

A Man galled Gus And Peter Blanchard

Gus: In fact his name is Fergus; Fergus Gordon Anckorn. I can recall the night I first witnessed him on stage at The Victory Services Club in London performing an astonishing act with his dog. At this time I was a guest, and the premises were the temporary home of Magic Circle. The club had several bars, a restaurant, and a large room with a stage. The amazing thing about this act was it appeared that the Dog could read instructions and carry them out.



Fergus G. Anckorn M.I.M.C

A volunteer member of the audience came on to the stage, there was a blackboard with a list of instructions or orders; for example: Bark, sit down, lie down, fetch newspaper, fetch gloves, fetch biscuit, fetch walking cane ect. No sooner was the item ticked (in random order) on the blackboard than the dog responded immediately without any prompting or hesitation. I watched in wonder as Mr. Anckorn went through a most unusual and rare act. The dogs name was Sam, part border collie and part Labrador. It was obvious to me that Mr. Anckorn had trained this dog to the point of excellence, Sam had a brilliant brain, and responded to his master in a way I had not witnessed before. At the end of the act he received prolonged applause, not least from me. It was some years before I was to see Mr. Anckorn again.

Saturday 3rd November 2001. Peter Blanchard: At this time I was looking for an outlet and to advance my interest in Magic, I decided to attend as a guest, at the Magic Circle dealer's day staged at the Imperial Hotel in London. I had the good fortune to meet and chat to a gentleman by the name of Peter Blanchard, we both enjoyed a glass of red wine together, "You know; I think you really ought to be one of us, I would like to invite you one of our meetings and you may bring your wife." "Yes I would enjoy that, thank you very much.



*Peter D. Blanchard
M.I.M.C*

A provisional date was agreed for Monday the 19th November, Peter said, "I will write to you soon with the details and the invitation." That was a good chance meeting and on the following Tuesday sure enough the invitation arrived.

Monday 19th November 2001. With my wife Josie I set off for London and the Magic Circle Headquarters, by this time The Magic Circle had its own building and clubrooms situated in Euston, Peter greeted us and gave us a good tour of the building and introduced us to other members.

One I remember was the Magic Circle Chaplin, the Reverend Stephen Blood, Josie remarked how friendly everybody was, and indeed they were. As we were chatting Peter asked me if I was interested in joining as an associate member, "Yes I am"--- "Good, I will get the forms and propose you, I will also find someone to second you." The forms were filled in, the fee paid, and I would have two years to pass my examination to become a full member. Peter was a good man and I will always be grateful to him.

Monday 8th April 2002. I had been a regular visitor to the clubrooms since my visit in November, after reading in the library which is full of good reading matter for members who intend to pass the examinations I made my way up to the clubroom for coffee. I had completed an hours study downstairs as I was to take my examinations for membership into The Magic Circle within a few weeks. With coffee and a biscuit, busy chatting to members of the club, I suddenly realized Mr. Anckorn was sat at a table nearby, I did a double take. Yes, that was him all right, I was so pleased. I made discreet enquires, "Oh yes Fergus, ex. P.O.W. You know, he keeps so well he's 83 doesn't look it." I agreed, and that was exactly what I wanted. By the next morning I had all the information I required about this man.

Monday 15th April 2002, Magic Circle H.Q. London. I could not wait, I hoped he would be receptive to me walking up to his table without introduction, he was. "Please sit down and join us, this is John Sherry." We all shook hands, I casually mentioned I had seen him some years before at the Victory Services Club. "Oh yes that's right, Ali Bongo fired a gun at the start of the show, we heard that down the road." "Would you care to see something of my magic? I enquired. "Yes we would, thanks." I was rather nervous because Fergus was a member of The Inner Magic Circle and a very experienced magician. I explained about security and proceeded with my Security Test. I could see when I finished he looked baffled, after a pause Fergus asked, "Are you going to tell us how you did that?" "Well in a few weeks time I take my examination, if I pass maybe then, that's how I met; A Man Called Gus.

Monday 20th May 2002. At last, the big night had arrived. I was to take the examination for membership of The Magic Circle. I took my place in the Devant Room in good time and dressed accordingly. My examiners were Fay Presto, Michael Vincent, and David Tomkins, all well experienced magicians and all Members of the Inner Magic Circle. I noticed Fergus was sat on the front row with John Sherry next to him; they had come to see if I could do the same piece of Magic again. On my final presentation I first requested that David Tompkins helped me, he declined, saying he was examining me, therefore I requested the person next to him help his name Brian Stringer, he agreed. I went through the same routine as I had previously with Fergus. It worked well and I received good applause. My final important words were. "Thank you all for your kind attention" I then retreated downstairs, a little later I thanked Brian Stringer for his help. Several people congratulated me that evening including the examiners.

Hotel Alpina Interlaken Switzerland, Wednesday 12th June, 2002. Time 2100. I had an important telephone call to make, it was to the examinations secretary and member of the Magic Circle Council Mr. Graham Reed. "Good evening Mr. Reed, I am phoning to enquire about my examination results?" "Michael, I am pleased to tell you, you have passed, let me be the first to congratulate you." "Thank you so much for that good news" I was so pleased now that I was a member of that fine company.

Monday 23rd September 2002 the evening came quickly I journeyed to London on the 1550 train. I went into the clubroom and sat with Mr. Anckorn and his friend, we got on well together. It was an evening of interest and enlightenment, during the next few months and years I was to learn so much more about this remarkable gentleman.

Wednesday 23rd June 2004. Sadly Peter Blanchard died, both Fergus and I attended the funeral in Kingston Surrey, many magicians attended and paid tribute to Peter who was dedicated to the magical arts and a first class club member.