

# A Ghost at Langham

The Rutland Magazine and County Historical Record Volume 3 1907/8

*It was a hot Summer's day in the Sixties. We had gone for a walk to the top of Langham pasture. There on, the hill, is generally a breeze as also a good view of the surrounding landscape. My companions were a lady on the advanced side of fifty and a youth of seventeen. Somehow the conversation turned to the subject of ghosts - a very safe topic for discussion at noonday as it now was, whilst we stopped to rest; but not pleasant to talk about near midnight. Not that I believed in ghosts, and I expressed my opinion rather decidedly. The lady said she did believe; for that she had seen one. "You have seen a ghost," I said. "Why, when and where?" "At the very place where we are now staying," she answered. We were staying at Langham House. And I noticed a look of alarm on the face of our young companion, for he had to sleep there again that night. The subject now became very interesting. Here was one who had seen a ghost, and I was anxious to hear all about it.*

*The lady began the story. Some twenty-five years before, she was visiting at Langham, at a house somewhere along the front of the village towards the Burley Road. I do not remember where. And she had some acquaintance with an old lady, who was then staying at Langham House. This old lady was very ill and, late one night, it was feared she would not survive until the morning. Langham House did not belong to the old lady, but to one, whom I will call Mr. W., lest I should give anyone offence. When the sick lady seemed to be in extremis Mr. X. was commissioned to fetch my informant. It was on the return of these two that the ghost appeared.*

*Now any old inhabitant of Langham will remember, that in former days, before Langham House was rebuilt, it was approached from the Melton Road by a long, straight drive, on either side of which were grassy slopes, with flower beds and here and there a shrub such as the arbor vitae, and at the back a laurel hedge. Behind the laurels on the left hand was a path leading from the front gate down to the kitchen door for the use of tradesmen and servants.*

*On the right the laurel hedge was set back against a high wall, which separated the property from the garden of the next door and this hedge reached nearly, but not quite down to the house, and it was impossible for anyone to pass behind it. At the bottom of the drive was a large round grassy plot, with a flower bed in the middle. Around this visitors had to drive who came to the house. But the front door was rather to the left of the flower bed and any one approaching the house invariably kept to that side.*



Langham House

*Well, it happened that as Mr. X. returned with his younger companion, and were reaching the bottom of the drive, that both became suddenly conscious of a ghostly figure standing to the right of the flower bed. They were both terribly alarmed, and with shame be it said, the gentleman, instead of making a dash for the ghost to see what it was made of, rushed with his companion to the front door which being unlocked, they hurriedly opened and passed in to the house.*

*Their nerves evidently were sadly unstrung and when presently they went up into the sick room, they were not in a fit state to encounter another strange scene which there presented itself. The lady lay a dying and her bedroom window was almost immediately over the spot, where they had seen the ghost. The dying lady had a fancy that a spiritual being was standing by the foot of her bed and that he had come to take her away. And in her delirium she was addressing him and saying "You shan't have me." " You shan't have me." And then she ejaculated, "Oh, that I may just creep into heaven."*

*From inquiries made, I should say that the dying lady was no worse than her neighbours and perhaps better than many. She was not badly spoken of. She had been a strong minded woman and able to ride to hounds. But perhaps she had not been what we should now call, religious. And apparently in those days, there were many places in the country where there was but little religion. Langham had been in this respect, unfortunate. For considerable intervals there was no resident clergyman and service only once in the grand old Church on a Sunday, when some clergyman came up from Oakham. When a visitor at Langham in my early days, I found it was so. And it was probably so at the time the ghost appeared. Anyway, no Curate or spiritual advisor seems to have been resorted to to help and comfort the dying lady.*

*At an earlier period there was a resident Curate, who afterwards became a man of note, viz., Dr. Buckland, the Dean of Westminster and father of Mr. Frank Buckland, the famous naturalist. Dr. Buckland when at Langham had also a companion, a pupil, who rose to eminence, Dr. Philpotts, Bishop of Exeter. sometime contemporary with Dr. Philpot, Bishop of Worcester, whom he was wont to describe his "singular" brother. The signature of Dr. Buckland will, no doubt, be found in the parish registers of Langham.*

*But to return to the lady who lay a dying. Her spiritual struggle was not so uncommon. The like one has read of, and even known in one's pastoral experience. And it is better to have a share of unfitness for the Kingdom above, than to be like the Pharisee, self-satisfied and self-righteous and to be too certain of admittance thereto. It was singular and yet but a coincidence, that the lady was afterwards buried just inside the Church door. Let us take it as an omen, that she did get into heaven, from which place none are debarred who humbly seek admittance.*

*I see no connection between the scene in the sick room and the ghost in the garden, although my lady informant appeared to think there was. And the events of that night had made on her a deep impression. To my thinking they were mere coincidence. And from subsequent information, I gathered that Mr. X. had been in some way making himself unpopular with some of poaching propensities, and it is possible that his going out to fetch the lady had been noticed by some of them, especially as he had to pass a corner where men of the village were wont to congregate. Perhaps the purpose of his errand was guessed and an opportunity to pay off an old score was taken advantage of. There might have been time for a man to dress up and to run into the garden and to hide behind a shrub. But the position chosen was not one for an easy escape, if a bold and resolute man had been present to make a rush for the ghost, a character which Mr. X. did not seem to possess. This was my explanation of the incident; but it did not seem to satisfy my friend.*

*Now, lest any at Langham should be superstitious, it may be well to point out, that in recent years Langham House has been rebuilt, every tree and shrub in the original garden has been uprooted, and the wall which separated the property from the next on the right has been pulled down and the two properties made into one. The ghost surely has been laid.*

*Besides, one cannot imagine that any ghost at Langham would molest any present occupant of Langham House. the owner of which has done so much for the Church and Churchyard of the parish, so that one thinks every ghost must there be now at rest. And yet there are ghosts the ghosts of the departed, good ghosts of whom it is said in the Holy Book, that those who have rendered kind deeds by means of their earthly riches, shall be received by them into the everlasting habitations. And this story would not have been written concerning a known house, without the permission first received of him who owns it.*

*M. Rudkin*