

Not “ ‘Til Death Do Us Part,” But Beyond

By Michael E. Tymn

As Roy Dixon-Smith, a British career military officer serving in the Indian army, came to see it, the marriage vow, “till death do us part,” does not apply to everyone. After the death of his wife, Betty, he continued to hear from her, communicate with her, and even see her. He told of his continuing romance with Betty in his 1952 book, *New Light on Survival*.



Roy and Betty Dixon Smith

Suffering from a condition called bacterial endocarditis, Betty passed into spirit in India on August 23, 1944, during her early 30s, after some five years of marriage to Roy. “Exhortations to prayer and faith and assurances of a future reunion in a vague sort of heaven, supported by biblical texts, were of no use whatever to me,” Dixon-Smith recorded his initial despair, adding that at the very most religion offered him nothing more than a gray tinge to his black despair.

After returning to Scotland and depositing their four-year-old daughter, Cherry, with her aunt in Falkirk, Dixon-Smith went to London and began exploring mediumship. Over the next five years, he had numerous evidential sittings in which Betty communicated. They came through clairvoyance, automatic writing, trance voice and even the direct voice, but as of July

1948 he had not yet experienced the materialization phenomenon he had read so much about. He therefore sent a letter to *Psychic News* (published 10th July 1948) requesting information on a genuine materialization medium.

The letter resulted in being invited to the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Patterson of Buckie (Scotland) for a July 31 sitting with a medium, who for privacy purposes, he refers to in his book as “Mrs. ‘D’.” Dixon-Smith took with him a dark red rose and Betty’s wedding ring. A minute or two after the members of the small circle took their seat and a red light was turned on, a male voice (the medium’s control) addressed the circle and began introducing materialized figures before they emerged from the materialization cabinet. “The first few visitors were for other sitters,” Dixon-Smith wrote. “They spoke clearly, naturally, and intelligently, and were apparently recognized; each only lasted for about a minute, sinking swiftly to the floor as he or she withdrew within the curtains.”

The male voice then announced that he had a lady present for the “gentleman by the door” and asked him to call her out. Dixon-Smith responded by asking her to come out. “A tall slim figure thereupon emerged from the left edge of the curtains, stretched out a hand, picked up my rose, crossed the floor to my chair, walking outside the curtains and in full view of the circle, and threw the rose in my lap,” Dixon-Smith continued the account. “I stood up to peer into the face dimly seen in the enveloping ‘cowl’ whereupon Mrs. Patterson exclaimed, ‘Don’t touch her!’”

The materialized figure stepped back toward the curtains and “said in a voice and accent

exactly resembling Betty's, 'He won't do that. He knows better.'" While the voice seemed like Betty's and the shape of the head and face appeared to be hers, Dixon-Smith could not make out her features well enough to confirm that it was Betty. He was certain, however, that it was not "Mrs 'D' masquerading as Betty as she was a much shorter and stout woman. As the materialization lasted only about a minute, Dixon-Smith deemed it inconclusive.

It was pointed out that the heat of the evening made for less than ideal conditions. The group met again the following night when conditions were cooler. "After a few visitors had come and gone, the guide asked the sitters to sing, 'I'll walk beside you,' [Betty's favorite song]," Dixon-Smith wrote. "At the close of the song, the same slim figure as before emerged from the left edge of the curtain, groped for the ring (which he had placed on a sideboard), and in doing so, knocked the torch (i.e., flashlight) off the sideboard on to the floor." Mrs. Patterson picked up the ring and gave it to the materialized figure, after which the materialized figure slipped it on Dixon-Smith's little finger. "I felt the touch of her fingers as she put it on, and they were warm and seemed as normal in all respects as any physical ones."

A torch was then permitted by the guide. "I was standing up within a few inches of Betty's form, and I peered closely into her face which was on a level with my own," Dixon-Smith continued. "My critical faculties dominated my emotion as I took in every detail of the features; yet it was not till the following day that the full wonder and joy of this experience came over me."

Dixon-Smith further explained that the "ectoplasmic wrapping" made it difficult to clearly distinguish the features, but he was now certain that it was Betty. "Speech combined with materialization is very rarely possible, since the 'power' is generally used up in the forming of the figure," he explained what he later came to

understand. "That is why materialized people can say so little, and the more they talk the shorter the time their forms can last." "This solid being with a clearly defined personality, who came to give Dr. Williams and myself a demonstration of how ectoplasm could perform miracles by means of laws manipulated by thought, stood there before us and then melted away into the world which our physical senses could not penetrate," Laubscher wrote, noting that Harris was clearly visible the entire time and there was no way that he could have been impersonating spirits as the skeptics claim.

Soon after the Buckie sittings, Dixon-Smith arranged a sitting with Minnie Harrison at the home of Sydney and Gladys Shipman in Middlesbrough. "For evidential reasons I revealed no details of my private life before the séance was over, and for the same reason they would have refused to have listened to them, since they were just as anxious as I for genuine evidence," he explained his approach to such sittings. His first sitting with Mrs. Harrison took place on October 9, 1948 with 10 people, including himself and the medium, present. Tom Harrison, Minnie's son, was one of those present and confirms the Dixon-Smith sitting in his 2004 book, *Life After Death – Living Proof*.

The first phase of the sitting was the "direct voice" in which a trumpet hovered in front of the sitter to be addressed. Some voices came through loud and clear, while others were difficult to understand. When the trumpet settled in front of Dixon-Smith, the circle guide gave an "excellent description" of Betty and then allowed her to speak directly. "Betty then attempted to speak to me," Dixon-Smith recorded. "After prolonged and seemingly painful effort and a few exclamations to the effect that she couldn't do it, she managed to say, 'I am your Betty'."

At the conclusion of the direct-voice phase, the red light was turned on and the room was well illuminated, so that Dixon-Smith had no

difficulty in observing forms and faces. Minnie Harrison, who had been in the circle and not in trance during the direct-voice phase, then took her place behind the curtain.

Dixon-Smith observed a half-dozen materializations of friends and relatives of the other sitters. "I rose from my chair, walked up to them and shook them by the hand, and we made conventional remarks to each other just exactly as everyone does when first meeting a stranger," he wrote. "They were swathed in white muslin-like draperies and cowls...They were solid, natural, and except for their apparel, exactly like ordinary living people. In fact, had everyone been dressed similarly, it would have been quite impossible to distinguish these materialized forms from the rest of the company. Their hands felt perfectly natural and life-like in every respect and their handgrips were very firm. They smiled, laughed, and chatted to me and the others; all their features, complexions, and expressions being perfectly clear in that ample light...There were mutual cheery good-byes as they departed, sinking apparently through the floor in precisely the same manner as the forms at Buckie."

Then the guide announced the coming of Betty and asked them to sing, "I'll walk beside you." As they sang, Betty emerged from the curtain and stood silently in full view. "I rose from my chair and walked up to the figure, taking the extended hand in mine," Dixon-Smith further recorded the experience. "I examined the hand, and it was just like Betty's and quite unlike the medium's. I stared into the face, and recognized my wife. We spoke to each other, though what we said I cannot remember, for I was deeply stirred and so was she and her voice was incoherent with emotion."

One of the sitters asked if Dixon-Smith could kiss her and Betty responded in the affirmative. "I then kissed her on her lips which were warm, soft, and natural," Dixon-Smith went on. "Thereupon she bent her head and commenced

to weep, and in a moment or two she sank. I watched her form right down to the level of the floor at my feet where it dissolved, the last wisp of it being drawn within the cabinet."

In concluding his book, Dixon-Smith wrote that he realizes that the reader will find it difficult to believe such amazing accounts of life after death as he has related. "Yet why should these accounts be so incredible when all professing Christians must believe in the similar materialization of Jesus to His mother and disciples, as I can now quite easily do?"

