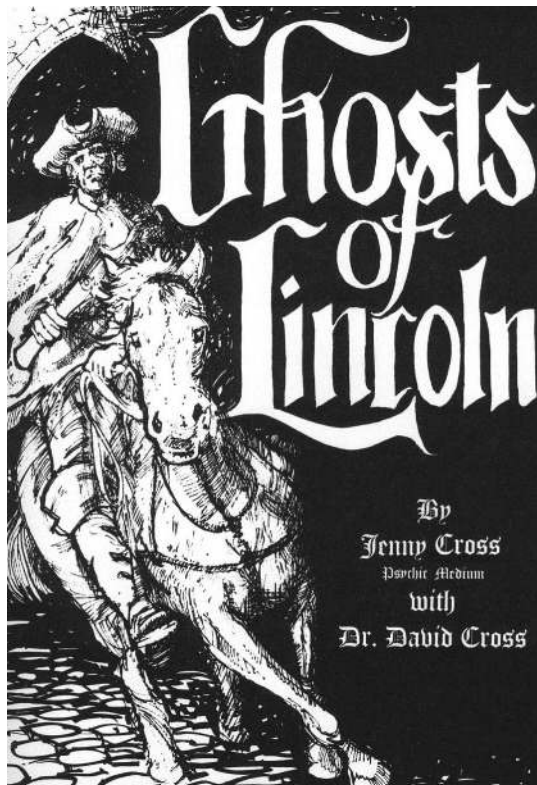


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GHOSTS OF LINCOLN



by

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with

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GHOSTS OF LINCOLN

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INTRODUCTION

Ghosts exist.

That is the inevitable conclusion reached by anyone who undertakes a serious study of the field. They have been reported in every civilisation since the dawn of time. Professor H.H.Price, a former President of the prestigious Society for Psychical Research, once said: "*The tea-party question, 'Do you believe in ghosts?', is one of the most ambiguous which can be asked. But if we take it to mean 'Do you believe that people sometimes experience apparitions?', the answer is that they certainly do. No one who examines the evidence can come to any other conclusion. Instead of disputing the facts, we must try to explain them*".

In 1994, the authors appeared on a TV programme with Peter Underwood, Chairman of The Ghost Club Society and author of some forty books on the subject. In reply to the question, "But aren't ghosts just all in the imagination?", he replied: "... *there is no shadow of doubt, if you look into the evidence, that many people, with healthy minds in healthy bodies, do see ghosts. It's absolutely overwhelming*".

"What are ghosts" is the question, rather than "do they exist". You may find some answers in these pages. We have collected here some fascinating stories concerning the supernatural inhabitants of Lincoln, to provide both resident and tourist with evidence of the paranormal phenomena they might possibly encounter in this ancient City. "What are ghosts" is a deep and sensitive question and will be the subject of a later and more detailed book by the same authors.

We have not made anything up for this book and have ignored any tales which we considered to be purely fanciful. Many of the stories are most certainly true, the authors having spoken to first-hand witnesses. You must make of them what you will. But you may never walk through Lincoln in quite the same way again.

Jenny Cross and Dr. David Cross.
June, 1995.

AUTHORS NOTE

For privacy, the names of living people given in our stories have been changed. The exception is that of Andy McLaren, Manager of The Green Dragon Inn. Some locations are not specified for the same reason.

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MARY AND THE DRAGON

"Oh by the way, you do know the place is haunted, don't you?", Andy was asked.

It was July 1994 and Andy McLaren had just taken over The Green Dragon Inn on Waterside North. He was in the hand-over period from the previous manager who was showing him the ropes. He knew that the building went back to the 14th century and that its distinctive four "garret" roofs had been added in the 1500's. On the walls were photographs of the major preservation work carried out in 1956, when the building had been stripped back to its timber frame, making it resemble a matchstick model.

The Green Dragon Inn



Andy was a no-nonsense Scot for whom the only spirits that had existed in his pubs had been in bottles and decidedly for drinking. "Haunted?" replied Andy. "What, you mean wee ghosties and goblins and such?" he scoffed. "Well, make of it what you will" his predecessor continued, "but we actually had a valued member of staff quit a couple of years ago after seeing a ghost. It was up in the Witham Suite, the function room on the top floor. One of our barmaids said she saw the ghost of an old woman, clear as day. She said the figure was very small, only about four and a half foot or so. The old woman was wearing a grey shawl with broad, black stripes and was smoking one of those old-fashioned clay pipes. Frightened her so much she gave her notice in on the spot".

Andy had never had much time for spooks and the diminutive old lady seemed one of the least likely he had ever heard of. He had forgotten all about her a few minutes later as he continued learning about his new premises.

Some months later however, in early December, one of his bar staff called him over to meet two ladies who were sitting at the bar. They were in their late 50's or so and had said that they used to live in the building before the 1956 renovations. Andy was actively researching the history of the place, in order to answer the stream of visitors' questions which had been directed at him during his first summer's residence. He became fascinated to learn that these ladies were life-long friends and that one of their grandmothers had been one Mary Cooper - who had kept the

middle of the row of three shops that had comprised the ground floor of the building. Mary had sold second hand clothes and had lived above the shop. As young girls, the two ladies had spent a great deal of time with her and had virtually grown up in the building. Mary had also made and sold umbrellas and had been widely known as "Umbrella Mary".

The two ladies had both married and moved away from Lincoln in the early sixties, Mary having died not long after her home was gutted and rebuilt. Neither of them had been back to their home town for nearly thirty years. They were now on a joint nostalgia tour and of course had come to see how their previous 'home' was faring.

Remembering the story of the ghost, Andy thought he would gently probe the ladies for further information. "You know," Andy began "this is a very old building and people are always asking me if it's got a ghost. Did anything happen while you lived here?". The ladies thought for a moment then replied "No, nothing, it was always very peaceful". That's the end of that then, thought Andy. Wanting to make some wall displays of the pub's history, Andy asked if the ladies had any photographs of Mary which he could use. They did send him one later, although they had none with them at the time. Andy therefore thought he would probe a little further.

"I'll look forward to seeing the picture of your grandmother. Out of interest, what did she look like?" asked Andy. "Well, she was quite a distinctive character" one of the ladies began. "You see, a childhood illness had left her with a curvature of the spine, so that she only looked very small, four, maybe four and a half foot tall". Andy's ears pricked. "Really?" he answered, "and what sort of clothes did she wear?". The ladies replied "Throughout the winter months she was never without her grey shawl around her shoulders. It was made in Ireland and had big black stripes on it".

Mary Cooper – "Umbrella Mary"



"Did she smoke, by any chance?" enquired Andy, wanting to complete the picture. "No, she never smoked" said one of the ladies. Andy was now confused, but a few moments later all became clear. They had assumed Andy had meant "Did she ever smoke *cigarettes*" and had

answered in the negative. As an afterthought though, one of them added: "Of course, she was never without her dojeen". "What's a dojeen?" asked Andy, never having heard the word before. "It's one of those old-fashioned clay pipes" came the reply.

Here then it seemed, was the ghost of the Green Dragon: Mary Cooper. By this time however, Andy had become at the very least open-minded about ghosts, if not an outright convert. He had witnessed so many inexplicable things in his few months at the Inn that his previous cynicism was sorely dented. Like the night of Halloween, for instance.

It had been a busy Monday evening in the pub, with party-goers dressed as all manner of vampires, witches and skeletons, calling in for a drink on their way to various Halloween parties. By 11.30pm the last of the bar staff had gone and Andy was doing his tour of locking up and alarm setting. He ended in the Witham Suite, put out the lights and went through the "Staff Only" door into his private apartment. It was about twenty minutes to midnight on that most haunted of nights. Andy sat down on his sofa about to relax, when suddenly he froze, listening.

Coming through his private doorway, from the Witham Suite, were noises. It sounded as if about 9 or 10 people were having a merry get-together, chatting and laughing. He had just locked everywhere up and knew no one could possibly be there. The alarms were set. He had just come through that very room, yet suddenly there seemed to be a party going on. Andy was a reasonable man. He decided that if the ghosts of the Inn wanted a Halloween party in his function room, well, that was fine; as long as they did not come into his private area. They didn't. And he did not venture into their space, either.

Instead, he listened intently to the sounds coming through the closed door, wondering what would happen at the 'witching hour' of midnight. He did not have long to wait. As his clock began to strike twelve, the noise of the 'party' ceased and did not return.

Strange noises and odd happenings were becoming quite common at the Green Dragon even before Halloween. In all the pubs he had run, Andy had always known the occasional bottle to get broken in the cellars. But here, the number of broken bottles were many times that of any of his previous twenty-odd pubs. He trusted his bar staff when they said, most of the time, that they knew nothing about it; pub managers develop an uncanny judgement of character. On numerous occasions, the staff would be sitting chatting for a few minutes after hours, taking a breather before their journey home, when loud noises would be heard coming from the cellars. The noises would be those of a keg of beer or a crate of bottles being dragged across the hard cellar floor. As Andy put it: "Everybody that I was paying wages to was sitting there staring back at me; so who was in the cellar?". Searches of the cellar always revealed nothing, except occasionally something moved out of place.

The cellar was something of a focus for odd occurrences at the Green Dragon. In the autumn of 1994, the pub had a new 'gas' system installed in the cellar, which controlled the pumping of the beer up to the bars. A complex system of valves and regulators fed the gas from the high pressure cylinder to each of the many different barrels of beer, lager and cider. Within the system was an isolating tap for each individual barrel, to allow for easy change-overs. The

system came on-stream one lunchtime on a normally quiet day, but on this occasion it was very busy. Andy had only one member of staff working that shift, so the two of them were kept flat-out. Suddenly, the two beer taps they were both engaged in pulling pints through dried up in mid-pull. They tried the others and found they were all off too. "That new gas cylinder must have been a dud!" shouted an irate Andy to his barman. "Get down there and change it over will you, fast!".

The barman disappeared through the doorway to the cellar stairs, but reappeared again much too quickly and ashen faced. "It's not the gas cylinder" he gasped to Andy "you had better come and see". "What do you mean?" snapped Andy, waiting to pull the rest of his customers pint. But the barman was adamant, so Andy put down the half-full glass and went down to the cellar himself. Then he understood.

He found that every tap on the gas system, leading to each separate barrel, had been turned off. They had been in mid-pull when it had happened, so the taps must have all been on and then turned off suddenly. All at the same time. In a locked cellar.

He turned them all back on again and returned to his customers. The barman still looked pale.

But the cellar was not, it seemed, Mary's only sphere of influence. The Witham Suite was used for a variety of functions and its tables and chairs therefore had to be frequently rearranged. On more than one occasion, a member of staff had been mid-way through setting out the furniture when they were briefly called away to help with something else. On returning they would find a table or a couple of chairs a long way from where they had just left them. Checking with their colleagues, they would find they had all been busy and had not been in the room.

The Witham Suite, at The Green Dragon



Shortly before Christmas 1994, the Witham Suite had been set out for a function and a particular table had been placed by the entrance door. Several sets of leaflets had been carefully arranged on it, so that guests could pick them up on their way in. The staff member left the room for only a few moments. When they returned, the leaflets had been scattered all over the table and floor, as if by a strong gust of wind. But all the doors and windows were shut and there was no air movement.

On Saturday, 28th January 1995, we visited the Green Dragon specifically to 'psyche it out'; that is, for Jenny to use her psychic abilities to see if she could detect a spirit presence. She was

indeed able to confirm that Mary Cooper was still paying visits to the Inn and was responsible for many of the ghostly happenings. Jenny reported that Mary did not seem to appreciate that she was dead and would not have any of her suggestions of moving on to a more appropriate abode. Jenny picked-up that Mary had become quite absentminded late in her life; and of course, still was. She had been forever putting things down and then forgetting where she had put them, and would then turn the place upside down looking for them. It seemed she was still doing just this, hence the noises in the cellar. She seemed to have taken a particular dislike to the new gas system and it was she who had turned off the taps.

After our visit, Andy asked us if Mary was likely to be more active after our psychic probings. "We sometimes find that things may be a little shaken up after our visits" Jenny told him. How right this was to prove.

Not only were the more common happenings of noises and things moving much more frequent in the week or two following our visit, but a rather alarming incident occurred the very next day. A member of the catering staff was in the kitchen on the Sunday morning, cooking the joints of meat for the Sunday lunches. They had been cutting a joint of beef with a long, sturdy carving knife before returning it to the oven. Just as they were doing so, Andy shouted to them that they were wanted on the phone, so they quickly shut the oven door, put the knife on the chopping board and went downstairs to the phone.

When they went back to the kitchen some time later, they let out a scream which had Andy dashing up to investigate. The knife had been snapped in two. The two halves of the blade had been placed in an "X" on the chopping board. No one else had been in the kitchen in the meantime and snapping a very sharp knife in that way would have been difficult and dangerous.

Today, you can visit the pub and see this knife displayed on the wall of the Witham Suite, together with other displays covering the Inn's association with Dick Turpin, Henry 8th, James 1st and others. We also end the Lincoln Ghost Walk at the Inn and if you attend, you may even witness the strange event of 'the moving hippo'.

This is a small stuffed toy in the shape of a pink hippopotamus which sits on top of one of the beams in the Witham Suite. We had not even noticed it until our third Ghost Walk, on Easter Monday, 1995. David had just finished the final story and wished everyone a good day, standing in 'the haunted corner' of the Witham Suite itself. A small boy about 7 years old, together with his father, had been on the Ghost Walk and approached David at the end. "Excuse me" said the little boy, grasping his father's hand "but that pink toy was not there when we came in". The father pointed out the hippo on one of the beams and explained to David that when the group had entered the room a few minutes before, the hippo had not been there. They had not seen it actually move, but by the end of the stories it was in a different position.

David nodded politely, but did not give it a great deal of credence. He did ask Andy about it later though and Andy confirmed that the hippo did frequently seem to move positions around the room. We were still reserving our judgement when another of our Lincoln Ghost Walk guides reported the same thing. It apparently happened quite often, to the degree that he began

pointing out the hippo's position when first entering the room, explaining the reason why a little later on. On one Saturday evening Walk, a group of several young ladies had attended who had been good natured, but rather (noisily) sceptical about many of the stories. The guide was reaching the end of his presentation in the Witham Suite when one of the women literally screamed and grabbed her nearest companion. She had just noticed that the pink hippo had indeed moved from where it had been at the start of the stories. The group of sceptics then suddenly became a group of 'believers' and rushed to the bar for nerve-calming refreshments.

One of the displays currently on the wall of the Witham Suite is a photograph of Mary Cooper, a copy of the picture provided by her granddaughters. Andy personally took the original to a processors for copying to ensure its safety. The man at the shop experienced great difficulty however in getting his electronic wizardry to work and copy the photo. Normally, he said, the equipment worked perfectly, first time. But it took him five attempts to copy Mary's photograph. On the fourth try, he exasperatedly asked Andy "This has never happened before. This isn't a photograph of a ghost or anything, is it?".

Authors Note for e-book edition free excerpt: The Lincoln Ghost Walk is now run independently and the itinerary may change.

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