

The Enfield Poltergeist

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enfield_Poltergeist

The Enfield Poltergeist was a period of apparent poltergeist activity in England between August 1977 and September 1978, with an added outburst in August 1980.

Onset

The activity occurred at North London, in a council house rented by Margaret Hodgson, a divorcee with four children. Margaret was unemployed, and the family lived on a nominal state benefit.

The alleged phenomena initially included furniture moving by itself, knockings on the walls, and lego bricks and marbles being thrown around, which were found to be hot to the touch when picked up. A Police Officer signed an affidavit to affirm that he saw a chair moving. The alleged events attracted various visitors including mediums and members of the Press. After visiting the house George Fallows, a senior reporter for the Daily Mail at the time, suggested that the Society for Psychological Research (SPR) be called in to investigate.

The incidents were duly investigated by Maurice Grosse and Guy Lyon Playfair, both members of SPR, who were convinced by the evidence which they encountered during their five month investigation. They reported witnessing various phenomena, including moving furniture, flying marbles, cold breezes, shallow pools of water appearing on the floor, and fires which spontaneously ignited and extinguished themselves.

The family in the Enfield case consisted of a mother and two daughters) real names, Margaret aged 12, a younger sister Janet 11, Johnny aged 10 and Billy aged 7. Billy had a speech impediment. Johnny featured only marginally in the inexplicable events, at least 26 of which the investigators considered could not be accounted for by fraud. These included movement of small and large objects, interference with bedclothes, pools of water on the floor, apparitions, physical assaults, graffiti, equipment malfunction and failure, spontaneous combustion, disappearance and reappearance of objects, and apparent levitations.

Among other alleged phenomena they witnessed was one of the children speaking using her false cords for hours on end (which is believed to be medically impossible), while she was apparently possessed by another entity. When speaking with the false cords she said she was "Bill" who had died in the house. Recordings were made of these occurrences. After the BBC went to the house the recording crew found the metal inside recording machines bent, and recordings erased.

However, further investigations by Anita Gregory and John Beloff, also from the SPR were not so positive. They spent a few days with the family and came to the conclusion that the children had faked the poltergeist activity after they found them bending spoons themselves. One of the children (Janet) admitted to Gregory that they had fabricated some of the occurrences. This admission was repeated on the ITV News (12 June 1980) when she stated: "Oh yeah, once or twice [we faked phenomena], just to see if Mr Grosse and Mr Playfair would catch us. And they always did."

Guy Lyon Playfair wrote a book about his investigation entitled 'This House is Haunted'. With the usual hyperbole one can expect of publishers of the supernatural it was billed as "even more terrifying than Borley Rectory!".

Conclusion

Margaret has publicly stated that although they did fake a few phenomena to catch the investigators out, they were not responsible for all the phenomena. She has stated that "It is ridiculous to suggest that either my sister or I could have been responsible for the strange activity that went on in our house." However, despite this there remain differences of interpretation regarding whether the girls faked all the phenomena or not.