

HAUNTED

(A true short story to illustrate how things can develop if the truth is not known)

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The period is before the First World War, when my grandparents were living at Callose, near Leedstown, in a two bedroomed thatched cottage where they raised seven children. Granddad went on to be decorated for services in World War I. He was a miner and was considered to be a pretty hard nut; he relished a fist fight and would start or join one at the drop of a hat. His given name was Richard Henry but he was known to all as Dick 'enny.

By way of socialising it was his wont once a week, to walk to Truthwall Farm, on the Leedstown to Fraddam road to enjoy an evening of draughts with Mr. Goldsworthy and others. Truthwall was, and still is, accessed by a long winding, overhanging, tree lined, lane. On both sides of the lane is a wide, grass strip where trees were planted to form a pleasant avenue. In those days the lane comprised a hardcore base bound together by finer gravel and made a crisp crunchy noise as one walked it especially if one was shod in hob boots as was usual at the time. There would be no lighting of any kind unless you were lucky enough to pick a clear moonlit night to help pick your way through the potholes and cow pats.

One night, all the games played, all the yarns told and all the tea drunk, Dick 'enney made for home, up the lane out of Truthwall as usual. Of course he knew the vagaries of the lane inside out and wouldn't have considered carrying a torch or 'flash-light'. The only such contraption he possessed was a heavy carbide lamp and that was more hindrance than help. The night sky on this

occasion was particularly black, with no trace of light anywhere except for the soft glow and the odd spark from Granddad's pipe that was freshly filled with his favourite mixture of Digger Plug and Condor tobacco. The air was eerily still; you could have heard a pin drop if it wasn't for the crunch of Granddad's hob-nailed boots crunching the gravel beneath his feet. He wouldn't have been allowed to smoke in the farmhouse, so it was particularly soothing to draw on his beloved pipe as strode across the farmyard and up the lane.

He was about halfway up the lane when unusually he heard footsteps following him. He walked a bit faster and the footsteps hastened too. He slowed down and the footsteps slowed down correspondingly but still followed. He stopped a while and it was all silent behind him. He walked on again and sure enough the footfall followed. Dick 'enney went through a few more variations of pace and was imitated every time, but Granddad wasn't worried in the least; if it had been a giant or a South Devon Bull back there he would have fought him!

But was he to go home without finding out what it was that was behind him and tomorrow night tell them all at Fraddam pub the story that would doubtless soon be known as "The Tale of the Ghost of Fraddam Farm"? Because if he did I feel sure the farm would have been considered haunted to this day. But that wasn't the way Granddad's mind worked, he 'ad te 'naw what 'twas, so back he went and what did he find but a lowly sheep, that had been grazing under the trees. In the pitch darkness Granddad would have walked past without seeing her then she must have followed him like a dog. So all was well and I expect that apart from me and now you, the whole episode is long forgotten, but what a big story, doubtless filling many a page, it would have been if GRANDDAD had not gone back 'te 'naw what 'twas!