

COPYRIGHT NOTICE



FedUni ResearchOnline

<http://researchonline.federation.edu.au>

This is the published version of:

Waldron, D. (2014) Playing the ghost: Ghost hoaxing and supernaturalism in late Nineteenth-Century Victoria. *Provenance: The Journal of the Public Record Office Victoria*, 13(2014), pp. 1-16.

Available online at

<http://prov.vic.gov.au/publications/provenance/provenance2014/playing-the-ghost>

Copyright © 2014 David Waldron. This Document is protected by copyright. All rights reserved. It is reproduced with permission.

Playing the Ghost:

■ prov.vic.gov.au/publications/provenance/provenance2014/playing-the-ghost



by David Waldron

'Playing the ghost: ghost hoaxing and supernaturalism in late nineteenth-century Victoria', *Provenance: The Journal of Public Record Office Victoria*, issue no. 13, 2014. ISSN 1832-2522. Copyright © David Waldron

Dr David Waldron is a lecturer in History and Anthropology at Federation University with a research focus on folklore and community identity. He is the author of *Sign of the Witch: Modernity and the Pagan Revival*, *Shock! The Black Dog of Bungay: a Case Study in Local Folklore* and *Snarls from the Tea-Tree: Victoria's Big Cat Folklore*.

Author email: d.waldron@federation.edu.au

Abstract

On the night of Wednesday 29 May 1895, two young ladies were approached by a spectral figure clad in black robes, with arms and face covered in phosphorescent paint. This individual frequently patrolled the area around Sturt Street and Dana Street in Ballarat attempting to harass young women. A search of newspaper articles from this period indicates a wide-spread proliferation of ghost hoaxing, referred to as 'playing the ghost', between the 1870s and World War I, with a particular focus on the Ballarat region in central Victoria. This extraordinary behaviour occurred in the context of the rising popularity of spiritualism, which challenged traditional notions of the role of the dead, as well as a similar proliferation of ghost and monster hoaxing in Britain, perhaps best exemplified by the character of Spring Heeled Jack.

This paper examines the phenomenon of ghost hoaxing in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Victoria through its reportage in the print media of the era, with a focus on the causes and legacies of the phenomenon in the broader cultural context of central Victoria and the Goldfields region.

Ghosts have long been a popular subject in central Victoria. Even in the late goldrush era, belief in ghosts, ghost stories and hauntings were popular subjects for entertainment and attracted significant attention in the printed press, and at public gatherings and lectures. In a sense, Ballarat in particular was a 'haunted' city from very early in its colonial history. With such a demand and popular interest in ghosts, Ballarat also became a hot bed of spiritualism and ghost hoaxing. This paper examines the history and context of ghost hoaxing in nineteenth-century colonial Victoria with a focus on Ballarat and the central Victorian region. In particular, this paper will examine the social and intellectual context of ghost hoaxing.

One indication of the level of early interest in the subject of ghosts and hoaxing was a lecture given on the subject

held at the Mechanics Institute in Melbourne on 9 June 1860. The venue was packed to capacity to hear Archibald Michie, later the Agent-General for the Colony of Victoria, lecture on the subject of ghosts and hauntings. Amid cheering from the crowd, he argued that while a man 'may be wiser', having 'read physiology, ... studied insanity and the various forms of delusion springing from morbid action of the brain', such a man,

has lost forever the supernatural shudder, the terrifically delicious creeping of the hair, and the heart coming up into the mouth, attendant on his listening to, or reading of, for the first time, a good authentic, and by justices of peace attested, ghost story.[1]

He later went on to argue that 'ghost seeing' and 'ghost feeling' are 'uniquely the preserve of humanity' and that the decline in the respectability of the belief in ghosts had led to a loss of the sense of the sublime, wonder and connection with heritage and the magic of life.[2] This lecture, which denied the physical existence of ghosts but made a case for their value in heritage, storytelling and their aesthetic role in the arts and literature, initiated a flurry of letters in local papers and began a series of regular seminars and public discussion on the subject.

The following year, a similarly well-attended and favourably-received lecture was given by David Blair of Melbourne under the title 'A Plea for Ghosts'. This speech was also the source of a great deal of interest in Victorian newspapers and throughout the local community.[3] It was discussed extensively through letters to the editor; referred to routinely in newspaper articles and often linked to broader concerns about the colony's spiritual health and the proliferation of ghost sightings, exorcisms and hoaxes. Underlying these public lectures and the discussion of ghosts in the print media were very fundamental questions about the nature of human existence, the spirit world and the soul. These were issues of immense emotional and cultural significance, but the traditional views offered on these subjects by clerical and church authorities were under threat from the rise of science and the intellectual culture of the Enlightenment. As David Blair commented in his lecture,

[w]ithout a study of the laws of man's spiritual being it was impossible to explain and understand man's physical nature. How then could we say that we would deny all possibility of the existence of a spirit land?[4]

For Blair this was an issue that was fundamental to an understanding of human experience and one which needed to be followed through the process of 'philosophy, the facts and the light thrown by revelation.'[5] Conversely, for Michie the question of the 'facts' had been resolved in the negative but belief in ghosts and their role in generating emotional connection to heritage and the sublime were a fundamental part of human experience.

However, despite their differences, both speakers agreed that ghosts and ghost stories were a phenomenon which should be approached through the vehicle of secular philosophy and science, as opposed to the traditional route offered by the church or local superstitions and folklore. Nonetheless debate was polarised between scepticism, which saw ghosts as an intriguing cultural phenomenon belonging to the superstitious past, and that which saw a critical investigation of ghosts and hauntings as a means to understand the nature of human experience and the soul. In a sense, it was a search for a new eschatology in which those questions of life after death and the nature of the soul and the spirit realm could be resolved through knowledge, science and intellectual enlightenment set against the superstitions of the past. Indeed, in yet another extremely popular lecture, in this case given by Dr Hickson at the Mechanics Institute on 2 September 1864, it was claimed that,

[t]he entity or spirit was altogether independent of the body, which was only functional, not intelligent. The soul appeared as an objective ghost, and made itself visible by drawing 'electrical power' from

The high public profile of these lectures and public debates was underlined by the popularity of ghost sightings and exorcisms in Ballarat (and indeed throughout central Victoria).[7] Part of this was undoubtedly the proliferation of beliefs and customs of immigrants who flooded to the goldfields in the 1850s, bringing their culture and folklore with them. In studies of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British folklore, a prominent theme in the literature was the use of local folklore and superstition as a vehicle to reaffirm community identity in the face of substantial social change and threats to community cohesion.[8]

In this sense, culturally specific beliefs in the spirit world form a profound link to homeland, community identity and connection to heritage.[9] Similarly, as O'Giollain argues, 'folklore' as an object of scientific study is predicated on the notion of the death of tradition and becomes a focal point of concern precisely when extant traditions come under threat through social, cultural and economic transformation.[10] At the same time, these beliefs are profoundly shaped through the anxieties and framework of the present as a romantic and nostalgic reconstruction of the past. Michie's nostalgic longing for the folklore of haunting and ghost stories as part of the sublime experience of life and heritage, while rejecting their existence through the framework of scientific progress, particularly reflected these romantic themes. As a result, this approach to supernatural folklore both appropriated the heritage of ghostly hauntings yet also relegated them to the realm of safe and controlled nostalgic space.

It is in this context that we see a central Victoria which is saturated by ghost stories, exorcisms and hauntings and, by the 1870s, Ballarat, Bendigo and Melbourne had become a flourishing centre for spiritualism. Indeed, so prolific was the rise of ghost stories and the demand for exorcisms that an editorial in the *Argus* commented that,

[i]t is a noticeable symptom of the reactionary movement against the materialistic philosophy so much in vogue at the present day that ghosts, after having been objects of contempt to the educated and intelligent classes for some generations, are beginning to grow again into favour. We are not now alluding to the phenomena of spiritualism, which some years ago threatened to make the spirits of the dead quite as common as, and a great deal more commonplace than, the persons of the living. But outside the obscure regions tenanted by this creed, there are distinct signs that ghosts, which we thought were laughed out of existence by the robust common sense of the eighteenth century, are creeping back into the world, revisiting again the glimpses of the moon, in these rather sickly times of the moribund nineteenth century.[11]

Tensions were running high on the topics of spirits and ghosts throughout the nineteenth century and provoked strong public sentiment on the issue. This is perhaps best exemplified by an 1881 public gathering before the Galloway monument in Ballarat attended by 400 people on the topic of ghosts and spiritualism. The meeting led to a considerable public disturbance when a local preacher spoke out against spiritualism and ghosts as agents of the devil and was chased up the street by an angry mob.[12]



Illustration of a ghost hoaxer beaten by a mob in Devon 1894, Illustrated Police News, 21 September 1894, p. 1.

In such a climate, ghost stories flourished in fiction, literature and reportage through the print media, local journals and public gatherings. Stories abounded of headless horsemen, women in white, headless animals, and ghosts of murdered victims, all of which proliferated alongside an increased popularity of such tales published as fiction. By the 1890s the proliferation of these stories came to be referred to as the 'ghost nuisance', particularly with regards to the concern that these panics could tie up scarce police resources and waste public time and money.^[13] Indeed, some editorials went so far as to advocate armed constables and vigilantes patrolling ruined buildings and cemeteries with orders to shoot any ghosts on sight; claiming that if they were really ghosts no harm would be done and if not, buckshot would teach hoaxers and pranksters a lesson.^[14]

Most commonly these stories were reported within the discourse of scepticism; showing both an enjoyment of storytelling, yet also relegating the experience of ghost hunting to the realm of ridicule and bemusement. One such example was the story of a headless ghost animal revealed to be a cat with its head trapped in a lobster tin.^[15] Another similar story was that of a Castlemaine stockman terrified of a female headless horsewoman 'with a fine body' that was later revealed to be a misidentification of an abandoned drapers dummy lying next to an old log.^[16] Other stories were treated with more credulity such as the ghost of a young man believed to have been seen in Castlemaine,^[17] or the often reported tale of 'Fisher's ghost'.^[18] Some prominent examples in Ballarat were the 'Burnt Bridge Ghost',^[19] which followed the iconic pattern of a haunted house, and the Warrenheip brewery ghost which was followed with ridicule in the *Ballarat Star* but with some dramatic flourish in other newspapers.^[20] In many cases however, ghost stories and experiences were placed in the framework of hoaxing or 'playing the ghost'. Here ghostly reports were attributed to individuals engaging in hoaxing, robbery, assault and even sexual assault while dressed in the paraphernalia of a ghost.

Ghost hoaxing or 'playing the ghost' was rife through newspaper reportage between the 1860s and early twentieth century. People in costumes would leap out, assail, scare and throw things at people late at night, often with quite dramatic hollers, calls and mysterious displays of lights. Many of these ghost figures would wear quite elaborate costumes with theatrical flourish and, as a result, gained nicknames through the local press as they played cat and mouse games with police and local vigilantes. One such young man wearing a white sheet and a tall sugarloaf hat was given a beating by two local residents in lieu of being handed over to police; afterward he made entreaties to protect his reputation and employment in a local state school.^[21] Another man was arrested and charged £200 for damages after assaulting a police officer's daughter while dressed as a ghost.^[22] One figure, who haunted the

region between Ballarat and Kilmore, gained the title of 'Wizard Bombardier' for dressing in white robes with a sugarloaf hat. He would scare workers and passers-by with eerie screams and calls, then throw rocks and other materials at them before agilely making his escape across the countryside.[23]



A common component of these scares was the use of phosphorescent paint, made readily available after its patenting by William Balmain in 1881.[24] One man in Essendon emblazoned a skull and cross-bones around town with phosphorescent paint before scaring people. Most commonly individuals would simply soak a sheet in phosphorescent paint to create the image of a glowing green ghost.[25] Others however went to more elaborate lengths, such as a 'ghost' dressed in a knight costume with a glowing breastplate featuring the words 'Prepare to meet thy doom', who reportedly threatened to behead a young boy of twelve in the late evening.[26] Another common theme was the use of coffin lids as a prop along with other ghostly paraphernalia and phosphorescent paint.[27]

In many of these cases the reportage indicates that the camouflage of a ghostly costume served as a vehicle to

cover sexual assault and robbery, particularly directed at young women. One individual patrolled the area between Sturt and Dana streets of Ballarat dressed in black robes, with his face and forearms smeared with phosphorescent paint, to create the illusion of a corpse in the late evening. The hoaxer routinely accosted and terrified women in the area, leading to some groups of men engaging in vigilantism, before being arrested by police.[28] Similarly, another 'apparition', this one bearing a skull and cross-bones emblazoned on his bare chest above the word 'Death', reportedly exposed himself to a young man in Ballarat.[29] Yet another man near Bendigo was found to be accosting young women dressed in a white overcoat with a suit dyed with phosphorescent paint underneath.[30] In some cases these events could lead to violence, as occurred in a case in Ballarat where a retired miner by the name of Frederick Parks was stabbed and assaulted by a man dressed as a ghost. The remarkable ghost costume of the assailant featured white clothes, face and arms soaked in phosphorescent paint and a coffin lid strapped to his back. Newspaper reports indicated the ghostly figure was assaulting a young woman when the miner went to intervene and grappled with the assailant. The 'ghost' then drew a dagger and stabbed Mr Parks before making his escape over a nearby fence.[31]



Artist's impression of the Ballarat hoaxer who assaulted a woman on Eureka St while dressed as a ghost in phosphorous, with a coffin lid strapped to his back. Artwork by Antoinette Stokell, reproduced by permission.

Perhaps the most famous of these 'ghosts' was the case of Herbert Patrick McLennan who was charged with indecent exposure and assaulting women after dark in Ballarat in 1904.^[32] The ghost, described as wearing a long overcoat, with Indian rubber boots and wielding a cat o' nine tails accosted young women and, it was alleged, sexually assaulted and exposed himself to them between Mair Street and Lydiard Street in Ballarat.^[33] A reward of £5 was issued for information leading to his arrest and police patrolled the region dressed as women in hopes of catching the man in the act.^[34] A letter had also been addressed to the Mayor of Ballarat by this particular 'ghost':

Dear Sir,

I see that you and your bally councillor's nave fixed a reward of £5 on my head, but you didn't say whether dead or alive; and, furthermore, you said you would have me plugged with a lead on sight.

Mr. Mayor, I give you warning that the first man I see with his hand in his pocket, or otherwise looking suspicious, I will plug a bullet through him. I hope you will caution the 'Rakebite' portion of your council of my intentions.

*Yours truly,
The Ghost.*



Artist's impression of Ballarat hoaxer Herbert Patrick McLennan, a local elocutionist and senior clerk, who was claimed to have exposed himself to ladies and assaulted them with a cat and nine tails while wearing a white glowing outfit complete with a white frock coat, knee high Indian rubber boots and a white top hat. Artwork by Antoinette Stokell, reproduced by permission.

McLennan, who worked as a clerk on Lydiard Street was also a well-noted elocutionist. He was described as a well-connected and respected individual and his arrest was regarded with considerable shock by the Ballarat community. Police had, in fact, suspected him for some time but had waited until they had collated sufficient evidence before

making formal charges and, upon his arrest, seized several garments and props from his Drummond Street home. Court records indicated he was charged with assaulting young women and was guilty of 'wilfully and obscenely exposing his person and is therefore deemed to be a rogue and a vagabond'.^[35] McLennan was found guilty and sentenced to a year's hard labour in Ballarat Goal but was released soon after on appeal, having been able to produce an alibi for one the attacks. However, the judge noted that based on the original evidence before the court there should be no question that the original conviction was appropriate with the evidence before the court at that time.^[36]

While less common, there were a number of women who also engaged in ghost hoaxing during this period. A number of articles from Ballarat, for example, referred to a woman who dressed as a ghost at night to steal chickens from neighbouring homes.^[37] One lady, who had previously been found to be impersonating a male, had taken to hiding under bridges wearing phosphorescent robes and a hideous mask before frightening passers-by 'into fits'.^[38] Another story featured a woman dressed as a ghost who played the guitar in the vicinity of the Junction Hotel, Sandhurst.^[39]



Artist's impression of a woman who engaged in ghost hoaxing under bridges wearing a white phosphorous sheet and a hideous paper mache mask. Artwork by Antoinette Stokell, reproduced by permission.

While many of these stories were treated with a great deal of sensationalism, many were also treated with a great deal of scepticism and ridicule. Individuals were also engaged in 'laying the ghost' by exposing hoaxes and examples of misidentification. One man, by the name of Charles Horman, went so far as to fire his shotgun at a suspected ghost and beat another with a walking stick to assist a young woman who had been accosted moments earlier.[40] A woman by the name of Mrs Date took a similar approach, having found a haunt after her daughter had been assaulted earlier that week. She went to the location with her bull terrier and sicked the animal on the unsuspecting hoaxer. Another case from 1913 involved a man in white phosphorescent robes being severely beaten in retaliation for his nearly scaring an elderly gentleman to death in Buninyong.[41] Such acts of vigilantism while 'laying the ghost' seemed common and were presented quite favourably by local papers as an antidote to the ghost nuisance.

A search of archival court records pertaining to petty crime held at the Ballarat Archives Centre of Public Record

Office Victoria indicated that these activities were, by and large, tried as petty misdemeanours and examples of lunacy. Most were cases in which the perpetrators had wilfully exposed themselves, used foul language, made public nuisances or were described with the simple phrase 'Lunatic found wandering at large'.^[42] Rarely were the features of ghostly accoutrements mentioned in police or court records. That being said the reports seemed to indicate that these cases were reasonably prolific and a regular public nuisance, however most of these individuals were simply discharged, fined or given to the care of Ararat Lunatic Asylum.^[43]

These examples of ghost hoaxing, while quite prolific in Australia, were mirrored by similar examples in Britain. Historian Mike Dash, in his history of the British legend of 'Spring Heeled Jack', discusses the enormous proliferation of ghost and monster hoaxing in Victorian England.^[44] He cites, for example, the story of the Peckham ghost where a young lady was assaulted by a man pretending to be a ghost. He was dressed in a long overcoat with white lining, a white waistcoat and a dark hat with a plume of spectacular feathers to hide his features. Another story featured a man engaged in monster-related pranks at a police barracks in Newport dressed in a sheep-skin costume with a tail.^[45] These stories proliferated and essentially revolved around the use of elaborate costuming and theatrical tricks to appropriate local ghost and monster folklore in pranks played on, predominantly, young women. In the case of his alleged assault of Jane Alsop in 1838, arguably the most famous Spring Heeled Jack story, we already see the patterns of ghost hoaxing and the response that was to become the staple of the Victorian era. As the *Times* recorded,

[a]t about a quarter to nine o'clock ... she heard a violent ringing at the gate at the front of the house, and on going to the door to see what was the matter, she saw a man standing outside, of whom she enquired what was the matter, and requested he would not ring so loud. The person instantly replied that he was a policeman, and said 'For God's sake, bring me a light, for we have caught Spring-heeled Jack here in the lane.' She returned into the house and brought a candle, and handed it to the person, who appeared enveloped in a long cloak, and whom she at first really believed to be a policeman. The instant she had done so, however, he threw off his outer garment, and applying the lighted candle to his breast, presented a most hideous and frightful appearance, and vomited forth a quantity of blue and white flames from his mouth, and his eyes resembled red balls of fire. From the hasty glance, which her fright enabled her to get of his person, she observed that he wore a large helmet, and his dress, which appeared to fit him very tight, seemed to her to resemble white oil skin. Without uttering a sentence, he darted at her, and catching her partly by her dress and the back part of her neck, placed her head under one of his arms, and commenced tearing her gown with his claws, which she was certain were of some metallic substance. She screamed out as loud as she could for assistance, and by considerable exertion got away from him, and ran towards the house to get in. Her assailant, however, followed her, and caught her on the steps leading to the half-door, when he again used considerable violence, tore her neck and arms with his claws, as well as a quantity of hair from her head; but she was at length rescued from his grasp by one of her sisters. Miss Alsop added, that she had suffered considerably all night from the shock she had sustained, and was then in extreme pain, both from the injury done to her arm, and the wounds and scratches inflicted by the miscreant about her shoulders and neck with his claws or hands.^[46]



Illustration of Spring Heeled Jack at Newport Arch, Illustrated Police News, 3 November 3 1877, p. 1.

A later investigation by police found a person had been seen in the vicinity by several eye-witnesses wearing a large cloak and carrying a small lantern with him. This pattern was to be repeated by many imitators throughout the nineteenth century, impersonating not only Spring Heeled Jack (whose exploits were also extensively covered in the Australian press), but many other local ghosts and monsters deriving from English folklore. It is in this context that the phenomenon needs to be understood; a tradition of ghost hoaxing or 'playing the ghost' that integrated established ghost folklore with theatrical performance and elaborate costuming. These attacks drew attention to the margins of moral respectability and the boundaries of Enlightenment reason.

Much of the literature of ghost stories and hauntings has focused on the notion of trauma. This is to say that ghost stories essentially function as a means to memorialise trauma and bind communities together through the act of storytelling. The story may not have occurred in a literal sense at the site in question but it would refer to the kinds of issues faced by the community in their shared past. In this way stories of traumatic experiences, and the lessons drawn from them, are brought into the present as part of a shared identity and heritage. They are given emotional poignancy through the act of storytelling and the emotional impact of the haunting experience, real or imagined. Ghost stories and hauntings are thus a multi-layered experience, pregnant with meaning, which use the traumas of the past to shape the present.^[47] Furthermore, as Gordan argues, the ghost is a figure that speaks of loss, trauma and injustice that, through story-telling, engenders a 'haunting effect'. They are unsettling figures, frightening and uncanny and thus challenge fundamental taboos of life and death, belief and faith, and reason and emotion. In a sense the 'haunting effect' and terror of a ghost undermines reason and the conscious mind through the overwhelming and unsettling nature of the uncanny.^[48] It is this kind of approach to ghosts and ghost stories that Michie was alluding to in his lecture at the Ballarat Mechanics Institute in 1860. Ghosts were a vestige of the past which connected us to heritage, trauma and identity through folklore and story-telling. They are a form of mythmaking which transcends the boundaries of the real and emotionally, perhaps spiritually, connects us to place, community and identity through the shared connection to traumas of the past.



Illustration of the Aldershot ghost hoaxes, Illustrated Police News, 28 April 1877, p. 1.

In this case, while the ghost hoaxes certainly drew upon the established imagery of hauntings with links to colonial Australia's British forebears, there are unique differences to the classic notion of the ghost story. They represented a new approach, better illustrated by the lectures of Blair and Hickson, that disconnected ghosts from heritage and brought them into the realm of the present. They were reinterpreted into the realm of paranormal phenomena which needed to be literally true phenomena to be understood through the rhetoric of science (or pseudo-science). At the same time, they were vehicles to understand the human eschatological condition, in which the traditional answers put forward by the church had been challenged by science and Enlightenment reason. It was a thoroughly modern approach which took the age old issues of life, death and the nature of the soul and spirit world; one which required folklore and belief to be validated through the symbols and rhetoric of modern science (even though many of these scientific studies ended up being themselves a kind of 'pseudo-science'). This is also tied to a broader history of differing religious attitudes to ghost stories as they intertwined with Protestant and Catholic rivalry derived from England. On the one hand ghosts were constructed as a legacy of Papist superstition and idolatry, and thus a symbol of Catholic and Irish rebellion, and on the other hand linked to a Protestant notion of the realm of the spirits that could commune with the living. This ambiguity underlay the folk beliefs of ghosts and hauntings, as well as the more educated and refined popularity of spiritualism and the enormous popularity of ghost stories and the gothic in Victorian popular literature.[49]

So while some hoaxers were apparently driven by more base and criminally-inspired motives, the act of 'playing the ghost', and the evident joy of a successful hoax, challenged the surety of intellectual certainty of the non-existence of the spirit world and the folklore of the past. It meant cloaking oneself with the paraphernalia of the supposedly buried superstitious past. The act of hoaxing also acted as a liminal space outside the borders of Victorian morality and respectability as a site of rebellion. It also gave a sense of anonymity and danger which permitted the breaking of taboos and the carnivalesque inversion of morals, beliefs and behaviours of acceptable society. In this context it is unsurprising that many of these hoaxing accounts involved the inversion of traditional gender roles and the

perpetrating of sexual taboos, such as exposure, sexual assault and even foul language. The elaborate nature of the costuming and the care taken by the hoaxers to create a sense of theatre around their exploits gives us an insight into how important this sense of transgression was to hoaxers who routinely risked arrest, disgrace and vigilantism to 'become' ghosts. What better way to challenge class, Enlightenment values and the social order than to become a symbol of death (in some cases literally, given the high toxicity of phosphorescent paint) to terrify people beyond reason.

Endnotes

[1] *Argus*, 5 June 1860, p. 5.

[2] *ibid.*; *Ballarat Star*, 23 November 1861, p. 1.

[3] *Ballarat Star*, 13 November 1861, pp. 2–3.

[4] *ibid.*

[5] *ibid.*

[6] *Ballarat Star*, 3 September 1864, p. 2.

[7] A cursory search through newspapers reveals many articles on the subjects of ghosts, hauntings and exorcisms as well as many lectures and discussions pertaining to spiritualism, séances and attempts to contact the dead. In Ballarat's case much of this is chronicled in James Curtis, *Rustlings of a Golden City: being a record of spiritualistic experiences in Ballarat and Melbourne*, Office of 'Light', London, 1902; see also R Lorimer, *Report of the Ballarat Psychological Association; referring to a series of séances held with Mr Jesse Shepard, the celebrated musical and physical medium*, James Curtis, Ballarat, Victoria, 1879, p. 2; *Argus*, 23 July 1872, p. 6.

[8] Diarmuid O'Giollain, *Locating Irish Folklore*, Cork University Press, Cork, 2000, pp. 8–9.

[9] GE Evans, *The Pattern under the Plough: Aspects of the folklore of East Anglia*, Faber and Faber, London, 1966; A Randel, *60 Years a Fenman*, Routledge and Keegan Paul, London, 1953; D Waldron and C Reeve, *Shock! The Black Dog of Bungay: a Case Study in Local Folklore*, Hidden Publishing, Herts, 2010; D O'Giollain, *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity*, Cork University Press, Cork, 2000.

[10] O'Giollain, *Locating Irish Folklore*, pp. 8–9.

[11] *Argus*, 1 March 1884, pp. 8–9.

[12] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 15 February 1881, p. 2.

[13] This becomes a staple of how the subject is treated in the late nineteenth-century press and instances can be easily found via a search of Trove Newspapers. An example can be seen in the *Sydney Evening News*, 2 August 1898, p. 5.

THRASHING A GHOST

Considerable alarm was experienced by timid residents of Connington, near Perth, at the frequent appearance of what was called a ghost. A number of residents waylaid the apparition, who surrendered on being bailed up by a revolver. The costume consisted of a sheet, with eyelet holes, and decorated with red paint and other elaboration. The residents decided not to hand him over to the police, but to administer a sound thrashing with a paling. This was accordingly done and the ghost set at liberty.



Example of an article with illustration about a ghost hoaxer being thrashed in Connington near Perth, Western Australia, *Sunday Times*, 27 November 1898, p. 9.

- [14] *Telegraph and St Kilda, Prahran and South Yarra Guardian*, 3 August 1878, p. 3; *Mercury*, 9 July 1904, p. 6; *Telegraph and St Kilda, Prahran and South Yarra Guardian*, 1 July 1871, p. 3; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 4 August 1891, p. 2.
- [15] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 24 August 1861, p. 3.
- [16] *Ballarat Star*, 27 September 1861, p. 3.
- [17] *Singleton Argus and Upper Hunter General Advocate*, 20 January 1877, p. 4.
- [18] *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, 21 August 1875, p. 4.
- [19] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 8 July 1871, p. 3.
- [20] *Ballarat Star*, 17 August 1877, p. 2.
- [21] *Mclvor Times and Rodney Advertiser*, 1 August 1878, p. 7.
- [22] *Kerang Times and Swan Hill Gazette*, 14 June 1878, p. 4.
- [23] *Kilmore Free Press*, 22 June 1882, p. 3; *Camperdown Chronicle*, 24 June 1882, p. 4.
- [24] William Balmain, *Self Luminous Paint*, 1881, US Patent US264918 A.
- [25] *Barrier Miner*, 12 July 1895, p. 1; *Adelaide Advertiser*, 10 June 1889, p. 7; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 12 September 1903, p. 4.
- [26] *Horsham Times*, 26 July 1895, p. 3.
- [27] *Register*, 28 June 1904, p. 4; *Adelaide Advertiser*, 3 October 1895, p. 5; *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 4 March 1899, p. 22.
- [28] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 27 May 1895, p. 3; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 29 May 1895 p. 2; Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 289/P0 Court Records (includes Petty Sessions Registers 1854–1962), unit 46, pp. 190 and 244.
- [29] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 14 July 1904, p. 5.
- [30] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 23 July 1903, p. 3.
- [31] *Barrier Miner*, 10 June 1895, p. 3.
- [32] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 26 May 1904, p. 5.
- [33] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 24 May 1904, p. 4.
- [34] *North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times*, 30 May 1904, p. 4.
- [35] PROV, VPRS 289/P0, unit 67, pp. 13, 32 and 53.
- [36] *Argus*, 25 June 1904, p. 13; PROV, VPRS 289/P0, unit 67, p. 53.
- [37] *Examiner*, 3 January 1903, p. 6.
- [38] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June 1877, p. 7.
- [39] *Queenscliff Sentinel, Drysdale, Portarlington & Sorrento Advertiser*, 30 November 1889, p. 2; *Northern Argus*, 26 March 1880, p. 3.

[40] *Delegate Argus and Border Post*, 18 June 1896, p. 4.

[41] *Colac Herald*, 12 May 1913, p. 2.

[42] PROV, VPRS 290/P0 Court of Petty Sessions Cause List Books (1858-1888); Court of Petty Sessions Registers (1888-1921).

[43] PROV, VPRS 289/P0, unit 46, p. 190, and unit 67, pp. 13, 32, 53.

[44] It is worth noting goldrush Victoria also had its many Spring Heeled Jack imitators and panics in the local press which are easily found by searching local newspapers between 1830 and 1914.

[45] *Camberwell and Peckham Times*, 19 October 1872 as cited by M Dash, 'Spring Heeled Jack: To Victorian Bugaboo from Suburban Ghost', p. 18, paper available online at <<http://www.mikedash.com/extras/forteana/shj-about/shj-paper-1>>, accessed 17 February 2014.

[46] *Times*, 22 February 1838, p. 2.

[47] This theme of ghost stories pertaining to memorialised trauma is a common theme in the literature, perhaps one of the more concise examples is Steve Pile, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagoria of City Life*, Sage Publishing, New York, 2005, pp. 131–64; see also D Goldstein, S Grider and J Thomas, *Haunting Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore*, Utah State University Press, Logan, 2007.

[48] A Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 2008, p. 8.

[49] A Smith, *The Ghost Story: 1840–1920*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2010, pp. 2–3.