



Bumps in the night, glasses flying off shelves... sorry, why am I here?

Getting spooked at Owd Betts, Norden

Owd Betts Inn is a traditional English country pub, near Rochdale, where their aim is to provide good quality, home cooked food at reasonable prices. However, inside it's 18th Century walls hides a ghostly secret of it's past...

Owd Betts started life as a farmhouse. Richard and Mary Ashworth built it in 1796. By the 1800's it was left to John Ashworth and his wife Betty where it became an Inn; the first title it operated under was 'The Hare and Hounds'. When John Ashworth died, his wife Betty continued to run the inn alone.

Because of this, the inn became known as 'Owd Betts' and even after Betty's death in 1893 at the considerable age of 93, the inn was still affectionately known as Owd Betts, although it wasn't until the 1950's when the inn officially changed its name from The Hare and Hounds to Owd Betts which it remains to this day.

Over the years, since Betty's departure, the inn has seen many landladies and landlords, but they have all maintained that Betty herself still keeps a benign eye on the inn that was once hers.

It is rumoured that Betty can be seen wandering the inn still conducting her chores. Many people who work in the Owd Betts building have claimed to have seen her on many occasions and that she unexpectedly switches off modern day appliance.

The current owners of the inn say they have also experienced strange happenings. Glasses fly off the shelves, her footsteps have been heard patrolling seemingly empty rooms and cold spots can be felt in certain parts of the old listed building.



Betty Ashworth

The evening sky was dark and calm, which is more than I could say for me as we drove towards, what I can only describe as my worst nightmare! I actually have no idea why I said yes to this. I guess a morbid fascination of whether such things as ghosts exist, or is it just in our imaginations? And after many years of watching *Most Haunted* (usually with one eye closed) I really had no choice but to agree to come along and expect the unexpected spectre of Betty Ashworth!

Once we arrived at Owd Betts we met the paranormal investigation company, the Ghost Seen team or GSI for short. They had set all their equipment up before our arrival, an impressive kit of infra-red cameras, motion sensors and electro-magnetic field detectors - I tell you, these guys are serious.

All was turned on and ready to go. We had from the witching hour (midnight) right through to the dawn break at about 4:30 am to investigate, explore and hopefully be witness to some paranormal and spooky activity... oh, as well as a large plate of home made Hotpot during the nights vigil to look forward to! (All included in the price of your ticket!)

There were 30 expectant ghost hunters there that night, so we were split into three groups. Our group first went for a tour around the old pub (in the dark). We gathered around the kitchen where much of the ghostly activity happens and then out into the pub grounds. Within our group there were several 'psychics' who claimed to see the past and felt residual energies of memories of what the old pub building used to be like and what went on there. Some were of hangings in the grounds, but our medium guide Tony, could not confirm this to be true - however, there were many points brought up which were correct to the history of Owd Betts.

I personally don't have any mediumistic tendencies and felt nothing more than the cold chill of the night. I had no idea how these mediums pick up on energies and see things that aren't there, but all the same I found it intriguing and compelling and so wished that something I could see would appear! Maybe an 'orb'?

Orbs are ghostly balls of light. It is said that they are spirits that have willingly stayed behind because they feel bound to their previous life or previous location for whatever reason, and declined from passing over into

the spirit world and are believed to be the first stages of spirit manifestation!

Ghostly orbs are the most photographed anomalies



caught on film by ghost hunters and investigators. Orbs can range from large to very small. Some are faint while others are very bright.

Although most orb pictures are often blamed on dust, or camera flash flares, some do have a real feel about them. And although, I have taken hundreds of photographs with this camera and they have always been clear and bright, but as you can see above and over the page, these pictures not only contain 'orbs' but also have a misty appearance coming from the left? Can you explain that?

As we moved to the second stage of our investigation, it was time to sit in a nice warm room watching the infra-red cameras in action. This was brilliant. It's funny how excited you can get just by seeing orbs float across a camera lens. There was one particular camera, placed just behind us which looked out into the bar area and frequently had orbs floating about, but when looking round you could see nothing at all with the naked eye.

I had the chance to walk around Owd Betts with an infra-red digital hand held camera, like the ones they

use on Most Haunted. It was a fascinating experience and totally exhilarating when orbs of many sizes float by, but also quite spooky in case something unexpected and ghostly appears. Nothing did, however I must hasten to add, but the experience of catching orbs was enough.

After our fill of Hotpot around 02:00am it was our turn to enter a quiet area of the bar for some 'Glass Work'. I wasn't quite sure what Glass Work was, but it's simply used by paranormal investigators to contact spirits through lightly touching an upturned glass with the tip of your finger on a wooden table and asking if there are any spirits amongst us, or who would like to communicate with us. Unlike Ouija boards, which are believed to open spirit portals and sometimes leave them open, attracting negative energy which can be dangerous, Glass Work only contacts spirits that reside in the place where it is being conducted, and so is seen as much safer.

So, our group sat around a large wooden table making a circle of energy by touching little fingers with our neighbours and keeping our thumbs together. After the medium of the GhostSeen team has established contact with something or someone, we lightly touched the glass and waited. After a few minutes the glass began to move about and after some deciphering we established that we were communicating with John Ashworth, Bett's husband who died in his mid forties, leaving Bett a widow for almost 50 years.

All seemed to be going OK, and even though I was sceptical about stuff like this, after having my fingertip on the glass and feeling it completely move and slide around on its own was bizarre and unexplainable. I was also a little disturbed because for some reason 'John' insisted on coming over to me several times - even when I ignored the glass it continued to slide in my direction. We asked if there was something he wanted to tell me - but even today, we're still non the wiser as to why John Ashworth was so interested in me!

So all in all, after 5 hours of investigation I'm still unsure as to whether ghosts exist, whether there is such a thing as paranormal activity but there is one thing I have learned and that was I absolutely loved taking part in an investigation and have booked myself on a very special vigil for Halloween Night at the Boars Head Inn, Middleton - fingers crossed we find something more than the occasional trick or treaters that night!!



Is this light phenomena or 'orb' the first signs of Owd Bett greeting us from another realm, or just a lens flare? Give us your comments.

So, if you fancy becoming a budding paranormal investigator and spending the whole night doing something spooky like this, check out the researchers website www.ghostseen.com where you can get endless information on investigations, paranormal experiences, team members and to purchase tickets for ghostly haunted venues around the North West.

- I'll probably see you there!!



• Vicky Lowery