

Hemel Hempstead and Harpenden Investigation

27th April 2007

General: For our April event we decided to investigate four haunted sites in Hemel Hempstead and Harpenden the reasons for the choice of these sites is given below under each site heading. We met in Eastman Avenue on an industrial estate in the northeast of Hemel Hempstead at 8pm then set out for our first investigation of the nearby disused railway line. This involved a walk of just over two miles which was taken at a slow pace as Andy Fazekas had had a knee operation the Friday before and wasn't too enthusiastic about walking quickly. Contrary to the weather forecast the day had been cool and the night became increasingly cooler making people wish they had wrapped up better.

After completing the walk of the line we travelled into Harpenden to Moreton End (in the north of the town) where we visited another part of the same railway line. From there we visited Agdell Path on the Rothamsted estate to the south of Harpenden then finally a haunted Rose Garden finishing about 01:30 Saturday.

Nickey Line - Hemel Hempstead

Background: The Nickey (or Nicky) Line used to be the Hemel Hempstead branch of the Midland Railway (later the London Midland and Scottish Railway) which closed to passengers on 19th June 1947. This area was being investigated as legend has it that the sound of a train whistle has been heard along the track which is believed to be a replay of events when a train using the original track would sound its whistle as it approached Hemel Hempstead. The exact location of the area where this whistle was heard is unknown. Because of the uncertainty of the location it was decided to walk the 1.1 miles of track (now a footpath) from Eastman Way to where the path ends near Downside after crossing over the B487. There is also a legend, possibly apocryphal, that three children were killed on the line when they were hit by a train. Later the area was said to be haunted with their footsteps being seen in the snow, stopping where the accident occurred. A good enough pair of reasons to investigate the area.

Report: Time on site 20:01 to 21:40.

20:50 Leana reported the smell of lavender and oranges. At the time she was facing NNE back along the line in the direction of Redbourn. The smell only lasted for a second then was gone. The prevailing wind was coming from the left (WNW).

20:59 Bridge at end of cycle path (over B487). Parapet temperature +12 to +13°C, path +11°C, vegetation beside path +7 to +9°C.

21:10 A shrill whistle was heard by Andy, Leana and Bill who were hanging back about 50m behind the others (near Pluto Rise). Other sounds including whistles (this is a very noisy area) and bird-song could be heard but this particular one sounded very different. This was consistent with the legend but the sound appeared to be coming from the south, on top of the embankment.

Nickey Line – Roundwood Halt

Background: Roundwood Halt was a small station on the Midland Railway line, now a footpath, which still has an intact platform and signal. The area is not known to be haunted but it was felt to be worthwhile going there as the exact location of the previously mentioned hauntings (see above) is unknown. The area is also a quiet one, unlike the section in Hemel Hempstead, which gave a good opportunity for sound recordings etc.

Report: Time on site 22:08 to 23:00.

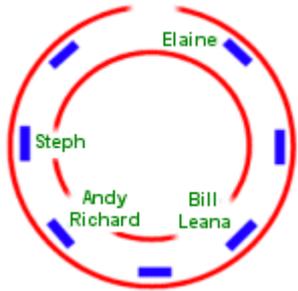
22:17 Just as Leana and Bill returned from the north end of the platform, where they had left a sound recorder, Steph showed them a photograph she had taken of a strange mist. Several members of the team spent the next few minutes trying to reproduce the effect using their breath but failed dismally. The mist could not be explained but it is possible that it may have come from a house which sits up on the embankment at the west side of the track at this point. That said there was no visible source for the mist (which looked more like smoke) and it would have had to have passed through a line of trees and dropped downwards by several meters. The original photograph (enhanced to show the smoke) is reproduced below.



The strange mist/smoke

22:21 Just after we had taken the experimental photographs near the middle of the platform Leana heard a groaning coming from the bushes to the south of the line. This was mentioned later to the members present and Richard reported that he had heard the same sound. Steph thought she had heard a tree creak at the time whilst Elaine and Bill heard nothing even though Bill had been the closest to the source of the sound. It is possible that the sound came from a house at the end of Moreton End Lane as the area at the top of the embankment is their back garden. That said no other sounds were heard from that area during the time we were there.

22:40 Whilst standing by the platform Leana saw a very tall (estimated at over 7 foot) figure cross the path (where another path crosses the line going from Moreton End Lane to Park Hill). This path crosses on a raised section which is bordered either side by a low barrier. The figure crossed from right to left (towards Park Hill) and appeared to be walking the other side of the barriers (not actually on the path). Investigation of the area revealed that on the Park Hill side there was a path leading up the embankment but on



the Moreton End Lane side there were just trees, undergrowth and a hedgerow with no path.

Just after returning to the rest of the group, after investigating the area where Leana had seen the figure, Bill went to tell everyone what had happened. As he started to talk his throat constricted so that he could hardly talk or breathe, this lasted for at least five minutes. There was no explanation for this occurrence and after several swigs of drink and a ten minute rest the effect went away.

Agdell Path

Background: Agdell Path runs from Pimlico Place to Hatching Green to the south of Harpenden. In a dell just off the path (between Harpenden Field and Agdell [Hag Dell] Field) lived a witch named Ann Weatherhead. Legend has it that Ann came back to haunt the path after she had died. So frequent were the sightings of Ann's phantom that young girls would not go near the area alone after dark. Ann is also said to haunt other areas of the Rothamsted estate and Harpenden Common.

Report: Time on site 23:20 to 00:05.

23:35 During the investigation emf spikes up to 0.5mG were detected along the length of the hedgerow which lies to the east of the path. Emf readings obtained from a point opposite the dell to a point 50m along the path towards Hatching Green. Readings dropped to 0.2mG opposite the dell. Readings were only high near the hedgerow. Levels were obtained on the club meter but did not register on Bill's meter though this may have been due club meter having a low power level range.

23:58 Temperature in dell +4.5°C, +4°C on path.

Rose Garden

Background: It is said that the sounds of a horse's hooves have been heard in the Rose Garden at the corner of the Rothamsted estate. These have been ascribed to the horse of Katherine Ferrers' (the Wicked Lady).

Report: Time on site 00:20 to 01:20.

When we reached the Rose Garden we spread ourselves around the 7 benches which circle the enclosed garden as shown on the drawing on the right.

00:28 Temperature +9 to +9.5°C (at Bill and Leana's bench).

00:35 Steph reports that her throat felt as if it was swollen and she found it hard to swallow. This lasted a couple of minutes then it went away. This is reminiscent of Bill's experience at Roundwood Halt.

00:55 Steph reports seeing a small dark shape on the ground in front and slightly to the left of her. The shape just appeared on the grass at the edge of the path and disappeared into the flower bed which curves round the garden in front of her. Bill reported that he had seen a similar dark shape near Steph but, from Steph's description of the location, it was slightly further to the north where the flower bed stops and there is a grassed area before the next bed starts.

01:06 Temperature +6 to +6.5°C (at Bill and Leana's bench).

The highlight of this part of the investigation was watching a fox going back and forth past the Rose Garden during the hour we were there then seeing it close up under the street lights not 5m away as we returned to the cars.

Report by Bill King



Some of the team at Roundwood Halt