

Hunting for Tata Duende

The little old man of Belize



The jungles of Belize where the Tata Duende is often sighted.

by Chad Lewis

Hiding in the dark shadows of more well-known legends like the Bigfoot of North America and the chupacabras of Puerto Rico lurks the Tata Duende of Belize. Don't be surprised if you have never heard of the mysterious creature, as he is almost completely unknown outside the jungle-filled countryside there. However, inside Belize, superstitious villagers cautiously whisper stories of the supernatural being throughout the country.

I first came upon stories of the Tata Duende several years ago while I was trekking through Puerto Rico and Costa Rica in search of the elusive Chupacabras. I was digging through research on the chupacabras when I stumbled across accounts of a strange, manlike being that was said to inhabit the lush forests of Belize, a small country bordering Guatemala in Central America. Belize is smaller than Massachusetts and has only about 285,000 inhabitants, so I was not surprised I had never heard of the bizarre creature.

Bizarre Hands and Feet

"Tata Duende" is derived from the word *tata* meaning "old man" and the Spanish word *duende* meaning "dwarf." He is reported to be diminutive, ranging from three to four feet in height. He has a disheveled look to him complete with long, matted hair and an unkempt beard. Witnesses almost always report seeing him wearing a large black or red sombrero as he moves stealthily through the jungle.

The Duende's eerie appearance is enhanced by two most peculiar physical characteristics, his hands and feet. At first glance his hands appear much like those of a human, but upon further inspection, it is found that he is missing both of his thumbs. His feet possess an even odder trait, as instead of pointing forward as is normal, they are turned 180 degrees so that they point backwards.

Although it is exciting to read stories of weird creatures, the only true way of getting to know them is to immerse yourself in the surroundings, culture, and people in which the creature exists. In order to understand the legend of Tata Duende I had to visit Belize for myself.

Before setting off to track down one of the world's most obscure legends, I had an even more difficult task before me: convincing my girlfriend that Belize would be a great vacation spot. Luckily for me, Belize is such a beautiful wildlife haven that it is nearly impossible for any adventurous person to pass it up. So in

July 2006 we boarded a plane headed for a 15-day expedition of Belize with the hopes of spotting the infamous Tata Duende. Little did we know that the Tata Duende would be only the beginning of Belize's mysterious creatures.

We had to make a brief stop in Belize City in order to locate research materials. Although nearly every guide book and fellow traveler had cautioned us about visiting the dilapidated, crime-ridden city, it was practically the only spot in Belize that housed a bookstore. We picked up a copy of the book *Characters and Caricatures in Belizean Folklore*, featuring eyewitness accounts of the Duende and other creatures that are not available anywhere else. This book would play an essential role in our investigation.

The town of Placencia, our next stop, is considered one of the hotspots of Belize's tourism. Nestled along the coast its beauty is matched by the friendliness of its people. Although English is the official language, many inhabitants still speak Spanish. Those who do speak English have a Creole dialect a bit like that of Jamaica.

When we inquired about the Duende in Placencia, we received a wide array of opinions, folklore, and reports. Many knew of the Duende and his stories, but some scoffed at the legend because they'd had no personal experiences. It was a bit like asking some one in Manhattan if they had seen Bigfoot. It was obvious that we needed to get closer to both the forest and the people.



Riverbank of the "Weeping Woman."

The Weeping Woman

Before heading into the interior we decided to explore the jungles near Monkey River. We came to a perfect hiding spot for the Duende, a jungle so thick it took a workout with the machete just to walk a few feet. With our guide we encountered feces-throwing howler monkeys, snapping crocodiles, and vicious mosquitoes willing to attack any exposed piece of flesh. Though we found no signs of the Duende, we learned about another mysterious creature of Belize: *La Llorona* or the "Weeping Woman."

La Llorona is a magical being said to travel the riverside preying on travelers and drunken men. She lures men with

her womanly charm and eerie cries of helplessness. Once she hooks a victim she draws him closer until she transforms herself into a serpentlike creature and the victims are never heard from again.

Looking to put some distance between ourselves and the river we headed off first thing in the morning to the heart of the jungle along the Hummingbird Highway. This densely forested area was home to many Duende sightings. We ventured to the small village of St. Margaret's to begin our search. Here, we were told that the Duende dwells in one of the many caves deep within the Blue Hole National Park. Residents also advised us to avoid the spirits that haunt the Blue Hole. Excited for

the new case we set up camp and quickly hiked towards the Blue Hole, a popular swimming destination near the park.

Phantom Children

The Blue Hole is a collapsed karst sinkhole filled with water making its journey to the Sibun River. The hole is about 25 feet deep; excess water runs off through a stream that disappears inside a half-submerged cavern.

A park guide told us tales of the hole being haunted. Local lore tells of ancient people performing human sacrifices at this sacred site, many of them babies whose blood would turn the pool red for days at a time. Those sacrificed souls forever haunt the hole, luring unsuspecting swimmers into the cavern to disappear with the stream.

Locals have avoided the hole for as long as he could recall, the guide said. Villagers passing by the hole at night have heard the faint cries of a phantom child coming from the cavern. Convinced that the noise is a trick of the spirits, they dare not stop.

We swam in the hole and noticed a sign warning swimmers not to venture into the cavern. After hearing the haunted stories our fellow swimmers didn't need a sign to keep them out.

That evening we hiked back to our lodging to hear additional stories of the Duende from the local villagers. Although descriptions of the Duende make it appear harmless, we learned that many en-

counters with him have proved otherwise.

Many believe that the Duende plays a role as protector of the jungle. He is rarely seen empty-handed; many witnesses report that he carries a large wooden club or machete with him at all times. It is said that if he catches anyone harming the jungle he will decapitate them and use their head as a decoration for his lair.

Other villagers swore to us that the Duende often carries a guitar, and that on quiet nights one could hear him playing songs in the forest.

Anticipating an early start to our next day of adventure, we drifted off to sleep listening for the songs of the Duende.

The Guide's Story

The next morning we set off for the jungles of the Blue Hole National Park. We informed the park guide that we were looking for the best areas to catch a glimpse of the elusive Tata Duende. He was a bit surprised that we had not only heard of the Duende, but were actively seeking him out. Unexpectedly, he shared with us his own remarkable experience.

One day, when he was young and playing outside his home near the park, he noticed a strange-looking creature off in the distance. At first he thought it was a small man who seemed to be calling for him, but as the figure motioned for him to come closer, he noticed that the man had no thumbs. The boy immediately recognized that it was the Tata Duende, yet the Duende's strange call seemed to put

the boy into a trancelike state where he mindlessly followed its voice. Luckily the spell was broken by the familiar voice of his mother calling for him, at which time he sprinted home as fast as he could.

After finishing his terrifying story the guide directed us to the most promising locations, warning us not to fall victim to the Duende's spell.

After several hours of hiking the difficult terrain in extreme heat, we came upon a large wooden lookout tower. When we reached the top, we were overwhelmed by the vast area of untouched land surrounding us as far as the eye could see. If there was such a creature as the Duende roaming through Belize, this jungle certainly provided an ideal hiding spot.

We spent several more hours scouring the dense landscape as we slowly made our way back to camp.

Into Guatemala

Next we set off to search for spirits over 1,000 years old. In order to get close to these ancient Mayan spirits we needed to travel to the sacred ruins of Tikal. Only a few hours into the wild countryside of Guatemala, Tikal provides an opportunity to witness the work of a lost people. We knew that Guatemala was home to



The author in the jungle of Belize.

many sightings of both the Duende and the Chupacabras, yet our goal for the next two days was to try to absorb everything Tikal had to offer.

Tikal is a sacred site where the ancient Maya constructed a city of temples, homes, and ball courts, which were also used for human sacrifices. Entering Tikal you are immediately transported back to the time when the Maya still ruled the area. The mystery of the place engulfs you as you realize that scientists are still baffled as to how such an advanced people could simply disappear without a trace.



Witness sketch of Tata Duende.

Although the physical bodies of the Maya are long gone, many visitors believe that the spirits of the lost people continue to live among their ruins.

After two days among the ruins and spirits of Tikal, we headed back to Belize and the trail of the Duende.

Hellhounds of Belize

The next night we participated in an evening trek through the jungle. Equipped with flashlights and cameras we excitedly set off through the dark jungle. We spotted many creatures of the night including armadillos and glowing scorpions, yet

we found no sign of the Duende. However, our guide told us several new stories of the mysterious little man.

Our guide was from the northern tip of Belize, where sightings of the Duende are also common. She spoke about the difficulty villagers had in tracking the Duende because his backward feet often left misleading tracks. On this trek we also learned of another mysterious creature called the *Cadejo*.

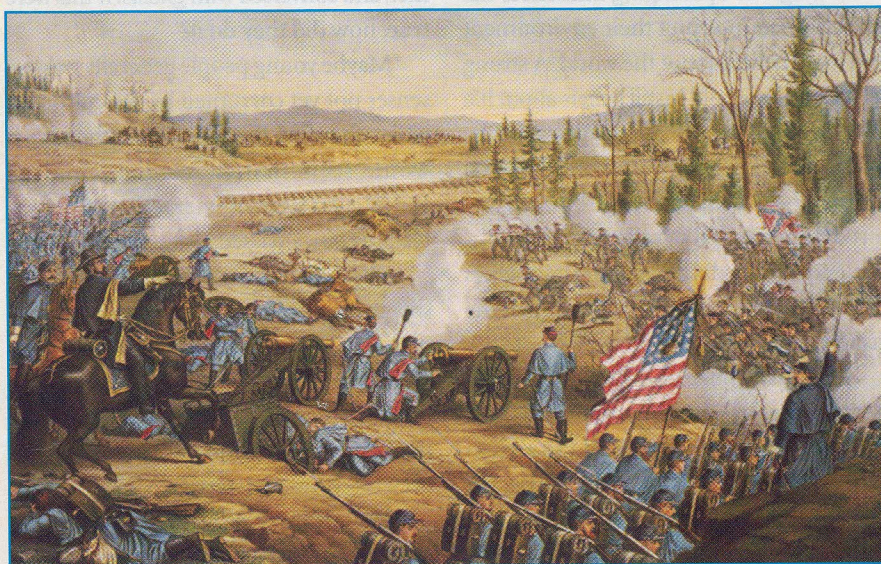
The *Cadejo*, meaning "tangled hair," is a supernatural dog-like creature similar to the hellhounds of the United States crossed with the chupacabras of Central America. The devilish looking *Cadejos* are often black or white in color and appear to help drunken men find their way home from a night of hard drinking. Yet many of the stories projected the *Cadejo* in a more sinister light.

Villagers talk of a creature hellbent on cursing anyone it encounters. We were advised to carry a cross in order to ward off attacks by the *Cadejo*. Although the *Cadejo* is said to prey mostly on drunken men, if you are unfortunate enough to spot one of these creatures you will immediately fall upon bad health. The *Cadejo* will continue to drain you and follow you until you meet your death. Only a gifted *curandero* (bush doctor or shaman) is powerful enough to cure someone who has been cursed by the *Cadejo*.

After a few more hours of searching the jungle we headed back to our lodge

The Headless Horseman of Stones River

by Heath Mathews and Debra Glass



Battle of Stones River.

Many battles are claimed to be the decisive battle of the Civil War—Gettysburg, Antietam, Vicksburg—but the little-known Battle of Stones River (Murfreesboro) may well have been the pivotal battle of that conflict. (Union troops usually named battles after the nearest body of water: Stones River, Antietam, Bull Run. Confederates usually chose place names for the name of the bat-

tle: Murfreesboro, Sharpsburg, Manassas.)

The Battle of Stones River held the highest percentage of casualties of any major battle during the Civil War, higher in total numbers than the bloodbaths at Shiloh and Antietam earlier in 1862.

Although the battle was tactically inconclusive, Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg was considered defeated since he was first to withdraw from the battlefield. With only the support of Gen. Joseph E. John-

ston, commanding the Army of the West, and President Jefferson Davis's inability to find a suitable replacement, his position was saved.

The battle was a strategic Union victory and was very important to Northern morale, as evidenced by Abraham Lincoln's missive to Gen. William S. Rosecrans: "You gave us a hard-earned victory, which had there been a defeat instead, the nation could scarcely have lived over."

Stones River National Battlefield Park near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, is home to the oldest intact Civil War monument, erected by veterans from William Hazen's brigade. The 600-acre national battlefield includes Stones River National Cemetery, founded in 1865, containing more than 6,000 Union graves.

The Union Army had 13,249 casualties while the Confederate Army suffered 10,266 casualties.

On a bitter cold Christmas Day in 1862, President Abraham Lincoln ordered Rosecrans to mobilize his troops, leave the comfort of Nashville, and march 30 miles south toward the town of Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Lying in wait was Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee, some 38,000 strong.

That same Christmas night, the Confederates celebrated, clad in their dress uniforms with local belles on their arms, at a festive ball held inside the Rutherford County Courthouse.

But this would be the last Christmas for many of these men. In just over one week, that very courthouse would become



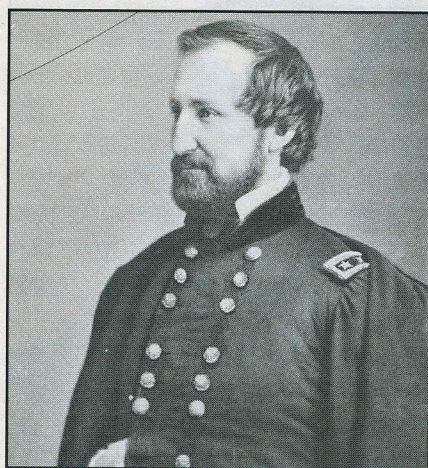
Lt. Col. Julius Garesche.

a military hospital.

At least one Union officer, General Rosecrans's trusted chief of staff, Lt. Col. Julius Garesche, had a premonition this would be his last Christmas and that his very first battle would be his last.

Julius Peter Garesche

At West Point, despite Garesche's inordinate number of demerits and a long illness, he graduated in 1841, standing 30th in a class of 52. Due to extreme nearsightedness, he had a very small circle of friends while at West Point. However, he formed a fast friendship with William Rosecrans,



Gen. William S. Rosecrans.

who was his academic junior by one year. Later, Garesche was instrumental in converting his future commander to Catholicism, and as assistant adjutant general in Washington, slashed through red tape to procure Rosecrans a commission as brigadier general in the Regular Army.

William Rosecrans

It was while stationed at Fort Brown, Texas, that Garesche first had a grisly premonition of his own death—which would happen 21 years in the future.

During his early military life, his time was spent writing contrite letters to his wife Marquitta, in personality clashes with superior officers, and brooding over a host of signs and omens. He also wrote lengthy, pedantic letters to the *Freeman's Journal* and *Brownlow's Quarterly Review* under the pen name "Catholicus." These heated

discourses ran the gamut from divorce laws to attacks on the President's control of the army.

Many of Garesche's relatives joined the Confederate Army, much to his consternation. In a conversation about this with one of his acquaintances, he grew emotional, calling his Confederate relatives turncoats and damning them to hell. Profanity was out of character for Julius, and being considerably disturbed, he sought out his brother, Father Frederick.

Frederick listened intently, and then made known his own premonition, revealing that he, too, knew the death of his brother would occur during his first battle. In fact, the revelation set a timetable: 18 months from the date of their meeting, September 14, 1861.

Feeling guilty for damning his Confederate relatives and for taking the Lord's name in vain, Garesche began actively applying for field duty in April 1862.

Ironically, the opportunity came when William Rosecrans, his West Point friend, replaced Don Carlos Buell in Kentucky. On November 5, 1862, Garesche was appointed Chief-of-Staff, Army of the Cumberland. He rose quickly in the ranks due to his writing ability, and his dedication to duty made him Rosecrans's closest confidant.

On the last day of his life, December 31, 1862, Garesche took Holy Communion with the Rev. Father Cooney of the 55th Indiana Regiment.

Thirty minutes later, the Confederates under Lt. Gen. William Hardee and the Sec-

ond Corps of the Army of Tennessee began an assault that would engulf and destroy the Union right flank.

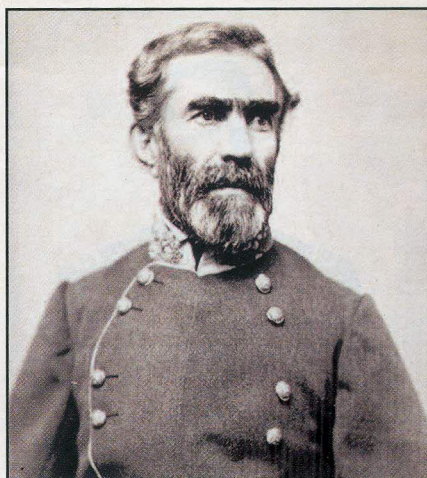
Many of the Union soldiers were still eating breakfast when wave after wave of Rebels bent the Union lines back like a jack-knife.

Mounted on horseback, Rosecrans seemed to be everywhere, trying to reform his position and encourage his men. Garesche thought Rosecrans was exposing himself too much and pleaded with him to be more careful. "Never mind me," Rosecrans replied. "Make the sign of the cross and go on."

Premonition Fulfilled

In the bedlam behind the Nashville Pike, where Rosecrans's headquarters was, one observer saw Garesche dismount and enter a small grove of trees. He was seen opening his prayer book and reading for a few moments. Soon afterward, he remounted and joined Rosecrans once more.

Near the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, which bisected the battlefield, Capt. Henry Semple of Semple's Alabama Battery spotted the officers and told a gunner to fire at them. The shell torpedoed through a stately cedar as Rosecrans and his entourage galloped unwittingly into its path. There was a slight puff and 100 yards beyond them the projectile bounded along the ground and then burst. Garesche's head was blasted off his shoulders. His blood and brains splattered Rosecrans. Only a fragment of the jaw carrying a hank of his



Gen. Braxton Bragg.

full beard remained. His spooked horse trotted along with the headless trunk sitting erect for about 20 yards before it slumped from the saddle and withered to the ground near the railroad.

It had been 15 months and 17 days since his brother's prophecy.

In *Confederate Veteran*, a Murfreesboro boy of 17, B. L. Ridley wrote, "Captain Semple, of Semple's Battery, located on the left, saw a fine-looking officer dashing up the pike in the direction of the center. He thought him a general, and asked one of his gunners to pick him off. The gunner loaded a solid shot, took careful aim with his cannon, and at her belch the officer fell down dead from his horse. It turned out to be the adjutant general of the Federal army, Col. Garesche, reported 'killed by a solid shot.'"

The Confederate attack would eventu-



Brig. Gen. William Babcock Hazen.

ally be halted around 4:00 p.m. due to reorganization of the Union troops under Union Brig. Gen. William Hazen.

William Hazen

Hazen, who directed the temporary burial of Garesche on a tiny knoll nearby, described the scene in a letter found in the *Annals of the Army of the Cumberland*: "I saw but a headless trunk: an eddy of crimson foam had issued where the head should be. I at once recognized his figure, it lay so naturally, his right hand across his breast. As I approached, dismounted, and bent over him, the contraction of a muscle extended his hand slowly and slightly towards me. Taking hold of it, I found it warm and lifelike. Upon one of the fingers was the class ring, that (to me) beautiful talisman

of our common school."

Hazen grasped the hand and removed the ring. He then discovered *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis that Garesche always carried with him.

The following day the body was removed and carried to Nashville for embalming. The Surgeon General's report carried this grisly note: "On discovering a protuberance extending some five inches from the spine I thought it well to remove it for the sake of conformity." A permanent burial was later made at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, in Washington, D.C.

"Brave men die in battle," was the only comment General Rosecrans ever made about the death of his aide and friend, but those who were there say he never recovered from Garesche's death. Rosecrans was later seen cutting the buttons off his uniform and putting them in an envelope labeled "Buttons from the uniform I was wearing the day Garesche died."

A Cedar Thicket at Stones River

Today, Stones River National Battlefield appears to be a quiet and peaceful place. However, on bitter winter days, especially near the time of the anniversary of the battle, it is claimed you can still hear the report of gunshots and the murmuring voices of the soldiers who fought so bravely here almost a century and a half ago.

Many horrified witnesses have also seen the figure of a headless Union officer on horseback galloping through the mist near the railroad tracks and the National Ceme-



The Haunted Bypass

Ghostly Monks Attack Police



Pearoyd Bridge on the Stocksbridge Bypass.

by Jason Day

In 1987 work began on a new section of road across the top of the Peak District in Yorkshire, England. The A616 passed through the town of Stocksbridge until road planners got to work on a new bypass to alleviate the traffic congestion.

While the new road may have relieved the flow of traffic through the steel town, it would appear to have disturbed something that might have been best left alone.

It all began one night when two security guards, patrolling the area where con-

struction equipment was kept, saw something unusual: a group of children playing beneath an electricity pylon. As the guards got out of their vehicle and approached the pylon, they saw that the children were dressed in old-fashioned clothing and had their hands linked with each other in a circle. The youngsters appeared to be playing ring-around-the-rosy. As the guards approached them, the children suddenly vanished.

The men were startled, to say the least. As Peter Owens, the security company's

A.E.

manager, explained: "They were security men who had been in the industry a long time. They knew the job; they had worked night shifts for a number of years and were not the type of people you would expect to be scared."

The men were to witness an even more disturbing event later in their shift.

Monk on Bridge

In the early hours of the morning, the guards pulled their vehicle into an area of the bypass that would later become known as Pearoyd Bridge. As their Range Rover came to a halt, one of them spotted a hooded figure on a section of the bridge just in front of them. The guard got out of the vehicle to take a closer look while his colleague drove onto the bridge. As the headlights fixed onto the figure, the beams shone right through it. The guards watched aghast as the apparition disappeared into thin air.

The men made a hasty retreat to their cabin on the construction site and called their employer. Owens came to the site immediately and described what he saw when he entered the cabin that night:

"They [the security guards] were physically shaking and their complexion was very white and pallid. One of the guards was actually crying."

The men described what had happened that night, and later in the morning they went straight to the local police station. The officer on duty that day, Police Constable Dick Ellis, knew them. Ellis said: "It was obvious they had seen or

heard something. They were both spooked and basically I said to them that it was not a police matter and there was nothing I could do about it. Perhaps jokingly I said to them that maybe they needed the church more than they needed the police."

The security guards took Ellis at his word and headed for Stocksbridge church. There they sought refuge and refused to leave. Thirty minutes later the police were contacted and Ellis was ordered by his superiors to go to the church and get the men out. Ellis was also told to investigate what the men had seen that night and get to the bottom of the matter.

After dealing with the security guards at the church, Ellis and his colleague Special Constable John Beet headed to the bypass themselves to investigate. They arrived at the site in the evening and sat in their car. They turned off the engine, the lights, and the police radio, and waited to see what would occur. Ellis recounted:

"We sat looking at the bridge and after a while I was convinced I could see something moving about on the bridge. Not wanting to spook myself or John I kind of looked at John."

Beet asked Ellis what was up and Ellis told Beet that he thought he had seen something on the bridge, which was still under construction. Beet then told Ellis that he should go and have a closer look. Ellis got out of the police car and headed for the ladder perched in front of it. Ellis continued:

"I actually climbed up the ladder onto the bridge and there were a lot of things scattered around on top of the bridge."

Nothing But Plastic?

Among the material on the bridge Ellis found a sheet of polyethylene waving in the breeze. He called to Beet and told him about his discovery.

Beet said, "Well, once we'd thought that we had found out what it was, and what was actually on the bridge, we decided to give it another ten or fifteen minutes and then forget it and go on with our normal patrol."

Ellis secured the plastic sheet with a rock and returned to the police car. The two officers then sat and waited. It didn't take long for things to take a turn for the worse. Ellis explained:

"I suddenly got this feeling, you can't explain it, there's the saying that somebody's walked over your grave, which turns you cold, and then I became aware that somebody now had appeared directly on my right-hand side and was virtually leaning and pressing himself against the car."

Ellis quickly cast his head to the right and saw the upper section of someone's torso at the car window. Almost instantly the figure disappeared. The figure then appeared at the window on Beet's side of the car before disappearing again a split-second later.

The officers were shaken by their experience but Ellis had the presence of

mind to get out and investigate.

"When I got out of my side of the car there was nothing about at all. I even hit the deck and looked under the vehicle because nobody could have run away from us, there were bankings on both sides, and nobody ran backwards or forwards."

Ellis inspected the mud around the car, but the only tracks he could find were those of the car tires and Beet's and his own footprints. Ellis returned to the car and got in. Beet continued the story:

"We went to start the car and at first the car wouldn't start and we began to panic a little."

The car eventually started and the policemen drove away. As Ellis radioed his colleagues at the station a huge bang came from the back of the car. Beet equated it to the sound of somebody hitting the back of the car with a baseball bat.

Beet stopped the car and the two men got out. They stood in front of the car with their backs to the vehicle and Ellis radioed for assistance. As he did so they heard another bang from the back of the car. This time they did not stay around to investigate. The officers jumped back into their car and raced back to the police station.

Ellis concluded: "There are things on this job that frighten me, and it wasn't the kind of fear that you get from violence offered towards you or anything like that. It was more a kind of dread feeling or knowing that something's happening that you have no control over."

Guards Not Over It

The security guards who first reported seeing the apparition never got over what they had witnessed that night at the bypass, as Peter Owens explained: "One of them left after three days and the other one stayed roughly two or three months. Neither of the two guards would set foot on that site again, not even in daylight."

Sightings of apparitions continued during the construction of the bypass. One day Graham Brooke was out jogging with his son Nigel. Graham was training for a marathon along the soon-to-be-completed bypass. As father and son jogged along Graham noticed what he thought was a man walking in the middle of the road. Nigel also noticed the man, but as they got closer to him Nigel could see that the man appeared to have no facial features apart from nose and eye sockets. The pair also noticed a smell that they described as "fusty," "rotting," and "not a human-type smell."

Something else didn't seem quite right about the man, Graham realized: "I could see that he wasn't walking on the road, he was like walking *in* the road. From below the knee you couldn't see anything."

Then, as is the case with many a paranormal episode, as Graham and Nigel recognized that they had seen a ghost, the apparition disappeared.



Special Constable John Beet (left) and Police Constable Dick Ellis.

Another witness to the ghostly figure during the construction of the bypass was a haulage driver. The incident occurred at the very spot where the security guards and the two policemen had their encounter with the phantom monk.

The driver had parked his truck on the site one evening and was taking the ropes off the near side of his trailer when he suddenly felt deathly cold. The driver thought this was an odd occurrence as it was a warm evening. As he continued his work, he began to smell a musty odor. He glanced up and watched the figure of a monk glide through the headlights of his truck and disappear among the other trailers on the site.

Sightings Continue

Sightings of the monk and other paranormal phenomena continued to be reported in the area, and some hoped these would dissipate with the completion of

mal phenomena. There is also a theory to explain the ghostly children observed by the security guards. Lodge says: "Children were used in the valley's coal mines in the late 18th century. The rumor suggests that there was a mining catastrophe."

Skeptics believe that the large deposits of iron ore, overhead power lines, and big electrical substations near steel smelters in the area could affect electromagnetic fields. Such a large electrical influx into the temporal lobes can induce an anomalous experience or a "paranormal episode," according to scientific tests.

The sightings continue to this day. Descriptions vary and experiences differ, but nevertheless, the reputation of the Stocksbridge bypass as a haunted location, per-

haps like the spirit of the ghostly monk, refuses to be laid to rest. ❀

Jason Day was born in Scunthorpe, England. He began as a features writer for Paranormal magazine in March 2006. Now as co-owner and host of



White Noise Paranormal Radio, Jason has had the opportunity to interview some of the most influential people in the paranormal community. His first book, It's Only a Movie... Isn't It?, will be out mid-2009.

Garden of Eden

Locations for the Garden of Eden have been offered many, many times before, but most of the previous theories about its location are based upon biblical interpretation. However, a new genetic survey of the people of Africa may hold the key to discovering where human beings first arose on planet Earth.

The evidence points to an area of southwest Africa, near the country of Angola. Under the Darwinian paradigm, the origin of a species is generally taken to be the place where its individuals show the greatest genetic diversity. When the new African genetic data was combined with DNA data from the rest of the world, it showed that this magic diversity spot lies near the Atlantic coast of southwest Africa near the Kalahari Desert.

The team carrying out this research, led by Sarah Tishkoff of the University of Pennsylvania, also believes it has calculated the exit point from which a small human group, of perhaps 100 to 200 people, left Africa some 50,000 years ago and populated the rest of the world. The region, they believe, is near the midpoint of the Red Sea coast in Egypt.—*The New York Times* ❀

Ghosts on the Hill



Mother of Aynne McAvoy at haunted house.

by Aynne McAvoy

As a professional psychic, I am often asked if there was something in my background that had an effect on who I am today. I tell people that I grew up in a haunted house, and I am sure that had a lot to do with it.

I am often amused with people who go to great lengths to seek out a haunted house, and have an experience. Should these people have grown up the way I did, I doubt they would spend one minute of their adult life in this pursuit. Whatever you may think about years of living in a

haunted house, fun is not a word I would use to describe it.

This story begins in 1953, when I was four years old. We were moving from the only home I'd ever known on Meadow Avenue to our new home, not far from the Thompson Park hill in Watertown, New York. My father was often away on business, and since my mother wouldn't learn to drive for several years yet, our close proximity to my grandparents must have played heavily in the decision to buy that particular house.

There were five of us in the family, my