

Ghostly Encounter

On my first assignment: John Clarke, a retired teacher from Kent, recalls a ghostly encounter on his first assignment for homesitters.co.uk.

A cheerful "Morning John" came over the phone as I excitedly awaited my first assignment for the home sitting agency. "Something a bit unusual", she continued, "It's a 25 bedroomed grade two listed building which has been operated by a charity as a residential home." The thought of leaving my two bedroomed flat in the dingy suburbs of South East London for a short time in a country manor house built in 1830s and surrounded by trees and fields filled me with great enthusiasm.

Following my preliminary visit during which I was taken on a magical mystery tour of the labyrinth of corridors and bewildering number of rooms, I arrived a month later to take up the challenge. The manager of the home was busy organising the last items of furniture for removal to their new location. She pointed out the rainwater leakage problem from the Victorian installed guttering. As there was a history of this happening, she highlighted the number of receptacles on the ground floor, strategically placed, to catch the rainwater in times of flood.



I eventually settled down for my first night's sleep, when suddenly without warning I was awakened by the sounds of what I thought was intruders. I sprang up in bed on hearing the thud, thud of footfalls outside the bedroom and on the stairs in the entrance hallway. I leapt out of my bed and armed only with a torch, I expected to encounter the burglars red handed. In the hallway I stopped to hear whispering sounds and voices. In my panic I screamed out "I've called the police!" at which the voices went silent, but the footfall sounds continued ceaselessly. A minute later all became clear. Astonishingly and to my amazement my torchlight picked out the outline of buckets and the sound of the plink plonking of water cascading into them. There were no intruders, it was only the trick of water dropping and dancing into the rapidly filling containers. Instantly my rapid heart beat stopped pounding and I broke into hysterical laughter of how I had been tricked into this ghostly midnight encounter.

Extremely embarrassed by my silly behaviour I was determined not to tell anyone. The next day the manager returned to the property and ventured to tell me of two more secrets of the house. Apparently the notorious highwayman Dick Turpin used to ride by the house on his horse and there were reports of a girl haunting the stairs and hallway. My heart began to pound for a second time. So perhaps the midnight encounter was not entirely the product of the rainstorm that previous night.....