

# **SALTER PAPERS**

Trinity College Library  
1996

## INTRODUCTION

The Salter papers at Trinity College Cambridge relate to a series of automatic writings produced by various individuals\* during the early decades of the twentieth century. Through the mediumship of these writers, the scripts purported to convey messages from the spirits of identifiable people† who had died. In some cases, separate scripts by writers unknown to each other contained pieces of information which assumed significance only when examined in combination. Instances of this phenomenon were known as "cross-correspondences". The scripts were subsequently analysed in association with the Society for Psychical Research (SPR).

Two of the chief automatic writers were Margaret Verrall, wife of Professor A.W. Verrall of Cambridge, and her daughter Helen, who later married William Henry Salter (1880-1969). Salter was a graduate of Trinity College who had proceeded to the Bar but had a longstanding interest in psychical research. In later life he became President of the SPR and wrote a brief history of the Society.

W.H. Salter deposited most of the present collection at Trinity in 1963. (See sections A and B of the following list.) The manuscript material consisted of automatic scripts by Margaret and Helen Verrall, with notes and correspondence relating to these and the writings of the other automatists. In addition there were thirty-two privately printed volumes, including various scripts edited by the Verralls, J.G. Piddington (SPR President 1924-5), Alice Johnson (SPR Secretary and Research Officer) and G.W. Balfour (afterwards 2nd Earl; SPR President 1906-7). J.G. Piddington's nine-volume analysis, *Notes and Excursuses*, and W.H. Salter's own *Introduction to the Study of Scripts*, also formed part of this collection.

At the time of the original deposit Salter indicated that the automatic scripts were being indexed by W.H. Clennell of the Bodleian Library. Clennell's unpublished main index was received at Trinity in 1966, followed by a supplement in 1967 (section C below). Further copies of the index were stated to be in the Bodleian Library and at the Parapsychology Foundation in New York.

After W.H. Salter's death in 1969 his papers at the SPR were catalogued by E.J. Dingwall. A few items were identified as being more appropriately housed with the material already at Trinity, so in 1971 a further small deposit was accepted (section D).

Section E consists of Trinity College correspondence concerning the Salter papers and their deposit. Access to this section is restricted. Because the automatic scripts were alleged to contain predictions and references to persons still alive in the 1960s, Trinity College made an agreement with W.H. Salter to close the papers until 1995. They were opened by Diana Chardin in October of that year.

Readers may consult the papers at Trinity College Library by prior arrangement.

Diana Chardin  
Assistant Manuscript Cataloguer  
June 1996

\*see page iii  
†see page iv

## AUTOMATIC WRITERS

Scripts by the following automatists appear in the Salter papers. For further information see biographical notes in W.H. Salter's *An Introduction to the Study of Scripts* (Salter B8/1, pp.84-105).

**Mrs Margaret Verrall**

née Merrifield; wife of Professor A.W. Verrall of Cambridge, mother-in-law of W.H. Salter and friend of F.W.H. Myers. She died in 1916.

**Helen Verrall**

Daughter of the above; afterwards Mrs W.H. Salter. Held various research posts at the SPR.

**Alice Fleming ("Mrs Holland")**

Sister of Rudyard Kipling; wife of Lt.-Col. John Murchison Fleming. See account of her early life in Salter A6/4.

**Winifred Coombe Tennant ("Mrs Willett")**

née Pearce-Serocold; wife of Charles Coombe Tennant of Cadoxton Lodge near Neath, brother-in-law of F.W.H. Myers (see Burke's *Landed Gentry*).

**Elizabeth Stuart Wilson**

née Doane; wife of Brig.-Gen. Charles Stuart Wilson. See account of her life in unpublished edition of her scripts (Salter B5/1).

**The Mackinnon family**

Several members of a Glasgow family named Mackinnon are identified as automatists in the unpublished edition of their scripts (Salter B6/1), where the three sisters and two brothers are named as the Misses Esther, Liliias and Doris, Mr L. and Mr Alan Mackinnon. An account of their mediumship is given in SPR *Proceedings* Vol. XXIV, pp.264-318.



## CHIEF COMMUNICATORS

Seven individuals in particular were alleged to have communicated via automatic writings as proof of their survival of bodily death. Salter described them as the "inner group" (*An Introduction to the Study of Scripts*, pp.22-3), all seven having died over a twenty-five year period ending with Myers' death in 1901. There were other communicators outside this group: two of the later ones were A.W. Verrall and S.H. Butcher, who had been contemporaries at Trinity College. For further information see biographical notes in W.H. Salter's *An Introduction to the Study of Scripts* (Salter B8/1, pp.84-105).

**Frederic W.H. Myers**

Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. One of the founders of the SPR. Died in January 1901.

**Henry Sidgwick**

Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge and pioneer, with his wife Eleanor, of higher education for women. One of the founders and first President of the SPR. Died in 1900.

**Edmund Gurney**

Collaborator in psychical research with F.W.H. Myers and Henry Sidgwick. One of the founders of the SPR. Died in 1888.

**Francis Maitland Balfour**

Cambridge zoologist; brother of the first and second Earls of Balfour. Killed by a fall in the Alps, July 1882.

**(Octavia) Laura Lyttelton**

née Tennant; first wife of the Hon. Alfred Lyttelton, afterwards Secretary of State for the Colonies. She died in 1886.

**Mary Catherine Lyttelton**

Sister of Alfred Lyttelton. A.J. Balfour had been in love with her and was profoundly affected by her early death from typhoid fever in 1875.

**Annie Elizabeth Marshall**

née Hill. She and F.W.H. Myers were in love with each other when she drowned herself in Ullswater in August 1876. Myers referred to her in his autobiography as "Phyllis".

**A: MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL DEPOSITED BY W.H. SALTER IN 1963****A1 Original automatic scripts of Mrs Margaret Verrall, 1901-6**

[letter enclosed: I. Newton, SPR, to J.G. Piddington, 15 Sep 1933, with list of scripts; also fragments of wrapping removed Oct 1995]

- A1/1 Jan 1901 - Oct 1902  
(c100ff)
- A1/2 Dec 1902 - May 1903  
(c70 items, mostly separate sheets with envelope fragments attached)
- A1/3 Jun - Dec 1903  
(c70 items, mostly separate sheets with envelope fragments attached)
- A1/4 Dec 1903 - Dec 1904  
(c75 items, mostly separate sheets with envelope fragments attached)
- A1/5 Jan - Nov 1905  
(c50 items, mostly separate sheets with envelope fragments attached)
- A1/6 Feb - Dec 1906  
(c60 items, mostly separate sheets with envelope fragments attached)

**A2 Margaret Verrall's transcripts of original scripts for 1901-1916**

- A2/1 Scripts for Jan 1901 - Jul 1902, with some later notes  
(notebook, ff.133)  
[letter enclosed: Sir Lawrence J. Jones to Margaret Verrall, 16 Oct 1901, on possible reference to his letter in ?SPR Journal]
- A2/2 Scripts for Jul 1902 - Oct 1903, with some later notes  
(notebook, ff.104)
- A2/3 Scripts for Oct 1903 - Sep 1906, with some later notes  
(notebook, ff.156)
- A2/4 Scripts for Sep 1906 - Aug 1907, with some later notes  
(notebook, ff.103)
- A2/5 Scripts for Aug 1907 - Mar 1910, with some later notes  
(notebook, ff.158)  
[fragment from letter enclosed: M.A.B. to Margaret Verrall, ?Oct 1908, re. script experiment]

- A2/6 Scripts for Mar 1910 - Jan 1913, with some later notes  
(notebook, ff.157)  
[copy of letter enclosed: J.M. Barrie to unidentified recipient, 9  
Dec 1912, on reference in speech to A.W. Verrall]
- A2/7 Scripts for Feb 1913 - May 1914, with some later notes  
(notebook, ff.100)
- A2/8 Scripts for May 1914 - May 1916, with some later notes  
(notebook, ff.132)
- A2/9 [Index to Margaret Verrall's scripts?]  
(notebook, ff.100)

**A3 Margaret Verrall's diary/notes relating to scripts, 1901-1916**

- A3/1 [Vol. I]  
Jan - Sep 1901 (and note of Aug 1900)  
(notebook, ff.55)
- A3/2 "SPR Private notes, chiefly concerning my automatic writing.  
Vol.2"  
Oct 1901 - Jun 1904  
(notebook, ff.98)
- A3/3 "Notes and Diary III"  
Jun 1904 - Nov 1906  
(notebook, ff.78)
- A3/4 "IV"  
Nov 1906 - Oct 1907 & Nov 1908 - Oct 1910  
(notebook, ff.127)  
[see note f.51 about gap and concurrent "Black note book"]
- A3/5 "V"  
Nov 1910 - May 1916  
(notebook, ff.127)  
[see note at front re. notebooks Va and Vb]
- A3/6 "Va"  
Jul 1912 - Jan 1913  
([Green] notebook, pp.96)
- A3/7 "Vb"  
Jul 1913 - Jul 1915  
([Blue] notebook, pp.134)
- A3/8 [Vol. VI]  
May - Jun 1916  
(notebook, ff.7 inscribed)



- A3/9 "SPR Note Book IV. Spontaneous" ["Black note book": covers part of Vol. IV]  
Feb 1902 - Jun 1909  
(notebook, ff.53 inscribed)
- A4 Transcripts by Helen Verrall (aft. Mrs W.H. Salter) of scripts and trance-utterances by Margaret Verrall and herself, 1906-32**
- A4/1 Nov 1906 - Nov 1908  
(notebook, ff.117)
- A4/2 Nov 1908 - Aug 1911  
(notebook, ff.130)
- A4/3 Sep 1911 - Oct 1916  
(notebook, ff.128)
- A4/4 Oct 1916 - Dec 1932  
(notebook, ff.100)  
[three letters from J.G. Piddington enclosed: 29 Sep 1919, 17 Jan 1921 & 23 Apr 1927]
- A5 Helen Verrall's script diary**
- A5/1 "SPR Diary"  
Nov 1914 - May 1933  
(notebook, ff.6 inscribed)
- A6 Notes and correspondence relating to the scripts**
- A6/1 "Papers ... put away with other papers & articles belonging to Mrs Verrall shortly after her death" (shown to W.H. Salter by Helen Verrall 30 May 1946) (2 items):  
1 Letter: Eleanor Sidgwick to M. Verrall, 21 Dec [1904], on references to "The Valley" in F.W.H. Myers' autobiography  
2 Letter: J.G. Piddington to M. Verrall, 2 Apr 1903, enclosing fragment of letter with signature of Edmund Gurney  
[one further item listed but not present, i.e. a note by Hodgson, 3 Jan 1904, re. "Syringa etc."]
- A6/2 "Some M[argaret] V[errall] Scripts of 1902 brought from SPR 29/4/57" (12ff)
- A6/3 "F.C. Constable expts. with M[argaret] V[errall]" [1908] (10 items)  
[includes notes on provenance, some notes by E.M. Sidgwick and three letters from F.C. Constable to E.M. Sidgwick, 18 Oct, 30 Oct & 21 Dec 1908]

- A6/4 "From Alice Johnson re. (1) Piper-Gurney control; (2) Mrs Holland (typescript notes)" (10 items):
- 1 Letter: AJ to WHS, 22 May 1935
  - 2 Letter: AJ to Helen Salter, 17 Oct 1934
  - 3 AJ: "The Gurney 'Control' in Holland Script" (typescript)
  - 4 AJ: "The Gurney 'Control' in Holland Script" (MS continuation of above)
  - 5 Letter: AJ to WHS, 17 Oct 1933, enclosing copy letter to Ernest S. Thomas, 16 Oct 1933
  - 6 J.G. Piddington: "Addendum to Miss Johnson's Note on Mrs Holland", 26 Nov 1944
  - 7 Letter: J.G. Piddington to WHS, 15 Aug 1944
  - 8 Letter: J.G. Piddington to WHS, 20 Jan 1945
  - 9 Two press notices of Alice Fleming's death [i.e. "Mrs Holland"], Oct 1948
  - 10 AJ: "'Mrs Holland'", May 1934 (typescript)
- A6/5 "Mainly letters from J.G. P[iddington] as to details of interpretation of scripts" (46 items):
- 1 Letter: Zoe Richmond to WHS, 9 Sep 1948
  - 2 Letter: JGP to WHS, 2 Dec 1946
  - 3 JGP: notes on the Balfours, [1940s?]
  - 4 Letter: JGP to WHS, 17 Oct 1945
  - 5 Letter: WHS to JGP, 19 Oct 1945 [?draft; end missing]
  - 6 Letter: JGP to WHS, 22 Oct 1945
  - 7 Letter: JGP to WHS, 12 Jun 1946
  - 8 Letter: JGP to WHS, 6 May 1946
  - 9 Letter: JGP to WHS, 25 Jun 1947
  - 10 Letter: JGP to WHS, 5 Jul 1947
  - 11 JGP: notes on Mrs Willett's choice of the name Antonia, [1946-7?]
  - 12 Letter: JGP to WHS, 9 Sep 1947
  - 13 Letter: Jocelyn M.C. Toynbee to WHS, 26 Aug 1947 (typescript)
  - 14 Letter: Jocelyn M.C. Toynbee to WHS, 30 Aug 1947
  - 15 Letter: WHS to W.M. Coombe Tennant ["Mrs Willett"], 12 Sep 1949
  - 16 Letter: W.M. Coombe Tennant to WHS, 17 Sep 1949
  - 17 Letter: JGP to WHS, 22 Sep 1949
  - 18 Letter: JGP to WHS, 7 Apr 1948; WHS notes enclosed
  - 19 Letter: Dame Edith S. Lyttelton (née Balfour) to WHS, 8 Jan 1947
  - 20 Letter: JGP to WHS, 20 Jun 1945
  - 21 Letter: JGP to WHS, 1 Aug 1946
  - 22 Letter: JGP to WHS, 4 Mar 1933
  - 23 JGP: notes identifying "The Forbidden Fruit" with the Golden Bough, [Mar 1936?]
  - 24 Letter: JGP to Helen Salter, 14 Jun 1933



## A6/5 (cont):

- 25 Letter: JGP to WHS, 1 Jan 1936
- 26 Letter: JGP to WHS, 12 Nov 1938 (typescript)
- 27 Letter: JGP to WHS, 28 Dec 1945
- 28 Letter: JGP to WHS, 4 Jul 1946
- 29 Letter: JGP to WHS, 16 Jul 1946
- 30 JGP: "Notelet re. Gordon, Maturin etc", [nd]
- 31 Letter: JGP to WHS, 4 Dec 1945
- 32 Letter: JGP to Helen Salter, 29 May 1945
- 33 Letter: JGP to Helen Salter, 4 Jun 1945
- 34 Letter: JGP to WHS, 30 Jan 1942
- 35 Letter: JGP to WHS, 4 Feb 1942
- 36 Letter: JGP to WHS, 1 Dec 1943
- 37 Letter: JGP to WHS, 26 Sep 1945
- 38 Letter: JGP to WHS, 20 Nov 1945
- 39 Letter: JGP to WHS, 15 Nov 1945
- 40 Letter: JGP to WHS, 30 Oct 1945
- 41 JGP: "Hints re. reading vols VI, VII and VIII of *N[otes]* & *E[xcursuses]*", [nd]
- 42 Letter: JGP to WHS, 1 Oct 1937
- 43 Letter: JGP to WHS, 10 Apr 1944
- 44 JGP: "Replies to points in your [i.e. WHS'?] letter of July 23 1945", 2 Aug 1945
- 45 Letter: JGP to WHS, 6 Dec 1944
- 46 Letter: Alice Johnson to JGP, 30 May 1924

## A6/6 "The Augustan References" (2 items):

- 1 W.H. Salter: "Augustan References in the Scripts", 7 Aug 1949 (5ff)
- 2 J.G. Piddington: [notes on same], 6 Apr - 5 Jun 1947 (45ff)

**A7 Helen Verrall's index to Mrs [Elizabeth Stuart] Wilson's scripts**

- A7/1 "Index to Wilson Records"  
(notebook, ff.129)

**B: PRINTED MATERIAL DEPOSITED BY W.H. SALTER IN 1963****B1**    *Mrs Verrall's Script*

[Unpublished printed version: Vol. I ed. by Margaret and Helen Verrall;  
Vols. II-IV ed. by J.G. Piddington; occasional MS annotations]

B1/1    Vol. I  
          Mar 1901 - Dec 1904  
          (ff.355, alternate pages blank)

B1/2    Vol. II  
          Jan 1905 - May 1907  
          (ff.209, alternate pages blank)

B1/3    Vol. III  
          Jun 1907 - Apr 1913  
          (pp.463, interleaved)

B1/4    Vol. IV  
          Apr 1913 - Jun 1916  
          (pp.458, interleaved)

**B2**    *Miss Helen de G. Verrall's Script*

[Unpublished printed version ed. by J.G. Piddington; occasional MS  
annotations]

B2/1    Vol. I  
          Apr 1903 - May 1909  
          (ff.254, alternate pages blank)

B2/2    Vol. II  
          Jul 1909 - Jun 1913  
          (ff.267, alternate pages blank)

B2/3    Vol. III  
          Aug 1913 - Dec 1915  
          (pp.665)

B2/4    Vol. IV  
          Jan 1916 - May 1928  
          (pp.617)

- B3**    *Mrs Holland's Script* [i.e. Alice Macdonald Fleming, née Kipling]  
[Unpublished printed version ed. by Alice Johnson; occasional MS annotations]
- B3/1    Vol. I  
          1903-6  
          (ff.222, alternate pages blank)
- B3/2    Vol. II  
          1907-1910  
          (ff.324, alternate pages blank)
- B4**    *Mrs Willett's Automatic Phenomena* [i.e. Winifred Margaret Coombe Tennant, née Pearce-Serocold]  
[Unpublished printed version: Vols. I-II ed. by Margaret Verrall; Vols. III-VI ed. by G.W. Balfour; occasional MS annotations]
- B4/1    Vol. I  
          Oct 1908 - Apr 1910  
          (ff.268, alternate pages blank)
- B4/2    Vol. II  
          May 1910 - May 1911  
          (ff.244, alternate pages blank)
- B4/3    Vol. III  
          May 1911 - Dec 1913  
          (ff.291, alternate pages blank)
- B4/4    Vol. IV  
          Jan 1914 - Jul 1917  
          (pp.375, interleaved)
- B4/5    Vol. V  
          Apr 1918 - Oct 1926  
          (pp.276)
- B4/6    Vol. VI  
          Oct 1929 - Mar 1936  
          (pp.150)



- B5**    *Mrs Wilson's Scripts* [i.e. Mrs Elizabeth Stuart Wilson, née Doane]  
[Unpublished printed version ed. by J.G. Piddington; occasional MS annotations]

B5/1    Vol. I  
          Apr 1915 - Oct 1918  
          (pp.xv; 448)

B5/2    Vol. II  
          Nov 1918 - Apr 1931  
          (pp.449-898)

- B6**    *Mac Script* [i.e. members of the Mackinnon family]  
[Unpublished printed version ed. by Margaret Verrall; occasional MS annotations]

B6/1    Jul 1908 - Sep 1911  
          (ff.87, alternate pages blank)

- B7**    *Notes and Excursuses*  
[Eight unpublished volumes containing analysis of the scripts by J.G. Piddington, plus index to Vols. VI-VIII; printed with occasional MS annotations]

B7/1    Vol. I  
          (pp.1-480)  
          [includes "List of Scripts in chronological order" by Mrs E.M. Sidgwick; & "Dates concerning proceedings"]

B7/2    Vol. II  
          "List of passages in the Scripts of 1901-1924 relating to [various subjects]"; with introduction and commentary by Gerald W. Balfour; [also subject index]  
          (pp.xxvi; 1-684)

B7/3    Vol. III  
          Chapters I-VII  
          (pp.x; 1-512)

B7/4    Vol. IV  
          Chapters VIII-XV  
          (pp.513-1060)

B7/5    Vol. V  
          Chapters XVI-XX; addenda to Vols. IV and V; chronological list; index  
          (pp.1061-1603)

- B7/6 Vol. VI  
Chapters I-II (sections I-VIII)  
(pp.vii; 1-616)
- B7/7 Vol. VII  
Chapters II (sections IX-XIII), III-IV  
(pp.617-1082)
- B7/8 Vol. VIII  
Chapters V-VII; notes  
(pp.1083-1620)
- B7/9 Index to Vols. VI-VIII  
(pp.1621-1636)
- B8** *An Introduction to the Study of Scripts*  
[Unpublished work by W.H. Salter, c1948; printed with some MS annotations]
- B8/1 [One volume]  
(pp.v; [107])  
[includes biographical notes on figures associated with automatic writing, pp.84-105]
- B9** *The 'Delta' Case* [phenomena involving "Mrs Willett", i.e. W.M. Coombe Tennant]  
[Unpublished proof by Margaret Verrall, c1909-1910; some MS annotations]
- B9/1 [One volume]: Chapters I-IV  
(ff.118)  
[marked "E.M. Sidgwick" on cover; note at end by W.H. Salter, 1 May 1960]
- B10** *Mrs Willett's Automatic Phenomena*  
[Unpublished account by Margaret Verrall, c1910?; printed]
- B10/1 Vol. I  
Chapters I-III  
(ff.1-67, alternate pages blank)
- B10/2 Vol. II  
Chapters IV-X  
(ff.68-174, alternate pages blank)

**C: MATERIAL DEPOSITED BY W.H. SALTER AFTER 1963****C1 *Index to SPR Scripts***

[Unpublished typescript by W.H. Clennell; main volume and supplement presented by Clennell, on behalf of W.H. Salter, 1966 and 1967 respectively]

C1/1 [Main index], 1964  
(ff.477)

C1/2 Supplement, 1967  
(ff.97)

**D: MATERIAL FROM W.H. SALTER'S PAPERS AT THE SPR**

[Deposited at Trinity by E.J. Dingwall on behalf of the SPR, November 1971]

D1 W.H. Salter: notes and correspondence concerning access to the scripts; most items marked with [SPR?] references (shown in *Italics*) (14 items):

[letter enclosed: G.W. Lambert, K.M. Goldney and G.A. Joy (SPR Vice-Presidents) to C.W.K. Mundle (SPR President), Nov 1971, re. deposit at Trinity]

- 1 WHS: note re. contents of SPR file, 3 Aug 1966
- 2 WHS: note re. contents of SPR file, 3 Aug 1966, "to be considered by the Hon. Secretary of the SPR after my death"; opened and endorsed by G.W. Lambert 18 May 1970
- 3 WHS: "Note as to Documents relating to the Scripts of the 'SPR' Group of Automatists", Oct 1965 (typescript with MS note, 20 Oct 1965) [A18]
- 4 WHS: notes on "Mrs Heywood's Visit, 18, 19 July '64", 19 Jul 1964 [i.e. a visit by ?Rosalind Heywood to Newport, Essex] [A23]
- 5 Letter: Alexander J.S. Coombe Tennant to WHS, 2 Feb 1961, enclosing typescript letter, Geraldine D. Cummins to Alexander Coombe Tennant, 1 Feb 1961 [A34(56)]
- 6 Letter: Alexander J.S. Coombe Tennant to WHS, 6 Feb 1961 [A34(57)]
- 7 Letter: (Augustus) Henry Coombe-Tennant [aft. Dom Joseph] to WHS, 7 Feb 1961 (typescript) [A34(58)]
- 8 Letter: Alexander J.S. Coombe Tennant to WHS, 2 Oct [1962] [A34(66)]
- 9 Letter: Alexander J.S. Coombe Tennant to WHS, 16 Oct [1962] [A34(68)]
- 10 Letter: KMG [i.e. Kathleen Goldney?] to WHS, 14 Jan 1966 (typescript) [A34(73)]



D1 (cont):

- 11 Letter: Alexander J.S. Coombe Tennant to WHS, 30 [Jan 1966] [A34(77)]
- 12 Helen Salter: note re. visit with WHS to Redcliff to inspect G.W. Balfour documents, 7 Oct 1945; signed by the Salters and the 3rd Earl and Countess of Balfour [B72]
- 13 Letter: WHS to Jean, Countess of Balfour, 5 Sep 1956 (incomplete draft?) [B121]
- 14 Letter: Guy W. Lambert to WHS, 1 Aug 1966 [B158]

**E: TRINITY CORRESPONDENCE RE. SALTER PAPERS**

[Deposited with papers by J.R.G. Bradfield, Feb 1967]

- E1 Correspondence of C.D. Broad and others, 1956-67, re. Salter papers and their deposit at Trinity (59 items)

*RESTRICTED ACCESS*