

Mary Rose Barrington

Mary Rose Barrington (1926–2020) was a lawyer who campaigned for animal rights and voluntary euthanasia. She had a life-long interest in paranormal phenomena, carrying out experiments and investigations, and was for many years vice-president of the Society for Psychical Research.

Life and Career

Mary Rose Barrington was born on 31 January 1926 in London to American parents. She became an accomplished amateur classical musician, playing the cello, and studied English at Oxford University, followed by law. She spent most of her working life in the legal profession, as a barrister and solicitor. As a supporter both of animal rights and the right to euthanasia, she drafted parliamentary bills that gained support in the House of Lords.^[1]

Parapsychological Research

At Oxford, Barrington joined the university's psychical research society, later becoming its president. She joined the [Society for Psychical Research](#) in 1957. Her main work within psychical research started after 1962 when she was invited to join the Council.

Barrington carried out informal experiments in [dowsing](#), telepathy, [table-tilting](#), [remote viewing](#) and [psychometry](#), often at her home with other SPR members. She also carried out field investigations of spontaneous phenomena, notably of [poltergeist-type disturbances](#). In 2001 she joined [Maurice Grosse](#), the principal investigator of the [Enfield poltergeist](#), to investigate the case of a young boy who appeared to be the epicenter of paranormal rappings.^[2]

Flying Thermometer Case

In 1964, Barrington investigated the case of a seven-year old child who was obsessed with the thought that the family home was haunted. The child's parents reported that objects had moved inexplicably, notably a bath thermometer that fell to the ground despite being fastened securely to the wall. The family also described unpleasant smells from an unknown source, creaking floorboards and 'moaning' sounds. The parents, a professional couple, seemed reliable witnesses. Barrington concluded that the phenomena were real and that the child could be acting as a physical medium.^[3] She returned to the topic in later articles.^[4]

JOTT

A particular interest of Barrington's was the reported phenomenon of ordinary objects seeming to disappear and then appear again in inexplicable ways, for which she coined the term [JOTT \(Just One of Those Things\)](#).^[5] In her 2018 book, *JOTT: When Things Disappear ... and Come Back or Relocate – and Why it Really Happens*, she described a variety of categories, giving around 180 examples from her own research, and reasons why these could not all be explained in terms of fallible memory or coincidence. In such cases she concluded that mind is acting on physical matter.

For more on JOTT, see [a review of her book](#) by Robert Charman. See also her [Psi Encyclopedia article](#) on the subject.

Mediums

Barrington found some reported feats of clairvoyance and mediumship particularly impressive,

notably those of the Polish medium Stefan Ossowiecki, which she described in *A World in a Grain of Sand*, with contributions from Ian Stevenson and Zofia Weaver (2005). Elsewhere, she defended [DD Home](#), [Franek Kluski](#) and [Eusapia Palladino](#) from attacks by sceptics.^[6]

Possession and Reincarnation Cases

In 2005, Barrington reported an investigation in Hungary of [Iris Farczady](#), a teenage girl who had undergone a dramatic change of personality, becoming that of a recently-deceased middle-aged Spanish woman who called herself Lucia and spoke fluent Spanish.^[7] Although this may be an example of [replacement reincarnation](#), Barrington preferred to see it as possession.

She also investigated claims by [Jenny Cockell](#) to remember the life of [Mary Sutton](#) in early twentieth-century Ireland, which she concluded were soundly based.^[8]

Works

Books

Crookes and the Spirit World (1972, ed. with RG Medhurst & KM Goldney). London: Souvenir Press.

Guide to the Investigation of Apparitions, Hauntings, Poltergeists and Kindred Phenomena (1996). London: Society for Psychical Research.

A World in a Grain of Sand (2005, with I. Stevenson & Z. Weaver). Jefferson, North Carolina, USA: McFarland.

JOTT: When Things Disappear ... and Come Back or Relocate –and Why It Really Happens (2018). Charlottesville, Virginia, USA: Anomalist Books.

Articles

In addition to the articles listed below, Barrington contributed regularly to the ‘Archives’ section of the *Psi Researcher* (later, *Paranormal Review*) often with translations of long-forgotten French articles.

The case of the flying thermometer (1965). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 43, 11-20.

Swan on a black sea: How much could Miss Cummins have known (1966). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 43, 289-300.

Further report of the flying thermometer case (1969). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 45, 149-61.

Obituary: RG Medhurst (1971). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 46, 124-26.

Investigation of a divining instrument called the ‘Revealer’ (1973, with JW Stiles,). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 47, 173-75.

A free response sheep/goat experiment using an irrelevant task (1973). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 47, 222-45.

A poltergeist revived: The flying thermometer case again (1976). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 48, 293-97.

‘Mrs Albert’s’ testimony: Observation or inference? (1974). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical*

Research 56, 112-16.

Bean growth promotion pilot experiment in 'London experiments with Matthew Manning' , ed. A. Gregory (1982). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 56, 302-4.

Jott – Just One of Those Things (1991). *Psi Researcher* 3, 5-6.

Jottles (1992). *Psi Researcher* 5, 8-9.

Palladino and the invisible man who never was (1992). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 58, 324-40.

Some more jottles (1993). *Psi Researcher* 11, 14-15.

Palladino, Wiseman and Barrington: Ten brief replies (1993). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 59, 196-98.

The Kluski hands (1994). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 59, 347-51.

Kluski and Geley: Further case for the defence (1994). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 60, 104-06.

A television ESP experiment (1995, with B. Markwick). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 61, 267-69.

Jott update (1998). *Paranormal Review* 5, 10-14.

Report of psychokinetic activity surrounding a seven-year-old boy (2001, with M. Grosse). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 6/3, 207-17.

An anniversary oddjott (2001). *Paranormal Review* 17, 3-5.

The case of Jenny Cockell: Towards a verification of an unusual 'past life' report (2002). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 66/2, 106-12.

The clairvoyant, the magician and the proto psi-cop (2004). *Paranormal Review* 30, 14-18.

The case of Iris Farczady (2005, with P. Mulacz & T. Rivas). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 69/2, 49-77.

Obituary: John Stiles (2005). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 69/2, 111-12.

Wotton: A slip in time and space (2011). *Paranormal Review* 58, 24-30.

Experiments in thoughts that write themselves (thoughtography) with Japanese mediums (2012). *Paranormal Review* 64, 1-15.

From jott to cosmic control and the normalization of the paranormal (2017). *Paranormal Review* 81, 8-10.

Telepathy. Putting the horse before the cart (2017). *Paranormal Review* 83, 29-31.

Book Review

The Sorcerer of Kings: The Case of Daniel Dunglas Home and William Crookes by G. Stein (1994). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 60, 45-50.

Web Posts

[Psychometry](#) (2016). *Psi Encyclopedia*.

[JOTT: Phenomena of spatial discontinuities](#) (2017). *Psi Encyclopedia*.

Melvyn Willin

Literature

Barrington, M.R. (1992). Palladino and the invisible man who never was. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 58, 324-40.

Barrington, M.R., Mulacz, P., & Rivas, T. (2005). The case of Iris Farczady: A stolen life. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 69/2, 49-77.

Weaver, Z. (2020). Obituary: Mary Rose Barrington. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 84/3, 186-88.

References

Footnotes

- 1.^ Weaver (2020).
- 2.^ Barrington & Grosse (2001).
- 3.^ Barrington (1965).
- 4.^ Barrington (1969, 1976).
- 5.^ For instance, Barrington (1991, 1992, 1998, 2017).
- 6.^ For instance, Barrington (1992, 1994).
- 7.^ Barrington (2005).
- 8.^ Barrington (2002).

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