

George Medhurst

George Medhurst (1920-1971) was a British mathematician and engineer who carried out experiments and scholarly studies in psychical research.

Life and Career

Richard George Medhurst, born into a poor family, won scholarships that enabled him to take a degree in mathematics at Queen Mary College, London in 1942. He worked at the General Electric Company on aerial theory and distortion problems in communications. He twice won the Heaviside Premium awarded by the Institute of Electrical Engineers for the best mathematical paper of the year.^[1] Shortly before his death he was awarded a London University doctorate in engineering.

In 1969 he underwent an operation for the removal of a malignant brain tumour; however, this returned and caused his death two years later.

Psychical Research

Medhurst joined the Society for Psychical Research in 1941, assisting telepathy research being carried out by SG Soal with Basil Shackleton. His responsibilities included checking the score sheets,^[2] which became an issue some years later when Soal's procedures were disputed. Medhurst defended Soal against charges of cheating, but the evidence to support this eventually became overwhelming.^[3]

Between 1961 and 1962 he conducted a large-scale experiment (with H. Stark and GT Thompson) to discover potential high-scoring subject for ESP testing. Some 1200 volunteers did unsupervised testing, of whom only 37 scored sufficiently highly to be considered for further testing. Of these, 26 carried out supervised tests but no high scorers emerged.^[4]

Medhurst was appointed to the SPR council in 1962 and became the chair of the library committee.

With KM Goldney, Medhurst wrote a detailed consideration of William Crookes's investigative work with Florence Cook and other materialisation mediums.^[5] This was occasioned by the publication by Trevor Hall's *The Spiritualists*, which argued that Crookes had become infatuated with Cook and was using the pretence of psychical research to carry on an affair with her. The authors present substantial details that cast doubt on this idea.^[6] An edited book of his research on Crookes was published posthumously.^[7]

Medhurst also attempted to investigate a 1937 incident by Harry Price, an encounter with what appeared to be the materialised spirit of a deceased young girl named Rosalie, whom he both saw and touched. Price gave few details, saying he had been invited to attend on the condition that he did not reveal the sitters' identity or the address. An earlier investigation, having identified the location of the address (erroneously, according to Medhurst), but finding no house that

matched Price's description, concluded that he made up the story. Medhurst's painstaking attempts to trace the property likewise ended in failure and he was unable to shed more light on it.^[8]

Selected Works

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Endnotes

Footnotes

1. ^ Barrington (1971), 125.
2. ^ Soal & Goldney (1942), 21-150.
3. ^ Beloff (1983), 140.

4. ^ Medhurst, Stark & Thompson (1965), 109-35.
5. ^ Medhurst & Goldney (1964a), 25-157.
6. ^ Medhurst & Goldney (1964b), 45.
7. ^ Medhurst (1972).
8. ^ Medhurst (1965), 209.

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