

‘Physical medium’ Gary Mannion caught on video faking phenomena

Infrared filming at Banyan Retreat shows him holding trumpets and creating other ‘paranormal’ effects

THOUSANDS of people in the UK, Australia and elsewhere who have paid large fees to witness Gary Mannion’s “physical mediumship” will be devastated to learn that they have possibly been duped.

During a recently filmed event it wasn’t spirits communicating from the Other Side who moved trumpets around the room, created psychic breezes and produced other impossible “phenomena” in the blacked-out séance room. It was Mannion. This now throws doubts on all his previous work as a “physical medium”.

Most attendees were totally convinced that they had witnessed genuine physical phenomena. The reason is that Mannion, seated inside a tent-like structure, was

secured to his chair by plastic cable ties at the start of each séance and they were still in place at the end.

So, logically, he could not have produced the phenomena that were witnessed. But not everyone is so easily convinced. An occasional contributor to *Psychic News*, medium Chris Connelly, had his doubts when he sat with Mannion at an experimental séance on 1 May 2016 at the Banyan Retreat, a spiritual centre which has featured in our columns in the past.

Connelly expressed his concerns in an online Blog shortly afterwards and he happily accepted *Psychic News’* request to publish it in this issue. (See “Levitating trumpets and a materialisation” on pages 40-41.)

What Connelly (These stills from the video courtesy of Banyan Retreat)



Gary Mannion at Heathrow Airport before flying to Australia (Photo: Facebook)

and the other invited sitters were totally unaware of was that the proceedings were being filmed by an infrared camera. Gary Mannion was also unaware of this, though Banyan Retreat displays notices advising its visitors that cameras are in operation throughout the centre.

Blatant fraud

When Nic Whitham, co-owner and manager of the centre and former columnist for *Psychic News*, viewed the video recording, his worst fears were confirmed. They show Mannion indulging in blatant fraud.

He begins the séance in a zip-fronted onesie, and then he slips in and out of the tent in various stages of undress, picking up the trumpets and moving them around the room, touching people and stroking their heads with them.

Then, wearing only what appears to be a loincloth, he moves slowly around the circle, allowing various sitters to feel the flesh of a “materialised spirit”. Individuals, still seated, are dragged towards the



Chris Connelly



Nic Whitham



centre of the room. And some are invited to receive healing from spirit hands.

Whitham did two things. He refunded everyone's fee for the event. And he revealed to Mannion that he had video proof that he had produced the phenomena himself.

His aim, he has explained to *Psychic News*, was to stop Mannion holding any more physical séances and to encourage him to return to his roots as a healer. Whitham's actions and decisions, he added, had been taken in conjunction with spirit advice.

Mannion agreed. On 28 May, he flew out to Australia, where his company, Afterlife Agents, is based, having given an undertaking to Whitham that he would never hold physical séances again. And that should have been the end of the story.

Mannion's Australian advertising seemed to provide confirmation since it promoted only psychic surgery, healing workshops, trance demonstrations, one-to-one mentorship appointments, and psychic and mediumship appointments. There was no mention of physical séances.

But then word got back to Whitham that people he knew *had* just attended a physical séance with Mannion. There was only one action that could be taken and that was to make video clips public in the hope that they would reach the widest possible audience to make people aware of what had happened.

The videos can be viewed at garyfiles.co.uk. Be prepared to be shocked by the blatant masquerading.

Equally as shameful is the revelation, made by Whitham to *Psychic News*, that Mannion asked him, via Facebook, to "name your price" for the video.

Whitham responded: "Gary – please do not judge me by your own standards. You have absolutely nothing that I want. I do this on behalf of the Spirit World and the thousands of people you have fraudulently taken money from over the past ten years or so."



Banyan Retreat, the spiritual centre in Kent, England, where the séance was videoed

Circle leaders' reactions

It is not only sitters who are angry and astonished to discover that Mannion has been caught in fraud. *Psychic News* has spoken to three of his circle leaders about their working relationship with him.

Despite accusations from sitters who may have been duped in the past, it is clear that Mannion's performance on 1 May did not require any assistance from others. It was a solitary enterprise.

Teresa Muzzlewhite, his circle leader and close friend for the past four years, was in control, as usual, at the Banyan Retreat séance which captured his trickery on video. She was almost too upset to voice her feelings.

"At the moment I don't know what to say, really. I'm struggling to get my head around it."

Sussex-based psychic artist **Christine Parkin**, who acted as leader of his physical circles for two years in the UK and also in Australia, said that on reflection she was astonished that she had not had any suspicions about Mannion's mediumship.

Her reaction on seeing the video "was as if someone had thumped me in the stomach. I was genuinely shocked."

She has not seen Mannion for a couple of years, having fallen out with him in Australia when she tried to get him to be more professional in his dealings with others.

"There were certain aspects of him that I did not like," she explained. "I am absolutely gutted that Gary has obviously been laughing at us all. Looking at the videos he's too adept, too agile. But how can he see in the dark? How does he get out of the cable ties?"

"It makes me feel a bit stupid, I must admit. I think he should come clean about how he does it. I now question his trance sittings and the healing and everything else.

"I would have staked my life on the authenticity of his physical mediumship. I'm gutted."

Some may argue that he once possessed physical mediumship powers, but there is evidence of cheating in the past.



California-based **Michael Mayo** – who met and developed a close relationship with Mannion in Australia, becoming his circle leader – soon began to suspect that the phenomena were fake. His suspicions were eventually confirmed, he says, when he left his seat during a séance and discovered that the chair to which Mannion was supposed to have been tied was empty.

“I met Gary around June 2014, and we became very, very close friends,” he told *Psychic News*. “Ultimately, I started sitting in his séances, becoming his circle leader whenever he was in Australia.

“From the very first séance I had questions and that became an ongoing thing every time I sat with him. Eventually, I could explain how he could fake all of this but I could never explain how he got out of the chair. But I felt strongly that he was getting out.”

His suspicions were reinforced when a “materialised spirit” walked around the room and held a luminous plaque to its face. Mayo realised it had Mannion’s features.

“Also, he walks around basically not wearing any clothes. I remember at one of the séances he wore my underwear that night and I could see my underwear on his body!”

Mannion sometimes shaved his body hair and Mayo noticed that this “spirit being” supposedly walking around the room had corresponding body hair.

“I just had to find out for myself – really truly know if my suspicions were correct – because I didn’t want to be a part of something that was fraudulent and not real.

“So at one of the séances I waited until I

could hear people on the other side of the room saying, ‘Oh, he’s touching me’. I just got up, walked over to the tent which had luminous dots at the entrance, put my hand into the tent and touched the chair. It was empty!”

Mayo told others with whom they were living about his discovery but there was a lot of resistance to accepting it. They didn’t want to believe it.

“Once I told Gary I’d checked the chair, everything turned on me.... It was awful. Just really messed up. I never sat with him again.”

Mannion did everything to discredit him, Mayo says, and even accused him of endangering his life. He also offered the excuse that at times Spirit overtook his body in a trance state and would use his physical form to create some phenomena.

“But technically, that’s *not* physical mediumship,” Mayo observes.

“I think my own personal feelings for Gary got in the way. I never wanted to believe it, even though I had doubts. It’s mind-boggling how I went along with it.

“Here’s a person preying on people’s grief and beliefs *and* taking their money. He made ridiculous amounts of money from each of his séances. It’s sick. I’m really happy the video has revealed the truth. I’ve wanted this to happen so much.”

Mannion issues statement

Six days after the videos were made public, Gary Mannion finally made a public statement (19 June) on Facebook, with the promise of a “bigger statement” soon. It would appear that he is taking no responsibility for his actions, blaming instead his “spirit team”. He states that he

“His suspicions were eventually confirmed, he says, when he left his seat during a séance and discovered that the chair to which Mannion was supposed to have been tied was empty”

was fastened to his chair with cable ties and they were still in place at the end of the demonstration. He adds: “My team also state they were in control throughout the séance.”

Psychic News makes no comment on this claim at this stage. Our August issue will carry a wide-ranging discussion of the Banyan Retreat séance and video recording, with input from leading Spiritualists and others who have attended Mannion’s events. ■

Three Gary Mannion circle leaders give their reactions



Christine Parkin: I would have staked my life on his genuineness



Michael Mayo: ‘Materialised spirit’ was wearing my underwear



Teresa Muzzlewhite: Too upset to voice my feelings