

# Denys Parsons

Denys Parsons (1914-1995) was an author, musician and psychical researcher who participated in psi experiments.

## Life and Career

Denys Parsons won a scholarship to Eton College and then took degrees in chemistry at the University of London and the Imperial College of Science and Technology. He worked for the National Research and Development Council which aimed to exploit the benefits of technology developed during World War II. In other activities he developed a system of musical notation (the Parsons Code of Melodic Contour)[1](#) and published popular books of humour, puzzles and practical guides.[2](#) From 1973 to 1980 he was head of press and public relations at the British Library.

## Psychical Research

Parsons was an active member of the Society for Psychical Research during the 1940s and 50s, serving on committees and advising on technical matters. He carried out numerous experiments and studies in subjects such as dowsing,[3](#) psychokinesis,[4](#) and mediumship[5](#). In his later years, he maintained little contact with the SPR, seemingly 'disappointed by the failure of careful experimental research to further understanding or produce consistent, reproducible results.'[6](#)

Melvyn Willin

## Selected Publications

Review of Experiments on the paranormal cognition of drawings. III. Steps in the development of a repeatable technique by W. Whately Carington (1944). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 33, 84-85.

Experiments on PK with inclined plane and rotating cage (1945). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 47, 296-300.

Attempts to detect clairvoyance and telepathy with a mechanical device (1946). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 48, 28-31.

Report on the questionnaire (1946). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 33, 270-71.

Correspondence: [Psi faculty] (1947). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 34, 58-59.

On the need for caution in assessing mediumistic material (1949). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 48, 344-52.

Reviews of the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (1949-50). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 35, 90-1; 115-16; 250-51; 288-89; 314-

15. (1951). 36, 530-32. (1953-54). 37, 170-71; 208-9; 291-92. (1955). 38, 192-95. (1958). 39, 190-92; 300-1; 328-29. (1959). 40, 33-35.

Correspondence: [water divining] (1951). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 36, 451-52.

Review of *Ghosts over England*, by R.T. Hopkins (1954) *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 37, 389-90.

Review of *Clock without Hands*, by Ronald Edwin (1956).

*Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 38, 221-24.

Cloud busting: A claim investigated (1956). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 38, 352-64.

Examination of a dowser (1959). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 40, 12-17.

Review of Manor House experiment (1959). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 40, 59-63.

Review of *Water Witching*, by Evon Z. Vogt and Ray Hyman (1960). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 40, 260-65.

The black boxes of Mr de la Warr (1961). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 41, 12-31.

A non-existent building located (1962). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 41, 292-95.

Reviews of *Ghost and Divining Rod*, by T.C. Lethbridge, and *Le Signal du Sorcier*, by Y. Rocard (1963). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 42, 197-200.

Review of *Paranormal Borderlands of Science*, ed. by K. Frazier (1981). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 51, 173-74.

Review of *Miracle Mongers and their Methods: A Complete Exposé*, by Houdini (1981). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 51, 178.

Reviews of *Science, Good, Bad and Bogus*, by Martin Gardner (1982). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 51, 318.

Dowsing: A claim refuted (1982). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 51, 384-86.

## Literature

Parsons, D. (1945). Experiments on PK with inclined plane and rotating cage. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 47, 296-300.

Parsons, D. (1949). On the need for caution in assessing mediumistic material. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 48, 344-52.

Parsons, D. (1959). Examination of a dowser. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 40, 12-17.

Salter, W.H. (1958). Correspondence: Tribute. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 39, 331-32.

West, D.J. (1995). Obituary: Denys Parsons. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 60, 415.

## Endnotes

### Footnotes

- [1. https://www.musipedia.org/](https://www.musipedia.org/)
- [2.](#) West (1995), 415.
- [3.](#) Parsons (1959).
- [4.](#) Parsons (1945), 296-300.
- [5.](#) Parsons (1949), 344-52.
- [6.](#) West (1995), 415.