

# HAUNTED UK PODCAST

## (Season 4) Episode 36 – The Haunting of The George Inn Hotel

As Tom was sitting next to the bar of the pub, where he had been the landlord for just a year, he was thinking about everything that had gone on whilst he and his family had been there. It was time to move on. It was time to put their nightmare firmly behind them. A nightmare which made them question reality and everything they believed in. A nightmare which certainly brought Tom to the edge of his sanity. I think it would be fair to say, Tom and his family were frightened and ready to make their escape and move on to another pub ... As Tom reflected on this, he watched the new landlord Tony and his wife Debbie move in, making sure to bring their own till from their previous pub ... a tradition that's followed by many landlords and landladies ... but they were about to get a very real taste of what was lying in store for them at The George Inn Hotel.

This is episode 36 of the Haunted UK Podcast, and in this episode, we're going to hear about the haunting of The George Inn Hotel.

Haunted pubs are a very regular phenomena – not only in the UK – but all over the world. Many have been around for hundreds of years and have seen their fair share of violence and death; and with all of the various customers, landlords and landladies which have come and gone, it's no surprise that many of these historic buildings have the reputation of being haunted.

The George Inn Hotel was one such place in Preston in the North of England. Unfortunately, the inn and its surrounding buildings have long since been levelled for development, but that didn't stop previous landlords, landladies, employees and customers from coming forward and retelling their stories of first-hand accounts of the ghosts of The George Inn Hotel.

It's the stories from two landlords and their families that we'll hear about in this episode. To warn you now: they are unnerving, chilling and at moments utterly disturbing. We'll re-join the story with Tony and Debbie positioning their till carefully in its place on the bar feeling excited about their new venture. Meanwhile – Tom, the outgoing landlord – sat the other side of the bar watching them bemused; he looked jaded, dejected, exhausted – like he had had enough and *seen too much* ... as Tony and Debbie were arranging the till, it sprang to life spewing out a receipt with an aggressive force which both stunned and knocked them back ... strangely, it wasn't even plugged in. Tony and Debbie gasped and looked across to Tom in confusion – but little did they realise – this *was a usual occurrence for Tom*...and he duly stood up and sniffed...*'you're welcome to this place.'*

Around 12 months before this happened, Tom, his wife Ann and their two teenage sons had moved into the George Inn Hotel to take over the running of the establishment. They had years of experience running pubs, so this was just another rung on the ladder...but this ... this was to prove *something completely different*.

The pub was at least 300 years old, and the land it stood on had seen the Battle of Preston play out as part of the English Civil war. There were mass graves found, as the area was going through various

stages of development throughout the centuries, and there were also many gravestones unearthed. Mass graves weren't marked, so these stones must have been from a more recent time.

With so much history in the immediate area, *was it possible that something could have made its way into The George Inn Hotel?* For around six years from the early 1990s, the pub had been getting somewhat of a reputation of being ... *a little strange*. Outgoing landlords would tell of strange goings-on emanating from all areas of the building, and incoming landlords would learn the hard way that the paranormal phenomena which had been present there ... wasn't a joke.

Tom was also to prove to be a *very different* landlord. He'd been aware of a very sensitive side to his own mental make-up for many years, and it was this sensitive side that would directly tune him in with whatever entity or force occupying the pub was – provoking his family, staff and him. *Mostly him though* ... As with many people before him had experienced, things began to occur at a slow pace. Keys would go missing only to turn up in another room. The pub's bank book had a habit of moving around the building's many rooms, causing frequent mad dashes and hunts to try and find it.

Bar staff would also tell of uncomfortable situations occurring in the cellar, in the bar and lounge after closing when the pub was being cleaned. One barmaid had a very strange experience with a large multi-CD Cartridge Player – which was located in the cellar. It controlled the background music which was played throughout the pub and had been loaded with various CDs. The barmaid, Murial, made her way downstairs to change the CDs over...a job which she'd done many times in the past, and it always went without a hitch ... but this time would be *very different*. She felt that the atmosphere in the cellar quickly turned very oppressive... cold – something she'd never experienced before. With some apprehension, she finished loading the machine with the discs and started to walk away, when it suddenly started ejecting every CD with great force across the cellar. Dozens of discs were flying across the room, sending Murial into a panic and causing her to run as quickly as possible back upstairs and into the bar. Things seemed to intensify when Tom was around...as if he was somehow causing the phenomena to increase in frequency.

However, the worst was yet to come...

It was in the dark early hours one night when Tom finally came face-to-face with what would eventually drive him and his family out of The George Inn Hotel. Tom was woken up by the sound of a banging door...then another ...then another one ... and more continuing throughout the pub. Initially Tom thought that it was his eldest son getting ready for work – as he started at a very early hour – ... but there was no way this was his son ... it was too early. Tom got up out of bed and tried to calm their dog down – which was now at the bedroom door frantically barking. The noise and commotion woke Ann up; initially she thought somebody had broken into the pub and was in the process of stealing from them. She saw Tom open the door and follow the dog out onto the landing. The pub had three floors – Tom and Ann slept on the middle floor while their two teenage sons slept on the third floor.

As Tom stood in the darkness, his eyes adjusting to the limited light, he slowly became aware of a ... shadowy figure moving quickly from door to door and slamming them. Still thinking it may have been his son, he shouted out asking him, *'why was he making so much noise?'*. Tom went back into the bedroom, grabbed hold of his cigarettes and ambled back onto the landing ... only to be confronted by something that frightened him to his core...

Stood there in front of him was a thin, tall man; rather imposing in eighteenth-century clothes with a wide-brimmed hat and long cloak-like coat. Gaunt looking with long stubble etched over his face in dark

angry lines ... he intently met Tom's terrified gaze and in a deep and authoritative voice commanded, 'Don't you ignore me!'

He was terrifying. Tom just couldn't move or speak but saw his dog's hackles stand on end as it rushed towards the stranger to attack him. This frightening figure quickly darted to the other side of the landing and disappeared...right in front of a petrified Tom and his dog. It took a few seconds to try and process what he'd just seen, and he went back into the bedroom and slumped down on the corner of the bed. His wife Ann asked him what was wrong...to which he replied that *she wouldn't believe him if he told her*. He described to his wife what he'd seen and what this strange man looked like as well as the characteristics and movements which he'd used...he even told her that whatever this spirit *was*...it had spoken to him. Initially Ann was very sceptical and began to wonder if Tom could be on the verge of a complete mental breakdown. Her observations were further compounded the more that this strange individual was allegedly appearing before Tom. She would hear arguments coming from the cellar between her husband and *someone else*...when it was clear that he was the only person in that room.

Tom's sightings of this troubling ghost were becoming more and more frequent, and it was becoming evidently clear that there was something real – which was having a profound effect on not only his mental health...but now his physical health. Tom began to lose weight...lots of weight...very quickly. Tom and Ann decided to get in touch with a paranormal investigator in the hope that there could be a solution to this strange problem. It was a woman named Melanie Warren who knocked on the door of The George Inn Hotel one rainy cold day, and it was Melanie who would ultimately suggest something very radical – according to Tom's wife Ann. Melanie could see the toll that this spirit was taking on Tom – and Ann was now beginning to come around to believing that maybe *something out of the ordinary* was really taking place. Melanie advised that the help from a psychic medium may help the family find out *who or what* this spirit may be.

A short time later an appointment with a medium was organised and a few days later a knock on the pub's door would bring many surprises to both Tom and Ann. As the three of them walked around the pub and its three floors and many rooms, the medium relayed details of this spirit which stunned Tom. *How could this woman know these things which had happened to him?... and how was it that she could describe this individual so accurately to both him and Ann?*

It soon became apparent that, according to the medium, she wasn't strong enough to control this entity and help it to some form of peace. She believed that this spirit was crying out for help...it wanted to cross over...it wanted to rest...and it was using Tom as a type of paranormal punch bag to try to get its message across.

The medium then suggested that a seance and a cleansing ritual be performed to try and help this spirit find peace...but she'd need help. Another date was set up, and on that particular day the medium was joined at The George Inn Hotel by a young man and a middle-aged woman. These two individuals were also psychic mediums, and it was hoped that their combined abilities could help send this troubled entity to the other side.

Tom, Ann and the three mediums made their way to a room in the pub which had been prepared for their arrival. In the room was a table with chairs for all of them, and as Tom went to sit down, he was told to go around to the opposite side of the table and to sit down on a chair with his back squarely up against the wall. He was then told to sit on his hands and to not move under any circumstances.

He was told that if this spirit became angry or scared, it may try to take him over and possess him in order to speak through him. Both Tom and Ann sat next to each other with the three mediums sitting

opposite them ... and it was then that very strange things began to happen. The two female mediums began to take on the voices, characteristics and even some of the physical features of two young girls.

They began to speak like young girls – their mimicked laughter was particularly disturbing...but it was the male medium who really made them feel incredibly uncomfortable. As Ann was concentrating on this medium, she noticed that Tom was beginning to rock back and forth...something that she'd never seen him do before. Focusing her attention back onto the male medium, she was shocked to see this 27-year-old man almost instantly change his facial features to that of a man in his late forties or early fifties ... *how was this possible?* As this strange transformation continued to take place, it was becoming more and more obvious to Ann that the face she was looking at was the face of the spirit which had been terrorising Tom. He'd described in detail to Ann what this entity looked like, and there he was ... sat staring back at them ... at their table.

Ann's scepticism soon melted away as she witnessed this strange phenomenon taking place right in front of her, but it was what Tom witnessed which completely convinced *him* that there was much more going on in The George Inn than just a regular haunting. As he sat there, he became fixated with the wall at the rear of the room. He noticed that it began to transform into a mass of swirling colour, but he wasn't the only one who could see this. All three mediums were also aware of this...*but what did it signify?* Ann couldn't see any of this, but she was amazed as she watched Tom and the three mediums follow what they said was a bright light move towards this wall of colour. As the light seemed to be absorbed into the wall, the colours faded away and everything returned to normal. Ann was amazed to see Tom sobbing, more in relief than in fear, but it seemed that whatever the outcome of this seance was, a decision had been made by both Tom and Ann to move on and leave The George Inn Hotel.

But before they left and handed the pub over to the new landlords Tony and Debbie, there were a few more surprises still to come. The first was the discovery of an item in the pub's cellar while some building work was taking place. Tom came across a gold ring in amongst the rubble with a name and date engraved into it - *Robert Clay 1786*.

*Could this ring have belonged to the troubled spirit who'd been making Tom's life a living hell?*

Tom began to wear this ring on a chain around his neck, and soon decided that he needed to try and find out as much as possible about this man named Robert Clay. Ann agreed to help him, and they both decided that their first port of call should be paranormal investigator Melanie Warren, who'd been instrumental in helping Tom when the disturbances first started to affect him.

They started by investigating the cellar of the pub where the ring had been found. The floor of the cellar was made up of very old gravestones which had been temporarily removed when building work began. Their hopes of finding a possible clue on one of the gravestones, however, were quickly quashed when they found that all of the stones were so old their inscriptions had been worn away over time. *So where to look next?*

Melanie identified the ring as being a bereavement ring ... meaning that it had been commissioned and paid for by Robert Clay to be left there in memory of him. After much more digging by Ann, Tom and Melanie, they found out that there was indeed a Clay family that lived in the area around the time when the bereavement ring would have been made. And in a strange twist of coincidence, the head of the family, John Clay, ran a house of correction which was situated directly opposite The George Inn Hotel.

A house of correction was an establishment which predominantly dealt with the poor who had been convicted of minor offences. After their convictions, they would have been sent to a house of correction

where they would have been put to work as punishment for their crimes. The work would usually have been hard labour... so as you can guess, it wouldn't have been a very inviting place.

But even with this possible connection to the Clay family and the bereavement ring, they still couldn't find any records or mentions of a Robert Clay...until they found a story which sent shivers down their spines. Their research unearthed the horrible tale of the murder of two young children whose bodies were never found. It became widely believed that they had been buried in the lower cellar...of The George Inn Hotel...which was now under a thick layer of concrete.

A local historian, who had taken an interest in the case of the haunting of The George Inn Hotel after learning about it through Melanie Warren, wasn't surprised at all that they couldn't find any mention of Robert Clay in old records. He made the point that many years ago, if you were from a family of wealth or high status (or both), and you committed a terrible crime, you were literally written out of history.

*So, was it possible that Robert Clay was the perpetrator of this heinous crime? And that his spirit was still roaming the cellar and many other rooms of The George Inn Hotel, desperately still trying to hide his horrific crimes? Had the seance and cleansing ceremony, which had been organised and executed by the three mediums, really worked?* Tom and Ann weren't prepared to hang around to find out. They soon decided to move on to pastures greener and handed the licence to The George Inn Hotel over to new landlords, Tony and Debbie...which brings us back to the beginning of this episode.

Both Tony and Debbie had absolutely no belief in the paranormal, but it was an incident which Tony himself experienced, that completely changed their perceptions of what the paranormal was. Tony had begun to notice little things happening but didn't take too much notice as he felt that these... '*little things*' could easily be explained away as natural phenomena.

Tony recalls that he was alone at the pub one night when Debbie was away with friends. He'd completed all his usual duties and then got himself ready for bed. For some reason he couldn't seem to settle down and admitted that every time he was about to drop off to sleep, something would disturb him, and he would become restless. He couldn't put his finger on what was wrong, and as he was trying to get comfortable in bed, he caught sight of his alarm clock. It read around 2 a.m. Tony sighed and went to turn over again when he saw the distinct figure of a man standing at the end of the bed. Tony's eyes were already used to the dark, and he noticed immediately that this man was wearing a strange shaped hat, quite tall and thin, and wearing a high-collared type shirt with what looked like a bow tie. Just as Tom recounted his encounter – Tony similarly described the gaunt face and long black coat. Trying to process the moment, Tony thought that this figure had broken into the pub to burgle the place. Terrified, Tony shouted at the man '*What do you want?*' but instead of this stranger answering him, he just turned around, walked away and disappeared. To say that the remainder of Tony's evening was uncomfortable, would be an understatement, but he eventually made it to the morning. Upon Debbie's return, Tony sat her down and explained to her what he'd seen. When asked what he thought it was, he simply answered that *he just didn't know*.

A few weeks later, Tony and Debbie were out enjoying a few drinks when they bumped into the previous George Inn Hotel landlords, Tom and Ann. Seizing his opportunity, Tony asked Tom and Ann if they'd experienced any strange phenomena during their time in the pub. Both Tony and Debbie were dumbstruck as Tony and Ann poured out all their experiences to them in great detail. They also explained that, according to Melanie Warren – who'd been a huge help to them as they struggled to understand what was going on – other previous landlords also had similar problems. It seemed that many of them didn't last long at all before the spirits haunting the George Inn had driven them out. Many of them had not only seen the strange gaunt figure of a man – who could have been Robert Clay –

but they also said that a *woman in white* was often seen wandering around rooms and corridors inside the building. Whatever had happened during the séance, which took place when Tom and Ann were landlords, obviously hadn't worked – because sightings of Robert Clay continued when Tony and Debbie took over. *So, who, or what was the bright light which allegedly crossed over?*

*So, what happened at The George Inn Hotel all those years ago? Did all these seemingly ordinary, everyday people really see the ghost of a child murderer, or the ghost of a woman in white? Did their staff really experience poltergeist phenomena whilst working behind the bar?* According to their testimonies, yes, they did. During my research I found it incredibly difficult to dig up further testimony from other witnesses. So much time has passed since these experiences happened, that it's quite possible that many of the people involved, such as Tom, Ann, Tony and Debbie, have passed away.

The building is a memory that is now long gone, and it's such a pity that information about this series of hauntings isn't more available, but I did manage to find something of interest. The timeline seems a little hard to pin down with regards to the building work that went on in the cellar of the pub, but from the information which I found, it involved several builders who were working there for around five days.

The original cellar floor was described as like a cobbled road, and it was this floor that Tom and Ann wanted taking up and replacing. As the workmen began to break the cobbled stones apart, they came across a very large gravestone which was buried beneath. As already mentioned earlier on in this episode, the markings on the gravestone had been worn away to the extent that nothing was readable ... but it was underneath this stone slab that the bereavement ring was found with the name Robert Clay and the date of 1786 engraved into it.

I'm going over this point again, because I feel that there is an important factor about this whole case that could have been overlooked. *First, was the cobbled stone floor an original road of some sort before the pub was even there, and if so, did it link to the main high street which was a very popular carriage route hundreds of years ago?* Many ghost sightings and hauntings are based around these once popular carriage routes, and there are hundreds throughout the UK.

With regards to the location of the gravestone, two possibilities exist: either Robert Clay (or someone else) dug the cobbled stone floor up, buried the bereavement ring and the gravestone, then replaced the cobbles ... or both the ring and the gravestone were laid down before the floor was put into place. Either way, it must have been an effort – likely conducted in both secrecy and relative silence so as to not alert anyone of what was potentially going on at the time. *But what if the builders had kept digging after they had removed the gravestone and the ring? What would they have found?*

It seems that it was *after* the ring was discovered, as well as the cellar floor being re-laid using concrete, that Melanie Warren had discovered the story of the murder of the two children – possibly at the hands of Robert Clay. *If this information had been found BEFORE the concrete had been laid, could the builders have discovered their remains if they'd kept digging?* It does seem very plausible that such a large and heavy gravestone could have been hiding something much more horrific than just a simple bereavement ring.

The possibility of ever finding the remains of these poor children is now extremely unlikely due to the construction work which has taken place since The George Inn Hotel was demolished, *but could the builders have disturbed something when they broke apart that cobble stone floor and removed the large gravestone? Could this also go some way to explain the sightings of a ghostly woman in white?* The Stone Tape theory is one thing but disturbing the resting place of the dead is something completely different. There have been so many stories from witnesses who have said that everything in their lives was normal until some sort of building work took place ... then everything changed.

I've spoken in previous episodes about the Stone Tape theory and its possible connection (if it is in fact real) to many paranormal events, especially ghost sightings. It was Charles Babbage who, in 1837, theorised about the possibility of spoken words being absorbed into the atmosphere, and then leaving some sort of permanent impression. It was then two paranormal investigators by the names of Edmund Gurney and Eleanor Sidgwick who, in the late 19th century, proposed an idea that expanded on a concept called 'place memory'. They speculated that certain ghost sightings were married to the places where they were seen, and that these locations could have the ability to store and play back these moments in time when a suitable, sensitive individual would trigger them. Since then, many paranormal investigators and specialist groups, such as the Society for Psychical Research, have put their own ideas forward to help further explain the Stone Tape theory, but the basic premise is always the same.

In the case of The George Inn Hotel, the alleged murder of the two children in the cellar by Robert Clay, could have generated so much psychic energy, that the actual fabric of the building itself ... the stone floor, the walls, the ceiling, absorbed all this energy, and then replayed characters and elements from the event when a sensitive individual unknowingly triggered their playback.

It seems obvious now, that it was Robert Clay's energy which was the most potent and powerful...*but does all this talk of the 'Stone Tape theory' and 'place memory' make these events any more real or unreal to the witnesses?* I think I've said many times over the duration of this podcast as a whole, that if you're in the right place at the right time, whether you believe in God or the paranormal or not...you may have an experience that could be classed as paranormal or unexplained.

Unfortunately, The George Inn Hotel finally closed for good years ago. It was demolished along with other buildings, and for many years, the land was left as derelict. Now, modern shops, offices and residential apartments sit on the sites of these once enjoyed community haunts. But if the Stone Tape theory is something to be believed, *then wouldn't it be a very plausible possibility that the land that these new buildings now lie on, may still have remnants of spirits, such as Robert Clay, stored deep down ... just waiting for the next sensitive person to trigger them all over again?*

In many ways this story feels incomplete; we're unsure of the ending. Yes, the inn was closed, demolished, but what happened in the years leading up to that? *Can you, listener, help us update this chilling story? Did you ever frequent Preston's The George Inn Hotel? Or know of anyone who did?* Let us know on Twitter at @HauntedUKPod or on our Instagram page at Haunted UK Podcast – if you want to add a hashtag #thegeorgeinnhotel please do! *Can we update this story further? Or perhaps you have a tale of a haunted pub you would like to share with us?*

Pubs and inns have been a way of life on this island for centuries, and it has to be said, quite a few harbour sinister histories, grisly murders, and secrets absorbed into its walls (or in this case – buried under its grounds). So be careful when you next breeze through the doors of your cosy local because the next spirit you encounter *might be very different* to the one poured into your shot glass.