

LPS INVESTIGATION

Mardleybury and Datchworth

Mardleybury Pond and Rectory Lane

14th March 2014

For our investigation in March we journeyed across to the south of Stevenage to visit Mardleybury, to investigate the haunted pond, and Datchworth, to investigate a haunted lane.

Both of these sites we had investigated in the past and Andy F was particularly interested in revisiting Mardleybury.

Mardleybury

For the investigation at Mardleybury we followed the road that runs from Woolmer Green to Datchworth Green. Just round a sharp right-hand bend by Mardleybury Manor lies the pond on the left side of the road. The pond itself is on private land so the investigation was done from the side of the road.

Background: Mardley Pond is said to be haunted by the ghost of a young woman wearing grey that appears near the pond, especially to lone travellers. Many a motorist has been startled by her sudden appearance in front of them which has caused them to brake on the sharp bend just before the pond. One man from Welwyn was driving near the end of Whitehorse Lane when the woman appeared. He veered sharply to try to avoid her, went off the road and hit a tree. Of course there was no one there when he looked back. He described the woman as having long hair and wearing a flowing gown or cloak.

Legend has it that the ghost is that of a woman who lived at the Manor in the eighteenth century. She was returning home from a party when the coach driver took the bend in the road just before the Manor too fast and overturned the coach. The woman was thrown from the coach into the icy waters of the pond where she drowned.

Investigation: For this investigation we parked our cars in a area outside mardleybury farm and walked the few metres to the western end of the pond. Team member Jason did have an experience at the site which is given below.

We proceeded to the pond at around 20:40 and it was about 10 minutes later that I experienced the only significant moment (for me) of the evening. Walking along the road past the eastern end of the pond I suddenly felt apprehensive and this was accompanied by a tingling sensation on the top of my head, as if my hair was standing on end (despite wearing a woollen hat). I do not consider myself to be psychic, but I have only ever had this curious sensation twice before, both times in locations that I knew to be haunted. However, it may be that my prior knowledge has played a part in causing this sensation.

I walked along this stretch of road twice and experienced the same sensation both times. I then spent about fifteen minutes away from the area before returning at 9:15pm. On this third time I did not feel any apprehension or tingling sensations - perhaps my subconscious no longer felt the stretch of road to be a threat.

Datchworth

For the investigation at Datchworth we parked close to the southern end of the lane in Datchworth Green then walked the length of the Lane as far as Hollybush Lane in Datchworth.

Background: Rectory Lane has three reported hauntings. These are as follows.

Haunting 1: A horseless cart is said to make its way from the Green in the direction of the church. Limp legs and arms have been seen dangling from the cart. The cart is believed by some to be a plague cart as the sound of a bell has been heard. It is more likely that the haunting relates to a tragic and true story regarding a family that lived in the area in the late 1700s.

Famine was spreading throughout the country in the winter of 1768 due to a poor harvest. Men were out of work and people were starving. James Eaves and his family from Datchworth had been without work for months and his family were starving with only the poor house to turn to. The parish overseers showed no compassion for the family and they were literally left to die in the poorhouse, almost naked and riddled with fever. The inevitable happened and the family died (we suggest you read Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist to get an idea of what workhouse life was like over one hundred years later and then imagine what it was like in the 1700s). The family's final journey was made in a rough cart by moonlight along Rectory Lane. Their emaciated bodies were taken to the church and buried in a mass grave. It is this cart and the sad contents that have been seen on Rectory Lane gliding silently along with no horse to pull it. The way the family was treated led to a high court inquiry which did see the overseers brought to justice but it was too late for the Eaves family.

Haunting 2: One dark winter's night two friends were walking along Rectory Lane in the direction of the church. The night was a cold one with no moon and a wind which blew the trees either side of the road and made the place seem eerie. Suddenly one of the girls heard the sounds of a car rushing along the lane. As the road is narrow the girl instinctively pushed her friend out of the way then dived for cover herself. Nothing went past them and the noises died away.

Haunting 3: In recent times the sounds of footsteps proceeding along Rectory Lane have been heard but there is never anyone there.

Investigation: For this investigation the team slowly walked north along Rectory Lane starting at Datchworth Green. Just under 350 metres from the start the road splits with the left-hand fork continuing as rectory Lane and the right being an unnamed road that leads to the church. As the sightings were on the road to the church and as the cart in the main haunting would have been heading towards the church we chose to take the right-hand road.



The

Top of the Lane

During this part of the investigation, and despite there being three hauntings on the road, no team member reported anything unusual.

At the top of the road there is a path to the east that passes the church so we decided to take the opportunity to explore the churchyard where unusual sounds have been heard.

22:27 Bill was walking around the churchyard and was near the north wall of the church when he looked to the west and saw a dark shadow by a tombstone approximately 15 metres beyond the west end of the church. At first he thought it was a shadow cast by the light which illuminates the church tower but the next time he looked (when the light was still on) the shadow had disappeared. He walked over to the area of the shadow but there was nothing there.

Report by Bill King