



## Spooky Wiltshire

As you can imagine on a dark, dismal night  
Things often go bump and never feel right  
Was it a vision or a trick of the mind  
Or was it a ghost - just one of its kind  
The eerie sound of footsteps clatter  
But no one's there so what's the matter  
What to do is such a worry  
Leave the house - and in a hurry?  
But no - to bed and dream of fairies  
Or ghouls and ghosts, so very scary

Poem written by Teresa Lewis, October 2015

Wiltshire has had links to the supernatural and mystical for centuries. Where did the standing stones of Stonehenge and Avebury come from and for what purpose were they put there. Salisbury plain has often been linked to U.F.O. activity - do they come from other solar systems or are they just unidentified flying objects and unexplained weather phenomena. Of course we must remember that much of Salisbury Plain is Ministry of Defence controlled - therefore you must make up your own minds as to what you believe.

With Halloween upon us our thoughts lead to those incidents over the years that may or may not have a logical or scientific answer. Wiltshire has hundreds and here I am going to try and include as many as I can from the various parishes in our county.

At Hackpen Hill in **Broad Hinton** legend has it that this is the home of the fairies, elves and other small mythical creatures. Enchanting music has been heard coming from the area.

A tithing in **Bishops Cannings**, Horton has a spectral pig often appearing with a rolling beer barrel that manifest along the appropriately called Pig Lane.

In Hodson, in the parish of **Chiseldon** on the road between the two villages a presence here seems to bounce up and down before disappearing

**Durnford** at the Chalk Pit again a black dog was chased off by a man returning home late from the pub. He threw a stick at the animal but the stick just passed through the spectre.

At the army base in Larkhill in the parish of **Durrington**, one family between 2003 and 2005 living in married quarters complained of cold spots in the house and to hearing footsteps. The children say

they saw a man hiding in the wardrobe who told them to play tricks on their parents. Things got to much for the family and they moved out.

Transcriber Jenny Todd sent this for me. She tells a tale of her mum who lived in a little cottage at **Hankerton**, situated in a field. One day when she was about 4 years old she was playing in the open field, with no hedges and no animals in it. She was pretending to be a horse with reins on and her sister was the driver. As they were running along, something large and black stood in their way. She could only describe it as being large black with large fiery eyes. They both turned round screaming all the way back to their home. My mum being the younger of the two sisters fell and was dragged on her knees all the way back to their home. Their dad went out into the field straight afterwards but there was nothing there. To her dying day she never wavered from the story and eighty years on still had the scars on her knees. A former occupier of the Old Vicarage swore to seeing a pair of body less legs wearing grey flannel leggings walking around the building. Also a ghost coach is often heard being pulled through the village by a team of horses.

In the Jolly Tar pub at **Hannington** in the early part of this century the landlady, chef and customers all saw a tallish middle-aged man in the building, reporting him to be opaque. Paranormal investigators recorded weird noises during an overnight ghost hunt. The event was reported on local radio. During the 1970's two people inside the St. John the Baptist Church witnessed the apparition of a monk saunter through.

**Heddington** police were called out by the local vicar who reported hearing a crowd of men and horses causing a disturbance on the downs near to the vicarage. The police investigated and found no sign of horse activity anywhere in the area the vicar had described even though the ground was soft. At the Bear Inn (now closed) laughter and the sound of clinking glasses were heard coming from an empty cellar.

At **Heytesbury** in 1854 Parson Smith successfully rid the village of a male ghost who appeared once every year to visit his former wife. Other clergy had tried to lay the ghost to rest but had failed. It is said the ghost moved to another location nearby.

Moving north to **Highworth** we hear tales of Squire Crowdy haunting the village after his death. A local vicar is said to have captured the ghost in a vat of cider, this was then taken to the manor house and placed in the cellar where it was bricked up. At the King and Queen public house a former landlord saw a figure dressed in a cloak floating across the courtyard and passing through a brick wall. Footsteps were also heard in an empty room above the public bar. The landlord was so convinced about the haunting that he took out a public liability insurance policy in case any customers encountered the entity and was injured by it or worse !!!! On Sheep Street approaching the church a monk-like figure was seen walking towards the church. Two theories for this were put forward one being that it is the spirit of a former verger at St. Michael's or it could be a lost monk searching for the an old priory which had been demolished in a neighbouring parish. Also relating to St. Michael's a faceless priest had been reported looking into the church during the 1930's and in the 1940's and in the 1970's a woman with just holes for eyes is said to have been observed in and around the church. In Westrop Cottage on the Cricklade Road it is said that tunnels underneath the property are haunted by a female owner of the house.

At **Hill Deverill** the churchyard is said to be visited by headless figures. During the 1970s at Gunschurch barrow the spirit of Henry Coker is said to still ride his horse across country following his hounds chasing his quarry. The sound of a hunting horn has been heard too.

Moving onto **Hindon** a phantom coach pulled by four grey ghostly horses travels along the A303 and A350 mostly being seen at the junction of both roads.

**Hullavington** in January 1967 near the Burton Hill House School a motorist said he had almost hit a man dressed in grey who was crossing the road the man waved at the driver and then disappeared.

**Imber** is literally a ghost village, the residents having been forced to relocate in 1943 when the Ministry of Defence moved in. Around the area where New Zealand Farm stood back in about 1880 a couple got lost trying to get back to their farm in thick fog, out of this fog a lady in white passed them saying nothing and looking straight past them both.

**Kilmington** near the Somerset border takes us back to the phantom horsemen theme as a grim headless horseman manifests in the Bull Lane area of the village. Lord Stourton and his four murdering cohort servants are said to gather in the churchyard. Stourton was executed, along with his servants at Salisbury on 16th March 16, 1557 for murdering two men, William Hartgill and his son John. It is believed that William Hartgill, one of the victims haunts the church itself.

At **Kingston Deverill** Barrow again the legend of the golden coffin pops up.

The Priory of St. Mary at **Kington St. Michael** a nun walks through the grounds at 1.30 every morning.

Another Abbey tale is from **Lacock** the abbey grounds are said to be haunted by a beautiful girl believed by some to be a murder victim of Queen Eleanor. Another dog is said to walk by the side of anyone walking through the main road in the village. Others report having seen a dog sat in the back of their car seen in the rear view mirror.

Not far away in **Langley Burrell** from the village centre up to Steinbrook Hill the ghost of Richard de Cobham who was murdered for his religion is often seen with cuts and bruises. He has also been seen at the top of the hill where he was burnt alive on a spit.

UFO sightings over **Laverstock** include reports of a bread loaf shaped craft circling the village during the 1990s.

On the road running through the village of **Limpley Stoke** a car driver reported seeing a ghostlike face at their windscreen as they rounded a bend in the road.

At **Little Hinton** in the north of the county the Hinton Manor House is haunted by the lady in red playing the harpsichord in the music room. She smiles at anyone who sees her.

**Littleton Drew** is home to Lugbury Long Barrow where the golden legends continue this time with the burial of a wheelbarrow.

At Littlecote House in **Ramsbury** parish it is said that each time a branch falls from a particular elm tree in the grounds a member of the Popham family would die. If the whole tree should ever fall then a major disaster will befall the village of Littlecote. Also in Littlecote House a woman carries her newborn baby along the corridors. It is believed this is the mother of a murdered child thrown into a fire soon after birth by its father. The screams of the mother have been heard. The house claims more than twenty different presences including Cromwellian troops and a lady seen to walk through one of the barrier ropes when the house is open to the public. Continuing the tale of the murdered child the perpetrator Will Darrell was found a little after the murder with his neck broken in the grounds of the house presumably from being thrown from his horse. Locals believe the spirit of the child caused the horse to rear up and throw its rider. Will Darrell's ghost is said to wander the park in purgatory for his crime. Roman soldiers have also been seen marching through the grounds.

A dog which appeared during an annual festival one Palm Sunday at Cow Down, **Longbridge Deverill** sent the revellers running in fear. The festival was never held again. Many believed the dog to be the devil incarnate.

At **Ludgershall** in Biddesden House a painting of General Webb is said to be cursed, bad would happen to anyone who tried to remove it. At Collingbourne Woods legend has it that another phantom dog lurks in the area, however there are no recorded sightings.

Lady Blunt witnessed the murder of her fiancé and the Rectory at **Lydiard Millicent** her blood curdling scream has been heard for over two hundred years.

At **Lydiard Tregoze** a pale ghost was seen sat in a corner of the church when it was supposed to have been closed to the public and after the church has been locked for the night organ music and singing has been heard.

Moving on to the parish of **Maddington** the ghost of a young girl in her early teens has been seen in different parts of the village. She wears a white ankle length dress and is believed to be one of the victims who drowned in the floods of 1841. At Maddington Manor House a knight in full armour is said to walk through the house on his way to the churchyard.

**In Malmesbury** a lady dressed in grey is said to haunt the Bell Hotel. On 25th July 2004 a clergyman staying at the hotel believed he saw the lady dressed in period costume and looking worried. The lady he saw is the same lady whose portrait hangs in the hotel. The lady has also been seen outside the building passing through a hedge. At Burton Hill in 1967 a motorist reported seeing a man dressed in grey work clothes in the middle of the road, when the figure turned towards the car the driver realised the face was very pale, then the man in the road raised his arm and disappeared. At Cole Park Farm the sound of a lady with rustling skirts seems to descend the stairs of the property. Harry Jones, a very well-known Mein Host of the Kings Arms in Malmesbury is said to haunt room 9 of the hotel where he died. It is also believed he still keeps watch over his bar where some strange unexplained occurrences have happened since Harry died.

The **Manningfords** are locations of paranormal activity too. At Hare Street an apparition of an elderly lady is said to walk along the street in eternal payment for selling her soul to the devil. At the Rectory in Manningford Abbas a former resident reported seeing a woman herding a pig across the garden, the occupier called her husband to help the lady with her pig and as soon as she called him the lady and pig disappeared. At the Rectory in Manningford Bruce in 1934 a lady was sleeping in a room where it is reputed that Charles II stayed. The lady was awoken by frivolous noises and she witnessed a vision of a man who resembled the king and some other men playing cards. Remaining in Manningford Bruce at the Hatches each New Year's day a golden coach is said to pass through pulled by four headless horses.

At Manton in the parish of **Preshute** a cottage close to a barrow where a skeleton of a bronze age woman was found and reburied was visited for several nights after the reburial in 1906. The spirit was said to peer through the window of the cottage. In a now demolished house on Preshute Lane, Manton, prior to WWI a headless dog is said to have moved around the house dragging a chain behind it.

In **Marden** a barrow was destroyed when excavation found no sign of a burial chamber but legends of buried treasure in the area still exist. The now filled in Shipton pond was said to be haunted by a figure carrying its head. It is said it emerged from the pond and walked along the footpath.

Broadwell House in **Market Lavington** is reportedly haunted by a lady in a mob cap and apron possibly the spirit of a former cook as sometimes the aroma of freshly baked bread can be detected although no such baking is being carried out at the time. In the now demolished Old Rectory a female murder victim is said to have haunted the premises. A Roman Soldier is said to ride along the Ridgeway here.

In a former chapel on **Marlborough** High Street during the 1970s tools would be moved from one place to another and after the conversion was completed it was reported by a worker at the building that they saw a monk dressed in a white habit wandering around the building. In the countryside surrounding the town reports of a phantom highwayman being heard but not seen are common. The manifestation is said to follow an old road that is no longer there. On Granham Hill a coach driven by a headless driver is said to appear at midnight and make its way through an opening in a hedge. A large black cat was encountered by a lady walking her dog near Wernham Farm in 2003. The animal looked at the lady before turning and walking away. In Marlborough College grounds there is a raised area called Merlin's Mound where King Arthur's legendary wizard is said to be laid to rest. In Savernake Forest within the Marlborough parish boundary a young lady was decapitated when riding through the forest at high speed failing to notice a very low hanging branch which she hit at full speed. Her headless body is now said to haunt the area along with a black dog and a white deer.

Moving across to **Melksham** in Snarlton Lane area it was reported that a man was seen around midnight walking down the lane with umbrella raised as the figure was approached he lowered his gamp revealing a headless body. The person who related the incident saw the figure three times in all and eventually stopped using the lane as a route home.

At **Mere** Tudor Tea Rooms in 1965 waitresses at different times encountered a female in a long white gown walking across a room in the building. Also a large heavy table was found one morning upside down after the tea rooms had been closed for the night and other strange activity has been reported.

In the village of **Mildenhall** at the site of a former Roman camp a black dog has been seen disappearing on sight.

At **Milton Lilbourne** it is said if the barrow there named Giant's Grave barrow is circled seven times at a running pace the giant buried within will awaken.

On to **Monkton Farleigh** and the Kings Arm public house. Footsteps are heard coming from empty rooms and in the bar the flapping of birds wings have been heard. A weeping woman has also been heard on the anniversary of her death. She is said to have been killed when her carriage crashed