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LOCAL LANDMARK HAUNTED

Reports Of Life At Abandoned Willowfield Manor Leave Many Thinking Spirits Of Times Gone By May Still Walk The Halls

Just outside of the small village of Willowfield lies a long-abandoned manor. A subject of great mystery and gossip for the townspeople, Willowfield Manor is now a moss-covered pile of grey rubble hidden away behind unkempt overgrowth, a mere marker signposting oncoming danger as the last stop before extensive and little explored boglands to the north. Although now feared by locals, the house was once the beating heart of the community, having hosted many a fabulous party in years gone by. There has been the occasional, brave, visitor in recent years, however, who has returned with varied unexplained tales that might just show the house to not be as abandoned as the town was led to believe.

The most common sign of life witnessed by many is the sound of music seemingly radiating from the empty manor. Mrs. Arden says: 'we hear it all the time, always the same. It feels familiar in that it's recognisable as some sort of jazz number, but really low and dragging as though it's been distorted, if that makes sense.' That same song permeates the fabric of the town, Miss. Bocksten telling us that 'from the inside of the house, you might mistake it for the wind, the sound of it feels like some natural force, coming from the earth itself. But then you step outside and there's no wind blowing.' The volume of this supernatural sonata is similarly strange, Bocksten, who lives in the south of Willowfield, the furthest point in the village away from the manor, continued: 'whenever the tune is playing, wherever I am, it's always the same. I can be sitting in my kitchen and hear it as clear as when I'm out walking the dog past the manor gates.'

Another resident, Mr. Croghan, also attests to hearing this creepy composition, but his curiosity kept nagging until, finally, he decided to go and see for himself what was going on inside Willowfield Manor. 'Ghosts? Like hell - it's kids! I reckon I'd just missed 'em, by the looks of it. Rubbish everywhere, spilt drinks, music still playing. It was only a kids' party for sure.' Mr. Dätgen, another investigative resident, disagrees. 'Yeah, sure, there's litter everywhere - could have been some party...but that wouldn't explain what I saw upstairs.' In the so-called 'Red Room' (a strange possible, long-forgotten in-joke, considering this bedroom - like the rest of the manor - is decorated in top-to-bottom green), Dätgen narrated a memory from his petrifying night. 'We went round just to, like, scan all the rooms. It was the upstairs bedroom, at

the front in the corner, I think, and I'd taken a few steps in so I was standing kind of at the end of the bed, looking out the window next to it. The room was completely dark, no fire or anything I'm absolutely sure, so when I turned to leave - back to the fireplace - that's why I was shocked to hear it.' What Dätgen heard was a spark, like the flick of a match, that sudden gush of energy. 'I turned back, and the fire had lit. And I don't just mean lit like it was a small flame of a new fire. It was a huge fully formed *fire*.' Dätgen asserts there was nothing in the fireplace before this, and there was no way his partner, whom he was exploring with, could possibly have gotten behind him to pull this stunt.

Mr. Esterweger, meanwhile, didn't even make it up the unlit, dirt driveway, seeing windows flicker between bright chartreuse and pitch black as though the lights were malfunctioning. Even worse, on returning home, Esterweger learned that the manor's electricity had of course long been turned off. Somewhat similarly, Miss. Fraermose and a couple of friends were on a stroll through the wooded outskirts of town when they accidentally wandered into the house's gardens. From their position west of the manor, Fraermose swears to have seen the silhouette of something in the first-floor window at the back of the house: 'it was completely bizarre! It - whatever it was - looked like a person, but it had this long rectangular jaw, and appeared to be looking off into the distance. Totally scared us.'

Finally comes the most infamous apparition, seen in the massive ballroom located at the back of the house. Tales of a couple dancing on the centre of the floor have been reported since

tried to engage, but even stated the pair were unresponsive legends of unrequited

part of

Little is known about the house itself. It was last owned by a Mr. Samuel Olematon, who passed three years back, leaving the estate to the town having no known heirs. He, like his father before him, were apparently reclusive figures and, despite the family living in the town for many years, rarely left the grounds. Mrs. Gunnister, however, one of the older Willowfield residents, recalls the parties that used to light up the now deserted house. 'They would illuminate the town. You'd see streams of guests in always beautiful gowns and suits heading to the house like moths to a flame.' She continued, 'I do remember, though, one occasion... Well, there were these weird reports of kids going missing. I can't remember much going on up there after that.' Ms. Hunteburg, Gunnister's younger sister, who couldn't have been older than a toddler in the house's active years, giggles as she reminisces: 'Yes! I thought I saw a monster there and was terrified. I think I must have dreamt it - it was this big green lizard thing - and I went crying to our parents that it must have eaten the missing guests!'

So what is it that makes this apparently ordinary estate so very peculiar? Many speculate that Willowfield's sinister situation is due to the land on which it is built. From the illogical architectural layout to the season-less gardens whose leaves seem to never change, it isn't far-fetched for the locals to point to the site itself as though the soil the manor stands on is drenched in mystery. Others suggest a more traditional tragedy ignited the hauntings. Or perhaps, as the sceptics suggest, the stories are simply attempts to explain the irrational eeriness one experiences when stepping on the grounds. Whatever the source, what's left of the house - and the fear it instils - isn't going anywhere soon.