

Strange Places: A Few Seconds Behind Cotherstone

by Gloria Heather Dixon

The following events took place during the mid eighties just outside the village of Cotherstone in County Durham...

Tom, his wife Melanie (pseudonyms) and his parents rented a cottage near Cotherstone in County Durham. During their six-day summer holiday they experienced some very odd events.

They arrived at the cottage on a Saturday and by the Sunday there were unusual things occurring, beginning with noises that were occurring in their bedroom. The hot water tank was located in their bedroom and they wondered whether there were birds in the eaves and even thought of rats. However the noises Tom describes sounded to him like those of a pneumatic drill, which seemed to get louder and louder and he claims that the ceiling appeared to be moving.

Because of the constant noise and the fact they could not establish what was causing it they went to see the key-holder to the cottage, but he was of no assistance at all and could not explain the cause of the noise. The cottage had originally been an old farmhouse and was now two cottages.

During the week, they went for a walk down to the river, which flowed at the back of the farmhouse at the end of the field. . Tom went on to describe some curious events during this walk on that summer's day. Both Tom and his wife had the powerful and extremely eerie sense of other people with them and they heard shuffling sounds and both felt 'out of sync' with things. They had walked down to the river and along the river bank and during that time could feel and hear 'shuffling sounds' reporting that the grass and undergrowth were moving as though people were walking with and around them and they had the impression there were about six people there, although no-one else was in sight.. They commented that there was no wind or breeze of any kind that would have been responsible for this movement in the grass and undergrowth. Melanie became upset and said to Tom 'we've got to go away' As they approached a small footbridge Tom saw a figure cross over the bridge, which disappeared totally before his eyes. Tom stepped onto the bridge with Melanie calling to him to 'come back'. As he stepped onto the bridge he felt as though he was taking a step down and then another step into nothing as though his foot had gone through the ground. The shuffling noises continued directly alongside them.

Melanie was so very uncomfortable about these events that they headed back to the cottage and consequently she decided that any more walks in the area of the river bank were out of the question.

A culmination of these anomalous events occurred five days later on the Friday night before they were leaving the cottage.

Melanie had fallen asleep in the lounge on the couch, as she was extremely tired due to the fact she had been unable to sleep for the previous five nights. Tom was

watching television when he noticed some disturbance on the television affecting the picture, which was fading. At this point the plug jumped out of the socket. He tried to awaken his wife, but could not do so. He went into the kitchen where the fridge plug also jumped out of the socket and the cable seemed to be moving around. The French windows began to rattle and he then became aware of something over the tree line at the back of the cottage (where the field and river were). He went outside and observed what he described as a 'thing moving very slowly over the tree line, like a metallic purple in colour, oval shaped and massive with a defining deep purple edge. It moved over the cottage - he does not recall any sound - and it appeared to recede as it moved towards Cotherstone and then disappeared. He describes half the horizon being blocked from his view. I questioned him as to whether this was a light rather than an object, but he was definite that this was an object with the purple colour emanating around the edge.

He felt that his observation time was about four to five minutes, but cannot be sure of this due to not checking the time before or after. He went from the back to the front of the cottage while he observed this and goes on to describe how he felt after seeing this object. His words to me were 'I felt absolute sadness', totally gutted - an empty feeling like dreaming on your feet'. At this point Melanie awoke coming out of her sleep to say 'I'm glad it was you, not me'. Tom did not understand why she said this and neither did Melanie

One of the things that Tom emphasised during our conversation was that throughout the entire week they were at this cottage and indeed in the area, they both felt 'out of sync' with things as though they were a few seconds behind everything'. I asked him to describe this feeling more fully and he said 'it was like a plate of glass between us and everyone else'.

During the time they were there, they visited the local pub in the evenings just to get away from the cottage and I asked whether they tried to find any further information about the area and the cottage. However, Tom told me that the people didn't seem very friendly, so they did not discuss the events occurring at all as they didn't want to trigger any ridicule from anyone. According to Tom, Melanie had made the comment that it was as though the people they met were people they had known before. I visited this area during the summer of this year (2004) and I will update this case in the future with some further information, having talked with the local historian there and visited the site of the cottage, which Tom and Melanie rented. I also walked along the footbridge and pathway where they observed the mysterious figure and received additional information about another very strange occurrence there involving a mist. This was in addition to gaining some insight into the history and local legends surrounding the area.

They did not report any of this to anyone. Melanie wanted to totally forget it and Tom searched the newspapers for quite a while after that to see if there had been any other reports or information, but nothing came to light at all.

Tom cannot remember a specific date or even year for these events, so this makes it all the more difficult to corroborate these experiences. The Barnard Castle case referred to earlier occurred in June of 1977 and involved a fuzzy hazy glow, which engulfed a sixteen year-old farm work riding his motorcycle late one night on the

B6278 north of Barnard Castle in County Durham, near the village of Lartington . This glow appeared to be linked to a major power loss to his motorcycle in addition to causing physiological effects to the witness. Tom felt that the glow he observed at their cottage in Cotherstone was similar to one described by the witness at Barnard Castle. (See Time Storms, page 17-19) Coincidentally, the village of Cotherstone, lies to the north of Lartington and these villages are in very close proximity to one another.

Durham has generated some highly unusual reports and I have personally investigated several strange cases from Durham, one of which occurred near Brancepeth on the A690. This involved an observation of a very strange small figure very early in the morning of 2nd January 1995. The lady concerned was driving to work when she saw what she describes as a 'small leprechaun-sized man, yellow in colour with almond shaped eyes' appearing to climb the grass verge at the side of the road with a 'puppet-like action'. The lady slowed her car to walking pace where she was only yards away from the figure and observed it walking sideways up the grass verge for a couple of minutes. She emphasises that this was not wildlife of any known kind and was stunned for several days by what she had seen. Subsequent calls to the police did not bring any further answers other than the usual jokes that this form of enquiry would bring. A colleague and myself spent several hours with the lady and her family as well as visiting the location of the sighting. A further update on this case will be documented in the near future, which involves a paramedic observing a strange small figure in the vicinity of the above case.

An interesting footnote to this report, is that in September of 1976 near Fence Houses, County Durham, a lady and her granddaughter were walking from a friend's home in Fence Houses and instead of taking the main footpath, they took a shortcut between the old pit yard and the fire station, which took them on a path down towards Bournmoor. Across the road was the 'Floaters Mill' pub. She noticed a bus passing, but for some reason could not hear it. Half way along the path the lady observed a very strange translucent object, which was egg-shaped and appeared to be on ski runners (the original investigator has described these as being like the runners of a sledge). The lady approached it, as her terrified granddaughter ran off down the road calling for her grandmother to leave it alone. As the lady put her hand on it she described it as feeling warm. In seconds the translucency began to modify into a semi clear object in which she observed two very small figures, with long white hair and dark costumes and what she described as silvery gloves or hands. She then became aware of the sound of the bus revving its engine up the bank to Fencehouses and her granddaughter crying and shaking with fear . Jenny Randles has documented this case in several of her books and a few years ago I was contacted by the original BUFORA investigator, who sent me a report with details of his interview with the grandmother in the presence of her son. However the granddaughter was not interviewed on the wishes of her father, who felt that it would be too upsetting for her resurrect her bad memories of these experiences.

Meanwhile late one night in November of 1994, a man riding his motorcycle home from work after nightshift was travelling on the A688, near Spennymoor in Durham, when observed a strange light in the field to his left, which appeared to become brighter shining over the field and then illuminating the road in front of him and behind him. Upon arriving home he became aware that he was very uncomfortable



and upon removing his clothes he realised the he was covered from head to toe in a red sunburn-like rash, which surrounded the edge of lips but left the lips white. After one and half hours the rash disappeared. Investigation established that there was no police helicopter in the area at the time and neither were farmers using sodium lamps in the fields. The man concerned was convinced that the rash related to his sighting, but when a colleague and I visited him and the area of the sighting, we were unable to prove whether this was the case particularly as the man had not sought medical advice regarding the rash, although his wife confirmed his claims.

I hope that this has illustrated some of the curious reports that BUFORA have received for the Durham area.