

Hereward Carrington

Hereward Carrington (1880–1958) was a British-born psychical researcher and author resident in the USA, with particular interests in alternative health treatments, conjuring and physical paranormal phenomena. He is noted in particular for his participation in the Naples investigation of the physical medium Eusapia Palladino. A large collection of his writings and correspondence is held in the Princeton University library.

Life and Career

Hereward Hubert Lavington Carrington was born on 17 October 1880 in St. Helier, Jersey and attended school in London and Kent.¹ He visited the USA in 1888 and later moved to Boston before settling in New York City in 1904, where he worked as an assistant editor for Street and Smith magazines.

Carrington became interested in psychical research after encountering books on the subject, joining the [Society for Psychical Research](#) (SPR) in 1899 and the [American Society for Psychical Research](#) in 1907. He founded the American Psychical Institute and Laboratory in New York in 1921 which closed after two years, but was re-opened ten years later. He was chiefly interested in physical phenomena of [poltergeists](#) and [mediumship](#), and is said to have sat with almost every prominent physical medium of the time, both in the UK and elsewhere. He is best known for his in-depth report of an investigation of Eusapia Palladino, which decisively endorsed at least some of the observed phenomena as genuine (see below).

Carrington suggested that physical paranormal phenomena of the type displayed by Palladino might be explained by the material manifestation of a natural 'life force' or 'vital energy' emanating from the spiritual realm. As well as being responsible for all 'normal' bodily and mental processes, this energy could also be deployed to move and manifest objects by gifted individuals. This life force might also account for psychic healing, which, he suggested, results from the transmission of vital energy from one organism to another,² the continuation of life after death,³ as well as phenomena such as psychometry, haunted houses, auras and materializations.⁴ He maintained that a person's vital energies (and therefore their health, well-being, and psychic abilities) were affected by their dietary practices and, as such, was a strong advocate of fasting and vegetarianism (in the form of a fruitarian diet) (see below).

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Carrington was a consultant for [The Mysteries of Myra](#), a fifteen-episode silent film series released in 1916, which introduced various paranormal concepts. He is said to have been the model for Payson Alden, the psychical investigator in the films.⁵

Mediumship

An extensive knowledge of conjuring made Carrington sceptical about the claims of séance mediums. His 1920 book *The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism, Fraudulent and Genuine* gives detailed descriptions of tricks that he argued were used by mediums such as [Henry Slade](#), the Eddy brothers and William Eglinton to deceive scientists and spiritualists.⁶ However, a shorter section describes mediums he considered to be genuine, notably [DD Home](#), [William Stainton Moses](#) and Eusapia Palladino.

In 1908 Carrington, with fellow SPR researchers [Everard Feilding](#) and [WW Baggally](#), carried out an investigation of Palladino in a hotel in Naples. Contrary to the results of an earlier investigation held in 1895 in Cambridge, which concluded she was entirely fraudulent, the trio became convinced that much of the phenomena they observed could not be accounted for by such tricks as she undoubtedly often used. In particular, Carrington noted, the more stringent their precautions the stronger the effects became. Carrington also commented on the psychological barriers to conviction that the investigators experienced, and which had hitherto been underestimated.⁷

Keen to show Palladino to an American audience, Carrington acted as her manager in a tour of US cities in 1910, which, however, led to accusations of cheating that damaged her reputation.⁸

For a full assessment, see [Eusapia Palladino](#).

Carrington later took part in a long-running investigation of the American medium [Mina Crandon](#) (best known as Margery), who likewise convinced him of the genuineness of the observed phenomena. However, he is also said to have admitted carrying on an affair with her, which sceptics argue may have affected this judgement.⁹ See [Margery \(Mina Stinson Crandon\)](#).

Starting in 1932 Carrington undertook [experiments](#) with the Irish clairvoyant medium [Eileen Garrett](#), aiming by the use of word association and other tests to establish whether 'Uvani', her 'control', could be considered to be an entity independent of her. Significant variation was found in eleven out of a hundred stimulus words, sufficient to convince Carrington but not Garrett herself.

A visit to the Lily Dale Assembly spiritualist camp in New York convinced him that all seventeen of the mediums working there were fraudulent.¹⁰

Considering research carried out with the clairvoyant medium [Leonora Piper](#),¹¹ Carrington opposed [James Hyslop](#), who considered it to be strong evidence of survival, adopting instead an explanation in terms of secondary personalities and telepathy among the living. Carrington accepted that Piper's ability to demonstrate knowledge of facts unknown to the sitter might be considered a major obstacle. However, he argued that this could be accounted for if people are unknowingly able to obtain knowledge telepathically from others.

Out-of-Body Experience

In the 1920s Carrington collaborated on two books with [Sylvan Muldoon](#), who described frequent occurrences of [out-of-body-experiences](#), or what they called 'astral projection'. The second of these, *The Phenomena of Astral Projection*,^{[12](#)} has become a classic and is described fully [here](#).

Fasting and Nutrition

Carrington's theory of vital energy (see above) pervades much of his writings and underpins his recommendations concerning fasting and nutrition. In his book *Your Psychic Powers and How to Develop Them*, a guide for the development of abilities such as clairvoyance, spiritual healing, trances, prophecy, and psychokinesis, he suggests that the physical, mental and spiritual health of mediums is an important factor for their psychic development.^{[13](#)}

Carrington was a strong advocate for fasting. He suggested that eating more than the minimum necessary taxes the body and that the less that is eaten (within limits), the more vital energy that is available to the body, mind and spirit. He maintained that all disease is caused by the retention of poisonous waste materials, which spread throughout the body via the blood and nervous system, and that fasting can allow the body to expunge these toxins.

He cautioned against eating meat 'since this is acknowledged by all to retard psychic development'.^{[14](#)} He suggested that meat contains toxins created in part in the process of dying, when waste materials accumulate in the cells and tissues of the animal. Dairy is also unhealthy because cow's milk is intended for calves rather than adult humans, and milk produced by an animal takes on its 'depraved' nature and character because of the cruel way it was likely treated.^{[15](#)} In *Higher Psychical Development (Yoga Philosophy)*, he emphasises that a vegetarian diet should be adopted by those who wish to 'go seriously into initiation'.^{[16](#)}

Carrington goes beyond arguing for what is essentially a vegan diet – eschewing all meat and dairy – and suggests avoiding vegetables in addition because of their purported ill-effects and/or lack of nutritional value. Instead, fruit and nuts – 'live foods' – should predominate because they are easily digestible, stimulate internal organs, and have a purifying and cleansing effect on the system. Fruit may also be beneficial in cultivating psychic ability, 'particularly acid fruits – such as the pear, peach, plum, orange and lemon'.^{[17](#)} He maintains that a raw fruitarian diet will 'supply a degree of vital life and energy which no cooked foods ever supplied, or could supply. It is man's natural diet, and should be the universal one'.^{[18](#)}

Works

Books

Below is an illustrative selection of more than 100 books that Carrington wrote on the topics of psychical research, conjuring, and nutrition.

The Coming Science (1908). Boston, Massachusetts, USA: Small, Maynard & Co.

Vitality, Fasting and Nutrition (1908). New York: Rebman Company.

Eusapia Palladino and her Phenomena (1909). New York: B.W. Dodge.

Hindu Magic (1909). *Annals of Psychic Science*.

Death: Its Causes and Phenomena, With Special Reference to Immortality (1911, with J.R. Meader). London: Rider & Co.

The Natural Food of Man (1912). CW Daniel Amen Corner, EC.

Personal Experiences in Spiritualism (1913). London: T.W. Laurie Ltd.

The Problems of Psychical Research (1914). New York: W. Rickey & Co.

Psychical Phenomena and the War (1918). New York: Dodd, Mead and Company,

Higher Psychical Development (1920). New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism, Fraudulent and Genuine (1920). New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

Your Psychic Powers (1920). New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

Death Deferred: How to Live Long and Happily, Defer Death, and Lose All Fear of It (1922). New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

Psychical Research Volumes 1, II. Little Blue Book Nos. 445/46 (1923). Kansas, USA: Haldeman-Julius Company.

The Story of Psychic Science (1931). London: Rider & Co.

A Primer of Psychical Research (1932). London: Rider & Co.

Houdini and Conan Doyle: The Story of a Strange Friendship (1933, with B.M.L. Ernst). London: Hutchinson.

Loaves and Fishes (1935). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons Ltd.

Laboratory Investigations into Psychic Phenomena (1939). New York: Arno Press.

The Invisible World (1947). London: Rider & Co.

Psychic Science & Survival (1947). New York: Beechhurst Press..

Psychic Oddities (1952). London: Rider & Co.

The Story of the Poltergeist Down the Centuries (1953, with N. Fodor). London: Rider & Co.

The American Séances with Eusapia Palladino (1954). New York: Garrett Publications.

Mysterious Psychic Phenomena (1954). Boston, Massachusetts, USA: Christopher Publishing House.

The Case for Psychic Survival. (1957). New York: Citadel Press.

Articles

Discussion of the trance phenomena of Mrs Piper (1903). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 17, 337-73.

The trance state (1908). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 13, 204-8.

Report on a series of sittings with Eusapia Palladino (1909, with E. Feilding and W.W. Baggally). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 23, 309-569.

A discussion of the Willett Scripts (1914-15, et al.). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 27, 458-91.

Vital energy and psychical phenomena (1921), *Psychic Research Quarterly*, 271-77.

A further discussion of Mr Soal's report on sittings with Mrs Cooper (1926). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 23, 55-59.

Concerning 'a series of sittings with Mr George Valiantine' (1926). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 23, 87-89.

In defence of D.D. Home (1930). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 26, 110-11.

The word association test in the Garrett-Uvani mediumship (1934). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 28, 288-89.

On the quantitative study of trance personalities (1935). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 43, 537-41.

Memory and telepathy (1936). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 29, 244-45.

Evidence of survival and of telepathy between the living (1940). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 31, 168-71.

A recent investigation of some unusual 'psychic phenomena' (1947). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 34, 93-94.

The investigation of spontaneous cases (1948). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 34, 306-7.

Telepathy between animals (1950). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 35, 315-16.

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- Tabori, P. (1972). *Pioneers of the Unseen*. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company.

Endnotes

Footnotes

- [1](#). Biographical details in Dale (1959).
- [2](#). Carrington (1908), 255.
- [3](#). Carrington (1921).
- [4](#). Alvarado & Nahm (2011).
- [5](#). Lupak (2020).
- [6](#). Carrington (1920b).
- [7](#). Carrington (1909).
- [8](#). Carrington (1954).
- [9](#). Tabori (1972).
- [10](#). Guiley (1994), 57.
- [11](#). Carrington (1903), 337-73.
- [12](#). Muldoon & Carrington (1939).
- [13](#). Carrington (1920c).
- [14](#). Carrington (1920c), 66.

- [15.](#) Carrington (1912).
- [16.](#) Carrington (1920a), 35.
- [17.](#) Carrington (1920c).
- [18.](#) Carrington (1912).

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