

HAUNTED UK PODCAST

Episode 38 – Strange Curses

Since the dawn of civilisation with its mastery of communication, stories of curses have endured. Whether it be on the tomb of an ancient pharaoh, or the sacred stone of a Scottish clan, the power of words to conjure up a protective curse have brought terror, intrigue and death to so many people over thousands of years. Curses stretch not only through languages, continents and cultures, but also seemingly can extend their powers to families, items and even numbers ... *but can all of this be true? ... or is this just a case of us simply 'believing' that something bad will happen when we're told that it will? Is it the power of our own minds that can inflict a curse upon us through the simple idea of suggestion? ... or is there more to it than meets the eye???*

This is episode 38 of the Haunted UK Podcast, and in this episode, we're going to look at some of the strangest and most frightening curses that have existed over the years.

Curses are a fascinating topic, and in episode six of season 2, we investigated the curse that befell anyone who dared disturb the tomb of the most famous Egyptian pharaoh of them all ... Tutankhamun. Whether you believed in the story that was told in that episode or not, it was quite clear that several strange coincidences took place around the time of the discovery of the tomb as well as afterwards. But curses aren't just limited to the ancient rulers of Egypt ... they have been found to be at the core of many stories of tragedy, death and pain.

In Episode 4 of Season 3, we heard about some truly amazing cases of people who seemingly had the ability to predict an imminent disaster with eerily accurate details. One was the story of David Booth and his dream over the course of ten consecutive nights that saw him witness the crash of an American Airlines commercial airliner. In his dream he witnessed this aircraft turn completely on to its side and then crash into the ground. The dream was exactly the same every night, and on the 25th of May 1979 American Airlines Flight 191 crashed shortly after take-off in exactly the same way that David had seen it night after night after night. But in this case, we're not interested in the prediction as we've already explored that ... we're interested in the flight number.

Back in 1963 a Russian passenger airliner carrying 43 people took off from Vnukovo airport heading to Ashgabat Airport, Turkmenistan on a routine flight of some 2000 miles. Weather was good and skies were clear, and the entire flight was completely uneventful ... until the aircraft made its preparations to land. To the pilot's horror, the weather changed almost immediately from good conditions to a huge powerful dust storm. This began to play havoc with many of the aircraft's instruments including communications with air traffic control.

The pilots fought against the storm as best they could, but the winds became so strong that they caused the aircraft to crash as it hit the airport runway. The resulting impact killed eight crew

members and four passengers, leaving the remaining survivors extremely lucky to have come through such a tragic accident. The aircraft's flight number was Aeroflot Flight 191.

Four years later, on the 15th of November 1967, American test pilot Major Michael Adams detached his experimental X-15 hypersonic aircraft from the B52 bomber which was carrying it. Shortly after the test flight began, several odd electrical problems began to manifest, causing the handling of the aircraft to become '*squirrely*' – as Adams described it to mission control.

The X-15 then began to spin at a rate which the aircraft's stabilisation controls couldn't correct, causing the aircraft to begin to break up at around 60,000 feet killing Major Michael Adams ... the flight number ... again, X-15 Flight 191. Coincidence perhaps ... maybe ... this was an experimental aircraft after all, so there is always an element of risk when test flying these exotic new technologies ... but the curse of flight number 191 continued.

On the 24th of June 1972 Prinair Flight 191 took off on a routine short flight from one airport in Puerto Rico to another. Again, as with all the cases which we've heard about so far, all seemed well and uneventful throughout the journey ... that was until Captain Donald Price began to descend for landing. From out of nowhere a fog bank drifted across the runway, limiting Captain Price's view of the landing strip, and as he touched down it was reported that he tried to steer the aircraft away from something that was in his path. He then tried to pull the aircraft back into the air to attempt a go-around so that he could try to land again ... but it was too late. The plane crashed on the runway, killing five people and injuring a further 15. Investigations into the cause of the crash could find no evidence of any vehicle or obstruction on the runway ... but it wasn't only Captain Price who saw something ... other witnesses came forward claiming that some type of vehicle was seen driving erratically on the runway at the time of the accident ... but there were no records of anything being out there.

The curse of flight number 191 again perhaps??? A few years after this came the crash of American Airlines Flight 191, which was described earlier in this episode, then in 1985 the curse seemed to strike again. This time it was Delta Airlines Flight 191 which was travelling from Florida to Los Angeles with a scheduled stop-over at Fort Worth International airport, Dallas.

As with many of the cases we've already heard about, weather seemed to play a huge part in the disaster of this flight. As the aircraft approached the Gulf Coast it ran into a thunderstorm – the pilots tried to alter their course to get around this – but instead decided to push through and land at Fort Worth as scheduled. As the plane began to descend for landing, the weather turned again, and a wind phenomenon known as a microburst caused the aircraft to veer out of control and crash. One hundred and thirty-seven people, including eight crew members, lost their lives that day ... it seemed like flight number 191 was beginning to develop an ominous reputation.

One of the strangest incidents to occur on a flight with a call sign of 191 happened as recently as 2012. On the 27th of March of that year, Jet Blue Flight 191 was travelling from New York to Las Vegas when pilot Captain Clayton Osbon's behaviour began to cause concern between his colleagues. First Officer Jason Dowd was shocked when Osbon turned to him and, out of the blue, commented, '*We need to take a leap of faith ... we're not going to Vegas, and I can't be held responsible when this plane crashes.*' First Officer Dowd then said that Captain Osbon began to deliver a type of sermon to him about Jesus, Al-Qaeda and Middle Eastern countries. At this point Dowd somehow managed to get Osbon to leave the cockpit to continue his sermon to the passengers, and then quickly locked the cockpit door and changed the code so that Osbon could not

regain access. Osbon then ranted about a bomb being on board the plane and continued on with his strange speech until a number of passengers restrained him and tied him up, securing him to a seat with seat belt extenders. An off-duty Jet Blue Airlines pilot who was on the flight at the time, persuaded First Officer Dowd to open the cockpit door so that he could assist him and get the aircraft down at Fort Worth as soon as possible. In this case the plane landed safely without any loss of life, *but what happened to Captain Clayton Osbon ... and why did he suddenly begin to display this frightening behaviour??*

When Flight 191 landed, Osbon was immediately arrested and charged with interference with a flight crew, but at the trial he was found not guilty by reason of insanity. Instead of prison, he was transferred to a mental health facility to undergo observation and treatment. It's not known to this day the exact reason of Osbon's breakdown, but some suggest that it was a momentary psychotic episode; whilst others think that it could have been a neurological seizure which in turn compromised Osbon's brain functions. Either way, this flight 191 ended relatively happily.

Flight Number 191 has gained such an unwanted reputation that many airlines have retired the number altogether, choosing to air on the side of caution ... maybe in this case it's better to be safe than sorry ...

Just like the curse of Flight Number 191, cursed phone numbers are also a relatively recent phenomena ... a few cases are very creepy indeed. One revolved around Bulgarian mobile phone company Mobitel and their issue of the phone number 359 0888 888 888. Now this number may seem completely innocent to you and me, but to the people who used it ... it was a totally different story. The events began in 2000 with the actual CEO of Mobitel, Vladimir Grashnov taking the number for himself.

At 48 years old Vladimir was a young, healthy, and successful businessman, but in under a year of taking the mobile number for his personal use, he was diagnosed with an extremely aggressive form of cancer which killed him in 2001. There were rumours which began to spread that he was actually killed by radiation poisoning, similar to that of the death of Alexander Litvinenko who was exposed to Polonium 210, but this was never substantiated.

According to family, friends and work colleagues, Vladimir was known for his solid but fair business practices and had no known enemies. After his death, the number went back into circulation and was allocated as the phone number for a man named Konstantin D. Dimitrov. Dimitrov was a highly respected but feared Bulgarian crime boss who was involved in all manner of criminal activities, but it was drug smuggling that drew the most unwanted attention.

In 2003, whilst at an exclusive restaurant in Amsterdam with his girlfriend, Dimitrov was gunned down in a spray of bullets from rival Russian crime bosses who wanted to take over his smuggling ring. At the time of the assassination, Dimitrov had the phone in his hand ... *was it the number that was bringing all of this fatally unwanted attention ... or just criminal gangs fighting for business?*

Two years passed before the same phone number was re-issued to estate agent Konstantin Dishliev. From the outside looking in, Dishliev led a normal life, but what most people didn't know was that he was heavily involved in a huge cocaine smuggling operation and, as with Dimitrov, this may have drawn unwanted attention to him ... but it was only after taking the phone number on that his luck finally ran out. He was shot on the streets of Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, and left to bleed to death after leaving an Indian restaurant. The assailant was never identified or found.

After the death of Dishliev, the phone number was temporarily suspended as the police investigated, but when no closure could be brought to the crime, the number was re-activated ... but nobody wanted it – as the stories of the deaths linked to it continued to circulate. After a time, the phone company withdrew the number permanently, and all that remains of it is a pre-recorded message stating that the number is '*outside network coverage.*'

Now it would be fair to say that the curses of flight number 191 and phone number 359 0888 888 888 could be stories which have been stretched to fit the narrative. *What about all of the other disasters in aviation history ... surely there are similar coincidences??* Also, it's common sense to assume that if you're an integral part of a huge drug-smuggling syndicate, you're going to draw attention from other sources who may be interested in trying to take over your operation.

For these reasons, let's move away from these types of curses and take a look at a family who have had more than their fair share of death and bad luck for over 80 years ... the Kennedys. This family dynasty has been involved in big business and political power for generations; but death, scandal and conspiracy have followed them wherever they have ventured.

There are many stories which describe where the curse originated from, but I have to say that my favourite (and the one I'd love to believe is real) comes from a tale about Thomas Fitzgerald who was the great grandfather of the 35th President of The United States of America: John F. Kennedy. The family's roots are originally in Ireland, and it is said that in 1872 Thomas Fitzgerald came across a chest of gold coins which had been abandoned due to an age-old curse. This cursed gold had been responsible for the complete breakdown of several Irish villages and their communities; so, it was agreed that it would be taken away from prying eyes and left to nature ... that was until Thomas Fitzgerald found it. It was *this* gold that was taken to America to begin the building of the Kennedy dynasty ... so the story goes ...

Whether it was this gold that kick started the curse of the Kennedy family or some other strange event makes no difference ... what cannot be denied is that there are a huge number of strange coincidences, deaths and tragedies that surround this powerful family ... even to this day. We'll start off with Joseph P. Kennedy Jr...

Joseph was held in high regard by his family, and they were sure that he would be the one to really kick start their political ambitions, but it wasn't to be. Whilst he was a talented athlete and a gifted student, he decided not to complete his law degree at Harvard but instead become a military pilot. By 1942 he was given his wings and was a fully trained naval aviator, and in 1943 he was sent to Britain to become a member of Bomber Squadron 110.

In 1944, instead of returning home to the US, he decided to volunteer for a top-secret mission named Anvil which involved the testing of an early version of a remote-control drone which carried explosives. Disaster struck on August 12th, 1944, when an electrical wiring harness defect caused the explosives in the drone to detonate, destroying the drone and also the bomber carrying the drone which was being piloted by Joseph P. Kennedy Jr.

In a strange coincidence, Electronics Officer Earl Olsen had warned Kennedy that very day that the mission was at great risk of failure due to the electrical defect ... but Kennedy ignored the warning and carried out his scheduled flight. It seems that this began a seismic chain reaction that continued to rock the family. A few months before this, Joseph's sister Kathleen Kennedy had married the

Marquess of Hartington, William Cavendish. This made her the marchioness, and the couple planned for a busy but peaceful life together in England ...but again...this was cut short.

Just five weeks after their marriage, William was posted to France to fight in the war, and just a short time after that he was killed by a German Sniper ... a matter of weeks after Joseph P. Kennedy Jr's death. Kathleen was devastated, but after a few years she met the 8th Earl Fitzwilliam and they soon started dating. In 1948 they both travelled to Paris to get the consent of Kathleen's father, Joseph Kennedy Snr, for their upcoming marriage. They would then travel on to the French Riviera for a short holiday, but on the 13th of May 1948 their plane crashed after being caught in heavy turbulence ... killing everyone on board.

The curse continued to claim lives as the years went by and in 1955 it struck again ... with yet another plane crash. This time it was the mother and father-in-law of Robert F. Kennedy. Robert had married Ethel Skakel in 1950 and was working for the US Federal Government at the time. Ethel's parents, George and Anne, were on a private plane on the 3rd of October 1955 when it crashed near Union City, Oklahoma ... again, killing everyone on board.

More tragedy was just around the corner, this time with the president himself and his first lady. John F. Kennedy and his wife Jackie had already suffered a miscarriage in 1955, then the stillbirth of their daughter Arabella in 1956 ... but the curse wasn't done with them yet. On August the 9th 1963, news began to circulate that John and Jackie had lost their third child ... the reports were correct.

Patrick Bouvier Kennedy died two days after being born from complications of a lung condition called Hyaline Membrane Disease. Furthermore, he was also almost six weeks premature, and whilst these conditions are relatively easy to control and treat today, back then they were a serious threat. It is reported that the death of Patrick began to bring the couple closer together again, as John had been guilty of being involved with several women during their marriage ... but it wouldn't be long before disaster would strike again.

On the 22nd of November 1963, just over three months after the death of their son Patrick, President John F. Kennedy and his wife Jackie were in downtown Dallas on an official visit. As their open top motorcade drove through Dealey Plaza, ex-US Marine Lee Harvey Oswald took aim with his Carcano rifle from an open window on the sixth floor of the Texas Book Depository building and fired three shots. The first missed the presidential limousine all together, but the second hit the president in the top of his back with the bullet exiting through his throat.

If you've ever had the unfortunate opportunity to watch Abraham Zapruder's 8mm home movie camera footage of the whole assassination, you'll see President Kennedy grip both hands around his own throat. It's at this moment that everybody realised that something was very wrong ... it was also the moment the third shot was fired. This third shot hit Kennedy in the head, showering his wife with blood, skull fragments and parts of his brain. He was declared dead at Parkland Memorial hospital approximately 30 minutes after the fatal shot was fired.

The aftermath of this event was monumental. It was on a par with what many witnessed on September the 11th 2001 with the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre's Twin Towers. America's freedom had been compromised ... someone had shot and killed their president; a man who despite his misgivings, had the potential to give so much more. The curse of the Kennedy family had struck again ... this time with the results being played out in the arena of the world media.

John F. Kennedy's younger brother Robert F. Kennedy had played an integral role in the campaigns which saw John rise to the Senate and then on to the White House as president. He even gave Robert the job of Attorney General, and after John's assassination, Robert also went on to become a Senator battling for civil rights. It seemed that Robert F. Kennedy was destined for the presidency ... just like his brother.

Five years after his brother's assassination, Robert decided to announce that he would run for President of the United States on March the 16th 1968. The campaign trail began and on the 4th of June of the same year he took huge victories winning the California and South Dakota primaries. The day after – on the 5th of June at around midnight – Robert and his team celebrated by giving a talk to supporters in the ballroom of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. After the talk had finished, Robert decided to take a shortcut to the press room through the hotel's kitchens ... something that his bodyguard and head of security – Bill Barry – strongly advised against. He pleaded that the route hadn't been checked and cleared of people and urged them to stick to their original planned route ... but Robert F. Kennedy chose to ignore this.

The Kitchen was very crowded, and as Robert F. Kennedy made his way to the press room a 24-year-old Palestinian man named Sirhan Sirhan pull out a .22 Calibre revolver and opened fire. Kennedy was hit three times, and as he lay on the ground fatally wounded, members of the public wrestled Sirhan Sirhan down to the floor and disarmed him. Even though Kennedy was conscious for a while and said a few words to hotel bus boy Juan Ramero, his injuries caused him to swiftly lose consciousness. He was taken to the Good Samaritan hospital where he died 26 hours after the assassination. *Was this yet another member of the Kennedy family lost to the curse? ... or was it simply a case of wrong place at the wrong time?* Some would also say this about the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and both of their deaths still swirl around the pools of conspiracy theorists who claim there's more to these assassinations than meet the eye ... but we're here for a curse ... not a conspiracy.

A year later Senator Ted Kennedy went on record saying, *'that it seemed like a terrible curse had been placed on the whole family because of the huge losses in their lives that they had suffered'* ... and while he himself enjoyed a long life of 77 years, the curse didn't leave him out entirely. Ted and his cousin Joseph were on Chappaquiddick Island where they were going to race Ted's boat The Victura – in the 1969 Edgartown Yacht Club Regatta. They were staying at a cottage on the Island and held a party whose guest list included a group of women known as the Boiler Room Girls. Six of this group of women would be reuniting for the first time since they had played a huge part in Robert F. Kennedy's presidential campaign a year earlier. The party would serve as a thank you to them for their efforts ... but it wouldn't end well for one of them. At some point in the evening of the 18th and 19th of July 1969, Mary Jo Kopechne decided to leave the party and go back to her pre-booked hotel room at the Katama Shores Motor Inn around two miles away from the cottage where the party was taking place.

Curiously, she left her purse and hotel key at the party and allegedly asked Ted Kennedy for a lift to the dock so that she could catch the last ferry. Kennedy estimated this at being around 11.15 p.m. ... although he had no way of verifying this as he never wore a watch. According to Ted Kennedy he took the keys to his car from his chauffeur (something he'd never done before) and began to drive Kopechne to the dock. He said that he took a wrong right hand turn onto Dike Road instead of keeping left, but this isn't how Sheriff Christopher Look recalled the situation.

Sheriff Look was at the junction of Chappaquiddick Road, Dike Road, and Cemetery Road, and he saw a black Oldsmobile Sedan slowly pass him and pull over onto Cemetery Road. He noted that the

car was being driven by a man with a female passenger next to him, and because of the late hour he decided to approach the car to see if the occupants needed assistance. When he was just a short distance away, the car reversed towards him, turned onto Dike Road, and sped off leaving a cloud of dust.

Sheriff Look reported that this was around 12.40 a.m. ... *so why had it taken Kennedy over an hour to drive only around one mile from the cottage to the junction of Dike Road? ... What had he and Kopechne been doing??* Dike Road led to Dike Bridge which crossed a channel connecting two large ponds and it was just before the car got to the bridge that Kennedy claims he lost control of the vehicle, sending it crashing over the bridge and landing upside down in the channel.

Kennedy said that he managed to free himself and swim to the surface ... but couldn't get Kopechne out and had attempted to dive back down to her several times before giving up hope. He then rested for 15 minutes before making his way back to the cottage on foot ... passing at least four properties where he could have alerted the authorities and confessed to what had happened ... but he didn't.

Instead, he chose to tell his cousin Joe Gargan and his friend Paul Markham what had happened. The three returned to the site of the accident and attempted again to dive down to Kopechne who was still trapped in the submerged car... their rescue efforts failed. They then drove to the ferry dock and stood near a pay phone discussing what they should do next ... just to clarify, all three of these men were lawyers. Both Markham and Gargan told Kennedy that the accident needed to be reported as soon as possible, but what happened next even took them by surprise.

Ted Kennedy jumped into the water and swam back to Edgartown a few hundred feet away to go back to his hotel room. Once there, he changed his clothes and left again ... this was around 2 a.m. All three men never told anyone what had happened and even commented to other people at the party that Mary Jo Kopechne was probably asleep back at her hotel room.

The car was found at 8.00 a.m. that morning and reported to the authorities ... Kopechne's body was recovered around 50 minutes later. Around this time Kennedy was said to be chatting away to various people at Edgartown in good spirits ... until he realised that Kopechne's body had been discovered. Ted Kennedy then made a series of phone calls at the pay phone on Chappaquiddick Island before crossing back to Edgartown to give himself up to local police.

This case is a minefield full of conflicting information and could be an episode in itself on a true crime podcast. Even though Ted Kennedy somehow got off without any charges – apart from having his driving licence revoked for a short period – the Kennedy Curse had struck again, and this incident would continue to haunt Ted Kennedy for the rest of his life. He had high hopes of following in the footsteps of John F. Kennedy all the way to the White House ... but his involvement in the tragic death of Mary Jo Kopechne would continuously bite back at him – thwarting any plans for presidential candidacy.

The son of Robert F. Kennedy was next in line for the family curse. David Kennedy had an extremely troubled childhood which involved him almost drowning at just 12 years old in the sea off Malibu, and then seeing his father murdered just a few hours later. These, and other incidents, tipped David over the edge, and he became involved in car crime, drugs and vandalism.

He was responsible for paralyzing a person in 1973 – the result of his reckless driving; and in 1979 at 24 years old, he was found in a budget hotel room in Harlem with 25 packets of heroin. Heavily beaten, it was clear that he'd been involved in some sort of confrontation. Even when the Kennedy

family tried to rally around him and get him to seek help, it didn't do any good. He was found dead in a hotel room in Florida of an overdose ... he was 28 years old.

Michael Kennedy, another of Robert F. Kennedy's sons, was just 39 years old when tragedy struck in 1998 on a ski slope on Colorado's Aspen Mountain. Whilst taking part in a dangerous game of football on skis, Michael struck a tree and died not long afterwards. He was wearing no helmet or safety gear; and the family were frequently warned to stop playing the game whenever they were on the slopes by ski patrol officials ... but they ignored the warnings. It seems like the curse stepped in and took care of the situation itself ... and even after all of the tragedy and death that had befallen the family ... the curse continued to take lives.

On the 16th of July 1999, John F. Kennedy Jnr, his wife Carolyn and her sister Lauren were travelling from Fairfield New Jersey to Hyannis Port Massachusetts in a Piper Saratoga aeroplane piloted by Kennedy himself. They were making the journey to attend the wedding of his cousin, Rory Kennedy, when the plane vanished from radar and didn't land as scheduled.

Search and rescue began the task of trying to find where the plane was and discovered luggage and plane wreckage in the Atlantic. The search lasted five days until the three bodies were found at the bottom of the ocean ... Kennedy was still strapped into his seat. Investigations into the disaster found that Kennedy didn't hold a full pilot's licence; and he was flying an aircraft that had the reputation of being difficult to fly – especially by novice pilots. There was also no flight plan and no flight instructor on board.

Ted Kennedy's suffering at the hands of the curse would become further intensified when his daughter Kara died at the age of 51. In 2002, Kara had been battling lung cancer, and instead of admitting defeat to the disease, Ted Kennedy sought out a surgeon who would operate. The treatment was a success, with the cancer going into remission. When she recovered, she became a regular at the gym keeping herself fit and healthy; until in 2011 – when she suffered a massive heart attack after a workout ... *an underlying health condition ... or the curse???*

Next up to face the wrath of the curse of Kennedy's was Mary Richardson Kennedy. She had married into the family when she tied the knot with Robert F. Kennedy Jnr, and life seemed to be taking a happy and idyllic route. She had four children, worked for non-profit organisations and was also a respected designer ... but all was not what it seemed behind the scenes.

In 2010 Mary's life began falling apart when Robert F. Kennedy Jnr filed for divorce. Mary had been struggling with alcohol and substance abuse for a while; finally, it was a drink-driving charge that brought about a court awarding Robert F. Kennedy Jnr full temporary custody of their children. On the 16th of May 2012, Mary was found dead at her home in Bedford, New York. She had committed suicide by hanging herself, and an autopsy found traces of an antidepressant in her blood. Yet another Kennedy falling foul of the curse.

One of the most tragic deaths in the Kennedy family dynasty was that of Saoirse Kennedy in August 2019. Saoirse was the granddaughter of Robert F. Kennedy who, as we've already learnt, was assassinated by Sirhan Sirhan in 1968. She was only 22 years old when she was found dead of a drugs overdose in Massachusetts. Saoirse had attempted suicide in the past, and although she seemed happy and grounded in front of her friends at Boston College, she was suffering from bouts of severe depression ... it seemed like the curse was continuing on its rampant path ... and it still goes on to this day.

We now move on from cursed flight numbers, phone numbers and the unfortunate series of events that enveloped the Kennedy family, to an ancient curse that surrounds the property of the Scottish Clan of Clanranald. The ancient burial ground of Clanranald lies near the ruins of Hawmore Chapel, and it's here that many sacred and valuable items reside to this day. This site is located on South Uist on the Outer Hebrides, south of Benbecula; so, this is a place which has been largely untouched since the Vikings ventured there over 1000 years ago.

Traditions, superstitions and religion are still cornerstones to the inhabitants of this area – even today, and so strong is their belief in the ways of their ancestors that a curse seems almost a given – when you are dealing with so much history. Since 1490, the Clansmen of Clanranald have been buried at this ancient site; for hundreds of years many attempts to take the land and its sacred objects have always either ended unsuccessfully or have never yielded the result that was intended.

In 1745 redcoat soldiers gained access to the Clanranald graveyard with a view of stealing the valuable St. Finan's Bell. As the soldiers began to make their way of escape, the bell began to ring uncontrollably and couldn't be stopped. The loud ringing alerted the graveyards caretaker, and he gave chase until the soldiers dropped the bell, abandoned their plan, and left the area for good. The bell continued to ring until it was placed back at the Clanranald site ... and this isn't the only time that this has happened.

The Clanranald Stone is another precious artifact that seems to have the full force of the curse interwoven through its very being. Carved onto its face are the symbols of the Clan, and it also marks the final resting place of Alan Moydart who was a clan chief and protector of the clan over 400 years ago. For centuries, the Moydart Gravestone sat on the land of Clanranald until, in 1990, an event happened which shook the whole community ...

The niece of the local priest took an early morning walk to visit the site of the stone but was shocked to find that it had vanished. After alerting her uncle, Angus McQueen, they both went back to find that the stone had indeed been taken ... *but by who??* Another local man drew attention to a set of drag marks along the ground which led to the Hawmore Chapel car park; but this stone weighed at least 360 lbs – so whoever had taken it *must* have made a superhuman effort to get it from the church and into the back of their car ... but there were no witnesses.

Local residents knew that the desecration of any grave was unforgivable, but to steal the sacred Moydart Gravestone was a fate that would reawaken the Clanranald curse once again. Authorities were alerted and searches were conducted, but the stone remained missing; and whilst the residents of the Clanranald site were horrified that such a sacred item had been stolen, they were in no doubt that whoever had taken it was in very grave danger.

Weeks turned to months which turned to years, and still the stone remained missing ... until five years later, late one evening, a phone call to the British Museum was made from a man who desperately needed some assistance with a discovery that he'd made. A museum employee, Cathy Haith who was the curator of the Department of Mediaeval and Later Antiquities, took the call from the information desk to see what assistance she could give, and spoke to a man who seemed very upset. The man said he urgently needed to see someone who could possibly help him out with a strange stone artifact, so Cathy invited him down to her department the following day.

The man, who introduced himself as David Maben, came armed with a photo of a large stone with some carvings on it. It appeared to be very old; he explained that it was currently in a flat in London – not far from Euston Station. He told Cathy that his son had been on holiday in the Outer Hebrides a number of years ago ... on South Uist to be exact ... and he'd discovered the stone in a field and

brought it back with him. It had remained in his flat ever since ... and his son had died very suddenly two weeks prior.

Living in Canada, David Maben had travelled to England for his son's funeral, as well as to prepare his flat to be handed back to its landlord. It turned out that his 33-year-old son, Lawrence Maben, had stolen the Moydart Gravestone and his death had been ruled by the coroner as Death by Misadventure. When his body was found, he was lying just feet away from the gravestone which he'd taken almost five years ago to the day of his death.

Not long after the stone was found, arrangements were made to return the stone to its rightful home ... back on the land of Clanranald, where it remains to this day. Priest Angus Macqueen – as well many of the South Uist locals, feel that it was the power of curse of Clanranald which ultimately brought the stone back to them ... but others just see this as coincidence ... until they realise that just days after Lawrence Maben took the sacred stone, his life began to fall apart...

Bad luck and misfortune plagued him until his sudden and unfortunate death ... *was this the curse of the Clan of Clanranald exerting its influence...or was it simply coincidence?* In the case of the Kennedys, it does seem incredibly harrowing that so many terrible occurrences can befall one family. If curses do exist, it's quite fair to say that the Kennedys would be in the top group of contenders as far as the possibilities are concerned ... *but what do **you** think?? Were they merely a family of risk-takers, ignoring the sound advice surrounding them? Or did the cursed treasure trove poison their lineage with tragedy?*

You've heard about the Curse of Tutankhamun back in Season 2 ... and the Curse of the Hope Diamond in Season 3 ... now you have more stories which could point to something very strange happening in our everyday world ... *but are these just cases of our own imagination literally making stories fit the narrative of a curse? We would love to know if **you** have any more information about curses. Is there a legend local to you which involves a curse? Do you feel you have been cursed? Or know of a story of someone who has? Or perhaps you would like to provide a logical explanation detailing why people believe in curses?* Let us know on Twitter @hauntedukpod – include the hashtag #hauntedukpodcast and we could start a conversation going. Alternatively let us know on Instagram @hauntedukpodcast, drop us a message or even a voice note. We love hearing your stories and opinions!

Either way one thing is certain ... curses are a very interesting element of the paranormal. Whatever the case, whatever you believe, the next person we hear telling us their ideas and opinions on this subject – on this show ... could be **you**.