

# George Chapman/William Lang

George Chapman (1921-2006) was a British trance medium reputed to channel the spirit of William Lang (1852-1937), an ophthalmic surgeon. The partnership is said to have brought about numerous healings. Author J Bernard Hutton, a satisfied patient, interviewed 153 other former patients and gathered verifications. This article is based on Hutton's 1966 book, *Healing Hands: The Amazing True Story of a Spirit Doctor*, and a 1978 collaboration by Chapman and parapsychologist Roy Stemman, *Surgeon From Another World*, which was updated and expanded in 2017.

## William Lang

William Lang was born on 28 December 1852 in Exeter, England, to a family of merchants. He was tutored at home up to age twelve, then attended the Moravian School in Lausanne and became a medical student at the London Hospital in Whitechapel. Four years later he began his practice as a general physician and surgeon, specializing in ophthalmology from 1879. During his long career he made important contributions to the field, both theoretical and practical. A practising Christian who prayed for his patients' health, Lang was comfortable with the notion of spirits.

He died of pneumonia on 13 July 1937, aged 84.

## George Chapman

George Chapman was born on 4 February 1921 near Liverpool, England to an impoverished family. He had a passion to protect animals from abuse and founded an animal sanctuary with the help of an adult neighbour. He enlisted in the Royal Air Force at age eighteen and worked as an instructor during World War II. He married at age 22 only to be struck with early tragedy: his firstborn child died in infancy. After the war he joined a town fire brigade, where a co-worker introduced him to spiritualism. He began to participate in Ouija sessions and Spiritualist meetings, and meditated regularly, sometimes for hours at a time. He repeatedly received the message that he would become a healer, and this seemed to be confirmed when he inadvertently unlocked the arm of an old man while helping him cross the street. He then began informally healing friends and neighbours.

Eventually, Chapman began to channel a personality who identified himself as William Lang. (This was in the mid-1940s and not 1951, as erroneously stated in Hutton's book). At these times a transformation came over Chapman, altering his appearance and manner to that of an old man who spoke with a different accent and in a more educated way. According to the discarnate Lang's account, Chapman went through five years of training by spirits to prepare him to become Lang's medium, while Lang himself was trained, in the spirit world, to work through him.

## Verifications

Deceased doctor and medium began to achieve impressive cures, many involving patients whose conditions had been declared incurable. Both wished to prove that Lang was who he claimed to be, and while an initial search of British Medical Association records failed, Lang provided another clue – he had worked at Middlesex Hospital in London – that enabled confirmation of his identity. It was further confirmed by former patients and other associates of the living Dr Lang, who were struck by the similarities in Chapman’s speaking and manner, when manifesting Lang, to those of their former doctor. For his part, the trance personality remembered them and was able to have long conversations with them, reminiscing about matters known only to him and them. These witnesses included Dr Kildare Lawrence Singer, Lang’s student in ophthalmology, and Katherine Pickering, a patient of fifteen years.

At about this time, Chapman met a self-billed ‘psychic artist’ who claimed he could paint portraits of the dead based only on a signature. Chapman asked him to paint his spirit control and Pickering recognized it immediately as portraying Lang. It also closely matched a photograph of Lang that Chapman found in an old medical publication.

## **Practice**

Chapman and Lang practised for some 65 years, ending with Chapman’s death in 2006.<sup>[1]</sup> They founded the Birmingham Healing Centre in 1958 to help meet patient demand in that city, and Chapman left his fireman’s job to work as a full-time healer.

A typical session is exemplified by the description, summarized below, of author and journalist J Bernard Hutton of his own treatment by Lang with Chapman as medium, which inspired him to write his book.

Hutton visited the clinic to seek help for an eye condition. He was told ‘Dr Lang will see you now’, and met a man in a white coat who introduced himself as Dr Lang. The man’s eyes were firmly closed and remained so throughout the appointment, but he moved as if he could see. He was aware of the strength of the prescription of Hutton’s glasses. By gently palpating Hutton’s eyes with his thumbs, Lang perceived that they had been operated on as a child, and made the diagnosis for his current problem. By laying his hands on other parts of Hutton’s body, he was able to diagnose Hutton’s other illness, a hepatitis virus which sapped his strength; this had been diagnosed by a regular doctor as non-paralytic poliomyelitis, but Hutton had not mentioned it to Chapman/Lang.

Lang then asked Hutton to lie down on the couch, without undressing, and began to ‘operate’. Sometimes he called upon invisible assistants (including his son Basil, who by then was known also to have died) to hand him instruments, and his hands were seen to move as if he was taking and using them. He told Hutton he had drawn Hutton’s spirit body slightly out of his physical body to work on it. Hutton began to have the physical sensations of incisions being made, though they were painless; later he felt as if the wounds were being stitched up. Lang calmly described everything he was doing as he worked. When the operation concluded Hutton sat up, and found that he could not see at all; however, Lang assured him his sight

would return, much improved. This indeed happened as he sat in his car afterwards, 'like one of those trick cinematic effects', Hutton writes. Later, the hepatitis symptoms – severe headaches, dizziness, exhaustion – all disappeared.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Lang's Explanation

Asked by Hutton to explain the workings of spirit healing, Lang said it was impossible to describe entirely, and gave a simplified version: 'Spirit healing is healing from the spirit world and is given to a patient by spirit doctors. The healing takes place upon the patient's spirit body, which brings about a change in the physical body...'<sup>[3]</sup> The spirit body, Lang explains, exists slightly outside, 'wrapped around' the physical body, but can contract within it. It cannot be seen by most people and is the same as the physical body except it has a different 'texture', and cannot die.

Lang explained that he was able to diagnose through his ability to see the spirit body, and through it, as its parts were transparent to him. He added, 'I can also see the person's aura, or reflected light, which is constantly moving and changing colour, and exists about two inches from the body ... Each organ, when healthy, reflects a definite colour in the aura, but when the organ becomes diseased ... the reflection changes colour.'<sup>[4]</sup> He could thus quickly perceive the overall state of health.

While operating, Lang explained, he made use of 'healing vibrations ... of divine source – coming directly from God', also described as 'spirit power'. These were the same vibrations as those used by Christ and clerics of all religions when healing their followers, he said. Still, he saw spirit healing as science, not religion, forming 'part of the natural laws of the Universe'.<sup>[5]</sup> He drew the spirit body slightly outside the physical body to 'create the vibrations whereby it becomes "alive" ... those organs which were previously tiny, assume their right size, and we are able to operate...'<sup>[6]</sup>

Lang firmly attributed his skill in spirit surgery to his surgical training and practice, both general and ophthalmic, while living. He said he had a number of deceased colleagues in addition to his son Basil, who consulted with and aided him – and even a secretary who kept careful patient records in the spirit world. Lang described the spiritual surgical instruments as being similar to physical ones but added that fewer were required, as the site of the operation on the spirit body could be more quickly reached. He also made use of 'astra liquid' for injections and 'ectoplasm', drawn either from the medium's body or the spirit world, to rebuild missing physical parts. Asked about the pinkish marks that often appeared on patient's bodies afterward, soon to disappear, Lang said that such scars were always left but were often impossible to see.

Lang also often performed distant healing – healing without contact and over long distances – by visiting his patients while they were in the sleep state, though he emphasized that this was not as effective as direct contact.

No belief in the process, religious belief or religious ritual was necessary for the technique to be effective, Lang stated. He was firmly of the opinion that spirit

doctors and regular doctors should work in collaboration, saying:

When a vast body of spirit doctors and first-class non-trance healers are able to operate all over the country, and irrefutable proof of the efficacy of spirit healing is established beyond contradiction, the medical profession will revise their present hostile attitude ... Unnecessary suffering and premature deaths will become things of the past'.<sup>[7]</sup>

While he and Chapman found most regular doctors to be dismissive of the notion, Lang did share the work of healing some of his cases, including difficult ones, with regular surgeons and physicians.

Lang claimed that 'nothing is incurable – provided the patient seeks help when his health deteriorates and does not fight the help he is given'.<sup>[8]</sup> In other words, success depended upon the patient having the will to get better and not waiting too long before consulting. In many cases, Lang was called as a last resort by people whose conditions had been declared terminal, and therefore had nothing to lose by trying spirit healing – but even in such cases there were very few failures.

## Sample Cases

Hutton's year of research for *Healing Hands* included tracking down former patients of Lang's whom Lang had not himself heard from for years, to see if their cures had held. The book includes detailed accounts of seventeen cases and shorter vignettes of several more, on people of all ages and from all walks of life, suffering from physical conditions ranging from the common cold (which Lang cured in Hutton's son) to injuries from accidents that would otherwise have been fatal, and terminal cancers. All were either permanently cured or showed vast improvement. All patients mentioned provided their genuine names.

Five-year-old Jonathan Bell seemed a normal, lively child until he suddenly became constantly tired and his face puffy. He was diagnosed with advanced leukemia and given two months to live. His desperate parents contacted Chapman at the suggestion of friends who had heard of startling cures by Lang, and he operated on Jonathan on 19 December 1964. Within two weeks, the boy's tiredness was much improved, and at three weeks, doctors who took his blood count were amazed to find it had unaccountably improved. At five weeks, the leukemia had cleared out of his spinal fluid, baffling doctors. With visits every three weeks to Lang, his improvement continued, and in 1965 he remained in perfect health.<sup>[9]</sup>

On 12 November 1954, Dorothy James was struck while walking by a fast moving car, and suffered a fractured skull, two broken legs, loss of sight, loss of memory and lacerations all over her body. Her condition appeared so hopeless that a priest was called to administer last rites. The priest quickly contacted Chapman, having heard of his miraculous cures. Lang immediately started distant healing, helped by a friend of Dorothy's husband who worked at the hospital and was able to keep Lang informed of her condition. She remained semi-conscious for six weeks; doctors were certain that if she survived she would never see, talk or walk again. However, she recovered sufficiently to leave the hospital, following which Lang

performed several contact operations. Eventually she made a full recovery, as Hutton ascertained ten years later.<sup>[10]</sup>

Ethel J Bailey sought help from Lang for residual pain and weakness from injuries to her back and legs in a car accident, not mentioning that her right eyelid had been closed from birth. To her surprise, when Chapman transformed into Lang, he greeted her familiarly, and she recognized his voice. Her parents had had the living Dr Lang examine her eyelid in childhood, and he had declined to operate, as the operation would have left the eye permanently open. He recalled her age and weight, and the more she heard him speak, the more convinced she became that he was indeed her childhood ophthalmologist. This time he did not hesitate to operate on the eyelid, which opened very soon afterward 'as if nothing had ever been wrong with it', she said. The injury-related pain and weakness were also cured.<sup>[11]</sup>

## **Lyndon Lang**

A little over a decade after publication of Hutton's book, George Chapman revealed for the first time evidence that he had kept secret for thirty years: for all this time, William Lang's daughter, Lyndon Lang, had been supporting her father's healing work through Chapman on the strict understanding that her involvement would not be publicised during her lifetime. She died in 1977 and Chapman announced the fact of her support in his 1978 collaboration with Stemman.

Lyndon Lang first heard of her dead father's spirit return from friends, three sisters, who had known her father. In 1946, after reading about Chapman's claim in a newspaper, they had invited him to Edgbaston, Birmingham, to test his claim of channeling William Lang. The visit satisfied them that Lang's spirit was indeed existent and continuing to help the sick through Chapman's mediumship, in part due to Chapman's speech and mannerisms when entranced and in part to knowledge revealed through his answer to testing questions.

One of the sisters, Nora Hanson, had accompanied her mother to consultations with Lang, and later became friends with Lyndon Lang. Speaking through Chapman, William Lang revealed he was aware of this friendship, and told Nora he would like to speak with his daughter again. Nora conveyed that invitation to Lyndon. Despite her scepticism, Lyndon arranged a private visit with Chapman at his home. Lang had died ten years prior.

About the encounter, Lyndon wrote:

George Chapman first visited my flat in 1947 to give sittings to myself and to friends and medical contemporaries of my brother. We all questioned and tested George and my father, William Lang, and we could only come to one conclusion: that the person who speaks through George Chapman and claims to be William Lang is, without a doubt, my father. George came under a contract to a group of medical men whose names are in a sealed envelope which was given to George in 1956 and must not be opened until my passing.<sup>[12]</sup>

Although the envelope was opened soon after Lyndon's passing in 1977, Chapman was reluctant to publicize the names in case those named had sons or daughters

still involved with medicine whom this might cause embarrassment. They were revealed forty years later in the revised and expanded 2017 version of Chapman and Stemman's book.

A second family member met the deceased surgeon through Chapman's mediumship: his granddaughter Susan Fairtlough, daughter of Basil Lang. She declared in a French publication:

..the man who was in this room was indisputably my grandfather. It was not him physically, but it was his voice, his behaviour. It was unquestionable. He spoke to me and evoked precise events of my childhood. And I was so impressed that all I could say was, "Yes, grand papa, No, grand papa".<sup>[13]</sup>

Fairtlough died in 1975, but in interviews with Stemman, her husband Andrew and their daughter corroborated this account and added details about their own encounters with Lang via Chapman, including successful spirit surgery upon Andrew for a heart condition.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Michael Chapman and Basil Lang

Chapman's career as healing medium and Lang's as spirit doctor concluded in 2006 with Chapman's passing at the age of 85. Towards the end of his life, Chapman started to refer his patients to his son, Michael, who now reportedly continues his mediumistic healing, with the spirit of Lang's son Basil, a renowned surgeon in his own right during his life, as his control.<sup>[15]</sup>

When asked about his mediumistic mission, Chapman once said: 'The real purpose of Dr Lang's spirit return, I am convinced, is not solely to cure sick people. It is to touch the soul and to give us a new convincing insight and understanding of the spiritual reality which surrounds us.'<sup>[16]</sup>

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## Literature

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*Telegraph* (2006). [George Chapman](#). [12 August obituary. Requires subscription.]

## Endnotes

### Footnotes

1. ^ *Telegraph* (2006).
2. ^ Hutton (1966), xix-xxv.
3. ^ Hutton (1996), 190.
4. ^ Hutton (1996), 193.
5. ^ Hutton (1996), 191.
6. ^ Hutton (1996), 194.
7. ^ Hutton (1996), 212.
8. ^ Hutton (1996), 203.
9. ^ Hutton (1996), 164-9.
10. ^ Hutton (1996), 64-76.
11. ^ Hutton (1996), 152-5.
12. ^ Chapman & Stemman (2017).
13. ^ Barrat (1974).
14. ^ Chapman & Stemman (2017).
15. ^ See Michael Chapman's [website](#).
16. ^ Quoted in Stemman, personal communication, 2019.