

## A Timeline of the History of Spiritualism

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- 1744** In April, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) had his first real intercourse with the Spirit world. He was a Swedish pluralistic-Christian theologian, scientist, philosopher and mystic. He is best known for his book on the afterlife, *Heaven and Hell* (1758).
- 1847** Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910) is often referred to as the 'John the Baptist' of modern Spiritualism. In 1846, for 15 months, he dictated from Spirit, the book, *Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations and a Voice to Mankind*, and it was published in 1847.
- 1848** On 31 March, in Hydesville, New York, the Fox sisters contacted the spirit entity who had been disturbing the family with strange rappings and activities. These events became known as the Hydesville Knockings and led to an investigation of the mediumship of the Fox sisters. This date is acknowledged as the Birth of Modern Spiritualism.
- 1849** The first public demonstration of mediumship by Margareta Fox, in the Corinthian Hall in New York.
- 1834** Robert Owen (1771-1858) converted to spiritualism after sittings with Mrs Hayden. After he passed to spirit, he channelled 'The Principles of Spiritualism' through the mediumship of Emma Hardinge Britten.
- 1852** Mrs Maria Hayden travelled from America to be the first Spiritualist medium to work in England. The press and clergy were very antagonistic towards her but despite this, she succeeded in demonstrating spirit communication.
- 1853** David Richmond (1816-1891) became a Spiritualist while living in America and on his return to his native town of Darlington, England, tried unsuccessfully to open a Spiritualist Church. He moved to Keighley and there established the first Spiritualist Church in England.

Judge Robert Hare (1781-1858) at the age of 72, began his investigations and devised a number of instruments which, contrary to his expectations, conclusively proved that a power and intelligence, not that of those present, was at work. His book, *Experimental Investigation of the Spirit Manifestation*, published in 1855, summed up the results as follows: "The evidence may be contemplated under various phases: first, those in which rappings or other noises have

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been made which could not be traced to any mortal agency; secondly, those in which sounds were so made as to indicate letters forming grammatical, well-spelt sentences, affording proof that they were under the guidance of some rational being; thirdly, those in which the nature of the communication has been such as to prove that the being causing them must, agreeably to accompanying allegations, be some known acquaintance, friend, or relative of the inquirer.”

Judge John W. Edmonds (1816-1874) was one of the most influential early American Spiritualists. After a great public career, as a member of both branches of the New York State Legislature and, for some time, President of the Senate and Judge of the Supreme Court of New York, he resigned the latter position on account of the outcry raised against his spiritualistic beliefs and, especially, his support of the Fox sisters.

**1853** Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-1886) was one of the greatest physical mediums who produced virtually all types of physical phenomena. He developed his skills in America and returned to England in 1855 where the remarkable phenomena aroused great interest.

Dr Henry Slade was an American medium famous for slate-writing, in which messages were written on sealed slates. He was thoroughly tested by several eminent investigators and pronounced genuine.

The first Spiritualist Newspaper, *The Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, was published in Keithley.

**1855** Alexander N. Aksakof (1832-1903), Imperial Councillor to the Czar, the pioneer Spiritualist of Russia, and a Swedenborg enthusiast whose introduction to modern Spiritualism was affected by Andrew Jackson Davis', *Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations and a Voice to Mankind*.

**1856** Allan Kardec (1804-1869) published his classic, *Le Livre des Esprits (The Spirits Book)*. Not very much is known about Allan Kardec's early years within the spiritualist movement, but his impact upon the movement was profound.

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James Martin Peebles (1822-1922) was known as ‘the spiritual pilgrim’ as he enthusiastically spread his philosophy through his writings and travels around the United States and the world. Himself a medium, he was surrounded by what he called his ‘band of angels’ from whom he received inspiration and spiritual guidance.

**1860s** Spiritualism first appeared in the late 1860s in Otago, New Zealand.

**1863** Andrew Jackson Davis (1828-1910) established the Spiritualist Lyceum in New York. The American born medium who, through his visits to the ‘Summerland’ during ‘out of body’ experiences, initiated Lyceum education and is acknowledged today as the Father of the Lyceum Movement (equivalent of Sunday Schools).

The first Lyceum in England was opened by Mr J. Hitchcock in Nottingham.

**1865** An attempt was made to form the first National Organisation of Spiritualists in Darlington, England.

**1866** Emma Hardinge (later Hardinge Britten) (1823-1899) returned to England from America where she was quickly recognised as a powerful medium and is perhaps the most renowned and most respected advocate and proponent in the early Modern Spiritualist Movement.

**1869** The Dialectical Society in London appointed a committee to investigate Spiritualism. They published a very favourable report – the best by any external body.

**1870** On 25 June an article called Rules to Be Observed When Forming Spiritual Circles by Emma Hardinge appeared in the Echo paper in Dunedin, New Zealand.

**1871** Emma Hardinge Britten received ‘The Principles of Spiritualism’ from Robert Owen after he passed to Spirit.

Sir William Crookes (1832-1919) reported on Spiritualism to the Royal Society and published his findings in the quarterly *Journal of Science*.

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He was an outstanding physicist who began his investigations into spiritualism with the avowed intent of exposing it as a nonsense. However, the facts (particularly his investigation of Katie King through the mediumship of Florence Cook) were too overwhelming, and to the end of his life he remained completely convinced of the truth of spirit communication.

**1872** James Smith, a Spiritualist from Australia, visited Dunedin.

William Stainton Moses (1839-1892) was an Oxford MA and a clergyman in the Church of England. He was a leading light in promoting The London Spiritualist Alliance and became its first President and the first editor of *Light*. His great contributions were the teachings produced through him by means of spirit-controlled writing and published as *Spirit Teachings* and *More Spirit Teachings*.

A second attempt to form a national organisation was made at a National Conference in Darlington but again it failed. However, it stimulated interest and it was recognised that there was a need for such an organisation.

**1873** J.M. Peebles and 'Dr' E.C. Dunn, two American spiritualists, visited New Zealand, giving lectures.

A conference was held in Liverpool which led to the formation of the British National Association of Spiritualists, with headquarters in London.

E.W. Cox, Sergeant-at-Law, well-known psychical investigator., assisted William Crookes in his first experiments with D.D. Home, suggested the term 'psychic force', published a booklet *Spiritualism Scientifically Examined with Proofs of the Existence of a Psychic Force*.

**1874** Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891). Commonly known as Madam Blavatsky, founded the Theosophical Movement and wrote several books and articles.

**1879** Emma Hardinge Britten toured Australia and New Zealand to promote Spiritualism.

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**1881** A Free Thought Association Lyceum – the Rationalist and Spiritualist answer to the Sunday School – was dedicated in Dunedin.

**1882** The Society for Psychical Research started in England.

**1883** William Charles Nation (1840-1930) began his long association with Spiritualism in New Zealand while living in Greymouth where he ran a circle in his own home.

Sir Oliver Lodge (1851-1940) was a world-renowned physicist and a fearless champion of survival. One could not really call him a proponent of the Spiritualist Movement, but he was, surely, an avid believer in Spiritualist concepts. It was in this year that he had his first spiritual experiences when he was invited by Mr Malcolm Guthrie to join his investigations in thought transference in Liverpool, England.

**1884** The formation of the Wellington Association of Spiritualists which lasted for eight years.

Leonore E. Piper (1857-1950) of Boston, USA, allowed herself to be subjected to the most exacting scientific, investigation of her mediumship for a period of 45 years. This great medium was instrumental in converting many eminent people to belief in a spirit agency operating through her trance mediumship.

Dr Richard Hodgson was an early member of the Society for Psychical Research who soon became noted as a competent and critical investigator. He made a systematic study of her mediumship of Mrs Leonore Piper, through which he became completely convinced of the reality of spirit return. The development of his own mediumship powers late in life brought to him an even deeper conviction.

**1885** Emma Hardinge Britten launched the weekly paper the *Two Worlds*, a publication that continues today.

**1887** William Charles Nation launched his first New Zealand spiritualist paper called *More Light*. All the work required to publish the paper, from writing articles to typesetting, was done by Nation alone. He continued to produce the paper until 1893.

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- 1889** Formation of the Spiritualists National Union in England.
- 1890** Jan Guzyk (1875-1928). A Polish materialisation medium, the son of a weaver whose strange powers first manifested in his years of apprenticeship in the tanning trade in Warsaw. There were raps, blows on the walls and a stirring of objects as soon as evening approached. At the age of 15, he became a professional medium.
- 1892** William T. Stead (1849-1912) discovered that he had the gifts of spirit-controlled writing. He became associated with the London Spiritualist Association and was a fearless champion of Spiritualism. He was, of course, a well-known editor, and a national famous figure for his great fight against the White Slave Traffic and the prostitution of children. He passed to the Higher Life through the tragic sinking of the Titanic.
- 1893** Foundation of National Spiritualists Association in America.
- Eusapia Palladino (1854-1918) was a medium whose name continues to be associated with both spectacular mediumship and fraud; the impact made by her activity is clearly demonstrated by the continuing debate.
- 1897** Dr James M. Peebles, M.A. M.D. PhD, learned American exponent of the Movement, arrived in Auckland from Samoa on the third voyage of five journeys from the USA, propagating Spiritualism. He gave lectures on Spiritualist philosophy, phenomena, and comparative religion.
- 1899** Dr Gustave Geley (1865-1924). Graduate doctor of the Faculty of Medicine of Lyon, distinguished psychical researcher and Director of the Institut Metapsychique International from 1919-1924. The most palpable evidence he produced for the reality of mediumistic phenomena were the Kluski plaster casts, which are still on view in the Institute.
- 1900** The first Spiritualist Church services were held in Wellington, thanks to Mrs Harris-Roberts' efforts to revitalise the movement.
- Theodor Flournoy, Professor of Psychology at the University of Geneva; author of perhaps the most remarkable book in the literature of psychic science: *Des Indes a la Planete Mars (From India to the*

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*Planet Mars*) Paris, 1900. This was the sensation of the year and the passage of time has in no way affected its unusual scientific worth or mitigated its absorbing interest. It deals with the mediumship of Mlle Helen Smith to whose circle he was first admitted in the winter of 1894-95.

**1903** William Charles Nation commenced the publication of the *Message of Life* and it continued to be published until 1934.

**1906** Gladys Osborne Leonard (1882-1968). As often happens with many natural mediums, Mrs Leonard exhibited early signs of her sensitive nature. Mrs Leonard was one of the most thoroughly investigated mediums of the twentieth century. For more than fifty years she gave remarkable evidence of personal survival to countless sitters. Perhaps the most significant in her life was a series of sittings she gave to Sir Oliver Lodge, the renowned physicist.

**1907** The National Association of Spiritualists of New Zealand (NZA) was formed. The first president was the parliamentarian William McLean, with W.C. Nation as vice president.

**1911** Etta Wriedt (1859-1942). As well as voices being heard in her seances, sitters experienced luminous forms, etherealizations gliding about the room, dogs materialising and barking, flowers taken from vases and placed in the hands of the sitters, invisible fingers touching the sitters, people being rapped by the trumpet if they were hesitating to answer promptly when spoken to, luminous discs were seen to move round, sitters were often sprinkled with water and wafts of cool air were felt.

The Bang Sisters. Within the vast and marvellous records of American physical mediumship, one of the most outstanding chapters belongs to the turn of the century mediums, the Misses Elizabeth S and May E Bangs of Chicago Illinois. Their gifts included above board, independent writing in broad daylight (mostly slates) and independent drawing and painting; all forms of fully developed clairvoyance, materialisations and direct voices, but their most wondrous and spectacular phenomena was that of precipitated spirit portraits in full colour.

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- 1914** Reflecting the growing religious aspect of Spiritualism, the New Zealand national body became the National Association of Spiritualist Churches of New Zealand (NZSC) with membership limited to churches rather than also accepting individual members as before.
- 1916** Parliamentary Campaign for the legal recognition of Spiritualism. In the United Kingdom was instituted by the Union under Ernest Oaten who was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's tour organiser and right-hand man. In 1919 he became editor of *The Two Worlds* and was rightly recognised as a leader of Spiritualist thought. Spiritualism is indebted to him beyond measure for his unflagging efforts on its behalf.
- Dr W.J. Crawford (1881-1920) whose painstaking and thorough investigations with the Kathleen Goligher Circle between 1917 and 1920 go a long way towards discovering the 'psychic' laws behind telekinesis phenomena. Crawford's conclusions are summed up in three important books: *The Reality of Psychic Phenomena* (1916); *Experiments in Psychic Science* (1919); and *The Psychic Structures in the Goligher Circle* (1921).
- 1918** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1858-1930) proclaimed his belief in the teaching and truth of Spiritualism. Just as Andrew Jackson Davis was called the 'John the Baptist' of modern Spiritualism, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a prolific writer on the subject and an avid proponent.
- Sir William F. Barrett (1845-1926) published his book *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, an examination of the phenomena of Spiritualism and of the evidence for survival after death. Barrett made searching inquiries both in England and in the USA. His summing up was that there is evidence for the existence of a spirit world, for survival after death, and for occasional communication with those passed over.
- John Campbell Sloan (1869-1951) a direct voice medium was investigated extensively by Arthur Findlay and whose findings were published in Findlay's book *On the Edge of the Etheric*.



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- 1919** Estelle Roberts (1889-1970). Maurice Barbanell referred to Estelle Roberts as “one of the world’s greatest mediums and the possessor of nearly every psychic faculty”.
- 1920** The famous British crusader Sir Arthur Conan Doyle paid a visit to New Zealand which aroused great interest. While here, he made visits to a number of centres and gave lectures which created both stimulus and direction to the Spiritualist movement.
- Rev G. Vale Owen (1869-1931). A Church of England clergyman who developed spirit-controlled writing. A whole series of articles produced in this manner were published in the *Weekly Despatch* in 1920 and made a profound impression. As a consequence of this publicity, he was persecuted by his Ecclesiastical superior and resigned from the Church. He conducted lecture tours of Britain and America. His *Life Beyond the Veil* has become a Spiritualist classic.
- 1922** Horace Leaf (1886-1971). In June 1922 English medium, lecturer and author, Horace Leaf, arrived in Auckland from Sydney after an Australian tour. Like Dr Peebles, he spent a considerable time among Māori people gaining an insight into the role of Tohunga. He had a high opinion of Māori psychic and spiritual attributes.
- 1923** The first conference of the New Zealand National Association of Spiritualist Churches was convened. At this conference it was resolved to draft a Bill for presentation to Parliament.
- Formation of the International Spiritualists Federation.
- 1924** On 22 September, an Act of Parliament was passed forming The Spiritualist Church of New Zealand and according this organisation legal persona.
- The first exhibition of psychic art was held in New Zealand in Auckland and later the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts accepted for hanging a number of designs drawn through the mediumship of Mrs Bertha Sinclair Burns. Mrs Burns was also the Editor of a magazine called *Aquarius* which was devoted to Spiritualism and creative thought.

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- 1930** Gordon Higginson (1918-1930) began demonstrating publicly at the age of twelve. Gordon continued to demonstrate his mediumship in churches, theatres, halls, including the Albert Hall, and astounded hundreds of thousands of people with his evidential clairvoyance. Because of the strength of his physical mediumship, many have witnessed materialised spirit forms in home circles, and also at the Arthur Findlay College of Psychic Science, where he was the principal and demonstrated his physical mediumship over many years.
- 1931-35** Arthur Findlay's trilogy *On the edge of the Etheric*, *The Rock of Truth* and *The Unfolding Universe* was published.
- 1932** Maurice Barbanell (1902-1981) founded the *Psychic News* and was its editor for many years. Through his literary works, he brought to the public many books of a spiritual nature, and virtually and single-handedly presented masses of unquestionable evidence of the survival of life after physical death. Maurice Barbanell was, in his own right, a first-class trance medium through which the famous teachings of 'Silver Birch' were channelled. Silver Birch was Maurice Barbanell's guide who worked with him for over 60 years, before Maurice joined him in the spirit world in 1981.
- 1934** First broadcast on behalf of Spiritualism through BBC by Ernest Oaten.
- 1936** Harry Edwards (1893-1976) probably did more than any other single Spiritualist, to permanently affect establishment attitudes (in the UK at least) towards spiritual healing.
- Grace Cooke (d. 1979) was a Modern British Spiritualist medium who founded the Church of the White Eagle Lodge in 1936 under the inspiration of her Indian spirit guide, White Eagle. Cooke began her career as a Spiritualist medium in 1913 and became progressively convinced that the spiritual and philosophical aspects of Spiritualism were more important than mere evidence of survival.
- 1937** Spiritualism investigated by Church of England Committee set up by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Cosmo Lang. Its subsequent favourable report was suppressed but leaked to *Psychic News*.

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- 1944** Helen Duncan (1897-1956) was the last person arrested and tried under the Witchcraft Act in London. She was charged with conspiracy and was imprisoned for 9 months for using her psychic gifts to prove survival after death.
- 1945** Helen Hughes (1893-1967) was a superb medium who conducted countless propaganda meetings around the British Isles in times when mediumship was still subject to the antiquated and outdated UK Witchcraft and Vagrancy Act (formed in 1735).
- Lord Dowding (1882-1970) came into prominence as a champion of Spiritualism after World War II. Lord Dowding was in command of the RAF during the Battle of Britain and, through a medium friend, many of the airmen who had passed over were able to give their former Chief convincing evidence of their survival. Lord Dowding spoke and wrote indefatigably on his convictions regarding the continuity of life.
- 1951** Passing of the Fraudulent Mediums Act 1951 in the UK, removing genuine mediums from the previous provisions of the Witchcraft Act 1735 and from the Vagrancy Act 1824, thereby enabling Spiritualists only and legally to practice their philosophy.
- 1957** Lillian Bailey was a deep trance medium who gave supreme survival evidence to many notable personalities in the 20th century. Kings and Princes consulted her because of her remarkable gift which allowed her spirit-self to leave its mortal shell and thus allow a communicator from the next world to take temporary control of it. In 1957 the Psychic Press published a book about her life called *Death is Her Life*.
- 1964** Stansted Hall was bequeathed to the Spiritualists' National Union by Arthur Findlay to be used as a College for the advancement of Psychic Science. The Arthur Findlay College was opened in 1966.
- 1974** Harold Sell, in recognition of his knowledge and experience of Spiritualism was commissioned by the Spiritualist Church of New Zealand to write a publication called *A Guide to Modern Spiritualism*.
- 1976** Wayne Dyer (1940-2015) was an American self-help author and a motivational speaker. His first book *Your Erroneous Zones* is one of

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the best-selling books of all time, with an estimated 35 million copies sold to date.

- 1980's** Ron Gibbs published the spiritual publication the NZ Psychic Gazette.
- 1980** Doris Stokes (1920-1987) published her first book *Voices in my Ear*.
- 1981** In NZ, a new Summary Offences Act was passed which finally removed the old fortune-telling section in favour of one that penalised only “acting as a medium with intent to deceive” or one who “with intent to deceive, purports to act as a Spiritualist medium...”
- 1984** Louise Lynn Hay (1926-2017) was an American motivational author and the founder of Hay House. She authored several New Thought self-help books, including *You Can Heal Your Life*.
- 1987** The Harmonic Convergence is the name given to the world's first synchronised global peace meditation, which occurred on 16/17 August 1987. This event also closely coincided with an exceptional alignment of planets in the Solar System.
- 1989** Betty Shine (1929-2002) wrote her first book *Mind to Mind*. She was guided by a spirit voice from the age of two onwards, but the bulk of her work in adulthood was done privately, in one-to-one consultations. She was not greatly interested in giving clairvoyant demonstrations.
- 1990** The movie ‘Ghost’ was produced in which a medium’s help is used to stop someone being killed. This was one of the first spiritual movies that helped to open the path to a wider acceptance of Spiritualism.
- 1991** Archie Roy (b1924) is a Founder member of PRISM (Psychical Research Involving Selected Mediums), an organisation devising scientific experiments, using mediums, to give evidence of survival. He has lectured in many countries, been an invited speaker for NATO Scientific Division, edited journals and newspapers, investigated haunted houses and haunted people.
- 1995** For many years the Roman Catholic Church has been carrying out scientific experiments with their own mediums. One of the most competent theologians of the Vatican, Father Gino Concetti, writing in the *Osservatore Romano*, the daily paper of the Holy See, says that

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“According to the modern catechism the Church has decided not to forbid anyone to dialogue with the deceased ... this is a sequel of new discoveries within the domain of the paranormal”.

- 1998** John Edward was born (1969) in New York. He is a well-known and respected medium and author.
- 1999** Ivy Northage (1909-2002) was well known for her teaching abilities; and in Britain she set up the Ivy Northage School for Mediums, which helped many acolytes to hone and perfect their mediumistic skills. In 1999, she wrote her life-story, called *While I Remember*, featuring some fascinating accounts of the mediumship that she witnessed.
- 2000** George Anderson is a contemporary American medium who has been achieving some amazing results under controlled conditions in studies at the University of Arizona in which five mediums were tested as accurate well beyond chance or guessing.
- 2005** The TV series ‘Medium’ first appeared on American TV, helping the wider public to gain an understanding of mediums.
- 2017** The Spiritualist Church of New Zealand was reshaped to become Spiritualism New Zealand with the aim of creating a community for individuals as well as Spiritualist churches and centres.