

# PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

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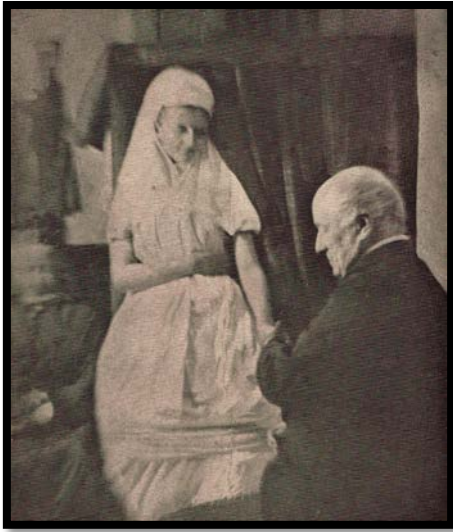
**Volume 10, No. 08: August 2014**

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# SÉANCE PHOTOGRAPHY



From the early days of Modern Spiritualism the movement has produced some remarkable photographs of its physical phenomena and for well over a century they have been published in our journals and history books etc. One example is the photographs showing the alleged full form materialisations of the spirit of Katie King through the mediumship of Florence Cook during William Crookes' researches in the early 1870's. In *Psypioneer* July 2012, it was shown that numerous photographs credited to Crookes were not actually taken by him. For example, the well-known picture of Dr. Gully holding Katie's hand was not taken at Crookes' residence at Mornington Road but by the editor of *The Spiritualist* newspaper (1869-1882) William Harrison, at Hackney in 1873.<sup>1</sup>

We have also quite extensively covered spirit photography from its start to the more recent times of William Hope and Mrs Ada Deane.<sup>2</sup> In the early 1930's it was considered by some Spiritualists and researchers that the problems of photography in the séance room was behind them with the introduction of infra-red photography. *Psychic News*, stated it: "opens up tremendous possibilities" and published on their front page (April 7th 1934) according to the paper, the first séance photograph taken in the dark, with the physical medium Dorothy Henderson.<sup>3</sup>

Leon Isaacs would pioneer much of the infra-red séance photography, working with Spiritualists and researchers. He secured a position as honorary photographer to the International Institute for Psychical Research (founded in 1934).<sup>4</sup> Isaacs invented and manufactured all his own apparatus. We have published some of the work at the International Institute with Nandor Fodor and the transfiguration medium Elizabeth Bullock.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>.-*Psypioneer*: Volume 8. No 7. July 2012:—*The Katie King Photographs Four "Katie King" Photographs – Psychic Science*, – Paul Gaunt comments:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.7July2012.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>.-*A Brief History of Spirit Photography*, by James J. Morse is serialised in *Psypioneer* starting in Volume 9. No 06. June 2013:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP9.6June2013.pdf>  
Use our online search engine for Hope, etc at:—[www.woodlandway.org](http://www.woodlandway.org)

<sup>3</sup>.-*Psypioneer*: Volume 8. No 5. May 2012:—*Infra-Red Photography and the Physical Mediums* – Paul J. Gaunt, – *Materialised Form Photographed* – S. G. Donaldson, – *Infra-Red Rays in the Seance Room* – *Psychic News*, – *His Infra-Red Séance Pictures were Foretold by Mediums* – *Psychic News*:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.5May2012.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>.-*Psypioneer*: Volume 7. No 2. February 2011:—*Whatever happened to the British College?* – *Psychic Science*, – \*The International Institute for Psychic Investigation (IPI) (\*formed from the British College & International Institute for Psychical Research in 1939):—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.2February2011.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>.-*Psypioneer*: Volume 8. No 6. June 2012:—*Transfiguration – Infra-Red Photography and the Physical Mediums Continued* – Paul J. Gaunt, – *Mrs. L. Bullock of Manchester* – *The Two Worlds*, – *New Research Method – Light*, – *Transfiguration – Light*, & – *She Became a Chinaman* – Nandor Fodor:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.6June2012.pdf>

Later in 1947 Isaacs would hit the Spiritualist press with some impressive séance photographs with the medium Ronald (Cockersell) Edwin, who later confessed it was a fraud. The ectoplasmic rods were likened to the séance photographs of Jack Webber, taken some years earlier. The story of *Ronald Edwin Cockersell, Fraudulent Medium – Genuine Psychic?* was published in Psypioneer July 2013.<sup>6</sup>

Psypioneer has also previously published its research into the photographs of the various forms produced in the Helen Duncan materialisation séances, which go some way in explaining the rather grotesque, sometimes referred to as papier-mâché, image of Peggy. The article also contains some previously unknown photographs. Psypioneer holds a considerable amount of reliable well documented original material on Helen Duncan.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1930's photographs were produced by infra-red on the two well-known mediums Colin Evans, and Jack Webber. Leon Isaacs was involved in the large public demonstrations of Evans' séances, and some of Webber's physical séances. In the July issue of Psypioneer we published some material on the Direct Voice of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in connection with the *The Link Association of Home Circles* founded in 1931. *The Link* held large mass meetings for Psychical Phenomena. Mrs. A. E. Perriman, was the first voice medium for the Link in 1934 at the Æolian Hall. A year later Leslie Flint, a friend of co-founder Noah Zerdin, gave a large direct voice séance at Bloomsbury's Victoria Hall.

Colin Evans' home circle was a member of *The Link Association of Home Circles*, and reports were circulating of remarkable physical phenomena in Evans home circle of which Evans was already a well-known clairvoyant. *The Link* decided to centre some large mass séances around Evans' home circle. This was in late 1937; arrangements were made for Nandor Fodor, research officer for the *International Institute for Psychical Research*, to record any the phenomena which might occur. Several photographs of levitated trumpets were secured; one of these was published in the *Two Worlds* for December 10th 1937. This led to Evans' circle demonstrating direct voice, materialisation, spirit lights, and levitation etc., at some of *The Link's* mass meetings. In the February 11th 1938 issue of the *Two Worlds* further reports of séances emerged of Colin Evans (not his real name), with the medium "floating over sitters' heads in his aerial trips round the room." and the paper published probably the first photograph of Evans being levitated during a séance the previous week in London under the auspices of *The Link Association*. The report of the séance was given by the well-known north-country medium Susie Hughes. However the photograph published in the issue was of very poor quality.

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<sup>6</sup>.-Psypioneer: Volume 9. No 07. July 2013:—*Ronald Edwin Cockersell, Fraudulent Medium – Genuine Psychic?* – Paul J. Gaunt:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP9.7July2013.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>.-Psypioneer: Volume 9. No 05. May 2013:—*Victoria Helen McCrae Duncan (née MacFarlane)* – Paul J. Gaunt, – *Impressions of Mrs. Duncan's Mediumship* – George F. Berry, – *Early materialisations photographed through Duncan's Mediumship*, – *Later materialisations photographed through Duncan's Mediumship*, – *Fine Materialisations* – *The Two Worlds*, & – *The story continues* – Britten Memorial Museum:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP9.5May2013.pdf>

Below is a report given by Colin Evans himself on his mediumship, which will also give the reader a good overview of the photographic techniques employed by Leon Isaacs in the early days of infra-red photography. The article was published by *Photography*, Vol. 7 No.77 January, 1939:

## SPIRITUALISM THROUGH THE LENS

COLIN EVANS

*Colin Evans is well known in the Spiritualist movement as a medium, and as a speaker and writer. Some of the most famous mediums have not been men of literary or academic education, and although it may reasonably be argued that the case for the genuineness of their mediumship is strengthened by that fact, it has handicapped them in meeting opponents on the platform.*

*Mr. Evans is a university graduate who only discovered or developed his mediumship and active interest in Spiritualism some six years ago, since when most of his activities in that connection—and the whole of them during the greater part of the time—have been as an amateur medium, in spare time taken from professional literary work quite unconnected with Spiritualism, though he occasionally uses his mediumship professionally.*

*The publication in Spiritualist and general newspapers of photographs taken by infra-red light at his seances, has largely been the means of making him so widely known.*

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IN view of the enormous divergence of views regarding the reality or the explanation of psychic phenomena, the appropriate tone, from a journalistic point of view, to adopt in an article of this nature, in a journal neither spiritualist nor anti-spiritualist but devoted to an utterly different subject, would probably be a non-committal one. Such an attitude, however, would be a mere affectation in a contribution by a known spiritualist.

If, therefore, I write “such-and-such a thing occurs, the spirits often do so-and-so,” instead of the possibly less controversial “such-and-such a thing is claimed by spiritualists to occur; the spirits, or the subconscious ego of the medium, or some unknown terrestrial force, do, or appear or purport to do, so-and-so,” it must be understood that I expect such readers as find the latter reservations necessary from their own point of view.



COLIN EVANS

I am confining myself to an attempt to indicate a little of what has been done or attempted in the way of using photography to throw additional sidelights on the subject.

Modern spiritualism has just celebrated its hundredth anniversary—though the same phenomena, and, to a large extent, the same inferences drawn from those phenomena, have a

continuous history as old as history itself.<sup>8</sup> But attempts at systematic study and research have to a large extent been handicapped till very recently by the necessity for every newcomer to the subject to “start all over again.”

Psychic phenomena, evidential communications from the “dead,” all those manifestations summed up by St. Paul as “spiritual gifts—the discerning of spirits, prophecy, the working of miracles, the gifts of healing, divers kinds of tongues,” etc. (1 Cor. xii, 8-10)—might occur again and again before large and small groups of witnesses; but, the next moment, there would simply be the memory and testimony of those witnesses, which would become less and less convincing, as time went on, to others who had not been present.

This is where permanent records, or at least illustrations by which to check reports, in the shape of verbatim shorthand notes, gramophone records, and (especially) photographs, have made a very real difference.

The difficulty with regard to photographic evidence at one time seemed almost insuperable. The mental phenomena of mediumship—trance control, whereby a person who has discarded the physical body at “death” is able to express his own personality through another man with a specially developed sensitivity, resulting in apparent “impersonation” of the dead person by the living medium, with the former’s mind and knowledge and mannerisms evidentially reproduced—clairvoyance and clairaudience, by which sensitives or mediums are attuned to see and hear spirit forms and voices imperceptible to the ordinary physical senses—obviously are not things that can be photographed.

But there are the so-called “physical” phenomena which do produce tangible, audible, physical effects external to the medium’s own body—material objects, even the medium’s body itself, are moved without visible physical manipulation or mechanism; parts or the whole of physical bodies reproducing the earth-bodies of the dead are made temporarily material so that they can be felt, touched, seen, heard.

If these things are true, as such scientific investigators as Sir William Crooks, Sir Oliver Lodge, Prof. Lombroso, etc., have testified, they should be photographable.

Photography depends on the chemical reaction of emulsions to etheric oscillations of certain wave-lengths or frequencies which definitely alter the chemical and physical constitution of the earlier and simpler (dye-less) photographic emulsions—hence the picture.

This is but one of the facts that lend credibility to the at first startling modern theories of the constitution of matter as essentially consisting of etheric vibrations, and to Sir Oliver Lodge’s theories of the etheric body, and some types of psychic phenomena, as dependent on, and consisting of, certain manifestations of the luminiferous ether. But if this be so, it is understandable that (as those with personal experience of psychic experiment have always claimed) etheric oscillations of certain frequencies are definitely liable to interfere seriously with unusual manifestations of the etheric “substance,” so that many of the most “material” or quasi-material phenomena can seldom be obtained in light, or if light is suddenly flashed during their production grave injury may be done to the medium.

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<sup>8</sup>.-“Modern spiritualism has just celebrated its hundredth anniversary ...” This presumably should read ninety years 1848 – January 1939!

In spite of the basic difficulty here involved—that photos need light, and light hinders phenomena or injures mediums, Sir William Crooks secured large numbers of photographs—some still extant—of the materialised form of a girl dead many years before,<sup>9</sup> under conditions eliminating every possibility of error or trickery, and Schrenck-Notzing obtained many photographs of “ectoplasm”—living substance normally not “material” but temporarily given “material” qualities—coming from a medium, and partially built up into materialisations of hands and other portions of a body.

These photographs were taken by flashlight—a sudden shock of white light, strong in the ultra-violet and blue parts of the spectrum, which would in most cases be mortally injurious to the medium and often did cause violent hæmorrhage.

Personally, I would not risk it. I have known what it is to have a week’s illness as a result of a little light through an imperfectly darkened glass roof at night, when I have been used for materialisation or there has been levitation of my body to a height above the floor.

Fortunately, however, increased knowledge, and increased development of photographic materials, have partly—only partly—solved the difficulty. It appears that it is the shorter wave-lengths and higher frequencies of oscillations or “light” that do most harm in psychic experiments. The longer the wave-length, the less the interference caused by light’s oscillations with the etheric vibrations on which the phenomena depend, and the less the repelling effect on the ectoplasm.

Hence phenomena are often obtained in fairly strong red light which even a feeble blue or “white” light would render impossible. The development of infra-red-sensitive emulsions opened a new door in séance photography.

Pure infra-red light is, of course, invisible to the human eye—pictures taken by it may be said to be taken “in the dark”; but it should be clearly noted that it is not the visibility or invisibility to the eye that matters. Strong ultra-violet light, with all visible light filtered out, would take photographs much more easily, on much cheaper materials, and the room would still be “pitch dark” to the eye—but it would probably stop all phenomena, and/or kill the medium! Strong visible red light, would be far less harmful.

For much pioneer work in the taking of spiritualist séance photos by infra-red photography and psychic research are indebted to Leon Isaacs, now a staff photographer on one of the national dailies, who for a long time was mainly responsible for work on these lines carried out for the International Institute of Psychical Research, and by whom, later, most of the photographs illustrating phenomena through my own mediumship were taken—at meetings of the Link (an association of home circles for the development of amateur mediums) and elsewhere.

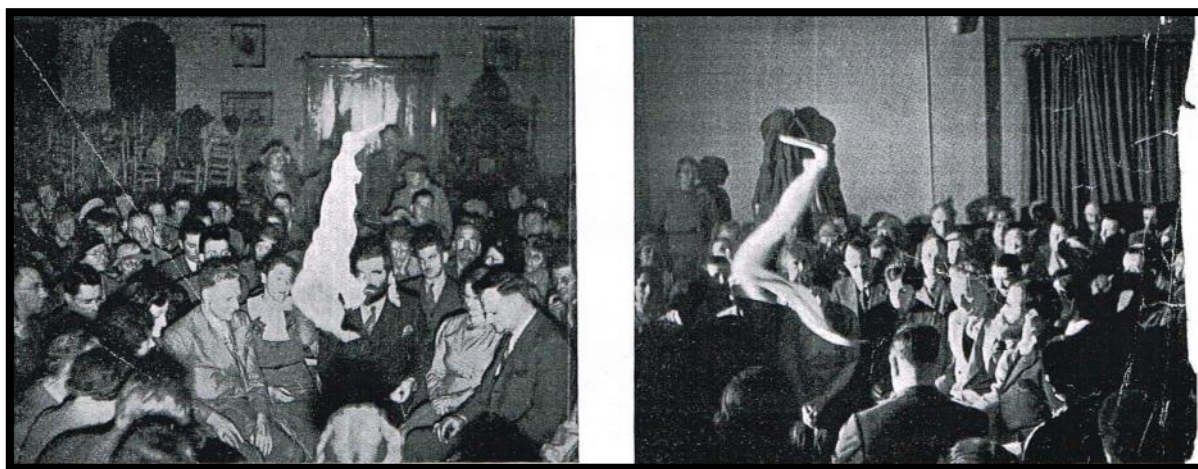
He uses a wooden box closed on five sides, the sixth side consisting of grooves within which slides an Ilford standard infra-red screen, about 10 in. by 8 in. (gelatine cemented between glass). Inside the back of the box is a reflector, inside the base a miniature lamp-holder to take photoflash bulbs, wired to a torch-battery outside the box, thus giving, when the switch is pressed, a flash—about 1/50th of a second—of light of which only the infra-red rays and an

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<sup>9</sup>.—Should read: “Crookes” not “Crooks”. Re-Crookes photographs please see introduction “Séance Photography,” page 232.



unavoidable minimum of the visible red can get through the screen. The camera, of course, must be loaded with infra-red plates, but needs no infra-red filter in front of the lens.



By using a camera of his own construction, with a very fast (large aperture) wide-angle lens, but taking small negatives (two exposures on a quarter-plate), he is able to get pictures at a reasonable distance, taking in a wide enough field of view to cover the whole séance-room, virtually, and well exposed despite the slowness of the infra-red negative stock and the amount of light lost through the infra-red screen. He focuses the camera before the ordinary lights are extinguished for the séance.

Development, of course, must be done either in total darkness or by a special yellow-green safelight.

Even this infra-red light is not perfectly harmless for psychic work, and should be “flashed” only when the spirit guides operating through the medium give permission. One of my own spirit guides at one séance explained that the wave-length chiefly involved in the phenomena was one of about 2,000 Angstrom units—which would correspond to the ultra-violet band—and that the light used in taking these photographs was mainly about 8,000 Ångstrom units, the “second sub-harmonic” of the former wave-length, and therefore did interfere perceptibly—and that if and when photographs could be taken by using only light of as low a frequency as about 20,000 Ångstrom units much more advanced phenomena could be subjected to the “shock” of the flash of light.

This, however, in the present state of photographic materials, would almost mean a reversion to a “wet-plate” process!

And, even so, whether suitable filter screens would be available is doubtful.

One of my disappointments up to now has been failure to secure a photograph of a complete materialisation of the human form of a “dead” person, though such materialisations frequently take place. The “dead” friend is seen by the faint light of a plaque covered with luminous paint, and often embraces or touches sitters.

My guides have, however, promised this—a materialisation fully photographed—eventually. Meanwhile, several photographs by infra-red have been taken showing the

ectoplasm, of which such materialisations are built up, “oozing” from my, body—either in small “thick” bulk, or sometimes in considerably greater quantity.

In two pictures, taken by one camera in front and one at the side, a considerable mass of this ectoplasm is seen in front of me. The photograph taken from in front shows it apparently issuing from my nose, and “swirling” upwards to a height of some feet above head-level—a physical impossibility had it been a piece of any normal material, in a completely draughtless closed room, with no wind to raise it [Photo.1 ▲].<sup>10</sup>

The photograph taken from one side by the same flash shows that it has completely left my body and is some perceptible distance in front of me with no visible connection with my own person and no visible support in the air, and one may vaguely discern the beginnings of the suggestion of an outline of a human form, indicating that what was photographed may have been the first stage towards a complete materialisation such as did, in fact, take place a few minutes later.

To obviate the difficulty of the photographer judging the best moment to take a “snap,” or the difficulty of his being prompt enough if he awaits a signal from the medium or from a spirit entity controlling the medium, the switch, which closes the circuit by which the photoflash bulb is ignited from the torch battery, is attached to a considerable length of flex, and held in my own hand or attached to my chair, it having been reasonably presumed (and proved correct) that, just as a medium in trance and not conscious can be made by spirit control to talk and move intelligently, so he could be “controlled” to press the switch at the right moment.

The camera shutter is left open the whole time; only after the flash (perceived by the visible red light which accompanies the infra-red through the standard infra-red screen) does the photographer close the shutter, change the plate, and change the burned-out bulb for a new one in the light-box, ready for the next exposure.

Other photographs taken by the same means have shown the levitation of a seance trumpet. This is a hollow cone, or megaphone, of metal, celluloid, cardboard, or almost any other material, used to facilitate the production and amplification of spirit voices. A “voice-box” or larynx substitute, something at any rate having a quality of life in it, and capable of being used to vibrate the air as a gramophone sound-box does, and make audible speech possible without having to use the medium’s vocal organs, is apparently built up by spirit operators, with ectoplasm drawn from the medium, in the narrow portion of this hollow cone, which serves as an enclosure to assist the process.

The cone, or “trumpet,” also amplifies and gives a directional quality to the otherwise possibly feeble and imperfectly audible voice of the communicating spirit. Almost invariably, the “trumpet” is supernormally raised in the air when spoken through (though I have known spirits to speak through it as it lay on the floor without raising it—this is unusual, however) and while numerous gramophone records have been made at my séances, giving permanent records of the spirit voices and messages, infra-red photographs have been taken showing the trumpet in the air, without “visible means of support.”

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<sup>10</sup>.—“Ectoplasm issuing from Colin Evans, nose and ears; photographs by Leon Isaacs”





In some of those taken on earlier dates when the spirit guides were apparently a little uncertain of what risks they could take with the infra-red light, the trumpet is quite close to my face—"shadowing and shielding the actual ectoplasm extruded from the medium, against the direct rays of the infra-red light," as one guide explained—but still evidential enough. My hands were, of course, held usually, and there was no projection or handle on the trumpet, but it had a band of luminous paint on the trumpet by which as many as three hundred people on several occasions (six hundred, once, at the Conway Hall) were able to follow its gyratory movements in the air up to the moment when the photograph was taken, so that no doubt can arise as to whether, in my trance, I might have been in some way supporting the trumpet against my face [Photo.2 ▲].<sup>11</sup>

Later, however, when the spirit people had got more used to the infra-red flash light, photographs were taken while the trumpet was at much greater distances from me and much greater heights in the air. The allegation sometimes made by those unable to be convinced of such phenomena, that a photograph might be taken while the trumpet was thrown into the air, has been disposed of by the band of luminous paint on the trumpet, enabling all the sitters to follow its movements while it floated *slowly* round, and up, and all about the hall, up to the moment of the flash, which shows it—after some five or ten minutes of such "floating"—20 feet up, in one picture.

Less obviously relevant to the great thesis of human survival and spirit communication, but even more striking as evidence of the super-normal in action, from the point of view of the materialist, is the phenomenon of human levitation. I am only one of many mediums who have many times been levitated, or made to float to a considerable height in the air, with no physical support.

The most famous instance, and one of the best attested, is that of D. D. Home, though this is now rather a number of years ago. But there are several contemporary instances besides my own. I only know of one other medium besides myself, however, who has been photographed during levitation.

The first conclusive photograph of my levitation, not a very good one technically, was taken by an amateur photographer; the second one, at home, by myself. I had placed and focussed my

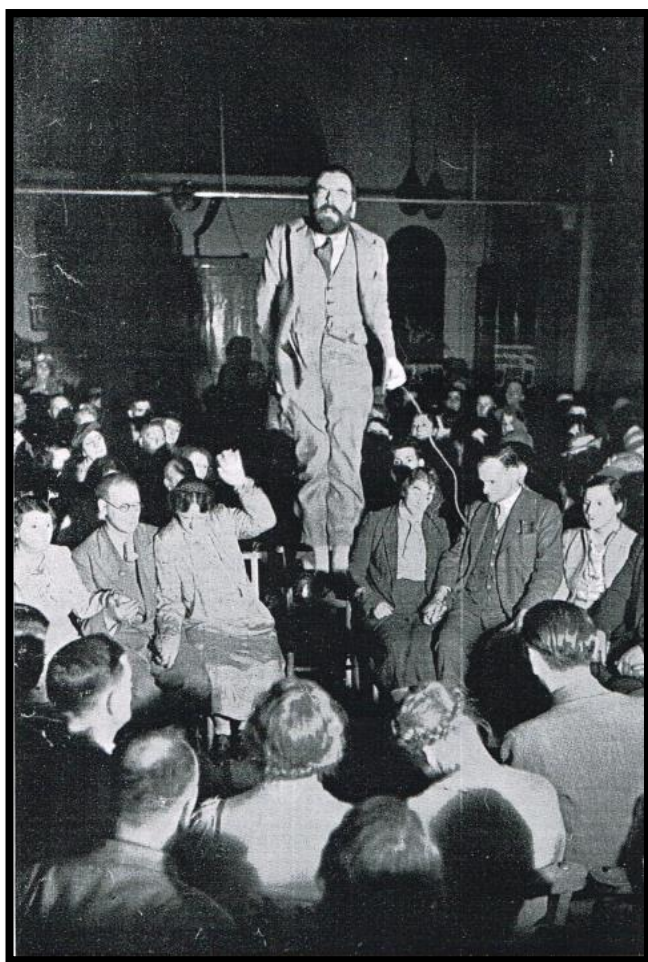
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<sup>11</sup>.—"Levitation of a seance trumpet. Photograph on the left by Leon Isaacs, and on the right by Dr. Nandor Fodor, courtesy International Institute for Psychical Research"

camera before the séance and retained the switch while sitting instructing somebody else in advance to close the camera before lights were lit when the séance should end.

Many subsequent pictures were secured by Leon Isaacs, and one by another Press photographer sent by the *Daily Mirror* to a public séance at Conway Hall, when the Editor of that paper preferred the photographic evidence of a completely disinterested member of his own camera staff who had not any previous knowledge of spiritualism, rather than that of Mr. Isaacs, known to be a spiritualist! [Photo.3 ▼].<sup>12</sup>

That paper devoted a whole page to the photo and column eye-witness report by a *Mirror* reporter.



Prior to any of these efforts, however, Dr. Nandor Fodor, former research officer of the International Institute of Psychical Research, had been given permission to take some infra-red photographs at a séance at which I was the medium, on condition that he gave me prints of all photographs taken, and he informed me that one of the photographs showed me levitated, apparently, though in it my legs were hidden by a sitter (my wife) standing between me and the camera. He hoped to verify the levitation by comparison with a photograph taken, by the same flash of light, from the side, with another camera.

That side view photograph, however, was never given me, and by some misunderstanding or other I was led to think that ordinary film instead of infra-red had been loaded into the second camera in error giving no negative. Only a year later did I learn that the second camera *had* functioned

and get a print of the photo taken by it—showing that the lady in question was not standing, but seated like everybody else, and showing also that I am, in that picture, not at the height from the floor misleadingly suggested by the front view. I still don't know whether I was levitated or not, when that was taken—but if I was, it was only a few inches.

The later photographs show me a considerable distance above the floor, with a clear view of and under my feet—in an attitude as if supported under the armpits by an invisible “life-belt.” Two “snags” would make the evidence of these photos slightly inconclusive if not taken in conjunction with the “living” testimony of persons present.

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<sup>12</sup>. –“Levitation of the human form—medium, Colin Evans; photographer, Leon Isaacs”

One “snag” is that although I am frequently levitated to a very considerable height—often “bumping” against the ceilings of lofty rooms and halls, often alighting lightly with my feet on sitters’ heads and floating off again—the spirit operators will not permit the risk of injury by flashing the infra-red light till I am down to within three or four feet of the floor—a distance from which I can safely fall if the flash destroys the conditions of the phenomenon and abruptly ends the levitation, as it sometimes does.

The second “snag,” if it were not for the testimony of those present, might be the fact that usually, though not always, my legs and feet seem to twitch or dangle in such a way that they—my feet—are often blurred by movement, though the rest of my body is sharp and evidently supported motionless for the duration of the exposure. This has led some people to wonder if the photographs showed more than a “jump”—though I am told by more expert photographers than myself that a much faster exposure than the duration of the flash would be needed to “arrest movement” of my whole body in that case. One or two of the levitation photos show no such movement even of the feet.

On the other hand, some spiritualists interpret the “transparency” of lower legs in a few levitation photos, as partial dematerialisation for a short time. I am by no means convinced of this, myself.

One rather interesting set of infra-red seance photographs was taken by Isaacs at a séance at my house attended by some twenty odd people, on the birthday of a “dead” little boy who has been a very frequent communicator at our séances and who was born near Christmas. A Christmas tree loaded with toys was in the centre of the circle—a large, heavy tree, standing some four feet high and imbedded in earth in a heavy wooden box.

We had held a similar “party,” the year before. On that former occasion, the principals of the Phonodisk Co., who are keenly interested in spirit phenomena, had been present with electrical recording apparatus. Many spirit children spoke and materialised and played with toys from the tree and even pulled crackers with earth-people in the room (all sitters’ hands and feet and my own being controlled to obviate suspicion of mental control of the medium leading to movements that might be mistaken for physical phenomena), and the gramophone records made during the séance, when played back afterwards, showed over twenty different and easily distinguishable and identifiable child voices chattering away, at times simultaneously.

This year, no gramophone records were made, but infra-red photographs taken. Two, taken at short intervals, show, first, the circle as seated at commencement of séance, with Christmas tree as it then was; and, next, the tree thrown by discarnate spirit hands to one side, and toys left scattered all over the floor.

A third photo shows, instead of the tree, a curious mere blur. At the moment of its being taken, all the sitters testified to seeing a great flash of light from (apparently) the centre of the tree—quite unconnected with the dim red flash, from across the room, of the infra-red light by which the picture was taken—and, at the same time, the tree was both seen and heard by sitters to soar up into the air to a height of several feet, whence it fell with a crash [Photo.4 ▼].<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>—“The seance pictures referred to are taken by Leon Isaacs by infra-red light. The start of the seance is seen on the left (Colin Evans, centre of the picture); the middle picture shows the “spirit disturbance” of the toys and Christmas tree; and on the right is the “curious blur” referred to by Colin Evans in this article”.



Whether the blur, which represents the tree in this picture, is the result of rapid movement of the tree, or of the flash of supernormal light over it, or of a partial dematerialisation, is a matter for argument by photographic and by psychic experts. Another picture taken at this séance shows a flow of ectoplasm from the nostril, and another shows me levitated.



It is believed that the movement of objects like trumpets is usually if not always effected by a system of rods or levers built of ectoplasm drawn from the medium—this is only sometimes visible or tangible, sometimes merely theoretically inferred from what it does. Several photographs of other mediums, not of myself, have shown the ectoplasmic rods in use.

One such photograph, which I have permission to reproduce, was taken at a séance with the Welsh miner medium, Jack Webber. He is in the habit of being securely tied up with ropes, with cotton threaded through the knots and through his buttons and button holes that would break at any interference, and of having white light flashed on suddenly at signals from his guides the very instant after and before phenomena, so that it can be seen that he has not moved, instead of being controlled by other sitters holding his hands or sitting very close to him as in my own case.

This picture shows two ectoplasm-rods coming from him, one from the solar plexus (a common source of extruded ectoplasm) and supporting two large heavy iron séance trumpets. At another seance with Jack Webber an infra-red photograph was secured showing the “voice-box” mentioned above, used for “direct voice” communications [Photo.5 ▼].<sup>14</sup>

So far, I have spoken only of normal photographs showing or illustrating supernormal occurrences.

Another aspect of the use of photography in spiritualistic experiments, however, is the supernormal production of photographs—or skotographs—or the supernormal super-position of images on a photograph.<sup>15</sup> Probably most people have seen, or at least heard of, some “spirit

<sup>14</sup>.—“Ectoplasmic rods controlling seance trumpets. Medium, Jack Webber; photographer Leon Isaacs. Picture reproduced by courtesy of Harry Edwards, Fellowship of Spiritual Service”

<sup>15</sup>.—Some of the best known “skotographs” (the term is said to have been proposed by Felicia Scatcherd) were produced by Madge Donohue, some showing the guides of well-known mediums. In 1932 she produced the guide of Estelle Roberts “Red Cloud”; other images included Arthur Conan Doyle on a “conducted tour of Hades,” 1934. Much of her work is illustrated in *Experiments in psychics*, by F. W. Warrick published around 1938 by Rider & Co, London,

photographs” in the ordinary sense of the term. In most cases—though there are exceptions—a mere inspection of the photograph itself is quite inadequate to determine whether we have to do with a genuine spirit phenomenon or with a piece of crude or clever trick photography, double exposure, double printing, or other “fake.”



To determine this question, collateral evidence of some kind is needed. This may take various forms—the plates or films may have been bought straight from a large independent photographic dealer by a trustworthy, disinterested, and perhaps sceptical, person; marked for identification; sealed; and handled under the eyes of independent witnesses from that moment to the completion of the finished print, under test conditions obviating any possibility of faking or substitution.

There are many striking photographs showing the faces or forms of “dead” people in addition to the photographs of the sitters, taken under such well-attested test conditions. But without such collateral evidence, they would be quite unconvincing, for any photographer could—and many have done so—easily imitate them by trick methods, with a resulting picture that would look just the same. There is, however, another class of evidence to authenticate spirit portraits—an evidential likeness of a known individual, whose appearance was not known to the medium, and of whom there was not available any ordinary normal portrait that could have been copied.

I have had a limited personal experience of actual spirit photography—have made about fifty exposures under psychic conditions with a hope of obtaining spirit portraits, and with complete success on two negatives only, incomplete success on about half of the other negatives, and nothing supernatural at all—just normal photographs of the “living” sitters—on the remainder.

One of the two completely successful spirit photos was the first one, or one of the first batch, I ever attempted. A number of persons were at my house, and I “snapped” each in turn twice, in slightly different poses, sitting in an armchair, against the ordinary background of my rather light-coloured room (no special dark background). I used a Piccochic roll film camera, taking sixteen exposures on V.P.K. film (each negative 3 by 4 cm.), with an f/2.9 anastigmat lens of 2 in. focal length, and compur shutter, giving a 1 second exposure by the light of a 100 watt gas-filled electric lamp.

Having made fourteen exposures, I held the camera in my hands and was in trance for a moment twice, each time winding on the film without making any exposure, in case of the possibility of “skotographs.”

This is a name used for photographic images impressed on any plate or film or photographic printing paper by spirit agency, without exposure through a camera lens to anything external.

I posted off the roll of film the same night to a large firm that extensively advertises developing service for miniature films, with whom I thought it safer to entrust it than to my own clumsy handling or the local “d. and p.” shop; on its return, developed, still uncut in the roll, I got a local professional to make enlargements from the negatives.

Twelve of the fourteen exposures showed normal portraits of the sitters, with no psychic “extras”; one of the two unexposed portions of film remained blank. But two of the exposures showed, a little distance from, and above, the sitter’s head, a white cloud like a cushion of cotton wool with, apparently imbedded in it, a recognisable human face. One of these exposures was of a Mr. C., a middle-aged business man whose acquaintance I had but recently made.

The spirit face was that of a woman with a coquettish-looking kiss-curl over one side of the forehead and with very high, almost Chinese-looking, cheekbones. This he unhesitatingly identified as his mother, “dead” many years before, who wore that “kiss-curl” all her earth-life owing to her sensitiveness as to a blemish on the skin of her forehead, and whose cheekbones were of that peculiar Mongolian type. His brother, a business man in South Africa, confirmed the identification, though the brother is very sceptical of spiritualism.

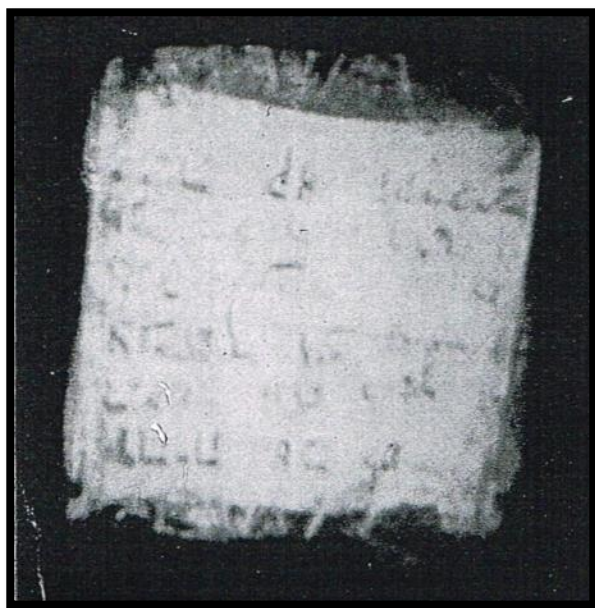
Apparently, the rays emitted by spirit forms which affect the photographic emulsion when invisible to the eye, are of a different intensity from the normal light by which the visible is photographed—for the spirit face was much “over-exposed” by comparison with the rest of the picture, and some local shading—giving the spirit face longer exposure in the enlarging camera than the rest of the negative—was needed to get the features distinct without the rest of the picture being all black, or nearly so.

The other successful spirit photo on this spool was of similar character, but a different sitter and different “dead” friend. Similar experiments on later dates resulted in the same sort of white cushion with very imperfectly distinguishable faces in some cases—all, apparently, cases of what would have been successful spirit portraits, spoiled by undue density of the supernormal portion of the negative.

Of the two unexposed portions of that first roll-film, the one that *should* have been blank, and was *not*, proved to contain what looks like a photograph of a stone tablet with ragged thick edges, inscribed with what I am told is correct but quite modern-style Hebrew lettering.



[Photo.6 ▼]<sup>16</sup>



When the only Jewish member of the company took it to a Rabbi to see if it could be read and translated, it proved to be a message urging him to study the Hebrew language, the sacred tongue of his race, and promising that his incipient mediumship would be most strongly developed with the help of eminent Jewish divines of past generations, if he did this, but not unless—a message, it seems, that had been given him in other forms, by various communicators, during his sittings with mediums, though I had no knowledge of this.

After this incident one sitter, without consulting or informing me, thought of getting me to experiment further with

“skotographs.” To this end, he bought a packet of quarter-plates at Boots, and, as their darkroom was not available, went to Kodak House, Kingsway, I believe, where he knew somebody in the firm, and got a member of the staff there (in his presence) to take the box of plates into the darkroom and wrap each plate separately in light proof black paper.

He brought the parcel of plates to my house, and gave me one wrapped plate at a time to hold for a few moments while I was in trance, immediately taking them back, and took them the same day to Kodak’s to be developed at once, himself being admitted to the darkroom to watch.

Each showed a clear design in shimmering white on black ground—one, the two linked triangles which are the Jewish national symbol, one a Cross, and one the Crescent, symbolic of Islam. Spirit guides attached to me representing these three religions had just been using me for propaganda work in connection with a reconciliation of their various creeds.

It may be interesting to note that the spool of film which resulted in two successful spirit photographs and one successful skotograph, was developed the day after exposure—the unsuccessful attempts on other spools were on spools that I allowed to remain undeveloped for some weeks because only a few exposures at a time were made.

I have heard from others with more experience of spirit photography that spirit guides have frequently insisted on the importance of prompt development, as “extras” impressed on the plate or film tend to be evanescent, otherwise—though how this can be so, is beyond me.

A usefully economical device for experimenting with skotographs in home circles of friends trying out what psychic power they may possess, is the use of pieces of gas-light paper, each in a light-proof envelope made of black paper, held in the hand by each sitter during the circle, and developed later. Using gas-light paper, rather than plates or films or bromide paper, has several advantages—in smallish sizes it is so cheap that one can afford not to consider

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<sup>16</sup>.—“The “stone tablet” skotograph taken by Colin Evans and referred to”

material's cost in trying repeatedly, in case no results at all appear for a time; by its low sensitivity it is not easily fogged by a little light-porosity of the black-paper envelopes, and needs no special darkroom facilities or other precautions in handling and developing. I have seen interesting indications of supernormal power on what should normally have been pure white unexposed pieces of gas-light paper used in this way by amateurs.

Perhaps the greatest future possibilities in serious photographic aid to psychical research, however, lies with infra-red cinematography. In this Leon Isaacs is probably the pioneer—the first man to take successful cinematograph “shots” lasting for some minutes of the various physical phenomena under test conditions.

With more photographers interested, mediums better developed to withstand light and longer wave-length infra-red materials, the phenomena of spiritualism will be lifted more completely from the controversial to the exact science stage of investigation.

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## Paul J. Gaunt comments:

Given the impressive claims of the mediumship of Colin Evans it is most surprising to find there is almost no information on him. Most of the reports in publications and on the internet show some of the photographs reproduced in this article and claims of fraud. However, the claims are not based on *original information*, and appear purely speculative and apparently no research has been done. The general claim is given in a couple of internet quotes:



“... photographs merely depict Evans jumping into the air. His movement was freezed by the flash, which he himself activated with that cord, but not entirely, as his feet are blurred. The next question is then, how that packed crowd didn’t denounce the hoax?”

“Colin Evans managed to fill a room with a crowd, but he could only “levitate” in complete darkness! That’s why nobody is looking at him levitating, that is, jumping. They didn’t see a thing. The photos were captured with a momentary flash. The photos were all Evans wanted”

It appears the medium was not independently investigated outside *The Link Association of Home Circles*. This may of course have been his own choice, but rejecting further investigation would in itself be expected to cause some negative headlines. Evans is not explicitly mentioned for example by the British

College of Psychic Science, or in the Proceedings or Journal of the Society for Psychical Research. The only brief negative headline found to date is in Harry Price, *Fifty Years of Psychical Research*, published in 1939, on page 199:

“Another unsatisfactory séance was that held at 61, North Gate Mansions, Regent’s Park, on May 27, 1938, with Mr. Colin Evans. This medium claims that, in complete darkness, he is ‘levitated.’ Mrs. A. Peel Goldney, Mrs. Henry Richards and others were convinced that at this particular test no levitation took place and the cheque paid to the medium was returned to the sitters.”<sup>17</sup>

Evans criticisms mainly focus on the photographs of his levitations; blurred feet in some photographs, his partially crouched position as in jumping mode, and the camera flash, which he himself activated with that cord, and the photographs taken in complete darkness – do these *facts* apply to all conditions and photographs? [Photo No.7 ▲]

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<sup>17</sup>.–Harry Price makes reference:— How photographs can be obtained of a man assumed to be levitating, but in reality *jumping*, is graphically recorded (with illustrations) in *Proc.*, SPR, Vol. XLV, Part 158, pp. 196-8. Evans was not named in PSPR. These were not infra-red.

A séance with 200 people is reported at the Rochester Square Temple, London on Saturday March 12th 1938 published in the *Two Worlds* (March 25th). There is a photograph of a levitation with two ladies standing on a chair, which describes a levitation process:

[Photo No.8 ▼]



The two ladies seated one each side of the medium then announced that he was “going up.” He seemed to float upwards from his chair, while they held his hands, until they had to stand on their chairs and stretch their arms upward to retain hold of his hands, which were drawn slowly but irresistibly right out of their reach, so that they had to let go—and a moment or two afterwards, sitters in different parts of the circle at some distance felt his feet drop fairly heavily (Mrs. Jackie Kruze said very heavily—others, not heavily enough to hurt them, but heavily enough and long enough to be distinctly felt and recognised) on to their heads and then float upwards again. The two ladies who occupied seats next to his, and who had been holding his hands till he “floated” up beyond their reach, were then made to take each other’s hands, while still

standing on their chairs in order to strengthen the power by completing a circle of linked hands. At this point an infra-red flashlight photograph was taken, which proved to be a picture showing him apparently about to be returned to his chair, but in the meanwhile “suspended” some distance above it in front of the two ladies’ linked hands. Immediately after the flash, the medium was felt separating the ladies’ hands and taking their hands again himself and a moment later falling downwards gently into his chair again.

A week earlier on May 7th at the same venue it was reported in *Psychic News* (May 14th 1938) by the assistant editor A. W. Austen (unfortunately the last few words of the article quote are missing) who was present and writing of his personal experience:<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>.-There had been two official stenographers for the teachings of Silver Birch (first known as “Big Jump”); the first was A. W. (Billy) Austen, assistant editor at *Psychic News*. Austen had been with the paper since its inception in May 1932, and would later become its editor. The first book, *Teachings of Silver Birch*, was issued in March 1938, edited by A.W. Austen, with a foreword by Hannen Swaffer.

## SITTERS SEE HIS BODY FLOATING IN THE AIR

“AN unwelcome intrusion of light provided visible proof of the medium’s levitation at The Link “mass séance” at the Rochester Square Temple, North London, on Saturday.

At previous seances, Colin Evans has frequently been lifted into the air but, as the sittings are held in the dark, the evidence has hitherto been inconclusive. Sitters have felt the medium’s feet touching their heads, those sitting on either side of him have felt their hands raised as he was lifted, until his hands were dragged out of theirs.

But, while these experiences went a long way to convincing those concerned of the genuineness of the phenomena, other people could quite easily imagine the results to be obtainable in other ways. Perhaps, for instance, Evans put his shoes on his hands and touched the heads of the sitters. Perhaps he was able to raise his hands above his head and give the impression his whole body was being lifted.

### DAYLIGHT LEAKS IN

*These objections were effectively answered on Saturday. As it was still light when the seance started, daylight leaked in through the glass in the roof. This fact enabled me, when Evans was levitated, to see his body floating at a considerable distance from the ground—I should think about ten feet. Others saw him too.*

Before the séance, the medium had put on the soles of his shoes some luminous tape, so that it was quite easy to follow his movements in the dark. He went up several times and on one occasion, just as he was coming down, an infra-red picture was taken simultaneously by two cameras. These pictures clearly show him in the air, his feet about three feet from the floor, and some distance in front of his chair.

The flash that is necessary to take the pictures always upsets the psychic conditions to the extent of causing him to fall. On this occasion he came down in the middle of ...”

Below is the full séance report of the above séance attended by *Psychic News* assistant editor Billy Austen, and quoted from *Psychic News*. The report is by the Vice-President and Secretary of the “Link,” Mr. I. S. Byerley which was published in the *Two Worlds* May 13th 1938:

## “THE LINK” TRIUMPHS AGAIN

300 PEOPLE SEE COLIN EVANS FULLY LEVITATED. MATERIALISATION, SPIRIT LIGHTS, DIRECT VOICE, INFRA-RED PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN WITH TWO SEPARATE CAMERAS BY LEON ISAACS. GRAMOPHONE RECORDS OF SPIRIT VOICES.

Further advances in the scientific control and recording of physical mediumship were made at the May monthly gathering of the “Link” Association of Home Circles, held for the third time at the Rochester Square Spiritualist Temple, Camden Town, London, on Saturday, May 7th. Photographs were taken from different angles and gramophone records made.

Some twenty-odd people, including experienced investigators, formed an inner circle, in which sat Colin Evans between two ladies, one a well-known platform clairvoyante (Mrs. Orme), and the other an experienced psychic investigator, who

is also a business woman, proprietress of two important textile and dress-making firms, while other sitters close to the inner circle included the well-known medium, Bertha Harris, and an eminent West End consulting physician, and the Vice-President and Sec. of the "Link," Mr. I. S. Byerley and Mr. Jay. Experienced sitters placed immediately behind Colin Evans included the Assistant editor of a London paper.

Several luminous trumpets and a luminous slate were placed on the floor in the centre of the circle.

Owing to the large attendance, about three hundred people, and the amount of space that had to be cleared to make room for the placing and operation of sound-recording apparatus for making gramophone records of voices, and of two cameras placed at widely different angles—one directly in front of the medium at a sufficient distance to take in almost the whole hall, and the other directly to one side of the medium, at an equal distance, but placing him in profile to the lens, and of the infra-red lighting apparatus by which photographs were taken, seating was very cramped indeed, and the sitters in the inner circle, including the medium were "almost on each other's laps," their chairs pressed close together, so that no movement was possible without the full knowledge and even disturbance of adjacent sitters, while the second circle of chairs outside the inner circle was crowded in equally close to the backs of the chairs of the inner circle, again allowing no movement of any sitter in the inner circle or of the medium to go unfelt by sitters in the chairs behind.

Unfortunately, recent weather conditions had largely washed away the black paint which some months before had been put on the glass roof of the Temple to exclude daylight, and this was only discovered at the last moment. A man was sent for to restore this, but when the lights were extinguished it was found that a great deal of daylight came through various patches and streaks of clear glass that had been left, and a guide during the seance complained that all this white light pouring right down on the inner circle necessitated a much greater drain on the medium's and sitters' powers to produce the same phenomena and prevented the production of more and stronger phenomena. As it was, however, this unwanted light did incidentally serve the purpose of giving visual confirmation usually not so clearly given of levitation, etc., that occurred in spite of it.

The movement of the luminous trumpets commenced almost immediately the sitting began (a few minutes later than the advertised time of 7.45 p.m.), actually during the opening prayer (given by Mrs. Bertha Harris). Then, while the medium's and all the other sitters' hands were controlled, one trumpet, liberally daubed with luminous paint, was levitated to a great height above sitters' heads, and moved freely all over the inner circle and for some distance outside it, as far as the third row of seats outside the inner circle, and for a long time waved in time with the singing, etc., and also went in the direction of, and up to, sitters to whom other sitters asked for it to be taken, tapping several sitters at a great distance from the medium as well as near him.

Then the trumpet moved towards a sitter and addressed him by what he recognised as the Gaelic form of his Christian name, and a woman's spirit, in



direct voice, speaking through the trumpet, carried on with him a brief conversation in Gaelic, which the sitter (a medical man, whose family belong to the Scottish isles, and who speaks Gaelic, which was the only language spoken by his grandparents) was able to understand, and reply to, but failed to get her name through or to identify herself definitely, the trumpet falling as she was making the attempts. Neither Colin Evans nor any other sitter who could have been used for this communication has any knowledge of Gaelic or any Celtic language. The name "Colin Evans," by the way, is only a platform name, adopted for public work by this medium, who has no Celtic blood or connections, and has no knowledge even of Welsh, which might be of help in getting the kindred Highland Scottish tongue through his mediumship.

On this occasion, strips of gummed paper painted with luminous paint had been affixed to the medium's shoes, outlining the shape of the feet, to make levitation easier off observation for sitters at a distance.

He was several times levitated for short distances from his chair, and then twice for prolonged periods was bodily levitated to such a height that his feet were seen to be about twelve feet above the heads of the sitters, where he appeared to float about for some distance all round the inner circle and outside it as far as the second or third rows seats, sometimes upright, sometimes in a sitting posture as if seated on an invisible chair, and sometimes apparently extended in the air horizontally, his body being visible to a number of people, including the London journalist already mentioned seated just behind the medium's chair, when it came against the gaps in the black paint on the glass roof and showed up against the daylight filtering through these parts of the roof.

The guides, however, did not allow the flash of light necessary for the taking a photograph till he was brought down to a safer distance from the floor, when a photograph was taken showing him suspended in the air some distance in front of his chair and with his feet some feet above the floor, where he was apparently suspended for a moment motionless, from the dead-sharp appearance of the photograph showing no movement in the upper part of his body, though the lower limbs seem to have been twitching slightly with a slight convulsive tremor common in the trance state [Photo No.9 ▼].

A large number of sitters in the inner circle and in seats some distance outside the inner circle were touched firmly and for appreciable lengths of time, and their heads stroked and shoulders patted, by materialised hands, while the medium's and all other sitters' hands were controlled and held.

Several attempts were made at visible materialisation, which were partially successful, the luminous slate being several times raised and moved about in the inner circle and once or twice carried outside the inner circle to more distant sitters, to show materialised hands of small child-like form, and an arm in a sleeve or draping of white gossamer-like shimmering material. The spirit draperies which, without any clearly seen bodily form, were repeatedly seen by the light from the levitated luminous slate, were, at sitters' spoken requests, taken from one sitter to another in different parts of the hall, and allowed to be felt.

The lady seated next to the medium, who by many years of business connection with textile fabrics has a wide expert knowledge of dress and other fabric, reported that when handled by her this ectoplasmic drapery was quite unlike any fabric known to her, feeling more like a very finely woven fabric of some such substance as spider's webs are composed of than like any silk, cotton, or woollen texture known to her.

In a position close in front of and between her and the medium himself, there was built up one apparently complete materialisation, which moved round from sitter to sitter for a little distance round the inner circle, raising the luminous slate at intervals, but only one or two sitters were able to see the face at all clearly, and they were unable to identify it except as a clean-shaven face.



Direct-voice messages spoken through the trumpets on this occasion were more fragmentary and less evidential, in most cases, as to their contents, than on other occasions when Colin Evans has sat with the "Link"—One woman spirit, however, called to a "Doris" at some distance in the audience and was claimed.

During the seances of Colin Evans' circle it is customary to sing secular songs with a quick, brisk rhythm to keep up light vibrations to assist physical phenomena, but a request had been made that songs with a war time association should be avoided. Somebody, however, started singing "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and almost immediately a trumpet went up into the air and a rough but very powerful, somewhat Cockney male voice (the clearest in enunciation of any of the voices produced through the trumpet on this occasion) cried, in tones of some bitterness and apparent irony, "That's right, practise it! You'll need it to keep you going that extra mile or two when you're ready to drop, before they blow you to - - - bits! Practise! You'll need it, soon enough."

### **Spirit Lights**

Very striking objective spirit light, first shaped apparently like a small globe or little "golf ball" seemed at one moment to come from some point in the medium's body—rested a moment on his lap and then (while all hands, including the medium's, were controlled) floated to a good height overhead, and moved

about from sitter to sitter, changing its shape and elongating into various shapes, strips and tongue-shaped filaments, and heart-shaped parches, and every now and then, being apparently extinguished to flash into luminosity again a moment later. This was immediately followed by two objective lights of greater intensity, but much smaller and more compact form—almost points, like tiny eyes—which moved about simultaneously with great whirling rapidity, sometimes about three feet apart, sometimes only a few inches apart and circling about each other like gnats or fireflies in rapid motion.

Three separate exposures were made in two cameras together each time, giving six pictures in all; the first a Guide through Colin Evans, described as the nearest they had ventured or managed to get yet to allowing and enabling a photograph to be taken showing the actual process of materialisation; the second, the medium levitated, and the third when apparently no supernormal phenomenon was in progress, but concerning which, the same Guide said they wished to take it as part of an experiment which might then be more interesting to them (the spirit operators who were experimenting) than to the sitters, but he hoped they would not grudge them the plate used for it! It apparently shows a partial attempt to transfigure over the medium, by a Chinese Guide was really a Guide attached to a young medium now in spirit and who was a friend of Colin Evans.

### **Benedictions**

Colin Evans' French Priest Guide, "The Abbé," speaking by trance control, gave a little "sermonette" of apparently a rather reproachful nature to those who were "prepared to crowd a hall in their hundreds to see a tin trumpet beating time to a silly tune in the air without physical means, but not more than a dozen or so of whom would trouble to come if the same amount of power were used to enable spirit friends to communicate abundantly and clearly through the much easier forms of mental mediumship" but added: that nevertheless, the physical phenomena were legitimate and useful, otherwise the spirit operators would not be allowed and encouraged to co-operate in their production.

The seance was closed with Catholic, Buddhist (or Sikh) and Jewish benedictions by the Abbé Ram Lal Singh and Rabbi Davids, three controls of Colin Evans, and the Abbé then ordered Colin Evans to leave the seance immediately even if other sitters liked to continue a little longer for other mediumship, Colin Evans was greatly exhausted and faint, attributed to the effect of the white light coming through the glass roof.

I.S.B.

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## In conclusion:

Given the information published in this issue of Psypioneer it can be seen the sweeping statements of fraud given earlier in this article referring to Evans levitations need more explanation. For example in the first quote it states:

“... photographs merely depict Evans jumping into the air. His movement was freezed by the flash, which he himself activated with that cord, but not entirely, as his feet are blurred. The next question is then, how that packed crowd didn’t denounce the hoax?”

But knowledge of infra-red photography is required, and the information needs to be clear in the case of each photograph e.g., the camera aperture and speed; some of this information is given in the reports, for any reader with experience in infra-red photography.

Possibly one of the first to announce Evans’ levitations were simply a man jumping was the American magazine *Life* that ran from 1883 to 1972, and stated “Magicians point out that Evans’ blurred feet indicate that he has simply jumped high into the air.”<sup>19</sup> The photograph used is shown on Photo 7; note Leon Isaacs holding the flash in the left hand corner of the picture.

The republished information in this article sheds some light on the mediumship of Colin Evans, especially on the alleged levitations and their photographs. The large séances given by the Link enabled thousands of people to witness physical phenomenon which was usually for the few in the home circles. Many testified to Evans’ public mediumship for example former Spiritualists’ National Union, President Harold Vigurs; he was also the speaker with Swaffer at one of the meetings.

## This article shows:

Evans states that he does hold the camera/flash release and he gives the reasons why. The lead is evident on some of the pictures. But this lead was not always the camera/flash; according to the *Two Worlds* March 25th 1938 “Medium Floats Holding Microphone.” [Photo 8]

It should be noted that Jack Webber on occasion held the camera/flash release. Generally the mediums/guides I have looked at, referring to infra-red or normal flash photography, were in full and complete control of the flash in some way.

The photographs are criticised as Evans feet are blurred, but this is not always correct. We can note in photo’s 3 & 8 this is not the case.

Reports state the levitations were performed in complete darkness, so the sitter saw nothing. But it should be pointed out that the articles reference Evans: *had put on the*

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<sup>19</sup>.—See LIFE page 35 “London Medium snaps His Own Levitation”:—  
<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Tk8EAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA35&dq=%22COLIN+EVANS%22+MEDIUM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=Wf09UcOkD-G57AaPIIDgAg&ved=0CEoQuwUwBA#v=onepage&q=%22COLIN%20EVANS%22%20MEDIUM&f=false>

*soles of his shoes some luminous tape, so that it was quite easy to follow his movements in the dark.*

Note also *The Link* “mass séance” at the Rochester Square Temple, North London on May 7th 1938 where *Psychic News* assistant editor A. W. Austen stated: “As it was still light when the seance started, daylight leaked in through the glass in the roof. This fact enabled me, when Evans was levitated, to see his body floating at a considerable distance from the ground—I should think about ten feet. Others saw him too.”

Furthermore in the *Two Worlds* report it states: *300 People See Colin Evans Fully Levitated*. On photo's 1 & 9 it appears as stated in the report and by comparing old photographs we can confirm the man directly behind Evans chair is A. W. Austen.

These re-published reports do not show Colin Evans as genuine, any more than him to be a fraud. As it appears there were no controlled investigations into his psychic abilities and mediumship, questions will always remain, even about simple matters like, was the medium searched before or after the séance? And were the sitters searched (e.g., the inner circle)? If, or not Evans was escorted during his stay at the Temple; or if he had access to the hall before and after the séance etc.

Being dressed in a three piece suit for his séances is unusual given the heat which would have been generated with so many people in such close proximity. We can note in the reports, that the inner circle where Evans sat was on occasion very crowded, as can be seen on photo 9. It would be difficult for him to blindly jump and land in a small area without injury to himself or the sitters, given the article quote:

“seating was very cramped indeed, and the sitters in the inner circle, including the medium were “almost on each other’s laps,” their chairs pressed close together, so that no movement was possible without the full knowledge and even disturbance of adjacent sitters, while the second circle of chairs outside the inner circle was crowded in equally close to the backs of the chairs of the inner circle, again allowing no movement of any sitter in the inner circle or of the medium to go unfelt by sitters in the chairs behind.”

I have found no authoritative reports directly challenging Evans’ mediumship except for some possible concerns over the technical production of a photograph. It was noted at the beginning of this article “February 11th issue of the *Two Worlds* further reports of séances were emerging of Colin Evans with the medium “floating over sitters’ heads in his aerial trips round the room,” and the paper published probably the first photograph of Evans being levitated during a séance ... the photograph published in the issue is of very poor quality.” It was this photograph which prompted an article in the *Two Worlds* on April 29th 1938 pages 260 & 266, by Dr. R. A Watters, Sc.D which is published below with the photograph:

## Concerning Infra-Red and Ultra-Violet Rays



REFERRING to an infra-red ray photograph, published in *The Two Worlds*, issue of February 11th, 1938, an article in the March 11th issue of the same journal says: "The infra-red ray used for taking photographs is not really safe or suitable for mediumistic phenomena of a physical order, except with many precautions and safeguards." The article goes on to say that "The wavelength the guides worked on for phenomena was about 2,000 angstrom units, and the infra-red in use was somewhere between 7,500 and 9,000. Much more interesting work could be done with greater safety if photographic experts could produce photographic emulsions to work at a wavelength of at least 20,000 angstrom units, and with a screen to transmit no limit below that wavelength."<sup>20</sup>

### SAFEST WAVE LENGTHS

If, as the guide says, the safest wavelength for photography is about 20,000 AU., one is immediately prompted to ask whether or not there may have been an error, typographical or otherwise, in the guide's purported statement, for if the guide has been misquoted due to a typographical error, it seems obvious that he was trying to say that since mediumistic phenomena occur at 20,000 A.U., it is much safer to try photography with light or approximately the same wavelength; but if there has been no error in the report, then the statement made by the guide should be most carefully investigated.

If the guide was correct, then phenomena that occur by virtue of light with wavelength of about 2,000 A.U., which is the beginning of the *far* ultra-violet, should be photographed with light rays of about 20,000 A.U., which is in the invisible infra-red. The light previously used in these experiments was, as I understand it, between 9,000 AU. and 7,500 A.U. Since the *red* portion of the spectrum is in the neighbourhood of 7,600 A.U. to 6,500 A.U. (depending upon the observer), it is evident that there was some dim illumination in the seance-room, due to the infra-red generators, if the minimum wavelength was 7,400 A. U. The *intensity* of the light would depend, of course, upon the number of burners in operation.

<sup>20</sup>—*The Two Worlds*, March 11, 1938, page 149: "Infra-red Ray Photographs Criticised by Spirit Operator." *The Two Worlds*, February 11, 1938, page 81: "Floating Medium Photographed at Seance: Infra-Red Ray Camera."



Since the guide requested that the wave length be changed from 7,500 A.U. to 20,000 A.U., it is evident that his request will be criticised by some on the grounds that the wavelength requested does not furnish sufficient illumination for visual observation. If, however, we assume that the published photograph is genuine, then the argument that darkness is desired for questionable purposes is invalid, for the simple reason that it can be said that photographs had been actually taken in red light at 7,500 A.U. A request, therefore, for a change of wavelength is not objectionable, provided, of course, there were enough lamps in operation in the first place to provide visual confirmation of the pictured levitation, thus ensuring the validity of the photograph. It is permissible, I think, to raise this criticism, because a study of the published photograph suggests that only enough infra-red rays were used to ensure minimum lighting of the seance-room, which, if true, means that with a minimum wavelength of 7,500 A.U., there was scarcely enough light in the room for visual confirmation of the levitation as pictured in the photograph. If this reasoning be correct, then the validity of the photograph is open to question; for not only was there insufficient illumination for visual confirmation of the phenomena, but there was no evidence put forth to ensure that the plates or films were always handled in the presence of witnesses, or that the photographic work in the seance-room was under the supervision of more than one photographer. In recording a phenomenon as important as the levitation of a human body, it is very desirable that no detail be overlooked which could possibly leave any doubts in the mind of the reader.

For an infra-red ray photograph of the type published to be valid. I should say that (a) there should be enough light in the seance-room for the sitters to visually confirm the phenomena; (b) that if the photograph *must* be made in the dark, then the plates or films should be bought, manipulated, and processed in the presence of witnesses; (c) that all photographic procedure in the seance-room should likewise be conducted in the presence of capable witnesses, otherwise the photograph is open to question. It is not a question of accusing anyone of dishonesty, it is a matter of conducting the experiments in such a careful manner that neither the medium, sitters, nor investigators can be accused of error or fraud—unconscious or otherwise; for *photography in the dark is as open to suspicion as are the phenomena themselves!*

### ULTRA-VIOLET RADIATIONS

Assuming that no error was made in the article published in the March 11th issue of *The Two Worlds* the guide's statement that "The wavelength the guides worked on for phenomena was about 2,000 angstrom units . . ." is, it seems to me, of some importance. It is not quite clear what the guide meant by this statement, but in view of the fact that living organisms have their own spectra, which includes ultra-violet radiations, it might not be amiss to include an hypothesis based upon certain inferences which may be logically deduced from the guide's statement, in the hope that it will stimulate the "Link" investigators to look further into the matter with a view to learning more about the *modus operandi* of mediumship.

There are many different kinds of radiation depending on the wavelength. The *shorter the* wavelength the more *energy* is contained in a given unit of radiation. Infra-red rays do not contain enough energy to effect ordinary chemical reactions. Ultra-violet rays can produce chemical reactions, as can also visible light, particularly in the blue end of the spectrum. Since, therefore, it is possible for visible light to produce chemical effects which may be undesirable, it is not as difficult to understand *why* it is preferable for a seance-room to be illuminated with a dim red light.

It is a well-known fact that in the presence of certain gases visible light will produce photochemical effects quite as readily as will ultra-violet: a Wilson cloud-chamber filled with hydrogen iodide plus hydrogen makes an excellent medium for the observation of the photochemical effects of light. Because of the instability of many substances in the presence of light, it might be supposed that while visible radiations are undesirable to the seance-room, the presence of ultra-violet rays indeed would be out of the question, that is, if there is anything to the contention that light is harmful to mediumistic phenomena.

Light of 2,000 A.U. is, as has been said, in the far ultra-violet; it is capable of producing chemical reactions, and it is readily absorbed, even in a few millimeters of air. If the guide meant to infer that light of this character could be produced at will for the production of mediumistic phenomena, the inference is rather far-fetched; but if he meant to convey the idea that he could impress the medium's organism in such manner as to cause him (the medium) to react to his (the guide's) thoughts and impressions, *then* the inference is that the guide assumes control of the medium's brain-function through the *product* of that organ's oxidation, which process results in the generation of ultra-violet radiations of about 2,500 A.U. to 1,990 A.U. Oxidation in living matter produces its own spectrum: beginning at about 20,000 A.U. is the infra-red, it extends through the visible spectrum into the ultra-violet. down to something like 1.990 A.U.; hence, when the guide stated that for phenomena a wavelength of 2,000 A.U. was employed, his statement was not without some foundation in fact.

If, then, we agree that the guide operates on a wavelength of 2,000 A.U., still it is not clear *why* he has chosen the *product* of oxidation rather than the phenomenon of oxidation itself; for oxidation, as is well known, controls the organs' functions. Oxidation produces radiant energy, that is, ultra-violet, visible and infra-red radiations; the ultra-violet radiation, control the organs' chemical activity; the chemical phenomena control the electric potential or, cellular structure; the electrical potential controls the activity of protoplasm; protoplasm controls the manifestations of cellular life; the growth, health, and cellular function determine the well-being or the organ; the proper growth, development and functions of the organs determine the activity of the organism; the health, functions, proper physical and psychical relationship, together with the co-ordination of the organism's physiology determine the behaviour of the organism as a *whole*.

To account for the phenomenon of oxidation Crile<sup>21</sup> has postulated a new atom, which he has called a “Radiogen,” a discussion of which would serve no purpose here; but since a variation of any factor cited in the above paragraph may, either singly or in conjunction with another, promote oxidative changes in one or more organs, it is plain that if it were at all possible for the guide to in some way affect the short-wave radiations of the organism, he would be in a position to affect decidedly the oxidation of, let us say, the brain, regardless of the “Radiogen”—or better, perhaps, in spite of it! If this hypothesis were proved, then it would be shown that a guide contacting the brain’s radiant energy in such manner as to alter its power to produce photochemical effects would in fact so alter the organ’s function as to make it come under the domination of the guide, thus making it possible for him to use the medium’s body and brain to achieve whatever results he might desire.

Although the above hypothesis is founded on fact I do not suggest that it is by any means the correct one; but since the guide has given what appears to be definite information regarding his *point of contact* with the medium for the production of phenomena, and since it is one of the few times that an apparently definite statement has been made that can be connected up with definitely established physiological facts, certainly the statement is worthy not only of mention here, but the *Link* investigators should press their investigations with utmost vigour; for they may be able to uncover new data., capable of laboratory verification, which would indeed give a new impetus, to mediumship.

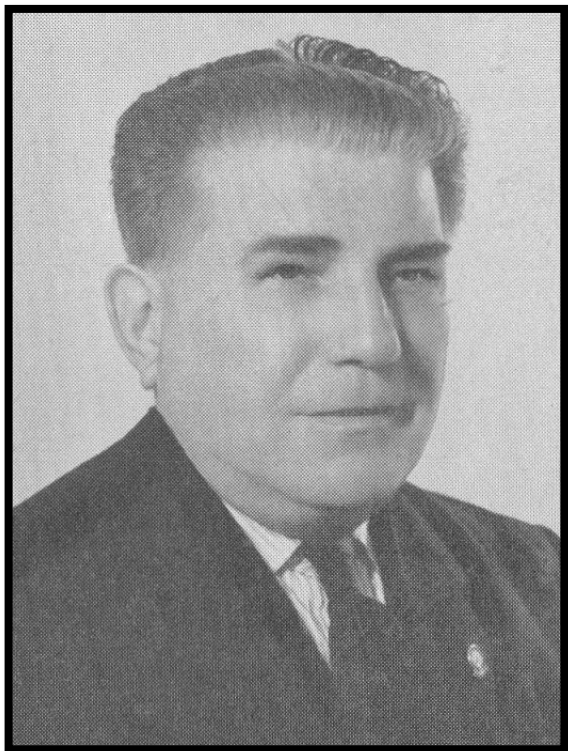
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<sup>21</sup>.—Crile, G. W., “The Phenomena of Life.” Pp 71-77.

## **“The Link”—The Association of Home Circles & “The Noah’s Ark Society”—for Physical Mediumship**

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**NOAH ZERDIN**  
1889-1972

*When in April, 1927, a  
terrible disaster robbed me  
of my dear wife and the  
mother of my seven  
months’ old baby, life to  
me became valueless,  
purposeless.*

*An atheist from the early  
days when I began to think  
for myself, death to me was  
the end, without a glimpse  
of hope. My loss was  
complete. My dear love  
was dead, and death was  
the end. — N.Z.*

Noah Zerdin was born into a strict orthodox Russian-Jewish family in 1889. A month after his wife Bertha’s death in 1927, with a few intimate friends and relations, he carried his own investigations into Spiritualism at his own home, without any help or assistance from any professional medium or Spiritualist resulting in his conviction of spirit return and the development of his home circle. Within a few years he began pioneering a general awareness and the safe practice of physical mediumship, a form of mediumship generally restricted to home circles. Around 1930, Noah began to exchange reports of his home circle with those of Harold Chibbett; the following year in 1931 *Light* published an appeal in its March 21st issue:

### **HOME CIRCLES-AN APPEAL**

Sir,—A group of private circles, sitting for physical phenomena, would like to get into touch with other home circles for physical phenomena, for the purpose of exchanging reports and pooling experiences for mutual benefit.

Will those interested please communicate.

32, Sandringham Avenue,  
Merton Park,  
Wimbledon, S.W.20.

N. ZERDIN.

*The Link*—the Association of Home Circles, was founded by Zerdin and Chibbett, and it held its first Conference in 1931. This represented 21 home circles, and the following year it increased slightly to 26. The new association was no doubt boosted by Hannen Swaffer, when on Sunday January 3rd 1932, more than a thousand people attended the Marylebone Association at the Queens Hall, London to hear Swaffer speaking on the subject of “home circles”—he said:

“... it was in such circles that the strength of the spiritualistic movement was to be found. That very evening, there were probably 100,000 circles sitting in this country, most of them quite unknown except to the sitters—their existence not even suspected by the people next door or in the flat below. It was in these gatherings that really convincing proof of Survival was to be found. Public clairvoyance was necessary, but it could do little more than arouse the interest and curiosity of the people who heard it, as intimate details must be withheld.”

By the third Conference held on October 15th 1933 in London it had reached 156 affiliated home circles (1934 - 187 home circles). Chibbett was then Hon. Secretary, (providing it is the same gentleman). Chibbett is referenced in the “Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology,” by Gale Research Inc., edited by Leslie Shepard (third edition) which states:<sup>22</sup>

Founder of *The Probe*, a pioneer British group of investigators of psychic and occult phenomena, Chibbett was born February 19, 1900, in England. He was a member of the first London science-fiction club and a friend of Eric Frank Russell, whom he met in 1942 and with whom he shared an interest in Fortean phenomena.

Chibbett spent some fifty years meeting occultists and collecting data on unusual phenomena. At his own expense he maintained a postal chain letter to spread information on Fortean, and during his investigations he met such famous individuals as occultist Aleister Crowley, psychical investigator Harry Price, and Kuda Bux, a fire walker. His correspondents included scientists and occultists.

He suffered from ill health for some years, and died February 23, 1978, after a heart attack.

In 1934 the *Link* published a booklet on *The Modern Home Circle*, by Zerdin; later in 1957 a more comprehensive booklet was produced. Zerdin would also publish a booklet entitled *Spiritualism in a Nutshell* (third enlarged edition 1952).

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<sup>22</sup>.—Originally taken from: *Encyclopedia of Occultism* by Lewis Spence, published London 1920 & *Encyclopedia of Psychic Science* by Nandor Fodor, published London 1934, substantially revised by Leslie Shepard and supplemented by new material. For more on Harold Chibbett see:—Tom Ruffles blog – Preserving the Archives of Psychical Research:—<http://tomruffles.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11/preserving-archives-of-psychical.html>

Lis Warwood also notes: Just to confirm the information: Harold Stanley W. Chibbett was born 19 Feb 1900 (GRO Births Mar Q 1900 Islington 1b 353). He married Lily M Walters in 1929 (GRO Marriages Sep Q 1929 Islington 1b 545). Died GRO Mar Q 1978 Enfield 12 0748.



In 1960 Noah retired from the *Link* due to poor health; he died in March 1972. His cremation service was conducted by SNU Minister Maurice Barbanell, editor of *Psychic News* and the *Two Worlds*.<sup>23</sup>

In a home circle in Ilkeston, Derbyshire on April 25th 1990 it is said:

“The people sitting in attempt to communicate heard an independent voice message (heard apart from any of their member’s speaking), that urged those present to form an organization specifically devoted to the promotion of physical mediumship and the development of mediums in whose present physical mediumship occurs. The voice identified himself as Noah Zerdin, ...”<sup>24</sup>

The message had been given on the anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the *Link*. The *Noah’s Ark Society for Physical Mediumship* was begun by Robin Foy and the other members of the circle formed the first committee. The Noah’s Ark monthly *Newsletter*, first appeared in August 1990, and January 1991 saw its first Seminar, a one day event at the Sleep Inn at Nottingham, Derby with over 70 delegates attending. Their first AGM followed in April 1991. The Society had early success by June of this year when membership had passed 500 Associate Members, and around 150 Member Circles internationally.

The Society Chairman, Robin Foy, built a séance room in the cellar of his home at Scole, Norfolk which was completed in February 1992. The séance room was dedicated by holding a séance for the committee with the physical medium Stewart Alexander who later became President of the Society.<sup>25</sup> Scole would become the focus of some astounding documented investigations involving senior members of the *Society for Psychical Research* asking to observe, test and record what took place. See *Psypioneer* 2008 for an exclusive report by Dr Alan Gauld *A sitting at Scole*.<sup>26</sup>

The Noah’s Ark monthly *Newsletter* became *The Ark Review* in 1998; some of the original material is still available on-line.<sup>27</sup> The final double issue of the *Ark Review* was November/December 2004 and the Society closed.

[NAS history is taken from the societies “An Introduction”]

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<sup>23</sup>.-Lis Warwood notes: Noah Zerdin’ died in Mar Q 1972 Sutton 5e 636. His date of birth is given as 24 Oct 1888. There is a marriage for him to Bertha Goldesgeyme in 1923 (GRO Mar Q 1923 Southwark 1d 172a). She died in a fire in his furrier business in 1927 (GRO Deaths Jun Q 1927 Pancras 1b 38), and a second marriage Sep Q 1935 Westminster 1a 1679 this time to Golda Goldesgeyme, Bertha’s younger sister.

<sup>24</sup>.-Noah’s Ark Society for Physical Mediumship:—<http://www.answers.com/topic/noah-s-ark-society-for-physical-mediumship>

<sup>25</sup>.-Stewart Alexander would hold various positions in the Society starting with Archive Officer. For more information on the Noah’s Ark, and physical mediumship see Stewart’s book *An Extraordinary Journey:—The Memoirs of a Physical Medium*, by Stewart Alexander; this is available at Amazon with the “Look Inside” feature at:—<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Extraordinary-Journey-Memoirs-Physical-Medium/dp/0955705061>  
The book is reviewed in *Psypioneer*: Volume 6. No 11. November 2010:—Stewart Alexander’s Journey – Book Review – Leslie Price:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.11November2010.pdf>

<sup>26</sup>.-Sitting at Scole 24th Jan 1997 – Monty Keen, Donald West, Alan Gauld, Robin and Sandra Foy, Alan and Diana. See *Psypioneer*: Volume 4. No 7. July 2008:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.7July08.pdf>

<sup>27</sup>.-The Noah’s Ark Society home page:—<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/annetts/ark/index.htm>

## BOOKS WE HAVE REVIEWED

*If you have any problems locating a copy we can contact the author*

**An Extraordinary Journey:—The Memoirs of a Physical Medium**, by Stewart Alexander, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England, 2010. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9557050-6-9, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 294-296:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.11November2010.pdf>

**Helen Duncan the Mystery Show Trial**, by Robert Hartley published by H Pr (Publishing), London 2007. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9553420-8-0. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 244-247:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.11November07..pdf>

**Aquarian Evangelist: The Age of Aquarius as It Dawned in the Mind of Levi Dowling**, by John Benedict Buescher Theosophical History Volume XI available at:—then—Occasional Papers. Psypioneer references by Leslie Price page 7:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08.pdf>

**Dead Men's Embers**, by Gerald O'Hara, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2006. Large Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9514534-6-9, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 1-2:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.1January07..pdf>

**Mrs Miller's Gift' – a Celebration of 75 Years of the Edinburgh College of Parapsychology formerly Edinburgh Psychic College & Library**, by Gerald O'Hara & Ann Harrison, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2007. Paperback ISBN: 978-0-951-4534-9-0, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 1-4:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08..pdf>

**Mrs Miller's Gift CD:—Helen Duncan Séance, Ernest Oaten and Harry Edwards**, Written and produced by Gerald O'Hara B.Sc. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 106-107:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09.pdf>

**The Indescribable Phenomena – The Life and Mysteries of Anna Eva Fay**, by Barry H. Wiley published by Hermetic Press, Inc., Seattle Washington 2005. ISBN: 0-945296-50-9, available at:—[http://www.hermeticpress.com/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=45](http://www.hermeticpress.com/product_info.php?products_id=45) Psypioneer references by Leslie Price pages 39-42:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.2February09.pdf>

**Immortal Longings – FWH Myers and the Victorian Search for Life After Death**, by Trevor Hamilton published by Imprint Academic in Exeter, U.K (also VA, U.S.A) 2009. ISBN: 9-781845- 401238 H.B, 9-781845-402488 PB, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 157-148:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>

**Talking to the Dead – Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism**, by Barbara Weisberg published by HarperSanFrancisco New York 2004. Hardback ISBN: 0-06-056667-1, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 9-10:—[http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie\\_Price\\_PP2.pdf](http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP2.pdf)

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Paul J. Gaunt

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