

# Investigation Report



**Investigation Site** Sharnbrooke Theatre

**Investigation Date** 10.12.2022

**Report By** Andrew Fazekas

**Team Members** Andy, Ben, Dee, Wendy, Jason.

## Background Information

The theatre has long been renowned for its ghostly sightings. There's the Grey Lady in the Clubroom, whose footsteps have been heard pacing between the rows of seating. Shining orbs and a hooded figure have also been spotted before in the foyer, often after someone has been rehearsing an especially emotional scene. It's not unusual for wardrobe items to go missing during productions either, with costumes or props often turning up in unusual places. These practical jokes have been attributed to 'a mischievous little girl', identified by a clairvoyant who once visited the theatre

### Bedfordshire Times, 18 July 1857 Sharnbrook River Tragedy

**THREE PERSONS DROWNED** - That portion of the river Ouse, near the viaduct in the parish of Sharnbrook was on Monday afternoon, the scene of a lamentable and distressing occurrence. It was the annual festival, when the villagers were accustomed to entertaining their friends, and participate in the enjoyments peculiar to the season.

George Prentice (31), his wife Sarah (29), and her sister Ann Stoker (21), with a view of having a short trip on the river and for other reasons stated in evidence below, placed themselves on a large raft near the viaduct, but which they afterwards exchanged for a smaller one. These rafts were constructed during the progress of the railway and have remained on the river ever since.

The parties pushed off from the bank, but on reaching the middle of the stream their position became critical, the water flowed over the planks and Prentice perceiving the danger turned the raft back to shore. On coming close to the side, the females attempted to jump onto the bank, but missed their footing and instantly fell into the water and disappeared. George Prentice, who had remained on the raft, threw off his coat and regardless of all consequences jumped into the water to recover his companions, but he also sank to rise no more, A female who had warned the parties of their danger in choosing the small raft, gave an alarm, but one hour elapsed before the bodies were recovered. The females were discovered firmly clasped in each other's arms: the body of the man was close to them.

It is supposed that when the man dived into the water, he was seized by one or both of the women or became so entangled with them as to be incapable of rendering the slightest aid, and in his endeavour to save their lives lost his own. At the place where the sad catastrophe occurred the bank does not slope gradually, but falls abruptly into a hollow, and the water being very deep, any attempt at landing from a boat or raft is rendered extremely difficult and dangerous.

As may be easily imagined, the melancholy circumstance has caused a painful sensation in the neighbourhood. On Wednesday, Mr. Eagles, the county coroner, held an inquest on the bodies. The following witnesses were examined: - Elizabeth Bayes sworn I am the wife of Josiah Bayes, of Sharnbrook. I knew the three deceased, George Prentice, Sarah Prentice his wife, and Ann Stocker. George Prentice was an agricultural labourer; Ann Stocker was sitting in my house on Monday afternoon last.

The sister, Sarah Prentice came to us and called her, and she went out. I followed to see what Sarah Prentice wanted her for. She said she wanted her to go with her on the raft, to keep her husband from the public house. It was Sharnbrook feast.

The raft is on the river Ouse near the viaduct. The raft was laid down by the men forming the railway. It is composed of a few planks nailed together. It does not extend across the river but is pushed across. Ann Hayes sworn: - I am the wife of Charles Hayes, a platelayer, living at Sharnbrook close to the river and railway. I knew the three deceased persons. Monday was Sharnbrook feast. There is a raft on the river about half a mile from Sharnbrook village. About three o'clock on Monday afternoon last I was at my cottage door. I saw the three deceased persons pass my door and go down to the rafts. There is a large raft and a small one. The large one is called a punt. It consists of more than a dozen planks fixed together.

The three got on to the large raft. George Prentice got off afterwards and got on the small one. The two women went after him on to the small one. The river is about 40 yards wide at that place. George Prentice took the bat to push them across, and when they had reached the middle of the river, I saw the water flowing over the planks. Prentice tried to turn them to push them back to the shore. When they got back close to the side, I believe I saw the two women jump or try to jump on to the bank. I heard a splash and missed the two women. George called out "Dont helloa" and immediately jumped in. I went for help immediately.

The first person I saw was about a hundred yards off. A man named Burr and several others ran immediately with me to the water and soon after the deceased man's hat and one of the women's bonnets was found. It was an hour before the bodies were got out. George Prentice tried to save his companions. The deceased women screamed very much. I believe the water to be deep where this happened. The deceased George Prentice did not seem to be tipsy. I thought it dangerous to take the women on the raft, and I thought it was in consequence of what I said that Prentice turned back when crossing the river. The jury returned a verdict of accidentally drowned.

[http://www.prenticenet.com/things/articles/uk\\_bedfordshire\\_times\\_18jul1857.php?c=2](http://www.prenticenet.com/things/articles/uk_bedfordshire_times_18jul1857.php?c=2)

### **Sharnbrook Theatre Background**

Daniel Hipwell took over Stoke Mills ( The Mill ) in 1817, and it stayed in the family until 1969. There were three generations of WILLIAM Hipwell, one or all of which could have been called **Billy**.

The last William Hipwell died in 1986 aged 76. ABF foods owned it from 1961-69. It became a theatre in 1974 and the oldest part of Mill standing dates back to 1703. The Mill restaurant next door was originally the owner's house, and they owned a small industrial area over the road too.

The theatre has long been renowned for its ghostly sightings. There's the Grey Lady in the Clubroom, whose footsteps have been heard pacing between the rows of seating. Shining orbs and a hooded figure have also been spotted before in the foyer, often after someone has been rehearsing an especially emotional scene.

It's not unusual for wardrobe items to go missing during productions either, with costumes or props often turning up in unusual places. These practical jokes have been attributed to 'a mischievous little girl', identified by a clairvoyant who once visited the theatre.

History of construction of the weir

The bridge / weir was reconstructed around 1950. Around this time also much modification was carried out with riverbanks all along this stretch of the river. Prior to these alterations access across the river was very rudimentary by a plank construction! The river to the right of the weir was then very shallow so if you fell one way you would get wet but the other you would go over the weir.

Depending on how much rain has fallen you have a depth of around 8 feet on the right of the weir but to the left in normal time around 12/ 15 feet but if as occasionally the river is in full spate it can swell to over 25 feet. I have never heard of any suicides or deaths at this point although there have been deaths through drowning up stream between our area and the railway viaduct.

Information provided by *Doug*

### **Equipment used by Jason**

Ceyomur CY50 Trail Camera - This is an infrared motion activated camera designed for capturing images of wildlife at night. It is referred to throughout this report as 'IR cam'.

### **Equipment used by Andy**

Sony camcorder – Flir 5 thermal imaging camera – PSB 11 Ghost Box –K2 EMF Meter - Stereo voice recorder –Note pad and pen – Olympus Camera. Two types of Rem Pods, EDI Meter. Torch

### **Pre-Investigation**

Just for the record, Dee was recovering from a serious cold and had only just recovered her voice!

Also, to be noted that LPS decided that we would operate as one team to implement our theory that this will help to avoid potential depletion of energy that may occur when multiple teams investigate an area at an allegedly haunted location.

Jason placed his IR cam behind the sound desk at the back of the auditorium, covering the back rows on the left-hand side (if facing the stage) of the theatre. This is an area where activity has been previously reported by LPS and other groups.

### **Weather conditions:**

Freezing cold conditions outside the theatre and very cold and in the older part of the basement and changing rooms, clear sky, no significant wind, full moon

### **Ambient sounds:**

Running water (the river) could be heard in various parts of the building (especially the basement); occasional ticking, clicking, 'building' noises.

### **19:05 – 19:45 Auditorium**

Ben sat at the top end of the Theatre using his K2 EMF meter and recorded the temperature being recorded as 17.9 degrees. Decided that this will be a silent vigil in complete darkness with all but the auditorium emergency lighting switched off. It should be noted that Ben's thermometer gives a reading of 17.9° but it has been in his pocket so will initially give a higher reading than the actual temperature. It would therefore seem that the actual temperature in the auditorium was 16.3° as that's where the temperature readings eventually settled.

19:05 17.9° C

19:08 Wendy heard a light knock to her left and the temperature dropped

19:13 Jason felt a slight cold breeze

19:13 17.2° C

19:23 16.3° C

19:25 Dee and Wendy and Jason were standing on the stage, and they saw moving three green lights three were darting around. Wendy was sitting in one of the seats in the theatre and she felt a hand on her head touching her hair.

19:28 Andy is sat at the back of the theatre and feels a draft coming from the stairwell

19:32 16.3° C

Dee stood on the stage at the start of the vigil with the lights off and noticed a tiny green light that flashed irregularly on the steps near to the sound engineer's booth. There were no light sources within the booth to account for this nor did it seem to be a reflection of a security light set high on the adjacent wall, as that emitted a constant glow. Dee, Wendy and Ben all sat within this area (within the IR cam range) in an attempt to gain more insight, but no satisfactory explanation was found.

19:32 - Ben feels something tapping on the back of his chair. He forms the opinion that it feels like someone has bumped the back of his chair as if they have got up to walk down the aisle. No other members are near Ben or his chair when this happens. At around the same time Dee who is sat on the stage area facing the audience chairs can see a light in the top right-hand corner of the auditorium which can also be seen by Wendy. The light appears to be emanating from several rows behind where Ben is sitting. Members attempt to identify the exact source of the light which appears to come and go but are unable to. There are no activations on the K2 Meter during this vigil.

19:36 Wendy was looking across the stage focus on our eyes on the door leading to the dressing room she saw what she thought was a shadow leaning in and out and then an arm moved in the doorway.

19:41 Andy observes a light anomaly moving on the wall. This is debunked by light coming from a members mobile

19:42 Wendy was sitting in a seat by the stage and started to use the SLS app on her phone she saw a figure that looks like it was dancing on the stage raising its right leg when she asked the figure to raise its left leg and on request it did shortly after this the figure disappeared.

19:45 - End of vigil. IR cam is left running in the auditorium throughout the night

### **19:53 -20:38 Corridor investigation.**

The corridor connects the bar area to the backstage area and enables access to the front rows of the theatre. It is enclosed with windows overlooking the river on one side and actually projects outside the building above the water. The team are spaced at intervals along the corridor, with Andy at the end nearest the bar, then Wendy, Dee, Ben and Jason at the end nearest the theatre. Two PIR motion sensors are placed further along the corridor beyond Jason, facing away from the team. Cat ball (CB) motion sensors are placed on the window ledges.

Initial temperature = 17.9° C (thermometer has been in Ben's pocket again)

19:54 the cat ball the furthest along the corridor or from Wendy started to go off and the temperature dropped.

19:55 - Temp 15.3° C

19:55 - Substantial temperature drop recorded as 13.3 degrees. Possible that this was caused as Temperature gauge had been placed in Ben's pocket between the Theatre and Corridor area.

The first motion ball activation is recorded, Ball is placed on the windowsill by the corridor dividing door.

19:56 - Another cat ball started to light up and another temperature dropped to 13.3 degrees

19:57 - Temp 13.3° C

19:58 Wendy started to use the app ghost tube which generates words and has a word bank the following words were heard:

Wendy asked "what is this what is your name how are you?"

19:59 - Temp 12.3° C

The response was "Donald" then the ghost app said be quiet dark and maybe

20:02 The cat ball at the very end of the corridor went off again

20:03 Wendy is using the Alice app the following words were recorded

Determine and I Kurt Maze observe tone silence cannot.

20:03 - Further motion detector ball activation - Temperature recorded as 12.3 degrees.

20:05 - CB nearest to Ben flashes.

20:07 - Temp 10.3° C

20:10 - Temperature recorded as 9.9 degrees

20:11 - Temp 9.9° C

20:13 - Motion detector ball activation on ball one near to Jason.

It is suggested that perhaps a spirit is attempting to move away from us and that Jason is blocking its way. Jason moves along the corridor closer to Ben.

20:16 - Temperature recorded as 9.7 degrees

Dee has a random thought about the Carmelite religious order. Subsequent research has not revealed any connections to the site.

20:20 The PIR lights went off off.com the ghost tube app Wendy asked for the spirits names and the following was said Sarah and Brandon

20:21 - PIR light activation mid corridor. No member is present in that part of the corridor at the time and no reason for the activation can be established.

20:25 the words image and woman came through

20:25 - Temperature of corridor recorded as 9.6 degrees.

20:35 - Conclusion of vigil and all members return to the canteen area for the first break of the evening. The temperature is recorded as 9.5 degrees at this stage.

The drop in temperature during this session can be attributed to the falling temperature outside (it was close to Zero) and the thermometer re-establishing a base reading after having been in Ben's pocket.

The CB and PIR motion sensors are less easily explained. As has been proven before at Sharnbrook the CB's need to be physically moved before they light up. They are not affected by transferred vibrations.

### **21:14 – 22:52 Basement: Set Building Store**

The team place themselves alongside the main aisle with the Set Building Store in front of them and the locked costume storerooms behind. Andy nearest the stairs, then Wendy, Ben, Jason and Dee at the far end.

Dee feels that the darkness in the furthest part of the store is very oppressive.

Five CB's are placed along the floor; CB1 nearest to Andy and Wendy, CB2 between Wendy and Ben, CB3 about 6ft in front of Ben in the actual store, CB4 between Jason and Dee and CB5 by Dee.

Temp. at the start of the vigil is 12° C

21:14 - The team make their way to the Basement area which had previously yielded the most activity when investigated earlier in the year. Motion detector balls are placed around the Basement at various places and the K2 EMF meter is placed on a box that appeared to contain ropes.

21:14 Immediately the cat balls started to go off cat ball

21:17 - Activation on motion detector ball 4 which had been placed onto the floor in an area which would have originally served the Mill.

21:20 - Further activation on motion detector ball 4. Temperature recorded as 12 degrees. By 21:23 the temperature has dropped to 11 degrees. Cat ball for went off for and Ben changed the balls around and put another one and they still went off

21:21 - CB4 flashes.

Ben: "Thank you spirit"

Dee swaps CB4 and CB5 positions.

21:23 - Temp 11° C

21:25 - CB4 flashes (this is the cat ball that was originally in the CB5 position and was swapped over by Dee). It flashes again during the same minute. This happens while Dee is trying the door handle to the locked costume store behind her (the "Bunny Marks Costume Store"). CB4 flashes for a third time as Dee walks towards the darkest / furthest part of the store. Her torch cuts out. Jason notices that the door to the "Bunny Marks Costume Store" has a peephole set into it and looks through it. What he sees is that the room is dimly lit by a green security light, revealing lots of costumes hanging on racks. Double activation on motion detector ball 4. Dee states that she feels uneasy and believes that something is being drawn to Ben. Dee's torch mysteriously fails at 21:29 and it is a few moments before its functionality returns. This also corresponds with a further motion detector ball activation on ball 4 which is the closest ball to where Ben is stood in the Basement.

21:29 - Dee's torch is still not working and she states that she is 'spooked'. She is joined by Wendy.

21:30 - Dee says, "That bloody wheelchair's not down here is it?" (In reference to LPS' previous investigation at Sharnbrook) and CB4 starts flashing. Dee's torch starts working again.

21:32 - CB4 flashes

21:34 - Jason looks through the peephole in the "Bunny Marks Costume Store" door. The room is in total darkness. Does the security light go off at 9:30pm? Can this be checked with the theatre?

21:35 - CB4 flashes. Temp = 9.3° C

21:37 - CB4 flashes immediately after the question "are you attracted to Ben?"

21:39 - Ben calls out to the spirit and CB4 flashes again.

21:44 - Temp 9.0° C

21:48 words picked up on Wendy App "go" "stupid" "cold" "blessed" "annoying" "brother"

21:52 End of this part of the investigation

### **21:53 -22:09 Basement: Corridor by Props Store**

This is the oldest part of the mill building.

21:56 - Andy, Dee and Jason all hear a woman's voice. Jason thinks it's Wendy, but she denies saying anything. Ben and Wendy did not hear the voice. There are numerous CB activations on the floor by Wendy's feet at this time. Wendy confirmed she has not said anything to the group.

22:01 - Several almost continuous activations are recorded in an area closest to where Wendy is stood. Ben is able to record this on his camera phone.

22:06 - Temp 8.9° C

22:07 - CB flashes by Wendy.

Wendy opens a "Necrophobic" app on her mobile and receives the name "John".

22:09 - Conclusion of Vigil in Basement and all members return to the canteen for a further break.

### **22:50 – 23:30 Team on stage. Temperature in the auditorium is 16.2° C. No other notes.**

This part of the investigation involves telling jokes and singing on stage as if there is a dress rehearsal or show going on in order to produce some form of paranormal response. Andy told Jokes and Ben attempted to sing unsuccessfully and other members had general fun on the stage in an attempt to trigger activity.

The temperature in this area was recorded as being 13.7 degrees at this stage. There were also several motion ball activations on one of the balls that had been placed on the stage but the timings for these have not been accurately recorded due to Ben's terrible attempt at singing.

23:30 - Conclusion of experiment in the auditorium

### **23:35- 23:45 Dressing Room area**

Team moves to the dressing rooms where it is very cold (not due to supernatural causes). Dee and Jason notice a dull, repetitive knocking coming from below. There are toilets below the room and Jason leaves the room, through the adjacent Green Room and down a flight of stairs to investigate. However, he doesn't complete the journey as he finds that the toilets are accessed from outside the building which he would need to leave via an emergency exit door. Not wanting to get inadvertently locked out he returned to the dressing rooms. No explanation for the knocking is found but outside (literally) interference from persons unknown cannot be ruled out.

23:41 To say it was positively freezing in this area would be an understatement with temperature recorded as a very frosty 6.5 degrees. The Spirit box was used together with the K2 in this area but yielded no activations or results in the very short time that the team remained in this area

23:45 Final temperature was recorded as 5.9 degrees. Team agrees that it's too cold in the dressing room and return to the breakout area. IR cam is retrieved from the auditorium

### **23:59 EVP Session in the bar area.**

The team took turns to call out the following questions:

Andy - What is your name?

Dee - How many spirits are here?

Ben - Are you connected to this building?

Wendy - How many spirits are here?

Jason - Did you work here when the building was a mill?

A - What year is it?

D - How many of us do you see?

B - Did you die here?

W - Who is our current monarch?

J - Who was monarch when you were alive?

A - Do you know you're dead?

D - What is your name?

B - How many spirits frequent this building?

W - Do you like lots of people?

J - Do you wish to make contact?

A - Did you drown in the river?

D - what is your favourite drink?

B - Do you wonder why we are here?

W - What do you like to do here?

J - Do you like it here?

A - Did you work as a miller?

D - Are you happy or sad?

B - Are you an actor or actress?

W - Can you say one of our names?

J - Are you drawn to any one of us?

A - Is your picture on the wall?

D - Are you male or female?

12:07 Wendy felt a static feeling in her hair air

12:08 Wendy heard had a tapping at the other end of the room

B - Were you a local resident?

W - Are there any children here?

J - What year is it in your time?

A - Did you wear shorts?

D - Can you sing your favourite song?

B - Are you grounded here?

W - Do you want to move on?

J - Or do you just like to visit?

12:15 Andy feels and can sense a man in a grey suit and red tie standing in between the tables staring at the team observing them from a distance. At the same time Dee also comes out with the same information except she feels that the man is wearing a red bow tie. The man is invited nearer to the group and comes closer before stepping back and then fading away. It is strange that two members of the group see and feel the same thing and come out with an almost word for word description when neither are mediums.

A - Are you the man I'm sensing down the other end of the room?

(Dee tells Andy that she is also sensing him)

D - What is your name?

B - How old are you?

W - Is it you who keeps touching my hair?

J - Are you a former owner of the building?

A - Come forward.

D - Come join us... if you're friendly.

A - Pull up a chair.

Andy says he's getting the name 'Sam' and has the impression of a man wearing a suit.

A - What would you like to talk about? Is your name Sam?

Someone, either Andy or Dee has the impression that 'Sam' might have been an actor.

J - Do you have fond memories of productions you were involved in? Were you a part of 'Salad Days' in 1979?

(First production staged at the theatre)

### **00:22 – 00:36 Foyer Vigil**

00:22 and 00:36 the team made their way to the Foyer area where a short vigil took place. Both Wendy and Dee suspect that it is a female spirit that appears to be drawn to Ben and that the spirit has followed the group throughout the evening from area to area, but Ben does not feel threatened by the spirit and at the conclusion of then vigil relays the closing prayer advising that we do not require any attachments or anything following us home.

During the Foyer vigil it seemed that the spirit of a woman was attempting to contact Ben. She had no connection to the mill or theatre, but to Ben himself. Ben's report will no doubt explain this in as much detail as he can allow due to its potentially sensitive nature.

### **River investigation**

The night's investigation finished with a vigil in the Foyer followed by a very brief trip to the bridge over the River Ouse.

Andy feels drawn once again to the bridge over the river Ouse and feels that the team are being watched by a spirit standing on the pathway from the opposite direction

### **Analysis**

**Ben** - This would be the second time that Ben had visited Sharnbrook Theatre to Investigate. Ben's opinion is that the site is active but that there are no spirits present of a sinister nature. He looks forward to investigating the Theatre again in 2023.

**Andy** – Something seems to draw me to the bridge over the river every time I am at this location. I am not sure why and historical research is inconclusive. Dee coming out with the same description of a spirit presence as myself at the same time during the EVP session only serves to validate the information we were both receiving from spirit which was interesting.