

Part of our reflections series

26th June - on the centenary of her birth

Rosalind (Ros) Cattanach (1920-2013)

A Woman Ahead of her Time.

Ros Cattanach was a doyen of spiritualism and I feel privileged to have known her for nearly two decades. This tribute is written in remembrance Ros Cattanach's dedicated Service to Spiritualism. Since on the 26th June, it would have been her 100th birthday.

In her lifetime, Ros was a true and faithful servant for the Spiritualist movement, and no doubt continue her service in spirit with her many Spiritual friends, including the mediums Nan MacKenzie (1882-1995), Ivy Scott, Albert Best (1917-1996), Ivy Northage (1909-2002), Don Galloway (1929-2009) and Larry Taylor (1931-2012).

Whilst Ros would say that she was not a medium or healer, she was a role model for how a Spiritualist may serve spirit in many other way, responsible and with integrity, there by upholding the reputation of the Spiritualist movement. Ros was well connected with the various churches and spiritualist organisation including the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (SAGB).

As Resident Secretary at the London Spiritualist Mission (LSM) Ros would only invite evidential Spiritualist mediums as opposed to psychics to serve at the LSM thereby building and maintaining the reputation of the Church. I well remember Ros's dismay following an open platform at the LSM and her remark to me that most of the participants had been working psychically and had no link with spirit. Ros's straight forward summation of the evening, led to a complete revamp of how future open platforms were organised.

Only participants that were sufficiently developed to link with spirit and demonstrate evidential mediumship did so. Less developed participants were ask to gain experience on the platform by giving an opening or closing prayer, read a poem or an extract from a spiritualist book or give a short inspired address after listening to one of the extracts. It made a varied evening enjoyed by the participants and the congregation. At the end, participants had the opportunity in private to reflect on how they felt it had gone and receive encouragement and/or constructive feedback. All necessary for the development of future mediums with high standards of evidential mediumship.

Ros Cattanach was a woman ahead of her time, yet because she was not a person to broadcast her own achievements, few people would know that she was the first female Assistant Manager in Barclays Bank. In 1975, at the age of 55 years, Ros took early retirement from the Bank, when she was invited by the Committee to become the Resident Secretary and moved into the house above the Church with her husband who was also retired.

At that time, I did not know Ross but I am aware that her managerial position at Barclays Bank, in that era, was most certainly an achievement. I know this from my own experience of working in a rival bank in the 1980's, where I become aware of the 'glass ceiling', thereby making it extraordinarily difficult for female employers to be promoted into managerial grades. This contributed to my decision to leave after five years and find a fairer career path elsewhere.

Prior to becoming the Resident Secretary, Ros had served the LSM in several capacities. Initially Ros became a member of the LSM in the mid 1950's and started attending regular services in the mid 1960's and later starting to chair services for the church. Reading Don Galloway's autobiography, *Inevitable Journey, 1974*, later edition 1994, CON-PSY Publications, I realised that it was Ros who chaired for Don Galloway when he took a morning service at the LSM around 1970.

It was in the 1970 that Ros was invited to join the committee and then in the same year, due to her banking experience, Ros was appointed Treasurer. In 1973 was co-opted by the Committee as the new President.

Ros Cattanach's humility, graciousness and her love for the LSM is clearly evident, when at the Annual General Meeting on the 10th April 1973, Ros said "How much she regretted the sad reason for her election due to the sudden passing of James King, a man devoted to the Church and much beloved by all, who would be sadly missed. Ros spoke of her deep love for the Church and her desire to help maintain the wonderful sense of serenity and warmth which pervaded it, which gave so much comfort to so many."

Ros Cattanach wrote an excellent biography about *Nan Mackenzie, Healer and Medium* with a forward by Maurice Barbanell (1902-1981) published in 1978, later edition published in 2007, Pembridge Publishing. When Ros was 79 in 1999, her second biography *Albert Best, Best of Both Worlds, A Tribute to a Great Medium*, Pembridge Publishing, was published, with a forward by Professor Archie Roy of Glasgow University.

Both books give an insightful account of how these two modest evidential mediums and healers. Come into the spiritualist movement and the high standards of mediumship that they demonstrated. I would recommend reading these books to anyone who wishes to explore what true Spiritualism is about and the solid factual evidence that proves that life continues after so called death.

Ten years ago in June 2010, on the front page of the *Psychic News*, the medium Peter Geekie graciously paid tribute to Ros following her retirement from active service.

"Due to her hard work and integrity Ros was in large part responsible for putting the London Spiritualist Mission back on the map and reinstating it as one of the country's foremost Spiritualist Church. It is also largely because of her efforts that the Church has often been referred to as "the Jewell in the Crown of British Spiritualism."

Ros will probably be embarrassed that we have said these things about her, with characteristic modesty, She would properly say that it was all a labour of love. The committee and members owe her a huge debt of gratitude and wish her a long and happy retirement,"

Ros was a dear friend who gave me encouragement and support on my spiritual path, as she did for many others. Following her passing in 2013 I went to her funeral, then her memorial service held at the LSM. Later I arranged for a memorial plaque to be placed on the back wall of the Church just above where she would sit if she was not chairing. I knew Ros would be inspired to include her own gracious words on being elected President.

"In Loving Memory of Ros Cattanach (26th July 1920 – 18th January 2013), With grateful thanks for your fifty years of service and for helping to maintain the wonderful sense of serenity and warmth which pervade our church,"