

The Ghost Club

Founded 1862

Journal

Winter 2009



"Nasci, Laborare, Mori, Nasci"

The Ghost Club Journal

Winter 2009

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Haunting Scotland



The Haunted East Coast of Scotland

By Derek Green

Scotland is a very busy nation by day and is recognised as a very haunted nation by night. The East Coast is one of Scotland's more populated areas and consequently there are a number of haunted locations ranged all down the East Coast. There are far too many to mention them all but here is a small selection.

Castle of Park, sits in large grounds and consists of a large Mansion/Castle. It is rumoured that part of the older building dates from 1292. The large Mansion is said to be haunted by a Green Lady, a one time servant girl whose employment was terminated after she was discovered to have fallen pregnant. It is believed that she committed suicide and for years her ghost has been witnessed in the grounds and has also been seen peering out of a window in the House. This sad apparition has been witnessed wearing a

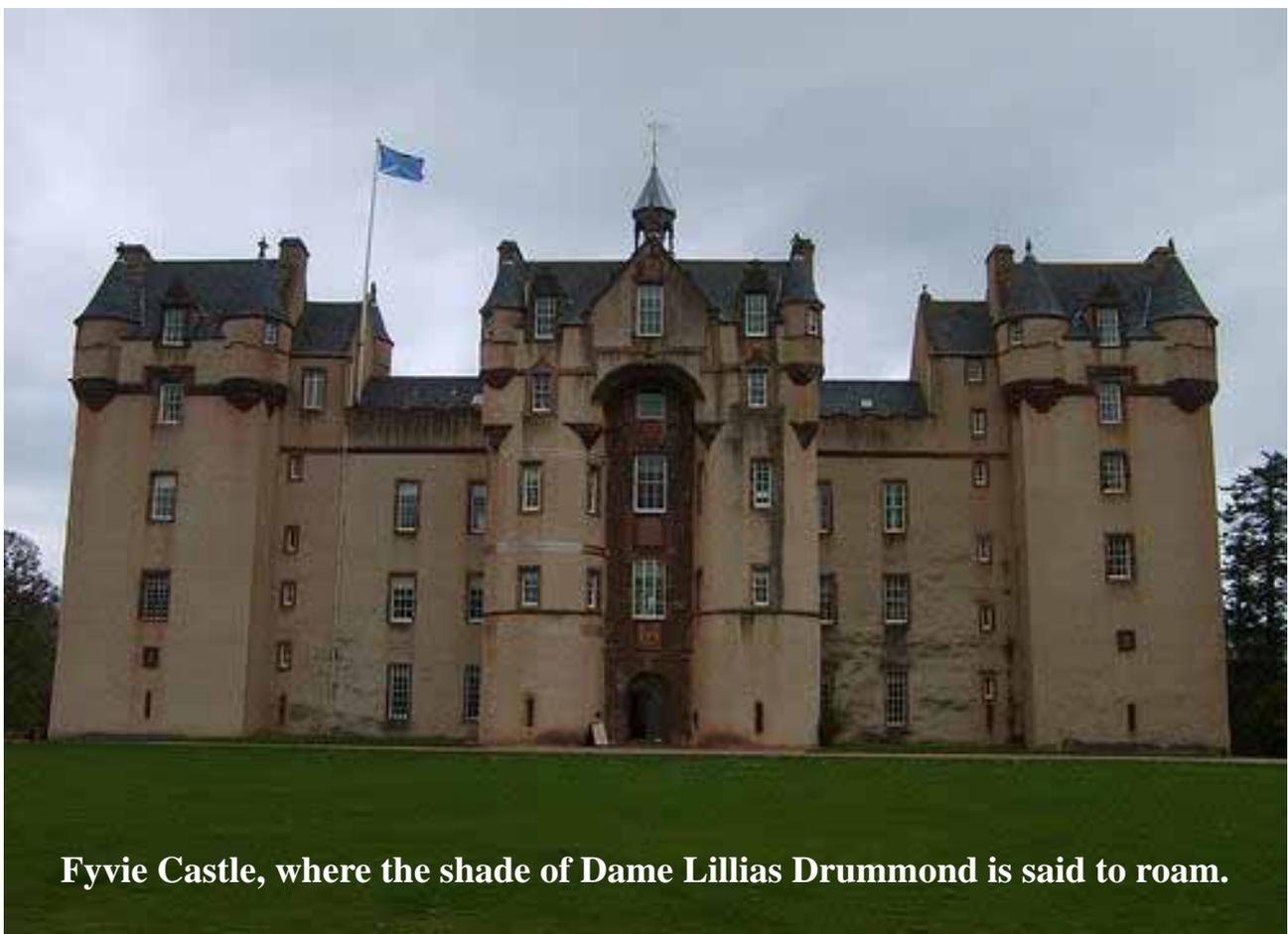
hooded cloak. Other phenomena in the Castle of Park has included the sightings of a phantom monk, the sounds of a child's disembodied voice and a music box which has often been heard to play in the upper floors of the House. Temperature fluctuations have also been recorded and items are frequently reported to disappear and then reappear in a different location.

Fyvie Castle, owned by the National Trust For Scotland is one of Scotland's Most Outstanding buildings. Set in the North East of Scotland, Fyvie has long been associated with a very sinister apparition. On 8 May 1601, Lillias Drummond, wife of Alexander Seton, Earl of Dunfermline, died at the family home in Dalgety aged 30 years. Lillias had five children, all girls. It is believed that not providing her husband with a male heir, Earl Seton ordered Lillias to be slowly starved to death. Just six months later, Seton re-married and on the wedding night of 27 October, Seton and his new wife were ready to sleep in what is now called the Drummond Room. The newly weds could not settle as they kept hearing the sounds of sighing and scratching coming from the area of the

window. In the morning, Earl Seton decided to inspect the area around the window. On checking the outside ledge, to his horror he discovered a carving embedded into the stone some fifty feet from the ground. Scratched, deep into the masonry were the words 'D LILLIAS DRUMMOND'. The carving can still be seen to this day and what is even stranger is the fact that the words face away from the window. Every so often there are reports of a lady in pale green being seen walking down the staircase and then walking through staff and visitors. Quite alarming! The ghost is always described as being very pale and gaunt and it is reckoned that this sad figure is none other than Dame Lillias Drummond herself. Other phenomena has been reported at Fyvie and includes the feelings of being shoved by unseen hands, a wind which blows through the interior of the Castle and

the apparition of a Lady in White, is also believed to be Lillias Drummond. Phantom drumming has also been heard echoing from Fyvie Castle.

Leith Hall, a courtyard mansion, once home to the Leith family, is now property of the National Trust for Scotland. The hauntings at Leith date back to 1968 when guests at different times reported hearing the sounds of a woman's laughter which would then be followed by the sounds of a loud party taking place. There were no celebrations taking place at that time. Other phenomena in the building has been reported since then and consists of the apparition of a man with a bandaged head, a woman dressed in eighteenth century clothing and the ghost of a man in a military uniform has also been seen in the grounds. In recent years, phenomena has also included foot-steps, unexplained music, doors slam-



Fyvie Castle, where the shade of Dame Lillias Drummond is said to roam.

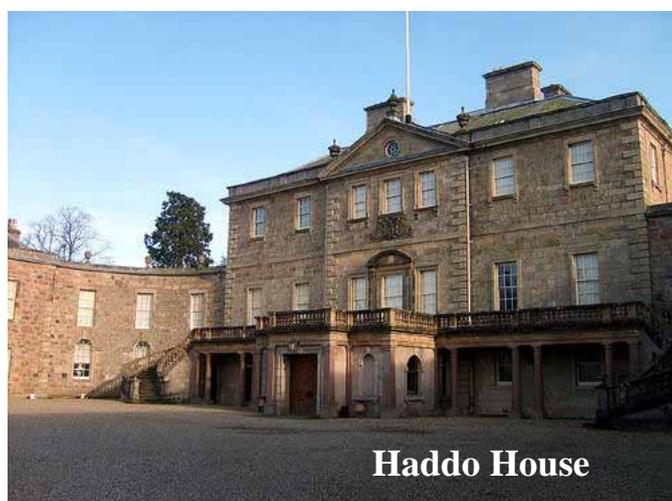


Leith Hall

ming shut, women and children laughing and extreme drops in temperature. These occurrences have all been reported at Leith Hall.

Another NTS property with a haunted background in North East Scotland is **Haddo House**. This Mansion, with two ornate wings, is home to the ghost of Lord Archibald Gordon and his ghost has been witnessed in the Premier's Bedroom. The City of Aberdeen, also

known as the Granite City, plays host to a wealth of hauntings which include **Aberdeen Arts Centre**, the former North Church, which is said to be haunted by the ghost of a maid in the upper section of the building. The Green Room in the Centre is reputed to be haunted by a disembodied face which has been witnessed by stage performers. **Aberdeen Central Library** is also reputed to be home to phantom whispering and the eerie sounds of a bell tolling. Footsteps have also been reported in unoccupied areas of the building. Finally, **Aberdeen's Tolbooth**, once a Scottish jail, is said to be haunted by the spectre of a man dressed in 1920's attire and wearing a Trilby hat. The height of the apparition is recorded as being four foot tall and it is a known fact, that during renovations, the current floor was raised by about two feet. Other phenomena in the building includes unexplained foot-



Haddo House

**The House of
Dunn, which was
investigated by the
Ghost Club in 2006**



falls and chains rattling.

Fasque House, in Aberdeenshire, once home to Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone is said to be haunted by his younger sister Helen Gladstone and a butler from the past, by the name of MacBean. **Edzell Castle**, now property of Historic Scotland, is reputed to be haunted by a White Lady who is described as being quite small and wearing a flowing floral dress. It is said that the apparition has no face. A few years ago a photograph was taken of the Castle and, on later examination, it was claimed that the apparition could be seen in the photograph standing by one of the windows. The same ghost is also said to haunt nearby Edzell Old Church.

Near Montrose is the **House of Dun**, owned by the NTS and investigated by

the Ghost Club in 2006. The Mansion House which was once used as a hospital, an RAF HQ and a hotel, is said to be haunted by a number of ghosts. One is a little girl skipping and others include a very stern looking man, unexplained noises which on one occasion were reported to have lasted as long as

thirty minutes, and the sound of an old fashioned phone ringing. In 2006, the Ghost Club carried out an investigation into the alleged hauntings and gathered some interesting evidence. During the

course of the night, a servant's bell was heard to ring in the basement corridor and on closer inspection, it was noted that no wires were connected to the servants' bells anymore. The ringing of an old fashioned phone was also heard coming from the area of the front lobby and the faint sounds of people gathered





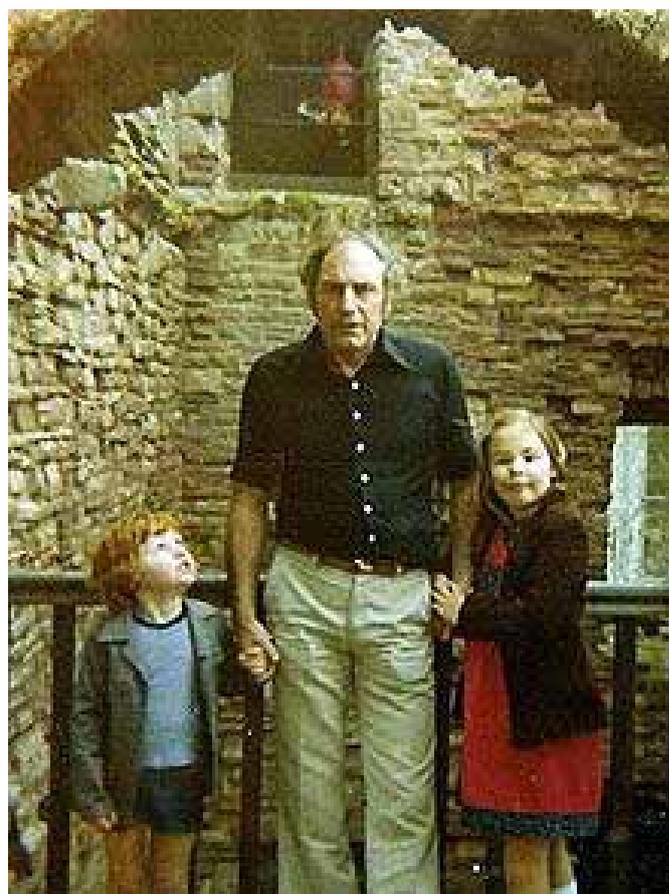
at a party were heard. Still near Montrose is the attractive **Lunan Lodge**, once a Manse dating from the Eighteenth Century. The House has had a very long reputation for being haunted. There is a large catalogue of activity which has been recorded and ranges from a man in plus fours who shouts at the guests, a stable boy, a pretty maid who has been witnessed as often as three times a week and a presence which has been sensed on the stairs. Other reported phenomena include the sounds of singing, loud bangs, thumps and clanks which have been mostly reported at night.

Craigievar Castle, owned by the NTS is a tall L-Plan Tower House once owned by the Forbeses Family and passed to the NTS, in 1953 for safe keeping. It is here where the apparition of a man has been witnessed. It is thought that the man is possibly a member of staff who was pushed to his death from a window. The sounds of heavy foot steps are regularly reported on the stair when no one else is there. Another spectre is said to be that of a Fiddler who only appears in front of one of the Forbeses family when trouble is near.

Discovery Point Dundee, is home to RRS Discovery, Captain Scott's Antarc-

tic Ship. The Discovery is reputed to be haunted by unexplained footsteps. I have personally spoken to a member of staff who works at Discovery Point and he has verified that there is indeed phantom footsteps which walk across the deck in the early hours of the morning. It is also rumoured that a face

has been seen looking into one of the cabins from outside on the main deck. It is also reported that books fly off the shelves in the shop on the Quay side. It is believed that this is the work of Ernest Shackleton the Explorer, or Charles Bonner who met with a tragic



The now infamous picture taken at Tantallon Castle in East Lothian



accident and fell to his death while working on board RRS Discovery.

The final eerie tale is from **Tantallon Castle** in East Lothian. Tantallon is a mid-14th-century fortress and is the last medieval curtain wall castle to be constructed in Scotland. The castle is comprised of a single wall which blocks off the headland and the other three sides are naturally protected by cliffs. Tantallon, now a ruin, is property of Historic Scotland and is associated with a violent history. Up until fairly recently Historic Scotland were not aware of any hauntings in Tantallon, until May of 2008, when a photograph was taken which is subject to a lot of controversy. In the photograph there is clearly an image of a person who seems to be wearing a ruff, gazing out of an area of the castle where there may have been a window. The photographer was questioned and stated that at the time of the photograph being taken there was no one standing in that area. Historic Scotland confirmed that no costumed guides had been in the castle that day and Professor Richard Wiseman has also agreed that it is a rather odd photograph. To add to the mystery, one week after publishing the original, a second photograph (taken thirty years before) came forward from a lady

called Grace Lamb. In the picture is her late husband and two children and in the background there is a head gazing out from a window. The head seems to have a ruff round the neck. Experts have looked at both photographs and have agreed that there possibly is a likeness of facial features in both photographs. It is certainly a real mystery.

Castles are wonderful places for the family to explore as there can be rooms, vaults, dungeons and sometimes spiral staircases. A word of warning though, when ascending or descending a spiral stair; always spare a thought for who or what maybe coming up or down the staircase to meet you in the middle!



**Do you have a story you
could share with us?
Either a personal ghostly
encounter or an opinion you
would like to air?
Then please get in touch
with Sarah at
editor@ghostclub.org.uk
All articles and submissions
considered for publication.**



GHOSTS AND BURGLARS

By Alan Murdie



Spotting a strange figure in one's house, or hearing unexplained sounds during the night, can typically provoke one of two possible thoughts in mind of the witness – either it must be a ghost or a burglar. A classic example is the account of Professor W.R. Sorley collected for the *Census of Hallucinations* in 1894, "Lying in bed, facing the window, and opening my eyes voluntarily....I saw the figure of a man, some three or four feet distant from my head, standing perfectly still by the bedstead...My first thought was "That's a ghost"; my second "It may be a burglar whose designs upon my watch are interrupted by my opening my eyes." I bent forward towards him and the image vanished." Professor Sorley later thought the apparition resembled his brother who, so far as is known, was not a burglar.

Certainly, occupiers seem to prefer ghosts to burglars, if the story behind the headline 'Jacob the ghost fails to foil pub burglary' in the *Rye & Battle Observer* is anything to go by. The story details a raid by thieves on the Royal Oak Pub, Wivelsfield Green, Sussex, in June 2008. The burglars concealed themselves in the pub's cellar until the licensee Claire Baldrock went upstairs, whereupon the gang then emptied the cigarette and fruit machines in the bar. All four of her pet dogs started barking, but because there were no cars in the car-park out-

side she presumed that no-one other than 'Jacob' the pub's resident ghost was around. She told reporters: "I think I'm a little disappointed in myself because I didn't hear anything. The pub's haunted and we are quite used to bumps in the night but even so." As with so many pub haunts, the ghost at the Royal Oak is known only by a nickname rather than having a precise identity. Previous activities of the ghost include dropping things, throwing salt on tables and (ironically) triggering the pub security alarm. "He's a complete practical joker. Very mischievous" was Claire's view of 'Jacob', despite his failure to protect the premises. Source: *Rye and Battle Observer* June 12 2008

INTRUDERS AT THE GRENADIER

This relaxed approach to dead intruders - in contrast to fear of living ones - turns out to be a long standing attitude. "Rather a ghost than a burglar" was the view taken back in December 1967 at what is London's - or perhaps even the world's - most famous haunted pub, *The Grenadier* at 18 Wilton Row, Knightsbridge. Tucked away in a discrete private mews, with no passing trade, the pub's living clientele consists mainly of wealthy locals, tourists including the occasional Hollywood celebrities and ghost hunters. Tradition avers that the pub (formerly called *The Guardsman*) was a billet for the Duke of Wellington's officers and that it is

haunted by an 18th century guardsman who was savagely flogged by his comrades after being caught cheating at cards, then thrown down into the cellar where he expired at the bottom of the stairs.

Reports of the haunting at *The Grenadier* date back to at least the early 1950s.

Landlord Roy Griggs told writer Joseph Braddock of his nine year old son seeing a menacing shadowy figure in an upstairs room in September 1952. Ten days later Mrs Griggs thought she had an intruder in the pub when she briefly saw a man coming up the stairs, whilst she was alone and in the process of getting

changed. A male figure was later seen at the foot of the stairs by another witness. The Griggs family believed the ghost was most active each September, the month in which the soldier is said to have died. Every year, during September, their pet dog showed strange reactions, growling and snarling at something unseen and trying to dig his way into the cellar.

The peak of the pub's notoriety was in the late 1960s, when landlord Geoffrey Bernerd told ghost hunter Dennis Bardens of hearing "Loud heavy footsteps coming from nowhere, and loud, really loud, bangs on doors when there is no-one there." Tina Ascott who stayed at the pub also heard noises

stating, "It sounded like people walking up and down. There were loud distant noises. I turned the light and radio on, but the noise continued for about an hour". Geoffrey Bernerd also reported poltergeist-like disturbances including being repeatedly disturbed by loud knocks on the door when there was no-one physically present. The ghostly presence was dubbed, "Him" and

Bernerd also reported that, "He moves clothes and glasses around, and sometimes pulls the plug out when you have filled the bath".

In June 1969, the *Daily Mail* reported how Tina Peel Yates, the niece to Lieutenant General Sir David Peel, Colonel to the Prince of Wales, was organising a charity ghost hunt at *The Grenadier* on Waterloo Night (June 18th) on behalf



The grenadier Pub, Knightsbridge

of the Spastics Society. Tina and eight other young women duly spent the night in the dark and damp cellar. They did not encounter any ghosts, but were greatly alarmed at 3 a.m. by the sounds of people breaking into the pub. However, it turned out to be students playing a prank rather than burglars on that occasion.

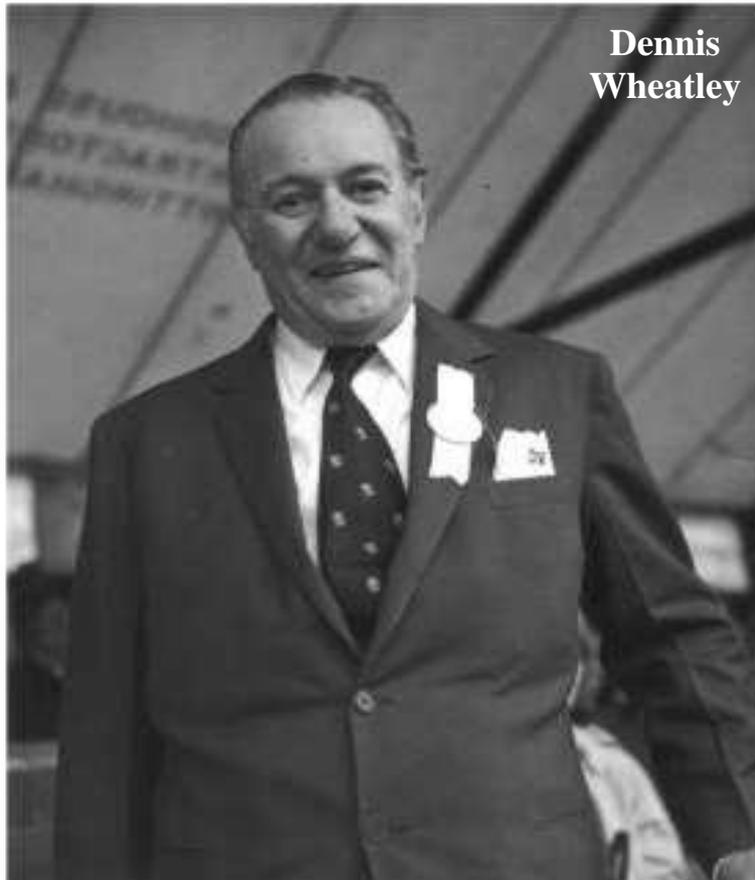
The Grenadier was also visited by parapsychologist Dr George Owen and veteran journalist Victor Sims, in the course of a study of contemporary hauntings in Britain. The involvement of Sims helped *The Grenadier* gain international attention (represented by the foreign press cutting still displayed in the bar). However, both investigators were convinced there was genuine psychic activity at the pub, with their findings published in *Science and the Spook* (1971).

As well as hearing of the incidents described above, they also noted lights switching themselves on and off and light bulbs unscrewing themselves. The beer supply from the cellar suffered interruptions with tap in the cellar being mysteriously switched off and beer bottle tops were reported flying off spontaneously in a horizontal direction. Testimony was taken from Tom Westwood, the head barman, and Mrs Hanson-Lester, mother in law of Geoffrey

Bernerd, of seeing a unique apparition resembling a wisp of smoke materialising in mid-air, even though there were no burning cigarettes or matches.

I spoke with staff at *The Grenadier* at the beginning of December 2008. All had heard stories of strange noises from their predecessors but none had first-hand accounts to relate. However, they still consider the pub remains haunted and affectionately hope that the ghost will be back soon. (Sources:

Haunted Houses (1956) Joseph Braddock; *Daily Express* 23 Dec 1967; *Daily Mail* 13 June 1969; *The Times* June 1969; *Haunted London* (1973) Peter Underwood; *The Haunted Pub Guide* (1984) by Guy Lyon Playfair.)



Dennis
Wheatley

GHOST OR BURGLAR?

Cases are certainly common in the literature of psychical research of witnesses initially mistaking

a ghost as a burglar. Accounts are spread over generations, and constitute something of a constant in human perception of hauntings. The Gilby family and their servants at first suspected burglars behind troubling noises at what was Brighton's most haunted house in Prestonville Road in the late 1880s. Sounds attributed to the well-attested Morton ghost at Cheltenham were at one point feared to be burglars, whilst a Miss Gertrude Horner who re-

ported in 1885 that her bedroom in Zennor, Cornwall had been illuminated by a will-o-the wisp, thought at first "that some burglar was about to enter my room through the window." (Sources: *Haunted Brighton* (2006) by Alan Murdie; *Journal of the SPR* 1885-86 vol 2;)

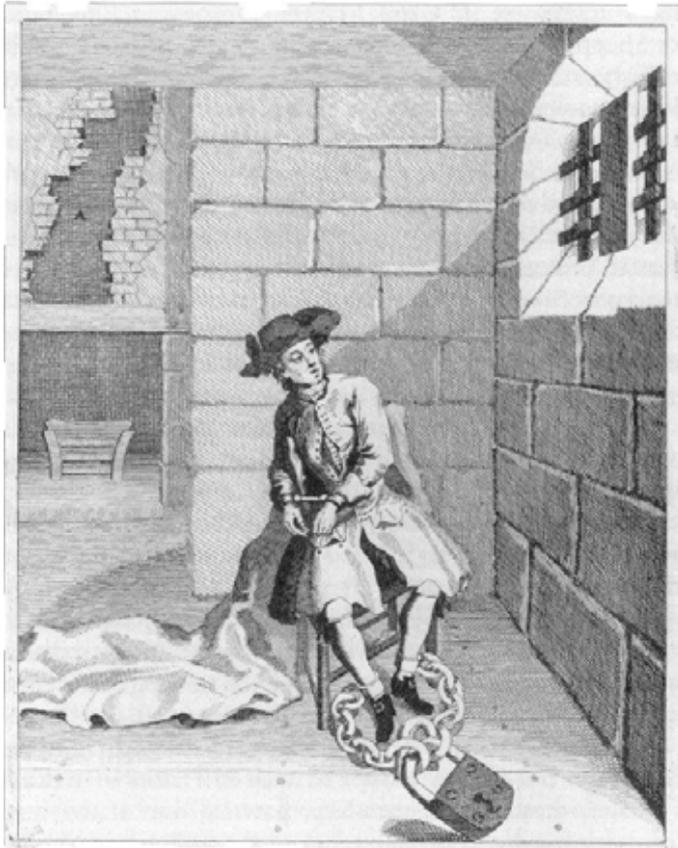
As a boy, thriller and black magic novelist Dennis Wheatley (1897-1977) saw an unpleasant ghost with a round, bloated face peering through banisters at his boarding school at Broadstairs, Kent. As he stared 'struck dumb with fear', the young Wheatley assumed the horrible apparition was a burglar, and on regaining his voice called loudly for help, whilst the figure disappeared up the stairs. A search was mounted but no trace of any intruder was found. However, the fiction of a burglar was maintained for some years by the adults at the school until years later when one of them admitted to Wheatley that they all believed he had seen a ghost. The couple who owned the school, named Hester, had been dabbling in spiritualism but immediately quit their experiments after the sighting, fearing they had inadvertently called up an elemental. Wheatley later used the incident in his novel *The Haunting Of Toby Jugg* and always declined to join investigations into haunted houses organised by the Ghost Club to which he later belonged. (Source: *The Devil and All His Works* (1973) by Dennis Wheatley; *Daily Express* 27 Mar 1975; *The Ghost Hunters* (1985) by Peter Underwood).

A family home in South London was the scene of a curious haunting in the late 1970s which brought a swift police response. Awakened by noises in the night, the family were shocked to see a procession of figures in period costume with sad expressions passing through the house, many of them holding bundles. They family fled their home and

called the police. Thinking that they were going to be able to apprehend burglars, police arrived at the scene very quickly and a young police constable entered the property. He emerged very shaken, having seen the same figures himself. Attempts were then made to send in a police dog, but the dog refused and bit its handler. Officers then entered the property in force and the family returned to find it empty. Investigation by sympathetic clergy revealed that the family had suffered a cot death three weeks before and that the house stood on the site of a plague pit. Specialists in exorcism and deliverance ministry believed that the modern tragedy had activated ancient memories stored at the site; but unfortunately the records of this interesting case have been lost. (Sources: *Deliverance: Psychic Disturbances and Occult Involvement* (1996) 2nd edition, edited by Canon Michael Perry; *In Search of Ghosts* (1995) by Ian Wilson)

In 1998 at Higham Park, Kent the owners Patricia Gibb and Amanda Harris-Dean believed they had spotted an intruder crossing a field seeded as a lawn. Having been tipped by police to try and get a photograph of any trespassers, Patricia Gibb took two photographs in quick succession. When she looked again the figure had vanished. On being developed, the first of the two photographs revealed a blurry orange shape, perhaps suggestive of a running figure, whilst the second shot showed just the empty field. It has been suggested that the first shows the ghost of Count Louis Zborowski, creator of the famous Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Car who died 1924. (Source: *Haunted Kent Today* (1999) by Andrew Green.)

Although mistaking a ghost as a burglar is common, the shades of deceased burglars appear to be rarity. In 1948, a Canon at St Paul's Cathedral claimed to have seen the spectre of infamous 18th



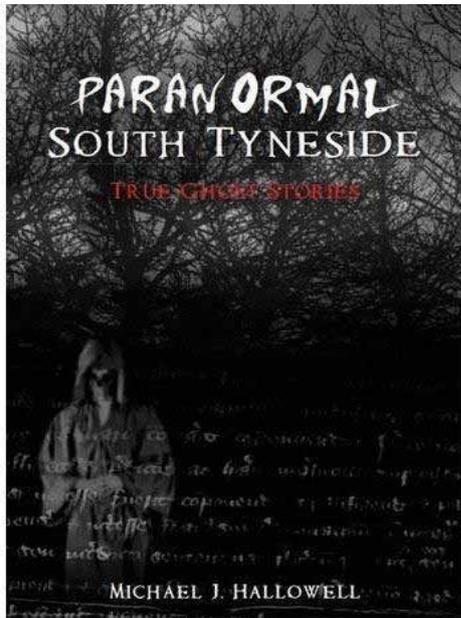
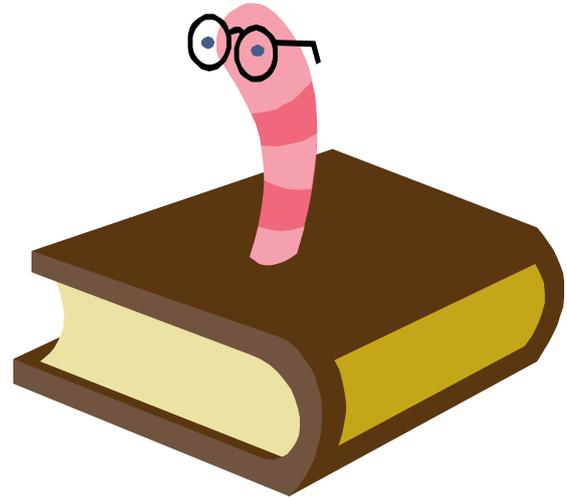
Jack Sheppard

century cat-burglar Jack Sheppard in Amen Court, close to the scene of his daring escape in 1724 from Newgate prison, but there seem to be few other examples. The absence of burglar ghosts is perhaps surprising given considerable licence given at common law until the end of the 19th century to use lethal violence in repelling them. Common law took its lead from Exodus 22 v2-3 stating that "If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed, but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed..." . This text may have been known to a 19th century clergyman named Canon Robinson, author of "Twelve months in a haunted house" which appeared in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research. In 1850 Canon Robinson was the incumbent at a haunted parsonage in Shropshire, and took a robust approach with tackling both ghosts and burglars. Maintaining that he had no

problems distinguishing between the two, his principal method of dealing with both was by shouting at them. This tactic had mixed results with the noisy, rattling ghost in the upstairs portions of the vicarage, which reacted with "louder, more hurried, and if we may use such a term, more passionate knocking" in response to what he termed his "wild words". Better results were achieved in scaring off would-be burglars shortly afterwards. On spotting dark figures identified as local robbers crossing the vicarage lawn, he was able "to address such remonstrance to them as led to a retreat, expedited in some measure by the discharge of a few shots from a pistol." (Sources: *Haunted London* (1973) Peter Underwood; SPR Proceedings (1884) 82g 144-51).

Finally, mention should be made of the infamous fake medium and part-time burglar Frederick Munnings who first came to prominence in 1919. Munnings could allegedly levitate trumpets and materialise figures at séances, attracting support from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the spiritualist press. Remarkably his career was not dented by being caught with rubber gloves and scented rags at one séance; nor was there a decline in faith after he was sentenced in January 1923 to 9 months hard labour for burglary. It was only when the lights were inadvertently turned up at a subsequent séance, revealing Munnings using equipment to produce the levitating trumpet, that his supporters deserted him, though some still maintained he had produced genuine phenomena at earlier séances (see *Light* March 13 1925). Spiritualists are a most forgiving breed.

BOOK REVIEWS



PARANORMAL SOUTH TYNESIDE TRUE GHOST STORIES

By Michael J Hallowell
Amberley Publishing

127 pages: Paperback
ISBN: 978-1-84868-730-1
Price: £12.99

Mike Hallowell is a veteran investigator of paranormal matters, mustering over 40 years' experience in the field. He has written the 'Wraithscape' column for the Shields Gazette for over 10 years and is a regular contributor to TV and radio presentations. This latest offering is an eclectic range of topics and

includes angels, dowsing, fairies and other strange entities, UFOs, time slips, ghosts and hauntings, poltergeists, jinxes and curses, historical conundrums, and several other categories of weird events.

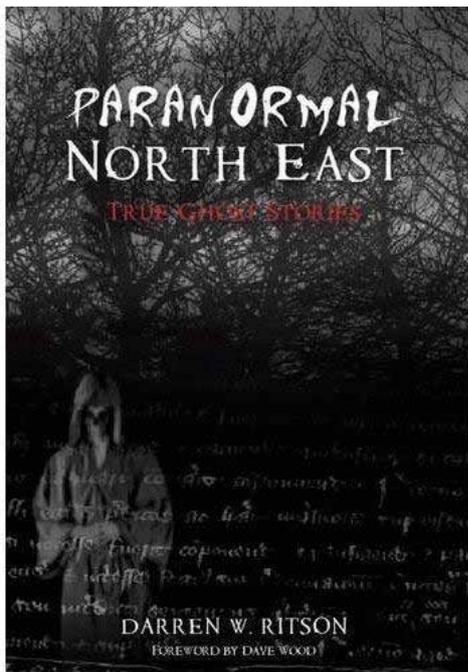
This book is a superb little treasure house for any reader with a predilection for the paranormal. The investigations are as thorough as one would expect from a seasoned researcher. The recounting of the evidence is completed in a level of detail that should satisfy newcomers to the field and the more experienced paranormal buff alike.

The author makes several interesting observations during the course of the book. In the chapter on 'Mystery Creatures from Beyond', he notes the strangeness of the world and the oft quoted view that 'what we don't know won't hurt us', commenting that this is the worst advice ever given as one would not wish to be in close proximity to many of these entities. His lightness of touch is evident in the chapter on 'Time Slips' where he comments that quantum physics and Einstein's theory of relativity were never his strong points and that he didn't pass his Eleven Plus until he was 43! He also made the intriguing observation that he was unsure whether science was the best way forward anyway, an idea that could perhaps have been more fully ex-

plored (a topic for the future perhaps?). More specifically relevant to the Ghost Club is the interesting report of a haunted computer where the owner had a message appear on-screen which stated, 'Hi, I like your shirt! Please answer!' Believing his machine to be infected by a virus he played along by asking what colour it was. The correct answer (red and blue check) came through – other details emerged which could only have been known if the communicator was in the room itself!

Overall this is thumping good book, enjoyable to read cover- to- cover or to dip into at odd moments. I would thoroughly recommend it as thought provoking, intriguing with a lightness of touch that is refreshing and lively. It left me wishing for more and should surely contribute to the erosion of that subversive concept of 'ignorance is bliss' which so bedevils paranormal research.

Review by John Barrett



PARANORMAL NORTH EAST

TRUE GHOST STORIES

By Darren W. Ritson

Amberley Publishing

155 Pages

ISBN: 978-1848681965

RRP £12:99

True Ghost Stories is essentially a series of accounts from investigations carried out by a local paranormal group and friends, led by the author.

Many locations have been investigated by the team over the last few years and the eighteen selected for this book are diverse in nature and yield some fascinating phenomena. Pubs, hotels, museums and even the cockpit of a Canberra bomber aircraft feature, but for me the most interesting location described is The Marsden Grotto Pub in South Shields - mainly because it has such a colourful history. This isn't any ordinary pub. It sits in the limestone cliffs overlooking the North Sea shoreline and was originally created by Jack 'the Blaster' Bates in the late eighteenth century as his new dwelling. Needless to say, it has its fair share of ghost stories attached (which are relayed to the reader) and *The Grotto* still exists to this day, so anyone can go along and take a drink in one of the cave bars...

In the Afterword the author reflects on the array of paranormal activity witnessed and captured by the investigators and stresses that he is presenting a genuine and fair account of events. Because the author can only present a limited amount of evidence in a book (i.e. photographs) the rest is anecdotal. The reader must judge for themselves the merit of the findings. If taken at face value though, there is no doubting that the team had some fantastic ex-

periences, experiences which many ghost hunters would die – or, at least head to *the North East* – for!

It's a paper-back book and is an easy read. It doesn't use complicated words or baffle with science: it has small chapters, is well paced and the text is broken-up by at least one black and white photograph of each location. It is also evident that the author is knowledgeable and very passionate about his subject.

Towards the start of the book is an excellent introduction and a 'what are ghosts?' chapter, followed by a highlight for me - a wonderful piece on that famous 'father' of ghost hunting, Harry Price. The author's admiration for Mr Price is reflected in this warm chapter.

The rest of the chapters – the investigation reports - each start with an introduction to the site, giving a brief history and detailing reputed hauntings. These are followed by a description of the investigation with findings, analysis and conclusions.

I would recommend the book primarily to budding ghost hunters but also people who are familiar with the area - especially those who want to know more about the paranormal goings-on there.

There is not much to criticise about *True Ghost Stories*. I would like to have seen more evidential photographs included - these get mentioned in the text but few actually make it into the book. Also, the book lacks the tension and atmosphere which you often get with books entitled 'ghost stories' (mainly fictional ones, admittedly) so I didn't find it particularly scary. Otherwise, it has been an enjoyable and enlightening journey around the North East of England with a group of hard-working and likeable ghost hunters.

Review by Paul Collins

Ghosts in the



I have pleasure in sharing the usual selection of strange stories which have appeared in the media in recent months. Many thanks this time go to Paul Collins, Philip Carr and Milton Edwards for their contributions.

On 15th October, The Sun Newspaper reported on paranormal goings on at Thorpe Park. It went on to say...

Spooked bosses at a theme park have suspended six members of staff and called in an exorcist after a late night séance on their top horror ride sparked a string of ghostly happenings. A Thorpe Park spokesman said: "On the evening of Monday October 12 an unauthorised Ouija Board session was conducted by six employees at SAW - The Ride after we closed to the public. A full investigation is under way and the six employees have been suspended pending the outcome of this enquiry. We take staff and guest feedback very seriously and for this reason we called in Rev Lionel Fanthorpe, a leading paranormal expert, to help us investigate reports that have arisen from this situation. The ride has not been closed down and the Halloween Fright Nights are continuing as normal."



The SAW ride at Thorpe Park

The workers at Thorpe Park carried out a Ouija board session on the horror themed rollercoaster SAW - The Ride after the opening night of their creepy Halloween themed "Fright Nights". The group chose the park's newest ride as the scariest place in the park to hold it. However, bosses didn't see the funny side when they heard staff had tried to communicate with the spirit world through a talking board which has been blamed for subsequent paranormal going-ons.

A Thorpe Park insider said: "Guests started to report an extreme drop in temperature when they walked into the ride building where the séance was held and other unusual happenings. Lights started to go on and off with no explanation and the special effects would start up even after being switched off and there were reports of footsteps with nobody there. Doors could be heard banging and it was then news of the Ouija board session came out and the members of staff responsible have been spoken to and suspended from work."

Thorpe Park in Surrey then called in Rev Lionel Fanthorpe, the UK's leading authority on the unexplained, who is currently examining the ride for evidence of paranormal activity. He says if he finds any signs of spirits "crossing

over from the other side" he will carry out an exorcism.

Rev Fanthorpe said: "Many people believe that the Ouija board is just a game but its power should never be underestimated as it may be a very dangerous tool if not used properly. It opens a gateway to another dimension and when people who are not experienced spiritualists play with Ouija boards, mischievous entities can get through as may have happened here. If there is something causing fear and bewilderment at Thorpe Park then I will take care of it and if deemed necessary I will carry out an exorcism to remove any mischievous spirits".

The source said: "It was a pretty strange sight to see a priest walking around Saw - The Ride holding a bible in one hand and a crucifix in the other - he looked like a part of the attraction!" Saw - The Ride cost £13.5million and opened in March this year and is a custom Euro-Fighter roller coaster that takes riders round a horror themed track at speeds of 55mph experiencing nearly 5 g forces.

The full story can be found at: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/2683886/Thorpe-Park-bosses-suspend-Ouija-Board-workers.html#ixzz0dG60vCW1>

Alleged ghost hunt in Toronto ends in death

wrote 'wiki news' on 12th September,

A 29-year-old woman is dead after she fell from the roof of a university of Toronto building, apparently seeking ghosts.

The deceased, which some reports say was Leah Kubik, was exploring a building at 1 Spadina Crescent with a male companion around 2:00 a.m. She attempted to make a jump from one section of the building to another and missed, resulting in a three-story fall into a courtyard below. Kubik was taken to St Michaels Hospital in Toronto where doctors pronounced her dead.

According to the *Toronto Star*, the

pair had been drinking alcohol. Police initially said the two were hunting ghosts, but now say the two had finished a first date and were walking home when they decided to explore the building. An investigation is ongoing.

The building, built for Knox College in 1874, was purchased by the University 37 years ago.

Pluckley cancels Halloween to stop nuisance visitors

Reported the Kentish News in October.

It went on to say:

Halloween has been cancelled in the nation's most haunted village. As Britain's most haunted village Pluckley has a history of being invaded by hundreds of ghost-hunting revellers, causing vandalism and traffic chaos.

In past years residents have tried to turn the night of expected disturbance into family fun, set up by the parish council's own Halloween committee.

But despite the festivities raising thousands of pounds for causes, such as the village hall, there was still vandalism, traffic problems and some anti-social behaviour.

Festivities were suspended last year and will not be reinstated this year.

A statement on the parish council website reads: "On 31 October 2009 there will be a large police presence in the village. There

will be no entertainment provided for visitors. There will be no barbecue, no hog roast, no beer tent, no fun fair and there will be no ghost tours. In fact, unless you are coming for a quiet drink,

may we suggest you visit one of the many other attractions in Kent for Halloween."

On 5th November, the following article was posted onto the Mail Online.

Fright House: Jenna Bush on the ghostly music playing in the presidential home, already haunted by Abraham Lincoln.

The daughter of former President, George W Bush has claimed she saw ghosts during her time at The White House.

The 27 year old teacher, who now works as an education correspondent for the Today Show said: "I heard a ghost. I was asleep, there was a fireplace in my room and all of a sudden, I heard 1920's music coming out of it. I could feel it, I freaked out and ran into my sisters' room. She was like 'Please go back to sleep, this is ridiculous'. The next week, we were both asleep in my room, the phone rang and woke us up. We were talking and going back to bed when all of a sudden we heard this

opera, coming out of the fireplace. We couldn't believe it, we were asking the people that worked there the next morning, 'Are we crazy?'. We tried to rationalise it but they said they heard it all the time."

Jenna and her family lived at the Washington DC presidential home from 2001 to 2009.

She said she had never seen Abraham Lincoln's ghost – which is said to regularly walk up and down the second



The haunted White House

floor hall way of the White House, but she wished she had. Indeed, Winston Churchill refused to sleep in the former presidents bedroom after reportedly seeing his ghost lurking there.

Former first lady Hilary Clinton has also spoken about the spooky atmosphere in the White House. The US Secretary of State said: "There is something about the house at night. It's neat, it can be a little creepy. It's a big old house and when the lights are out, it's dark and quiet and any movement at all catches your attention."

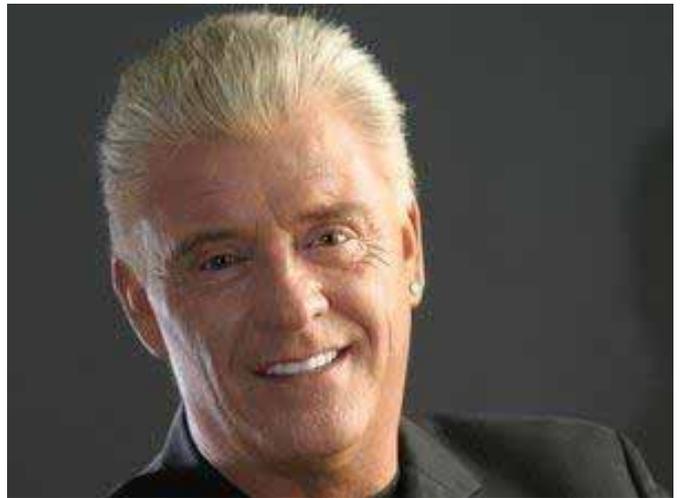
As well as human hauntings, there have been tales of a demon cat prowling the buildings basement. According to legend, years go by without sighting of the animal but when it is seen, national disaster is said to be imminent. Some witnesses claim it first appears as a helpless looking kitten, which grows in size and menace the closer one gets to it. A White House guard claimed to have seen it a week before the great stock market crash of the 1920's and it was reportedly seen in the days before the assassination of JFK.

The full article can be seen here: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1225404/Fright-House-Jenna-Bush-reveals-ghostly-events-Presidential-home-haunted-Abraham-Lincoln-demon-cat.html>

Love him or hate him, Derek Acorah's live séance on Sky One in November was controversial. The article below mirrors what appeared in most of them. This excerpt was taken from *The Guardian* on the 9th November.

Michael Jackson: The Live Seance was car crash TV in the worst sense

Derek Acorah show was in such bad taste that it couldn't be seen as entertainment on any discernible level. If you were watching Sky One on Saturday night, count yourself lucky - you



Derek Acorah's séance was described as 'car crash' telly.

saw what will easily be remembered as the worst single hour of television produced in 2009. I'm talking, of course, about [Michael Jackson](#): The Live Séance.

I was watching because I thought it'd be funny - a car crash of a show with the added bonus of a slimy-looking medium rolling his eyeballs around inside his bright orange skull and reciting the lyrics to Heal the World in a silly high-pitched voice. Turns out it was a car crash. But it was one of those actual car crashes where real people get hurt and you're not sure that everyone's going to make it out OK and you end up feel like a bit of bastard for even wanting to watch it in the first place.

This is how Michael Jackson: The Live Séance worked. Derek Acorah - he of Most Haunted and Derek Acorah's Ghost Towns fame - rounded up a group of Michael Jackson fans and took them to a house in Ireland that Jackson had stayed in a few years ago. Once there, he spent 20 minutes doing what he does best: trying to convince everyone that he was being inhabited by the ghost of a dead megastar.

And he was certainly very convincing. Because if you were Michael Jackson and you'd just been gifted an unexpected conduit into the world of the liv-

ing for the first time since your death, you wouldn't use it as an opportunity to pass on some personal messages to your grieving children, would you? No, the first thing you'd do would be to give a shout out to your man Quincy Jones. Then you'd mutter darkly about journalists before mumbling endless variations of the word "love" a lot too. That definitely sounds like something that Michael Jackson would do. Doesn't it?

Derek Acorah's shtick is offensive at the best of times, but the sight of him sitting at a table with four fans - including two who were literally dressed up as Michael Jackson and one who appeared to be on the brink of emotional meltdown throughout the séance - and doing his best to goad them all into crying on live television left an especially bad taste in the mouth. Acorah's manipulation of the vulnerable was in such bad taste that it couldn't be seen as entertainment on any discernible level. It was depressing. That's all it was.

In the coming years, Michael Jackson will be endlessly repackaged and commoditised by people with all kinds of vested financial interests, but I'll be staggered if anything even comes close to Michael Jackson: The Live Séance. That's unless Sky One secures the broadcast rights to Michael Jackson: The Live Corpse-Defiling any time soon. It wouldn't be that much of a leap.

The full story can be found at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2009/nov/09/derek-acorah-michael-jackson>

'Psychic' loses police sack case

A police employee who claimed he was sacked because he thought psychics could solve crimes was not a victim of discrimination, a tribunal ruled.

Alan Power, 62, from Merseyside, had accused Greater Manchester Police (GMP) of forcing him out of his job in

2008 because of his spiritual beliefs. Despite winning a ruling that his views should be seen as a faith, the tribunal said GMP did not dismiss him unfairly. "We welcome all races and religions," a police spokesman said.

During the tribunal in Manchester it was claimed a number of reasons were behind him being sacked. The tribunal heard the police law trainer, described as a "ghostbuster", was playing the part of an arrested shoplifter during a session at Bruche police training college, near Warrington, in 2004 but he became visibly aroused during the frisking process. A sergeant from Merseyside Police who witnessed the scene vowed never to use him again, and Cheshire Constabulary made the same decision because of his "inappropriate behaviour", the tribunal heard. He was sacked three weeks later, with the force citing his "current work in the psychic field" as a reason.

Assistant Chief Officer Julia Rogers said: "GMP notes and fully supports the judge's ruling. "This matter has never been about Mr Power's beliefs and we vehemently deny any claim he was discriminated against on those or any other grounds. GMP welcomes all races and religions and employs and actively recruits people with diverse beliefs and from many different ethnic backgrounds."

In an earlier hearing, the employment tribunal said his psychic beliefs fell under the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003. Greater Manchester Police Authority had claimed his beliefs did not amount to religious views.

The full story can be found at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/8377512.stm>



ASTON HALL

Standing a mere stone's throw from Aston Villa football ground is Aston Hall, a true hidden gem. It is a glorious example of late Jacobean architecture and a building simply awash with ghostly experiences. It recently re-opened on 18th July 2009 following a major refurbishment, a process that took nearly two years.

My first visit to Aston Hall was some thirty eight years ago on a junior school outing. Even at that tender age I was impressed with Aston Hall and vividly recall the guide relating a couple of the ghost stories associated with the hall, to his eager audience. Before sharing

some of the stories associated with the building and its ghosts, let me give a very brief history of the hall.

The owner, Sir Thomas Holte (1571-1654) began construction in 1618 and completed what was one of the last great Jacobean houses in 1635. It is situated a short walk from both Witton and Aston railway stations and is just three miles north east of Birmingham, which at the time it was built was just a small market town. The Holte family resided at Aston Hall for nearly two hundred years but in 1858, Birmingham Council took over ownership of the Hall, thus becoming the first local authority

in Britain to acquire a major historic building and ensure its on-going preservation. The hall is still under Council management and admission is free. To Birmingham Council's credit, they have done a remarkable job of managing the site which produces a richly rewarding experience for the Hall's many visitors.

On many subsequent visits, I have got to know the hall well and despite nearly thirty five years visiting haunted sites all over the United Kingdom, I can seldom remember one that has produced so many first hand experiences from both staff and visitors alike. The beauty is that many of the experiences have never been published and go some way to giving credence to the Halls most widely known three ghosts. The most famous of these is reputed to be the daughter of the Hall's founder, Sir Thomas Holte.

Sir Thomas was by all accounts a quarrelsome and vindictive man. He was accused of murdering his cook with a meat cleaver and successfully sued a neighbour who accused him of such. He also disinherited his own son Edward, following his marriage to a girl deemed to be a social inferior, even though her father had been Bishop of London.

Coming back to our ghosts, we find Sir Thomas Holte's daughter in what was yet again deemed by Sir Thomas to be an inappropriate marital match, to which he declined his blessing. The story goes that the poor girl was locked away in an upstairs room for sixteen long years and depending on which version you prefer, she either fell to her death down the staircase leading from the attic room whilst attempting to escape, or died mad and neglected but of natural causes. This poor lass is our origin for "The White Lady" and sightings have been made on frequent occasions. Perhaps she was responsible for the sighting related to me by a guide back in 2003. The guide in question

was making a last check of the hall prior to closing time when he encountered a pillar of white light at the far end of the impressive long gallery. As he approached it, the object veered to the right and shot upwards before disappearing through the wood panelling just below the ceiling.

The second of Aston Hall's ghosts lends his name to the top floor room where he ended his own life. Dick Garet was a servant during the reign of James I and by all accounts, was caught stealing from the family. The poor terrified lad was locked in the male servants quarters to await the return of his master but it appears that poor Dick took matters into his own hands, by hanging himself from a beam rather than face his masters wrath. His appearances are rare and several of the current members of staff are a little dubious about the validity of the story, so we will pass on to the hall's most active ghost.

This is the famous "Green Lady", who is thought to have been Sir Thomas Holte's house keeper, a lady by the name of Mistress Walker. Sightings of the lady suggest she is aged in her early fifties and wears (hence the name) a high collared green dress. She is usually more active following building work and refurbishments, although she seems to have been unusually absent during the current refurbishments. Her favourite haunts are The Great Hall, The Long Gallery and not surprisingly The House Keepers Room. Two of the more recent sightings that have been related to me involve firstly a guide seeing a lady in a green dress standing by a window in the first floor doorway, from which she walked away and out into a side room. The guide followed her only to discover the room empty, much to his amazement. The guide in question had no doubts about what he saw and in a way felt pleased to have

finally witnessed something.

The second experience relates to a different guide and in this case to The Long Gallery. On this occasion it was approaching closing time and the guide was checking for any remaining visitors when upon entering The Long Gallery he saw a lady in a green dress sitting in a chair at the far end of the room. He spoke to the lady who completely ignored him. Upon drawing nearer to her she promptly faded away.

The final tale relates to a guide seeing a ghostly face in a grandfather clock, but since this face was male (it was bearded and our witness was clean shaven) it cannot really relate to our three main ghosts. There are, of course, numerous accounts of cold spots, footsteps and doors opening and closing but these are perhaps less impressive.

Unfortunately, when I visited in August 2009, the staff and volunteers appeared to be new, and having only been there for a short space of time, were a little light on personal experiences - but give it time...

So, if you find yourselves in the much overlooked (in a ghost hunting sense) West Midlands, may I suggest a visit to Aston Hall? It is open from Easter to the end of October, Tuesdays to Sundays between 12 pm and 4 pm but be warned, it is closed on afternoons when Aston Villa are playing at Villa Park.

by
Mike Pope



BRITAIN'S MOST HAUNTED PUB RE-OPENS

By Alan Murdie

What was once labelled as 'Britain's most haunted pub' has recently re-opened at Bungay, Suffolk, minus an ancient wall removed by a former landlord who has been fined for his trouble. Bungay is best known for its famous 'Black Dog of Bungay' – the manifestation of a demonic dog at St Mary's Church, but in the 1960s and 1970s this was eclipsed by the supposedly haunted *Three Tuns* inn. In 1969 it was claimed the pub had at least two dozen 'earth-bound entities', identified in séances by a psychically inclined landlady. Messages were received by means of an improvised Ouija board using a tumbler. A complicated story of adultery and murder emerged, with one ghost supposedly identifying itself as an 18 year old youth called Rex Bacon who hanged himself in *The Three Tuns* in 1682 after killing his wife's lover. Another spirit was Tom Hardy, an 18th century highwayman who used the Inn as a base before



The Three Tuns Inn, Bungay

being executed with his gang. Church of England exorcist Canon Pearce Higgins became involved, treating the communications seriously. During one séance, a Mr Beckett, a local hairdresser, claimed to have seen a white ghost-like figure in a corner of one of the rooms where he later discovered a door had been situated. A former assistant manager Mervyn Blakeway told the press that his window had mysteriously opened and closed.

In many ways, *The Three Tuns* was ahead of its time, its haunted reputation being built upon the statements by financially interested psychics but little in the way of manifestations experienced

by anyone else. Armed with extensive local knowledge and a fair chunk of regional pride, author Christopher Reeve in *Paranormal Suffolk* (2009) reviews the evidence and points out that a local journalist searching local records found that at nearby



St Mary's Church

Mettingham there was once a vicar named Bacon. However, it should be noted that enquiries undertaken in 1970 by the Norfolk and Norwich Record Office in response to the ghostly messages found no confirmation of the claimed executions of the highwaymen.

In the forty years since the *The Three Tuns* has passed through a number of hands but little more activity has been reported. In October 2009, a former landlord was fined £8000 for removing an ancient wall dating from at least 1540, and this may have put paid to any haunting altogether.

Indeed, local psychic researchers have now switched to *The King's Head* Hotel standing directly opposite *The Three Tuns*, and backing on to Bungay Castle. *The King's Head* has

been visited by paranormal investigation groups several times, and when I stayed there in November 2009, a member of staff told me strange noises had been heard recently but "the boss says it just creaks because it's a very old building." Others are convinced of paranormal activity, but on my own visit the chances of investigating strange sounds were curtailed by the pub hosting a 1980s themed fancy dress disco the same night. The decor is certainly contemporary to this period, with low level lighting.

Nonetheless, both the *Kings Head* and *Three Tuns* remain examples of old fashioned inns, and a reminder of what pubs were in the past; and Bungay itself is a nice example of an East Anglian town that has been spared the ravages of modern development.

St Mary's Church is maintained and opened to visitors; the Black Dog legend is celebrated in the

local town sign outside the two pubs. According to an ancient pamphlet with antique spelling, *A Strange and Terrible Wunder* a black dog materialised in St Mary's Church, Bungay, Suffolk during a violent thunderstorm on Sunday morning of August 4th 1577. The dog ran down the nave of the church wreaking havoc, and killing members of the congregation which it caught between his jaws. Despite these depredations, the Black Dog of Bungay has been rehabilitated over the years and is today celebrated as a local town symbol. Tradition avers that the Black Dog also rampaged through Blythburgh Church the same morning, harming yet more people and leaving claw marks on the north door. Alas, for tradition, research has shown that although a pow-

erful storm is recorded on that morning as having inflicted damage by lightning on the church, with the resultant costs being recorded in the parish accounts, there is no mention of any Black Dog apparition. As for the claw marks of the Black Dog at Blythburgh, there are indeed burn marks on the church door, but their actual date is uncertain (the church also contains a pillar to which Oliver Cromwell allegedly tethered his horse in the Civil War). Outside the church there also stands the 'Druid's Stone' a glacial erratic boulder. Tradition claims that if you dance round it 12 times the devil will appear and make a nuisance of himself.

Black Dogs are currently being studied by Dr Simon Sherwood of Northampton University.

The link between Black Dogs sightings and churches or churchyards is well established in folklore, particularly in Suffolk, where an alternative name for the Black Shuck is the 'churchyard beast'. A former Lady Rendlesham told the ghost story collector James Wentworth Day that she had seen the Black Shuck leap over the wall of Leiston Churchyard in a vigil in the 19th century. Interestingly, Dr Sherwood has found modern examples of Black Dog sightings in the proximity of churchyards. This feature runs contrary to modern experience; despite graveyards enjoying a spooky reputation worldwide, relatively few apparitions are ever encountered in them today. Yet the old Black Dogs seem to be an exception.

Dr Sherwood classifies dog apparitions as either benign, neutral or hostile and has identified clear behaviour patterns connected with each type. Analysing Black Dog sightings in terms of behaviour, the typical sighting scenario is a lone traveller on a road at night, either a pedestrian or motorist. Benevolent dogs seem to have a protective function usually appearing parallel with the walker, or running along the road ahead in the direction of travel. Neutral black dogs are those typically seen crossing the path ahead of a person but not interacting with the observer or acknowledg-

ing his/her presence. The third category are the dogs which are negatively disposed and which display aggression to humans. These run towards observers or bar their path, with their teeth bared and growling ferociously.

Reviewing a range of theories proposed for Black Dog sightings, Dr Sherwood find that none satisfactorily account for all the reported cases in the literature. A similar impasse was reached by David Hufford reviewing explanations for 'Old Hag Syndrome', involving phantom bed-room invaders which are reported as assaulting sleepers at certain locations. All explanations, from hallucination, paranormal phenomena, Jungian archetypes, demons and witchcraft fail to account for all aspects of the experience.

A Black Dog is also said to haunt the ruins of Bungay Castle; this is said to be the transformed spirit of wicked baron Hugh Bigod who rebelled against Henry II. Christopher Reeve has also recorded more recent local sightings of a Black Dog, identified as the East Anglian Black Shuck, portent of death and disaster (in fact there is relatively little evidence for this). Bungay is on the borders of Suffolk and Norfolk and an association between Black Dog sightings and borders or boundaries has also been noted before (for example Black Dog Lane at Uplyme, Dorset lies on the county boundary with Devon).

Bungay castle also had traditions of a ghostly white lady at the end of the 18th century, mentioned in a local novel, but no recent appearances have been claimed.

(Sources: *The Haunted Inns of England* (1972) by Jack Hallam; *Eastern Daily Press* 30 June 1969; *Eastern Evening News* 25 April 1970; 'Landlord removed historic pub masonry' *East Anglian Daily Times* 6 October 2009 ; *In Search of Ghosts* (1969) by James Wentworth Day; lecture by Dr Simon Sherwood 30th April 2009.



The Ghost Club

Founded 1862

PO Box 910

Ipswich

IP1 9PT

THE COUNCIL

Chairman Alan Murdie <i>chairman@ghostclub.org.uk</i>	Events Officer Philip Hutchinson <i>events@ghostclub.org.uk</i>
General Secretary Mark Salmon <i>gensec@ghostclub.org.uk</i>	Treasurer Lance Railton <i>treasurer@ghostclub.org.uk</i>
Journal Editor Sarah Darnell <i>editor@ghostclub.org.uk</i>	Web Design Philip Carr <i>webmaster@ghostclub.org.uk</i>
Press Officer Steve Rose <i>media@ghostclub.org.uk</i>	Scientific Officer Paul Foulsham <i>science@ghostclub.org.uk</i>
Membership Secretary Paul Collins <i>memsec@ghostclub.org.uk</i>	Investigations Organiser Derek Green <i>investigations@ghostclub.org.uk</i>

GHOST CLUB ADVISORS

Advisors
WTG Perrott
Dr Ciarán O'Keeffe
Keith Morbey

Legal Advisor
Alan Murdie, LLB Barrister

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