

Ghostly goings-on at Moot Hall, Elstow.

There have been a couple of items in the local press about ghosts having been seen at Elstow's wonderful old Moot Hall.

Moot Hall, set on Elstow's beautiful village green, is certainly old enough for it to have picked up an unusual guest or two, so what is the truth in the rumours?

A former curator claimed to have seen a young schoolboy in there, a few years ago. She had arrived early and had locked herself in, so she could have her lunch before Moot Hall's usual open public afternoon. Sitting in reception, she thought she saw a figure out of the corner of her eye. She turned and looked and there, standing beside the door to the downstairs exhibition room was a boy aged about 9. She looked away in disbelief, but immediately turned back to look again – but the figure had gone. The curator was never able afterwards to decide whether she really had seen this boy and she admits that. At the time, she was thinking about her young son, who was taking a test at school that day. Yet she was able to describe the boy in some detail, as being dressed in clothing typical of the 1800s. Interestingly Moot Hall had been used as a school throughout most of the 19th century.

This story would not be very remarkable but for events which have happened at Moot Hall since then.

The door beside where this 'ghost' boy was seen repeatedly used to open on windy days or nights, despite it being secured with a heavy drop-latch. As this door is wired into the alarm system, its opening would set off Moot Hall's intruder alarm system. The present curator, who lives next door to Moot Hall was, on one windy night, awoken by Moot Hall's alarm at 1am, 2 am and 3 am. Each time he went to shut the alarm off, he found this door ajar, despite him knowing that it had been securely shut when he had previously locked up. Various investigations were then carried out – a carpenter inspected the door and could find no fault with the latch. The drop latch is much too heavy to be opened by a mouse or bat landing on it. Staff tried shutting the door and only just engaging the drop-latch into its keep, then vibrating the door – as a draft on a windy day *might* do – to see if they could make the latch jump out of the keep but, whatever they tried only made the latch move downward, engaging even more securely into its keep. They also found that, on windy days there is no draft at or near this door. A few days later, after the alarm had been set off several more times by that door opening, the curator fitted a small bolt to the door and it has never set off the alarm since. Some years later, a paranormal investigation team spent the night at Moot Hall. They came with no prior knowledge of any of these unusual events. But as soon as that group's medium went through that door way, she said 'You have a little boy here!'

Other strange things have happened to the staff at Moot Hall. There was a period when the caretaker kept coming in and finding that the cover on the medieval bed had been turned back. The caretaker refused to accept the curator's assurances that he was not playing tricks on him – until he checked the alarm's system's computer log and found that no-body had entered between his visits, proving that the bedcover had been turned back when no-one was in the building. The cover on this bed is quite a heavy fabric and there are no draughts near this bed.

There have been many paranormal investigations carried out at Moot Hall since then and investigators have reported seeing and hearing children, as well as 'receiving' information

about the building which, following investigations by the curator of old documents, turned out to be correct.

Many investigators have photographed 'orbs' – spheres which look rather like floating bubbles about 4-5 cm wide. Some paranormal investigators say that these orbs are merely an optical effect caused by reflections of flashlights on dust specs. Yet, strangely, it is only paranormal investigators who have captured such images – none of the many other people who have taken photographs in Moot Hall have reported finding orbs appearing in their images.

However, the most astounding occurrences have been the digital sound recordings made during 2012. The voice of a man has been captured, on several different recorders, by different investigators. Whilst those present during recording heard nothing at the time, in response to their spoken questions a man's voice has been heard responding on the digital sound recordings. There are now four separate recordings, on which he can be heard saying; 1. 'I can hear you.', 2. 'I *am* here.', 3. 'It *hurts!*' 4. '*Burns.*' The first three recordings are very clear and distinct, the fourth somewhat less so. All four recordings sound like the same person – his voice is a little gruff and he sounds elderly.

Andy Matthews, TV producer of Ghost Hunt programmes, in November 2012, whilst being shown around the building, claimed to see one of the upright timbers in the downstairs exhibition room suddenly vibrate from side to side and then a figure in white come toward him. It was his first visit to Moot Hall and the curator, who was with Mr Matthews at the time was intrigued because – unknown to Andy Matthews – the upright timber he had been facing at that moment was one of only two pieces in the entire building which can actually be moved a little from side to side.

Staff at Moot Hall find these events intriguing but baffling. Is there paranormal activity at Moot Hall, or is there a rational explanation for each one? Such has been the level of interest in these occurrences, that Moot Hall is considering holding an occasional 'Ghost Hunt' type evening which members of the public may attend. If you are interested in this, please contact the curator.

Anyone wishing to pay an ordinary (daytime) visit Moot Hall, to see the inside of this beautiful and historic building, may do so on public open afternoons – Saturdays from 1 to 4pm, from the beginning of April to the end of September. Groups may book to visit on (almost) any day of the year.