

How I came to write “The Mystery of the Mayanup Poltergeist”¹

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Nowadays there is no sign that anything mysterious ever occurred on the hill overlooking the homestead on the Hack family farm. But nearly five decades ago, this quiet location was the scene of significant poltergeist activity that occurred from May 1955 until May 1957. The properties of two farming brothers, Doug and Bill Hack, were deluged with curious visitors, journalists and scientific experts all coming to see what must surely be one of the most amazing examples of the paranormal.

Twenty years ago, through marriage, I became a member of the Hack family and first heard strange tales of the phenomenon which is referred to locally as the *Jannick* or the *Mayanup stones*. Mayanup is the locality in the Shire of Boyup Brook where stones first began raining down on an Aboriginal family living and working on the Hack family farm. *Jannick* is an Aboriginal word meaning *spirit* and it is still believed by many indigenous and non-indigenous people that this bizarre example of poltergeist activity was caused by a mischief-causing ghost or spirit.

Stones varying in sizes from fine gravel to a thirty-five pound lump of laterite were seen to move about in the air travelling at unnatural velocities and trajectories and seeming to possess no inertia as they landed softly without rolling. They were warm to the touch and could fall straight through the roof of the dwelling without leaving a hole. The falling stones and other objects such as bones, glass bottles, scraps of metal, old tools and boots flew about intermittently over the two years and were witnessed by hundreds of people from many different walks of life. These were intelligent, hard-working responsible men, women and children with nothing to gain by making up such stories. They all vehemently deny they were victims of mass hysteria, hypnosis or any form of hoax. Gradually over the years as I heard more and more *Jannick* tales, I was turned from a skeptic to someone who believes that something extraordinary really had occurred at my home nearly fifty years ago.

I set out to write it all down because of a strong belief in the preservation of local history. The phenomenon had been published previously but in brief, partially inaccurate and incomplete forms. I used the Hack family's journals and diaries as well as all available newspaper and

¹ A review of this book can be found in the book review section of this issue.

magazine reports printed at the time. However, “The Mystery of the Mayanup Poltergeist” is primarily a record of eyewitness accounts. I interviewed more than sixty individuals over the course of several years. Unfortunately, the focus persons of the poltergeist activity, Jean Smith and Audrey Krakouer as well as the owners of the properties, Bill and Doug Hack, were deceased by the time I began researching the book. Wherever possible I tried to cross-reference stories by interviewing others mentioned as also visiting on the night in question.

There were many attempts made to prove the phenomenon was a hoax and to catch out the perpetrators but none succeeded. Spotlights were set up around the camps at night and a break was ploughed around the dwellings to expose footprints. Shots were even fired into surrounding trees in case the culprits were throwing stones from such vantage points. Some of those interviewed admitted to trying to mimic the *Jannick* by secretly throwing stones into the air. However, they could not match the strange movement or warmth of the real stones as theirs remained cold and always clattered and rolled upon landing.

Many of those interviewed reported hearing strange whistling noises and seeing strange lights at the same time as the poltergeist was operational. This led my research to also cover reports of UFO’s occurring in the same area although many of these took place in a later time frame. I was amazed to hear about an instance at Easter 1979 of a strange object that was seen by many locals and I have included this story in the book. The common thread that binds the UFO sightings to the poltergeist stories being their disregard for the laws of physics.

I am not an expert on either Aboriginal culture or poltergeist activity. I have included some theories and explanations for poltergeists in my book to stimulate the reader’s curiosity. Personally, I would like to believe there is a scientific explanation for the phenomenon, be it some form of undiscovered electromagnetic energy or an unconscious psychic power transformed into a physical power. However, at present there is no way of proving or disproving the phenomenon. I certainly believe that something completely extraordinary happened in Boyup Brook in the 1950’s as do the hundreds of others who saw things they just could not explain.

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