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OH NO NOT ENFIELD AGAIN! A TRIBUTE TO THE WORK OF MAURICE GROSSE

MELVYN J. WILLIN

MEMBERS OF THE Society for Psychical Research are undoubtedly aware that Maurice Grosse passed away during the autumn of 2006. They are also probably appreciative of the huge amount of work he undertook both as a private psychical researcher and on behalf of the SPR as the chairman of the Spontaneous Phenomena Committee. This article is not an obituary to his lifetime's achievements (I leave that to others who probably knew him better than I) but it is rather a brief appraisal of his work, especially concerning the notorious 'Enfield Poltergeist' case. During the last few months of his life I was in direct contact with Maurice and his family and this included a few visits to his house to discuss in person what he wanted to happen to his vast collection of case histories, correspondence, cassettes and videos. It was his wish (and the family's) that I should archive his work so that it could be kept as a lasting record of his thirty years of psychical research and that the manuscripts should then be housed at the Cambridge University Library as part of the SPR archive. I therefore collected his complete works and started to sort through them and bring some order into the hundreds of letters, articles, cuttings and case histories. I kept Maurice and his family up to date with my efforts and they



were pleased with the way it progressed. The end result is the following archive referred to as the 'Maurice Grosse Collection':

- § The Enfield Collection – 5 folders, reel-to-reel recordings and artifacts.
- § The Enfield Cassettes – 110 cassette tapes.
- § Case histories on cassette – 135 cassette

- tapes.
- § Videos – 46 VHS videos.
- § 8mm tapes and 60mm originals copied onto cassette.
- § The un-edited Video Diaries – 88 VHS videos.
- § Photographs – 9 folders, 107 slides.
- § Cuttings and articles – 7 folders.
- § Cases, correspondence and reports – 14 folders.

The contents of the collection are available to view in London or Cambridge and I also have the full details – in excess of eleven thousand words.

Having listened to all the tapes, seen all the videos and read all the letters and case histories I have been very impressed with Maurice's thorough and sensible approach to the cases he investigated. His somewhat eccentric appearance may have disguised a very alert brain and this was revealed throughout his psychical research and other ventures. (Some of his inventions can be seen throughout the world and he also produced art and sculpture works of considerable merit.) His forthright attitude sometimes alienated people who are more used to slippery diplomacy and this was evident during and after the Enfield Case.

I did not visit Enfield between 1977 and 1978 when the phenomena were at their height and I therefore must bow to Guy Lyon Playfair's knowledge as Maurice's helper during the investigation. However, I have now examined much of the information available concerning Enfield and several points need to be made. Firstly, Maurice spent a vast amount of time there with and without Guy and he recorded much of the phenomena. The other

people who were involved with the case, namely the family and close neighbours, were also convinced of the veracity of most of the phenomena. Outsiders who witnessed the phenomena included a member of the police force, a baker and a patrol-crossing lady, as well as medical persons, including a speech therapist and hypnotist. The psychical researchers who visited were mixed in their views, but most only attended once or twice when, indeed, they may have only witnessed play-acting by the girls. The family did not receive financial gain from the events and if one listens to the tapes that Maurice made one can appreciate the stress levels, which must have been very great for all concerned. Modern interviews with the mother and the girls have taken place and although they do not want to "drag it up" all over again they nevertheless still maintain that the events were genuine.

Before studying the information about Enfield I was of the opinion that it was probably a case of young girls playing around to gain attention in a difficult family situation. My opinions were based on a sceptical bias and lack of detailed knowledge. Now that I am more informed I am of the opinion that some of the phenomena were genuine and that therefore the Enfield Case is possibly, as Maurice put it, the most important investigation of the twentieth century.

Finally, I hope that other people will take up his mantle concerning psychical research. I realize and support the massive importance of parapsychological laboratory work in expanding our knowledge of the anomalous, but I hope there is still room, nay a lot of room, for the type of fieldwork that Maurice was so prolific in undertaking.

MEDIAWATCH

EMMA MCNEIL

PARANORMAL THEMES continue to permeate the media. There are an ever-multiplying number of "investigative" shows (*Most Haunted*, *Derek Acorah's Ghost Towns*, *Haunted Homes*) and a few (often surprisingly good) documentaries with eye-catching titles (*My Kid's Psychic*, *The Dog Suicide Bridge*). Psychic themes are also beginning to creep back into popular drama.

Two hugely popular dramas from America focus on psychics while they solve the problems of the living and the dead. *The Ghost Whisperer* (E4) and *Medium* (The Sc-Fi Channel), both attempt to treat psychic phenomena with a degree of seriousness without drifting too far into the vampires and demons territory of shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed*.