

## In Memoriam Mary Rose Barrington, M. A. (1926 –2020)

It caused me great sorrow to learn of the passing of my esteemed colleague and friend of many years, veteran British psychical researcher Mary Rose Barrington, who died in the morning hours of Friday, Feb 20<sup>th</sup>. The saddening announcement did, however, not come entirely unexpected: a few months ago, Mary Rose felt forced to resign from a parapsychological discussion group on the Internet due to her failing eyesight which was a major blow to her as communication with colleagues was significantly reduced, and on later phone calls she announced more than once that the time for her to go would come soon.



© Rosemarie Pilkington

We came to know another in the early 1990s when I attended the SPR Annual Conference held at Nottingham. The lectures were interesting and so were the discussions of several topics, for instance the sittings with Eusapia Palladino at Naples, which, in the person of Mary Rose, found a staunch defender of their “genuineness.” When I mentioned that not long ago I was shown the Kluski moulds at the Institut Métapsychique International in Paris, Mary Rose became very aroused, and, as I learned only later, travelled to Paris at her earliest convenience to view these unique pieces with her own eyes.

Yet physical mediumism was not the only topic within the field she was interested in. Take ESP as another example: on the famous Polish clairvoyant, Stefan Ossowiecki she published a book together with Zofia Weaver and Ian Stevenson. She suggested an analogy between retrocognition and remote viewing as the remote viewer goes to a certain defined place in space while the clairvoyant goes back to a certain point in time, both of them experiencing the situation like observers physically present at the spot. She saw crisis telepathy as cases of kappa-telepathy (in the sense of the original Wiesner-Thouless psi model) and deduced that such psychic processes impacting on other people necessarily have an implicate aspect of “force” by which reasoning she arrived at kind of dual-aspect monism (while she acknowledged that substance dualism could be defended as well). So, it was rather jokingly—she was a charming, very witty yet thoughtful and humorous person—when she posed the (rhetorical) question whether she would see the pony she possessed in her youth once she had crossed that border. That brings me to other aspects of her biography, her life apart from psychical research, and her relation to the animal world; however, let me first add a few more words to her as a parapsychologist.

She was very interested in phenomena beyond plain ESP & PK, such as solid objects disappearing and reappearing (some of them perhaps apports, other simply inexplicable), for which she introduced the acronym JOTT, time slips (one case she investigated herself), and other strange occurrences. Most of these are of course spontaneous cases, some of considerable magnitude, some of smaller size yet likewise posing a problem for a rational explication; for covering those she coined the telling phrases “Broken Threads in the Fabric of Physical Reality” or, more specifically, “Rifts in the Fabric of Causality.” On the theoretical side, Mary Rose gave much consideration to the question “What is Proof?”, a question she had to deal with a lot during her professional life as a lawyer putting her into the position to apply similar deliberations to psi phenomena.

I should single out the case of Iris Farczády that we (i. e., Mary Rose, Titus Rivas, and I) went to investigate to Hungary in 1997; it is a strange case, very difficult to classify—something in between dissociative identity disorder and reincarnation. Eventually, the report of our joint investigation was published in the SPR’s Journal in 2005.

In April 1999, Mary Rose gave a talk—in impeccable German, by the way—to the Austrian Society for Parapsychology on “The Normality of the Paranormal and the Para-Normality of the Normal.” The content of her brilliant and well-received talk was already similar to the topics of her two latest books. Even better than her German was her French; she used to translate articles from older issues of the *Révue Métapsychique* and publish them under the heading “From the Archives.” She took a particular interest in the psychic Alexis Didier and his phenomena.

Summarizing, she entertained very original ideas on parapsychological issues, had a sharp intellect and was always critically minded. During the heated debate on the (alleged) Scole phenomena—almost causing a rift in the SPR—she, too, sided with the critics. Nonetheless she did not allow herself to get lost in small details; her approach was a broad one. What she was ultimately interested in was the very nature of reality, and she was deeply convinced that parapsychology has an important role in the a broader understanding of nature.

Born on Jan 31<sup>st</sup>, 1926 in London, Mary Rose developed an interest in the paranormal already at childhood, enjoying reading ghost stories. Later, she worked her way to serious literature such as the works by Sir Oliver Lodge (yet still remaining somehow reserved vis-à-vis spiritualism). At Oxford University she did not only enroll in English but also joined the Oxford University Society for Psychical Research becoming their president. Her favorite sports at that time were tennis and horseback riding. As she was interested in housing and real estates she resolved to learn the trade of a barrister at law; later on, she switched to solicitor, which she felt was more rewarding due to the closer contact with people. She was also a charity administrator (combining law practice with assisting in the management of a large group of almshouses for the aged), an engagement fitting her well as she was a very generous person.

In the voluntary sector she engaged actively—again applying her legal resources to these causes—in animal protection (not limited to pet animals though she had some: when thinking of her I still could feel the smell of her cats in my nose) and she operated as the honorary secretary of an animal rights group. On another issue, she was an advocate of voluntary euthanasia; once she even served as a chairperson of the British Voluntary Euthanasia Society *Exit*. She was deeply convinced that humans have the

right to determine the manner and timing of departing this life, and supported rational suicide and the notion of “planned death,” somewhat ironically as she has been the administrator of those almshouses for the elderly.

One final aspect of her personality is that she was fond of classical music; she played cello very well, in a string quartet meeting regularly. Playing an instrument came to an end when she became unable to read printed music.

Back to parapsychology. In 1957 she joined the Society for Psychical Research, participated in many investigations and experiments of which only a fraction could be mentioned here, and became a Council member in 1962. Since its inception, she served on the Spontaneous Cases Committee, an area she was particularly interested in. In 1995 she was elected one of the Vice Presidents of the Society, a position she held until her death. Her multi-faceted contributions to the field are most valuable. As a person, she was remarkable, unique, and lovely; she will live on in my memory forever.

## References

- Barrington, M. R. (1966). Swan on a black sea: How much could Miss Cummins have known? *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 43, pp. 289–300.
- Barrington, M. R. (1981). Apologia for suicide. In M. Pabst Battin & D. I. Mayo (Eds.), *Suicide, the philosophical issues* (pp. 90-103). St. Martins Press.
- Barrington, M. R. (1999). What is proof? The assessment of past events. [http://parapsychologie.ac.at/programm/ss1999/barringt/proof\\_txt.htm](http://parapsychologie.ac.at/programm/ss1999/barringt/proof_txt.htm)
- U. Nohoogh (pseudonym of Barrington) (1999). Why I must give up flute research. <http://parapsychologie.ac.at/programm/ss1999/barringt/flute.htm>
- Barrington, M. R., Mulacz, P., & Rivas, T. (2005). The case of Iris Farczady: A stolen life. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 69, 44–77. [https://www.academia.edu/768149/The\\_case\\_of\\_Iris\\_Farczady-A\\_stolen\\_life](https://www.academia.edu/768149/The_case_of_Iris_Farczady-A_stolen_life)
- Barrington, M. R., Stevenson, I., & Weaver, Z. (2005). *A world in a grain of sand: The clairvoyance of Stefan Ossowiecki*. McFarland.
- Barrington, M. R. (2013). Beyond the boggle threshold: Confessions of a macro-addict. In R. Pilkington (Ed.), *Men and women of parapsychology. Personal reflections, ESPRIT Vol. 2* (pp. 7-27). Anomalist Books.
- Barrington, M. R. (2018): *JOTT: when things disappear ... and come back or relocate – and why it really happens*. Anomalist Books.
- Barrington, M. R. (2019): *Talking about psychical research: Thoughts on life, death and the nature of reality*. White Crow Books.

## Video Sources available on YouTube:

The Scole Experiment: SPR – The Scole Debate 1999 – London – Introduction from Chair  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ls\\_qNMw5O2A&t=154s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ls_qNMw5O2A&t=154s)  
 (Basic remarks to the Scole issue)

Ghosthunters UK Series pt 17 – Ripples in time

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zx\\_IQInNDiU&t=793s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zx_IQInNDiU&t=793s)

(A commercial program on time slips featuring Mary Rose Barrington in one case)

Mary Rose Barrington. Interview by Gayle Kimball. July 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQBKXH7PUJA>

(Mary Rose Barrington's last interview. Though the quality is poor, particularly the audio is extremely noisy, it is worth watching)

Peter Mulacz, Lecturer, Sigmund Freud Privatuniversität, Vienna, [peter@mulacz.at](mailto:peter@mulacz.at)