

# SNU

February 2021

# TODAY



Issue 16

£2.80

Where sold

## Spiritualist repair shop

We take a look at the renovation  
of the intriguing Communigraph

## THE POWER OF TWO

We talk to Brighton and Hove  
National Spiritualist Church  
about their successful merger

## THIS ISSUE:

Our journey continues  
into 2021, in the first  
issue of the year we look  
at what the future holds  
for Spiritualism

## THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

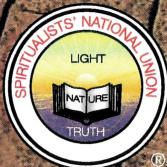
*From a Personal Perspective*

The NEC takes us through each of their roles, and Minister  
Alan Rawnsley explains exactly what the NEC does

# SPIRITUALIST CHURCH

## SNUi TODAY

One positive outcome of the  
lockdowns is that we have  
seen the internet open up  
the world of Spiritualism

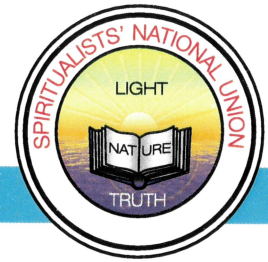


[www.snu.org.uk](http://www.snu.org.uk)

*Your regular Union update*

News, reviews and comments from around the Union,  
keeping you informed of the what, where and how of  
your SNU – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

# CONTENTS



## 1 WELCOME

Our President introduces you to this issue, brought to you in challenging times for the world and our religion.

## 2 NOTE FROM OUR EDITOR

Alv Hirst introduces the content of our February issue and asks for your input.

## 3 UNION NEWS

The work of our religion and Spiritualists continues as we adapt to change, online and in the real world.

## 8 LINDA FERN SMITH

We were deeply saddened to learn of the passing to Spirit of Linda Fern Smith, President of Norwich Spiritualist Church, and Spiritualist of the Year 2017.

## 9 THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

"Well after the challenges of 2020, 2021 has to be better!" Minister David Bruton looks at a positive approach for 2021.

## 11 IN SEARCH OF MARIA B. HAYDEN

Sharon DeBartolo Carmack DSNU talks to us about her recent book on Spiritualist Pioneer Maria B. Hayden

## 17 2021 OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

A remarkable time in history, and recording the remarkable response of Spiritualists to it."

## 21 SPIRITUALIST REPAIR SHOP

We take a look at the renovation of the intriguing Communigraph, a rare item from the Britten Museum & Library.

## 24 PREPARE FOR SUCCESS

Minister Judith Seaman takes us through the new concepts for SNU Education, Training and Awards.

## 25 EVIDENCE & ESSENCE

We look at the key ideas behind "Mediumship and Spiritual Development" – an Arthur Findlay College course

## 27 INDIVIDUALITY MATTERS

Marie Lisseman OSNU talks to us about her life in SNU Spiritualism, and her role as your representative.

## 29 SOLAR EMPOWERMENT

Spiritualism reminds us of personal responsibility. This doesn't let unsustainable industries off the hook, but it does at least give us the opportunity to look at what we can do.

## 31 CENSUS 2021

Spoiler alert! This is a call to action! March 21st 2021 is a census day.





### 33 **WHAT'S THE NEC ALL ABOUT?**

In this article Minister Alan Rawnsley gives an overview of the work of the National Executive Council (NEC).

### 35 **THE NEC FROM A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE**

The NEC tell us about their roles, and what it takes to ensure the Union runs as efficiently as possible.

### 41 **EMBRACING THE MOMENTUM**

The Diss and District Pioneer Centre is ready for 2021, find out why!

### 43 **THE POWER OF TWO**

SNU Today with Brighton and Hove National Spiritualist Church, exploring a rich history and strong future

### 47 **SNUi TODAY**

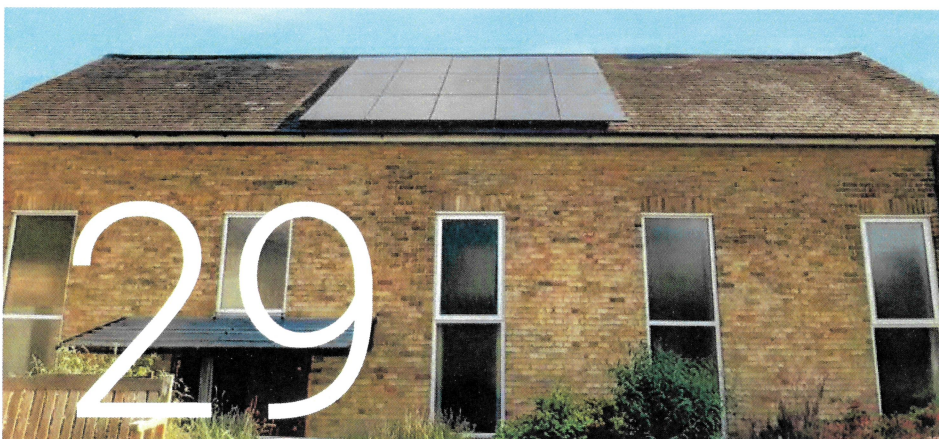
One positive outcome of lockdown is that we have seen the internet open up the world of Spiritualism.

### 51 **SPREADING THE NET**

Looking back at the early days of Modern Spiritualism we see technology seems to have had its influence on today.

### 45 **CAO REPORT**

Chief Administrative Officer Sadia Bowering with an update and round up of news from around the Union.



## *Follow us*



Find us on social media and follow us for all the latest news

**Twitter**  
@spiritualistSNU

**Instagram**  
@spiritualistSNU

**SNU**  
www.snu.org.uk

**SNUi**  
www.snu.org.uk

**Arthur Findlay College**  
www.arthurfindlaycollege.org

**Barbanell Centre**  
www.barbanellcentre.org

**SNU Trust**  
www.snutrust.co.uk

**SNU President**  
Minister David Bruton

**SNU Today Editor**  
Alv Hirst

#### **Content Contributors**

Minister David Bruton

Alv Hirst

Minister Judith Seaman

Sharon DeBartolo Carmack

Marie Lisseman OSNU

Minister Simone Key (SNUi Chair)

Joan Bygrave LSSNU

Michelle Lieberman

Alexandra Campana

Alan Seymour CSNU

Minister Colin Bates

John Johnson OSNU

#### **Write to us**

If you would like to submit an article or post a reader response, please submit all text and photos to

[news@snu.org.uk](mailto:news@snu.org.uk)

#### **Spiritualists' National Union Head Office**

Redwoods, Stansted Hall,  
Stansted Mountfitchet,  
Essex CM24 8UD

**01279 816363**  
[snu@snu.org.uk](mailto:snu@snu.org.uk)



# In Search of MARIA

In the last issue we met Karen Frances McCarthy CSNU whose book, "Till Death Don't Us Part" added to a modern literary body of Spiritualist works.

Maria B. Hayden, M.D.  
(1824-1883). Photograph  
courtesy of the Lommel  
Family and Sharon  
DeBartolo Carmack.



# B. HAYDEN

**I**n this issue SNU Today is excited to report that another Spiritualist author has added to that body. Our readers will be familiar with Individual and SNUi Member Sharon DeBartolo Carmack, DSNU, for previous contributions to your magazine. Notably last year's useful article about researching our Spiritualist ancestors. Further back, Sharon also wrote an article about Maria B. Hayden, a much overlooked pioneer of Spiritualism, and it is her knack for historical research that has seen the early research that she shared with us grow into a book.

Newly published, her book "In Search of Maria B. Hayden: The American Medium Who Brought Spiritualism to the U.K." takes a deeper look at the life and impact of this Spiritualist who brought about a step-change in religion and spirituality in the UK. This biographical account explores a woman who was both revered and disdained, and like many Spiritualists of that time showed great tenacity in staying true to her principles. We are familiar with many of the strong female Spiritualist pioneers, and Maria is among them, not only pushing beyond religious norms and expectations, but also those placed on women at the time. It is only right then that her life should be celebrated, and the book does this through previously unpublished information, images and illustrations that help to bring to life the work of this pioneer. Maria's life isn't presented in isolation, and through the book we also learn much about its context, and the Spiritualist movement at the time.

Sharon is an experienced genealogist,

and through her work has helped and encouraged many others to research their ancestry, and her interest in Spiritualism, and her work and awards with SNU meant that going in search of Maria was a rewarding process. SNU Today caught up with her to talk in depth about the book, and the importance of recording our history. In doing so we also learnt about the excitement of delving into our history. We begin by asking Sharon how she came to focus on Maria's place in history. She tells us, "As I like to say, I don't know if I chose to write about Maria or she chose me, or a little of both. When I took the SD1 course and had to write about three pioneers, I was surprised by how little was known about Maria. That's what initially intrigued and drew me to her. What was known focused on her year in England, but I discovered there is a lot more to her life and story before and after that time." As Sharon's investigations expanded, Maria's accomplishments continued to unfold, as she explains: "What still interests me most about her is all the pioneering work she did for Spiritualism in so many ways. She started as a spirit medium, then turned to healing mediumship, and later went to medical school in her forties and became a physician. She also practiced automatic writing and psychometry."

However these things are really just the headlines to an incredible story. "Since so little was known about her," explains Sharon, "everything was a surprise! One surprise is she wasn't born in 1826 as was carved on her headstone. My research shows she was born in 1824. But I guess the biggest surprise is her work as a healing medium and clairvoyant physician before she went to medical school. While

other pioneering healing mediums have received recognition, no one seems to have known about Maria's abilities in this area. She used a combination of psychometry and clairvoyance to diagnose, and with her spirit helpers, she prescribed remedies. Her accuracy was noted in several American newspapers, and she was also recognized by her medical colleagues as a "remarkable diagnostician."

The past year has been an unprecedented challenge for the whole world, and it might be suggested that looking into the past is a distraction. We pondered on the value of thinking about our heritage, particularly at a time like this. Speaking of our pioneers, Sharon points out, "Their lives show us that despite obstacles and criticism, our work for spirit is important and has an impact. I think we also learn that while times may change, human emotions do not. People in the nineteenth century grieved just as fully as we do when we lose a loved one. Our work as Spiritualists, like the pioneers before us, helps us realize how important communication from spirit really is. A single message can be life changing."

This is an empowering notion for us to consider. The work of Maria and countless other pioneers is a source of inspiration and guidance that validates the importance of what we are doing now. It encourages to know that the future that we build for ourselves from today will be enhanced with Spiritualism included in its foundations. Sharon begins to expand on this thought by asking a key question, "How can we know where we're going if we don't understand where we've been? For example, there is a trend now to produce physical phenomena. Many feel that, like

in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the phenomena has to be manifested in a dark room with little or only a red light and the medium withdrawn into a cabinet. But earlier, in Maria's day, this wasn't the case. She produced amazing physical phenomena during her séances, many of which were held in broad daylight with everyone visible, including the medium. Maria preferred this to rule out any hint of fraud. The phenomena in Maria's day was due to the power and energy of the spirit world working through the medium, not through the use of ectoplasm. (That theory and term wasn't coined until 1894.) Why can't we produce that kind of physical phenomena now?

Why must physical phenomena be manifested in the dark? If the spirit world is as intelligent as we say it is, then we should be able to produce it the way Maria did, in broad daylight." So we see that our history is not simply a passive record of accounts. It is a dynamic source of challenge, and an opportunity to critically appreciate what is happening today. When we talk about eternal progress, then we are referring to a process that is dependent on the past as well as the potential of the future. When we allow it to interact with our experiences, an understanding of our history is a tool to evaluate and inspire our progress.

Maria is key to the evolution of Spiritualism as a religion, especially in the UK, and Sharon's book creates a new body of work to help us understand an important (and arguably overlooked) figure in our history. We were intrigued by this and asked Sharon why Maria has previously not been given the recognition she deserves? "That's a really good question and one I've wondered myself," she responds. "Why wasn't she recognized? Why hasn't someone written her biography before now? I'd like to think she was waiting for the right biographer to come along, like Silver Birch waited for the right medium to come along in Maurice Barbanell! It also surprised me that the American Spiritualists have nothing written about her in their literature, yet she was one of the most popular and accurate mediums in Boston and later in New York City, let alone her contribution of bringing American Spiritualism to the U.K. in 1852-53. The only explanation I can give is Maria wasn't a trance speaker. Trance

mediums, like Emma Hardinge Britten, who toured America and lectured publicly, drew audiences of hundreds at each event, whereas 'test mediums' (what we'd call an evidential medium) like Maria, who made up the majority of mediums and gave private sittings with evidence of individuals' survival, reached only as many people as could sit around the séance table each time. Private circles, or séances, were the mainstay of the Spiritualist movement. Yet these skilled and in-demand mediums like Maria weren't in the limelight so have received little attention."

We know that Sharon's article about Spiritualist ancestry proved to be a much valued resource to our readers, and for some has perhaps sown the seeds of a

**"Our work as Spiritualists, like the pioneers before us, helps us realize how important communication from spirit really is. A single message can be life changing."**

research or writing project. We explored the importance of Spiritualist literature with Karen Frances McCarthy in our last issue, and wanted to continue this theme with Sharon. We asked her to expand on her own research and writing process. "I've been a professional genealogist for more than thirty years and I've written twenty-three other books, so researching ancestors and writing about them is second nature to me," she explains. "Through that experience, I know how to find not only commonly used sources such as censuses, vital records, and the like, but I know how to get creative with my research and ferret out sources others might not be able to find or think to look for. Additionally, I take into account how and why historical records were created. Sometimes what's not in a record is just as important

as what's in the record. "When I write someone's life story, I like to put their life into historical perspective to help explain people's motivations and behaviours, especially when the person left no first-hand accounts like letters, diaries, and journals. So Maria's story isn't just her story, it's also early Spiritualism's story.

"In writing biography, I don't write in chronological order. I write it in subject order. For example, Maria's first known séance in England was at Knebworth House for Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. That's ended up being chapter seven in the book. I focused my research and writing just on that subject to write that chapter. Then I might jump to focusing on Maria's talents as a psychometrist, which became chapter twenty-seven. Then I might work on what would become chapter two. So I write out of chronological sequence. But the biography has to come together as a whole. When I revise the drafts, I smooth the chapters out with transitions. As I get closer to a final draft, the person's whole life has unfolded for me, so I can see the cause and effect. Now I revise for 'This happened, which caused this to happen, and here's how things have changed.'

"Something many writers don't talk about (or do) is the number of drafts or the number of bound galleys [a pre-publication draft of a book] you go through to get to publication. With a 600-page book like Maria's, which is heavily illustrated, annotated, and documented, my husband and I spent a good deal of time reading and re-reading, checking and cross-checking. I had three readers review the manuscript for understandability of the content, then I made more revisions. After my husband did the layout and design, I and two proof-readers read it not only for typos, but looking for formatting issues. Yet we still found problems when the bound galleys arrived. We went through four bound galleys until the book was as close to perfect as we could make it. No one was happier that this book was finally finished than we were!"

This insight into the process is valuable, and one of our aims in writing this article was to encourage others to pick up the pen. In "An Audience with the President" Karen McCarthy spoke about the blank page being terrifying, and encouraged us

on DeBartolo Carmack

**In Search of  
Maria B. Hayden**  
The American Medium Who Brought  
Spiritualism to the U.K.



**National Union**

Sharon DeBartolo Carmack

The Spiritualists' National Union  
**Diploma**  
Presented to  
*Sharon DeBartolo Carmack*  
Member of the Union



to start writing anywhere in our story and to edit and organise later. This is worth watching (SNUFilm, YouTube) if you need encouragement and sound advice to get going. Sharon also has encouragement for us: "Writing a book, or even an article, whether about your own knowledge and experiences or that of someone else, is a lot of work. It's not 'This happened, and then that happened, next this happened, and that happened.' Those are just facts, not a story. Instead, it's 'This happened, which caused this to happen, and here's how things have changed.'

"All good stories have conflict. No one wants to read about perfect weight and blue skies. That's boring. The narrator's struggle to achieve their goal is what makes it interesting. Also, two important questions to ask yourself are 'Why does this matter?' and 'How is my story different from anyone else's?'"

Karen suggested that we don't think about what to write as the opening sentence, and it's probably no surprise that Sharon suggests something very similar "As for where to start, never start your story at the beginning! Always start with the day that was different. Then write. In the words of Ernest Hemingway, 'The first draft of anything is \*\*\*\*.' You will go through numerous drafts and revisions. That's what all writers do." We will leave our readers to fill in the blanks from Hemingway's observations, but take courage in taking the leap required in writing!

Finally, one of the most remarkable twists in the story is the uncovering of a photograph of Maria, certainly down to the tenacity of Sharon as a researcher. "Until now," confirms Sharon, "none of today's Spiritualists had any idea what Maria B.

Hayden looked like. There were no positively identified photographs of her when I started my research. I share my search for a photograph in the book, but in short, I ended up tracing down all of her descendants, then contacting each one in the hopes one of them had a photograph. And eventually one did! The photo on the cover and in the book is the only known,

her pioneering work directly resonates through the years to the lives of all the Spiritualists reading this article. When she stepped onto British soil she brought with her a change that would be the catalyst for what we know and love today, and her story is a keystone in our history. As she transformed lives then, she continues to transform them today.

**Sharon DeBartolo Carmack was talking to SNU Today**

## Sharon DeBartolo Carmack



## In Search of Maria B. Hayden

The American Medium Who Brought Spiritualism to the U.K.

positively identified image of Maria in existence. That was one of the most rewarding parts of my research. But the best part was coming to know and being able to share Maria's life story and legacy, forgotten for so long."

We can all be grateful to Sharon for helping us to understand the value of and processes of historical research, and for giving Maria the focus that she deserves. It is not unreasonable to suggest that

"In Search of Maria B. Hayden: The American Medium Who Brought Spiritualism to the U.K." is published by Scattered Leaves Press, and available to order at SNU online shop or Head Office.