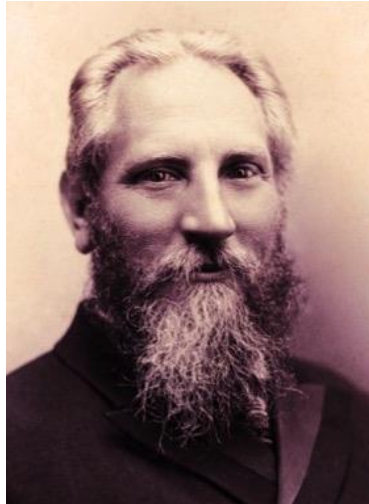


## Sydney Police Investigates C. W. Leadeabter

### Conclusions of the First Police Investigation (28 December 1917)



Compiled by Pedro Oliveira

Thomas Hammond Martyn was in the early 1890's President of The Theosophic League in New South Wales. He was elected President of Sydney Lodge in 1892, and served as Australian Section Treasurer in 1895. He was elected General Secretary of the TS in Australia in 1898, but was too ill to serve. He served as General Secretary of the Australian Section between 1916-19 and had a strong influence in the Section for many years. He was the founder of Sydney Theosophical Education Trust. (Source: *Theosophical Year Book 1938*.)

C. W. Leadbeater met T. H. Martyn in Australia during the former's tour of the Section in 1905. They also met in London in May 1906, just after CWL had resigned from the Theosophical Society at the Advisory Board Meeting on 16 May 1906. Although Martyn was aware of the charges against CWL he invited him to come to Australia. Thomas Martyn was also at Adyar in 1913 when the custody case between Annie Besant and Naraniah, Krishnamurti's father, was taking place at the Madras High Court. One of the main arguments of the prosecution was that CWL had sexually molested the boy Krishnamurti. Although the presiding Judge dismissed that charge the press in Madras was circulating highly defamatory statements about CWL and Thomas Martyn was aware of them. Soon after that Martyn invited CWL for a longer period of residence in Australia, and to stay in his own home.

Below are some of the reports about CWL's visit to Sydney in 1905, published in *Theosophy in Australasia*:

MR. LEADBEATER.

Our latest news is that he considers his visit to us of next year as definitely fixed. He will leave San Francisco on 12th January, pay a short visit to Honolulu on the way over, and be in Auckland about the end of February. Two months are to be spent in New Zealand, and Sydney is to be reached before the end of April. Remaining in Sydney until the end of May or beginning of June, he will then go to Queensland, and work south and west, following Miss Edger's route, finally leaving our territory, as she did, at Fremantle, and at about the same time of year—10th November.

LEADBEATER LECTURES.

We have a few specimens to hand of some of these single lectures in the form of neatly printed little booklets, a supply of which we are obtaining from Harrogate, Yorkshire, where they were printed. As shewing [sic] the activity, present and prospective, at most of our Branches, large parcels of these have been ordered from home; even a small Branch like Launceston taking 500 of them. They are marked price 2d., and are admirably suited for members to have on hand to supply to casual enquirers, and we advise the isolated member, often at a loss how to meet an enquiry, to provide himself with a few of these. The subjects selected are under ten in number and include –

“The Soul and its Vestures.”

“Guardian Angels.”

“What Theosophy does for Us.”

“Purgatory.”

“Heaven World.”

“Law of Cause and Effect.”

“Reincarnation.”

We shall, as soon as we get the supply, be ready to send a parcel of not less than a dozen (price 2/3, including postage), to any who express a wish for them.

MR. LEADBEATER IN SYDNEY. (*Theosophy in Australasia*, June 1905)

The pent up expectation of the Sydney members of the T.S. has now crystalised into an actual visit, which will now become part of the history of Theosophy in Sydney, and in the days that are coming many are there amongst us who will speak of the great times there were when Mr. Leadbeater first came to Australia. As yet it is a little premature to say what the harvest has been, or to prophecy what it may be, but that there has been a very remarkable gathering of people as attentive listeners to what Theosophy has to say there cannot be a shadow of doubt. In taking stock of the audience at any of these special propaganda lectures, anyone who can look below the surface at all, must see the wonderful variety of minds brought together on the common ground of *some* attraction to the mystical and the superphysical side of life. Where a lecturer stands up gifted with great eloquence, great power to move people by the charm of his rhetoric, of his pathos, there is always room for the supposition that it is for the pleasure which these things give that the audience are mostly attracted. When, however, there is but a minimum of any pretence to these qualities,

when the appeal to the audience is founded rather upon the clear, plain, lucid statement of what is *claimed to be fact*, then one is justified in assuming that it is for the ideas which are voiced themselves that the bearers seek when they come, as many of them have done again and again, to listen to these lectures. Of course there is some attraction in a cultivated voice, a pleasing and commanding presence, and a select choice of English, which may account for the presence of a few, but the majority of the audience gave sign of keen critical attention, foreign to the attitude of the pleasure seeking dilettanti.

Members who carry on the weekly Activities of the Branch in humdrum times fall easily into the idea that the two or three hundred people who month in and month out, come into any touch with the Branch lectures, represent as many as there are of the city population who have at any time been brought under the influence of Theosophic thought. It is when we set going some special stir such as the advent of a capable world evangelist, from some other part of our camp, that we discover how many there are who nightly pillow heads around us more or less occupied with thoughts certain to bring them in the future to a knowledge of the great truth. That this must be so, that there must be a great preparation of many of what we think outside minds going on, is shown by the quietness with which the statements made in the lectures have been received. Two or three generations ago such statements would have been received with ridicule, contempt, fanatical denunciation; probably would not have been permitted a hearing. As it is, the quiet receptivity of the mixed audiences, proves how largely the great centres of life must now be permeated with thoughts based upon the existence of an unseen world, in the minds of a class of people seldom seen inside any place of worship.

There has been no beating about the bush, no qualifying loopholes of escape in the statements made; almost dogmatic they have been in their undisguised sincerity; and surely it may be claimed that the way in which they have been received by the hundreds of people who have listened to them, that the continuous work of the Society, and the literature it has spread, has prepared the soil for a good deal of future sowing. Taking the whole series of lectures given, they have formed a complete structure in the mind leading from its foundation upon the rock of "Mission of Theosophy" before the world to the apex of the Crown of Peace, which it is the aim of that mission to bestow upon every one. If one could single out any one particular subject which above all others seemed to hold the listener's attention, it might be "Life After Death," perhaps a tribute to the belief that the speaker was dealing with facts in what, to the audience, was a maze of conjecture—an ocean of doubt. Mr. Leadbeater confesses to dislike the subject of Christian Theosophy, yet it is doubtful if any of his lectures did better work than that which dealt with it. Such distinctions, however, are like isolating a few bars in a great symphony, or half-a-dozen words in a grand peroration—the whole must be taken as a complete structure, such as would stand the decaying hand of time. An object lesson has been given our working members in what not to do, and what not to say. Throughout there has been a studious avoidance of any student's terms, of the use of any Eastern words where plain English could be made to do. Also, there has been no attempt to explain the palpably inexplicable.

"Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread."

has been an axiom quietly acted upon, as to what should be left alone. There has been no attempt to dissect Parabrahm or to explain the Absolute; on the contrary the discourses have been about the life which everyone of us has to live, and an effort throughout to make us understand the extent, the grandeur and the scope of *that*. Many who come only within reach of the Society's work at some special time like this are accustomed to get opportunities by private interviews, or questions at the lectures, of ventilating their own particular difficulty, or of dilating upon their own particular experiences; and all of these will, this time, go away with a grievance, we suppose. We can afford to risk all this in the object lesson given us to do our own work and not to allow anything to hinder the effectiveness of that. Mr. Leadbeater realises that he cannot keep pace with the work he has laid out as possible to him, if a large share of the day is to be taken up in listening to 'experiences' of those who very often are able to give but a hazy account of what they do see. Our lecturer realises that all these things will keep until they do see with clearness, when, in all probability, they will not want to talk much about it.

The close of this visit leaves one with a settled conviction that the Society's centres everywhere in the Commonwealth may be certain of just that spur to fresh effort which all of us need from time to time.

MR. LEADBEATER.—Our visitor and his party leave Sydney on 13th June by S.S. "Wodonga" for Cairns direct, reaching there on 22nd, and remaining until the end of the month. He then departs for Townsville, where a stay of about ten days is made. From Townsville he goes direct to Brisbane, which is reached on 13th July, so that the activities and lectures there will be in full swing when our July issue goes to press. An obvious printer's error appeared in our May summary of the itinerary. The Sydney visit closes on 13th June, not 30th.

After receiving a letter of Joseph Fussell, Secretary to Katherine Tingley, Leader of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, Point Loma, California, dated 1 June 1917, to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, New South Wales, Police authorities in Sydney decided to conduct an investigation on the conduct of C. W. Leadbeater. Mrs Tingley was conducting at that time a relentless defamatory campaign against both Annie Besant and CWL in several countries.

Fussell attached to this letter a testimony by Douglas Pettit, who had travelled with CWL in the United States in 1903, and to whom the latter had given advice on regular masturbation. However, and in spite of friendly letters to CWL before, in the testimony, given personally to Mrs Tingley, Douglas claimed that he and CWL had sexual relations. Information about the previous attitude of Douglas towards CWL can be found in the book *CWL Speaks – C. W. Leadbeater's correspondence concerning the 1906 Crisis in the Theosophical Society*, Olive Tree Publishing, Woy Woy, Australia, 2018. (See [www.cwlworld.info](http://www.cwlworld.info))

We include below facsimiles of letters from Douglas Pettit to CWL, from a private collection, written after his travels with him in 1903. They present clear evidence of his attitude to CWL, with a keynote of friendliness and respect. The 'attacks' he mentions in some of his letters are episodes of epilepsy.



Lee Avenue Post-Office,  
Toronto, Canada.  
May 15th., 1904.

My dearest Uncle,

We have at last got somewhat settled down at New Beach as you will see from the heading. It is very delightful down here among the trees and it is quite near to the lake. I do not think that you visited this part of Toronto when you were here, but it is one of the prettiest

The Sunday before last we celebrated our White Lotus day. We did a good deal of decoration, and everything turned out very nicely. We had a great many flowers, so that we were able to make things look quite pretty. We had music, and then some of the members gave little speeches. Last Sunday we had a lecture from a Mr. Houston on "Tennyson". It was very interesting, but I think it is rather out of place to have people lecture on such things without any Theosophy in it.

Yesterday we went for a walk along the cliffs down here by the lake. It was very pretty and I enjoyed it very much.

I am enclosing a rather absurd press-cutting about Mrs. Besant. It is rather silly for people to write such idiotic stuff.

I know that Basil is continually taking photographs while in Australia and on the tour generally, and as I know that you usually send the films home to Harrogate, I wondered if you would mind sending them to me first. I could take copies of them for myself, and then forward them on to Harrogate. Of course I should be most careful with them, if you could do this. What do you think?

Everything is getting along nicely. I have had one or two attacks lately, but they have been very much milder in form, so I expect that I am getting over them. With much love to you all

I am ever

Yours most affectionately

*Douglas*

Toronto, Canada.

May 30th., 1905.

My dearest Uncle,

Very many thanks for your two letters of the 17th. and 20th. of April, one from Napier and the other from Auckland. Many thanks to Basil also for his very nice letter from Invercargill. Your visit there must have been quite an interesting experience. You must be having a very delightful time, and I hope that the rest of the tour will as interesting. All the news that your letters contained was most interesting, and I only wish that I could have been with you to see all the sights. Many thanks also for the various postcards, and for the stamps. They were all quite new to me. I also noticed that there seem to be two types of the penny king's head. One has a portion of the nose and ear red while the other is without this colouration.

I have met Russel Fox whom you mention and he seems to be a very nice boy, and he is reading some of your books, and seems to be quite interested.

Everything here is getting along very nicely. The weather we are having is delightful, although there has been a little rain for the last two days. I am getting quite well and strong again, and the attacks have become less frequent, and very much milder, so I hope that I shall soon be over them. I shall get a boat as we are near the lake, and get a good deal of exercise out of that. I hope that you are all in good health, and that the tour is not proving too great a strain for you.

In reading the last chapter of the "Ancient Wisdom", I came upon a quotation from the "Secret Doctrine" in which, speaking of the moon and the earth, it says "A new moon will appear during the seventh round and our moon will finally disintegrate and disappear". If this is so then as Venus is in its seventh round may we expect the appearance of a new moon as the old one has disintegrated---or does this only apply to chains when they are in the fourth incarnation?

The Branch meetings are getting along smoothly, and everything is going very well. Miss Hayward noticed the difference in the heading and body of a letter Basil wrote to her lately and asked me about it, and as I could not get round I had to acknowledge that it was a carbon. She sends her love to you all, and why she does not write is because she is busy. With very much love to you all

I am ever Yours most affectionately

Douglas



Lee Avenue Post-Office,

Toronto, Canada.

June 16th., 1905.

My dearest Uncle,

Very many thanks for your two letters of the 7th. and 15th. of May; the former reached me on the 5th. of June and the latter on the 14th., so that it seems that the San Francisco way is the quickest. although Vancouver seems more direct. Your letters were of the deepest interest, and I am glad to hear that you had such a good voyage on the "Sonoma". I am also very glad to hear that the public lectures have been attended so well; Australia seems to be a most excellent field. It is a pity that it is so far away, and that more people could not visit it. Mrs. Besant has never been there, has she?

Very many thanks for the stamps enclosed, and also for the envelopes and post-cards. They were all quite new to me, and will be very nice for my collection. Why is that you put 5d. and 2½d. on your letters. Surely the postage to Canada is not as much as that. I have only been putting two cents on mine to you---I hope very much that none of them have been overweight. However, in looking it up in the Toronto Guide, it seems that the postage from here to Australia is only two cents. You also put three cents on your postcards---they seem to cost more also.

I traced your little excursion on the postcard and found it very interesting. I am going to get a map of New Zealand and Australia and draw your tour on it, so if you could send me the timetables of some of the railways you went by with maps in them it would be very useful. Very many thanks for the very nice post-cards. They are all printed very nicely and Sydney must be indeed a pretty place. Those from the "Sonoma" ~~menu~~ ~~they~~ are quite a curiosity, and I like them much.

We hope to be able to have Raja here when he makes his tour of the Middle and Eastern states, and I hope that he will be able to stay for as long a time as possible. Many thanks for those photographs of Basil and the party. In that one of Basil's in which he is alone his long neck is very prominent!!

We are having a delightful time out here among the woods and pines and I am enjoying it very much. I am practically all right in health now. I shall send this letter by Vancouver as it will probably be the quickest, and the next boat leaves there on the 23rd. With very much love to you all

I am ever

Yours most affectionately

*Douglas*

P.S. A big batch of clippings and a copy of the New Zealand Theosophical Magazine

Lee Avenue Post-Office,  
Toronto, Canada.  
June 22nd., 1905.

My dearest Uncle,

I shall aim to send this letter by way of San Francisco. By calculating how many days ahead, I shall be able to send you about three letters a month---two by San Francisco and one by Vancouver. I believe I mentioned that I received from you that package of press-cuttings, the New Zealand Theosophical Magazine and the Report of the Convention. They were all very interesting, and I was very glad to get them.

I do not think that there is very much news since last writing. On last Saturday, a boy friend and myself went for a bath along the cliffs near here, and although it was a little cold we had a very nice time. It will get much warmer later on probably. That day we bathed over on the island, it was very cold in the lake because we were a long way away from the regular coast line, but on the beach here it is much warmer. Do you have much bathing in Australia? If the climate is so good I should think that the water would be delightful. However, you did not mention any bathing in any of your letters.

The meetings of the Society will stop during the months of July and August. The meetings of the members will not stop, however, but will be some what modified during those two months. We shall take up certain topics each Saturday instead of continuing the study of the Ancient Wisdom, as a great many of the members are likely to be away during those two months. These meetings will be open to friends and will be held at the <sup>homes</sup> ~~meetings~~ of various members.

The weather here has been very wet, and we have really had very little summer. I suppose you are revelling in the heat. We have a lot of birds about here, for which we put food out. Sometimes we have as many as a dozen out here eating from the bread we put out. With very much love to you all

I am ever

Your most affectionate

*Douglas*

Other papers attached by Joseph Fussell to his letter of June 1917 to the authorities in Sydney included the Minutes of the Advisory Council held in London, on 16 May 1906, and presided by the President-Founder of the TS, Col. H. S. Olcott.



Below are facsimile reproductions of the official Police Report carrying the conclusion by the Police Officers who had conducted the first investigation on CWL in Sydney, J. Develin and P. J. Downey:

SUBJECT: Charles W. Leadbeater, Leader of Theosophic Thought, alleged to be giving immoral teachings to young boys.

Police reference: —

Forwarded to the  
Inspector General of Police,  
*[Signature]*  
Inspector, C. I. Branch.  
28 DEC 1917

POLICE DEPARTMENT,  
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION BRANCH,  
SYDNEY, 28th Decr. 1917.

51 4126

We beg to report having visited King's Hall with the object of interviewing Mr Leadbeater relative to the above matter, but were precluded from seeing him as his Medical advisers objected to him being visited for the present. He is suffering from diabetes and heart trouble, has been under the constant care of a lady Doctor, Mary Rocke late of London, and also has Dr Bullmore of Macquarie St. in attendance. The latter informed me that Mr Leadbeater is over seventy years of age and were we to interview him at this juncture it might possibly upset him and retard his present progress towards recovering his health.

We have seen Mr Martyn and his wife, at whose place Mr Leadbeater had under his care some seven or eight boys including a son of theirs. It was his function to give these boys instructions in theosophy. The Martyns are well to do people and have a magnificent home named "St. Michaels" in Raymond Road, Neutral Bay. They are members of the Theosophical Society to which Mr Martyn is the General Secretary here. He informed us that he had known Mr Leadbeater for a considerable number of years and already was aware of the charges of immorality that had been made against him and such as this file refers to but he regarded them as baseless having been trumped up by members of the Universal Brotherhood at Point Loma, California, and other places with the object of damaging his character in the minds of Theosophists. Since Mr Leadbeater had come to this country now over three years ago he has been Mr Martyn's guest and stayed at his place. Both Mr and Mrs Martyn invited him to look after their son and teach him Theosophy. Sometime afterwards a class was formed of seven or eight youths whose parents were members of the Theosophic Society and the class was under his supervision.

Some of these lads stopped at Mr Martyn's whilst a number more stayed with a Mr Kollerstrom who lived in the same neighbourhood and whose son also belonged to this class. A tutor was procured and supervised the class in matters pertaining to the general educational studies of the pupils whilst it was Mr Leadbeater's wont to lecture them on Theosophy, supervise their personal habits of social deportment, constantly encouraging them to habits of cleanliness and the taking of healthy exercises. He was continually under the eyes of Mr & Mrs Martyn and they assure us that his conduct and work with these boys was pure and free from the slightest taint of immorality, had anything of that nature obtained they were bound

(over)

THE INSPECTOR OF POLICE,  
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION BRANCH.

72181



bound

to have heard or seen something to arouse their suspicion.

These people have implicit confidence in Mr Leadbeater and are satisfied that nothing in the nature of immorality can be attributed to him or his pupils. They now much regret his present illness as he was compelled for the sake of his health to be removed to the flat (at King's Hall) where he is now confined. Two of his pupils who we are led to understand gave singular promise in theosophic science, he brought with him to this flat for the purpose of helping him in his secretarial work and also to have them continue their studies on theosophy under his immediate guidance. One of these lads is named Kollerstrom whose father we have spoken to on this matter. He, like Mr Martyn, scouts at the suggestion of immorality taking place between Mr Leadbeater and his pupils.

We have spoken to several of these lads and they appear to be pictures of health and show no symptom or indication of having practised masturbation.

In connection with this matter we also saw Mr. J. Mackay, "Malahide", Eleanor Avenue, Kirribilli Point, who is a wealthy station owner, vice President of the Graziers Association, President of the N.S.W. Kindergarten, and vice President of the Theosophical Society. He informed us that like many other members of the Society he had heard of the charges of immorality that had been attributed to Mr. Leadbeater, but had looked upon them as having been trumped up order to injure him in the eyes of the members of the Society. Whilst here he had seen much of Mr Leadbeater and his pupils and not unfrequently at his invitation had them to his place. From what he had observed of their manner and Mr Leadbeater's supervision, he felt assured that they were receiving a pure moral education and their actions and manner bespoke such.

Seeing the advanced age of Mr Leadbeater and that the Martyns and Mr Kollerstrom had ample opportunity of detecting any immoral relationship between this man and his pupils if such obtained, together with the general surroundings of these lads, also the high moral character of their relatives and others connected with the Society, leads us to be of the opinion that Mr Leadbeater is not instructing his pupils in any pernicious practices whatever.

*A. Dench*  
Det. Sergt. 1/c

*P. J. Downey*  
Det. Const 1/c

Source: State Records NSW – SRNSW: NRS 333, Attorney General Special Bundles, Police enquiry into alleged immoral teachings of C.W. Leadbeater, "Bishop" of the Liberal Catholic Church (Enquiry held 1922), 1915-25, [5/7771.2] Reproduced by permission.

The importance of this report cannot be overstated. It shows the trust of Thomas H. Martyn and his wife Hilda in CWL and how they unequivocally vouched for his integrity in the face of very hostile accusations. CWL had lived in their house since his arrival in Australia in 1914 and the Police Report states that 'he [CWL] was

continually under the eyes of Mr. & Mrs. Martyn and they assure us that his conduct and work with these boys was pure and free from the slightest taint of immorality, had anything of that nature obtained they were bound to have heard or seen something to arouse their suspicion’.

It was only after the involvement of Sydney theosophists in the Old Catholic Church, later on known as the Liberal Catholic Church, the presence of James Wedgwood, its Presiding Bishop, in Australia and CWL’s profound involvement in the Church, including his consecration as a Bishop, that provoked an irascible reaction on the part of Thomas Martyn and the beginning of a nasty trial by the press of CWL. Such a “trial” was strategically started by Thomas Martyn’s letter to Annie Besant in 1921, which was marked “private” but was leaked in Sydney and from Sydney to individuals around the world. It was that letter that triggered the second Police investigation. Significantly, the four accusers in that investigation were members of the Thomas H. Martyn family and household.

The example of CWL, in the middle of a never ending storm that sought to destroy his reputation and that of Annie Besant, as President of the TS, can be found in his “Resolutions”, reproduced below:

#### R E S O L U T I O N S

(C. W. L.)

1. I will try to think of the Master's work first.
2. I will make it an absolute rule not to take offence at all.
3. I will strictly mind my own business, and not criticize. I will not listen to or repeat gossip about others.
4. I will try to avoid irritability, to keep calm and peaceful. I will endeavour to put aside all personal thoughts.