

Coalhouse Fort, East Tilbury, Essex – Return Investigation April 2009

Prior to this eagerly awaited return to this fascinating site, we visited Kit's Coty House at Blue Bell Hill and Fort Amherst, before meeting up with our friends from WOLF (World Oneiric Life Force) and then Kieron and Mel Saville at the fort.

A series of experiments was trialed for this investigation, one which featured heavily was sound recording in an attempt to capture EVPs whilst calling out, and awaiting a response either at the time, or on the playback of the recording. One of the main drawbacks with sound only recording is that you cannot account for, or rule out any normal interference as effectively your senses are partially deprived. We also attempted to account for any normal sounds and to ensure no one was walking around where they might cause such an effect, by deploying a four camera CCTV system around the entrances. Despite enjoying very little in the way of EVPs or anomalous sounds on any of the multiple recording devices deployed, the CCTV proved invaluable in confirming these areas free of other investigators later in the night.

We also tried a basic version of a Ganzfeld Experiment. Ganzfeld is derived from the German for 'complete field' and has been extensively used in ESP, particularly telepathy experiments. The basic principle involves a participant listening to white noise through headphones, with their vision being dimmed by a red light source. During an investigation session, the flooding of an area with red light is a little impractical since it would disturb the rest of the team. A red LED light was pointed at the closed eyes of each participant and then faded out so that no light was visible, and the participant was effectively deprived of their normal senses. Sat in a chair and instructed to relax, a ten minute sample of pre recorded white noise was played through headphones.

The idea is to induce a deep state of relaxation and a somewhat altered state of perception, one common factor was how all participant's breathing became much deeper whilst listening to the white noise. Most reported hearing muffled male voices in the white noise, something which subsequent trials in non haunted locations have also produced. Leading to the conclusion that this is a natural phenomenon as the participant's mind tries to make out phonemes in the noise and effectively make sense of what is being heard and relate it to a 'best fit'.

There was quite a lot of experiences reported by the team over the course of the night, so this summary only touches on a few of them. One of the most interesting was found whilst watching back the camcorder footage when breath is clearly visible in the infrared light. This is most unusual and has only been recorded by us on outdoor locations in very cold or damp weather, and the only time it is visible is when a member of the group is experiencing something. All night you do not see any breath, until a shadow is caught or a noise is heard, is this just coincidence? Something did cause the temperature to vary significantly but we couldn't state with any certainty that this is paranormal.

Again audible phenomenon seemed to be the most reported, one investigator was left a little shaken after hearing footsteps down the tunnels whilst no one was there. Unfortunately the camcorder battery had run out by this point so not only was he in the dark, but unable to record what he was hearing. Or perhaps this was the reason why he had such an experience, often we have found that the level of experiences increases when the group is operating 'Tech Neutral', that is with no equipment running or with us.

The same scenario was present when two of us had a similar experience later on and further down the tunnels. We had both moved away from the group a little and were staring into the darkness when we heard a distinct set of four heavy footsteps moving down towards that suddenly stopped. As with previous similar audible experiences at Coalhouse, we checked that the other team were not in the area and can confirm that no one walked past the infra red CCTV cameras at the end of the tunnels. So twice during this investigation, a series of isolated footsteps were heard in this section of the fort, when there was absolutely no one there to cause them.

As part of the group's contribution to the ASSAP Merlin Matrix research project; various attempts were made at producing anomalous or faked ghost photographs by using delayed exposure settings on tripod mounted cameras. It would appear from the results, that it is equally as difficult to manipulate a 'fake' ghost image as it is to capture a 'real' one. The best two of the many shots taken are shown on the Gallery page, although these are not entirely convincing. They both show inside the Quadrangle, with investigators in static and then moving positions.

Shots in the Magazine tunnels produced nothing, although it is worth noting these were all shot with a digital SLR. Cheaper point and shoot cameras create more extreme effects a lot easier, which is due to the quality of the lens and the fact slight movement or shaking at the point of exposure is more likely. The rough conclusion from this, and our previous research is that such effects on point and shoots are more common.

Therefore any 'ghost' or anomalous photograph is much more likely to be credible when taken with a quality SLR by a user familiar with it's operation. It is also worth noting that SLRs produce virtually no 'orbs'. Whilst this was a rough experiment without a detailed statistical analysis, it does support the conclusions of ASSAP regarding 'ghost' photography (please see their website along with PSI's www.theorbzone.com for further details, examples and analysis).