

PSYPIONEER

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THIS ENTIRE ISSUE IS DEDICATED

To

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Psypioneer will continue our celebration of this 150th year with more rare ACD material in the months ahead: - So subscribe free now!

psypioneersub@aol.com

The Sesquicentennial of the birth of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

22nd May 1859 – 7th July 1930



Sir Arthur, circa 1928 – Windlesham, Crowborough with his old Airedale, Paddy

22nd May, 2009 marks 150 years since the birth of Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle in Edinburgh – and we are pleased to dedicate this issue of *Psypioneer* to his work for Spiritualism.

We bring *Psypioneer* readers a selection of articles on the “St Paul of Spiritualism” (as Sir Arthur was described, following his passing, due to his widespread travelling to take “the Vital Message” to the world at large). Of course, this selection is but a glimpse of his tireless efforts for Spiritualism, let alone his other humanistic endeavours.

For a quick biographical study of the man and a bibliography of his major literary works, we refer readers to the Wikipedia entry¹:

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur\\_Conan\\_Doyle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Conan_Doyle)

# Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Psychic Bookshop, Library & Museum

By Garth Willey

**ON 9<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY, 1925** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (ACD) established a Psychic Bookshop and Library “within a stone’s throw of Westminster Abbey”; and towards the end of that year he supplemented it with a Museum of psychic artefacts and memorabilia in the basement.

It was very much a labour of love on ACD’s part, to bring the truths of psychical research and Spiritualism within easy reach of the general public’s attention and opportunity to browse and see for themselves the truths of the matter (so to speak, for much of the Museum’s artefacts were related to physical phenomena) and of the spirit.

But the enterprise never turned a profit and early in 1930 he endeavoured to give it a chance of surviving himself by converting the enterprise into a company and issuing a prospectus inviting subscribers to participate. The prospectus was issued but its objective was not fulfilled. He passed on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1930 and his estate and family were left to carry the burden.

A Conan Doyle Memorial Fund had been set up and the Library was donated to that Fund, thereafter referred to as the Conan Doyle Memorial Library. Without willing financial support, the Bookshop, Library and Museum was closed early in 1932. All remaining material (stock for sale, the Library and the Museum) was transferred to *The Friendship Centre* at Lancaster Gate in Bayswater (opposite the north side of Hyde Park).

The Friendship Centre had been set up by Spiritualist Stephen Foster in 1929. It was a place where people could go for psychic development, a clairvoyant sitting or for healing, a chat, a cuppa and a browse, comfort in bereavement, etc. In the course of the 1930s, the libraries of The Friendship Centre, the Conan Doyle Memorial Library and the W T Stead Estate (being donated in 1937) became merged. The eventual fate of the Library, the Museum and other material became somewhat of a mystery following its removal in 1939 with the advent of World War II.<sup>2</sup>

In 1927, ACD was interviewed by The Strand Magazine about his Psychic Museum and the following article appeared in its May, 1927 edition: -

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<sup>2</sup> See “*Psypioneer Archives*” at the end of the *Strand Magazine*

## Extract from *The Strand Magazine*, May, 1927

[Due to the electronic space size, apart from the leading photograph all photographs have been removed but the accompanying notations have been retained and referenced. The complete article will be available in *Psyopioneer Archives* see page 146. Ed.]



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.<sup>3</sup>

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.”

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

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.

"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 Métapsychique, 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<sup>4</sup> 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<sup>5</sup>

“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.

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<sup>4</sup> Cholesterin

<sup>5</sup> 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.

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.<sup>6</sup>

“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 Métapsychique* for the same month.”

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.

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

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.<sup>7</sup>

"Now look at these complex flower designs." Sir Arthur pointed to the beautifully - coloured wreath.<sup>8</sup> "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."

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<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> PAINTED" IN SEVENTEEN SECONDS: - This complex design was precipitated upon the blank paper in seventeen seconds! The original is strikingly coloured.

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

“Now this,” said Sir Arthur, pointing to a striking seascape,<sup>9</sup> “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.”

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.<sup>10</sup> 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.”

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.

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<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> ONE OF DANIEL DUNCLAS 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.

“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,<sup>11</sup> 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.”

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.”

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<sup>11</sup> 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.

# “Psypioneer Archives”

Psypioneer has collated a considerable volume of letters, articles, etc on ACD’s Bookshop, Library and Museum and on The Friendship Centre – and it is intended that we present this material as part of a separate record to be developed under the banner “**Psypioneer Archives**”.

So this collation of records will be the first of a number of topical records, or dossiers, if you like. In the case of a pioneer such as ACD where so much material will be available, matters such as the Bookshop, Library and Museum will probably be a sub-record under the broader record of Sir Arthur’s Spiritualist and Psychological Research activities.

As online records, these Archives will be easily supplemented by newly discovered and contributed material and they will facilitate a growing data base. Should any Psypioneer readers have historic articles, letters, references, etc. relative to any Archive Record which they should like to contribute at any time, please send them to the Editor: - [psypioneer@aol.com](mailto:psypioneer@aol.com)

Below is one of the archive letters from Mr. Edwin Butler, who had worked, and resided, at The Friendship Centre between 1932 and 1934, referring to the transfer of the Psychic Bookshop and Museum to the Friendship Centre.

In early 1937 the Friendship Centre became known as: - “The Friendship Centre and the 'W. T. Stead' Memorial Library”: -

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## **A Letter from Edwin Butler to The Book & Magazine Collector**

Dear Sir,

16th March, 1998

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?

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

Yours faithfully,  
*Signed*  
Edwin Butler  
59 Stirling Rd.  
London, N22 5BL  
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# ECTOPLASM ON THE WIRELESS

Although the first UK broadcast about the Spiritualist religion was by Ernest Oaten in 1934,<sup>12</sup> psychic matters had been featured on several occasions previously. Harry Price revealed that he himself attempted to be a pioneer in this!<sup>13</sup>

There was something exceptional however in the 1924 broadcast by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle - surely it was the first radio reference to ectoplasm. There is no known recording of it, but the BBC Written Archives Centre states: -

*I can confirm that this broadcast was indeed 20 May 1924 at 9:40pm. Our Programme as Broadcast records, which are considered the most accurate indication of what was broadcast, gives the title as Psychic Developments, though I note that Radio Times lists it as Psychic Development. Unfortunately, we don't hold a copy of the script, so I cannot use that to confirm either way, but as I said above, the programme records are generally considered more accurate than Radio Times. There is no further information available about the talk.*

We take the text from *LIGHT* May 31 1924: -

## PSYCHIC DEVELOPMENTS: A “WIRELESS” LECTURE

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### AS DELIVERED BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE THROUGH THE BROADCASTING STATION ON MAY 20TH, 1924

It is a very pleasant thing to talk about a subject in such a way that no one can contradict you. However I do not intend to abuse my opportunity, but I will confine myself to what may be fairly called the scientific side of the subject. If there should be any demand for it I will on some later occasion touch on more vital matters.

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<sup>12</sup> See volume 2.3 page 59: -<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/2.3%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>  
This is also available on a C.D., taken from an original 78rpm recording see volume 5. 4 page 106: -  
<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09..pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.survivalafterdeath.org.uk/articles/price/broadcasting.htm>

I will talk to-night about that strange substance known as Ectoplasm, and I will venture upon a prophecy. It is that if the last fifty years have been largely devoted to protoplasm, the basis of animal life, the next fifty will be largely devoted to ectoplasm, the basis of psychic phenomena.

Many who have not experimented with it will even now deny its existence. As I have repeatedly seen it, and on one occasion had it in my hand, I am as sure of it as I am of anything. But the name ectoplasm was given to it by Charles Richet, the Professor of Physiology at the University of Paris, and one of the great thinkers of the world. Such a godfather does not give a name unless he is quite sure that there is a baby. I admit that the facts seem quite incredible, but they are not more incredible than this very wireless which we are now using would have seemed a few short years ago.

There are certain people in the world who have the power under proper conditions of throwing out from their bodies a whitish vapour which is capable of solidifying into a solid substance. That substance, whether vapour or solid, is ectoplasm.

We know now, after exhaustive experiments, certain definite facts about this substance.

The first serious experiments were carried out by a French lady, Madame Bisson, the widow of the well-known journalist, Adolph Bisson. Her subject, or medium was called Eva Carriere, or Eva C. Madame Bisson took Eva C. completely under her charge, so that she could control her and safeguard herself against fraud. In the experiments which followed she was helped by a German man of science, Dr. Schrenck-Notzing, of Munich. These two worked together for five years, and their results are destined, I think, to be the basis, not of one, but of several new sciences.

Their method was to make Eva C. change all her garments under supervision. She was then taken into the experimental room, to which she had access at no other time. At one end of this room was a small space shut in by curtains at the back and sides and top, but open in front. This is called the cabinet, and the object of it is to concentrate the ectoplasmic vapour in one place and prevent it from diffusing itself all over the room. Eva was placed in a chair, where she went into a trance. The lights were then turned down, save for a small red light. The reason of this was that experience has shown, that white light dissolves ectoplasm. It is a purely chemical reason, like that which prevents a photograph from being developed in white light. Several photographic cameras were then trained, upon the cabinet, and pictures were taken by flashlight without warning so as to show what was going on. A large number of scientific men were admitted to the experiments, that they might confirm the fact that all possible precautions were taken.

The results are shown in Madame Bisson's wonderful book which contains some two hundred photographs. First you see fleecy clouds of vigour. Then you see incredible as it may sound, that these clouds take shape, that they form faces or limbs, sometimes very crude sometimes perfectly formed. Finally that a whole body may be built up from the ectoplasm, and that this body may resemble someone who is dead - Mr. Bisson in one

instance – and may have the power to move, to walk and even to speak. In my recent book I have told in detail how I have myself spoken with ectoplasmic images.

The fact is beyond dispute. It has been confirmed since by Schrenck-Notzing in the case, of the medium Stanislaw, the medium Willy S., and several others. Dr. Geley, of Paris, obtained a series of similar results with Eva, which have been published, with photographs. Afterwards he got even more wonderful results with Franek Kluski, a Polish gentleman, where the ectoplasmic figures were so solid that he was able to take a mould of their hands in paraffin. These paraffin gloves, which I have seen and handled, are so small at the wrist opening that the hand could not possibly have been withdrawn without breaking the brittle mould. It could only have been done by dematerialisation-no other way is possible. These experiments were conducted by Geley, Richet and Count Grammont, three very competent men. In the course of these experiments the stuff was examined chemically and microscopically. The former examination gave roughly the constituents of the human body. The latter showed a mucoid substance. It was already known that it was from the mucoid surfaces of the body that it is largely drawn, as is shown in the photographs.

Another series of experiments were carried out by Dr. Crawford, of Belfast, whose name, will live in the science of the future. He got his ectoplasm from a medium named Kathleen Goligher. In this case the stuff did not take the form of faces, but rather of rods and lines of energy, so that Crawford, a skilful engineer, could work out the laws which govern such phenomena. He took three years over his research, and has published it in two volumes which will, I think, be classic. He showed that all the curious physical sounds and effects of the seance room depend upon this substance. What the intelligence is which directs the substance is, of course, another matter. He conducted his experiments with his medium and occasionally his circle, all seated on weighing chairs with dials. In this way he showed two remarkable facts. One, that the medium as she extruded ectoplasm lost in weight, even to the extent of twenty or thirty pounds, which returned when the stuff was reabsorbed. The other was that everyone else in the circle also lost weight, showing that all contributed ectoplasm and that a physical medium is only a person who has more than others.

Since then ectoplasm has been demonstrated in solid form to one hundred picked men, including twenty-six professors, by Dr. Schrenck-Notzing: and to forty representative men by Geley, all being quite satisfied. We can say then that there is no doubt of its existence'. It cannot, however, be produced to order. It is a delicate operation which may fail. Thus several experimenters, notably a small Committee of the Sorbonne, did fail. We have learned that it needs the right men and the right conditions, which conditions are mental and spiritual, rather than chemical. Thus a harmonious atmosphere will help, while a carping, antagonistic atmosphere will hinder or totally prevent its appearance. In this it shows its spiritual affinities and that it differs from a purely physical product.

What is it? It takes shapes. Who determines the shape? Is it the mind of the entranced medium? Is it the mind of the observer? Is it some independent mind? Among the experimenters we have a material school who urge that we are finding some

extraordinary latent property of the normal body, and we have another school, of which I am a humble member, who believe that we have come upon a link which may be part of a chain leading to some new order of life. It should be added that there is nothing concerning it which has not been known in a general way, and stated innumerable times, by those derided folk called Spiritualists. The causes are still under debate, but as to the phenomena themselves, and their dependence upon a curious plastic substance which solidifies from a vapour, this has been known by them for at least sixty years, and they have been the pioneers of an important branch of the world's science. It is true that such substance is not spiritual in itself. Neither is a pen spiritual. But a pen may give the thoughts of a Shakespeare, and this stuff also may be an instrument for high purposes. When Spirit descends into Matter it has to use material or semi-material means, otherwise it cannot impress our material senses. Ectoplasm is, we hold, the one substance which is ethereal enough to receive an ethereal impression and yet material enough for us to register it. That, however, opens up a field which we may explore at some later time.

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## **ACD URGED WINSTON CHURCHILL TO LOOK INTO THE PSYCHIC FIELD**

The occasion was 1923. Lord Alfred Douglas had libelled Churchill on Great War matters, and Douglas had gone to jail. Churchill received letters sympathising with him, including one from Conan Doyle who added

“This fellow Douglas wrote me an abusive letter once over my psychic work. I answered “It is only your approval which could shock me.” I have heard no more.

“I wish you would yourself look into this psychic question. It is far the most important thing upon earth & we want leaders of energy”

(December 14 1923. "Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 1/165)

No reply from Churchill is present in the archives. It is possible however that such a reply may be found in one of the ACD repositories.

# WAS SIR ARTHUR'S EIGHTH PRINCIPLE FOREDOOMED?

Much remains to be explained about the attempt to add a principle to the existing seven of the SNU, starting with such a basic question as whether and when Conan Doyle was an SNU member or attended SNU meetings. The attempt appears to have begun with a letter sent to the psychic papers. We take our version from **LIGHT** June 25, 1927 page 305: -

## SPIRITUALISM AND CHRISTIANITY

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Sir,-I feel impelled to write certain thoughts for the consideration of our Spiritualist bodies all over the world. Such an impulse may perhaps be independent of one's own personality.

At present the organised Spiritualistic movement in Great Britain rests upon seven principles handed down from the last generation. They are: -

1. The Fatherhood of God.
2. The Brotherhood of man.
3. The Power of Communion with the departed.
4. The Survival of Personality.
5. Personal Responsibility for sin.
6. Compensation, or Retribution for good or evil deeds.
7. Eternal Progress open to every soul.

I am not clear how far these seven principles of Spiritualism have been adopted by American Churches, but if not actually formulated, I am aware that the general teaching is on the same lines.

I have felt for some time that an eighth article should be added, in order to define our position, and to bring us more in touch with our fellow citizens. I would suggest that this article should be worded in some such fashion as the following: -

“While fully recognising that many teachers have been sent to various sections of the human race, and that all are worthy of deep respect, we, who spring from European or American civilisation, desire to affirm that the ethics and the recorded life of Jesus of Nazareth seem to us to be the highest ideal, and worthy of our imitation.”

Such a declaration would make it easier for an entirely orthodox person to adopt our views, while it would not be antagonistic to those, who like myself, look on Jesus as a very high spirit sent down upon a Mission to earth, but in no way to be

confounded with the great central force of the Universe. With a little good will I think that every Spiritualist could accept such a formula, and yet we would keep our present world-wide platform, which is open to the Jew, the Buddhist; or any other earnest man.

I put forward these views from the platform of the Grotrian Hall in London, and I afterwards sent them on to some of the leaders of the Spiritualists' National Union in the North of England. Their replies were most encouraging. I afterwards sent a copy to Mr. Burr, the leader of the New York State Churches, with whom I was in correspondence, and by what is probably more than a coincidence, my letter crossed one from him, in which he expressed the view that some such Step was imperatively necessary. I am now sending copies of this letter to various Spiritualistic papers throughout the world, in the hope that it will sow seed, even if the harvest is not immediate.

Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.  
Windlesham, Crowborough.  
June 18th, 1927.

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Sir Arthur's optimism was perhaps misplaced, as can be seen from a subsequent report in *LIGHT* July 9, 1927:

## **SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION**

### **THE PROPOSED EIGHTH PRINCIPLE**

At a crowded meeting of the Spiritualists' National Union, held on Sunday afternoon last, at the Hall of the Art Workers' Guild, Queen Square, Bloomsbury, the proposed addition to the Seven Principles of Spiritualism, which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle recommended in his letter to *LIGHT* last week, was the subject of an animated discussion. Some eloquent speeches were made for and against the resolution; embodying the new principle, and several amendments were moved. In the end, on the proposal of Mr. Ernest Oaten, it was decided not to put the resolution to the meeting, but to make it the subject of further consideration, with a view to deciding whether it might not take the form of a statement or affirmation by the S.N.U. with the object of correcting the unwarrantable impression which had got abroad to the effect that Spiritualism is anti-Christian. Our space prevents any fuller notice of the meeting this week. We hope to give a fuller account in our next issue.

.What appears to have happened here is that the proposal was diverted. A committee was set up, and as we have previously reported<sup>14</sup> [November 2004] it recommended no change, and this was confirmed by a later SNU conference. One would guess that Ernest Oaten, the leading figure in National Spiritualism, had no wish to add a new principle to the existing seven, and had the necessary familiarity with SNU machinery to secure such a result. But the fact that in 1934 an attempt would be made to exclude Christians from the SNU<sup>15</sup> suggests that Oaten was widely supported.

LP.

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<sup>14</sup> See volume 1.7 page 58: - [http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie\\_Price\\_PP7.pdf](http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP7.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> See volume 5.3 page 85: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.3March09..pdf>

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<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.1January07..pdf>

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See Psypioneer 3.6 issue: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.6June07..pdf>

*'Magical Spiritualism - a warning address given in 1878 to mark thirty years of Modern Spiritualism'*, Andrew Jackson Davis. Published May 2000 by Psychic Pioneer Publications, this is a small booklet 7pp £2.00 incl. U.K., postage (please add 20% for airmail).

*'The Mystery of Stainton Moses an address given in 1992 on the centenary of his death'* Leslie Price Published December 1999 by Psychic Pioneer Publications, this is a small booklet 8pp £2.50 Inc U.K., postage (please add 20% for airmail).

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