

Letitia Fairfield

Letitia Fairfield (1885-1978) was a pioneering medical doctor, lawyer and women's rights campaigner, with an interest in parapsychology.

Life and Career

Letitia Fairfield was born in 1885 in Melbourne, Australia.^[1] Aged sixteen, following the breakdown of her parent's marriage, she moved with her mother and two younger sisters to Edinburgh. She was educated at the George Watson's Ladies College, then at Edinburgh Medical College for Women. In 1911 she was awarded a medical degree and started working for London County Council (LCC) with responsibilities for children's health and welfare. In 1917 she was appointed Medical Officer to the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and subsequently was promoted to Inspector of Medical Services for the Royal Air Force.

In 1920 Fairfield returned to the LCC and three years later obtained a law degree, following which she took responsibility for London's Poor Law hospitals. In 1940 she re-joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and was appointed Senior Woman Medical Officer of the Armed Forces.

As one of the first qualified female doctors, Fairfield is regarded as a pioneer in medicine, and as bringing a novel focus on women's healthcare in her senior roles.

Fairfield was involved with the women's liberation campaign. She also joined the Fabian Society. In 1922 she converted to Roman Catholicism, despite disagreeing with its anti-birth control and other doctrines.

Psychical Research

Fairfield held a wide-ranging interest in parapsychological phenomena, joining the Society for Psychical Research in 1957 and serving on its governing council from 1958 to 1966. Her unpublished papers, now in the SPR archive in Cambridge University Library, include detailed original research into witchcraft.

Selected Publications

The supernatural in the law courts with special reference to the Witchcraft Act, 1735 (1946). *Medico-Legal and Criminological Review* 14, 1/2, 27-38.

Therese Neumann (1957). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 39, 164-73.

Book review: *Thérèse Neumann - Visionnaire? Stigmatisée* by Pierre Goemare (1958). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 39, 245-46.

Correspondence: Angel of Mons (1961). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 41, 51.

Unpublished Papers

Papers and Correspondence on Witchcraft and Black Magic, 1922-1970. GBR/0012/MS SPR/17. Cambridge University Library, Society for Psychical Research archive:

The Problem of Confessions (1957)

Theory of healing (1967)

Interview of J.E. Aduba concerning witchcraft (1965)

Article in *The Tablet* (1964)

Strange Happening at the Rectory in *The Times* (1939)

Notes (handwritten) on witchcraft relating to children; witchcraft in Africa, North America and Ireland; occult tradition in France; and witchcraft and parapsychology.

Miscellaneous correspondence and articles in newspapers.

Melvyn Willin

Literature

George Watson's College (n.d.). [Letitia Fairfield](#). [Web page]

Bailey, E.L. (2020). [Who was Dr Fairfield? A story lost among the archives](#). *British Journal of General Practice* 70/693, 185. [Web page]

Endnotes

Footnotes

1. ^ Biographical details in George Watson's College (n.d.).

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