has carried out a cherished scheme of his own by establishing a Psychic Bookshop and Library at Abbey House, Victoria Street (Opposite Dean's Yard and close to Westminster Abbey). The Bookshop will be devoted entirely to the sale of Spiritualistic literature and its success will depend upon students of psychic matters turning to it for the books which they need. A large stock will be kept and all requirements carefully met. Sir Arthur appeals for contributions of old psychic books or duplicate copies for use in the new library. We learn that the premises should be ready early in February and that letters should be addressed to Mr: Monier-Williams, Psychic Bookshop, Abbey House, Victoria Street, S.W.

Three weeks later, LIGHT reported the official opening day:

LIGHT, FEBUARY 14,¹ 1925 page 76.

OPENING OF THE PSYCHIC BOOK SHOP

We live in adventurous days, and surprises crowd thick upon us. Some such reflection doubtless entered the minds of many people passing along Victoria-street on Monday last,² as they gazed into the attractive windows of The Psychic Book Shop opened on that day.

Hitherto the man in the street with an inquiring turn of mind, who wanted to find out something about this new faith which had captured such good men as Conan Doyle, Oliver Lodge, Barrett, Blatchford, and Marshall-Hall, has not known where to turn for information. He knew nothing of such secluded back-waters as Queen-square, Smith-square, and Holland Park.

Now, thanks to the bold initiative of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in at least one very busy quarter of London, psychic literature will, so to speak, hit the public in the face.

The first shop on the north side of Victoria-street, after leaving Westminster Abbey, is destined to become famous. Here, for the first time since the tiny but momentous revolution of 1848 in far-away Hydesville, is a large, well stocked bookshop and library of psychic literature in the very centre of a great city.

On the opening day there was no rush on the part of the public for the treasures within the shop, but a steady sprinkle of people throughout the day who bought books and pamphlets. But the windows were a magnet, and by and by, when these gazers from afar have overcome their initial tremors, they will enter and make their first plunge into the psychic world.

Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle visited the shop morning and afternoon, and answered many inquiries. Orders by post have flowed in, and Mr. R. G. Monier Williams, the manager, and Miss De Morgan, his assistant, had the satisfaction of dispatching numerous parcels at the close of the first day. Miss De Morgan, it is interesting to note, is a Grand-daughter of Professor Augustus De Morgan, who, in the sixties was such a valiant defender of the truth of psychic facts.

L. C.

¹ Saturday

² 9th February

Five months later, ACD wrote to LIGHT announcing his intention to set up a Museum in the basement of the Psychic Bookshop, and invited contributions of objects:

LIGHT, July 4, 1925:

A Proposed Psychic Museum

SIR, - I am establishing a small museum of psychic objects under the Psychic Bookshop, Abbey House, Victoria Street. The situation is so central that such a collection cannot fail to attract attention and to form a powerful propaganda centre. I should be greatly obliged if any of your readers will either give, lend or sell suitable objects. I have at present the two wax gloves lent me the Psychic College and I have the Garscadden collection photographs with some other pictures. With such a nucleus I should have no difficulty in getting together a worthy collection. Perhaps those who wish to help me will send me a line first so that I may tell them how far, with our limited space, their kind offers can be taken advantage of.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

A few months later, he had cause to write to The Daily News in response to a sceptical article they had run on the Museum:

THE DAILY NEWS, 9 December 1925

The Psychic Museum

SIR, - The article by your representative upon this museum is so genial that I should be churlish indeed if I were to take serious exception to it.

In it he couples my name with Sherlock Holmes, and I presume that since I am the only begetter of that over-rated character I must have some strand of my nature which corresponds with him. Let me assume this. In that case I would say (and you may file the saying for reference) that of all the feats of clear thinking which Holmes ever performed by far the greatest was when he saw that a despised and ridiculed subject was in very truth a great new revelation and an epoch-making event in the world's history.

There are many more now who would subscribe to this opinion than a few years ago, and I am convinced that a very short time, at the rate of its present progress will bring about the considered comprehension of it on the part of the whole human race.

My great difficulty with inquirers who come to my museum is that often they know nothing of the subject - worse than nothing in many cases, for they may be filled with prejudices and misrepresentations. Then in a few minutes I have to try and convey to them the elements of a great science. Fancy a man coming to a geological museum who knew nothing of the science and imagined that he was competent to correct the curator upon the order of the fossils. That is a fair analogy to what is a constant experience.

To show the untenable nature of the views which they put forward I will take those of your correspondent concerning the experiment which produced the original Geley gloves. Let us take the facts as recorded in the Journal of the Institut Metapsychique, which is the organ of that body - a scientific and not a spiritualistic institution in Paris.

First of all we will take the fact that the report of what occurred was signed by Charles Richet, Professor of Physiology at the University of Paris, Gustav Geley, who was the head of the Institute, and of European reputation, finally by the Count de Grammont, an experienced investigator, none of the three a professed Spiritualist.

They observed what occurred under a fair red light, and all were agreed as to their observation. Their scientific reputation depended upon the truth of their statement. Now I ask your representative for a fair answer to this question. Were these three men deliberately and senselessly lying? I will assume, as he is a sane man, that his answer is no.

Then the only alternative is that they were deceived. Let us see if this is credible. They had locked the door, and as the room was their own (I know it well, and it is in a basement) there was no secret entrance.

When Kluski, who is a Polish banker, had sunk into a trance, and when the ectoplasmic figure was formed from him in a fashion already recorded and photographed on many occasions with other mediums, it was asked to dip its hand into a pail which contained warm paraffin. All the observers saw it do so, and controlled the medium at the same time.

When the wax had encrusted the hands of the phantom it was asked to disappear. It did so, leaving the wax gloves which had formed over its hands upon the table.

And now comes the point which your correspondent has overlooked, and which is fatal to his theory of impersonation. The wax gloves, as anyone can see for themselves, are in one solid piece, and are much narrower at the wrist than across the hand. How, then, could the hand have been withdrawn save by dematerialisation inside the glove. No one has ever yet suggested any feasible way in which this could have been done.

To show the care taken by the researchers, Geley had put cholesterine in the pall of wax. An independent chemist analysed a portion of the glove and reported cholesterine. This, of course, is proof positive that the glove was not brought ready-made into the room.

Impressions were taken of the spirit hand and of that of the medium, with the result that a certificate was obtained from M. Bayle, of the Paris police, that there was no resemblance.

The experiment was repeated with various sitters, Mr. and Mrs. Hewat McKenzie being among those who obtained the gloves at the Psychic Museum. Some 28 impressions were taken in all on different occasions. Is it to be supposed that in every case these observant circles were unable in a red light to see ' that a stranger had come through the locked door and was walking about the room?

It is a foolish thing to be too credulous, and it is an equally foolish thing to be too incredulous. The balanced judgment holds its poise between.

I can well understand that a reporter may find it impossible to attain in half an hour the experience and knowledge which 38 years of work have given to me. That is natural. But it is not natural or reasonable that a novice who was not present should ascribe to fraud or folly events which were observed and guaranteed by some of the first intellects of Europe.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Eighteen months later, he was given the opportunity to be interviewed by The Strand Magazine and to explain the major objects in the Museum, on his own terms. (ACD and his 'immortal' character, Sherlock Holmes, had been synonymous with Strand since 1891.):

The Strand Magazine
May, 1927



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the Psychic Museum.

THE WORLD'S HAPPIEST MUSEUM

Through a Room of Miracles with

Sir A. Conan Doyle

By LEONARD CROCOMBE

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE thought "The World's Happiest Museum" a happy title for these pages when I mentioned it. "If," he added, "it is not too much like propaganda." For, when assenting to the Editor's request that he should act as my guide through the Psychic Museum, he wished it made clear that the interview was not to be considered as propaganda for Spiritualism and psychic phenomena. That was not his object in giving me this interview for the Magazine with which he has been associated as a leading contributor since the year of its foundation.

Why the world's *happiest* museum? The answer will be plain when you have read about its contents.

To reach this room of miracles you enter the Psychic Book Shop and Library, facing Westminster Abbey. Sir Arthur is proprietor of this shop, and beneath it is the long room in

which he has arranged hundreds of objects, photographs, pictures – a thought-provoking record of certain phases of Spiritualist activities, and of the results of psychic research (between the two is an important difference), for the past fifty years or so.

“My Museum may be the smallest in London,” Sir Arthur said, “but it is as large as any museum ever need be, for the visitor will have to give several hours to its exhibits if he wishes really to examine them all thoroughly. It is, also, unique. We can give the history of every single thing in it, and I do not think the most hardened sceptic could go over the exhibits and retain any doubt as to the continuity of our life after physical death. That is surely the core of every religion, and my little Museum must be doing good work if it proves our survival of bodily death. What is there even in our big brother in Bloomsbury which is so important as that?”

It should, perhaps, be explained that the exhibits may be divided into two sections: one, those with a definite evidential value; two, those which, although non-evidential, are of interest for the stories attaching to them or – as in the case of a number of paintings – because they illustrate vividly certain dramatic aspects of psychic phenomena, the scientific accuracy of which can be tested elsewhere by all who care to seek advice in the Library above the Museum.

Let us, then, examine first some of the things which can be labelled evidential. To me the most dramatic exhibit of this class is the enlargement of the actual photograph of Sir William Crookes, F.R.S., arm-in-arm with the materialized spirit of Katie King. (No. 1)



1. THE MOST REMARKABLE SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPH EVER TAKEN

Professor Sir William Crookes arm-in-arm with the materialized spirit of Katie King.
This is one of the forty-four photographs taken, under the strictest of scientific test conditions,
by the great scientist in his own laboratory.

Sir Arthur's remarks on this wonderful exhibit were: “This photograph is an enlarged copy of the one taken by Sir William Crookes in his own laboratory more than fifty years ago. It is one of the forty-four which Crookes took. Here is another one in which Katie is seen entering the room, together with a letter of Crookes' in which he shows that Katie and the medium, Florence Cook, were two separate and distinct people. When one considers that Crookes' observations of Miss Cook extended for over three years and were conducted in his own house, I cannot imagine how any reasonable being can doubt the truth of them.”

Dipping for a moment into Crookes' "Researches," we find the following paragraphs regarding this vivid photograph on the Museum walls:-

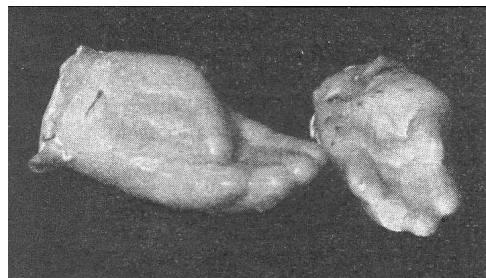
"One of the most interesting of the pictures is one in which I am standing by the side of Katie; she has her bare foot upon a particular part of the floor, Afterwards I dressed Miss Cook like Katie, placed her and myself in exactly the same position, and we were photographed by the same cameras, placed exactly as in the other experiment, and illuminated by the same light. When these two pictures are placed over each other, the two photographs of myself coincide exactly as regards stature, etc., but Katie is half a head taller than Miss Cook, and looks a big woman in comparison with her. In the breadth of her face, in many of the pictures, she differs essentially in size from her medium, and the photographs show several other points of difference. ...I have the most absolute certainty that Miss Cook and Katie are two separate individuals so far as their bodies are concerned. Several little marks on Miss Cook's face are absent on Katie's. Miss Cook's hair is so dark a brown as almost to appear black; a lock of Katie's which is now before me, and which she allowed me to cut from her luxuriant tresses, having first traced it up to the scalp and satisfied myself that it actually grew there, is a rich golden auburn.

"On one evening I timed Katie's pulse. It beat steadily at seventy-five, whilst Miss Cook's pulse a little time after was going at its usual rate of ninety. On applying my ear to Katie's chest I could hear a heart beating rhythmically inside, and pulsating even more steadily than did Miss Cook's heart when she allowed me to try a similar experiment after the *séance*. Tested in the same way, Katie's lungs were found to be sounder than her medium's, for at the time I tried my experiment Miss Cook was under medical treatment for a severe cough."

Well may the great scientist conclude that chapter with the words:

"To imagine, I say, the Katie King of the last three years to be the result of imposture does more violence to one's reason and common sense than to believe her to be what she herself affirms."

Next in dramatic as well as evidential value I place the now famous wax moulds or "gloves" of spirit hands. (No. 2.)



2 - THE SPIRIT GLOVES.

These and other paraffin wax moulds were made by a materialized spirit who plunged his hand into a bucket of warm paraffin, in the presence of Dr. Geley and Professor Richet, the eminent French psychic investigators. The spirit hand dematerialized after the wax had solidified. Every attempt to duplicate these moulds by normal means has failed.

"You will see," Sir Arthur explained, "that the wrists are smaller than the breadth of the hands, so that the hands could not have been extricated from the moulds save by dematerialization. I defy anyone to suggest any other way. Houdini, the conjurer, and Sir Arthur Keith, a great anatomist, have both tried their skill, and the results, laboriously produced, have only served to accentuate the unique character of that which they tried to copy. And, of course, it must be remembered that men of scientific repute – Richet, Geley, and the Count de Gramont – superintended the whole experiment. On the wall there is a picture illustrating the occasion on which these wax moulds were obtained. The medium was an amateur, Franek Kluski, of Warsaw. When you have the palpable proof of the wax 'gloves' on the one side, and the evidence of such expert witnesses as Richet, Geley, and de Gramont on the other, I think the case is proved."

There is space to tell only very briefly and incompletely how these wax gloves, and others, were obtained. Dr. Geley, of the Institut Metapsychique, Paris, and Professor Richet had prepared a bucket of warm paraffin, and upon the appearance of a materialized figure – that of a smallish man – the request was made that the spirit should plunge his hand into the bucket and then withdraw it, so that when it dematerialized a cast of the hand would be left on the table, like a glove of solidified paraffin, so narrow at the wrist that the hand could not have been withdrawn by any possible normal means without breaking the mould. Dr. Geley writes, after proving that none of the sitters made the gloves:-

"Finally, there is the hypothesis that the gloves were brought by the medium. This is disproved by the fact that we secretly introduced chemicals* into the melted wax, and that these were found in the gloves. The report of the expert modellers on the point is categorical and final. . . ."

While I have been making my notes on the gloves, my guide has been fingering the large vase illustrated on the next page. (No 3.)

* Cholesterin.



3. - THE SYRIAN VASE.

"It came down suddenly, inexplicably, on a séance table."

The medium was an amateur, a poor woman,
who gave away all the apports produced through her psychic powers.

"This room is full of incredible things," he said, when I rejoined him. "Things which, in the old days, would have been called miracles, or the results of miracles. A miracle, now and always, is simply the intrusion of some natural force which we do not yet understand. That is why it is incorrect to use the words 'supernatural' or 'supernormal' in connection with these manifestations of powers of whose methods we are as yet ignorant. Everything in Nature is 'natural' and 'normal,' whether we understand it or not. We can show you results here before we can accurately explain their causes."

(I was not quite sure whether or not we were touching on that propaganda, so I took the vase without comment.)

"Yes, now examine this big jug, or vase," Sir Arthur continued. "It came down suddenly, inexplicably, on a *séance* table."

"This is what we call an apport – the French word for something brought. Apport phenomena are the bringing of objects – live birds and fish, fresh fruit, dew-laden flowers, coins – all manner of things! – from a distance, through walls, closed windows, locked doors, and so on, into the midst of a group of sitters. Darkness is not always essential, neither is a *professional* apport medium necessary.

"No one could say that the medium had this large jug hidden upon her person," Sir Arthur continued. "I happen to know a good deal about the medium. She was an amateur. From first to last she – or, rather, the spirits who used the psychic power she supplied – brought through about two thousand objects of various kinds – Chinese and Indian lamps, amulets, Tibetan pots – all manner of queer things – and among them all I do not think there was one that could have been got in England. This jug, for example, is Syrian ware. She was quite a poor woman, but she would not sell her apports. She just left them with the sitters. Of course, it is all very fantastic, but it is true."

Sir Arthur next called my attention to a number of smaller apports which appeared in his own presence under test conditions. We are, be it remembered, still considering only the exhibits of evidential value.

"This pile of Turkish pennies," said Sir Arthur; "there are about thirty of them. They all crashed down on the table during a test sitting I arranged in Melbourne. Now, you might hunt Australia from coast to coast and you would not find a Turkish penny. How, then, could the medium have got these? We asked the question of the medium's 'control' and were told that they had been brought from a well in Asia Minor. They had been hidden behind some bricks and were part of the hoard of some poor peasant who had probably been murdered. Such was the story; but, of course, there was no proof at all of their origin except, perhaps, the very slight corroboration provided by the fact that some of the coins have, as you see, got verdigris upon them, which seems to show that they had been in a damp place.

"The only thing that is perfectly certain is that they were not on the medium's body, for I stripped and searched him; also, such coins, as I have said, could not be got in Australia.

"It is easy to make fun of such things, but facts are facts, and it is impossible to explain them.

"This other exhibit – a Babylonian clay tablet – fell upon the table during the same sitting. The inscription on it is, I think, correct. The control seemed to be a very wise spirit, who discoursed in a most learned manner upon Assyrian and Roman antiquities and psychic science, so I asked him how an apport was brought. The spirit's answer was:-

" 'It involves some factors which are beyond your human science and which could not be made clear to you. At the same time you may take as a rough analogy the case of water which is turned into steam. Then this steam, which is invisible, may be conducted elsewhere to be reassembled as visible water.'

"I should add that I had the tablet tested at the British Museum and that it was pronounced to be a forgery. Upon further inquiry it was ascertained that these forged tablets are made by certain Jews in a suburb of Bagdad, and, so far as is known, only there. The matter is not much further advanced, therefore. To the transporting agency it is at least possible that the forged tablet, steeped in recent human magnetism, is more easily handled as an apport than a genuine one taken from a mound. This same medium had, at one time or another, brought not less than a hundred of these imitation Babylonian tablets through.

"But that is enough about apports. Of course, one has to look out for frauds. That applies to every form of mediumship – and to other human activities. Take your own profession; we have had dishonest journalists. You are a journalist, but, so far as I know " – here Sir Arthur thoughtfully collected those Turkish coins and replaced them under lock and key - "you are an honest man. Still, the other day the Spiritualists caught an apport 'medium,' whose claims were being investigated, with small stones stuck by plaster behind his ears. We've no use for that sort of 'apport' merchant; the conjurers can have him!

"One must not be credulous. But one must not be too incredulous. The man who believes nothing is just as foolish as the man who believes everything. Test and ponder each case for

yourself, comparing it with the results of others. There are rogues in psychic circles, as there are in more mundane circles, but the true mediums amateur and professional, far outnumber them. By the way, one of the best apport mediums in this country will never accept payment for a sitting. If he could do by trickery the marvellous things he does through his psychic power he would be making a large income on the stage. Curious, isn't it?

"But in these days the gifts of the Spirit are becoming more mental and less physical. They are refining all the time. The coarser phenomena were mere signals to attract our attention. We have hardly a single good materialization medium in England now, while we have many excellent clairvoyants.

We next turned our attention to some finger-prints recorded, by request, by spirits who rapped with materialized fingers on a piece of smoked glass. This exhibit is of evidential value owing to the fact that the finger-prints of everyone present were carefully taken immediately after the *Séance*. Finger-prints do not lie, and if you visit the Museum and compare the spirit finger-prints with those of the sitters you will find proof of the fact that the former were not made by any of the sitters. Who, then, did imprint them upon that piece of smoked glass?

Sir Arthur next told me the facts concerning some of the most striking of the many spirit photographs in his Museum.

But to digress for a moment, I feel I should first report this; you ought to know it.

"Those spirit photographs, now," said THE STRAND photographer, as we drove away. "I know how they're done! I've examined some through my magnifying glass. They superimpose another portrait on the negative before they use it. I've seen the marks."

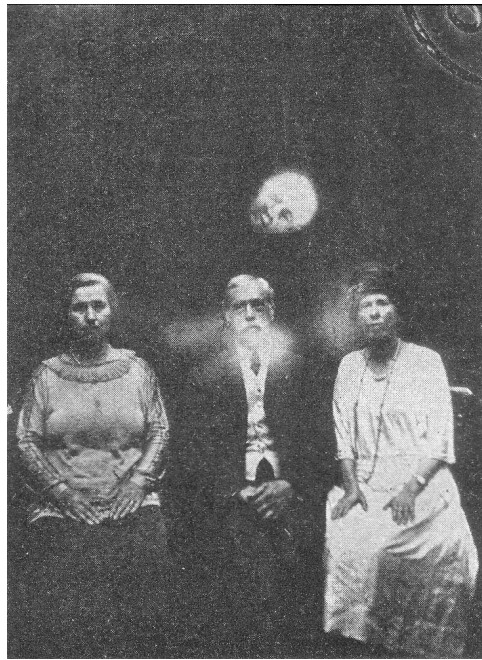
Well, well, well! Now, here is a man with knowledge that some of the best scientific brains in the world are searching for, and he lets it out calmly, casually – just like that – in a taxi! I have urged him to send a full report of his discovery to every important scientific body! And he will, doubtless, also explain how it is that the spirit faces are so often recognized by sitters as those of dead relatives!

So now that at last we know exactly how spirit photographs are produced, let us examine one or two of those in the Museum.

Sir Arthur handed me a group photograph of Mrs. Hewat McKenzie, Hon. Secretary of the British College of Psychic Science, Mr. Stanley de Brath, M.Inst.C.E., and Miss Scatcherd, all for many years experienced investigators. (No.4.)

"Dr. Gustave Geley, who had probably gone as deeply as anyone into psychic science – his great book, 'From the Unconscious to the Conscious,' will probably stand the test of time – had arranged to sit with Mr. Hope, the photographic medium of Crewe, for a portrait on which he hoped to obtain what is called a spirit 'extra.'

"Immediately before the date fixed for the sitting, Dr. Geley was killed in an aeroplane accident. That was on July 15th, 1924. The *séance* with Mr. Hope was nevertheless held on the appointed day, and, as will be seen, Dr. Geley, too, kept his appointment, for his face can be very clearly seen above the sitters. In the top right-hand corner can be seen also part of the secret mark made by the manufacturers on the negatives before they were packed, in order to prove that the same negatives were used, and there is a certificate that the medium was never allowed to handle them. Readers desiring the full details will find them in *Psychic Science* of October, 1924, and in the *Revue Metapsychique* for the same month."



4 - A DRAMATIC PORTRAIT.

Dr. Geley photographed a few days after his death.

His face can be clearly seen above the three seated figures, all experienced psychic investigators. In the top right-hand corner is part of a secret mark made on the negative by the manufacturer before it was packed.

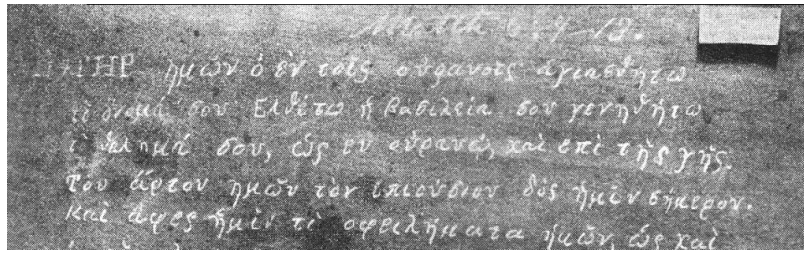
Two large photographs which every visitor to the Museum should inspect closely are of a Mr. Walker of Derbyshire. One shows him as he was on earth and one as a spirit; the features are identical. This Mr. Walker was a friend of W. T. Stead, and he went with the great journalist to bid him good-bye before his voyage on the doomed *Titanic*. Stead's last words to Mr. Walker were: "I will try to keep you posted." After the sinking of the *Titanic*, and the drowning of Stead, Mr. Walker went to be photographed by Mr. Hope of Crewe. In the portrait then taken can be seen, written round Mr. Walker's head, the last words he heard Stead utter : "I will try to keep you posted," followed by the signature *W. T. Stead*. And the writing is undoubtedly the same as Stead's.

Sir Arthur related the sequel to this. Mr. Walker died and his family then assembled at Mr. Hope's studio, hoping for a spirit portrait of him. They got it. Inspection will show that the spirit head is an almost exact "double" of the photograph of Mr. Walker taken during, his life here; and round which Stead wrote his evidential message.

Sir Arthur called my attention to one of the many interesting documents framed on the walls. "Here is a letter from Oscar Wilde written to me in his lifetime. Below you see a written communication from him many years after his death. It came by automatic writing through the hand of Mrs. Hester Dowden, the psychic daughter of the eminent Shakespearean scholar. Now look at the signature: look at the fine points of resemblance in the two scripts. When, in addition, one learns that the complete manuscript, which your readers can get under the title of ' Psychic Messages of Oscar Wilde,' is full of characteristic prose, and contains numerous little-known allusions to his own life, one surely must admit that it is difficult to explain the facts save by the hypothesis that it is actually Wilde who is behind it.

"Over there you can examine portions of the original automatic script given through the hand of the Rev. G. Vale Owen and published in his wonderful volumes, ' The Life Beyond the Veil.'

"This slate, on the other hand, bears evidential testimony to the fact that there is such a phenomenon as *direct* spirit writing. The passage is ancient Greek, and was produced on the slate in the presence of the medium Slade in 1876. Slade was not well-educated and knew no Greek. Authorities on Greek assert that only a great scholar could have placed the accents correctly, as they are placed on this slate. (No. 5)



5 - DIRECT SPIRIT WRITING.

Portion of a passage in ancient Greek, every accent being correct, produced on a slate in the presence of a medium who knew no Greek.

"Now look at these complex flower designs." Sir Arthur pointed to the beautifully coloured wreath. (No. 6.) "This design is a specimen of yet another phase of psychic phenomena called precipitations."

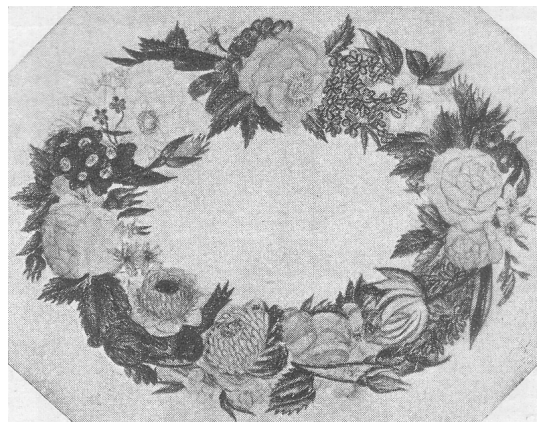
"How long do you suppose this intricate design took to do? A matter of hours, certainly, one would say. Well, as a fact it was done completely in seventeen *seconds*! Naturally, we cannot expect everyone to believe that! Still, when we look at the corner of the paper we see the names of all the witnesses - reputable people in their day.

"By some power which we can only vaguely call psychic, the whole picture was thrown in those few seconds upon the paper. Incredible, of course but perfectly true none the less!

In the top left-hand corner of this "precipitation" the following is written:-

"We whose names are hereto appended do certify that we were present and witnessed the production of the picture in seventeen seconds. Done on Saturday, April 13th, 1861, through the mediumship of Mrs. E. J. French in New York."

Among the five signatories was judge Edmonds, of the Supreme Court of New York.



6.-"PAINTED" IN SEVENTEEN SECONDS.

This complex design was precipitated upon the blank paper in seventeen seconds!
The original is strikingly coloured.

"Now this," said Sir Arthur, pointing to a striking seascape (No. 7), "is what I should call a specimen of the higher mediumship. This watercolour was done by a woman who had no knowledge of art, but who was controlled or obsessed from time to time, according to her own account, by the spirit of a Dutch water-colour painter. I came across her in Los Angeles. She is not allowed to sell the splendid results of her obsessions, but she gave me this picture. Did you ever see such a sense of movement in a seascape? And yet normally she could hardly draw or paint at all."



7 - A SEASCAPE BY A WOMAN WHO CANNOT PAINT!

This vivid picture was painted by a medium with no knowledge of art.
She paints while under spirit control and will not sell her work.

There are, unfortunately, limits to the length of this report; and it must, of necessity, be somewhat scrappy. Accounts of some of the most outstanding exhibits having evidential value have been given; from a mass of notes I find it difficult to choose: things which thrill me may leave you cold.

Reference should undoubtedly be made to the illustration of one of D. D. Home's miracles. (No. 8.) The picture is non-evidential, of course; but evidence enough to satisfy most people capable of forming a judgment on the considered statements of others will be found in the Earl of Dunraven's book, "Experiences in Spiritualism with D. D. Home." Home, while entranced, told his friends not to be afraid, and then went out of the room, which was on the third floor. He was heard to throw the window up in the next room, and presently he was seen to be floating in the air outside. He then opened the window and walked in quite coolly. A few moments later he repeated the manifestation, going through the open window "head first, quite rapidly, his body being nearly horizontal and apparently rigid. He came in again feet foremost."



8 - ONE OF DANIEL DUNGLAS HOME'S MANY MIRACLES.

In the presence of three witnesses, D. D. Home was levitated, while entranced, and went rapidly head first out of a third-floor window, returning by another window on the same floor.

These extraordinary happenings took place at Ashley House, Victoria Street, on Sunday, December 13th, 1868. The witnesses were Lord Adare (afterwards Earl of Dunraven), the Hon.

the Master of Lindsay, and Captain Charles Wynne. "All honourable men," as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle remarked. "And," he added, "there are more than a hundred instances of Home's levitation. It is strange how a Christian can say such things are utterly impossible and yet, easily accept the account of St. Peter walking on the waves two thousand years ago. These psychic facts greatly reinforce the Biblical miracles, and some day the New Testament will be believed in, not in spite of but on account of the miracles."

I was looking through one of many albums of thought-provoking photographs when I came upon enlarged prints of the world famous photographs of fairies which THE STRAND MAGAZINE introduced to an incredulous public.

"Fairies?" Sir Arthur echoed. "Well, we don't reckon them to be a part of Spiritualism, do we? But they are a part of the Universe, although they have no connection with human evolution. These, little creatures are separated from us only by a very slight difference of vibration, which can readily be pierced by the clairvoyant, and occasionally – as in the instances when these photographs were taken by those small girls – needs no piercing at all.

"The Cottingley fairies have held their own entirely and there has never been any damaging criticism at all. The two girls were perfectly honest and the photographs are unquestionably genuine. The negatives have stood every expert test.

"Here you see another fairy photograph (No. 10), which came from an adult source. It was taken in Devonshire a couple of years ago. The queer little fellow seen leaning against the tree is a tree spirit. We have always been told that 'they draw their strength from trees while leaning against them, also that they preserve a semi-wooden appearance. You get both conditions in this photograph."



9 - THE TREE SPIRIT.

The queer little fellow leaning against the tree is, Sir Arthur says, a tree spirit. Another plate was exposed at the same spot two seconds later, but the fairy had disappeared, seemingly frightened by the first click of the camera.

We left the fairies and returned to our talk of things spiritual and psychic. We both for a moment forgot our resolution against propaganda when I asked Sir Arthur for a word or two which I could pass on to those who sometimes ask me urgent questions by no means easy to answer. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's words will form a fitting epilogue to this account of my visit to the World's Happiest Museum:-

"Fresh evidence for our survival of bodily death and for Spirit return, under certain conditions, is not needed. If only the existing evidence is examined it will be found to be overwhelmingly on the side of the angels. Unlike every hypothesis put forward by those who have proved the phenomena but are in doubt as to their origin, Spiritualism alone covers all the facts satisfactorily."

Also in 1927, ACD had begun using the Bookshop as a publishing house, at least for his own works. His documentary of his home circle work, Pheneas Speaks, carried the following advertisement:

Pheneas Speaks

By Sir A Conan Doyle
(Psychic Press and Bookshop, 1927)
An advertisement in the back pages

THE PSYCHIC BOOKSHOP, LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

[*Proprietor : Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.*]

This central depot for knowledge was established to meet the fact that psychic literature, the most important literature in the world, found hardly any place upon the shelves of the ordinary book seller.

What advantages does it offer?

1. It contains a splendid stock of psychic books, which is always kept up-to-date, and includes the old literature as well as the new.
2. It has a circulating library from which these books, which are often expensive, can be taken out at 2/6 a month or a guinea a year. Provincial customers are served by post.
3. It has a psychic museum which is unique.
4. It gives advice and direction gratis.

Come and inspect or write for Catalogues.

**PSYCHIC BOOKSHOP,
ABBEY HOUSE, VICTORIA STREET, S.W.**

*Telephone: Franklin 6248.
Telegrams: "Ectoplasm, Sowest."*

The Psychic Bookshop, Library and Museum never turned a profit for ACD; and, with his health failing, ACD endeavoured to set it up as a company - with ongoing chance of surviving without his personal philanthropic support.

The following correspondence with Harry Price and extracts from Price's works, has been taken from an article in the ACD Literary Society's Journal, but is available to all in the Harry Price Collection:

The Journal of The Arthur Conan Doyle Society Vol 3 : 1992

'Dear Price... Yours Sincerely, A Conan Doyle'

Letters from A. Conan Doyle in the Harry Price Collection

By Philip K Wilson

Windlesham 9th May, 1930.

Dear Price,

As my health is bad, I am turning the Bookshop into a company.*

It is in the interest of all psychic researchers to keep the place going, as it keeps the subject before the eyes of the public in a very prominent position.

If, then you could give me the names of any of your people to whom it would be good to send a prospectus I should be greatly obliged.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,
A. Conan Doyle

Wilson notes:

* Elsewhere, Price claimed that the bookshop had been a 'nightmare' to Conan Doyle. Situating it opposite to Westminster Abbey was, so Price told ACD, the 'wrong end of Victoria Street for the sale of psychic literature.' Price recounts that Conan Doyle lost £700 one year in his bookshop venture. Yet, Price frequently reiterated how his suggestion to Conan Doyle to establish the May 1925 'Exhibition of Objects of Psychic Interest' into a 'permanent exhibition or museum' was a 'success'; museum admission charge was one shillings. (Price: *Leaves From a Psychist's Case-Book*, pp. 95-96). Conan Doyle's plan to form a company was not realised before his death.

Crowborough 23rd May, 1930.

Dear Price,

I am sending out my circulars, so if you have any likely names I'd be glad to have them.

A. Conan Doyle

Windlesham 24th May, 1930.

My dear Price,

Many thanks for your little list. It will be most useful. I will see that a prospectus is sent to you. Also a picture(!)

With decent luck the place will pay its way soon. It is the very heavy rent which with rates comes to £750 which has held it back.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,
A. Conan Doyle

Following ACD's passing on 7th July, 1930, ACD's friend and colleague, the Rev John Lamond, was commissioned by Lady Conan Doyle to write the first biography of Sir Arthur's life. In it, Lamond had the following to say in a short comment on the Bookshop:

Arthur Conan Doyle – A Memoir
By Reverend John Lamond
John Murray, 1931

THE PSYCHIC BOOKSHOP – page 215

One of [Sir Arthur's] many schemes for attracting public attention towards psychic study was the Psychic Bookshop which he established in Victoria Street, well-nigh under the shadow of Westminster Abbey. He desired that there should be some central emporium for the distribution of psychic literature. A good many agencies of this kind were in existence, but, as a rule, they were attached to some spiritualistic society. A few booksellers like Mr. Watkins had made a speciality of selling theosophical and spiritualistic literature, but Sir Arthur desired a shop in some public centre in which the literature of the movement would be the main feature. Associated with the Bookshop he formed a library and a museum. The museum contained objects of historical interest collected by himself, and articles contributed by personal friends. This shop for several years was under the personal management of Miss Mary Conan Doyle, his elder daughter. It was a bold venture, and in later years caused the founder considerable anxiety. In the future it is intended that it will form part of the memorial to be erected to commemorate Sir Arthur's labours. It was one of the many proofs of his desire that psychic literature should be made accessible to the public.

I can recall him in many scenes – on the platform, at some crowded meeting, in the chair at some business gathering, at his own fireside on a Christmas Eve, in the glades of the New Forest at Bignell Wood, or amid the ruins of Beaulieu Abbey when the Abbey bells seemed to sound him a welcome – but there is one unforgettable vision of him in the Psychic Bookshop that is stamped for ever on my memory. I had gone in to purchase some recently published volume, and found Sir Arthur with his coat off and a great bundle of books between his arms. That a man whose time was so precious should be engaged in that manual task of carrying about bundles of books seemed to me to be the decisive proof of his interest in the enterprise. I came out of that Bookshop a humbled man. If the readers of this volume could realise how much he valued the Bookshop, and how great was the joy he felt in seeing the parcels of books going forth to the ends of the earth, they would, as a token of gratitude to this great patriot and missionary, see that the Bookshop is re-established on a sound commercial basis.



TWO PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE.

Above – The Friendship Centre Rest Room, where the Conan Doyle Memorial Library is now housed.

Below – Note academy picture of Sir A. Conan Doyle, and seated at table Dr. John Lamond, his friend, the author of “Arthur Conan Doyle, a Memoir.” And other books.

THE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE, 85, Lancaster Gate, W.2.

ALWAYS OPEN.

Telephone: PADDINGTON 2312



And in Thy Kingdom Come, Ivan Cooke had the following comments on ACD's Psychic Bookshop:

Thy Kingdom Come
By Ivan Cooke
Wright & Brown, 1933

CHAPTER IV - THE PSYCHIC BOOKSHOP

LET US turn to another aspect which became intimately associated with the Memorial. The Psychic Bookshop was opened by Sir Arthur some years ago, in a shop adjacent to Westminster Abbey. Whether he entertained the hope of making an impression on the clergy of the Abbey by so placing his shop before their eyes, and whether that hope found fruition, is a speculative question; an unfortunate certainty, however, is that the shop from its inception involved a heavy annual loss. Sir Arthur supported this loss cheerfully, having expected no other, and counting this as among his contributions to the Cause, but with his passing, the burden bore heavily on Lady Doyle. All efforts to dispose of the stock and goodwill proving unavailing, Miss Mary Doyle finally decided to close the doors at the end of December, 1930. This decision was widely advertised, and although Spiritualism regretted the passing of the Bookshop, which by now had become an institution, no effort for its retention materialised.

Sir Arthur stepped in once again, however, to save the situation. It so happened that Mr. Ernest Hunt, widely known as lecturer and writer, was at that time speaking at Kenton Spiritualist Church, and after the service, drove Mrs. Caird and Brighteyes homeward.

The party entered the home of Brighteyes for a brief chat, and it was during these few moments that Sir Arthur dramatically and quite unexpectedly took charge of affairs – and the medium. As with some foreknowledge of what the answer might be, he turned to Mr. Hunt, speaking under the stress of considerable emotion, "The Bookshop must be saved! On no account must it be closed down! Important issues depend upon its remaining open! " Would not he, Mr. Hunt, help in this most necessary work? He appealed to all. If the shop could be carried on for but a short time, other arrangements could be made. As may be imagined Mr. Hunt promised readily.

So ended a moving and dramatic ten minutes, the result of which was the hasty formation of a subcommittee to work in collaboration with the Memorial Committee, composed of the four present, together with one or two added names among which was that of Lady Doyle, who most generously donated the remaining stock of the Bookshop to the Memorial. Mr. Hunt undertook the management, with the assistance of a body of voluntary workers; the result being that within a few days of the shop's closing it re-opened, the months following affording the Committee ample opportunity to realise the magnitude of Sir Arthur's annual contribution towards the upkeep. During the nine months a large number of books were sold, and thus disseminated among the public, and hundreds of enquirers were enlightened and consoled.

At the expiration of Mr. Hunt's management, it proved possible, by the generous co-operation of Mr. Stephen Foster, to move the Library, stock and Museum to the Friendship Centre, at 85, Lancaster Gate, where it now waits, comfortably housed, and in active demand, until such time as it is needed for incorporation in some larger scheme.

And thus Sir Arthur's message at **Bignell Wood***, in which he told his family that he and they had carried the responsibility for long enough, and that others must now shoulder the burden, found its fulfilment by his (Sir Arthur's) own efforts. A remarkable prediction, fulfilled to the letter, some four months later.

*See previous chapter "The Memorial" – yes, Brighteyes (GC) was the medium then, too.

A note in Facts, 1937 - No. 1, provided an historic reference on The Friendship Centre:

STEPHEN FOSTER



Most visitors to The Friendship Centre know Mr. Foster, its founder and president. So diligent is he in the work of the Centre, that it is rare for him to be absent. In other places, too, his many activities have made him well known among those interested in psychic study and demonstration.

The Friendship Centre, which he founded eight years ago, at Lancaster Gate, now has a membership of about 500. Its splendid collection of books was considerably increased early in 1936 by the addition of the "W. T. Stead" Memorial Library, removed from Smith Square, Westminster.

The quarterly journal, "Facts," which is devoted to Spiritual, Psychic, Occult and Mystical subjects generally, and of which Mr. Foster is Editor, was commenced by him at the beginning of 1934.

At his birth, the Sun and Mercury were in Pisces, Neptune being in good aspect with both the Sun and the Moon. These are excellent positions for mediumship and for psychic study and development, and indicate a good worker in the cause of Spiritualism. His nature is sensitive, emotional, good-humoured, restless, receptive, intuitive, imaginative, imitative, changeable, meditative, patient and fanciful, desiring peace and possessing a quiet understanding. His mind is much attracted to occult studies, mysticism, philosophy, originality of thought, religious movements, public life and publishing. He likes change, roaming about and being continually on the move, and prefers to be occupied with several subjects rather than with one. His hospitality,

thoughtfulness and desire to make others happy and comfortable are traits most valuable at The Friendship Centre.

His friends will wish him happiness and a successful continuation of his good work in the future.

Advert in Facts, 1937 - No. 1: -

The Psychic and General Book Dept. will supply any Book on any subject, new or second-hand. Prices are marked against books in the first section of our catalogue. The Friendship Centre Library List, and all newly published Psychic books are carried as stock on our shelves.

We ask also for all your book orders for fiction and general literature; by buying from us you pay no more but have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping the Centre's development.

We stock a variety of Séance Trumpets, Crystals, Planchettes and Communicators of all kinds, various mechanical aids to development and all supplies for séance room work.

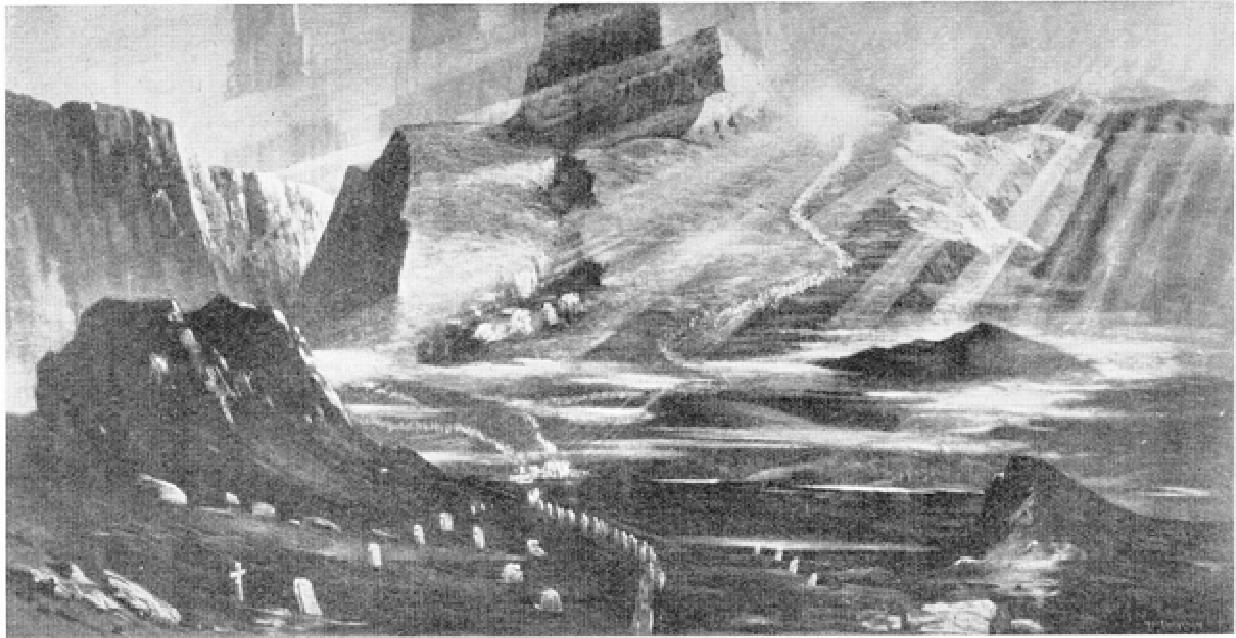
All weekly and monthly Psychic magazines are stocked, and we welcome regular orders for any period. All weekly papers sent by post will arrive at your address by the first post on the day of publication.

A quarterly magazine, price twopence, the official organ of the Centre, contains articles by well-known writers of the present and of the future. Specimen copy free on request.

Meetings and Lectures are held every day at the Centre, and at least once each month there is a lively gathering of a social and informal nature which enables our members and friends to meet and talk together. All dates and times are given in a monthly syllabus, which is sent regularly to members and to others by request. See that your name is on our list.

Another item from FACTS, January 1934, quarterly official organ of the Friendship Centre at 85, Lancaster Gate, London W.2 at the cost of sixpence:

THE ETERNAL MARCH



THE ETERNAL MARCH
By WILLIAM LONGSTAFF

*The original painting forms part of the Conan Doyle Memorial
Museum Collection, now housed at the Friendship Centre.*

The famous Australian artist, William Longstaff, whose picture “The Menin Gate at Midnight” was bought by Lord Woolavington and presented to the Australian Government, painted this remarkable composition. After a séance at which he received indubitable proofs of the truth of Spiritualism he worked for nine hours, under strong psychic inspiration, and in that period completed the greater part of this wonderful conception.

In the foreground one sees the human race passing in its endless procession through the valley of gloom. It comes to the River of Death and passes onwards.

On the further bank it is met by the Angels of judgement, who send the undeveloped to their dreary period of chastening, while the main body can still be seen rising higher and higher through the spheres until they reach the ineffable glory which absorbs them.

A Letter from Edwin Butler to The Book & Magazine Collector

Edwin Butler (1912 to 2005) had resided at and worked in the Friendship Centre 1932-1934. In 1998 he tried to track down, to no avail, what happened to the ACD Museum artefacts consequent to World War II:

To The Editor
The Book & Magazine Collector
43/45 St. Mary's Rd.
Ealing, London W5 5RQ

16th March, 1998

Dear Sir,

In your March issue, the Conan Doyle article mentioned the transfer of the Psychic Bookshop and Museum to the Friendship Centre. I was present when, in early 1932, Lady Doyle, Mary Doyle, Sir Robert Gower and W.R. Bradbrook finalised the transfer to Stephen Foster, proprietor of the Friendship Centre.

Later, when Estelle Stead moved from the Stead Bureau in Smith Square to Herne Bay, the Stead Library was also transferred to the Friendship Centre. The books of the three libraries (Conan Doyle Memorial, W.T. Stead Memorial and Friendship Centre) were so merged as to be indistinguishable.

When war came in 1939, Stephen Foster moved to Balcombe in Sussex, taking some items with him. What remained of the libraries moved to the healer Ronald Beesley in Norfolk Square, W.2.

What I have been unable to discover is what happened to the Museum? There were two large oil paintings, one a portrait of Sir Arthur; a large ewer in reddish-brown (an apport); many smaller items included the wax gloves from the "Margery" (Crandon) circle, the interlocked Zollner rings of different woods, and a collection of flintstones so split as to display alphabet and numerals white on black in the stones themselves - the label read, to the best of my recollection, "no claim is made as to the origin of these stones, but explanations are invited from geologists and others."

I have heard rumours that (a) that Museum items were stored in London and destroyed by bombs in the "blitz" - but no precise location indicated; or (b) that items were purchased by Americans - but again unspecified.

Can any reader throw light on the whereabouts of Museum items?

Also, besides books, a stock of gramophone records from the Psychic Bookshop was transferred to the Centre and was speedily sold from there, being the recorded voice of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Do any of these fragile 78s still survive?

Yours faithfully,
Edwin Butler
59 Stirling Rd.
London, N22 5BL
(Tel: 0181888 4728)

Please note: - "Copyright of all material appearing in *LIGHT* is reserved to the authors and original publisher. It may not be reproduced or translated, either wholly or in part, without written permission. *LIGHT* is still published by the College of Psychic Studies and you are urged to subscribe.
<http://www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk/index.html>"