

Charles Hope

Charles Melbourne Hope (1892-1962), a minor British aristocrat, devoted much of his life to psychical research, participating in experiments with Rudi Schneider and in the investigation of Borley Rectory.

Life

Charles Melbourne Hope (Lord Hope) was born in Ararat, Victoria in Australia. His father, John Hope, the 1st Marquis of Linlithgow, was a colonial governor. Hope was educated at Eton College and served in the army from 1911. He was a successful amateur golf and tennis player, taking part in national championships.

Psychical Research

Hope joined the [Society for Psychical Research](#) (SPR) in 1926 and served on its governing council between 1931 and 1955. He was a generous supporter of the organization, in terms both of time and financial donations. In 1931 he was invited by the London Spiritual Alliance to become a member of its research branch, the London Psychical Laboratory.

Sittings with the American medium [George Valiantine](#)^[1] in 1927 left him disappointed at the lack of evidence of postmortem survival, and uncertain even whether Valiantine was genuine.^[2] Other activities included a visit to Brook House, Frimley, the site of an alleged haunting, in 1949,^[3] and the acquisition of molds of the 'Walter' thumbprints from the [Margery séances](#) in the late 1920s.^[4]

Rudi Schneider

Hope collaborated with Eugene Osty's investigation of the Austrian medium [Rudi Schneider](#) in Paris between 1930 and 1931. The following year he conducted his own experiments with Schneider in London, publishing his findings in the SPR Proceedings^[5] along with similar reports by other investigators. Here he drew attention to apparatus used and precautions against fraud; he also had audio recordings made of Schneider's peculiar breathing while in a trance.^[6] He contested claims by [Harry Price](#) that Schneider fraudulently used a free hand to stage phenomena, arguing that this only damaged Price's reputation.^[7] He later published his recollections of his involvement with Schneider,^[8] maintaining that under sympathetic conditions Schneider was able to produce 'impressive phenomena' and adding that Schneider's belief in his 'unusual' powers was 'quite genuine'.

Borley Rectory

Hope made two visits to [Borley Rectory](#), the location of an alleged haunting, in 1929. His extensive notes (housed in Cambridge University Library) were quoted frequently in a critical survey published later by Dingwall, Goldney and Hall.^[9] In

comments made to Harry Price, who led the investigation, Hope said 'I was not impressed and thought the phenomena were produced by normal means'.^[10]

Selected Articles

Appendix – Report on some sittings with Valiantine and Phoenix in 1927 (1932). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 40, 411-27.

Report of a series of sittings with Rudi Schneider (1933). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 41, 255-330.

Report of a visit to Brook House, Frimley (1949, with R. Heywood). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 35, 56-60.

Rudi Schneider. Recollections and comments (1958). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 39, 214-15.

Melvyn Willin

Literature

Anon. (1933). Notice. Further gramophone records. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 28, 83.

Cummins, H. (1935). The Hope Tablets. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 43, 21.

Dingwall, E.J., Goldney, K.M. and Hall, T.H. (1956). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 51, 1-181.

Hope, C. (1932). Appendix – Report on some sittings with Valiantine and Phoenix in 1927. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 40, 411-27.

Hope, C. (1933). Report of a series of sittings with Rudi Schneider. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 41, 255-330.

Hope, C. (1958). Rudi Schneider. Recollections and comments. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 39, 214-15.

Hope, C. & Heywood, R. (1949). Report of a visit to Brook House, Frimley. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 35, 56-60.

Endnotes

Footnotes

1. ^ Hope (1932), 411-27.
2. ^ Hope (1932), 419.
3. ^ Hope and Heywood (1949), 56-60.
4. ^ Cited in Cummins (1935), 21.
5. ^ Hope (1933), 255-330.

6. ^ Anon. (1933), 83.
7. ^ Hope (1933), 290.
8. ^ Hope (1958), 214-15.
9. ^ Dingwall, Goldney and Hall (1956), 32 passim.
10. ^ Dingwall et al (1956), 33.

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