

## This is one of the true stories from 'Ghosts in The Garden of England' by Alan Tigwell

### Longfield, Kent

(Written as told to me by the father)

A few years ago, I took my children (one boy aged 11 and a girl aged 8) to a boot fair near to where Brands Hatch racecourse is located. It was huge and one of the largest I've ever been to. Those of you who frequent boot fairs will know the majority of items people sell are absolute rubbish; basically what they couldn't sell on Ebay. However, my kids love going to them and usually end up getting some toys or things to play with. I like them because I spend very little money in comparison to going to a toy shop!

On this day, I was looking at a stall with books and my children had wandered a little further to the next few tables. While I was picking through the many books, my son came running over to me with something in a bag. He was very excited and extremely pleased with himself. When he got to me, he immediately opened the bag to show me the contents and shouted, "Look what I've got!" I looked in and thought it was hilarious, all be it hideous at the same time; it was an old ventriloquist dummy.

I looked at the face staring up at me for a few seconds before I remembered that I hadn't given my children any money yet, so I asked him how he'd paid for the dummy. My son told me the man a few stalls down the row said he could have it for free. I did believe my son as he's a very honest person, but I said we should go over to the stall where he got it from; just to make sure the owner was happy with his decision and to thank him for the free gift.

When we got to the stall, the man was hurriedly packing up and practically throwing his other items back into his car. When he saw my son and the bag, he looked worried. Thinking he was worried I was going to make a complaint or something like that, I reassured him we were grateful for the free gift, but I wanted to check whether he wanted some money for the item. It was quite large and must have been worth something so giving it away for free was very generous. Cutting me off before I finished my sentence, he adamantly told me that my son was to keep the dummy. His demeanour changed and he developed a wild, crazed look in his eyes. His stance became more aggressive and insisted that the dummy had chosen my son, it was now his. With that he returned to packing his car up.

Believing he was either eccentric or insane, I took my son's hand and we went and found my daughter who had found a stall with a box of teddy bears and was busy deciding which one she should take home. My son thrust the bag under her nose to show her his prized possession (I'm sure he knew it would terrify her!) and she recoiled in horror, my son giggling at the response. I pulled him away, helped her choose her teddy bear and we headed home to give my wife the good news about the free gift.

At home, we found my wife and my son took the dummy out of the bag to show her. Let's just say, she wasn't particularly impressed! Now it was out of the bag, we could see the state it was in. It had been extensively repaired with masking tape and it was in a very sorry state. The jaw, which would normally open and close was stuck fast, it looked as though it had been glued shut and as much as I tried, I couldn't prise it open. It had no clothes so it was basically a head with hair that was greasy and matted down, a stuffed body covered in tape and little black plastic boots stuck to the end of the legs. All in all, it was a mess, but my son loved it and for about six weeks he took it everywhere with him, talking to it and pretending to listen to what the dummy was saying. He called it 'Tapey' because of all the masking tape keeping it together.

One day, I came into the living room and saw my son sat on the sofa, staring into space. Tapey, his usual companion was nowhere to be seen. I asked if he was OK and he told me he didn't like Tapey and they weren't friends any more I sat down and asked what had happened. My son said that Tapey had started to say bad things, was scaring him and was keeping him awake at night. Assuming this was a child's overactive imagination, I played along with him as he was obviously upset about the situation. I told him we could put Tapey in a box and put him in the attic or out in the garage. When I said this, we heard a loud crash come from upstairs. I went up to see what had caused it, only to find my son's TV screen had been broken. There was a huge crack across the screen with a small hole in the middle where something had obviously hit it. I looked around the floor and found a marble; it's the only thing which was around that could have damaged the screen and the hole matched the size of the marble. As always, the dummy was sat on my son's bed.

When I told my son what had broken, he was obviously upset and immediately blamed the dummy. He told me how he'd put the dummy in the cupboard under the stairs and had gone to sit in the living room. In my mind, for the dummy to get back up onto his bed, the only explanations were that my son was confused about putting the dummy in the cupboard, someone else had moved it back upstairs, or unbelievably, the dummy had made it up to the bedroom on its own. As my son and I were the only people in the house I'm sure you can guess what I thought, but as he was upset about the TV, I didn't push the matter. I also couldn't explain how the TV had been smashed with the marble as it happened when we were both downstairs in the living room. As promised, I took the dummy away, put it in a box and left it in our garage.

This is when the unexplained things started to happen, and believe me, I know only too well how implausible and farfetched they sound!

At night, when the kids were in bed, my wife and I would hear the patter of feet upstairs. When we would go and check on the children, they would be fast asleep. Objects would either be moved or disappear completely, only to turn up in the most bizarre places. My wife would hear giggling and other noises in the house when the children were at school.

One Sunday, I had taken the children swimming and my wife was cleaning my son's room; as she was Hoovering around his bed, she had a fright. She had looked under his bed ready to push the end of the Hoover under, when she had seen two eyes staring back at her. It was Tapey. When she recovered from the shock, she grabbed him, took him downstairs and threw him into the cupboard under the stairs.

When we returned from the swimming pool, she asked him why he'd taken Tapey out of the garage. He replied he hadn't, Tapey had done it by himself. I went to the cupboard to get the dummy, but couldn't see where my wife had put him. I called her over and we both looked; with an increasingly sinking feeling, we decided the dummy wasn't in the cupboard any more. I could tell by the look on my wife's face that we both knew where we needed to look next.

My wife and I went up to my son's room and walked to the bed. I knew neither of us wanted to look, but knew we had to. I got down on all fours and looked under the bed and as expected, saw two eyes glaring back at me. My stomach just dropped. Although I didn't want to touch it, I grabbed the doll and we went downstairs. When my children saw it, they both burst into tears. While my wife consoled them, I took the dummy outside and put it in the bin, thinking that would be the end of it. It wasn't.

The following day I went to put some rubbish in the bin; when I opened the lid, the dummy was gone. I went straight back upstairs and looked under my son's bed. Thankfully, there was nothing under it. Relieved, I stood up and turned around only to see Tapey sat on the shelf behind the door; his eyes staring blankly at me and his grin as menacing as always. I grabbed the dummy and went to the garden; I grabbed a spade which was next to the garage and smashed the dummy's head into pieces. I have to say, I thoroughly enjoyed that part! I also used the spade to separate the body, tearing open the masking tape. Dirty stuffing came spilling out together with a small leather bag. I opened the bag and inside I found a powder of some sort, what looked like dried herbs and what I believe was a couple of small animal bones.

I dug a deep hole and placed the smashed remains of the dummy, the stuffing and the bag at the bottom. From the garage I grabbed some firelighters and liquid which we use to light our barbecue and set light to the evil thing at the bottom of the hole. As the flames engulfed the tangled mess of smashed and torn dummy, I felt a huge sense of relief. When the flames were out, I covered the hole with soil and stamped it down. As far as my wife and children are concerned, the final part of the story never happened and they think the dummy was taken away by the dustmen. I have no plans to tell them Tapey's remains are buried in the garden!

### **Update from Alan Tigwell**

I was contacted by the father shortly after the initial events took place as he was concerned about any future possible issues that may come up with the dummy. Primarily what should he do if Tapey dug his way to the surface and crawled out of his grave? We had an extensive conversation and it was left that he would contact me if he had concerns in the future.

About two years after the initial interview, the father contacted me again. The family was about to move to a new house, and he was worried about leaving Tapey's remains buried in the garden. When the rest of the family was out, he decided to dig Tapey up, and take him to the local tip. He was obviously nervous when he began to dig but he continued none the less, and soon the hideous face was unearthed; its eyes staring blankly up at the father from its grave.

Seeing the face of Tapey was an issue for the father; and he was shocked. He was absolutely sure he had smashed the face into pieces several years before, and yet here it was, the dirty face, fully formed and staring straight at him. He grabbed the head by the hair and drop kicked it into the open door of the garden shed, scoring the perfect goal as the head sailed through the doorway. He slammed the door shut and quickly locked it, then came inside and called me.

When I arrived, thankfully rest of the family hadn't returned from their day out so the children were spared seeing the sight of their father. He was a mess! Terrified with tears streaming down his face.

He explained to me how as the head flew through the air, he was positive the eyes blinked, and the mouth opened. When he had slammed the shed door shut, he told me that he heard a little giggle coming from the inside. Whilst there is a very plausible and natural explanation for this to happen (after all, he had just kicked the head into the air with quite a force) he was having none of it. As far as he was concerned, I was having the head and I was going to take it away; he wouldn't take no for an answer.

Without having any choice in the matter, I took the head and it has been with me, sealed in a box, for the last decade.