

## The "Brother Doli" case: Investigation of apparent poltergeist-type manifestations in North Wales

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### **Abstract**

*In February 1997 two Irish tourists allegedly witnessed a healing apparition of the Virgin Mary in a field near Mold, North Wales. Soon after, further apparitions and other phenomena began to be reported in the field and in the house of its owners. Since October 1998 a large number of unexplained stains and carvings of images and Welsh words, generally of a religious nature, have been discovered inside and outside the house. Welsh religious words were also found in emails sent from the house, in computer files and printed documents. Other phenomena have included noises, strange smells, temperature fluctuations, pools of water, electrical disturbances and object displacements. A number of photographs taken in and around the house also contained unexplained monk-like shapes and other seemingly anomalous images. An investigation of these various phenomena was undertaken. This focussed on surveying the stains and carvings, on an examination of the photographic anomalies, and on an attempt to record manifestations using time-lapse surveillance equipment. Results are described, strengths and weaknesses of the evidence discussed, and possible interpretations considered. Although there are some highly strange features in this case, it is not possible to conclude with certainty whether the phenomena indicate genuine paranormal activity, whether they are the result of an elaborate hoax, or whether there is a mixture of genuine and fabricated incidents.*

### **Introduction**

As a result of articles in local and national newspapers and magazines, TV and radio broadcasts and coverage on several websites, the identity of the Gower family was already in the public domain prior to this investigation. Their real names are used in this report with their permission.

I was first contacted by email on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2000 by Dr David Gower, a secondary school headteacher whose subject is science. In this email, Dr Gower outlined the various phenomena that had been experienced at his home, most notably a series of stains and carvings of shapes and Welsh words, generally of a religious

character, that were reported to have mysteriously appeared on walls and stones inside and outside the house. I visited the house for the first time on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2000 to view these phenomena and to talk about the case with Dr Gower and his artist wife Rose-Mary. Also living at home was the family's 15-year old adopted son John-Paul, who has Down's Syndrome. A memorandum of agreement outlining the terms and conditions of an investigation was subsequently drawn up and signed by the Gowers and myself on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

Between 12<sup>th</sup> November 2000 and 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2001, I made 14 visits to the house, totalling 54 hours on the premises. Throughout this period, regular email contact was also maintained with the Gowers. As will be explained later, an ending to the phenomena was signalled to take place by 6<sup>th</sup> March 2001, and the investigation was wound down at that time. Further stains, carvings and other phenomena have since been reported, although these have been less frequent and are different in content. I made four further visits between 9<sup>th</sup> December 2001 and 12 May 2002 in order to check this report with the Gowers, to examine some of the more recent phenomena, and to discuss possibilities for future investigation.

## **Background to the Investigation**

The following background account is based on interviews, conversations and email communications with David and Rose-Mary Gower and their three daughters, and on newspaper reports and website articles. Because of John-Paul's condition, it has not been possible for me to question him directly on his experiences.

The first unusual events in the case were reported shortly after the Gowers first moved into their house in February 1997. Prior to this move the family had lived, since May 1995, in an adjacent bungalow.

On 7<sup>th</sup> March 1997 the lead article in the local weekly *Mold & Buckley Chronicle* reported that the newspaper had received a letter from an Irish couple, Michael and Concepta Dooley, who were on a walking holiday in North Wales. The letter described how, while walking along a lane (next to the Gowers' home), they stopped by a gate to admire the view. They then saw what seemed to be an apparition of "Our Lady" at the top of the field. They were both overcome by a sense of awe, peace and serenity. Mr Dooley claims in the letter to have been cured of a painful frozen shoulder while his wife's cataract is also healing. Rose-Mary was interviewed by the

newspaper and is reported to have remembered seeing the couple in the lane. She says they were in their late 50s or early 60s, seemed excited, but said nothing about their experience. Rose-Mary is also quoted as stating "I think it's all silly".

On 11<sup>th</sup> March 1997, a three-page hand-written letter addressed to "The Lady with the Labrador Dog" and signed "M & C Dooley" was forwarded from Wrexham to the Gowers. Dated March 9<sup>th</sup>, the letter gives the writers' address simply as "London", where they were visiting. It confirmed their sighting and adds that "we revisited the field behind the bungalow on Monday March 3 and while we did not see 'Our Lady' again we had a great sense of peace".



Figure 1. Face in the barn window (close-up right).

In March 1997, Rose-Mary took a series of 35mm photographs of the house, garden, field (in which the vision had been seen) and the metal barn that is just beyond the field gate. One photograph appeared to show a large face in the far window of the barn (Fig. 1). On 1<sup>st</sup> June 1997, this photograph appeared in the *Wales on Sunday* newspaper, under the headline: "Is this the face of Jesus' mother?" The article also reports that the original name of the bungalow (built c. 1959) was "Santa Maria". On 17<sup>th</sup> May 1997, Rose-Mary says that she saw a white hazy figure standing alongside one of her daughters who had climbed to the top of the field with a friend. The two young women then ran down to say that they had sensed a presence. Also around this time, a number of visitors began turning up at the site to lay flowers and pray. On 8<sup>th</sup> June 1997, the *News of the World* ran an article: "Virgin Mary 'Cures' sick holiday makers". In November 1997, an account of the visions and cures also appeared in *The Paranormal Review* (Gower, 1997). Over the next year, several other newspaper articles appeared describing these religious visions.

In the summers of 1997 and 1998, the field became in Rose-Mary's words "a mini Lourdes". In response to the number of visitors, the Gowers decided to set aside a small strip of land in front of the gate as a "sacred site" (under the terms of the millennium Sacred Land Project established by the Archbishop of Canterbury and Prince Philip). A sign posted at the gate now welcomes those who wish quietly to pray or meditate outside the field.

The next series of phenomena began in August 1997 when Rose-Mary reports that a strange transformation occurred in the kitchen when she was clearing out a vase of dried blue flowers. Having placed the flowers on the floor while she stepped briefly outside, Rose-Mary returned to find that the blue petals had changed into a large group of dead and dying half-drowned wasps. On 31<sup>st</sup> January 1998, according to Rose-Mary, John-Paul saw a "Blue Lady" by the barn door. Less than a week later, she found a small stone in the garden containing a discoloration and pockmarks that bore a resemblance to Mother Teresa of Calcutta. According to Rose-Mary, this was immediately recognised by John-Paul as the "Blue Lady" he had seen a few days before. On 20th February 1998, Rose-Mary found another small stone in the shape of a coffin, containing a distinct cross-shaped indentation (both stones were examined and photographed by me but have since gone missing). On 1st September 1998, Rose-Mary reports that an oil-stain appeared on the driveway outside their house, which resembled an aeroplane with three vertical lines underneath the nose and tail (Fig. 2). The following day, Swissair Flight 111 from New York to Geneva crashed off Halifax, Nova Scotia, killing all 229 people on board.



Figure 2. Aeroplane oil stain.

In October 1998, the Gowers' youngest daughter, who was staying overnight in the house, awoke to see the figure of a young monk at the bottom of her bed. The apparition was initially experienced with a sense of great peacefulness, but it surprised her sufficiently to cause her to jump out of bed, scream, and turn on the bedroom light. A few days later, Rose-Mary reports that she saw through the kitchen window a fleeting apparition of the hooded head of what seemed to be a monk walking behind a hedge. This would have been impossible because there is a sudden drop from the base of the hedge down to the level of the river about 8 feet below.

In October or November 1998, a dark stain of a cross, about 12 cm high, appeared on one of the stones of the lounge fireplace. In January 1999, David, Rose-Mary and John-Paul returned home following a visit to the Midlands. They decided to move the furniture around and discovered a brown stain of a word, "tangnefedd", about 60 cm in length, on the white-painted plaster of the lounge wall next to the fireplace (Fig. 3, top). Presuming from the "dd" at the end that the word was Welsh, they discovered that it meant "peace" (in the religious sense). That month, about 20 further stains of Welsh words (generally of a religious nature), crosses and figural outlines that resembled a monk appeared on the same wall. Rose-Mary photographed them all and claims that sometimes words or images appeared in the photographs that were not apparent to the naked eye. In April 1999 a 30-cm tall monk-shaped stain appeared on a flat stone in the wall at the top of the stairs (Fig. 4, left). Two days later, the Welsh word "mynach" (monk) was found very neatly carved down the centre of the stained stone (Fig. 4, centre). This rather beautiful stone is now generally referred to as the "Monk Stone".



Figure 3. The original "tangnefedd" stain and carving.

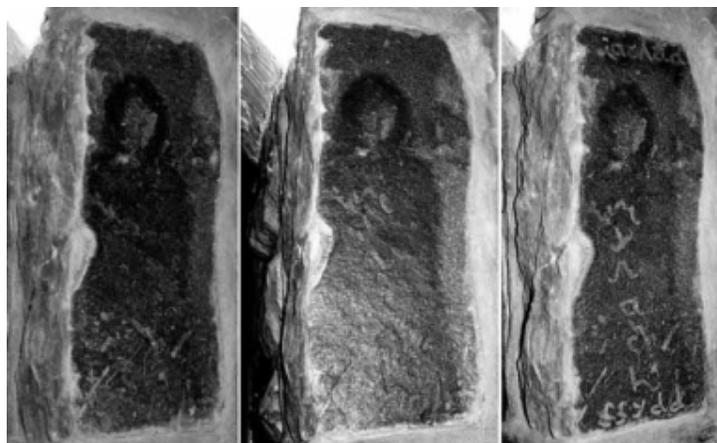


Figure 4. The "Monk Stone", showing development of carvings (left to right).

In the spring of 1999, Rose-Mary repainted the lounge walls using white emulsion, though carefully preserving the original "tangnefedd" stain. Having completed the painting about 7pm, she noticed that stains had reappeared on the wall, but now as different words in different places. In May 1999 David, Rose-Mary and John-Paul returned from a visit to Harrogate to discover that the "tangnefedd" stain had disappeared, to be replaced by the same word now *carved* into the plaster of the wall (Fig. 3, bottom - note the identical surface irregularities in both photographs). This was followed by the appearance of other plaster carvings, including crosses, monk-shaped outlines, and various other Welsh words of a religious nature such as "gobaith" (hope) and "cariad" (love). What was strange about these carvings was that the paintwork showed no evidence of having been scraped away, but continued apparently undisturbed inside the indentations. Also it is reported that no dust or debris was ever found in the vicinity of the carvings. Over the next several months, further carvings and stains appeared on the lounge walls and fireplace. Since this time, similar stains and carvings appeared in other areas of the house, on outside walls, on stones in the garden, on the trunk of a holly tree, and an outside dog kennel.

A name was needed to enable the family to refer to whatever was responsible for these phenomena. Because of the religious nature of the words and images, the apparitions of the monk experienced by Rose-Mary and by her daughter, and the high frequency of monk-shaped stains and carvings, a monk seemed to be the most obvious candidate. The name "Brother Adolphus" ("Brother Dolly" for short) was coined. This was a name that, as a child, Rose-Mary had noticed appearing every year in the *In Memoriam* column of a newspaper. Sometime later a message from the monk was

found written on a notepad and signed "Doli". The family became accustomed to talking about Brother Doli as if he were an actual presence in the house, although David in particular has done this rather with tongue in cheek.

In August 1999, the phenomena at the Gowers' home were examined on HTV Wales' *Weird Wales* series. The case has since featured on several other TV and radio programmes, including ITV's *This Morning*, BBC TV's *Kilroy*, and John Peel's *Home Truths* series on BBC Radio 4 (twice).

Between 14<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999, 39 email messages were sent out to fourteen people in the Gowers' email address book. These messages contained Welsh religious words or strings (e.g., "mynach", or "tangnefeddcariadmynach"). With the exception of those sent on the first day, these messages were not found in the Sent folder. The times recorded on the messages also indicated that several had been posted in the middle of the night. Since that time, email messages sent by the Gowers occasionally contained Welsh word intrusions, including one ("tangnefedd") in the first email I received from Dr Gower. Other reported computer-related phenomena include deletion of files and the frequent appearance of Welsh religious words or religious images as intrusions on screen or in printouts of documents. Sometimes lettering is inverted or printed sideways.

In March 2000, Rose-Mary took a 35mm photograph of a stained cross that had appeared on the stonework outside the lounge window. When the print was examined, it seemed to show a dark outline, possibly resembling the shape of a monk, inside the house (Fig. 5). Also a vase that normally appears in the window was missing in the photograph. Around the same time Rose-Mary also took a photograph of a carved wooden bench that stands at the top of the stairs. This was a family heirloom that had been given to the Gowers a few months earlier by Rose-Mary's mother who had first acquired it in Guernsey around 1952. The family believed that the bench came from a monastery and it has always been called the "monk's bench". The photograph shows the apparently anomalous images of a white outline of a hooded figure and a crucifix on the backboard of the bench (Fig. 6).



Figure 5. The monk in the lounge window (close-up right).



Figure 6. Monk's bench with monk and cross.

In the spring of 2000, a monk-shaped outline, about 1.5m in height, appeared cut out of the lawn, as if with a spade. The word "mynach" was also cut in the lawn, in letters about 30 cm high. In July 2000, the word "iachâd" (healing) was found neatly carved across the top of the "Monk Stone" at the top of the stairs. Two weeks later, the word "ffydd" (faith) appeared at the bottom of this stone, again very neatly carved (Fig. 4, right).

In September 2000, Rose-Mary took a 35mm photograph of one of her digital artworks, which had been hung on a kitchen wall directly underneath a decorative

mirror. The photograph showed a dramatic outline of a faceless white figure apparently reflected in the mirror (Fig. 7, left).



Figure 7. Monk in the mirror. Scan of original print (left) and scan of original negative (right)

In addition to the range of phenomena mentioned above, which comprise apparitions, stains, carvings, photographic effects and computer-related anomalies, the Gowers also report:

- **Noises** - including footsteps on the stairs and landing, latches being lifted, bangs and crashes, the sound of a baby crying in the kitchen, and indistinct voices.
- **Smells** - especially of incense and candle wax.
- **Pressures** - feeling a pressure on the bottom of the bed, as if someone had sat down on it (experienced by Rose-Mary and a daughter).
- **Temperature changes** - sudden unexplained drops in temperature in the lounge.
- **Pools of water** - unexplained pools of water appearing on the floor inside the house, or on chairs and a bed.
- **Strange animal behaviour** - the cat often rushes around the house as if someone were chasing him.
- **Displaced objects** - personal items such as spectacles and slippers going missing, to be found later in unusual locations around the house.

- **Other graffiti** - visitors to the house have found Welsh words engraved on their personal belongings (e.g., purse, handbag and a laptop computer).
- **Electrical and telephonic anomalies** - clocks changing time or going slow, light bulbs flickering or flashing when switched off, silent phone calls made from the house, often recorded on recipients' answering machines.

## **The Investigation**

### **The House**

The Gowers' home is situated in a very attractive and peaceful rural area, a few miles from the market town of Mold, Flintshire. It is a converted, extended and modernised period dwelling. Some of the original stonework is retained. The lounge is located in the oldest part of the house and features a beamed ceiling and a large reconstructed stone fireplace. Little is known about the history of the property, although the Gowers believe the original building was possibly a miner's cottage. A stone built into the front elevation has the date "1610", but this seems to be modern. Outside there is a garage and workshop. The narrow, fast-flowing River Terrig runs through the garden close to the house. Situated further up a lane and not directly adjoining the property is a steep field that belongs to the Gowers where the visions were experienced (approx. 2.5 acres). Just over the gate inside the field is a large metal barn where the face in the window was photographed. There are four neighbouring dwellings.

### **The Gowers**

The Gower family is not Welsh, or Welsh speaking. David was born in 1947 and was brought up in Middlesex. There was a strict Baptist influence in his family, but he no longer sees himself as religious. He has a BEd in Chemistry and Divinity, MEd, PhD in Chemical Education, and MBA in Education Management (qualifications checked by me). He describes his attitude to the phenomena as scientific and sceptical, but he also finds the case entertaining and intriguing. His early suspicion was that his grown-up children were playing a hoax, but he now tends to discount this possibility. He admits to having witnessed strange noises in the house (e.g., footsteps, crying baby, indistinct voices), but has never experienced a visual apparition. His work means that he is typically away from the house for much of the day.

Rose-Mary was born in 1950. She reports that her family experienced poltergeist-type phenomena at their home in Guernsey from before the time she was born, throughout her childhood, and after she had left home. When she was about eight years old, Rose-Mary and her two younger sisters named the poltergeist "Kelly". "Kelly" used to steal things and cause bangs and crashes. On one occasion, a mirror was smashed. Rose-Mary reports that she was frightened by these phenomena, in contrast to the present events, which seem harmless or benign. Rose-Mary's family was strictly Pentecostal. She first met David when she was 15, as a result of contact between the families. Rose-Mary is no longer affiliated to any particular religious group. Rose-Mary is typically in the house most of the day, where she has home-educated John-Paul. Since January 2000, Rose-Mary has discovered a surprising talent for digital art and for poetry. She has had exhibitions of her art and regularly sells her work, which is often commissioned. Rose-Mary attributes the sudden flowering of her artistic talent to the Brother Doli phenomena and, as a result, uses the name "Y Mynach" for her art business. Rose-Mary describes her attitude to these phenomena as one of interest and her view is that something very strange is happening at the house. She also attributes human qualities and personality to "Brother Doli" whom she claims to have "seen", fleetingly but distinctly, on five occasions including once, in the corner of the kitchen, when she and I were in conversation. Since taking the photograph of the face in the barn window, Rose-Mary will now often finish off a roll of film by taking photographs in and around the house.

The Gowers have three daughters (born 1970, 1974 and 1976) and two adopted sons (one born 1973 and John-Paul born 1985). The daughters and elder son left home between 1989 and 1997. The daughters remain regular visitors to the house, but the elder son has made few visits since he left home in 1994. I have briefly met and spoken with the three daughters. All three are interested in and intrigued by the phenomena and claim to have heard footsteps in the house. They also confirm the apparitional experiences previously described.

John-Paul was adopted in 1986, when he was 13 months old. He has quite severe Down's Syndrome. He can read, copy words and, with assistance, can use a computer to write letters. He is a quiet and gentle young person who seemed to treat "Brother Doli" in a very matter-of-fact way. When asked where Brother Doli was, John-Paul would typically claim to be able to see the monk who, he stated, lived in a corner in

his bedroom (where the daughter first saw the apparition of a young monk). I am told that he also sometimes reported on Brother Doli's moods and could be quite convincing when describing the monk's activities even though he is not noted for having a good imagination. John-Paul typically kept himself out of the way during my visits and seemed to show little understanding of or interest in the investigation. He amuses himself by watching videos or playing Nintendo. He is sometimes left alone in the house for an hour or two.

### **The Dooleys**

Evidence from Michael and Concepta Dooley is currently limited to the testimony of Rose-Mary, who claims to have met them in the lane in late February 1997, together with information in the two letters apparently sent by them to the *Chronicle* and to "The Lady with the Labrador Dog". Unfortunately neither letter included a return address although the *Chronicle* letter states that they live in a village near Dublin. No further contact with the Dooleys has been forthcoming and my attempts to identify them from the Dublin telephone directory have not met with success. Of course, the Dooleys may have moved away or used an alias in their letters (the lack of a return address indicates that they did not wish to be contacted). The possibility remains, however, that the Dooley letters are a hoax perpetrated by the couple themselves, or by someone claiming to be them.

### **The Stains and Carvings**

I surveyed the physical manifestations at the house during visits for this purpose on 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December 2000, and on 7<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> January 2001. Records were made of all stains and carvings, including their location and approximate measurements. Stickers were used for the purpose of marking and identification. I photographed the majority of stains and carvings using Kodak Gold 800 film with a Canon EOS 1000F 35mm SLR camera and Canon Zoom Lens EF 35-105mm 1:4.5-5.6. Rubbings were also taken of several prominent carvings in order to provide a more exact record of size, shape and surface details. Two full days (13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> December) were needed to record all the phenomena then apparent. The visits on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 7<sup>th</sup> January and 14<sup>th</sup> January recorded stains and carvings that had appeared since the previous visits, as well as some that were revealed behind furniture not moved earlier because of Christmas preparations and decorations.

A total of 234 stains, carvings and other features were recorded during these visits. Additionally there were many features that were not included in the survey because they were too faded to identify clearly, or because they might have been natural artefacts. Table 1 summarises the phenomena recorded during the survey. To give an indication of the nature and extent of these phenomena, Fig. 8 shows a view of the fireplace taken on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2000 (the fireplace has never been used by the Gowers). The small rectangles in Fig. 8 are stickers identifying stains and carvings.

Table 1. Summary of recorded phenomena (13<sup>th</sup> December 2000 - 14<sup>th</sup> January 2001)

Type	N	Location (Floor) <sup>a</sup>	N	Surface	N
Stain	148	Lounge total (G)	134	Plaster	109
Carving	57	(Lounge fireplace)	(69)	Stone	99
Carving + stain	11	Kitchen (G)	49	Wood	15
Burnt carving	4	Study (G)	7	Brick	4
Raised plaster	7	WC (G)	1	Other	7
Other	7	Stairs	12		
		Landing (F)	4	<b>Content</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Recorded</b>	<b>N</b>	Bathroom (F)	4	Words	77
13 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2000	72	Bedroom 1 (F)	3	"Monk"	52
14 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2000	70	Bedroom 2 (F)	0	Cross	50
19 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2000	32	Bedroom 3 (F)	0	"Smiley face"	10
7 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2001	38	Bedroom 4 (F)	0	Monk with cross	6
14 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2001	22	Outside	20	Chi-Rho symbol	8
				Others	32
<b>Total N in each group = 234</b>					

<sup>a</sup>. G = Ground floor, F = First floor



Figure 8. The lounge fireplace (at 14<sup>th</sup> December 2000).

The great majority of stains and carvings appeared in the older (original) part of the house, especially the lounge and the wall by the stairs (which was originally an external wall). Few were found upstairs. There seemed to be particular "hot spots" in the house, most notably the fireplace, the area directly beneath the stairs, and a wall next to the kitchen door that leads to the patio.

Stains on painted plaster were generally coffee-coloured, although five plaster stains that appeared in the New Year of 2001 were a pale blue. Stains on stonework were usually mid-brown or rust-coloured, although some were almost black. Stains on wood were generally silver-grey. Size of stains varied from a tiny cross at 1 x 1 cm to two large monk-shapes (33 x 70 cm, 30 x 81 cm), and a large word, "hirymaros" (longsuffering) at 98 x 13 cm (all measurements are width x height). There was also a large monk shape (48 x 108 cm) on a textured outhouse wall. This particular image was unusual in that it was unclear whether it was a stain or a shadow produced by unevenness in the wall's textured surface.

Stains were found at various positions and heights, from floor to ceiling (including two on the carpet). One is reported to have appeared on the outhouse chimney, which is accessible only with difficulty. Following a "throwaway" comment I made one day that it is a shame that the phenomena don't appear in inaccessible places, stains soon started to appear behind radiators and were later discovered behind heavy furniture.

The family reports that the appearance of the stains often varied over time. The stains may fade or increase in vividness, may change in colour or size, and may disappear altogether. New stains may suddenly be noticed that did not seem to be there moments before. I can confirm the apparent fading, intensifying and disappearance of stains on both plaster and stone surfaces. It should be noted, however, that changes in lighting inside the house often produce noticeable variations in the appearance of the stains. New stains also appeared during the course of my survey, including one dramatic stain of a monk shape on the fireplace that was immediately noticed on the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> December 2001 as not having been there the evening before (confirmed by photographic evidence).

From casual inspection, the stains appeared to be produced by some agent that had soaked into the plaster, stone, brick or wood, rather than being a surface film. The stains could not be rubbed or washed off and are reported not to respond to bleaching. The chemistry of the stains was not analysed during my initial investigation and most have since faded. In recent months a few new stains have appeared. It is planned to undertake detailed chemical analysis on these, and on the few original stains that remain, for a future report.

"Carvings" in plaster comprised incisions that were generally about 2 mm or less deep and about 5 mm or less wide. Some carvings were quite crude, but others were precisely executed. They varied in size from a small cross at 2 x 3 cm to a large "tangnefedd" at 62 x 10 cm (Fig. 3, bottom) and occurred on the walls at different heights. In all cases the paintwork continued inside the indentations. To test how easy it would be to make such carvings in plaster, I experimented at my own home (an old Welsh cottage that has similarly plastered stone walls). My experiments showed that plaster was a surprisingly good medium to work and I was able to produce neat carvings easily and quickly using a bradawl or small screwdriver.

The question of whether the carvings have been overpainted is crucial in assessing whether they may be a hoax. In most cases, although there was no obvious indication of overpainting (i.e., the paintwork around and inside the carving did not appear to be new), there were some indications of a difference in texture around some of the carvings. For example, the area around the carved surface often appeared smoother. In a few cases, there was evidence of brushstrokes around the carving that differed in

direction and fineness from those found on the surrounding surface. An example of this is shown in Fig. 9.

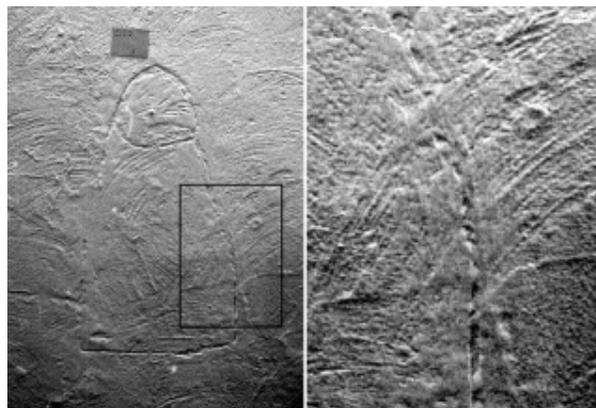


Figure 9. Carving of "monk" (detail right) showing possible evidence of overpainting.

A few carvings appeared to "fade" during the course of my investigation (i.e., to become shallower) possibly also indicated in Fig. 9. This was first noted following another "throwaway" comment that disappearing *carvings* (as opposed to stains) would be very impressive. In one case, a previously very distinct carving of a monk had disappeared (could not be located) on my visit of 14<sup>th</sup> January 2001, although it later re-emerged, though less prominently than before. There seemed to be no obvious indication that the carving had been in-filled. However, on my latest visit (12<sup>th</sup> May 2002) there was evidence that a very crude attempt had recently been made to in-fill, skim and paint over the Fig. 9 carving. Also on this day another fresh-looking plaster carving was discovered in the kitchen. There was a faint but noticeable smell of paint around the carving that was confirmed by members of the family.

Another type of plaster "carving" appeared very slightly *raised* from the surrounding surface. The first of these was a monk shape that I noticed on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2000 (again following an earlier comment that raised surfaces would be more evidential than indentations). This particular "monk" gave the appearance of a slight swelling in the plaster. On 14<sup>th</sup> January 2001, six further raised plaster features had appeared in the lounge. Unlike the first raised carving, however, these latest features seemed to have been built up using some kind of plaster or filler material. Generally they looked crude and unconvincing.

Carvings in stone varied in size from a "smiley face" at 2 x 2 cm to the date "1778" at 23 x 4 cm. They were generally found in easily accessible locations at heights that

would be relatively comfortable to work. Many of the carvings were quite crudely executed and looked as though they could have been scraped away with a pointed tool. A few "carvings" (e.g., "1778" and a "face" on the fireplace keystone) appeared to be partly formed from natural edges on the stones.

The most interesting and significant carvings are undoubtedly the words on the "Monk Stone" at the top of the stairs (Fig. 4), which appeared to be executed with considerable skill and precision. Here the edges of the words were straight and crisp and the carvings made to an even, flat depth (about 1mm). They did not look fresh, although there were variations in coloration that matched the order in which they appeared. Thus "mynach" (the earliest of the three words) was darker and older looking than "iachâd" (which came second) while "fydd" (the last to be discovered) was the lightest and freshest looking. The "Monk Stone" itself is very unusual. The carved and stained surface is almost completely flat and appears to be faced with a thin layer of hard, darker stone. The family is particularly intrigued by this stone, which has become an interesting talking point. Rose-Mary polishes it regularly.

Carvings in wood were crudely executed and looked as though they could have been made with a chisel, knife, scissors or other scraping implement. They varied in size from a tiny cross at 0.4 x 0.3 cm, which could simply have been a pencil mark, to an 8 x 18 cm "monk" cut into the trunk of a holly tree. They were generally found in accessible locations and at comfortable heights for working. One or two looked freshly made, although others appeared quite old. Some were varnished inside, matching the surrounding wood. Four examples of woodcarvings looked as though they have been burnt with a pyrography tool (the family possesses such a tool).

The lawn cuttings are another very unusual feature of this case. Two had been reported before my visits. On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2000 I discovered three new ones on the raised lawn. Fallen leaves that covered them indicated that they might have been there for some time. The first was a bare patch of lawn a few centimetres in depth, in the shape of a "monk" (approx. 66 x 100 cm). Another was an edged outline of a cross shape (approx. 89 x 140 cm). Finally there was a layer of turf, about 4 cm thick, in the shape of a "monk" (approx. 54 x 100 cm). Although these latter measurements are not a precise match for those of the bare monk, it seems likely that this layer was that removed from this patch of lawn. The appearance of these lawn features gave the impression that they had been carefully cut with a spade.

## The Words and Numbers

The words and numbers recorded in the survey are shown in Table 2. Other words that have appeared since January 1998 are shown in Table 3 (these have been reported by the Gowers on webpages, in interviews or emails, or are shown in earlier photographs taken by Rose-Mary, or have been observed by me since the survey was undertaken).

Table 2 Glossary of words (Survey results at 14<sup>th</sup> January 2001)

Word	Translation	N	Word	Translation	N
angel	angel	3	Jane	Jane	1
cariad	love	1	Jones	Jones	2
cerdd	poem, music	1	llanwenydd <sup>a</sup>	joy, gladness <sup>a</sup>	1
ci	dog	1	llun	form, image	1
croeso	welcome	8	maddeuant	forgiveness	1
daioni	goodness	2	Mari	Mary	2
dedwyddwch	happiness	1	MCDXVI <sup>b</sup>	1416 <sup>b</sup>	2
dysgu	learn, teach	1	mynach	monk	18
ffydd	faith	2	Nadolig	Christmas	1
gobaith	hope	1	perthyn	belong	1
goleuni	light	1	St Teresa	St Teresa	1
gorffwys	rest, repose	1	tangnefedd	peace	5
gweddi	prayer	4	teulu	family	5
gwyn	white, blessed	1	Treffynnon	Holywell	1
hirymaros	longsuffering	1	ysbryd	spirit, ghost	2
iachâd	Healing	4	15, 1778, 2000 <sup>c</sup>	15. 1778, 2000 <sup>c</sup>	3

<sup>a</sup>This would appear to be a spelling mistake for the intended "llawenydd" (joy, gladness).

<sup>b</sup>The date "MCDXVI" is unusual in that the letters C and D have appeared as mirror images. The other four letters are, of course, laterally symmetrical. If viewed in a mirror, it therefore reads IVXDCM.

<sup>c</sup>The number 2000 is reported to have appeared close to the millennium.

Table 3 Additional words (January 1998-May 2002)

Word	Translation	Word	Translation
Amwythig	Shrewsbury	gwynfa	paradise
anabl	disabled	Karol W <sup>c</sup>	Karol Wojtyla? <sup>c</sup>
arogidarthu <sup>a</sup>	burn incense	magwraeth	nourishment, nurture
bendith	blessing	mynachlog	monastery
cannwyll	candle	paderau	rosary
edifar	penitent, sorry	pererindod	pilgrimage
ffyddiondeb <sup>b</sup>	faithfulness	plentyn	infant, child
golau	light	rhinwedd	virtue
gwyddonydd	scientist	Sanct Mari	St. Mary
		Tom	Tom

<sup>a</sup> Correct spelling = aroglarthu.

<sup>b</sup> Correct spelling = ffyddlondeb.

<sup>c</sup> The family interprets this as a reference to Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyla)

On several occasions words appeared seemingly in response to current events. For example the number "2000" is reported to have appeared at the time of the millennium, "Nadolig" (Christmas) shortly before Christmas, "gwyddonydd" (scientist) during a visit of a scientist friend, and "ci" (dog) the day after the death of the family dog.

The stained and carved words are written in a simple, but very distinctive and consistent script that was even used, I am told, for the word "mynach" that had appeared cut in the lawn. The letter "n", for example, resembles a witch's hat. Lettering is always unjoined. All words (with the exception of "Jane", "Jones", "St Teresa", and "Karol") appear in the *Collins Gem Welsh Dictionary* (purchased by the family following the initial appearance of Welsh word stains). However, "tangnefedd", which was the first word reported, appears in the dictionary only under its English translation (peace).

There are no examples of sentences or other syntactical constructions. In the case of the email phenomena, Welsh words have been typically strung together in a seemingly haphazard fashion.

The examples of what appear to be clear spelling mistakes are of particular interest (these errors have been confirmed by Dr Branwen Jarvis, Head of the Welsh Department at University of Wales Bangor, in a personal communication). In two cases, "arogidarthu" (see Fig. 10) and "ffyddiondeb", the letter "l" has been incorrectly replaced by "i". In other words, the actual Welsh words are "arogldarthu" (to burn incense) and "ffyddlondeb" (faithfulness). Because of the clear difference in pronunciation involved, this would not seem to be the kind of spelling mistake that a Welsh-speaking person could easily make. It should be noted that the font used in the *Collins Gem Welsh Dictionary* is small and the letters "i" and "l" might easily be confused by someone with poorish eyesight who was unfamiliar with the language.



Figure 10. An apparent spelling mistake.

Another significant error occurs with "llanwenydd", which is not a Welsh word. However "llawenydd" means "joy" or "gladness" and this would appear to be the word intended. Given the frequency of Welsh place names beginning with "llan" (church or village) it is very possible that a person aware of this but generally unfamiliar with Welsh could have mistakenly read the word from the dictionary. There is no such place as Llanwenydd in Wales.

The words "Jane", "Jones", the number 15, and the date 1778, which were found in close proximity on the fireplace, directly match words on a loose tombstone that leans against the outside front wall of the house. The origins of the tombstone are unknown, but its presence at the house predates the Gowers' occupancy (as shown by the original estate agents' photograph). The tombstone reads "Jane Jones / AGED 15 / 1778".

The date MCDXVI (1416) which appeared during the time of my investigation is of especial interest when considered alongside some of the original word stains photographed by Rose-Mary. One photograph shows an arrow pointing between the

words "Amwthig" (Shrewsbury) and "Treffynnon" (Holywell). Under these words is the word "pererindod" (pilgrimage). This seems to refer to pilgrimages associated with the cult of St Winifred, which was especially prominent in the 12<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries (although pilgrimages to St Winifred's Well at Holywell continue to this day). According to legend, in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, Winifred (Gwenfrewi) was decapitated by Prince Caradoc after she resisted his attempts at rape. Winifred was brought back to life by the prayers of her uncle, St Beuno, while Caradoc was struck dead. Where Winifred's head fell, a spring broke forth (at Holywell). Winifred spent the remainder of her life as a nun at Gwytherin in nearby Denbighshire. On her death (c. 680) Gwytherin and Holywell became important places of pilgrimage. In 1138, Winifred's remains were removed from Gwytherin to the Benedictine monastery in Shrewsbury and pilgrimages then centred on Holywell and Shrewsbury. The cult of St Winifred grew in prominence until, in 1415, the feast of St Winifred was ordered to become a major solemnity throughout England and Wales. The following year, *in 1416*, King Henry V made the 45-mile pilgrimage, on foot, from Shrewsbury to Holywell to give thanks for his victory at Agincourt (1415). His route would have very likely passed through the parish in which the Gowers' home lies. It should be noted that Ellis Peters used the transfer of St Winifred's bones to Shrewsbury as the inspiration for her first Brother Cadfael novel *A Morbid Taste for Bones* (1977). David is a great fan of the Cadfael books and TV series. Rose-Mary says that she does not read the books, but did watch the series. It may also be significant that the Gowers' Labrador dog was named "Cadfael".

### **The Photographic Anomalies**

I have examined prints of eleven photographs taken by Rose-Mary between March 1997 and March 2001 that may show anomalous phenomena. These are all reported to have been taken using Kodak Gold 400 or 800 film with a Konica Z-up 70 Super fully automatic compact 35mm camera (35-70mm lens f/5.2-9.8). Rose-Mary reports that she usually uses out-of-date film that she obtains from a friend. All films are routinely taken for processing to the Tesco Store in nearby Mold.

The photographs, in date order, are:

- **Face in the Barn Window (Fig. 1)**

This was reportedly taken in March 1997, along with a large series of other photographs of their new property. Rose-Mary claims that she did not see anything unusual at the time, in which case the photographic composition might seem rather strange. The photograph appears to show a face, possibly with some kind of headdress, almost fully filling the window at the back of the metal barn. The window normally looks out to the foliage of a tree directly behind the barn. On my visits, the window was quite heavily cobwebbed. The window glass is wire-meshed and measures approximately 50 x 75 cm. The dimensions of the "face" are therefore about twice life-size. The eyes are notable for their asymmetry. I have requested the original negative of this photograph for scanning but unfortunately Rose-Mary has been unable to locate it.

- **Monk's Bench with Monk and Cross (Fig. 6)**

This was reportedly taken around March 2000. It apparently shows the white head and torso of a hooded figure, and a large white cross, on the backboard of the bench. The other white patches on the left and right of the bench appear to be flash reflections from the varnish. Again I have requested the original negative of this photograph, but it has not been discovered.

- **Monk in the Lounge Window 1 (Fig. 5)**

This was reportedly taken around May 2000. The photograph apparently shows a dark outline behind the lounge window of a shape that could be interpreted as a cloaked and hooded life-size figure. A large pottery vase that normally stands in the far left of the window (as viewed from the outside) is missing in the photograph. Unfortunately, the original negative is again unavailable.

- **Monk in the Mirror (Fig. 7)**

This was reportedly taken in September or October 2000. Rose-Mary says that she took the photograph of her digital artwork, which she had hung underneath the mirror. She was not intending to photograph the mirror, and the top of this is cut off in the photograph. However, this does beg the question: why was the photograph taken in portrait rather than landscape orientation?

The photograph seems to show the head and torso of a white, cloaked figure reflected in the mirror. Possibly the head is hooded, although the image could be interpreted as showing hair. Some people interpret the image as that of a girl rather than a monk, especially when the photograph is viewed as a negative.

Of all the photographic anomalies, this is the clearest, most dramatic, and it initially appeared possibly the most difficult to hoax. I therefore chose it for closer examination. The framed mirror itself measured 50 x 60 cm. It contained a single sheet of glass (43 x 53 cm) held with a sheet of hardboard. The back surface of the glass was silvered and printed with an Art Nouveau style decoration. In the original print of this photograph (Fig. 7, left) the white figure of the "monk" seemed to disappear behind the decorative printing. This could indicate that the figure was "in the room" and reflected in the mirror rather than being painted or daubed on the surface of the glass. In order to examine this image more closely, I loaned the original negative, which was scanned at 2700dpi with no manipulation, using a Nikon Coolscan III film scanner (Fig. 7, right). The scan revealed that, in several places, traces of the white figure appeared *in front of* the decoration (at head, shoulder and base). This is consistent with the image being daubed on the surface of the mirror. Experiments using the mirror have shown that a similar effect may be produced using a layer of a substance such as white polish or sun-cream to create the image. Because other "Brother Doli" phenomena involve graffiti and daubed surfaces, this is not conclusive evidence of a hoax, but it must be considered highly suspicious. I shared these concerns with David and Rose-Mary on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2001. Rose-Mary has since discovered another photograph showing her artwork beneath the mirror (with no anomalies). She now believes this is the photograph she took and is no longer certain that she took the photograph of the "Monk in the Mirror". The mirror itself is reported to have smashed when it fell from the wall in November 2001.

- **Mirror with Amorphous Shapes (not illustrated)**

In November 2000, Rose-Mary took four further photographs of the mirror that were found to contain amorphous white shapes that are similar in general appearance and texture to the "Monk in the Mirror". On one photograph, Rose-Mary claims to be able to see a face that seems strangely familiar to her. Again

there is evidence in two of the photographs that the images are daubed on the surface of the mirror.

- **Monk in the Lounge Window 2 (not illustrated)**

Also in November 2000, Rose-Mary took another photograph of the lounge window that apparently shows a dark outline of a figure that is remarkably similar to that in the earlier photograph of the lounge window (i.e., Fig. 5). Again the pottery vase is missing in the photograph. The original negative has not been located.

- **John-Paul in Light (Fig 11)**

In February 2001, Rose-Mary took a photograph of John-Paul sitting in a chair in front of the fireplace in the lounge. She claims that as she took the photograph there was a bright flash that came from her left. The photograph shows a bright area of white light fogging the image at the left. John-Paul and the chair in which he is sitting (but *not* the rest of the room) are also bathed in a bright white light. John-Paul himself looks rather startled. From the direction of the shadows cast on John-Paul's clothing, the light would appear to be coming from the right of the photograph. This is the direction of the lounge window that faces out onto the driveway.



Figure 11. John-Paul in light.



Figure 12. Smoke in the lounge.

- **Smoke in the Lounge (Fig 12)**

Rose-Mary reports that she took this photograph in March 2001, sometime around the time of Brother Doli's announced departure (to be discussed later). It was not processed until 7<sup>th</sup> June 2001. When she showed the photograph to John-Paul, he is said to have replied that it is Brother Doli leaving. The photograph (apparently taken with flash) shows the lounge fireplace obscured by a large amorphous area of what looks like swirling white smoke or steam rising up from the direction of the floor towards the ceiling. I have examined and scanned the original negative, which itself shows no suspicious features. However, it may be significant that after two normal (holiday) photographs, three blank frames immediately precede the smoke image (No. 5a on the negative strip).

### **The Attempt to Videotape Phenomena**

Because of the frequency with which new stains and carvings appeared during the course of the survey, an attempt was made to record their manifestation on videotape. For this purpose a small surveillance camera was set up to view the white-painted plastered kitchen wall adjacent to the back door (the primary route of access to the house). This location was chosen because of its convenience and unobtrusiveness, and because it would allow the monitoring of people entering and exiting the house. The wall in question was also one of the "hot spots" where stains and (especially) carvings were regularly appearing. The resolution of the camera and recording was insufficient to show a faint stain or small carving on the wall. However, should a stain or carving

appear during surveillance, the recording would hopefully provide evidence of whether or not someone had been at the wall to produce it.

The camera was an unbadged monochrome CCTV device with infrared illumination. This used a 1/3" SONY CCD image sensor scanning at 290,000 effective pixels. The light sensitivity was 0.1 Lux. The camera gave good results in normal daylight or artificial lighting, and the infrared capability produced an acceptable image at night with all house lights switched off. A Toshiba KV-6200E time-lapse video cassette recorder was set to record for seven days (168 hours) using a standard VHS 3-hour tape. Frames were recorded approximately every 2.25 sec. Unfortunately the set-up had no battery backup to continue recording in case of power failure, although recording would recommence when power was resumed. The VCR and camera were installed by technicians on top of a standing cabinet, just below ceiling height, with wiring neatly trailed along the walls to the nearest power socket on the other side of the kitchen. Accurate timing of recorded events was ensured by a digital on-screen display. The wall under observation also held a large clock with a second hand, providing useful confirmatory evidence of time.

Recording commenced at 14.40 on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2001 and continued until 10.35 on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2001. During this period, five tapes were recorded. I personally replaced all tapes. The intention was to do this at convenient times within the seven-day maximum period (to eliminate over-recording).

- **Tape 1 (14.40, 25th January - 17.06, 5th February 2001)**

Tape 1 was not replaced within the seven-day recording period because Rose-Mary contracted flu. The tape automatically rewound and, as a result, is over-recorded at the beginning. No changes on the wall were noted.

- **Tape 2 (17.07, 5th February - 15.16, 10th February 2001)**

Tape 2 was replaced on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February. On this date a film company visited the house to record material for a documentary on paranormal investigations in the UK. When I arrived at 11.00am, I noticed that a small carved cross (1.5 x 2 cm) had appeared on the video wall. However, Rose-Mary reported that there had been a power cut at about 6.00pm on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February and also that the lights had flickered, but not gone out, during the same afternoon. David confirmed the power cut which occurred shortly after he had

arrived home. It had lasted, they said, no more than two minutes. The hope was therefore that a short gap in an otherwise continuous recording would confirm this. Furthermore, two minutes would seem insufficient time for anyone to have executed and repainted the new carving. However, when Tape 2 was examined, it showed a gap in the recording on 7<sup>th</sup> February from 16.20 to 18.05, i.e., a period of 1 hour 45 minutes (the clock of the VCR had a battery backup and the timings were confirmed by the clock on the wall). Clearly this would have been ample time for the carving to be made. The simplest explanation is that the video recording had been stopped or paused at 16.20. It may also be significant that when the recording recommenced at 18.05, the position of the camera had shifted slightly, indicating some mechanical interference with the equipment (although the camera was not in direct physical contact with the VCR).

- **Tape 3 (15.17, 10th February - 18.21, 15th February 2001)**

Although no changes occurred on the wall during the recording of Tape 3, two gaps in the recording occurred on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> February. A six-minute break occurred between 16.58 and 17.05, followed by a longer break of 35 minutes between 17.11 and 17.46. No power cuts were reported.

- **Tape 4 (18.22, 15th February - 11.01, 22nd February 2001)**

Tape 4 is the first to have recorded fully and continuously. The family was away for three days during this recording. No changes were observed on the wall.

- **Tape 5 (11.02, 22nd February - 10.35, 1st March 2001)**

Tape 5 was planned to be the final attempt at recording. On Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February, Rose-Mary emailed to say that some brownish stains had appeared on the video wall. On Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> March, the tape was collected and the equipment uninstalled by technicians. Two smudged brown circular "stains" were found on the wall (each approx. 10 cm diameter). These stains were, however, quite different in appearance from previous stains and looked as if they had been smeared on the surface of the wall with some brown substance. Also unlike other stains, Rose-Mary was able to remove them partially by rubbing with a cloth.

When the tape was played, a full and continuous recording was found. Close inspection of the recording reveals several occasions during the week when John-Paul makes what seem to be "gestures" at the wall in the vicinity of the new stains. This unusual behaviour is first noted on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February at 12.33. At 14.24 the same day, John-Paul is seen "waving" at the wall for 10 sec. The following morning, at 08.08, John-Paul is seen gesturing and waving for 45 sec. Nothing unusual happens at the weekend, but on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February at 10.02 John-Paul is seen wearing a hooded fleece gesturing at the wall with what seems to be a stick or pencil. Over a two-and-a-half minute period, John-Paul moves back and forth seven times to the wall. On Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February at 09.07, John-Paul again appears at the wall wearing a hooded fleece and gestures in the vicinity of one of the new stains for 45 sec. On Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February he is again seen briefly gesturing at the wall at 09.05, 10.04, 10.33, 10.53 and 13.30 (wearing the hooded fleece on the last four occasions). Finally, on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> March, at 10.01, John-Paul is seen at the wall gesturing for 45 sec. On this occasion he again appears to have a stick or pencil in his hand. Of the 11 occasions on which John-Paul is recorded gesturing at the wall, six occur less than ten minutes after Rose-Mary is shown exiting through the back door, leaving John-Paul presumably alone in the house. All but one of the occasions when John-Paul is wearing the fleece, Rose-Mary has been recorded having left the house.

Examination of the first four videotapes shows no unusual behaviour by John-Paul at the video wall, and no occasion when he is wearing the hooded fleece. Rose-Mary reports that this fleece appeared in his room about three months earlier and that no one knows where it came from, or to whom it belongs.

### **My experiences of "Brother Doli"**

On my first visit (12<sup>th</sup> November 2000) my camera case, which I had deliberately left on a kitchen unit, was found to be missing. It was discovered, after a search, on the floor behind a chair in the lounge. David, Rose-Mary and John-Paul were in the house at the time and all denied having moved it.

On 24<sup>th</sup> November 2000, at a time when there was some uncertainty about whether the investigation would proceed, I received an email sent from an account (named

"mynach") used for Rose-Mary's art-related business which simply said "mynach dim dim dim" (monk no no no). According to Rose-Mary, several other recipients reported similar emails on or about that date.

On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2000, I received another email from "mynach" which said "tangnefedd tangnefedd mynach" (peace peace monk). It was apparently sent and received at 11.47am, when I was at the Gowers' home surveying the phenomena. Rose-Mary and John-Paul were in the house at the time, although it is always possible that the email was sent from a remote computer.

Also on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2000, I was taken into the master bedroom to record the stains there. On opening the door to the bedroom Rose-Mary and I were immediately struck by an overpowering, heavy smell, apparently of church incense. In response to this, Rose-Mary rushed to open the bedroom window to try to clear the air. As I was preparing to leave the house at about 17.15 that day, a roll of rubbings that I had made was found to be missing from the kitchen table where I had left it. A brief search was unable to locate the roll. I found the roll two visits later (7<sup>th</sup> January 2001) as I was preparing to leave the house. It had been slid over a measuring stick that I had left in the study earlier in the day. Rose-Mary and John-Paul were in the house on 14<sup>th</sup> December, while David was also present on 7<sup>th</sup> January.

As I was collecting up my things to leave about 16.50 on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2001, shortly after the film crew had left, I found a woolly hat had been placed in my camera case, which I had left on one of the kitchen units. The hat turned out to belong to John-Paul. Clearly this could have been put there by any of several people that day, including one of the four members of the film crew.

The final unusual occurrence that I can report relates to a photograph taken by me of stains on the kitchen wall that normally held the decorative mirror (removed for photographing). The photograph shows a very striking stain of a unusual monk-like shape (approx. 22 x 36 cm) that I do not remember seeing at the time (Fig. 13, top right). Unlike the other less prominent stains on the wall, it is not marked with a sticker. This particular stain was not apparent to the naked eye when the wall was later examined and neither David nor Rose-Mary can recall having ever seen it.



Figure 13. Unmarked "monk" stain (top right)

### **Farewell Brother Doli**

On Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2001, I received an email from Rose-Mary, which reported that John-Paul had said that Brother Doli was going away to a happy, smiling place because he (J-P) was going to be 16 and was too old. On Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2001 another email from Rose-Mary reported that, in response to some leading questions, John-Paul had said he was helping Brother Doli and used a brown "secret potion" to make the stains and a special black stick for the carvings. John-Paul also said that the photographs were "another film" although the meaning of this was unclear.

On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2001, at a family gathering (which I attended) to celebrate John-Paul's forthcoming birthday, he was coaxed by his sisters into demonstrating the gesturing that he had been making at the video wall. John-Paul made a gesture similar to making the sign of the cross, although with two horizontal movements, one across the top and one at the bottom. When asked to draw it on a piece of paper, he made a shape like a capital "I", again with horizontals at both top and bottom.

On Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2001, Rose-Mary emailed to say that the carved "gwyn" on the video wall now reads "gwynfa" (paradise). Another email later that day reported that a new stain of a cross had appeared on the same wall, and that there had been many bangs and crashes in the house. "Maybe," she mused, "it is Brother Doli's last stand!"

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2001 was John-Paul's sixteenth birthday. Rose-Mary emailed to report that John-Paul had said that Brother Doli had now gone and would not return.

On Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2001 Rose-Mary emailed to say that about 09.20 she had seen an apparition of a heavily pregnant girl, about 12 years of age, stroking the cat on the patio. The girl was dressed in a blue cloak and a "floaty smock".

On 29th April 2001, Rose-Mary reported in an email that many of the stains have gradually disappeared and that there had been little happening at the house other than a door continually opening and a sweet smell in and around the house.

Despite Brother Doli's heralded departure, over the next several months the family continued to report noises (bangs and crashes) in the house, as well as faint sounds that seemed to be human voices. A few stains also occasionally appeared on walls inside and outside the house. These were similar in appearance to the Welsh word stains, but simply said "Jane" and were written in a different script style. The word "Jane" is also reported to have appeared as intrusions in some emails and printed documents, and as a lawn cutting. "Jane" has also been found carved in the trunk of the holly tree and in a lounge wall.

On 13<sup>th</sup> April 2002, the word "Tom" was discovered carved into the holly tree. On the same day, several "Tom" stains were also found on an outside wall and on the fireplace, together with a new cross and a coronet shape. Rose-Mary reports that a few weeks earlier John-Paul had seen a boy with longish hair sitting on his bed reading his James Bond book. A week or so later, Rose-Mary was walking down the drive and reports seeing a youth with shoulder-length fair hair waving to her through the study window. Only David and John-Paul were in the house at the time.

On the basis of events reported since 6<sup>th</sup> March 2001, it would seem that both the apparitional and physical phenomena are continuing, although at a lower level of intensity than before. The form of the physical phenomena (e.g., stains and carvings) remains essentially the same, although their content no longer expresses a clearly religious agenda. Further investigation of these phenomena is clearly indicated and I intend to continue my involvement in the case. More than a year has now passed, however, since the last clear manifestation of monk-like phenomena. It may therefore be an appropriate time to conclude that the personality of "Brother Doli" has indeed departed from the Gowers' home.

## Discussion

This case is both complex and multifaceted. Many of the apparently psychokinetic phenomena are consistent with a typical poltergeist-type manifestation (e.g., Bender, 1982; Gauld & Cornell, 1979; Owen, 1964; Roll, 1976, 1977). These features include object movements and disappearances, bangs and imitative noises, electrical disturbances, and pools of water. Also typical is the "playful" and disruptive quality of the phenomena, including difficulties experienced in attempting to record directly their manifestation. Additionally, there are features in the family dynamics that are often found in poltergeist cases (e.g., Roll, 1976, 1977; Teguis & Flynn, 1983). These include the presence of a child or adolescent (John-Paul), and preceding family disruptions (e.g., moving house and the moving away from the family home of four out of five children). A strict religious background in the family is also quite typical of poltergeist cases (Teguis & Flynn, 1983). Although this may be observed in the childhood of both David and Rose-Mary, it does not seem to apply within their own family. The fact that Rose-Mary's family apparently experienced a poltergeist when she was a child may be relevant however.

Other aspects of the case are more unusual. Stains and especially carvings of shapes and words are rare in haunting and poltergeist cases, although there are some famous precedents. Perhaps the clearest parallel is with the controversial "Marianne" writings on walls and paper in the Borley Rectory case (e.g., Banks, 1996; O'Neil, 2002). Similarities may also be suggested with the Spanish "Faces of B elmez" (e.g., Tort & Ruiz-Noguez, 1993) although the images in that case were much more painterly and naturalistic. Like the stains in the present case, however, the B elmez faces were said not to respond to attempts at removal using detergents or by scrubbing. Also like the present stains, the faces were reported to appear, change and eventually disappear without any obvious explanation.

Another distinctive feature of the present case is the sheer volume, frequency, duration and variety of the phenomena involved. Although haunting cases may continue for decades or centuries, poltergeist manifestations typically last for only a few months, although cases spanning several years have been reported (Roll, 1976, 1977). The first clear poltergeist-type activity that may be identified in this case was the appearance of the stained cross on the fireplace in October or November 1998. At

the time of writing, more than three years later, similar phenomena continue to be reported.

The present case is also notable for the absence of any bombardment by projectiles or *observed* movements of objects, which are two of the most common features of poltergeist activity (Roll, 1976, 1977). Smells, temperature changes, and visual apparitions, on the other hand, are generally more typical of hauntings rather than poltergeist manifestations (Owen, 1964; Roll, 1976, 1977). Perhaps the most unusual feature of this case, however, is the apparently benign quality of the phenomena. In contrast, poltergeist manifestations are usually annoying, unpleasant, very disruptive or traumatic, often expressing indirectly underlying emotional tensions within the family (e.g., Roll, 1976, 1977; Teguis & Flynn, 1983). Although the "presence" of Brother Doli undeniably affected the family dynamics in various ways, his influence generally seemed to provide the family with a sense of common interest and focus. The benign nature of the manifestations is most obviously expressed in the clearly and consistently *religious* language and imagery of the stains and carvings, although the apparitions were also reported to impart a sense of peace and serenity. It is, of course, arguable whether the vision of the Virgin Mary and subsequent healing allegedly experienced by the Dooleys should be treated as connected with the other phenomena in this case. My own view, however, is that there are sufficient similarities to presume a connection.

Although some of the phenomena may be explainable in terms of natural artefacts, suggestibility of witnesses, errors of perception, or lapses in memory, it is obvious from the evidence of the stains, carvings and photographs that something very unusual has been going on at the Gowers' home. The question, then, is whether these unusual occurrences indicate a genuine case of paranormal activity or whether, on the contrary, they are a hoax. We should also remain open to the possibility that the case may represent some complex mixture of the genuine and fraudulent (cf. Roll, 1976, 1977).

If we consider the evidence of the physical phenomena (e.g., stains, carvings, photographs, object disappearances, emails) then it is clear that all of them *could* be hoaxed. Disappearing objects and emails would be relatively easy to hoax. Although we do not yet know the chemistry involved, the stains on plaster and stone may not be difficult to produce, although their disappearance would perhaps require a more subtle

knowledge of chemistry. David, of course, has degrees in Chemistry and he readily concedes that this makes him a likely suspect in any hoax.

I remain somewhat perplexed by the prominent stain of the "monk" shape that appeared in a photograph I had taken (Fig 13), but that did not seem to have been there at the time (nor was observed subsequently). It is, of course, possible that my memory is mistaken, or that there may have been a faint stain on the wall that was ignored during the survey and for some reason has been particularly highlighted in the photograph. On the other hand, Rose-Mary has reported similar photographic additions on several occasions. It is perhaps significant that I can provide possible independent confirmation of this.

Most of the carvings in plaster, stone and wood could easily be executed with a little care and time. The very finely executed carving of words on the "Monk Stone" would seem, however, to be the work of a skilled craftsman. The overpainting of the plaster carvings would also be difficult to do convincingly and undetectably, as would be the apparent disappearance and filling in of some of these carvings. On the other hand, some of the plaster carvings have appeared to show very crude attempts at filling and overpainting.

There is some evidence that strongly points to certain phenomena being a hoax. Most obvious, perhaps, are the apparent spelling mistakes that seem to be consistent with errors made by a non Welsh-speaking person, possibly someone with poor eyesight, who has access to a Welsh dictionary. Then there is the evidence of the "Monk in the Mirror" photograph, which seems to indicate quite clearly that the image has been daubed on the mirror.

The sceptic will also point out a number of other weaknesses or suspicious features in this case that could suggest hoaxing. These include:

- An apparently Welsh monk, who can write Welsh words, but cannot construct a sentence in the language.
- The apparent attempt to respond to hints dropped by the researcher (e.g., for inaccessible stains, disappearing and raised carvings).
- The "convenient" power cut during video surveillance.

- The announcement of Brother Doli's farewell that occurred within six weeks of sharing my concerns about the "Monk in the Mirror" photograph.
- The failure, following this sharing of concerns, to locate negatives of other key photographic anomalies.
- The failure to confirm the existence of the Dooleys.

If some or all of the phenomena are a hoax, it seems clear that either or both David and Rose-Mary must be the perpetrators (possibly conspiring with others). Because of the amount of time she spends at home, Rose-Mary would appear to have the clearest opportunity. Also many of the phenomena involve her directly (e.g., the apparitions and photographic anomalies). It is inconceivable that John-Paul has the ability to perpetrate such a sophisticated hoax unaided and the other children would seem to have little opportunity to play anything more than a minor role in any conspiracy. On the other hand, on several occasions, new stains and carvings have appeared following family trips away from home. It is conceivable, therefore, that some other person may have access to the house during these times.

Given the range of phenomena reported, a hoaxer would need to have at least a general knowledge of typical poltergeist manifestations, although this is not difficult to acquire. Rose-Mary had her own experience of poltergeist activity during her childhood. As a result of this, both Rose-Mary and David have a long-standing interest in poltergeist and related phenomena. They are also past associate members of the SPR.

The question of the possible motivation for a hoax is a relevant consideration. The family does not seem to be making substantial money from the case at this time, although it is possible that some future financial exploitation might be anticipated (e.g., a book or film). It is true that Rose-Mary's art business may benefit from the connection she has established with the Brother Doli phenomena. However, Rose-Mary's artistic work did not commence until January 2000, nearly three years after the first phenomena (the Marian visions) were reported. Another obvious possibility is that the family enjoys the interest generated in the case, especially among the media and on the Internet. Rose-Mary in particular may be said to have "promoted" the case in various ways, through radio and TV appearances, in newspaper interviews and on several websites (e.g., Gower, 2000 and others cited in References). I do not know the

individuals or the family dynamics well enough to speculate whether there might be other, more complex, psychological motives for a hoax. Perhaps the most straightforward explanation might be that the phenomena simply represent the hoaxer's hobby, or are an expression of creative fun, with an additional reward being the delight of fooling others.

Against the argument that this is a hoax perpetrated by a single person, there is the testimony of the other members of the family confirming that strange noises are frequently heard in the house and that the stains and carvings often appear under seemingly impossible conditions. Also there are the apparition-type experiences reported by the daughters (John-Paul's experiences are, of course, very difficult to assess). This confirmation could indicate either a family conspiracy, or else that at least some of the phenomena may be genuine (i.e., not fabricated, albeit not necessarily paranormal). Alternatively, it may indicate that other members of the family have simply responded to the suggestions provided by the framing of the phenomena as the work of "Brother Doli" and have therefore been set to experience and interpret events at the house accordingly.

If the case involves genuine poltergeist-type activity, the question arises as to who may be the *focal person* or catalyst (Bender, 1982; Owen, 1964; Roll, 1976, 1977). John-Paul might appear to be the obvious candidate, especially considering his age together with his activities and reported statements in the final days before Brother Doli left. However, as mentioned, he seems to lack understanding of, and shows no real interest in, the phenomena and there is little evidence generally for his direct involvement. In contrast, Rose-Mary does appear to be the central figure in many of the reported events. It is therefore possible that she may be the focus and that she possesses some latent psychokinetic potential. Rose-Mary's own reported childhood poltergeist experiences may be indicative in this context.

The third main possibility is that this is a mixed case in which there is a core of genuine but relatively low-level paranormal phenomena (e.g., noises, apparitions, and possibly some staining) that has been deceptively imitated or elaborated upon. Such elaboration or "imitative fraud" (Cox, 1961), perhaps occurring in a dissociated state of mind, has been suggested as a feature to be considered in poltergeist investigations (e.g., Bender, 1982; Roll, 1976, 1977). On this assumption, investigation becomes particularly difficult because the suspicion or discovery of some hoaxed elements

does not immediately invalidate all other aspects, although it inevitably tarnishes the overall reputation of the case. The investigator's problematic task then becomes one of carefully examining each phenomenon separately in the attempt to establish or eliminate the various possibilities for fraud.

In conclusion, the phenomena that have occurred, and are continuing to occur, at the Gowers' home are extraordinary. They also remain highly ambiguous. The reader may wish, of course, to draw his or her own conclusions from the evidence I have outlined in this paper. In my opinion it is not possible, at this stage, to be certain about the status of this interesting case.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my particular thanks to David and Rose-Mary Gower for their invitation to conduct this investigation, for their continuing openness and co-operation, and for their most generous hospitality on my visits. To their family, thanks for their willingness to discuss the case. Keith Nicholson, Mike Kavanagh, and Steve Lawler of John Moores University contributed invaluable technical advice and assistance. Dr Branwen Jarvis of University of Wales Bangor provided most helpful consultation on the Welsh language. Three anonymous reviewers and Dr Zofia Weaver gave helpful and detailed suggestions for improvements in content and style.

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