

Everard Feilding

Everard Feilding (1867–1936) served in the navy and was a barrister and psychical researcher. His father was the 8th Earl of Denbigh. He was a long-standing council member of the Society for Psychical Research and carried out research on mediums, notably the Italian Eusapia Palladino.

Life and Career

Francis Henry Everard Joseph Feilding was born on 6 March 1867. He attended Oscott College and Trinity College, Cambridge where he obtained a law degree in 1890.

He served as a lieutenant in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and worked for the British Intelligence Staff in Egypt and Palestine. He was awarded the OBE in 1919 for military service. In the same year he married the Polish sensitive [Stanislawa Tomczyk.1](#)

Psychical Research

Feilding became interested in psychical research after a visit to Lourdes in 1892. He subsequently joined the [Society for Psychical Research](#) (SPR), serving on committees from 1897. He was appointed honorary secretary and was on the Council between 1900 and 1929. A colleague recalled:

In addition to various visits to alleged haunted houses we held sittings with Mrs Corner, (née Florence Cook) and a number of physical mediums. These special researches of ours were full of interest and on one or two occasions produced phenomena which we found it difficult to explain; but in general they proved futile or, at best, inconclusive.

There ran indeed throughout the whole of Feilding's work in Psychical Research a note of cheerful optimism, to laugh at the exposure of trickery, and to suggest by way of consolation that after all we had gained some further knowledge of mediumistic psychology.[2](#)

From 1905 he undertook numerous experiments with mediums including a study of [Eusapia Palladino](#) and a subsequent controversial report.

Investigations

Eusapia Palladino

Much interest was aroused in psychical research circles by scientific investigations of Eusapia Palladino, an Italian séance medium reputed to produce exceptionally strong physical phenomena. However, an investigation led by [Richard Hodgson](#) in 1895 in Cambridge found only weak phenomena and concluded that she cheated.

Pressure for a new attempt led in 1908 to an investigation of Palladino in Naples by Feilding, [Hereward Carrington](#) and [William Baggally](#), described by Feilding in a subsequent report that bears his name.³ All three had extensive experience in detecting fraudulent mediums; Carrington and Baggally also had conjuring skills. Eleven séances were held, during which phenomena such as levitations, raps, furniture movements, cold breezes and materializations were observed, despite extensive precautions taken against fraud. The report concluded that at least some of the phenomena were certainly genuine.⁴

The report has been frequently cited in support of claims of physical mediumship, and also questioned by sceptics,⁵ most recently in the 1990s.⁶

A further five sittings were held in 1910, attended by Feilding, W Marriott and the Count and Countess Perovsky-Petrovo-Solovovo, but these failed to produce anomalous phenomena.⁷

Abbé Vachère

In 1914 Feilding, a Roman Catholic, visited Mirebeau in southern France, in the company of Maud Gonne and WB Yeats, to investigate an alleged miracle of a bleeding print (oleograph) in the possession of a priest, Abbé Vachère. Feilding took a sample of the blood and had it scientifically tested, finding it to be non-human. He returned in 1915 and again in 1920 with his wife when they were informed that a statue of Jesus in the chapel had started to bleed, but discovered no evidence of paranormality.⁸ He did not suspect the Abbé Vachère of deception, however.

Stanislawa Tomczyk

Stanislawa Tomczyk, a Polish woman who manifested poltergeist-type phenomena, was able to exhibit psychokinetic abilities under controlled conditions for investigators, who observed her ability to make small objects move without touching them. Feilding visited her in 1912 and again 1914, attending successful demonstrations for investigators. Tests by an SPR committee including Feilding were held in London later in 1914, where less striking and frequent phenomena were observed.⁹ The couple married in 1919.

Works

Books

Sittings with Eusapia Palladino and Other Studies (1912/1963). New Hyde Park, New York, USA: University Books.

Articles

[Discussion of Professor Richet's case of automatic writing in a language unknown to the writer, Part III](#) (1905, with A Johnson). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 19, 245-61.

[Private meeting for members and associates: The haunted solicitor, an unfinished comedy](#) (1905). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 12, 162-69.

[Sittings with Mr Chambers](#) (1906, with WW Baggally and A Johnson). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 12, 197-203.

[The exposure of Mr Eldred](#) (1906). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 12, 242-49.

[The poltergeist case of Mr Grottendieck](#) (1906). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 12, 279-81.

[Report on a series of sittings with Eusapia Palladino](#) (1909, with W.W. Baggally & H. Carrington). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 23, 306-569.

[Report on a further series of sittings with Eusapia Palladino at Naples](#) (1911, with W. Marriott). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 25, 57-69.

[Report on some experiments in thought-transference](#) (1914, with A Johnson). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 16, 164-67.

[Note on the English sittings with Miss Tomczyk](#) (1915). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 17, 28-31.

[An experiment in faking 'spirit' photographs](#) (1922). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 20, 219-23.

[Report on a series of sittings with Eva C.](#) (1922, et al.). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 32, 209-345.

[Mr Hudson Hoagland's 'Report on sittings with Margery' in Atlantic Monthly, November 1925](#) (1926). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 36, 159-70.

[More alleged occurrences of the rope-trick](#) (1932). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 27, 281-86.

Book Reviews

[Occult Japan or the Way of the Gods: An Esoteric Study of Japanese Personality and Possession, by P. Lowell \(1900-01\)](#). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 15, 434-37.

[Hypnotism and Suggestion in Therapeutics, Education and Reform by R. Osgood Mann \(1902\)](#). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 17, 265-68.

[How to Go to a Medium by E.J. Dingwall \(1928\)](#). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 24, 180-81.

Melvyn Willin

Literature

Barrington, M.R. (1992). Palladino and the invisible man who never was. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 58, 324-40.

Bennet, E.N. (1936). [In memory of Everard Feilding](#). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 44, 5-6.

Feilding, E. (1911). [Report on a further series of sittings with Eusapia Palladino at Naples](#) (1911, with W. Marriott). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 25, 57-69.

Feilding, E. (1915). [Note on the English sittings with Miss Tomczyk](#) (1915). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 17, 28-31.

Feilding, E. (1930). The case of the Abbé Vachère from *Transactions of the Fourth International Congress for Psychical Research, Athens*.

Podmore, F. (1910). *The Newer Spiritualism*. London: T. Fisher Unwin.

Wiseman, R. (1992). The Feilding Report,: A reconsideration. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 58, 129-52.

Endnotes

Footnotes

- [1.](#) Bennett (1936).
- [2.](#) Bennett (1936).
- [3.](#) Feilding (1909).
- [4.](#) Feilding (1909).
- [5.](#) Podmore (1910), 114-44.
- [6.](#) Wiseman (1992), Barrington (1992).
- [7.](#) Feilding (1911), 57-69.
- [8.](#) Feilding (1930).
- [9.](#) Feilding (1915).