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Clairvoyants and mediums search for Franklin

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ABSTRACT. The search for Sir John Franklin (1847–59) coincided with a growing interest in mesmerism and modern spiritualism in Britain. Several clairvoyants, claiming to 'see' Franklin's ships and crews in the Arctic, made statements about the status and location of the overdue expedition, and at least three mediums described communications with Franklin's spirit. Although the Admiralty provided assistance to Dr Haddock, the mesmerist of Emma, the Bolton clairvoyant, they did not take any action on the basis of her statements, probably because the various accounts were contradictory and could not be verified, and because the Admiralty Lords were sceptical of paranormal phenomena. Lady Franklin, on the other hand, visited clairvoyants and altered the plans for her search expeditions under Forsyth and Kennedy on the basis of a revelation. Recently, an American medium has described more than two dozen conversations with the spirits of Sir John and Lady Franklin.

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'Men may utterly disbelieve in the existence of so strange a faculty as clairvoyance; but it must be admitted that there is something in the whole art and mystery of mesmerism which baffles philosophy and defies comprehension.' (*The Aberdeen Herald* 13 April 1850)

Introduction

The search for Sir John Franklin coincided with a remarkable surge in paranormal phenomena in Britain, and, inevitably, some of the persons who believed in the existence of extraordinary powers of perception, either in themselves or in others, were intrigued and challenged by the sensational mystery of his disappearance. But as the pronouncements of clairvoyants and mediums about Franklin were virtually impossible to confirm or refute unless the rescue of Franklin was actually effected, the planners of search expeditions faced a dilemma. Should they ignore such statements (and risk losing an opportunity of finding Franklin) or should they act on the information (and risk sending search expeditions to the wrong place)?

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Britain was introduced to 'mesmerism.' It had originated with Friedrich Mesmer (1733–1815), a German whose therapeutic treatments (and colourful theatrical effects) had become hugely popular in Parisian society, despite the condemnation of the French Academy of Sciences in 1784. Mesmer's chief tool was what is today called hypnotism, sometimes induced with the aid of magnets. He and his numerous followers believed that beyond the range of ordinary knowledge there existed a mysterious force that, if properly exploited, could cure diseases and provide other practical benefits. Mesmer used hypnotism to harness the invisible power, and later another German, Baron Karl von Reichenbach, experimented with magnetism, electricity, heat, light, crystallization, and chemical attraction, to facilitate access to what he called the 'vital force' or 'odyle.' His influential work was translated into English by William Gregory, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Edinburgh, and published during the Franklin search (Reichenbach 1850).

In its broadest sense the term 'mesmerism' referred to a spectrum of phenomena, all apparently derived from the supposed vital force or influence. (Other terms, more or less synonymous, included 'animal magnetism,' 'zoistic magnestism,' 'electro-biology,' and 'electro-physiology.') Among the related phenomena, the most important in the context of the search for Franklin was clairvoyance — 'the direct and immediate perception of absent or distant objects without the use of the eyes' (Gregory 1909: 34). The latter sort, in which far-off things are perceived, has sometimes been called 'clairvoyance in space' (Tischner 1925: 2), but the term 'travelling clairvoyance' (Guilley 1991: 112) is even more apt because clairvoyants claimed they could undertake a mental voyage to any place designated by their mesmerists.

In a narrower sense 'mesmerism' referred simply to what the Scottish doctor James Braid termed 'hypnotism' in the 1840s. The revelation that a patient in a trance could be made insensible to pain had aroused the interest of medical doctors, notably John Elliotson (1843) and James Esdaile (1975), both of whom carried out many painless surgical operations using the mesmeric trance (thereby incurring the opposition of conservative elements in British medical circles). The mesmeric or hypnotic trance was also used frequently to facilitate the process of clairvoyance (Fig. 1), and as mesmerised subjects could be made to exhibit curious and amusing forms of behaviour, the technique was often used to titillate audiences in commercial stage performances (Fig. 2).

An entirely different sort of paranormal phenomenon reached Britain from the United States. The famous

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Fig. 1. Mesmerism was used in the treatment of illnesses and as an anaesthetic during operations. It also helped clairvoyant subjects perceive objects beyond the range of normal vision, including Franklin in the Arctic. (The Wellcome Library, London)

'Rochester rappings' — apparent communications from the spirit world to the teen-aged sisters Maggie and Katie Fox in 1848 — convinced many people that there truly was life after death, and that they could get in touch with departed relatives and friends through mediums. In an age when technology and materialism seemed to have undermined religious faith, a new 'modern spiritualism' was suddenly born, and it exploded into prominence. Within two years there were 100 mediums in New York City and more than 50 spiritualist circles in Philadelphia (Brandon 1984: 43). When two well-known American mediums, Mrs W. R. Hayden and David Dunglas Home, arrived in Britain in 1852 and 1855, respectively, the spiritualistic movement 'swept like a tidal wave across the kingdom, from John o' Groat's to Land's End' (Wyndham 1937: 2).

If clairvoyants could really 'travel' mentally to any destination, however remote and unfamiliar, and 'see' what was happening there, then presumably they could not only reveal the location and condition of Franklin's ships, but could also determine the health and morale of the men, the state of the sea ice, the extent of food resources, and the intentions of the commander. And if mediums could really hold discourse with spirits, they could discover who on Franklin's expedition had died and under what circumstances.

In 1849, when *The Aberdeen Herald* (14 July 1849: 111) reported that Lord Ducie had become a believer in psychic phenomena and would soon become president of the Mesmeric Institute in Bristol, it suggested that if some people really possessed such extraordinary powers they should turn them to some useful practical ends. Why, for example, did they not explain what had happened to Sir John Franklin? Whether or not this article (which was doubtless published in other papers as well) motivated some clairvoyants to focus their powers on the Franklin mystery is not certainly known, but at least one of them had already begun doing precisely that, and several more were to follow.

Clairvoyants and Franklin

Francis Leopold McClintock stated that 'In the early days of the Franklin search there were clairvoyants, visions, dreams, and revelations in the greatest abundance — a large number came from America' (quoted in Lloyd-Jones 2001: 30). Unfortunately, he did not elaborate, and no statements about Franklin by American clairvoyants have come to light. In Britain, on the other hand, several clairvoyants are known to have made pronouncements about Franklin and some of the searching expeditions.

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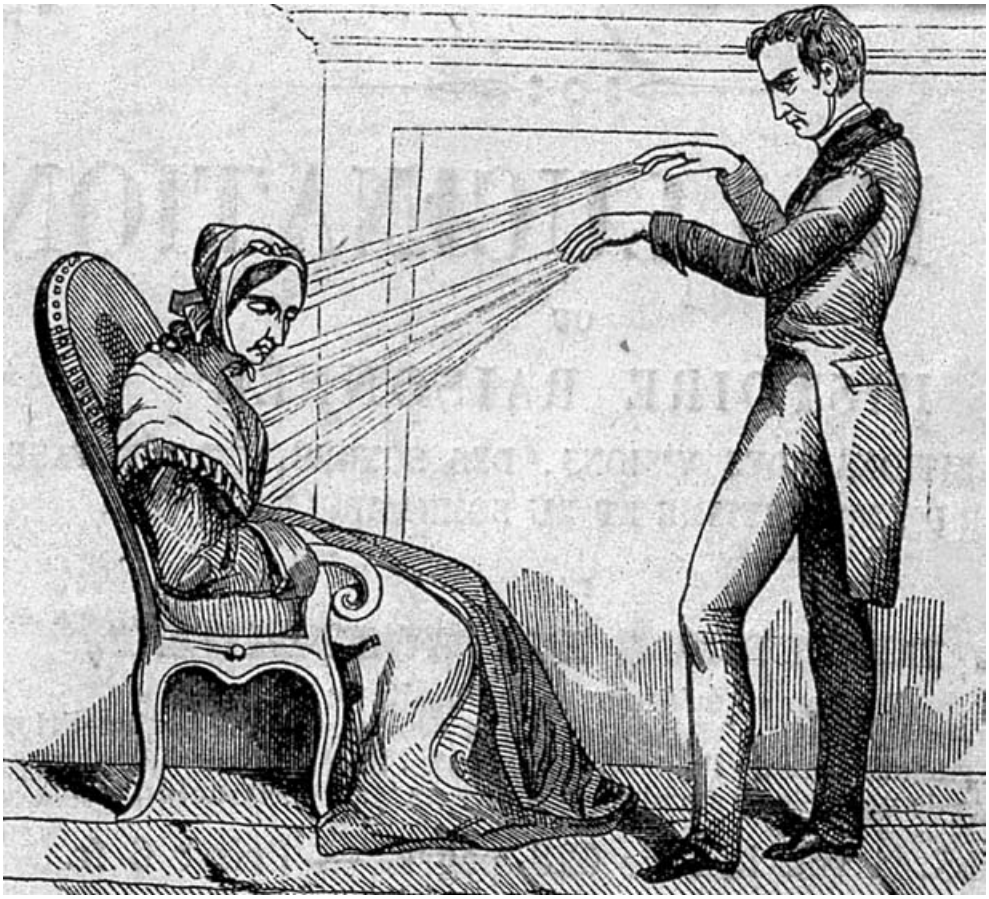


Fig. 2. As mesmerised subjects could be made to exhibit amusing forms of behaviour, the technique was often used in commercial stage performances. (The Wellcome Library, London)

Ellen Dawson

Ellen was described by Miss Boyle, a former maid of honour to Queen Adelaide, as 'a young, pale, sickly-looking girl' (Esdaile 1975: 91), but she displayed remarkable powers and had a favourable reputation as a clairvoyant in upper class circles. At the home of Ellen's controller, Mr J. Hands, in London's Grosvenor Square, Miss Boyle watched as he put the girl into a 'mesmeric sleep' by pointing directly at her for about three minutes, after which she 'travelled' to Normandy, Le Havre, and Rouen, telling what she 'saw' in each place. Then she described in detail Miss Boyle's own house in Somerset, both inside and out. It was a thoroughly convincing demonstration.

Ellen's talents were sometimes directed towards practical problems such as theft, and her successes enhanced her reputation. When a valuable brooch went missing in November 1848 its owner consulted a mesmerist, E.H. Barth, who referred the lady to Hands. Under a mesmeric trance Ellen was able to identify the thief (a servant) and locate the brooch in a pawn shop (Barth 1849–50). A few years later Barth mesmerised Ellen at his own house, to solve another jewelry theft and to locate a missing husband (J.A.S. 1852–53).

Among Ellen Dawson's clients was Lady Franklin. She may have been introduced to Ellen and Hands by her brother-in-law, Ashurst Majendie, who was later an active member of the London Mesmeric Infirmary (Anonymous 1852–53: 213). In May 1849 Majendie accompanied Lady Franklin and her niece Sophia Cracroft to Hands' residence in hopes of getting news of Sir John. After entering a trance, Ellen 'travelled' a long way and 'saw' two ships surrounded by ice, and several men, one of whom appeared to resemble Sir John and who had portraits of two women hanging in his cabin, apparently Queen Victoria and Lady Franklin. Not far off were two other ships, apparently the search expedition under Sir James Ross. It was a vision full of promise and Ellen supplied details that made it all seem so real. The men were dressed in fur garments, had salt beef and biscuit to eat, and smelled of brandy (clearly things were not going all that badly). In the description of the session by Woodward (1951: 266–267), there is no mention of the location of Franklin's ships or those of Ross, so perhaps Ellen did not reveal this.

Sophia Cracroft's personal record of the session, written on 28 May, reveals a few other details. Hands was assisted by another man, also a mesmerist. Ellen, 'a very diminutive young girl,' declined to speak directly to Lady Franklin because she did not wish to upset her, so while Jane remained in one room (either alone or with the second mesmerist), Ellen, Sophia, Majendie, and Hands went

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into an adjacent room. Sophia sat beside Ellen and asked the questions. Ellen's responses dealt mainly with the appearance of the ships and officers, but in disappointingly general terms; whenever Sophia pressed for more specific information, clouds suddenly obscured the girl's vision. However, at the end Ellen reassured Sophia that 'all is quite right' (Cracroft 1849–57: 1).

Sophia also described another session with Ellen on or about 18 November 1849: 'I clasped her hand in my right, put my left over, & said I felt sure she wd. tell me the truth — all she knew. She agreed but said she cd. not talk to Lady F about it, could not bear to tell Jane what she saw.' What she claimed to see was Sir John's ships 'so blocked up [by ice] that they cannot get out, unless a ship goes to help them.' This vision, coming at a time when the hand of winter was already pressing firmly upon the Arctic regions and most waterways were frozen solid, was doubtless discouraging; it would be eight or nine months before a search expedition could enter the Arctic archipelago. But at least Franklin was alive and well, and had plenty to eat. As to the best way of reaching the ice-bound ships, Ellen suggested an approach from the west [via Bering Strait], 'because they are nearer that way' (Cracroft 1849–57: 2).

Writing to someone (probably her mother and sisters) who had expressed doubts about consulting a clairvoyant, Sophia explained that the object was not to look into the future, but 'simply to ascertain that wh. *now is* by means of an extended state of vision.' If Ellen had made a few mistakes — and it appears that she had — this was only natural for 'one who is searching for truth' (Cracroft 1849–57: 2). But a few months later Sophia (who always reflected Jane's opinions) appears to have developed a degree of scepticism about this experience, or perhaps simply a dislike for Hands. Replying to a request from her mother and sisters for the name of a clairvoyant for a friend to consult, Sophia told them that Hands was a strange character, advised them to have nothing to do with him, and suggested a Madame Baumann in Wimpole Street instead (Cracroft 1849a).

Lieutenant Morrison's son

Lady Franklin and Sophia also consulted Lieutenant Morrison and his son (Lloyd-Jones 2001: 29). Judging from Sophia's remarks on 9 February 1850, the son, only 13 years old, was the clairvoyant. His father relayed questions from visitors to the boy, who used, as a scrying device, a crystal ball the size of an orange, set on top of a tumbler. Lieutenant Morrison claimed that the ball had been made in India in the seventh century by a famous astrologer and magician, and that it would show images or words of two unusually helpful spirits, Orion and Gego. After some of the people present asked about their dead or missing loved ones, Jane or Sophia (it is not clear which) asked about Franklin, and Orion provided some very encouraging information. Sir John was not only alive and well, but he was making his way homeward from 'Franklin Island' with sledges and 'ice boats.' In response to a question, the spirit explained that 'Franklin Island' was northwest of Melville Island and closer to Melville Island than to Bering Strait. 'What is the longitude of Franklin Isd.?' was the next question from Jane or Sophia, but evidently Orion's attention span had been exceeded, for the abrupt reply was, 'I do not know — good bye' (Cracroft 1849–57: 4). Evidently, this was not Lady Franklin's first visit to the Morrisons, for when Jane or Sophia asked whether Franklin was at the same place as last Monday, and what its latitude was, the spirit answered with undisguised impatience, 'That was told last time.'

Emma, the Bolton clairvoyant

One of the medical men fascinated by the mysteries of mesmerism was Joseph W. Haddock, a surgeon-apothecary and later doctor of medicine in Bolton. In the autumn of 1846 he hired a 20-year-old Worcester girl, Emma L., as a domestic servant. Haddock was interested in mesmerism and phrenology, and he discovered that Emma, when in a mesmeric trance, possessed clairvoyant powers. After private and public demonstrations of her talents in 1848, she solved some cases of theft and missing persons, one of which was summarised in *The Zoist* (Elliotson 1849–50). Her reputation was enhanced by the publicity attending her exploits, which were written up in the *Bolton Chronicle*, the *Liverpool Courier*, *The Manchester Guardian*, and *The Times* (Elliotson 1849–50).

Haddock (1975: 144–145) explained how he and Emma became involved in the Franklin search. 'I was applied to by a naval gentleman, a private friend of Sir John Franklin, to know if I thought any light could be thrown on the fate of his friend, by the aid of my clairvoyante. My reply, in substance was, that judging from past experience, I thought if I had some writing of Sir John's, she could say whether he was dead or alive.' The 'naval gentleman' was Captain Alexander Maconochie, RN, who had been a professor of geography at the University of London and secretary of the Royal Geographical Society (Woodward 1951: 192). In 1836 he had accompanied Franklin as private secretary when he took up the post of lieutenant-governor of Van Diemen's Land. Despite an unfortunate estrangement there, when Maconochie's efforts to reform the prison system reflected badly on Sir John, who was later recalled to England, the Maconochies and Franklins had remained on good terms.

Maconochie himself was interested in spiritualism and had already questioned clairvoyants in London and Paris about Franklin, apparently without satisfactory results. He sent Haddock a sample of Sir John's writing to help Emma make contact, and in September 1849 he travelled to Bolton, attended at least three of her sessions, posed meaningful questions about the missing explorer, and came away impressed with her reliability. Thereafter, he followed Emma's pronouncements about Franklin closely, through Haddock's letters and newspaper reports. And, importantly, he kept the Admiralty informed, sending them copies of his correspondence with Haddock

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during a period of several months (Maconochie 1849–50). Normally the Admiralty would probably have paid no attention to accounts of clairvoyants' revelations, but Maconochie had all the right credentials, so he was a man they could trust.

Maconochie was also valuable to Haddock. With the cooperation of Captain W.A.B. Hamilton, Second Secretary of the Admiralty, he sent a chart of the polar regions, news about the search, letters written by Franklin, Crozier, and other officers on the expedition, and by Saunders of HMS *North Star*. He even sent a lock of Franklin's hair (presumably obtained from Lady Franklin). According to Haddock, these objects would help Emma connect with the men of the various expeditions, and at the same time enable him to test her accuracy (Maconochie 1849–50). In retrospect, they could also have enabled Haddock to fabricate plausible 'revelations' from Emma.

Judging from a few marginal remarks on Haddock's letters (forwarded by Maconochie), the Admiralty Lords were sceptical, even contemptuous, about Emma's revelations. When Haddock wrote 'Emma has been strikingly correct in her description of these gentlemen' [officers on the various expeditions], a caustic Admiralty note remarked 'Strikingly correct certainly — a perfect transcript of the descriptions I wrote,' and then advised 'take the description of Mr Saunders, whose description I'd not sent & which is anything but strikingly correct.' When Haddock wrote that, according to Emma, HMS *North Star* had arrived in Barrow Strait after James Ross' two ships had left, and had reached a position 'further west than him,' a minute said 'Has proved wholly incorrect.' When Haddock wrote 'I should like to know what Captain Hamilton thinks of the probabilities of Emma's report,' a minute pointedly said 'I know what *I* think.' At one point the exclamation 'Humbug!' appeared in the margin (Maconochie 1849–50). Although the men at the Admiralty do not seem to have placed any reliance in Emma's revelations, they were obliged to take the time to read and assess Haddock's letters and various newspaper clippings on the matter, and this was time that could have been much better spent in other aspects of the search.

During a trip to Scotland, Lady Franklin and Sophia Cracroft happened to read in a newspaper (evidently *The Manchester Guardian*) a letter about Emma's visions, submitted by Maconochie. Writing to her sister, Sophia declared, 'We have had the statement by Captn. Maconachie [sic] of all that passed between him & the Bolton clairvoyante & do not in any way rely upon it. It is a very fanciful story, both as regards the clairvoyante, & that wh. she reveals' (Cracroft 1849b). 'I do not know of any trickery in the matter,' she added in a subsequent letter, '& do not believe there has been any. But after reading the statement made by Capt. Maconachie. . .of the proceedings, we come to the conclusion, I perhaps even more strongly than my aunt, that there was a diseased imagination, or over excited nerves, at work, & that therefore her statements sd. not be depended upon' (Cracroft 1849c). What particular information Sophia and Jane considered to be evidence of a 'diseased mind' or 'over excited nerves' was not explained, but in one session Emma had described bodies underneath the snow, a leaping animal with black and white stripes, some tangled forests, wild cattle and wild men (*Historic Times* (London) 12 October 1849) — a rather curious mix of fabulous and alarming things that might easily provoke such a diagnosis.

Haddock had a dozen or more sessions with Emma between 21 September 1849 and 15 September 1850. Like Ellen Dawson, she stated that Franklin and some of his men were still alive, and that rescue ships were not far off, but she also revealed what Ellen apparently did not — Franklin's location. In a session in September 1849, when she 'travelled' to the place, she noted the difference in local time between Bolton and Franklin's ships, which could then be translated into longitude. According to her information, Franklin was in northwest Hudson Bay, about 85°W, apparently making his way to Churchill on foot, but he intended to winter in the vicinity before proceeding. This location provided a potential target (albeit a vague one) for prospective search expeditions, but evidently Franklin intended to give them a merry chase, for soon afterward Emma saw him in Prince Regent Inlet, then at Lowther Island in Barrow Strait, and finally north of the Parry Islands (*Historic Times* (London) 12 October 1849; *Dundee Advertiser* 26 October 1849: 1; Haddock 1851). One newspaper gave an additional location, north*east* Hudson Bay, but this may have been an error (*Dundee Advertiser* 5 October 1849: 2).

Rationally, the succession of locations cited by Emma (Fig. 3) should have given rise to suspicion and despair rather than confidence and hope. Why would Franklin, from a position approximately 400 miles from a safe refuge at Fort Churchill in late September, suddenly reverse direction and head north as winter was closing in? And how could he possibly have travelled from Hudson Bay to Barrow Strait, a straight-line distance of about 700 miles, in the 18 days between the two positions cited? With the inevitable changes of course to circumvent natural obstacles, the journey would have required an average of more than 40 miles per day — impossible for a party of exhausted men walking over snow and ice, hauling their camping gear, food, and fuel on sledges. The healthy man-hauling parties of the search expeditions, on generous rations, covered only about 11 miles a day (Mackinnon 1985).

However, when hope hangs by a slim thread reason may vanish. After expressing scepticism about the initial revelation by the Bolton clairvoyant, Sophia Cracroft changed her mind when a more appealing location was cited in a subsequent session. With undisguised enthusiasm, she then wrote, 'in a Dundee paper of today we see the statement of another consultation with this girl, & I am very much inclined to place confidence in this statement. . .I will tell you that she says my uncle is getting home & is at Lowther Island, in 78 1/2 W.

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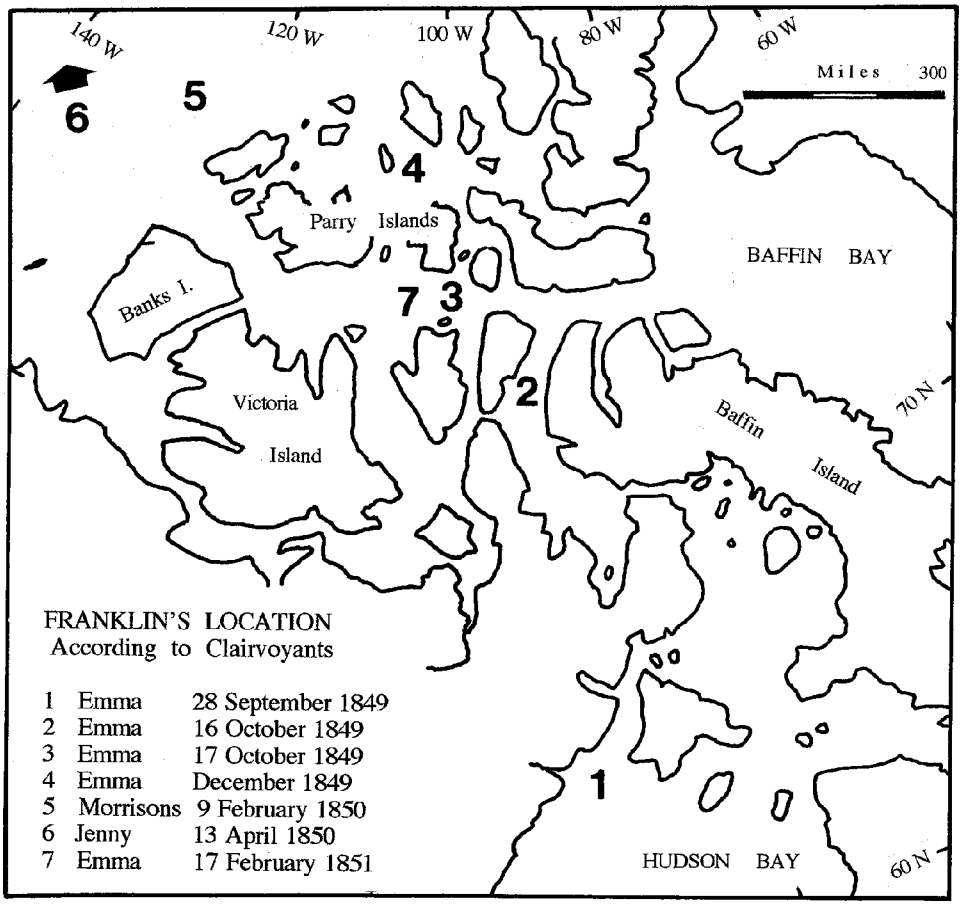


Fig. 3. Franklin's location according to clairvoyants, 1849–51. Another clairvoyant report, apparently fraudulent, placed Franklin on Somerset Island (near no. 2).

long' (Cracroft 1849c). Her view undoubtedly reflected that of Lady Franklin. One wonders what they thought later, when Emma put Franklin hundreds of miles farther north, beyond the Parry Islands, where no European had ever gone.

Emma kept her paranormal vision focused on Franklin. Professor Gregory, the translator of Reichenbach's work and an investigator of psychic phenomena, was present at a session on 17 February 1851. As he described in his book (Gregory 1851: 306) she 'saw' the ships of Austin's search expedition at a longitude of 95°45'W, and those of Franklin a hundred miles farther west at longitude 101°45'. Several months later it was learned that at that very moment Austin's ships had been frozen into the landfast ice of Barrow Strait near Griffith Island — at almost exactly the longitude she had cited. If her revelation had so accurately revealed Austin's location (unknown in Britain at the time) then her information about Franklin's whereabouts could be correct too! An American newspaper remarked, 'Here, then, we have a prophecy giving precise numbers, and even distinctly recorded previous to the time when any knowledge of the event referred to could have been had; and which turns out to be quite correct. Clairvoyance, which has been getting somewhat into disrepute, will probably be looking up hereafter. It has never before had — that we are aware of — so decided a signal success' (*New-York Daily Times* 14 October 1851: 2).

The credibility of Gregory's statement was accepted in England as well. A newspaper in what is now Sandwich, Ontario, *The Voice of the Fugitive* (5 November 1851), quoted *The Times* (London) as stating, 'Extraordinary as this story is, the evidence for it is too reliable to be questioned for a moment.'

Gregory was present at another of Emma's sessions in August 1851 and consulted another clairvoyant at about the same time. Amazingly, 'both these clairvoyants, unknown to each other, agreed in stating that the ships were fixed in ice, that Sir John was alive, looking anxious and thoughtful, and that a good many of his companions had died since I had last inquired' (*The Aberdeen Herald* 3 January 1852: 2). Evidently, there was no lack of subjects for Gregory's research; he claimed to have examined four other clairvoyants repeatedly and several others once. Whether or not they all could perceive Sir John Franklin in the Arctic ice is not known.

Jenny

A 20-year-old clairvoyant named Jenny went public on the matter of Sir John Franklin in the spring of 1850. She was a Scottish-born domestic servant who had been in the employ of a Liverpool couple for a year. Her master,

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an amateur mesmerist, had occasionally demonstrated the girl's supernatural powers to a few friends, but after the *Liverpool Mercury* heard of the matter, he agreed to let reporters attend a session and observe the proceedings.

According to the reporters' verbatim record of the proceedings, Jenny 'travelled' a long way to a ship that had been beset in Arctic ice for three or four years. On board she 'saw' Sir John and a dozen companions. They had the flesh of fish, birds, and polar bear to eat, and had been able to reserve some of the ship's provisions for future needs. Some men were alive but below deck at the time, and others had died. Although sympathetic to their predicament, Jenny candidly exclaimed, 'Why, it is a wonder they don't try to get out. They are a set of stupid blockheads' (*The Aberdeen Herald* 13 April 1850, supplement: 1, from the *Liverpool Mercury*).

Visible in Jenny's supernatural vision were other ships trying to reach Franklin and, on land a thousand miles away, native people whom she described as 'wild customers' with 'wild beasts' skins on them for clothing.' She agreed that they must be 'Esquimaux.'

Jenny noted that the time on Franklin's ship was 10 AM. At that moment it was 9:47 PM in Liverpool. Although not mentioned in the article, this time difference (10.8 hours) translates into 162° of longitude west from Liverpool. As Liverpool is located 3° west of Greenwich, Franklin's ship was on the meridian of 165°W, that is to say, somewhere on a north–south line running close to Point Hope, Alaska. The latitude gave her some difficulty, however. She said that the ship was 300 miles from the North Pole, but then she thought it might be 3000 miles, or. . .perhaps it was only 200. (Three thousands miles from the Pole on the meridian of 165°W would be half way to the Equator in the Pacific Ocean; the other distances would put the ship within 5° of the Pole.) But when asked to name a place near Franklin's ship, she said, 'Why it is lying to the north of a place called Behring's Straits' (which eliminated the figure of 3000 miles). Jenny proposed a rescue method that had probably not occurred to the Admiralty — send three shiploads of salt to the area to melt the ice and free the vessel. When asked where exactly the salt ships should go, her deficient sense of geography again became apparent. Just send the ships to the edge of the ice, she advised, and they will see Franklin. (This might have been difficult. A ship reaching the margin of the polar pack ice north of Bering Strait would still be a thousand miles away from the closer of the Arctic positions cited by Jenny. To see Franklin's ship would have required Jenny's paranormal vision.)

Near the end of her trance, as Jenny was making her way homeward, she ran into a fierce squall that impeded her progress. 'Are you sailing, then?' she was asked. She replied, 'Oh no; I am in the air.' Had she seen anyone else on her voyage? was the next question. She answered, 'I passed one woman going. . .She told me she was from London, and I said I was from Liverpool. She is away after him.' This was a reference to another clairvoyant, possibly Ellen Dawson. Evidently, traffic was heavy on the flight path between England and Franklin's ice-bound ship.

'Captain Hudson's girl'

The *Liverpool Mercury* noted that were two clairvoyants in Liverpool and it told its readers:

> we shall, as opportunities arise, examine both of them on the same cases or events; and as the examinations will be conducted and reported by short-hand writers belonging to our establishment, this will probably be received as a guarantee of their faithfulness. We pledge ourselves that the records shall be as correct as human ability can make them. As to the revelations themselves, we leave the public to place what reliance upon them they please. (reprinted in *The Aberdeen Herald* 13 April 1850, supplement: 1)

The identity of the second clairvoyant girl in Liverpool, whose revelation had evidently been described in an earlier issue of the Liverpool paper (probably between 1 and 10 April 1850), has not yet come to light, but she may be the one referred to in the above account as 'Captain Hudson's girl.' Presumably, Hudson was her mesmerist — another instance of a naval or military man controlling a female clairvoyant.

A few weeks later, the *Daily News* (3 May 1850) of Saint John, New Brunswick, remarked, 'Recently a girl in Liverpool, in a clairvoyante state, has been making revelations somewhat similar to those of the Bolton lady.' The girl had claimed to see Franklin, looking 'sad and wearied,. . .poorly and tired, and almost worn out with hopes deferred.' His ships, 'dirty and battered,' were surrounded by ice, but the men were bravely cutting through in an effort to advance towards the west. Despite the obvious uncertainties of ice navigation, Franklin confidently believed he would be able to reach England in 'six months and three or four days.' The expedition had met natives, whom she ungenerously described as 'wild, stupid, and uncommunicative.' This unnamed clairvoyant (who again may have been 'Captain Hudson's girl') declared that no search expeditions would find him, and she was pessimistic (but very close to the truth) concerning the utilization of the Northwest Passage: 'What can be the use of this road? It ought never to have been sailed. It will never be sailed again.'

John Park

According to *The Manchester Guardian* (15 May 1850), reprinting an article published in *The Aberdeen Herald*, a clairvoyant 22-year-old tailor named John Park in Peterhead had been mesmerised by one William Reid on 22 April. Reid's account, in the form of a letter to the editor, described how Park 'travelled' to Fury Beach (on the east coast of Somerset Island) and visited both of Franklin's ships. He found the expedition in remarkably good shape, the men busy hunting, fishing, repairing some ice damage to one vessel, and communicating with native people. On his way back to Scotland, Park boarded a Peterhead whaler, the *Hamilton Ross*, at 'Old Greenland' (the Davis Strait/Baffin Bay region). He learned that the

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ship had secured 100 tons of oil and that her second mate, David Cardno, had injured his hand sealing. On the following day, after being put into a trance again by Reid, he returned to the Arctic and 'saw' Franklin in bed with hymn and prayer books at his side. On his way home Park again visited Peterhead whalers, stopping on board the *Hamilton Ross* and the *Traveller*, and conversing with Captain David Gray of the *Eclipse*.

The Aberdeen Herald, in which the article first appeared, noted that Cardno — a real whaleman — had in fact injured his hand while on the *Hamilton Ross*, and that Captain Gray — a well-known whaling captain — had actually been on board that ship. Assessing the reliability of the report, the newspaper commented, 'we refrain from saying more than that this affair is either an extraordinary fact, an extraordinary fraud, or an extraordinary coincidence. Charity and caution lead us to adopt, *ad interim*, the latter alternative.'

What the newspaper did not notice about this 'extraordinary coincidence,' however, was that although the ships and persons mentioned in Park's alleged clairvoyance were authentic, the *Eclipse*, *Harrison Ross*, and *Traveller* did not sail to the Davis Strait ('Old Greenland') region in 1850, but rather to the whaling grounds near Spitsbergen — nowhere near Park's route from the North American Arctic to Scotland. The only two Peterhead ships to exploit the Davis Strait/Baffin Bay region were the *Victor* and the *Enterprise*, neither of which was mentioned in the account (Arbuthnot n.d.). This suggests that the episode was probably a hoax contrived by the man who called himself William Reid.

A slightly different version was published in *The Public Ledger* of St John's, Newfoundland (2 July 1850), taken from the *Morning Chronicle* of London. It made no mention of the 22-year-old Park, but referred to 'a boy under mesmeric influence in Peterhead' who 'in presence of a large audience' had described Franklin as 'quite well, but looking thin,' and had given various details about the whaling ship *Hamilton Ross*. His revelations were said to have 'thrown the inhabitants of Peterhead into a state of great excitement.'

James Smith

In a letter written to Dr Gregory on 31 March 1851 (Gregory 1851: 338–342) a minister who signed himself 'P.H.' described meeting and testing a locally well-known clairvoyant, James Smith of Whalsay, during a visit to Shetland in August 1850. P.H. stated that he had at first been entirely sceptical of clairvoyance and other phenomena associated with animal magnetism. Intent upon proving the man a fake, he told the mesmerist that he had no wish to hear 'any mere general descriptions of places or persons, nor any account whatever of Sir John Franklin, or such like, the accuracy of which I could not pronounce upon.' Instead, he supplied several questions about himself. To his amazement, Smith, while in mesmeric trance, answered all the questions correctly, as well as ones he subsequently added. In response to requests made by the minister, Smith then 'travelled' to various places and described them in detail. P.H. confessed to Gregory that his scepticism 'received a considerable shock.' In the face of such convincing demonstrations of the man's powers of perception it was hard to stay away from the subject of Franklin, so Smith was sent off in search. He 'found the ships Erebus and Terror, spelling the names of each on the stern of the vessel.' Both ships were fast in the ice; 'those on board were alive, but in low spirits,' with little hope of being extricated. No location was given, and P.H. later regretted that he had not pursued the subject more intently.

An Australian clairvoyant

One of the unresolved questions about clairvoyance was the effect of distance. Gregory recognized a sequence of stages in which an individual perceived objects at progressively greater distances. In the sixth, or 'travelling stage,' he said, the clairvoyant 'visits different places and describes them, as well as the persons in them' (Gregory 1909: 34). A particular person might advance from one stage to a more advanced one, and the most gifted might reach a very high intensity of perception. But every clairvoyant had limits, and for some the travelling stage might be unattainable. When William Scoresby junior, whose scientific investigations of terrestrial magnetism had led him into the murkier waters of animal magnetism (1849), suggested that clairvoyance — if such a phenomenon really existed — could not possibly extend over great distances, *The Zoist* vigorously protested. 'Why should great distance annihilate effect?' asked their anonymous reviewer of Scoresby's book — possibly John Elliotson himself. Distance, he asserted, could be overcome by the intensity of will of the mesmeriser, and the susceptibility of the subject (Anonymous 1849–50: 328).

The geographical range of clairvoyance was a fundamental issue, as the central Arctic of North America was about 3000 miles from Britain. In the fall of 1850 the opinion that distance could be overcome by certain clairvoyants was apparently supported when Dr. J.B. Motherwell wrote to Elliotson describing the deliberations of a clairvoyant woman in Melbourne, Australia, almost half-way round the world from Franklin's probable location. Motherwell had shown her a letter written by Franklin in 1838 which had enabled her to describe correctly various episodes in Franklin's career in Van Diemen's Land. When asked about his Arctic expedition of 1845, she had replied, according to Motherwell's 'nearly verbatim' account, as follows: 'I see the vessel Sir John Franklin is in; there are other vessels with him; they are all starting together. I think there are three or four of them, and they are sailing now: they are passing land just now which is very high. . .I see land now; it is very low, and seems inhabited by natives who are quite astonished and are running down to look. The vessels are beginning to come near each other now, and I see floating in the sea those large white cliffs: they are icebergs' (Elliotson 1851–52: 71).

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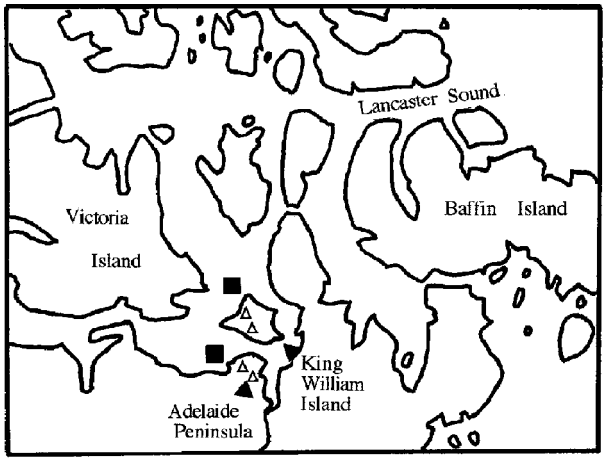


Fig. 4. Franklin's location according to Snow's vision, January 1850. HMS *Erebus* and *Terror* are represented by solid squares, and scattered bodies and parties of men by clear triangles.

If the account seems somewhat vague, failing to give a geographical position for Franklin or any other concrete information, it may be because Elliotson intentionally suppressed part of the clairvoyant's statement when it was published in *The Zoist*. He believed that it might do more harm than good to disseminate information whose reliability could only be assessed if and when Franklin was found. If it then turned out to be accurate, it would demonstrate that great distance did not necessarily prevent clairvoyance from operating. Although an outspoken proponent of clairvoyance, Elliotson did not consider it a reliable means of finding Franklin.

Parker Snow's vision

Several months before sailing as second-in-command of Lady Franklin's search expedition on the *Prince Albert* in 1850, William Parker Snow experienced a vision. At three in the morning on 7 January 1850 he suddenly saw a vivid picture of an Arctic region between the meridians of 90 and 100°W, extending from the estuary of the Great Fish (Back) River northward into Boothia Peninsula and King William Island. Pictured in this scene were two ice-bound ships, apparently abandoned, one northwest of Victory Point, and the other near the continental coast just west of the Adelaide Peninsula, near O'Reilly Island. On King William Island there were lifeless bodies and a few living men, and at several places on the mainland he saw small parties of men on foot (Fig. 4). Franklin himself was not seen. Snow rushed immediately to his desk, wrote down the details, incorporated what he already knew about Franklin's expedition, and drew a rough map (*Review of Reviews* 1893).

Snow was unsure about the nature of his experience. He began his narrative with the words, 'What I did see *or fancied I saw* [author's italics] was the following. . .' and because he was awake at the time he described it as 'a waking dream' (*Review of Reviews* 1893: 377). It may have been what Gregory (1909: 230) called a 'spontaneous vision of passing events,' in which a subject's sympathies for an absent person's predicament can generate a vivid image of the situation, or what a recent work has termed 'dream clairvoyance' (Guilley 1991: 112). *Review of Reviews* (the editor of which, W.T. Stead, claimed he could interview people, both living and dead, by paranormal communication) called Snow's experience 'a clairvoyant vision,' and stated that Snow had possessed clairvoyant powers since the age of 12. Aside from the Franklin vision, however, the journal mentioned only one rather unconvincing example of his alleged extraordinary powers — in his childhood he lost a coin but weeks later he 'saw' where it was, and found it in that very place. If Snow had really known since boyhood that he was clairvoyant, would he have described his vision as 'a waking dream' or admitted that he might have only 'fancied' that he saw the Arctic scene?

Whatever the phenomenon was, it was so alarming and seemed so real that he wrote to Lady Franklin that very day urging her to send a search expedition of 100 men to that region by way of Hudson Bay, and offered his services (Great Britain 1850: 138–141). He did not, however, reveal that his pleas were based on dreaming or clairvoyance. What influence his letter had on Jane's ideas about Sir John's whereabouts and condition is uncertain.

The curious thing about Snow's vision is that it fits so well with facts that were determined later. The location, the abandonment of the ships, the dispersal of survivors into small groups, and the deaths of men in scattered localities were all correct. Yet his vision is said to have occurred nine years before McClintock's expedition discovered these things! This led *Review of Reviews* (1893: 377) to ask: 'What is the use of a clairvoyant revelation if it is no avail to rescue those whose whereabouts were so marvellously made known?' But Snow does not appear to have revealed that his search proposal was based on a vision at any time during the 43 years preceding the publication of the biographical sketch, apparently written by a spiritualist. Did Snow *really* experience a vision?

Weesy Coppin's revelation

The most persuasive and influential spiritualist statement about the missing expedition was said to have come from the spirit of a dead girl, Louisa, or 'Weesy,' Coppin. This was not a clear case of clairvoyance because no one in the Coppin family claimed to be able to 'see' Franklin or anyone else, and, although the phenomenon allegedly involved communication with the spirit world, none of them claimed to be a medium. According to Reverend J. Henry Skewes, the vicar of a Liverpool church who brought the revelation to public attention 40 years later, it was simply a 'special act of Providence' (Skewes 1889: 195).

Lady Franklin learned of Weesy's revelation from the dead girl's father, Captain William Coppin, a Londonderry shipyard owner, builder of screw steam vessels, surveyor of ships and engines, and ex-commander of merchant

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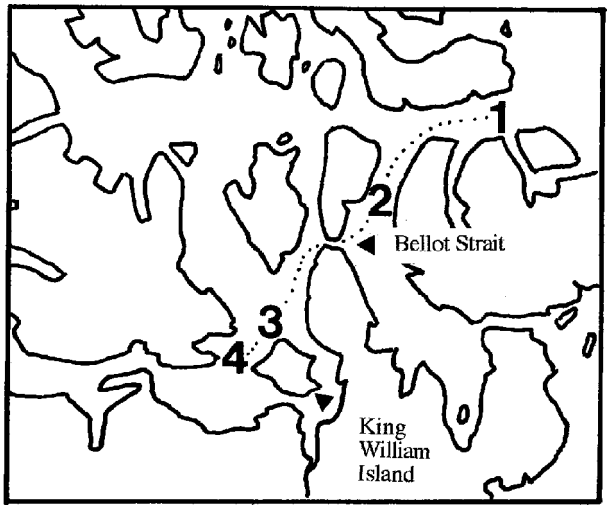


Fig. 5. Sequence of places in Weesy's revelation, October 1849, and Franklin's inferred track.

ships — in short a reputable man experienced in maritime matters. His four-year-old daughter 'Weesy' had died in May 1849, but her spirit had been visiting her four siblings, sometimes making itself known by a blue light, and at other times appearing as an apparition so convincing that the youngest child more than once ran eagerly towards it only to crash into a wall. When the family gathered for dinner a place was always laid for Weesy, who, according to the children, joined them (Skewes 1889; Lloyd-Jones 2001). Weesy was visible to all four children and to Captain Coppin (who had had several psychic experiences before), but not to Mrs Coppin or her sister.

In October, when daughter Ann (aged seven) asked Weesy about the location of Sir John Franklin, an Arctic 'scene, in the form of a chart' with two ice-bound ships appeared on the floor, while the words, '*Erebus* and *Terror*. Sir John Franklin, Lancaster Sound, Prince Regent Inlet, Point Victory, Victoria Channel' became visible on a wall. Ann copied the inscription and chart. (Captain Coppin was away at the time.) On at least two subsequent occasions Weesy's spirit was asked about Franklin, once in November 1849 by Captain Coppin, and again in 1851 by William Kennedy, the commander of Lady Franklin's imminent search expedition, and on both these occasions the results were apparently similar (Skewes 1889: 73–75).

The sequence of the four place-names (Fig. 5) that appeared on the wall suggests that Franklin had proceeded through Lancaster Sound and Prince Regent Inlet into Victoria Channel (now Victoria Strait) off Point Victory (now Victory Point) on the northwest coast of King William Island. In 1845 Bellot Strait between Somerset Island and Boothia Peninsula (Fig. 6) had not yet been discovered, but if Franklin had gone down Prince Regent Inlet he might have found it and followed it westward to reach Victoria Strait. Looking at Weesy's revelation retrospectively, one is struck by the fact that this is precisely where the remains of the expedition were discovered in 1859. Had her spirit really revealed the true location several years before McClintock's voyage in the *Fox*? Or, if the Weesy phenomenon was a deception perpetrated by Coppin and his family, how had they happened upon the correct locality?

Because Reverend Skewes published the details of Weesy's revelations so long after the events and wrote in such a sensationalist style, his reliability was questioned. Among his fiercest critics was McClintock, whose scathing denunciation of his claims (Lloyd-Jones 2001) prompted Skewes to publish an expanded edition (1890), which included revealing correspondence between Coppin, Lady Franklin, and Sophia Cracroft — evidence difficult to refute.

Skewes made the following assertions. Coppin not only wrote Jane Franklin in the spring of 1850 to tell about the revelation, but he actually visited her on more than 30 occasions! On the basis of Weesy's information, she instructed Charles Codrington Forsyth and William Kennedy, who commanded her private search expeditions in 1850 and 1851, to proceed down Prince Regent Inlet and attempt to advance towards the southwest, instead of searching towards the north as she had originally desired. Forsyth was not especially sympathetic to the spirit-derived information, but Kennedy travelled to Londonderry to meet the Coppin family, attended three spiritualist sessions, and came away convinced. When he departed from Aberdeen in the *Prince Albert*, Coppin was present. By causing Jane to alter her search plans, Weesy's revelation led to the discovery of Bellot Strait during the expedition, and if Kennedy had turned south from the western extremity of the strait towards Victory Point (in accord with his instructions) instead of north, he would have come upon the scene of the disaster on King William Island half a dozen years before McClintock. (Skewes 1889, 1890).

Lady Franklin's frequent contact with Captain Coppin and her faith in Weesy's revelation were known only to a few close friends (one of whom was Charles Dickens, who must have been eager to publish the details). But, significantly, it was also known to Captain W.A.B. Hamilton, the Admiralty's influential Second Secretary. Shortly after Forsyth's departure in the *Prince Albert*, Jane confided to him, 'Mr Coppin continues to write to us, & each time he says the ship is seen at the same place but the ice is breaking all around her' (Franklin 1850). She persuaded Coppin to visit Captain Hamilton, who promised to inform the Admiralty Lords of Franklin's alleged location, but without revealing its spiritualist source (Skewes 1889: 80). The Admiralty, however, took no action.

Mediums and Franklin

A well-known spiritualist aspect of the Franklin search was the love affair between Elisha Kent Kane, the celebrated American Arctic explorer, and the medium Maggie Fox of 'Rochester rapping' fame. The two met

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Fig. 6. View from 20,000 feet above Prince Regent Inlet, looking westward along Bellot Strait, not discovered until Kennedy's expedition in 1851–52. The strait leads to the ice-covered waterway of Peel Sound/Franklin Strait, through which HMS *Erebus* and *Terror* probably passed. Prince of Wales Island is faintly visible in the background. (National Air Photo Library, Ottawa)

in Philadelphia after his return in 1851 from the first Grinnell Expedition in search of Franklin, when Maggie may have been as young as 13 (Davenport 1897: 36), and they are said to have been united several years later in a common-law marriage ceremony that was kept secret to avoid the wrath of Kane's parents (Corner 1972). Kane was not a believer in spiritualism, however, and Maggie does not appear to have communicated with the spirit of Sir John Franklin. When Kane set off in command of the second Grinnell Expedition in 1853, it was without the benefit of any useful tips from Maggie or any other medium.

Alfred Cridge

In 1854 a man in Halifax, Nova Scotia, who described himself as a 'writing medium' (Cridge 1854), published some interesting information about Franklin. During a séance held in February, with a Mrs J. Johnson assisting, Alfred Cridge had invited spirits to communicate. In response to his invitation, an unknown spirit made rapping sounds and spelled out his name — Sir John Franklin. Then Cridge's hand began to move in a mysterious way, scrolling out a message from Franklin, who revealed the reasons why he had failed to complete the Northwest Passage:

> The cause of our failure was a season which set in with unusual severity, at an earlier period than usual. The indifferent manner in which our provisions were packed spoiled many of them, and compelled me to detach too large a party to hunt, so that we could not prevent the ships being crushed by ice. Thus driven from our refuge, all who had not previously been drowned or died of hardship perished from the combined effects of cold and hunger. Had it not been for the defective quality and fastenings of the provisions we should not have been jammed up, as there would have been no necessity to have hunted until we were in a locality more favorable for the purpose. . .The result of our operations was the discovery of a large tract of open water near the North Pole. . .Our farther progress was stopped by a barrier of ice about three miles wide. Our men traversed it, and from the other side was seen an open sea as far as the eye could reach to the northward. We were reluctantly compelled to retrace our steps, and try to proceed westward in another direction. On our return by the route we had come, we were crushed by the ice in the manner above related. . . (Cridge 1854: 74).

Cridge asked for some proof of identity, but none was provided. However, several months after the séance, he learned from an article in an English newspaper, reprinted in a journal entitled *American Vegetarian* that many tins of preserved meat supplied to the Admiralty by a firm in Bohemia had proven to be so 'revolting' and 'putrid'

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that the authorities had worried about a new plague; furthermore, Franklin's ships had been supplied with some of this tainted food! Cridge declared that he had never been particularly interested in the Franklin expedition, that the communication from Franklin had been unsolicited, that he had not known about the tainted food before, and that the writing (done by his hand under the guidance of Franklin's spirit) had been 'psychometrically examined by two readers,' both of whom felt 'sensations similar to that of a person dying of exhaustion, gradually falling into a sleep' (Cridge 1854: 74–75). These, he declared, were convincing evidence that he had really had been communicating with the spirit of Franklin.

Search expeditions had found hundreds of empty food cans on Beechey Island four years before, leading to the suspicion that the food had been rotten. Similarly, the unsanitary conditions in the meat packing plant of Goldner, who supplied Franklin's expedition, had been revealed long before Cridge wrote his book. We have only his word that he was unaware of these events until after he heard from Franklin's spirit. The Inuit stories at Pelly Bay in April 1854 had persuaded John Rae that Franklin and all his men were dead. This news was published in the *Montreal Herald* on 21 October 1854, and in *The Times* (London) two days later (Richards 1985: 107). Whether this was before or after the publication of Cridge's book is uncertain.

An American medium

On 30 June 1855, a medium, apparently in the United States, received a communication from a spirit indicating that both Sir John Franklin and Elisha Kent Kane (who had been searching for him) were dead. Summarizing a note or article said to have been published in the *New England Spiritualist*, the *Perth Courier* (3 August 1855), in what is now Ontario, wrote with award-winning carelessness as follows:

> Dr Kane has recently passed away from the earth life, his mortal body having been crushed by the ice, as he went after his crew, who had gone in search of land. His ship's [*sic*] have been crushed to pices [*sic*] and destroyed and most, if not all of his crew [are] in the spirit world. The spirit also stated that he in company with Dr Kane, Sir John Franklin and others, was last night in the Polar regions, and saw the remains of Dr Kane upon the ice, with clothes, papers and his watch, upon which they saw his name, Dr Kane, he having engraved it thereon, not expecting to escape, but hoping that it might possibly be found by someone in search of him.

In fact, Kane's search expedition had included only one vessel, and at the time of the alleged séance Kane and his men, having abandoned the ship in the ice north of Smith Sound, were making their way southward toward Upernavik, Greenland.

John George Henry Brown

A few years after Rae's distressing news about white men starving near King William Island, a Nottingham seer, J.G.H. Brown, who had 'soared to realms said to be out of the ken of ordinary mortal crystal-gazers' (Barrow 1986: 33), posed the following question to the angel Gabriel: 'Is Sir John Franklin, who undertook an expedition to the Arctic Regions for the purpose of discovering the north-western passage of the Polar Regions, living or dead?' Gabriel answered, 'Behold! This man has long since perished by cold, hunger, and exhaustion, while others have shared a similar fate; and in a future chapter, he, himself, will be commanded to appear in the spirit, and give confirmation of these assertions in his own words' (Brown 1857: 155–156). In early summer 1856, Brown 'had recourse to the apparatus for the communion with aerial spirits, and then called upon the spirit of Sir John Franklin. . . .' Franklin's spirit duly appeared, 'attired in a long loose brown garment, similar in appearance to that of the Duke of Wellington, and so far as its outline could be observed, it appeared something below the middle stature, broadish set, and a face of an oval shape, tolerably well featured, and expressive of great intelligence, and who appeared about the middle age' (Brown 1857: 163). The spirit displayed a scroll containing a lengthy summary of his expedition.

The narrative contained the usual ingredients of Arctic adventure — icebergs, narrow leads, dangerous reefs, polar bears. After being frozen into the ice, Franklin had ordered the crews to abandon the ships and cross the ice to the land, where they camped for the winter. In the following summer, efforts to advance in the ships failed, and they settled in for a second winter ashore. Food grew scarce and the crew became mutinous. The ships were driven away to destruction, leaving the men 'destitute of every thing.' The survivors were marooned on an ice floe and driven against a large berg. Franklin and a few men managed to reach an island, on which one of the remaining officers disappeared into some boiling waters. Franklin found the bodies of some of his companions dismembered, presumably by some animal, and he became 'weary, exhausted and spirit-broken' (which would be quite understandable under the circumstances). The end came on 24 September 1853: 'I soon fell into that sleep from which I never awakened to mortal existence; and my body was devoured by the bears' (Brown 1857: 163–168). Unfortunately, the account given by Franklin's spirit gave no details of place or time.

According to Brown, the hardships endured by Franklin brought some of the people present at the séance to tears. As for the authenticity of the phenomenon, he said that as higher powers had enabled the spirit of Franklin to appear and testify, this was 'sufficient to banish all doubts as to its truthfulness' (a questionable argument). Franklin's spirit also revealed that two of his men had survived the ordeal and would soon appear in Britain 'as living proofs of what is here stated.' 'When the facts become generally known, and the remains of their bones, and remnants of clothing are discovered,' he added, 'who then shall say that spiritual communications cannot be relied upon?' (Brown 1857: 168–170). A few years later,

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bones and fragments of clothing *were* found — on King William Island — but they did not confirm the alleged account by Franklin's spirit, and no living survivors ever emerged from the Arctic.

B.J. Rule

The most recent spiritualist claiming to have communicated with Sir John Franklin may be Mrs B.J. Rule, who lives in Florida. She appears to be well qualified to communicate with spirits, having 'studied metaphysics for many years, including self-hypnosis, Eastern philosophy, scientific palmistry, and transpersonal psychology' (Rule 1998). Furthermore, she describes herself as a Franklin descendent. Following the advice of the well-known psychic Edgar Cayce, Rule uses the technique of automatic writing.

Her book *Polar knight: the mystery of Sir John Franklin* (Rule 1998) tells of more than two dozen conversations with the spirits of Sir John and Lady Franklin between 1985 and 1988. In Sir John's early conversations with Mrs Rule, he expressed a desire to set the record straight about his final expedition. After so many false accounts he wanted the true story to be told in an accurate and exciting way, and he seemed gratified that she was ready to undertake the task. When she asked where to find information, he said 'In England. Cambridge Library. Naval Academy, Mariner's Periodical, an old periodical of my time. Journals of Lady Jane Franklin.' Another time he advised her, 'Check the London Times.' Later he suggested that Rule's sister, who was planning a trip to Australia, should contact grandchildren of his former friends in Tasmania, and visit Government House, his old school, the harbour, and the archives. He mentioned that he once donated initialled napkin rings, and a gold pen with cameo, to the Geographical Society there. Subsequently, Mrs Rule's sister did see these items in a museum in Tasmania. Rule attributed the 'first real break' in her research to the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, which mailed her a package of information (Rule 1998: 7, 49, 51).

In the dialogues Sir John revealed that contaminated canned food caused illness and death, but the crew, imagining that evil spirits were spreading disease, scuttled one of the ships. Discipline then broke down, cannibalism occurred, and Franklin, seeing no one he could trust, left the others and walked alone across King William Island to its southeast corner (about 100 miles), where he died after giving his Cross of Hanover to some Inuit, who buried him under a pile of rocks. His probable route, and the location of his grave, are shown on a map. Interestingly, the map reveals that most of the persons who have subsequently scoured the island in search of Franklin's burial site have been looking in the wrong place. The grave is at Matheson Point (68°52'N, 95°10'W). But, sadly, it appears that Franklin did not have any written documents with him, for he stated that when he left the other survivors, 'I took my blanket, a knife, telescope and some food, my Cross of Hanover and compass with me' (Rule 1998: 106, 107).

Even more interesting than Franklin's remarks on the disaster on King William Island are those about spirit life on the other side. Evidently the spirits are well aware of events on Earth and envious of some technological aids. Sir John and Lady Franklin admire Rule's tape recorder. They know that men have landed on the Moon. They are aware of the horrific explosion on the Apollo mission and feel that NASA's space program needs new leadership. Indeed, Franklin thinks he can help improve the rocket design, and badly wants to go into space himself (isn't he already there?). He is surprisingly open-minded on the subject of flying saucers, accepting as fact that aliens visit the Earth to perform certain missions. They are remarkably intelligent, he observes, but a bit short on physical strength and endurance.

A 'Scientific Union' exists on the other side. One of the members is none other than the American explorer Charles Francis Hall, whom Franklin admires for the courageous attempt to find his grave (in 1869). Hall is still working on the problem of how to forgive the enemies he encountered on his last earthly voyage (doubtless they include whoever poisoned him with arsenic on the *Polaris* expedition). Other members of the Scientific Union include Richard Byrd, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Herbert Hoover, Guglielmo Marconi, James Watt, and two astronauts. Clearly there is no lack of intellectual stimulation.

But the verbatim remarks of Sir John and Lady Franklin, as reported by Rule, seem stilted, trite, and inaccurate. Jane chats idly about mundane topics, admires the house in which a session took place — 'I like your house. It is very nice' (page 165) — describes the 'pants' (presumably trousers) she made for herself in Tasmania for riding (page 64). Sir John uses the adjective 'nice' three times to describe the tape recorder (page 50), and says, rather awkwardly, 'I should have exhausted the trials to be sure the supplies were all right' (page 118). He mentions the 'Mariner's Periodical'; does he mean the *Nautical Magazine*? The *Mariners' Mirror*? And what Englishman would refer to *The Times* as *The London Times*? Or the National Maritime Museum as 'the Naval Academy?' Both Sir John and Lady Franklin were accomplished writers, far more articulate than such passages indicate. Considering the length of time since their deaths — a century and a half for Sir John, a century and a quarter for Jane — one wonders whether these are preliminary signs of senility. Hopefully, however, such uncharacteristic modes of speech are simply a result of careless transcription, for Rule herself makes the occasional slip in reporting the names of explorers — for example, Hoswell for Caswell; Ammoney for Ommanney; Penney for Penny (Rule 1998: 165, 64, 50, 118, 117, 122).

The ebb and flow of belief

Novel scientific ideas sometimes generate scepticism, disbelief, ridicule, and opposition, even if they are firmly based on scientific evidence and careful investigation, as

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was Darwin's theory of evolution, published only a decade after the birth of modern spiritualism. The extraordinary nature of most of the phenomena associated with mesmerism and spiritualism made them natural targets for criticism, yet there were many dedicated believers, not only among common folk but also in the higher echelons of society. Darwin's co-evolutionist Alfred Russel Wallace (1975), and Sherlock Holmes' creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1926) both wrote books purporting to prove that spirits did communicate with people on Earth.

Even on the relatively straightforward phenomenon of hypnotism, a phenomenon that can easily be demonstrated, there were violently opposed points of view. Because of its exciting potential in surgery it attracted the attention of some free-thinking medical men, but their successes were greeted with contempt by the establishment. In India, James Esdaile (1975: 167) used mesmerism in more than 260 surgical operations (including amputations), during which his patients felt no pain, and after which they retained no memory of the operation. Yet the opposition tried to curb his activities. Fortunately, after he presented his records to higher authority he was congratulated on his pioneer work and put in charge of a mesmeric hospital in Calcutta. But when he submitted a paper about his methods and results to the *Edinburgh Monthly Journal of Medical Science*, it was rejected. Mesmerism had earlier been labelled 'an odious fraud' by *The Lancet* (Esdaile 1975: 269), and the conservative medical establishment in Britain apparently did not wish to hear about it having been successfully employed in surgery. Other doctors supporting the use of mesmerism in surgery also ran into stiff opposition. John Elliotson, 'the most important scientific exponent of mesmerism in England' (Kaplan 1982: vii) and a man who campaigned vigorously for reform in the medical system, pioneered the use of the stethoscope in Britain, and was an early advocate of acupuncture, resigned from his job at University College Hospital in London because his unorthodox beliefs were not tolerated (Cooter 1984: 52). At the time, ether and chloroform were being tried as anaesthetics, so the proponents of mesmerism may have faced some jealous rivals.

Scepticism is natural, but it is strange that so many reputable doctors and scientists, instead of encouraging unbiased scientific investigation of hypnotism and other phenomena, summarily dismissed them as nonsense and strongly criticized those who earnestly sought to confirm or refute the facts. Although the alleged animal magnetism, universal fluid, influence, or power, supposed by Mesmer, Reichenbach, and others to be at the root of paranormal capabilities was not visible, that did not prove that it did not exist, for electricity and magnetism were invisible too.

On a popular level, the performances by mesmerists also encountered mixed reactions in the 1850s. Claims and denials succeeded each other in rapid succession, as a few examples from *The Aberdeen Herald* indicate: Professor Simpson of the Medico-Chirurgical Society offered to pay £100 to any clairvoyant who could read a line from Shakespeare that he had inserted into a box, but six months later no takers had appeared; Madame Lorenzo, the 'Second-Sighted Lady,' proved to be in collusion with her mesmerist, Signor Lorenzo; Mr Lewis performed in Aberdeen, Sothal Mills, and Kintore, in one week, hypnotising 14 people at one performance, and in another putting a girl into a trance during which she experienced no sensation of pain, but did feel pain when Mr Lewis pricked his own hand with a pin; another mesmerist, Mr Dymond, admitted that his performance was all a hoax. Some public demonstrations were convincing and peaceful but others were interrupted by hecklers and ended in noisy disarray with the patrons demanding their money back (*The Aberdeen Herald* 6 September 1851: 144; 27 September 1851: 155; 24 April 1852: 5; 8 May 1852: 5). It is hardly surprising that Lady Franklin and Parker Snow kept the paranormal nature of their information secret.

Long after the Fox sisters initiated the rise of modern spiritualism in the United States, Maggie, the alleged widow of Elisha Kent Kane, and her younger sister Katie admitted that their spirit rapping had been a trick. It had been 'absolute fraud,' Maggie declared, and in October 1888 she gave a public demonstration of how they made noises by manipulating the joints of toes or feet (Davenport 1897: 37; 74). But at about the same time the discussion of 'animal magnetism' and 'spiritualism' in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1878–1889), while pointing out that many physical manifestations of contact with the spirit world, including lights, sounds, voices, table-turning, apparitions, and direct writing, were *susceptible to* fraud, did not deny that such phenomena occurred. In 1889 Reverend Skewes published his account of Weesy's revelation, which he strongly believed to be true. Davenport (1897), on the other hand, regarded the admission of deception by the Fox sisters as a 'death-blow to spiritualism' (the title of his book). Yet spiritualism survived. In the early twentieth century Houdini wrote several books exposing the conjuring tricks used by clairvoyants and mediums (Randi 1995), but this did not destroy belief either. Showing that certain psychics had used deception, and even replicating their tricks, did not prove that all psychics were fakes. And, in any case, faith sometimes transcended reason.

William Kennedy, who travelled to Londonderry to witness revelations by Weesy's spirit in Captain Coppin's home, was not the only Arctic explorer to take an interest in phenomena associated with mesmerism and modern spiritualism. Sir John Ross was a believer in phrenology, in which a person's head shape was said to reveal traits of personality and behaviour (in phreno-mesmerism, touching certain parts of the head was said to produce a response in specific organs of the body). He saw it as a potential tool with which commanders could allocate shipboard duties and assign disciplinary measures that were appropriate to the particular character of each

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seaman. Ross began measuring heads early in his naval career (Ross 1994: 111), joined the Edinburgh Phrenological Society (of which Elliotson was a prominent member) in 1823 (Cooter 1984: 53), and published a pamphlet on the subject two years later (Ross 1825). The pseudo-science of phrenology gradually faded away, however, and is now regarded as 'complete nonsense' (Youngson 1998: 217).

One of Ross' acquaintances was William Scoresby junior, the versatile Arctic whaling master, author, curate, and authority on the Franklin search, whose contributions to science led to his election to the Royal Societies of both Edinburgh and London by the age of 35 (Stamp and Stamp 1976). Scoresby was an expert on magnetism, particularly as it related to ships' compasses and their deviation, and only a few months after Franklin's departure for the Northwest Passage in 1845 he began investigating animal magnetism (which he called 'zoistic magnetism'). Four years later he gave two public lectures summarizing the results of more than 70 experiments with more than 30 women (Scoresby 1849). Although he had not extended his investigations to clairvoyance, he was sceptical of it, noting that those who claimed to have the paranormal capability never turned it to any useful purpose, such as locating the missing expedition.

Sir John Franklin was again associated with spiritualism in 1967, although only indirectly, when the BBC subjected the prominent Dutch clairvoyant Gerard Croiset to a test. They took an authentic letter by Franklin, comprising about 40 words, wrapped it in cardboard so that only a few letters were visible, and showed it to Croiset. He concluded that it had been written by a captain who drowned when his ship sank between America and England, in 1866 or 1869. The BBC concluded that it was 'a remarkably close guess' (Cooper 1974: 108).

Spiritualism still has many believers; a quick internet search brought up almost 800 web sites advertising the services of personal psychics and the sale of relevant equipment, including scrying mirrors, crystal balls, pendulums, divination and dowsing tools, magical and occult supplies, tarot cards, ouija boards, shamanistic and ritual items, palmistry and astrology tools, and many others.

Influence on the Franklin search

At least eight clairvoyants — Ellen Dawson, Lieutenant Morrison's son, Emma, Jenny, 'Captain Hudson's girl,' John Park (possibly a fake), James Smith, and the woman in Australia — are known to have made statements about Franklin. Parker Snow's vision and Weesy's revelations might also be considered as clairvoyance. Professor Gregory said he had interviewed several clairvoyants in France and England (none of whom is known); and McClintock spoke of many in the United States (none of whom has come to light). In addition, there were probably others who either kept their visions of Franklin to themselves, received little attention, or made pronouncements that have sunk into the mire of forgotten historical facts during the last century and a half. The total number of individuals claiming to perceive Franklin through clairvoyance undoubtedly exceeded a dozen. In addition, at least four mediums (Cridge, Brown, an unidentified person in North America, and Rule) have described communications with Franklin's spirit.

All the known clairvoyants in the years 1849–52 said that Franklin was alive. In fact he had died in June 1847, long before they made their pronouncements, so they were all wrong. Furthermore, those who cited locations for Franklin all put Franklin in different places (Fig. 3), none of which coincided with the actual location. This casts serious doubts on the authenticity of their alleged paranormal powers. But the possibility of fraud was recognized, even by some of the mesmerists. Haddock wrote: 'I have, therefore, regretted that ever any notice of this particular investigation [with Emma], found its way into the public newspapers, because it has led to a host of imitators; some of which seem to have reflected the statements already known or reported. And I know, that Lady Franklin has been pestered, and her feelings hurt, by persons intruding on her the most arrant nonsense and downright falsehoods, as pretended clairvoyant revealments' (Haddock 1851: 150). Of course, other mesmerists may have felt that Haddock had imitated *them*.

In Weesy's revelation and Snow's vision, however, the approximate location of Franklin's expedition was correctly identified. It is therefore less tempting to suggest that they were fraudulent. Yet it is curious that among the four Coppin family members who professed to communicate with Weesy's spirit only one — the father — was more than nine years old, and that 40 or more years elapsed before the paranormal nature of the observations by Weesy and Snow were made public. Although it seems amazing that Franklin's location, allegedly revealed to Coppin's family and to Snow by paranormal processes, turned out to be correct, one must remember that some individuals — without resorting to the questionable phenomena of clairvoyance and mediumship — had already urged the Admiralty to search that particular region. Among them were the explorer Dr Richard King and Lady Franklin (Woodward 1951: 272–273).

That most of the controllers were older men with naval or merchant marine experience — Captain Coppin, Captain Maconochie, Lieutenant Morrison, and probably Captain Hudson — who were *au courant* with the Franklin expedition and search, makes one suspicious. Did they obtain as much information as they could about Franklin and his companions, the search expeditions and their personnel, and the Admiralty's intentions, and then fabricate reasonable 'revelations' by the so-called clairvoyants they controlled? If so, it is difficult to see how the clairvoyants themselves could have been innocent of collusion, unless they believed sincerely (but mistakenly) in their own powers and were skilfully manipulated. To believe that the clairvoyants really did possess paranormal vision, one would have to suppose that, like normal persons, they could become confused, make mistakes, or experience *trompe de l'oeil*. But the mesmerists *did*

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admit this. Discussing the clairvoyance of Ellen Dawson in a letter to Elliotson, Barth wrote: 'I have known her make blunders and be wrong in her assertions' (Barth 1849–50: 101). Haddock, the controller of Emma, the Bolton clairvoyant, cautioned: 'we must expect to find many anachronisms and incongruities in her statements, similar to what we all experience in ordinary dreams' (*The Manchester Guardian* 14 November 1849). Elliotson went even further. 'I believe in clairvoyance,' he stated, 'but I place implicit reliance in no clairvoyant,' adding, 'there is generally more error than accuracy in the whole clairvoyance of every person' (Elliotson 1851–52: 71). Nonetheless, some mesmerists — including Haddock himself — felt that they were assisting the Franklin search by publicizing the statements of their clairvoyants concerning Franklin's location. The attitude of Elliotson was perhaps more responsible; he withheld such information from publication.

A crucial question is whether the information from clairvoyants and mediums — authentic or not — influenced the search for Franklin. The Admiralty learned about Weesy's revelation when Captain Coppin visited Captain Hamilton to emphasize the importance of searching near King William Island. But, as Lady Franklin had instructed Coppin to keep the spiritual origin of the evidence secret, the Admiralty had no way of assessing its reliability, and they did not act on it. The pronouncements of Emma generated far more publicity, and Captain Maconochie kept the Admiralty informed about her statements. Yet, the Admiralty did not act on her information either. Even if the Lords Commissioners had been receptive to spiritualistic phenomena, the unreasonable shifts in Franklin's location in Emma's reports would have seemed ridiculous to anyone who followed their sequence. And although the Admiralty was aware of the statements of some other clairvoyants, no evidence has been uncovered to indicate that they were believed to be credible.

Lady Franklin, on the other hand, is said by Skewes to have transferred the search area for her expeditions of 1850 and 1851 to the region outlined by Weesy. Is there any evidence to corroborate this assertion? In mid-December 1849 she suggested that Wellington Channel and other waterways leading north from Barrow Strait should be searched, but two weeks later she advocated a search of the region near King William Island and the mouth of the Great Fish River (Stone 1993: 130). However, this may not have represented a sudden change in her thinking. Perhaps she simply wanted to see both areas searched because Sir John had been directed firstly towards the continental coast and secondly towards the north. And although by this time she had visited Ellen Dawson and had heard about Emma, she had not yet been made aware of Weesy's revelation, which pointed to the region near King William Island.

Was her subsequent decision to send the expeditions under Forsyth and Kennedy to that very region in 1850 and 1851 based on Weesy's revelation, as Skewes states? Forsyth, Snow (his second-in-command), and Kennedy were silent on the question; they never mentioned the revelation, and neither did she. Did she suppress the information for fear of criticism or ridicule? Did she worry that public knowledge that she had based search plans upon messages received from the spirit of a dead child might harm her reputation and discourage potential sponsors of future expeditions? Skewes (1889: v) merely said that she had kept the story secret for 'family reasons.' One would expect to find evidence of what Lady Franklin really thought in her correspondence and private diaries, but Ralph Lloyd-Jones examined these documents and found nothing, concluding that all references to Weesy's revelations had been expunged from her letter books and diaries, partly because 'her evangelical husband would never have approved of spiritualists' (Lloyd-Jones 2001: 34).

If Lady Franklin and Sophia Cracroft kept the connection with Coppin secret and expunged from their letters and journals all information bearing on this point, then we are left with the statement and supporting of evidence of Skewes. As no valid reason to disbelieve Skewes has emerged, it appears that Weesy's revelation did influence the course of the Franklin search.

An unfortunate aspect of the statements by various clairvoyants was their effect on public opinion. By stating that Franklin and some of his men were alive they were disseminating false information, and thereby extending the fragile hopes of families, friends, and thousands of others not directly connected with the expedition. To what extent the clairvoyant 'evidence,' by prolonging the belief that the missing men were safe, contributed to the large number of search proposals made by various individuals, cannot be ascertained.

Nothing indicates that the books by the mediums Cridge (1854) and Brown (1857) were noticed by Lady Franklin or the Admiralty, but it would be truly remarkable if books published during the search period and purporting to contain statements from Franklin's spirit were not brought to their attention. They probably escaped mention in written documents because they were simply too far-fetched to be taken seriously. The alleged messages from Franklin's spirit during the search period, and those reported more recently by Rule (1998), face the same objections as the statements by various clairvoyants. They simply do not agree. Surely a man of Franklin's integrity would not communicate contradictory accounts of his experiences and location. Mediums were aware that such contradictions undermined their credibility. In Britain, Brown (1857: 162) wrote: 'Up to the present time no positively reliable information has been ascertained of his [Franklin's] real fate, although in America and in this country several spirit mediums have obtained information respecting him; but some of the statements contradicting each other, *all* were doubted and repudiated as unworthy of reliance. . ..' Even so, Brown criticized the Admiralty for not taking spiritualistic information seriously:

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> One person whom I know, well versed in spiritualism, wrote to the Admiralty, and offered to point out the actual spot where some of the remains of the vessel and the bones of the crew could be found; but on learning that by spiritual agency this important discovery would be effected, the Admiralty refused to listen, or to encourage anything in the form of spiritual manifestations. Thus did red tape and prejudice prevent an important feature connected with the genuine character of spiritual agency from being put to the test. (Brown 1857: 162)

In view of the serious discrepancies between the various statements regarding Franklin, however, the Admiralty's attitude seems perfectly reasonable.

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