

Winter Chills 2©

By the Storyteller (Nicola O'Connor) for Gylden Fellowship

Foreword

In the forewords to the first collection of *Winter Chills*© and *Tales of Wonder and Magick*©, I referenced the provenance of folklore and fairy tales in different cultures. Here, I want to spare a thought for **archetypes**. It is probably true to say that our culture is dominated by archetypes, from the MCU/ DC series of TV and films to much older characters, namely Merlin, Robin Hood and King Arthur. Ghost stories are no different and the winter season lends itself to spooky tales, told around the fire in the dark evenings. Archetypal spooks include haunted houses or castles, but you'll find a few more unusual examples in this collection.

The oldest known fairy/folk tales in written form date from ancient Egypt in about 1300 BCE, but most such tales were delivered in the oral tradition. The role of storytellers was vital to many ancient communities as a news service as much as a type of entertainment. Storytellers were people who told and wrote stories, were prized by early settlements and were probably responsible for the spread of tales across countries. Did these folktales travel across continents with the earliest Scandinavian explorers or Phoenician slavers?

All tellers of tales seek to embellish their stories for their listeners. That holds as true for a Celtic or Saxon storyteller as a performance artist today who recounts Arthurian legends. The stories in this volume all come from Britain and have been verified through my historical research for places and dates. It is worth saying too that many of these tales are designed for **performance**, perhaps in a community group setting or for reading to a child at bed-time, albeit some of the tales may be a little scary for younger children! It should be noted that folklore tends to fall into three main types:

- Accounts of historical events.
- Attributed stories, namely tales surrounding real people.
- Tales that reflect common folklore themes.

In the English traditional calendar, there's a date in early December called *Stir-Up Sunday* when all the ingredients for the Christmas cake or pudding were gathered together and mixed up, including all the little tokens for good luck. And this is what has happened, over the centuries, to some of our most popular stories. Did King Arthur exist in reality? Most likely, he was a composite archetype of several folk heroes from Saxon times and many of our beliefs about him can be traced to Geoffrey of Monmouth's poetic accounts from the 13th century. Since then, there have been innumerable films, TV series, novels, etc about Arthur, Merlin and several other characters. Does the tale lose anything in the telling? Of course not, because oral stories of valour, dragons, giants and magical beasts are as popular now, as then.

When it comes to stories of the **supernatural**, archetypes and provenance are a little different, because most such tales rely upon sightings and history. Are ghosts real? Well, I believe in spirits for two main reasons: first, they form part of my shamanic path and second, there are simply too many reported occurrences in the UK and almost everywhere else. Institutes of psychical research and after-death experiences can be found in many countries. So, it is probably fair to say that we do not understand ghosts yet, but it is an evolving field. This collection of stories includes all sorts of spectral sightings from the UK, in all types of locations.

Some of you may have heard a few of these tales before, perhaps from **Gylden Magick** or at a moot event. It's like song lyrics – does one lose out through hearing a song again? In the early Middle Ages, storytellers would travel from village to village and the audience would expect to hear stirring tales of knights, dragons, monsters and heroic deeds. Where possible, actual dates and locations have been included for provenance.

Quite often, I'll be asked by a listener whether a tale is true. With this collection, practically every tale is rooted in verifiable facts or personal testimony. I guess it depends upon whether one believes in ghosts, demons or vampires. All I can say is that these tales come from all over Britain, from the 11th century to present-day and most can be traced, which is the best result for any storyteller!

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The White Hart Hotel

This 300-year-old coaching inn in Andover is home to a number of spirits. Most well-known is the **Green Lady** whose phantom form has been seen in room 20 and gliding along an upstairs corridor in the dead of night. Whether she is also responsible for the mysterious footsteps heard in other parts of the old building is unknown. It's reported that people have heard beer barrels being rolled around and the ghost of a woman who appears in mirrors after closing time.

A second female ghost, described as being less distinct, has also been seen. A male companion sometimes joins her and they will drift silently past bemused bystanders. One witness described them as being "*not quite white, but semi-transparent*", and went on to explain how their fleeting appearance had left him feeling "*as if a couple of people had drifted through me*".

No one has ever discovered their identities nor, for that matter, uncovered what long-ago event, tragic or otherwise, lies behind their spectral ramblings.

The Choughs Hotel

The 16th-century Choughs Hotel in Chard is a mysterious building of solid stone, riddled with secret passageways and hidden rooms, period furnishings and dark timbers. Set into the wall of an ancient fireplace is what appears to be an inverted tombstone on which can be discerned a weathered inscription that looks

like the name, *Winifred*. It is said that anybody who attempts to take a picture of this mysterious relic using flash photography is destined to fail.

The most sophisticated camera equipment has been known to malfunction and, even if the flash does go off, the resulting images are either very foggy or else do not appear on the negative at all. Successive landlords have grown used to explaining the anomaly to prospective photographers with the warning, "*The ghost won't like it!*". No one is certain which ghost is responsible for the phenomenon and, since there are several to choose from, the ghost seekers might be better off seeking out a spectre rather than a photograph. Ghostly figures seen drifting about other parts of the hotel, objects that move of their own accord and doors that slam in the night are just some of the other supernatural occurrences

A former landlady was walking along an upstairs corridor one night when she encountered the mysterious figure of a knight in armour. His bulk was blocking the passageway, and she thought at first that he must be something to do with the carnival that was taking place in the town that day. She asked him politely if he would mind moving aside to enable her to pass and was baffled when he simply vanished.

The ghost of a sinister-looking old man has been seen crouched by the fireplace in the bar. Some say that this particular entity is that of Judge Jeffreys. He stayed at The Choughs in a room where his coat of arms can still be seen in bas-relief on the wall.

In the early 20th century, a guest at the hotel was awoken one night by the sound of a woman's voice, alternating between whispering and laughing. It was accompanied by the more forceful and menacing voice of a man who appeared to be arguing with her. As the strange sound ceased, the guest fell back to sleep. Next morning, he awoke to find a deep red weal across his face, as though a whip had struck him. Not surprisingly he paid his bill and left very quickly.



Farleigh Hungerford Castle

In 1369, the immensely wealthy Sir Thomas Hungerford - John of Gaunt's steward and first Speaker of the House of Commons - purchased the manor of Farleigh in Somerset (near Bath). He started to rebuild and enlarge the castle. Almost immediately, he found himself in trouble, when he was charged with crenellating (building battlements) without a licence. But, having obtained a pardon in 1383, he was able to pass on a substantial stronghold to his son, Walter.

Having further enhanced the family seat, Walter was created Baron Hungerford in 1426, and, from then on, the building became known as Farleigh Hungerford Castle. Walter fought alongside Henry V at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415.

His grandson, Robert, lacked his ability to back the right side. He was captured in the last battle of the Hundred Years War, and spent seven years as a prisoner in France. Returning to England, he joined the Lancastrian cause in the Wars of The Roses and, on 29 March 1461, following the virtual annihilation of Henry VI's army at the Battle of Towton, was captured and executed.

Farleigh Hungerford Castle then passed into the hands of Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III, who retained it until his defeat at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, whereupon the new King, Henry VII, returned Farleigh Hungerford Castle to Robert's grandson, Walter Hungerford.

In 1516, Walter's son, Edward, inherited the estate, which is where Agnes enters the tale. She was the wife of one John Cotell, a key servant of Sir Edward. Agnes wanted to marry wealthy and prominent courtier, Sir Edward, and bask in glory as the chatelaine of the castle. John would never offer her excitement or riches. So, as any scheming wife would, she contemplated murder.

On 26 July 1518, John Cotell was strangled by Agnes and two yeomen (named William Inges and William Mattheve). The future Lady Agnes Hungerford disposed of the body in an unconventional way. She burned her late husband's body in the castle's bread oven until he was a pile of ashes. While there was no proof that Sir Edward Hungerford was involved in the murder, he married Agnes and ensured that she wasn't arrested during his lifetime.

It didn't require too much imagination from others to work out what happened to John. The murder was a fairly well-known secret. However, when Sir Edward passed away on 24 January 1522, his protection died with him.

Her notoriety at the time of her execution at Tyburn in London in February 1523 meant that she was edited out of Hungerford family records. Agnes and her two henchmen were arrested, convicted and sentenced to hang at Tyburn tree, the

infamous London execution site. Lady Agnes Hungerford was hanged with William Mattheve on 20 February 1523.

A list of Agnes' possessions was made on Henry VIII's orders. The crown, or Henry VIII, seized every item and the castle. Never a man to miss an opportunity, the king sold Farleigh Hungerford Castle to Agnes's stepson, Sir Walter Hungerford, who would otherwise have inherited it, possibly for £5000. According to the Bank of England calculator, that's almost £4 million in 2024.

And this is where the supernatural stuff comes in. The ghost of **Lady Agnes Hungerford** is still said to return here and appear in the vicinity of the Church of St. Leonard's in Farleigh Hungerford, a serenely beautiful ghost who flickers briefly in front of astonished witnesses, before fading into nothingness in the twilight when day turns into night. She is also seen at her likely burial site, the Grey Friars Church in London.

In the latter half of the 17th century, another Sir Edward, inherited the estate and proceeded to gamble away the family fortune. He sold the castle in 1686 and, thereafter, it fell into ruin until only the ruins of the once magnificent pile remained, under the present care of English Heritage.

Sandford Orcas Manor

Sandford Orcas Manor can be found in Dorset, near to Sherborne. It lays claim to being the most haunted house in England with the 14 ghosts that have been reported to live there.

Only two families, the Knoyles and the Medlycotts, have actually occupied Sandford Orcas Manor since it was built in the early 1530s. Sandford Orcas takes its name from the Norman *Orescuilz* family, who came to own the village in the century after the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The village was known as Sanford in 1086 (in the Domesday Book), Sandford in 1243, Sandford Horscoys in 1372 and Samford Orescoys in 1427. It is an eerie looking building with grey stone walls, which give the appearance of being every inch the haunted house of tradition.

Colonel Francis Claridge, who leased the manor between 1965 and 1979, grew used to sharing his home with the ghosts of numerous former residents, but since his family motto was *Fear naught but God*, he was more than happy to let the spirits be undisturbed. One evening, when he was closing the house to visitors, he caught sight of **an unkempt looking lady** who proceeded to walk through the gate and onto the grass. She seemed oblivious to his presence and so the Colonel went over to confront. No sooner than he had walked onto the grass himself, the woman suddenly melted away into thin air.

In the 18th century (1740s) a **farmer** (James Davidge) is said to have committed suicide by hanging himself from a trapdoor inside the house. He had fallen prey to financial problems - the trapdoor has long since been boarded up, but it doesn't seem to have deterred his ghost from haunting the kitchen dressed in a

white milking smock. His ghost is one of the more frequently witnessed manifestations and has been reported by staff and Claridge family members many times.

During filming in 1966, one member of the BBC film crew claimed to have seen his ghost walking past the kitchen window. Similarly, another member of the BBC production team caught a glimpse of him dressed in what she described as being an old-fashioned farmer's hat and smock. The witness became ill with fright when it was explained to her that she had, in fact, seen the ghostly farmer. Later, the BBC reported that "*the manor has a strong reputation of being haunted and has earned its name as being the most haunted manor house in Britain*".

Even more disturbing is the ghost of a **former footman** who, in life, used to while away his spare time molesting the maids of the manor. He would take great delight in scaring them at every opportunity. It was his obsessive, sexual deviance that was to lead to his eventual undoing. He accosted a young girl from the village whom he beat and raped. He was arrested, tried and sent to prison where he eventually died. His ghostly presence returned to the Manor where it is preceded by a foul smell.

His presence endures, as Colonel Claridge's daughter found out, shortly after the family took up residence at the house. Determined to see for herself whether there was any substance in the rumours of mysterious tapping being heard in one particular room, she opted to spend a night there. No sooner had she fallen asleep than she was rudely awoken by a ghostly force which threw her to the floor. Suddenly, she was grabbed round the throat by icy, invisible, fingers. Fortunately she was able to fight her way free and flee the room. She refused point blank to enter the house again after nightfall.

Other ghosts that have been reported at Sandford Orcas Manor, include the following.

- A lady in a beautiful red silk, Georgian dress
- A little girl in black who is seen at the foot of the stairs
- A wicked priest whom guests have awoken to find bending over their beds holding a black cape with which he appears to be about to smother them
- A sinister man who walks from the gatehouse to the staff quarters leaving the stench of decaying flesh in his wake
- The ghost of a male servant, said to have murdered a former employer, walks the upper floors slamming doors
- A lady dressed in green, seen in the grounds.

And there is always the **ghost of the young man** who, having grown up in the house, set off to join the navy. But when he had enrolled at Dartmouth College, he killed another cadet, was judged insane and was sent back to Sandford Orcas Manor where he was locked in a room at the back of the house and was never allowed to leave. He is said to have died at the age of 27 years and to have been buried in a secret passageway behind the Great Chamber. On certain nights, when the moon is full, his ghostly cries are said to echo throughout the property and he is heard banging on the door of the room screaming to be released.

Perhaps the last word on this most haunted of haunted houses should go to the group of Society of Psychical Research investigators from the **Paraphysical Laboratory at Downton** who, having carried out a detailed investigation of the house's ghosts, concluded that, "a reasonable *prima facie* case had been made out for the hauntings and five ghosts had been verified".

The Murder Pool

OK, let's shift to Berkshire now in the 17th century. On 23 February 1676, at Winchester Assizes, a farm labourer named George Bromham (or Brooman) and a widow named Dorothy Newman stood trial for murder. The record of the trial is to be found in the Western Circuit Gaol Book, which is kept in Winchester Library.

George Bromham was a farm labourer living in the tiny village of Combe, just below Walbury Hillfort on the edge of Berkshire. He was married to Mrs. Martha Bromham and had a young son, Robert. It would appear that George Bromham had formed some kind of illicit association with the widow (Dorothy Newman) who lived in the larger village of Inkpen, a few miles over the other side of Walbury Hillfort, in the valley below.

We don't know for how long this relationship had been going or what, brought the two together (or if the relationship was just local rumour). What is known is that one dark day in the weeks leading up to the trial, Martha and her son Robert were walking the ancient Wigmoreash Drove, which connects Inkpen and Woodhay to the top of Inkpen Beacon and Combe. Either George or both George and Dorothy were lying in wait; they beat Martha and Robert to death with a staff. Whether both committed murder or not, the beaten bodies of Martha and Robert were dumped into the dew pond known as Wigmoreash Pond or, as it became known later, the **Murder Pool**.

Enter the shadowy character called *Mad Thomas*. Thomas is said to have been the village idiot and either deaf or dumb or both. It was Thomas who is said to have witnessed the murder and alerted the authorities to the bodies and the culprit(s). Indeed, Thomas is said to have been called as a witness at the Assizes, but whether this is fact or fiction is unclear; the guilty parties may have been brought down by other factors such as tracks in the snow or mud, the murder weapon(s), bloodstained clothing, village gossip or a guilty confession.

Whatever or whoever it was that pointed the finger of suspicion at George Bromham and Dorothy Newman, both were taken off to the Assizes at Winchester. Both stood trial for the murder of Martha and her son, both were convicted and found guilty of murder and both were ordered to be hanged "***in chaynes near the place of the murder***". Their public hanging took place on 3 March 1676 in Winchester.

Records suggest that some dispute arose as to who would be liable for the cost of the hanging, which would involve the building of a large double gibbet, together with two sets of iron chains. The crime was neither committed nor planned in either the parish of Combe or Inkpen, but on their borders. So, the cost was split equally between both parishes and the place that neither parish had claim to as the boundary stopped at the side ditches: The Long Barrow itself.

Records indicate that the two dead bodies were then brought back to Inkpen and laid out in the barn at the back of the Crown and Garter Inn, where they were measured up by the local blacksmith and fitted in their chains. This barn later became a tourist attraction, probably initiated by the landlord, and was renamed **Gibbet Barn**. It would appear that the display of the hanged bodies of George and Dorothy, now bound in their chains, took place each side of their double gibbet on 6 March 1676.

The original gibbet lasted an unknown length of time, but the second gibbet was erected in 1850 to replace the rotted original. This was struck by lightning and was replaced by number three in 1949. However, that one lasted only one year, and number four was erected in 1950. Since then, the gibbet has been sawn down on two occasions in 1965 and 1969, in protests against hanging. The fourth gibbet blew down in gales during the winter of 1977-78, where the stump had rotted away. The current gibbet was re-erected on May Day, Beltane, 1 May 1979.



The Tale of the Tadley Witch

The Falcon is on the edge of Tadley in Hampshire, not far from Aldermaston and this story involves the Witch of Tadley, **Maria Hale**, whose reputation was in the 1850s-1860s. She was able to turn herself into a large brown hare and sit outside the pub to learn all the local gossip. Once, the hare was shot at by the local gamekeeper who wounded it in the leg. Ever after, Maria was seen to have a pronounced limp!

Maria was well-known to the local police for conning the gullible with her curses and cures. In the village, she was feared and people were terrified of crossing her. One day she demanded that the village shopkeeper buy some bacon from her. He was taken to her home, Park Cottage on the edge of the Park, where she produced two handsome flitches from beneath the bed. Never before had such tasty ham been eaten in Aldermaston, but Maria kept no pigs!

She was in the habit of leaning over her neighbour's fences and asking for flowers. If she was refused, the plants would wither and die. The same fate she inflicted on her own daughter and she later bewitched her son when he wished to leave home and work in Windsor. He soon became ill and had to return home. Maria died in 1879 at the age of 88 years and was buried beneath the yew tree to the right of the path by Aldermaston church tower. The coffin was rammed down with stones and bricks and the diggers jumped up and down on her to ensure she would never rise again. Placing an extra stone on her grave was a popular pastime in the village for many years.

The Witch-hare of Cleveland

Here's a story that resembles that of Maria Hale, but comes from Danby in Cleveland. Some farmers out hunting hares had had a disappointing day when they ran into **Nanny X**, a well-known local witch. She told them, "I can tell you where you'll find a hare to chase, but mind you don't set a black dog on it". And sure enough, under the hedge Nanny X indicated, there lay a huge hare.

It set off, zigzagging for miles across the countryside with the hounds and hunters in hot pursuit. Just as the hare, doubling back, reached the hedge around Nanny X's little cottage, a random black dog appeared from nowhere and snapped at its haunches, tearing the skin and biting a lump out of its leg. When the hunters stepped into the cottage to apologise to Nanny X for not preventing the black dog's attack, they found her groaning in her bed, with a lump out of her thigh, just where the black dog's jaws had caught the hare. This tale is one that was collected by the Reverend JC Atkinson, who was the vicar of the parish of Danby in Cleveland (Lord Dawnay's chaplain) from 1847 onwards. Atkinson wrote and published his reminiscences (*Forty Years in a Moorland Parish*) in 1891.

The Vampires of Drakelow

Two peasants who lived in Stapenhill in 1090 (under the administration of Burton Abbey) absconded to the village of Drakelow (this name in Old English means Dragon Mound), then in the ownership of Nigel de Stafford, liegeman of Earl Roger the Poitevin. The peasants said they wished to live under the lordship of de Stafford rather than the abbot - both men spoke evil words and laid false accusations against the abbot and stirred up Lord Nigel against him. They also took the crops they had grown from their storage barn to Drakelow.

Geoffrey Malaterra, an eleventh-century Benedictine monk and historian (possibly of Norman origin) having gone barefoot to pray for guidance at the shrine of Modwenna, ordered that their crops be seized by the monastery. The charges that the men brought against the abbot are not recorded, but they were enough to anger Nigel to the point that he threatened to kill the abbot. Lord Nigel sent his men, along with the two peasants, to take back the stolen crops, along with whatever else was stored in the monk's barns in Stapenhill.

The next day at around 9 o'clock in the morning, the two peasants had just sat themselves at the table to eat when they were both struck down dead. They were buried the following day in wooden coffins in Stapenhill churchyard. That same evening, before sunset, the two dead men arrived in Drakelow, carrying their wooden coffins and spent the evening and night walking the paths and fields of the village, terrifying the inhabitants by banging on the walls of their houses and exhorting them to join them and follow, shouting, "Come with us!", "Move!" and "Follow on!". This continued night after night for some time, with the undead vampires shifting between the shapes of men, bears, dogs and other animals, horrifying and terrifying the villagers, Lord Nigel and his retainers.

Next came something worse: the village of Drakelow was struck by plague, which ravaged the village, killing many of its inhabitants. Three men survived, including Drogo, who was Lord Nigel's reeve, and two others. As one of his villages had been devastated, Lord Nigel went to the abbey a repentant man, to pray to the abbot and to Modwenna that they might lift the curse upon Drakelow. He restored the looted grain and Drogo was sent to found a new village (which he did, and called it Gresley). The two other men were struck with an ailment that left them bedridden.

The shape-shifting vampires continued to harass the locals and, eventually, the villagers went to the graves of the two peasants and opened the coffins, to find that the linen covering their faces was soaked in fresh blood. They took out the bodies, hacked off their heads and placed them back in the coffins between their knees. They cut out their hearts, reburied the bodies and carried the men's hearts back to Drakelow, where the villagers built an enormous pyre and, casting the hearts into the flames, continued to load wood onto the fire all day. Eventually, the heat from the flames grew so hot that a great cracking sound was heard and the hearts burst asunder. As they did so, an evil spirit in the form of a great crow was seen to rise from the flames and fly away.

Seeing the great bird fly off, the two sick peasants arose, gathering their wives, children and belongings as they left Drakelow for Gresley. Drakelow was left empty and was considered cursed for many years, with people giving thanks to Modwenna for saving them. Nigel de Stafford's family adopted the name of Gresley instead of Drakelow, despite the family seat remaining at Drakelow for many centuries, along with a later mill and outlying farms. The village of Drakelow itself, considered cursed, was never refounded.

The Giant of Galva

In the far west of Cornwall, the giant of Galva guarded the folk of Zennor and Morvah from less amiable giants who lived nearby. The [Carn of Galva](#) giant liked to pile up stones and then, playfully, knock them down again. He also set up some rocking stones, one of which is known as the Logan Stone and can still be seen.) The giant could rock himself to sleep on top of it while he gazed westwards into the fiery sun sinking into the gold of the western sea.

This giant was so friendly that he had a young human friend who would come up on the moor to play a game involving throwing quoits over the scattered stones. At the end of one day's play, the young man threw down his quoit, ready to go home and the friendly giant tapped him playfully on the head to encourage him to return for another game the next day. But the poor giant didn't know his own strength - his fingers went straight through the lad's skull and he dropped dead on the spot.

The heartbroken giant cradled his friend's body, lamenting loudly, *my son, my son, why didn't they make the shell of your head stronger? It's as soft as a plum, soft as a pie-crust, dough-baked and made too thin by half!* And the poor giant pined away and died within seven years of a broken heart. The remainder of his playthings and the missiles he stockpiled against enemy giants; they can still be seen up on Carn Galva, near to Penwith.

Bolster of St Agnes

Not all Cornish giants are as friendly as the Giant of Carn Galva; evil giants are more common in folk tales. One such evil giant is Bolster of St Agnes on the north Cornish coast, just a little way up from Morvah, the village protected by the Giant of Carn Galva.

Bolster was prone to eating both cattle and children, until he fell in love with the maid, Agnes. She asked the giant to fill a hole in the clifftop with his blood to prove his love for her, but the hole was bottomless and connected only to the sea. The lovelorn giant bled to death, but he is still celebrated every May Day in the village. His blood-soaked fate explains why the cliffs nearby are stained red: a natural phenomenon.

Littlecote House Ghost

Littlecote House is in Wiltshire and functions as a country house hotel. The story of the Littlecote House ghosts tells how a local midwife was woken late one night and offered a large sum of money if she would attend to a woman who was in urgent need of her services, but she had to be blindfolded. She agreed and was taken to a big house where she was instructed by a masked man to deliver a

baby to a masked woman. The baby, a boy, was safely born whereupon the masked man grabbed the child and threw it on the roaring, open fire and held it there with his boot until it was dead. The midwife was devastated, but as she made a final check on the progress of the mother, she had the presence of mind to tear a piece of cloth from the bed curtains. And as she was led, once again blindfolded, down the steps of the house, she counted them one by one.

The poor midwife kept her silence until, on her deathbed, she revealed the terrible secret. Immediately, suspicion fell on Wild Will Darrell of Littlecote House. It was even suggested that the mystery masked mother might be his sister and that Darrell himself may be the father. The number of steps up to the manor agreed with the number given by the midwife and, when a search was made of the house, in one bed-chamber a hole was found in the bed-curtains that matched exactly the piece torn out by the midwife. Darrell was arrested but it was said that there was not enough evidence to convict him and he walked from the court as a free man.

However, justice was served later when Wild Will Darrell was killed in 1587. He was thrown from his horse while hunting at a spot now known as *Darrell's Stile*. His twisted spectre has been seen both at the scene of his death and in a bedroom in the house itself. But Wild Will Darrell is not the only Littlecote house ghost. In 1970, a journalist saw the figure of a midwife carrying a baby in the haunted bedroom. He rushed to fetch his camera and, when he returned, the figure had vanished.

The Green Dragon

Often, details of ghosts from the Civil War are fairly sparse, but those of the spectral cavalier at the Green Dragon in Waltham Abbey (in Essex) are more robust. The inn is over 450 years old and there were several different sightings during the 1970s, usually around midday.

The landlady, a Mrs Joan Green, reported that the ghost had been seen by her family on separate occasions and also by local residents. For example, in the early 1970s, her daughter (Cheryl) was in an upstairs corridor, about to enter the loft, when she saw something glide past. The following afternoon, in exactly the same spot and at about the same time, the girl noticed the figure of a man dressed exactly like a Cavalier, standing in a doorway and stated: "*As I looked at him, he just faded away*".

Since then, mysterious footsteps have been heard walking down that empty corridor and, on one occasion, Mrs Green's daughter-in-law felt as if she had been pushed towards the stairway. A reporter of the local *Cheshunt Telegraph* carried out an investigation of the haunting, noting that several people had heard the footsteps and also strange scuffling noises; these continue to be heard to this day.

Chillingham Castle Ghosts

Chillingham Castle (in Northumberland) exudes a spooky and dark aura. The castle has seen some of the most paranormal activity of any location in the UK. Chillingham Castle has existed since the 13th century, boasting dungeons and a torture chamber. The castle has been continuously owned by the family of Earls Grey and their relations and it is said to host some of the UK's most famous ghostly apparitions, including the following.

1. The tale of the **white pantry ghost** will make your skin crawl! The ghost appears in what is known as the inner pantry. This housed the castle's silver and a footman was employed to sleep and guard it. One night, when he was readying himself for sleep, the footman was accosted by a mystery lady in white. The woman was very pale and begged him for water. Thinking that she was a guest of the castle, he fulfilled her request. He then realised that he had locked himself in and no visitor could have entered. The woman in white is said to still appear today and she is always longing for water.
2. One of Chillingham Castle's most famous phantoms is the **Blue Boy**, who mysteriously vanished in the 1920s. According to legend, he appeared at the stroke of midnight in the Pink Room, with his presence heralded by the sounds of a child in pain emanating from the walls. The cries would eventually cease, and a bright halo would appear, earning him the name of *Radiant Boy*. In the 1920s, workmen discovered a boy's skeleton and fragments of blue fabric in the castle's walls. After these remains were buried, sightings of the Blue Boy ceased, though occasional reports of a blue halo persist. Some guests have even described seeing a young boy in blue clothing typical of the 1660s.



Haddon Hall

Haddon Hall is a picturesque castle, located near Bakewell in Derbyshire. It was built in 1170 by Richard Vernon and only changed hands in the late 1500s to the Manners family. In recent years, it has been used as a film location for the likes of *Jane Eyre*, *Mary Queen of Scots*, *The Other Boleyn Girl*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Princess Bride*.

The Hall has changed little since the reign of Henry VIII. Its stone steps and flagstone floors are worn by the ravages of time. Ghost-hunters have detected much spectral activity here, such as cold spots on stone staircases, a white lady who drifts across the impressive 14th century banqueting hall and of a ghostly dog whose yapping is heard in the beautiful gardens.

Haddon Hall's best-known legend concerns its involvement in a stroke of fate that changed the course of English history. A frequent visitor to the Hall in the early years of the 16th century was Prince Arthur, eldest son of King Henry VII and heir to the throne. One September evening in 1501, following a strenuous day's hunting, the Prince rested on the leafy banks of the river Wye in the grounds of Haddon Hall.

A tall woman, dressed in white with features sunken and wan with lips of ashy hue and eyeballs protruding bright and motionless appeared to him in a dream and warned him: "Unhappy Royal Prince. One earthly Pageant awaits thee, yea, it is at hand; and then, ah! then, thou wilt drop into the lap of thy mother earth! Forth comes to Britain's shore thy lovely, smiling bride - ah! and widow of a royal boy!"

When the Prince returned to the Hall that evening, he was greeted with the news that his bride to be, Catharine of Aragon, had arrived in England and that he was to be married without delay. Not four months after his wedding, he died of a sudden illness, his last words are said to have been being *O, the vision of the cross at Haddon!*

With his untimely death, his brother (Henry) became heir to the throne, married his brother's widow and the rest is history.

Longdendale: The Haunted Valley

Longdendale, the long valley, stretches for ten miles, through some of the most remote and beautiful countryside in the Peak District. Close by are two notable mountains - Bleaklow and Shining Clough. Scattered across the high moor are the rusting wrecks of dozens of World War Two aircraft that crashed into these unforgiving mountains. The fact is that there are more ghostly encounters, unexplained happenings and UFO sightings here, than anywhere else in the Peak District. This is the reason why Longdendale has been named the Haunted Valley over the years.

Let's start with the Longdendale Lights.

Going back a century or more, travellers on the desolate Bleaklow mountains would have felt truly alone and vulnerable. The landscape was much wilder and there were many superstitions, with the result that few people ventured onto the moors at night. Any who did so were liable to see the Longdendale Lights. These strange, flickering lights or balls of blue flame were known locally as the *devil's bonfires* and they were attributed to the faery folk, will-o-the-wisps or boggarts.

Some believed that they were the work of witches, whose evil intent was to lure the unwary to become sacrificial victims. There are records of the Lights as long ago as the 16th century and are still a baffling feature of this lonely wilderness, although these days they are often attributed to UFOs. People have spoken of rounding the hairpin bend on the B6105 (known as the *Devil's Elbow*) to find themselves suddenly dazzled by a powerful blue light that shines from a nearby field, but which suddenly disappears should they approach it.

The local mountain rescue team have been called out on many occasions to search for what were presumed to be the torches or flares of lost ramblers. They have got used to the flickering lights fading slowly away as they get closer to them.

On a warm summer night in July 1998, the residents at the nearby Youth Hostel were amazed when the entire district was suddenly lit up by a brilliant blue light that shone from somewhere on Bleaklow. It was visible for over three minutes and was seen by so many people that a full-scale search was undertaken by the emergency services, but its source was never found.

The Longdendale Lights have never been satisfactorily explained. It has, however, been suggested that they may be responsible for the high number of planes that have crashed onto the moors. Some wonder if the crews perhaps mistook them for direction beacons and followed them into the hillsides. Whatever the cause, the wreckage that litters the landscape is now a permanent feature of the terrain.

There have been hundreds of reports in the last century of **ghostly planes** flying over Longdendale. They have been seen by hikers going home in the fading light of early evening, by farmers tending their cattle and by policemen, fire crews and other emergency workers. On Thursday, 22 July 1954, two Sabre 4s of 66 Squadron disappeared over the peaks. The crashed fighters were discovered on the following Sunday by two ramblers who alerted the emergency services. Eventually the bodies of the pilots were recovered and carried off the high moor, although the wreckage was left strewn where it had fallen. The two pilots were experienced flyers, both planes were brand-new and the cause of the accident remains, officially, unknown to this day.

The radio transmissions between the two pilots, shortly before they disappeared, however, provide a tantalising hint of a cause. It is evident that the two were flying in low cloud and were lost. "*Where are we*" asked one, "*I'm not sure,*" came the reply. But then the second pilot apparently spotted a third plane and issued the fatal order, "*just follow the other jet through the cloud*".

Those were the last words he spoke and, since no other planes were known to be flying in the area at that time, rumours abound that the two pilots were lured to their deaths by the appearance of a phantom bomber.

The most recent sighting of the spectral plane took place in March 1997, when Maria France and a companion had headed onto the high moor at around 10pm one night in the hope of enjoying a view of the Hale Bopp comet. As they gazed into the clear night sky, a low-flying plane suddenly appeared above them. They watched as it passed overhead and rounded the peak, where it disappeared from view. It was then they realised that, despite the fact they could clearly see its huge propellers whirling round, there was no sound emanating from the mysterious aircraft.

There were, however, other startled witnesses to the phantom flight that night. These included a farmer who saw it round the peak and come diving toward him. So convinced was he that it was a real plane, that he instinctively dived to the ground and prepared himself for the inevitable impact.

A short time later, several witnesses heard the sound of a plane crashing and saw an orange glow light up the sky. Within moments, the emergency services were inundated with phone calls from concerned locals reporting a plane crash on the high moors. Despite the fact that hundreds of emergency workers scoured the area for more than 15 hours, no fresh wreckage was discovered and no plane was ever reported missing.

Gawsworth Hall

This half-timbered manor house in Cheshire (near Macclesfield) dates largely from 1480; it was owned by the Fitton family whose daughter, Mary, was Maid of Honour to Elizabeth I. Her effigy can be seen in the nearby church, kneeling behind her sister and her mother, Dame Alice Fitton. There have been several incidents of phantoms around Gawsworth Hall.



A ghostly lady resplendent in ancient costume has been seen around the courtyard of the old house whilst several guests have been troubled by the inexplicable smell of incense drifting from the vicinity of the Priest's Room. In 1921, an old cupboard was removed from the oratory where an escape hatch led to the cellars. Workmen were horrified to discover a skeleton hidden behind the cupboard. The bones were buried in the churchyard, but this did not seem to placate the phantoms in the area for the smell of incense continues to pervade from the vicinity of the Priest's Room.

Dudley Castle

Dudley Castle in the West Midlands was founded in 1070 by Ansculf de Picquigny. It was massively refortified in the following 200 years by the then owners, who allegedly used violent extortion to fund the expansion. In a dimly lit corner of the castle's lecture room are two halves of an enormous medieval stone coffin, the original occupant of which must have been a giant of his time. It came from Dudley Priory, where the Lords of Dudley were once buried, and is believed to have once held the mortal remains of John de Somery, who died in 1322. However, in 2002, an historical dowser detected that the two sections of the coffin, whilst both being from the 14th century, were of different dates and, therefore, may well be the remains of two different caskets.

As to ghosts, a cleaner, working in the room one day, happened to glance over in the direction of the coffin and saw a pair of feet, clad in a pair of thigh length riding boots, standing next to it. Her alarm intensified when she realised that the figure was minus the upper half of its body! Is it possible that the cleaving in two of his resting places has condemned John de Somery to lead a somewhat truncated ethereal existence?

From the de Somery family, the castle passed by marriage to the de Sutton family and then, in the mid-16th century, came into possession of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland and father-in-law to Lady Jane Grey. When Mary I refused clemency to Lady Jane Grey, John Dudley and his son were all executed. Dudley Castle passed back to the Sutton family. And then, on 24 July 1750, it was engulfed by fire and the flames gutted the castle. In 1937, Dudley Zoo was built adjacent to the castle.

However, many spirits linger around the castle ruins.

1. A group of intrepid ghost hunters who volunteered for a sponsored overnight stay one Halloween, were startled in the early hours by a mysterious figure, seen pacing across the parapets. Who or what they saw has never been ascertained and has never been seen since that day.
2. The wraith of an old lady, who hanged herself from the ramparts, when her cat was killed by local youths, has also been known to return to the place of her suicide.
3. A Civil War drummer, who was picked off by a single shot from the battlements as he attempted to take a message offering terms of surrender to the garrison, is also seen from time to time.

The most famous of all the ghosts is that of the **grey lady**, whose sombre shade drifts around the parapets of the old keep at sundry times of the day and night. She is thought to be Dorothy Beaumont, who died at the castle during the siege of 1646, apparently of natural causes. The Parliamentary commander, Sir William Brereton, allowed her funeral cortege to pass through his lines and she was buried in the church at the top of Dudley High Street.

However, the fact that her infant child had died before her and been laid to rest in the town's lower church, which was closer to the castle, proved too much for Dorothy's spirit, and her ghost wanders the castle seeking the baby. Staff have grown accustomed to her wanderings, whilst numerous bemused visitors will testify to her existence. In the course of one of the ghost tours now staged at the castle, an actor was employed to play the part of Dorothy's ghost. At the crucial moment when the castle keeper was regaling his audience with her heart-rending tale, participants were puzzled by the appearance of a second grey lady behind the actor.

Minster Lovell Hall

The sleepy ruins of Minster Lovell Hall in Oxfordshire are tucked away behind the delightful St Kenelm's church, on the tranquil banks of the River Windrush. It is haunted by the ghost of **Francis, the first Viscount Lovell**, and a fervent Yorkist, who fled to the continent following the defeat of his King (Richard III) at the battle of Bosworth.

He then made his way to Ireland where the Pretender, Lambert Simnel, was crowned King and, in whose company, he returned to Yorkshire to raise an army which then met with Henry VII's forces at the battle of Stoke. Defeated again, Francis is said to have escaped by swimming his horse across the River Trent and galloping back to Minster Lovell Hall where he had himself locked up in an underground room, the location of which was known only to an old retainer.

With only his pet dog for company, he was dependent upon this faithful servant for food and drink. One day, the servant died suddenly, leaving his master incarcerated and helpless in what became his underground prison and, eventually, his tomb.

There he remained until the 18th century when, during the fitting of a new chimney, the builders uncovered a large underground vault in which they found the entire skeleton of a man sprawled across a table with the bones of a little dog at its feet!

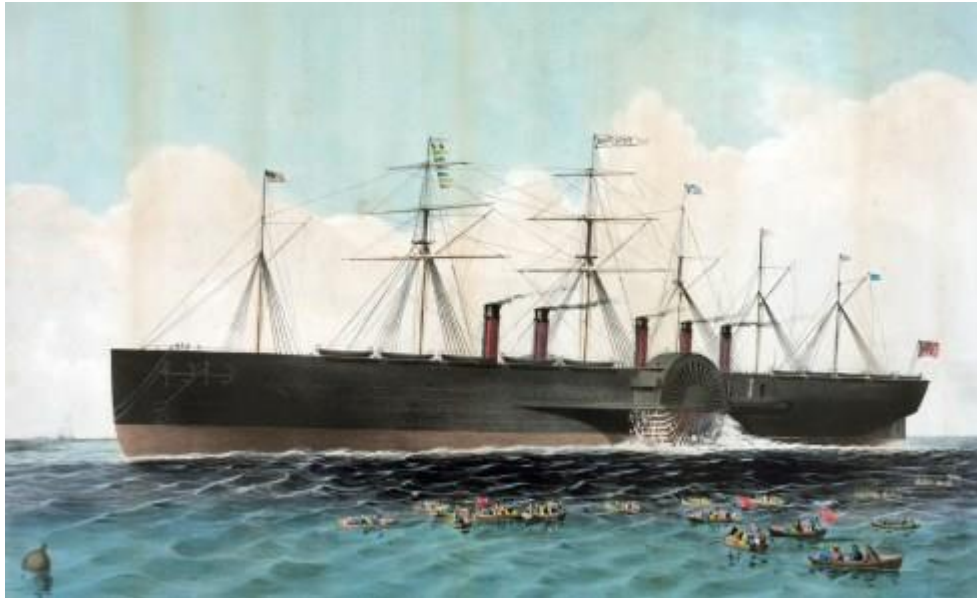
His ghost has wandered the ruins ever since, a forlorn figure in a billowing cloak whose manifestations are often accompanied by the dreadful sounds of groans, footsteps and rustling papers emanating from somewhere beneath the ground.

The Great Eastern Curse

The *Great Eastern*, launched in 1858, was huge. She defied the technology of the day – a vessel that pushed the envelope of what was scientifically possible in the mid-19th century was bound to be plagued by accidents and malfunctions. It is no wonder that persistent rumours surrounded the unlucky vessel, alleging that she was cursed or even haunted.

The ship was designed in 1854 by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who envisioned a passenger and cargo vessel that could steam from England to Australia or India without stopping for fuel. This concept dictated her size as she would need to be huge in order to carry enough coal. It was nearly 700 feet in length, and weighed about 20,000 tons: about five times larger (by tonnage) than any ship afloat at the time. A larger ship would not be built until 1901, placing the *Great Eastern* about four decades ahead of its time.

She had berths for 4000 passengers, a record never exceeded in an ocean liner. In order to move such a massive bulk, Brunel came up with an unprecedented design incorporating three different means of propulsion: side wheel paddles, a screw propeller and six masts of sails. The hull was entirely iron.



Six men were killed during the construction. Another two died during the first attempt to launch her. This fiasco caused a delay of several weeks between her christening and her eventual launch, something many seafaring men believed to be bad luck. After she was finally afloat, five men were killed during her sea trials when one of her boilers blew up. The accident caused an explosion of enough scalding steam to fill her elegant saloon, which might have killed many more, if not for the fortunate fact that virtually all the passengers were up on deck at the time. By this time, the strain of building, launching and testing the massive vessel had ruined Brunel's health. He suffered a stroke in 1859 and died on the same day he was told of the boiler accident.

When the time came for the *Great Eastern's* maiden voyage in 1860, her owners decided that voyages to the Far East would be too expensive for a ship of her size and, instead, committed her to carrying emigrants from England to New York. During her early voyages, crewmen and passengers were disturbed by a persistent pounding seemingly coming from inside the double layered hull, leading to apocryphal stories of a workman who had gone missing during construction and who was accidentally sealed up inside the hull.

His ghost, so the story went, pounded away on the hull, hoping someone would set him free. There is documentary evidence suggesting that even the captain of the *Great Eastern* was unsettled by the peculiar hammering. After the ship struck a rock off Long Island, New York, opening a gash far larger than the one that sunk the *Titanic*, it was discovered during the subsequent repairs that the banging was the result of a loose joint on one of the paddle wheels.

Eventually, her owners realised she was just too large to be profitable in the passenger business. She could not be filled and there were few ports large enough to accommodate her. She was refitted for laying telegraph cables and laid some of the first transatlantic telegraph lines. She was about the only ship afloat that could hold the necessary thousands of miles of cable for such tasks.

Even in this role, she could not make a profit. Too far ahead of her time and too expensive to operate, she became a symbol of engineering folly and was laid up at Liverpool in 1874 waiting to be torn into scrap. This was finally accomplished in 1889. Unfounded rumours persisted that a skeleton was found inside her hull when she was torn apart.

During one of her cable laying voyages in 1867, Jules Verne travelled on the *Great Eastern*. The voyage inspired him to write a novel called *A Floating City*, which was set on board the huge vessel.

Number 7 London Bus

The sight of a red London bus is familiar to most English drivers, but not when you're heading towards a head-on collision with one. For one unfortunate driver in 1934, the sighting of the **phantom bus** proved fatal, as his car exploded into flames when he swerved into a wall without any rhyme or reason.

At least there was no reason, until several witnesses came forward during the investigation and testified about the existence of this ghostly vehicle. The very first witness claimed to have seen a car driving along an empty road when, suddenly, a strange bus appeared. The driver of the car got scared, abruptly swerved his vehicle and hit a pillar. He was killed on impact. After the incident, the bus immediately disappeared.

Then, the phantom bus started appearing more frequently. Many witnesses were claiming that the bus was driving without a driver. One of the victims was lucky enough to survive. Later, he was taken to the police station. He said, *"I turned around the corner, and saw the bus moving! The headlights were shining, both floors were lit, and there was no one inside, neither the driver nor the passengers! I, of course, turned the steering wheel, drove out onto the sidewalk, and slightly hooked on the fence. And the bus immediately disappeared"*.

The driver who made such a statement to the local authorities of North Kensington in London could have been drunk, or hallucinated or fell asleep at the wheel, and later tried to shift his blame onto the English ghost bus. But, can this be said about the hundreds of drivers who experienced the same mysterious red double-decker bus rushing towards them?

And it was always moving in the oncoming lane at a very high speed. The result was always the same. Any unfortunate driver who encountered the oncoming speeding phantom bus would try and steer clear of it and end up crashing into something. In most cases, people were dying immediately.

Between the 1930s and 1990s, many Londoners reported narrowly avoiding a collision with an unlit, unmanned Number 7 bus driving in the centre of the road. It always appeared around Cambridge Gardens at 1:15 am - a time no buses

should have been in the area. After thundering past the panicked drivers, it always disappeared into the night without a trace. The police were left baffled by the phantom bus; so, what exactly was it?

Derbyshire ghost plane

In 2018, walkers spotted what they believed was a Second World War Lancaster bomber flying over Derbyshire.

Derbyshire Live featured a story about Christine and Robin, a married couple from South Derbyshire who witnessed the phenomenon of a vanishing war plane. The couple came forward with their experience after reading a story on *Derbyshire Live* about the most haunted spots in the Peak District. The plane disappeared from sight above the pair. The silent, phantom flight stunned the couple and left those they told unsure how true the story could be.

Many readers contacted *Derbyshire Live* to say that over the previous two decades, around Chatsworth and the Peak District, they too witnessed the same kind of plane overhead.

Pam Brooks said: "*I, too, saw this ghost plane about 17 years ago when we were driving through the Chatsworth estate. It was at about top of tree height and partially obscured by the tops of the trees, but it suddenly appeared at the side of me and actually made me duck in the car as it seemed so close and very real and then it was gone! My husband, unfortunately didn't see it but was very startled when I ducked and said something like, Blimey, did you see that plane, it was so low and close! I'm not sure he believed me at the time, but has since read similar reports and has been persuaded*".

However, some sceptics have also been in touch with their own theories and explanations as to what the couple may have seen.

According to a sky-scanner app, on the day of 18 August at 2:40pm, a Hercules Lockheed C-130 RAF aircraft was flying nearby over Lincoln and, with top speeds of 592 km per hour, it is likely this plane was flying over the stately home at the time Christine and Robin spotted it. The Hercules are based at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, but fly across the UK in training and routine missions. In 2018, when other reports of a mysterious ghost plane emerged, the RAF confirmed that it was a Hercules that had been seen.

However, one reader of *Derbyshire Live* had an interesting theory of what might have been spotted in the sky. A Vickers Wellington crashed while attempting an emergency landing on 11 June 1943 at Chatsworth Park while on a day training flight from Cottesmore. The Vickers Wellington was a long-range medium bomber with twin engines that were designed in 1930 and used in World War II. So, maybe it was a ghost plane after all.

Water daemons

There are several monsters in English folklore that may be classed as water daemons. One is derived from the story of **Beowulf and Grendel** or, to be precise, **Grendel's mother**. It is this creature that was known as the **grindylow** or Jenny Greenteeth, where it was linked to meres, bogs and lakes.

Grindylows are supernatural creatures that appear in the folklore of Lancashire, as short human-like figures with scaly skin, greenish complexions, sharp claws and teeth and long, wiry arms with lengthy fingers at the end. They lived in ponds and marshes waiting for unsuspecting children, which they grab with their shockingly strong grip and then drag under the surface of the waters. They have been used as shadowy figures to frighten children away from pools, marshes, or ponds where they could drown.

Another example of a water daemon was **Bloody Bones**, who haunted deep ponds, oceans and old clay pits (which often became filled with water to form ponds). This monster also dragged children into the depths. Children were told to "keep away from the marl-pit or Bloody Bones will have you." OK then, here's a regional variation on the grindylow legend that appeared in the first collection of *Winter Chills*.

The Tale of Jenny Greenteeth

I guess it all started with the annual apple howling. I'm old now, but I remember the events of that terrible year as if it was yesterday. I used to live in the village, but not since then and only yesterday, I heard that several children have gone missing from there over the years.

Just to explain the custom to you folks, apple howling by night was an ancient tradition in our village, part of the wassail. One local farm had many apple trees and the previous year had produced a bumper crop. But to ensure good apples, you have to drive out the orchard demons from the trees or they will ruin the crop for the next year.

So the whole village set up for the howling and we all followed in a torchlight procession down Pegs Lane to the orchard. The village elders surrounded the oldest tree and everyone shared in the wassail cakes and cider. Then the elders hit the tree with sticks to rouse any demon and other villagers fired their shotguns into the upper branches in case a demon tried to hide up there. We sang the wassail, ate more cakes and the ritual was over for another year.

And then I saw, at least I thought I saw a movement in the tree – up high, just a shadow really and then it was gone. We all went home, but I saw Old Jen trailing along slowly. Well, that was usual. To me, she seemed about 90 years old anyway and the long walk to the howling in the dark and cold hurts the

bones when you're old. I went back to help her, but she snarled at me, pushing my arm away – so I left her alone.

The apple howling was in early January, but when I tell you that the village had its worst run of luck for many years, that was a fact. Not only was the apple crop bad, but rain ruined much of the harvest. One of the inn-keeper's daughters, playing by the mill-pond, fell in and drowned. A cart ran out of control on the village green and hurt some children. There were lots of unexplained fires and that's a problem with hay ricks or thatched cottages.

When did people suspect the truth? Can't really put a time on it, but it seemed to me that we were all avoiding Old Jen. Her temper was never good, but she was always angry and she seemed to be around each time another accident took place. Finally, a group of elders and the local priest went around and we all heard what happened next. Old Jen had gone, left her house and all her goods, but her clothes and walking stick were found by the river that evening.

And I saw the result – just me, out of all the village, but I'll never forget it, because we were mistaken – all of us – the apple howling had not driven out the demon. The demon had just moved into the most vulnerable person there – Old Jen – and then carried on its mischief. I'd crept down to the river that night to see where Old Jen had died and I saw something. It was most like an old woman with green skin, long wet hair and very long sharp teeth. I saw the teeth glow green in the moonlight and it had hold of an animal which it dragged into the water. Nothing surfaced. And that's my story.

In *Somerset Folklore*, Ruth Tongue cited that Bloody Bones "lived in a dark cupboard, usually under the stairs. If you were heroic enough to peep through a crack you would get a glimpse of the dreadful, crouching creature, with blood running down his face, seated waiting on a pile of raw bones that had belonged to children who told lies or said bad words. If you peeped through the key-hole he got you anyway".

Old Bloody Bones is a version of Bloody-Bones in Cornwall, according to F. W. Jones in *Old Cornwall*. Old Bloody Bones inhabited Knockers Hole near the village of Baldhu, is a former mining village (the name comes from the Cornish for black mine) and it is situated above the Carnon Valley (not far from Truro). The parish was created in 1847 from Kea and Kenwyn and the church of St Michael and All Angels was built soon after. There was said to have been a massacre in the area, and it is suggested that he was an evil spirit attracted by the carnage.

OK, onto another water daemon – the **nicor or knucker**. This one is most like a water dragon, but knucker holes are common throughout England. Sussex has plenty of examples, including that in Lyminster, near Arundel.

Knucker

*A darkling wood and shady pool,
Deep green beneath the firs,
This is the knucker's lair in truth,
A man walks close and it stirs.*

*At first a ripple, then a wave,
With a roar, the knucker attacks,
A blur of teeth and crunch of bone,
All that's left is blood and tracks.*

*Villagers know and tell the tale,
To travellers: beware the wood,
Avoid the fir trees and the pool,
Stay alive and safe for good.*

In the waters around Orkney lives a skinless human-horse with the head of a man, only far larger, emerging from an equine body of rotting sinews and exposed veins that run with yellow blood. Some accounts speak of flippers on its legs and the creature is known as the **Nuckelavee** or **Nuckalavee** (similar etymology, meaning *Devil of the Sea*).

This sea-dwelling beast wilts crops with its breath and makes livestock sick when it comes onto land, smelling of burning seaweed and set to exact revenge on any hapless soul unfortunate enough to witness its arrival. Like many British monsters, if you want to escape from its evil presence, you need to leap across a freshwater stream or river.

In many deep pools of the streams and rivers, guardian-daemons were believed to reside, and it was dangerous to bathe in them. Sometimes, when a castle or mansion was being sacked, a faithful servant or two contrived to take the valuables and throw them into a deep pool in the nearest stream.

On one occasion, a diver was persuaded to dive to the bottom of such a pool to fetch up the plate of the neighbouring castle. He dived, saw the valuables and was preparing to lift them, when the demon ordered him to go to the surface at once and not to come back. At the same time the daemon warned him that, if he did come back, he would forfeit his life. The diver obeyed. When he reached the bank, he told what he had seen, and what he had heard.

*By dint of threats and promises of large reward, he dived again. In a moment or two afterwards, his heart and lungs rose and floated on the surface of the water. They had been torn out by the demon of the pool. (Source: Walter Gregor, *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland*, the Folk-Lore Society by Elliot Stock, 1881).*

The River Adur runs through Shoreham-by-Sea in West Sussex and the river was once the heart of the local community, with fishing being a significant source of income for the town. During a big storm in 1893, one particular resident's fishing boat was carried upstream by a sizeable wave and smashed against the rocks of the river bank. The owner of the vessel was distraught as this meant the ruin of his livelihood and the onset of hard times for his family. The remains of the wreck can be seen to this day, now far from the River Adur's meandering path.

It is said that the howls and sobs of the fisherman and his family can be heard late at night as they attempt to push the ghostly wreck back towards the water. Some have even reported seeing pale apparitions of the fisherman, his wife and two children around the wreck, their faces dull and eyes dark as they mourn the vessel's loss eternally.

Madeira Hall Hotel

Jilted on her wedding day, Miss Margaret Catherine Dick withdrew from the world. Until her death some 19 years later, she refused to leave the house and lived in an upstairs room, which had a trapdoor leading to the kitchen. Her meals were served through the hatchway by the daily woman who never saw her employer – her wages being left with the dirty plates.

The story reached the ears of Charles Dickens during one of his visits to friends in the village of Bonchurch (Isle of Wight) in November 1860. He was so fascinated by the tale that a few weeks later, Miss Dick appeared as Miss Havisham in chapter seven of the serialised version of *Great Expectations* on 22 December 1860.

Miss Havisham, too, had been jilted on her wedding day. Dressed in her yellowing bridal gown and torn veil, with flowers in her white hair, she lived in a perpetual darkness lit only by candles, surrounded by decaying reminders of that tragic day; the wedding cake being a playground for mice and black beetles – the hands of all the clocks in the house stopped at 20 minutes to nine.

Miss Dick's ghost is still seen and heard today in the hotel kitchens, bedrooms and corridors. Her silver hair is worn in a tight bun and she is dressed in a blouse and long flowing skirt.

Okehampton and Teignmouth Stations

During the course of research into the Okehampton area (Devon), it appears that the railway station there is haunted by the spirit of an old train driver, known as Sam. The station was a tourist attraction, but is back in use again. In the late 1990s, there were reports of Sam making his presence felt, moving things around and causing noises.

At a local history meeting at The London Inn in Okehampton, where around 60 people turned up, a gentleman stood up and shared his story. Being an avid

train buff, he had spent a lot of time at the railway station, and once, whilst standing on the platform, he saw a man walk out of the office, wearing the livery of a porter (a livery belonging to a company that he knew had operated there many years previously). The porter walked to the edge of the platform and disappeared – on questioning, the gentleman thought for a moment and concluded that it was Sam, as the livery for porters and drivers was the same back then, and the sighting was around the late 1990s when Sam was most active!

The owner of The Whistlestop Cafe on Teignmouth railway station (in Devon) would always describe how active the place was. Furniture would often be moved around in a tidy way and money would be left for her if she was ever short for making a bill payment. There was even an annual sighting of a man, running through the cafe, on the same day, at the same time, to reach the platform, where he promptly disappeared.

The owner permitted a psychic investigation there one night. In order to give access to the platform, where the toilets were, she placed the keys on a table, by the locked back door, to make it easier to come and go. When the first person felt the need to use the toilets, the keys weren't on the table and no-one else had moved them. At once, the owner knew where they would be and, opening the till, there the keys were, back where they were usually kept. Once again, her resident ghost was tidying up for her! More than that, when the team reviewed the video footage and photographs of the area where the keys were placed, white rays of light can be seen, moving from the table in the direction of the till.

Croydon Hill

Croydon Hill is the site of an Iron Age hill fort in West Somerset, but is also the setting of an unusual tale that may be based on a real event. The hill has a reputation of being haunted by unearthly howls, especially on stormy nights.

One day, many years ago, a ploughboy who hailed from Croydon went to the smithy at Rodhuish to have a plough blade repaired. While he was there, he was entertained with the story of the Devil of Croydon Hill - a local legend about a daemonic creature. It was supposed to haunt the hillside and frighten people travelling on the lane across the hill.

The butcher's boy at Rodhuish thought it would be good fun to scare the wits out of the ploughboy, so he dressed up in a bull's hide (complete with horns) and ran ahead of the ploughboy to lurk in the darkened lane. As the ploughboy was walking home, he was frightened out of his wits by a horned figure that jumped out at him in the lane. Without thinking, he lashed out at it with his plough blade and ran home. The butcher's boy was never seen again although a bull's hide with a gash through it was later discovered. It is said that the boy haunts the lane and was taken by the real Devil of Croydon Hill, to be pursued forever across the hill on stormy nights.