Hauntings of York Villa, Bath, Somerset, England

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Nearly a year ago I picked up a little 40 page booklet from a charity shop in Bristol that was entitled, Local Ghosts, True Stories of Odd Happenings. I gave it a quick read through and then shelved it with the rest of our enormously growing collection of books. A few times over the last year I looked for the book to have a quick read of it again, but because it is such a thin book, it was lost amongst all of the other books.

A few months ago I moved further south into Somerset to an area that is known for numerous hauntings and ghost stories. I became determined to find my little book to see if any of the places were the general vicinity to which I had recently moved. Two nights ago, I finally found it stuffed in a basket in the bathroom along with joke books and other popular 'tank topper' books.

I had a look through the book again, but this time looked each story up on the internet to see if there had been any updates on any of the hauntings since the book was written in 1976. Some of the stories were listed in various ghost hunter data bases, while others had no mention due to the building being torn down or converted into offices, the story forgotten, or possibly the spirit had moved on. However, one of the stories in the book has more information than what seems to be available on the internet. I have found mention of the story on several sites, but only as one line.

York Villa, Bath: Guilt ridden servant who let two children starve to death *

I will now share the excerpt from the book that has raised my curiosity to a level that I feel compelled to research this haunting until I have exhausted all possibility.

The Case of the Remorseful Retainer

This story about York Villa, Bath, was related to Margaret Royal by a friend who came to live in the house in 1910. The house in its earlier years had been occupied for sometime by Frederick, Duke of York, second son of George III. The Duke had a number of mistresses, one of whom, plus their two children, he kept at York Villa.

One day he decided to break off the relationship and go back to London. His mistress decided to follow him and instructed the staff- in particular and old family retainer - to look after the children while she went off to keep an eye on the Duke.

Unfortunately, neither the retainer nor the staff had been paid, so they left the house and the two children starved to death. The retainer did, however, return and was filled with remorse when he found the children dead as a result of his neglect. It is his ghost that is supposed to have haunted York Villa over the years. The haunting takes the form of footsteps which move up the stairs and then stop.

During the last war somebody who was staying at the house came downstairs and asked, "Who is that I saw in a long cloak and long trousers? It doesn't look as if he belongs to the house; I met him on the stairs as I was coming down this morning."

There have also been very fleeting sightings of a woman in grey. Mrs. Royal's informant says she saw her once going into the big room at the top of the house and that her brother is supposed to have seen the spectre of a young boy when he himself was very young. **

I have found this story intriguing and have started the long process of researching the history of the house and the parties involved. I will summarize some facts that I have uncovered so far.

Frederick Duke of York and Albany had several mistresses and several illegitimate children

The Duke was known to live in Bath and had residences at both No.1 and No. 16 Royal Cresent

There is a driver who worked at York Villa who hung himself (not at the villa)

The Duke had a known mistress in Bath who had ancestors who are listed as living in York Villa years after his death

The Duke had great financial problems and very well may have left town without paying his servants.

York Villa has since been a brothel, a social club, and is now part of a school. It is a grade II listed building.

There is no mention anywhere of The Duke of York having had two illegitimate children that died.

http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-__wqc2RqjMQ/Tl7sUpSDnyI/AAAAAAAAAE8/T7Q5ynGoECk/s1600/york+villa.jpg

http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-WB7xeegX7Qg/Tl7sbOfFwKI/AAAAAAAAAFA/j3_uCnG05IQ/s320/york+villa2.jpg

I will continue to investigate the story behind this haunting. I will need to travel to Bath and have a good look through some of the records available. I also plan to visit the York Villa and get some photos and video of the exterior and try to interview some of the staff and students at the school that now occupy York Villa to see if there are any strange occurrences still happening.

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