

INVESTIGATION REPORT



Investigation Site	Clophill, St Mary
Investigation Date	26 th June 2010
Report By	Bill King
Team Members	Bill, Steph, Andy, Sarah, Dee, Elaine + Michael, Kevin, Rob, Cris, Craig, Mark

Investigation Background

Towards the end of March 2010 Bill was contacted by Off World Films and Bleeding Edge Films Limited, after they had read his book (Haunted Bedfordshire - A Ghostly Compendium), with a view to interviewing him about Clophill St Mary for a forthcoming documentary that they were producing about the haunting of the site. It was decided that an investigation would take place involving members of LPS and a small team of experienced investigators, with past experience of the church, was chosen. This was an excellent opportunity for LPS as we had previously tried to investigate the site with little success due to the presence of other people who had gone there to frighten themselves. The Off World investigation would include the police and security staff so as to keep the site free of intruders.

Site Background

St. Mary's and the churchyard are now a ruin which has had a grisly past. During the 1960s it was twice used for what were purported to be black magic rituals. In March 1963 the grave of the wife of an eighteenth century apothecary, Jenny Humberstone (buried in the 1770s), was opened and her bones were later found in the nave of the church, arranged in what appeared to be a ritualistic pattern. The bones formed a circle with cockerel feathers placed nearby and her skull was found impaled on a railing. The bones were eventually reburied in her original grave by the church porch. In 1969, on Midsummer's Eve, graves were again broken into and bones removed. No clue has ever been found as to the people who did this, but it seems likely that the Black Mass was involved as the sixties were a time of occult revival with many groups being interested in the darker aspects. In 1975 bones were again removed from the graves, but this time they were just scattered around the site so this may, therefore, have been the work of vandals.

Local inhabitants believe that the site is haunted by 'Sophie's Ghost', especially when a visitor and his wife photographed the church and discovered a figure in the church window clad in white and looking down the church nave. The strangeness was heightened when they realised that the window lies nearly two metres above the nave floor, though this would correspond with the height of the pulpit.

The site is a very apt one for the diabolic purposes to which it was put. The church itself is located on the top of a hill a good half a kilometre from the nearest habitation and is reached by a narrow, potholed, unmetallised lane called Old Church Path. The area has a very strange atmosphere what with the ruin and the location coupled with the knowledge of what has happened there. Most people say that the church is the wrong way round but this is not the case. The confusion probably came about as there is a large window in the tower, which is in the west and they probably assumed this was the important main window as the large opening in the east wall looks like an arched doorway. The main window normally faces east so that the congregation face the light, the rising sun, and not into the dark, the setting sun. If you look carefully at the east 'doorway' you will find that there are no hinges or even areas where hinges or posts could have been so this was most likely a window, the east window. The hill on which the church stands is invariably referred to as Deadman's Hill, but this actually lies nearly two kilometres away to the west (on the A6) across a wide valley. Deadman's Hill is where James Hanratty was said to have murdered Michael Gregson in 1961.

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Another unusual aspect of the church is the fact that there are no grave markers near the church. Instead they have all been moved to the north and south boundaries of the site. This was probably brought about due to the previously recorded ritualistic events, in an attempt to hide the true locations of the graves so that they couldn't be attacked again. To the west there are graves still in their original positions (many lying in amongst the trees and bushes) and a more modern graveyard to the south.

The present building was constructed in the fifteenth century but there has been a church on the site for at least the last eight hundred and fifty years and it is believed that the area was a holy site in Celtic times. Prior to the building of the church the hill was believed to have been used as the site for a leper colony though no evidence has been found for this. The church now sits on its own due to the Great Plague of 1665 when the surrounding village was said to have been burnt to the ground.

Clophill has two churches, with the second, Victorian, church lying down the valley in the village (consecrated in 1848) as the church on the hill had become too small and inconveniently located for the growing local population. The church on the hill continued to be used but only as a mortuary chapel. It was decided to decommission the old church in the late 1950s after the roof lead had been stolen in 1956. Bedfordshire County Council purchased the site in 1977 after the church was declared redundant in 1972 and it is now a Scheduled Monument. Maintenance work continues and recently some of the overgrown areas of the cemetery have been tidied up and the trees cut back.

General

The evening was a very mild one with very little wind and clear skies. The area is a long way from any artificial lighting so it is normally a dark site but on the night of the investigation there was a full moon which, coupled with the clear skies, lit up the site adding an ethereal quality. The area is also a fairly quiet one with just distant traffic sounds and the occasional aircraft passing overhead.

Pre-Investigation

The event started as an initial tour of the site and a series of interviews with the LPS members. This took place between 18:15 and 20:00. After a break for food the team returned to the rendezvous point at the bottom of Old Church Path at 22:00 for the investigation. Due to unforeseen circumstances the actual investigation was delayed so that the team did not enter the site until close to 23:00. It was decided that LPS would not follow its normal investigation procedures as these involve silent vigils which would not make for exciting viewing. Instead we chose to undertake a séance and to use the Ghost Box and a Ouija board that was provided by the film crew.

Due to the nature of the investigation it was very difficult for some members of the LPS team to keep notes so this report will consist of details of events with known times along with a number of general impressions etc. A lot of the timings were taken from the sound and video records taken by LPS during the investigation.

Dee made the observations that, as this investigation was being videoed as part of a documentary programme, it was not conducted completely naturally or in separate teams with vigil sites in rotation, as would be the norm. Instead, members were involved in each part of the filmed investigation at different times according to shot requirements, while some members 'sat out' and/or performed individual vigils.

Dee performed a (videoed) baseline sweep of the church building and surrounding cemetery area to the north with an EMF meter prior to the start of the séance. Absolutely no EMF activity at all was

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registered in any area during the sweep, so any subsequent measurements would be considered significant. However, it should be noted that there was a lot of electrical equipment in use during the investigation (especially audio and video equipment), which may be responsible for any spikes that may have occurred during the investigation.

Dee also noted that due to the 'pressure' of having a film crew hovering around, and in many cases, physically moving around and/or talking/whispering, it was very difficult to concentrate on sounds and sensations. Dee feels that this may have impacted on her usual sensitivity and her ability to discern 'sensed' things from actual ones. It was very difficult to be aware of where everyone was during a vigil, as Dee is not as familiar with all the film crew members as she is with recognising members of the LPS! In this respect, trying to conduct a proper 'controlled' vigil was virtually impossible

When the team first arrived on site Bill placed his datalogger in the north window and left it for a while for the datalogger temperature to equalise with the ambient temperature. In addition he placed his battery discharge tester on the west side of the south window.

Before the investigation started Bill set up his video camera, with a separate infrared light source, in the churchyard facing the north window as shown by the *1 on the plan shown on the next page. It was positioned so that it faced southeast towards the eastern half of the north window. This was done as one of the alleged hauntings involved a photograph of the ruined church which was said to show a figure in the pulpit. Pulpits are traditionally placed in the northern half of a church near the eastern end of the nave (on the left as you face the east window) which would have been the area where the camcorder was facing. The 'ghost' photograph was actually taken facing the south window which does seem to make the appearance of a figure odd unless the pulpit was in the south side of the nave.

Séance: Graveyard – 23:19 to 23:49

For the séance the team located themselves at the eastern end of the line of gravestones in the north of the churchyard, in the area where a figure had been seen during a previous LPS investigation (26th February 2010) and by an independent witness (the location of the séance is shown by the * on the plan on the next page). All of the LPS members took part in the séance by sitting in a circle and holding hands (the actual positions of the team members are shown on the drawing below). As a consequence no written notes were taken during this session but sound and video recordings were done.

23:19 Before the séance started the team synchronised their watches so as to ensure any written records would have the correct times.

Just as the LPS members were settling into position for the initial (videoed) séance, Dee mentioned to Steph that she felt a bit breathless.

23:23 The séance started with Bill calling out for any spirits to give the team a sign that they were there.

23:26 Bill noticed the sound of drumming which could be heard coming from the southeast. This turned out to be an Ubuntu Workshop (African Shamanism) being held at the Clophill Centre on the Shefford Road just to the east of Clophill.

- * Bill
- * Steph
- * Dee
- * Sarah
- * Elaine
- * Andy
- * Camera

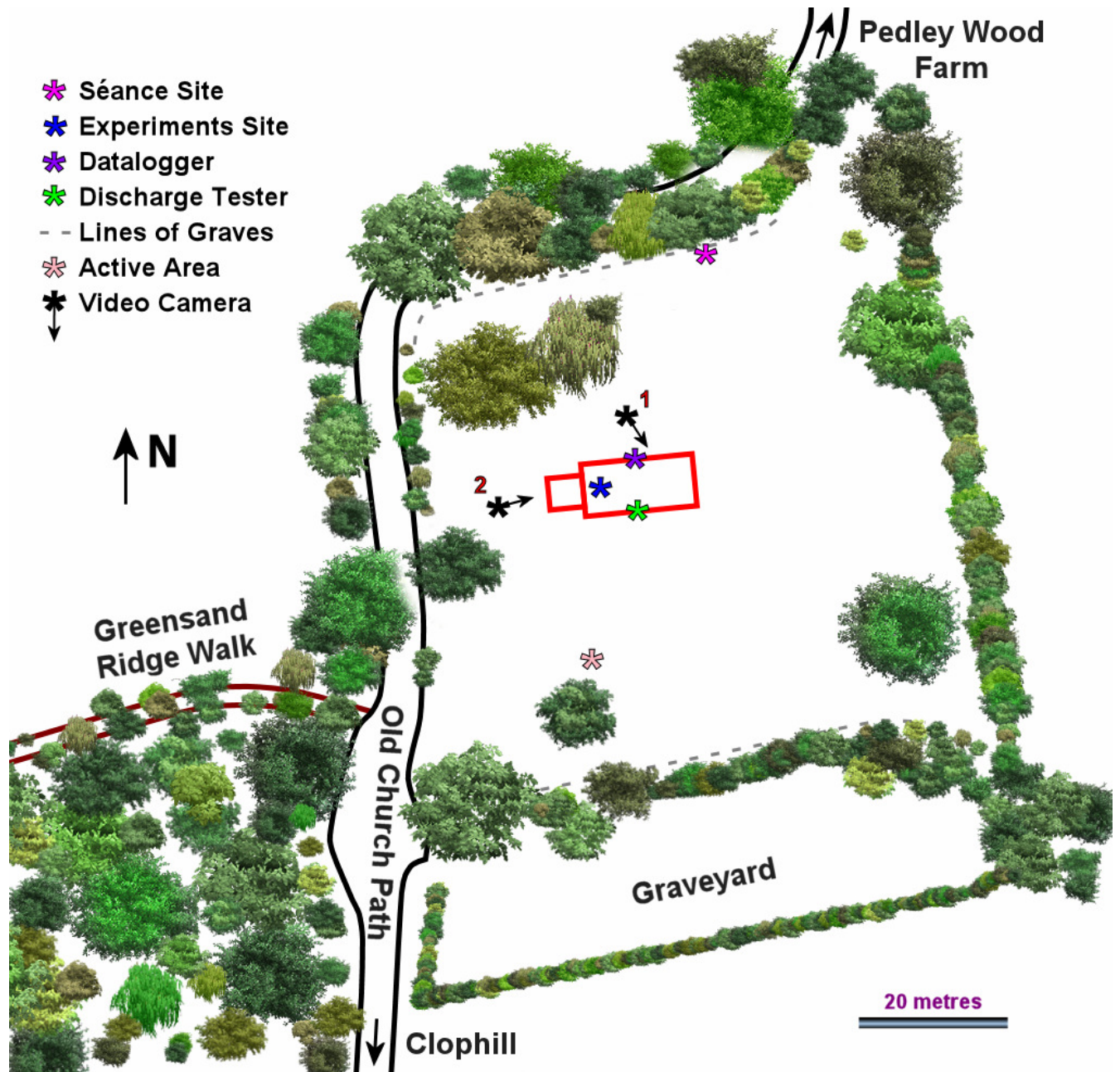


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During the séance Steph suddenly felt very weak. She felt as if she was ill and her muscles were weak, especially her legs. She felt that if she had gotten up she wouldn't have been able to walk very far without being exhausted. Dee brought to Steph's attention that Steph's hand had loosened its grip on hers. Dee asked Steph if she could grip; Steph tried but couldn't muster a tight grip on Dee's hand.

Later during the session Steph heard the sound of something brushing past the long grasses coming from the other side of the graves behind her. She recreated the sound with her hand using the grasses next to her and it sounded exactly the same.

Later still Steph heard the sound of something moving in the trees on the other side of the graves behind her (to the north). She noted that this had sounded like somebody trudging through the

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undergrowth. During the séance noises were also heard by Bill coming from behind the gravestones to the north and northwest. Bill left the séance to walk round to the other side of the hedgerow behind the graves (part of Old Church Path) to see if he could find the source of the noises but could not identify anything specific. On this occasion the security guards and police were not in the area and all the investigation team and crew were accounted for.

Towards the end of the session distinct footsteps were heard on the path to Pedley Wood Farm by Steph and other members of the team. Dee called out to see if anyone was there but no one replied and the footsteps continued past, back towards where the cars were parked. Bill and two crew members went to check the area and reported back that the footsteps were of the security guard and a police officer.

Although other team members appeared to sense something that could be paranormal such as cold breezes during the séance Andy did not experience anything.

Despite there not being any written notes, Dee did experience a few sensations, namely: cold shivers, sensing that someone/something was nearby behind the gravestones, a discomfort in her ribs down her right side, and a slight tingling to the right side of her face towards the end of the séance.

23:49 Both Dee and Elaine get the same word/name *Rose* at the same time, though Elaine was the first to say it out loud.

At this time Bill had returned to the church to start his datalogger.

During the séance Elaine's left side of her face went all tingly, Dee asked Elaine if she could speak properly which Elaine could.

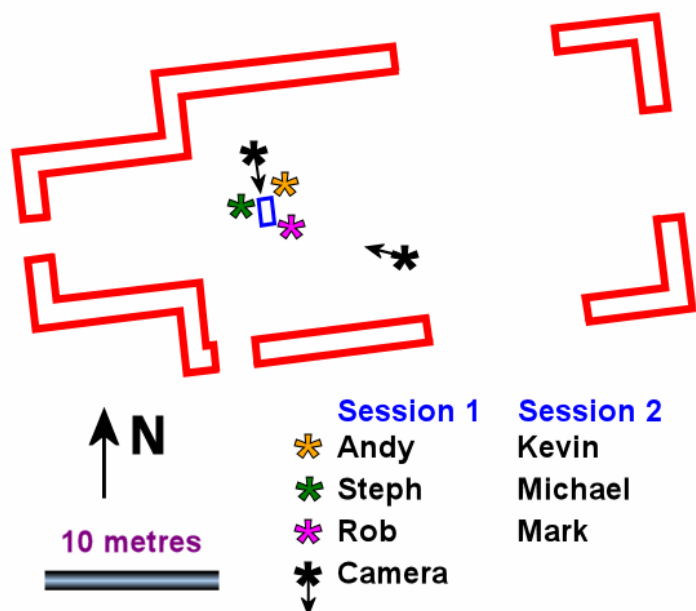
A review of the video recording Sarah had done during the séance revealed nothing.

Ouija: Nave – 23:52 to 00:30

For the second experiment of the night it was decided to have a Ouija session inside the church. The board and planchette were new ones provided by the Off World Films team and were placed on a small rubberwood table in the nave just to the east of the tower. The positions of the team members are shown on the drawing on the right.

23:58 Dee did not wish to take part in the Ouija session itself, so she positioned herself in the northeast corner of the church to observe 'from afar'. She couldn't hear the actual session terribly well from her position. She placed her voice recorder on the ground to her left. Dee found it very difficult to relax into the vigil at first.

00:02 For the first session Steph, Andy and Rob (members of the Off World



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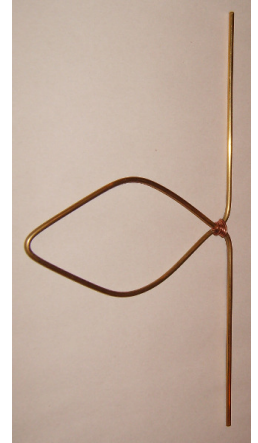


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Films crew) operated the board but after eight minutes the planchette had not moved at all so the team was changed.

00:06 During the time the Ouija board was being used Bill decided to walk clockwise around the outside of the church using his Hartmann Rod (shown on the right) to see if he could pick anything up but there was no response.



During the time the first group was using the Ouija board Elaine heard a stone hitting the wall to her left.

00:10 The new Ouija team, Kevin, Michael and Mark (all Off World Films crew), commenced their session. A plan of the positions of the team members is shown on the right. Once more nothing seemed to be happening but after five minutes the planchette had started to move and almost exactly six minutes from the start it had reached the number 2 followed by a repeat of the number 2 then *O* and finally *N*.

00:11 Dee reported that she had just seen someone walk past the east window.

Sarah looked up onto the west facing wall next to where the window would have been, and noticed a shape that looked like a dog with definite horns in a bounding position. It was a definite black shape. It disappeared for a second, and looking away to look back to make sure of what she had seen, Sarah saw the shape come back again. Then it faded away. Sarah drew this in her notebook.

Sarah was videoing at the time, but the handycam was on a tripod videoing the Ouija board. Sarah forgot to use her camera around her neck to see if a picture could have been taken.

00:14 Dee got the names *Ivy* and *John* or *Joan* followed by severe twinges in the right side of her ribcage under her arm. This lasted for about a minute before abating.

00:16 Dee distinctly saw someone in light clothing step out and peer round the corner of the west window in the tower then pull back. She tried to get Bill's attention (he was standing outside the church past the south window at that time) to get him to check out who was outside the west end of the building, but she couldn't and didn't want to leave her position and risk disturbing the videoing of the Ouija session which was still in progress.

At this time Bill had left the church and was standing outside the south window so as to take a photograph of the team using the Ouija board. He was not aware of any other team member being outside and the only other people around were the security staff both of whom were wearing dark suits so neither of them could have been the figure Dee saw.

00:24 Sarah's battery on her handycam became drained and then went back on again.

The film crew's camera battery died. They said it had been fully charged and should have had several hours of use left.

00:25 The Ouija session ends.

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Post-Experiment

00:44 Bill stopped his video camera then moved it to face the west window from the west-southwest as shown by the *2 on the plan on page 4 of this document. This was in response to what had happened at 00:16 when Dee had seen someone walk past the window.

After the vigil, Dee spoke to one security man to establish if it had been him Dee had seen peering in through the west window. The man was dressed in a black suit with white shirt and black tie and Dee was positive that the figure she had seen was not wearing those clothes (the moonlight made it possible to see quite clearly). The security man also confirmed that he had been standing down the main path to/from the car park (to the southeast) and had full view of the front and west side of the site. He said that nobody had been there at all. The figure that Dee saw at the tower window remains unexplained.

Dee and Sarah wandered round the east end of the building and approached the other security man, Gerry. As they were chatting, all three of them stopped because they could hear very clear 'footsteps' over in the grassy area near the north line of gravestones where the initial séance had taken place. Gerry said that he had been hearing that for about five minutes while the Ouija Board session was in progress. He said that nobody else was outside at that time. All three of them approached the spot and heard the 'footstep' sounds again. This time they seemed to be in the undergrowth behind the gravestones. They were convinced there was someone on the road beyond. They quickly went with Gerry through the trees to the road behind the site and could find no obvious cause for the sounds.

Dee noticed that the sound of walking on the road was totally different to the sound that she, Sarah and Gerry had heard, which was clear, but softer. The road sounded 'crunchy' whereas the grassy area of the site sounded 'rustley'. They could find no obvious explanation for the very distinct 'footstep' sounds.

Pre-Experiment

00:55 During the setup for a Shack Hack session, Steph's voice recorder batteries failed.

Just before the Shack Hack session started Bill gave a short description of how the Shack Hack worked for the camera crew.

Shack Hack: Nave – 01:01 to 01:38

For this session a modified RadioShack Digital AM/FM Pocket Radio (Catalogue number 12-469) was used (the Shack Hack). This was placed on the rubberwood table used for the Ouija experiment and which was still positioned in the nave just east of the tower. As the 12-469 has no built in speaker the headphone output was connected to a pair of portable, amplified stereo speakers so that the whole team could hear the results.

The session was started with the Shack Hack scanning through the FM band and the usual initial question of whether there were any spirits present who wanted to talk to the team. Steph has transcribed the entire Shack Hack session and this is available in a separate report. During the session both FM and AM scans were tried and different people asked the questions.

Dee sat in one of the chairs around the table for this session. Due to the nature of the Shack Hack session, it was very difficult to make handwritten notes. Also, Dee was seated behind the speakers, which made it more difficult to hear clearly. However, the session was recorded with multiple pieces of audio-visual equipment.

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During the experiment Steph got a distinct smell of fresh roses drifting over her. The scent came from the direction of the large archway at the east end of the church.

Sarah videoed three minutes of this session and then the battery went on her handycam. Sarah thinks this was due to the battery being used up by the camcorder and not by being paranormally drained, but she can't be sure.

The only significant thing that Dee would like noted is that all 'messages' seemed directed at the Off World Films crew and not the LPS members. Dee considers this differentiation between the two teams to be significant in terms of potential paranormal evidence.

01:22 Whilst looking through the south door Bill saw a dark shadow going from right to left along the edge of a ridge which runs east to west past the church 17 metres to the south. This is shown by the ✱ on the plan on page 4 of this document.

01:26 Bill was standing just outside the south door telling Andy about what he had seen at 01:22 when he observed another shadow going along the ridge. This was followed by a whole series of shadows. Some were close to the ground so could have been rabbits but others were a metre or more high and not necessarily in contact with the ground.

01:38 The Shack Hack session ends with a general discussion about the results.

Sarah took a picture from inside the doorway to the church facing out and captured a figure, then it had gone. With hindsight this was the end of the night, and the Shack Hack session had just finished, so it could have been a member of the film crew walking past which is most likely. With packing up going on it wasn't debunked.

Post-Experiment

01:41 Bill had walked round to the west of the church and was standing near his video camera when he distinctly heard the sound of running footsteps which seemed to be coming from the direction of the church. He went up to the window and saw that just Dee and Sarah were inside and asked them if they had just run along the church (which has a slightly gravelly floor). Dee said that it wasn't them and she had recently looked up and thought she saw something in the window.

Post-Investigation

During the investigation nothing unusual was picked on either Bill's or Andy's EMF meters. The battery in Bill's discharge tester was found to be fully charged after the investigation despite it being close to the area where other team members had battery problems.

Dee reported that nothing unusual showed up in any of her digital voice recordings or photographs.

Andy reported that during the whole investigation he did not see or hear anything paranormal. In addition his photographs and video did not show any paranormal activity.

Analysis of the datalogger results showed nothing unusual, just a slow decline from +16.4 to +14.9°C with no glitches. The plot can be seen at the end of this document.

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Equipment List

Andy Digital Camera: Panasonic Lumix DMC-FS15
 Digital Camcorder: Sony DCR-DVD306E
 Digital Voice Recorder: Olympus VN-480PC
 EMF meter: K-II j
 Digital Infrared Thermometer: IR-102

Bill Digital SLR Camera: Pentax K2000
 Digital Camcorder: Sony DCR-HC14E
 CCTV Camera: LYD-804C (as infrared source)
 Video IR Light: Sony HVL-IRM
 EMF Detector: Hutech
 Digital Infrared Thermometer: CHY 110
 Datalogger: CEM DT-172
 Battery Discharge Tester

Steph Digital Camera: Pentax K-m
 Digital Camcorder: Sony DCR-DVD306
 Digital Voice Recorder: Olympus VN-480PC
 Gauss Meter
 Notepad & pen, torch and watch

Elaine Digital Camera: Kodak C913
 Digital Voice Recorder: VN-2100PC

Dee Digital Camera: Fuji FinePix F31fd
 Digital Voice Recorder: Olympus VN-5500PC
 Notepad & pen, torch and watch

Sarah Digital Camera: Sony DSC-H50
 Digital Camcorder: Sony Handycam DCR-SR55E
 Video IR Light: Sony HVL-IRM
 Pendulum
 Notepad & pen, torch and watch

Acknowledgement

LPS would like to thank all of the members of Off World Films and Bleeding Edge Films Limited for an excellent night and for providing LPS with a rare opportunity, the chance to properly investigate St Mary's at Clophill.

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The Investigation Team

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Report By – Bill King

Clophill, St Mary Environment Data

