

PHANTOM LADIES: THE NEW EDITION

By Andrew Green. Edited and enlarged by Alan Murdie. Arima Publishing, 2024. 210 pp. £11.95. ISBN 9781845498306

Andrew Green (1927–2004) was an active and energetic conductor of practical investigations into the paranormal for nearly sixty years, from 1944 until shortly before his death. He did extensive work in the field, documented witness accounts, and sought to develop investigative techniques along scientific lines using the latest equipment. Green published extensively, cataloguing his first three decades' findings in a series of books intended as national gazetteer-type collections. While fully aware of historical material, his concern was to document contemporary and recent reports. *Our Haunted Kingdom* (1973) detailed more than 300 locations where manifestations had been reported over the previous twenty-five years, and *Ghosts of Today* (1980) added another 400 examples.

In the process, however, he became increasingly aware of the sheer number of reports where the haunting was specifically female. Green worked through documentary sources to compile the first edition of *Phantom Ladies* (1977), while still largely holding to the practice of only including sites where reports had been received during the previous three decades. It is this book that Alan Murdie has charmingly and pleasingly worked over for republication here. Murdie, chairman of the Ghost Club and an SPR Council member, is himself a longstanding investigator of spontaneous cases. He also loyally acknowledges his forebears. *Phantom Ladies* follows Murdie's 2016 edition of Green's *Ghost Hunting: A Practical Guide* (1973), also published by Arima (reviewed by Clarke, 2018). Murdie is engagingly upfront about his aims here. Championing Green's work means, for Murdie, not just revisiting his writings but drawing attention to his research ethos, methods and ambitions.

This welcome new edition is substantially expanded from Green's original publication, which forms its first section. Here, Murdie has lightly revisited Green's text, adding updates on access, more recent references and reports and, in some cases, material from his own research. There is, for example, an extensive and informed editorial supplement to the entry on Bury St Edmunds, where Murdie has considerable knowledge.

In the substantial second section, 'Exploring Aspects of Phantom Ladies', Murdie contributes four new chapters. These address historical and

theoretical questions around the phenomenon, consider Green's own research perspective, and provide some characteristically sensible advice on research and investigations. This last point is a nice tribute to Green. Murdie celebrates Green's approach and attitude as much as, if not more than, his achievements, seeing them as the grounds for future work.

Murdie's first chapter, 'Phantom Ladies from the Perspective of Psychical Research', briefly summarizes Green's findings in the context of earlier and later reporting. Murdie is keen to accommodate existing reports while also carefully setting out more rigorous investigative frameworks for their consideration and for future work. His consideration of the range of reported types of experiences (auditory, olfactory, etc.) usefully opens some reflections on the suggested interpretation of the apparitions, too, with some astute comments on the attitudes of various groups of investigators. This feeds helpfully into Murdie's third chapter, 'Investigating Ghosts', where his sensible and practical advice is aimed at encouraging further constructive research. This recurrent theme in Murdie's contributions is most welcome.

Murdie offers a sensibly balanced consideration of the kind of witness documentation presented in Green's original text, seeing this against a backdrop of changing patterns of reported manifestations and standards of evidence. As a folklorist, I have always appreciated Murdie's determination to encompass all types of report and evidence, which he then fits into a psychical researcher's scale of evidentiary status and authority. I realize that this approach may not always find favour at the more scientifically minded end of psychical research, but Murdie's recognition and acknowledgement of different registers of reporting enables a more nuanced and flexible appraisal of the beliefs and interpretations being brought by the witness or investigator themselves. This is invaluable in his discussion, say, of Andrew Green's own interpretative framework or that of "many amateur ghost hunters—who tend to be far more active in site investigation" (p. 138). Whatever attitude one may take to such investigators, their presence and numerical strength is itself a feature in a broader landscape of belief that cannot simply be excluded from consideration. In this regard, Murdie's 'Appendix' (pp. 195–196) is instructive, raising qualitative issues flagged for attention in psychical research investigations. The appeal for reflexivity is consistent with the approach taken by most folklorists now, and is important.

As its title, "White Ladies and Phantom Ladies—One and the Same? Or Different Altogether?", suggests, Murdie's last chapter is his most far-reaching attempt to bring together the folkloric and psychical research records. He sketches the similarities and differences in the recurrent documented apparition types in broadly typological terms. This is clearly only an initial overview, and folklorists could usefully contribute more here. For example, the groundwork article Murdie cites (Beck, 1970) has long seemed somewhat old-fashioned. It remains central to the literature but has been usefully supplemented since

its publication. Murdie draws his discussion of the Welsh *Dynes Mewn Gwyn* (p. 189) from Beck, but this has recently been greatly clarified by Badder and Norman (2023). Using Welsh-language material extensively, their work on this indicates that the more familiar local term is *Ladi Wen*.

My criticisms are not intended as hostile, but as a supportive contribution to Murdie's enthusiasm for further and broader research. He concludes that the existence of this wider folklore record poses only healthy challenges for investigators: "If it means that psychical researchers and ghost hunters themselves have to widen their horizons, so be it. Further research is needed" (p. 191). I have one possible caveat about this reissue. I am unclear whether the review copy reflects the book's final published form or was a preprint prior to final proofing: either way, I hope that its final form will see some clumsy formatting issues and inconsistent referencing corrected, along with the occasional unfortunate typo (Aniela Jaffé appears as "Anita" throughout, for example). These are small matters, which should not interfere with our appreciation of this chance to revisit Andrew Green's illuminating work.

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