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**Let's Turn Up The Heat**

**TRUTH**

**on fraudulent physical  
mediums with thermal  
imaging technology...**



# Time for action

Psychic News' TRUTH campaign for thermal testing of physical mediums gets major backing from three continents *By the Editor*

IN A dramatic move designed to verify the genuineness of physical mediumship and, at the same time, rid Spiritualism of charlatans pretending to produce physical phenomena, *Psychic News* has joined forces with the Spiritualists' National Union (SNU) and the Banyan Retreat to change perceptions and challenge the procedures surrounding such séances.

This informal coalition follows the exposure of Gary Mannion's blatant fraud, revealed by covert infrared filming of his "physical mediumship" at Banyan Retreat, Kent [PN July, August and September 2016] earlier this year.

His ability to fool many people poses serious questions about the involvement of Spiritualist churches – some of them SNU members – and independent centres in unwittingly exposing their followers to fraudulent activities.

It's difficult to know if Mannion once had some genuine physical mediumship ability, but as his physical séances for three years or more have followed the same pattern as the "séance" caught on video, this is now being questioned.

Physical mediums have produced some spectacular results over the years, manifesting remarkable phenomena combined with impressive evidence of life after death. But even the best have been accused of fraud – often unjustifiably, it seems – by sceptics who refuse to believe such things are possible.

The major problem with most accounts of materialisations and other ectoplasmic phenomena is that they usually occur in darkness or in low light conditions, often making eyewitness accounts less than reliable.

*Psychic News* believes it is now time for Spiritualists around the world to unite in stamping out fraud by utilising new technology before the activities of fake physical mediums like Mannion do long-lasting damage to the Movement.

As a first step, we are campaigning for every physical medium who demonstrates publicly to be tested using the latest, non-invasive thermal technology. We are also inviting all Spiritualist churches and centres to give their support to this campaign by agreeing to allow only those physical mediums whose abilities have been verified by thermal imaging technology to demonstrate on their premises.

## The problem

Belief is a vital factor that plays an important role in people's perceptions during a physical séance. The most influential element – particularly in fraudulent séances – is the belief that the medium is securely fastened to a chair at the beginning of the séance and is still secured in the same way at the conclusion of the proceedings.

Therefore those who attend such séances conclude that since the secured medium could not have produced the phenomena experienced, they must be the work of spirit beings transformed into a physical form or capable of manipulating physical energies to perform the feats witnessed.

But as Mannion so ably demonstrates on the two-hour video that caught him cheating, he was able to slip easily in and out of the cable ties that supposedly held him in their vice-like grip. Now that Spiritualists around the world can see (on [garyfiles.co.uk](http://garyfiles.co.uk)) how easy it is to escape from whatever binds a medium to a chair, they are questioning if other mediums who give public demonstrations of physical mediumship could be doing the same.

The challenge, until now, is that infrared filming of physical séances is said to be damaging, since it produces a form of light that, though invisible to the naked eye, could potentially have the same damaging impact on the medium and the phenomena as turning on a normal light.

It is, therefore, regarded by many – but not all – Spiritualists as an invasive and dangerous method of recording the proceedings, despite the fact that a number of mediums have in the past been filmed or photographed with infrared whilst producing phenomena. On the other hand, others have been physically injured when lights have been switched on unexpectedly.

For that reason, Banyan Retreat has been criticised for using infrared without informing Mannion. It justifies that action on the basis of an assurance it received through a trusted medium that no one would be injured if the event were filmed – which proved correct.

UNITED STATES

UNITED KINGDOM

AUSTRALIA

## The solution

The Catch 22 situation is that whereas a genuine medium appears to need a room largely devoid of light to produce physical phenomena – just as a seed needs darkness in order to germinate – a fraudulent physical medium also needs those same conditions in order to fake the interaction of spirits with objects or people in the room.

So how do we distinguish one from the other?

The good news is that new *passive* technology now exists that makes it possible to record activities in a darkened séance room without emitting any form of light. What thermal imaging cameras do, instead, is detect *heat* in the form of infrared emissions (body heat) from each individual in the room. This should make it possible, when the recording is reviewed, to see if the medium or anyone else moved from their seat during the event.

*Psychic News* believes the time has come for action and has proposed a two-pronged campaign that calls for testing of mediumistic abilities and creates greater global awareness of the standards expected from those individuals who claim to possess physical mediumship.

We believe it is essential that those physical mediums whose abilities are sufficiently developed to provide their services at various venues and to receive remuneration for them – Mannion would have been paid in the region of £500 for his fraudulent mediumship at Banyan Retreat – should submit to an independent thermal imaging check of their abilities.

Such a scheme needs the support of centres in the UK and other countries to send out a clear message that Spiritualism is turning up the heat on fraud by using heat-sensing technology and any other suitable scientific equipment.

We are calling it the TRUTH campaign (TuRn Up The Heat). Churches, centres and societies can show their support on our Facebook page and a list of those that support it will be made public. We will, in time, also publish the names of those mediums who participate by demonstrating their abilities under the scrutiny of a thermal imaging camera.

The **Spiritualists' National Union** (SNU) was quick to give the TRUTH campaign its full support. On 26 August, Minister David Bruton, SNU president, informed us: "We discussed your campaign at our officers' meeting last evening and today I have sought direction from the full National Executive Committee.

"I am pleased to tell you that they are unanimously in favour of providing the full endorsement of The Spiritualists' National Union and support for your campaign.... Needless to say, I hoped that this was the reaction we would get and I look forward to working with *Psychic News* in helping to mould the future of Spiritualism in the 21st century."

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## Who will do the UK testing?

The technology and the facilities to carry out the testing in the UK will be established at **The Arthur Findlay College (AFC)** in Essex and the independent **Banyan Retreat** in Kent.

We are delighted to report that *both* have agreed to work with *Psychic News* and make their facilities available to those physical mediums who agree to be tested. Talks are about to take place to agree on the best protocol to adopt and the technical specifications of the test centres, as well as how the test programme will be implemented.

The AFC, which attracts visitors from around the world, introduced its own protocol as a way of ensuring that fraudulent physical mediums were not allowed to infiltrate the prestigious Spiritualist centre and tarnish its reputation.

It was announced at the beginning of last year, together with an eight-page document explaining the need for such measures (PN January 2015). The protocol applies only to the AFC, not to SNU churches or centres, and to the best of our knowledge the facility has been used to test only one medium. Those results were negative, though this has never been made public.

So the medium tested at the AFC is still able to offer his services, and those who engage him or attend his séances are blissfully unaware that he has failed to demonstrate physical mediumship under test conditions.

An irony to this story is that Bruton, who is also principal of the AFC, had to visit Stourbridge SNU Church in the West Midlands to experience Gary Mannion's mediumship (PN July 2016). Had the AFC's testing procedure also applied to SNU churches, he could have saved himself from an unpleasant experience.

Although Bruton would like to see the AFC protocol adopted by all SNU churches, the Union's powers to impose such requirements are limited. This is likely to be discussed at its next National Executive Committee meeting.

In the meantime, we are launching our TRUTH campaign to invite a voluntary expression of support from all churches around the world that desire to use only the services of physical mediums whose abilities have been confirmed as genuine.

“Progress with testing at Banyan Retreat will depend on receiving approval from the spirit teams”

## Mediums' reactions

There are probably no more than a dozen individuals who claim to possess physical mediumship that they can demonstrate at public séances. We expect resistance from some of them but they have nothing to lose, except their reputations.

Scott Milligan, whose levitation and independent direct voice phenomena have been reported in our columns, was among the first to reject the AFC protocol, though that was due, in large part, to a demand in the AFC's documentation that subsequently proved to be inaccurate.

The very first requirement for future "dark séances" at AFC read: "they must be filmed with infrared cameras" and it went on to discuss night vision goggles also being made available to those in attendance. Scott Milligan found those conditions unacceptable – as would most other mediums – on the basis that infrared light *might* damage his mediumship and his health.

At the very least, he was not prepared to agree to the protocol without first discussing it with his spirit helpers. He therefore withdrew his services from the AFC (PN January 2015).

It later transpired that not only was the AFC willing to drop its demand to use infrared cameras in favour of passive imaging, but also that the equipment it was using was *not* infrared but "the latest thermal imaging equipment developed for the military [which] emits no light that could be damaging to the medium" (statement made by Bruton in PN March 2015).

*Psychic News* understands that Scott Milligan is now experimenting with such equipment under spirit instruction in his home circle, of which Nic Whitham and Steven Siu, Banyan Retreat co-owners, are members.

Banyan Retreat expresses its commitment to the testing mediums on its website in these words: "In order to protect and ensure the legitimacy of our physical mediums in our modern world it has become necessary for us to ask them to work whilst we film them with a thermal imaging camera. These cameras are extremely expensive and are the only product available which will cause no harm to them as they work in a darkened room."

It is inviting donations towards its own camera at [fundraising.banyanretreat.com/thermalimaging/](http://fundraising.banyanretreat.com/thermalimaging/) but Nic Whitham makes it clear that they are still at an experimental stage and are working in consultation with three circles. Progress will depend on receiving approval from the spirit teams.

The London-based **Spiritualist Association of Great Britain** has also welcomed the TRUTH campaign. In giving its full support, general manager Annie Blair says it has always been the Association's intention of introducing more physical mediumship again, once they move to new permanent premises and have a suitable environment for this type of work.

"There are so many genuine mediums working to promote Spiritualism," she adds, "and as always it is the very few who create a bad reputation for the Movement."

# Testing in other countries

The Australian Academy of Spirit (AAS), based at Universal Cottage on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, which has also given its support to our TRUTH campaign, is leading the field in setting new standards on that continent.

It stipulates that "all physical mediumship by AAS members or visiting mediums will now be conducted in some or full red light or, where not possible to conduct in red light, there will be non-intrusive thermal imaging, full spectrum or infrared cameras on and recording!"

The needs of the medium and the requirements of the AAS will be discussed and a mutually acceptable situation agreed upon. It is, however, determined to provide "a level playing field" for all physical mediums.

"We have in the past allowed certain mediums to remove the cameras and regretted it," Debbie Bozicevic-Mewes, AAS president and founder, tells *Psychic News*.

She reveals that Gary Mannion was invited to demonstrate his physical mediumship for the AAS after he participated in a Symposium on Physical Mediumship organised by the Wallacia Development Centre, Sydney, two years ago. Mannion is closely associated with Wallacia and returned there from the UK in August this year.

"When informed of the cameras (after we experienced his appalling work twice at the Wallacia Symposium, the second time to make sure we were correct) Mannion declined the booking saying that his 'team' do not work with cameras," Debbie continues.

"The Wallacia Physical Mediumship Symposium was to have Garry Mannion, Kai Muegge and Warren

Caylor, as well as Gordon Garforth who was also in attendance as a transfiguration medium and whose work was impressive in red light.

"Warren arrived, was accused of fraud by Mannion and after some very unfortunate incidents Caylor got on a plane back home before the symposium started.

"Caylor contacted me from Dubai to tell me of the incidents. Muegge, who was also to be at the symposium before coming on to the AAS (where he was to give seven fully booked séances) was stopped at the airport and deported for not having the correct visa."

So the only medium in attendance at the symposium was Mannion. Debbie Bozicevic-Mewes says that those who knew better became angrier and angrier at the level of fraud they witnessed at his séances.

British-born medium David Thompson, who now lives in New Zealand, had impressed the AAS president some years ago but when he gave three physical séances for the academy she received 10 complaints from sitters, some of whom reported having their toes trodden on by the "spirits" – though it has been argued that this was merely a demonstration of a materialisation's presence.

Thermal imaging would have settled that argument but Thompson had demanded the removal of cameras from the room prior to his séances.

This month, Helen DaVita will be running a physical mediumship course at the AAS's specially-designed séance room, which will be filmed by the academy's thermal imaging equipment. Her trance and transfiguration séances, held in red light, have been filmed in the past but this will be the first opportunity for AAS to capture physical mediumship on camera. We



Sofas and other furnishings are removed when physical séances are held in this room at the Australian Academy of Spirit (Photo: AAS)

look forward to reporting on the results.

It is hoped that North America will also soon have a test centre that will verify the claims of physical mediums living on that continent or visiting from overseas, if they have not already been tested in their home countries. This follows the wholehearted support for the TRUTH campaign from the **American Society for Standards in Mediumship and Psychical Investigations (ASSMPI)** which is currently searching for a suitable test centre.

Its president, Jock Brocas, tells *Psychic News*: "The ASSMPI is dedicated to raising standards in all aspects of mediumship. This is the main focus of our charity and our mission to give service to Spirit and raise standards in all practices. This includes mental, trance and, in particular, physical mediumship.

"The very fact that we also have the Helen Duncan Foundation under our auspices means that we have a real desire for transparency within the practice of physical mediumship. Due to recent events we have had to re-evaluate our position and expand our protocols.

"One of our major goals is to develop a centre of excellence and research in the USA. Furthermore, we can confirm that we will be moving towards more stringent protocols in the testing of physical mediums to include, but not limited to, the use of thermal imaging as well as other protocols that we are developing to create a balance between Spirit and science.

"It is our desire to work hand-in-hand with all organisations and retain an a-political and non-judgmental stance. We believe that together, as a Movement, we all have to protect mediumship, our public that needs us, and our mediums.

"We will not support or stand for any fraudulent mediumship, no matter who, where or by whom, and our goal is to raise our standards, to remove the desire for material superiority, and to bring the message from Spirit through Spirit and to Spirit."

ASSMPI's decision is also of historical importance since its board members include Margaret Hahn, granddaughter of famous physical medium Helen Duncan.

*Psychic News* encourages all churches and centres to support our TRUTH campaign and allow only physical mediums whose abilities have been confirmed by thermal imaging technology to demonstrate to the public on their premises.

Church officials can do so on [Facebook.com/psychicnews/](https://www.facebook.com/psychicnews/). We will also be pleased to have the public support – on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, for example – of individual Spiritualists who agree that *now* is the time for action.

This important initiative will be of great benefit not only to Spiritualism and those who attend séances but also to those genuine physical mediums whose dedicated work is being tarnished by the efforts of frauds. ■



A still from the video of Gary Mannion's fake séance (Photo: Banyan Retreat)