



The Brown Lady of Raynham Hall

SPECIFICATIONS:

Date: Sept. 19, 1936

Location: Raynham Hall, Norfolk, England

Photographer: Captain Hubert C. Provand and Indre Shira, Photographers for Country Life Magazine, London, England

Type Camera: Unknown

Other Information:

Location has a history of paranormal activity going back for centuries.

Perhaps the most famous “ghost photo” ever taken, this highly controversial shot, taken at an English manor in 1936, remains among the most thoroughly examined and investigated of them all, giving it a significant pedigree.

Allegedly showing the Brown Lady of Raynham Hall descending a staircase, what makes it so compelling is that the photo was taken not by a ghost hunter looking to make a name for himself, but by two men sent by a London magazine to take some rather pedestrian shots of the architecture of the building. What’s also interesting about this photograph is that in contrast to most photos in which the figure is not seen until after the film is developed, the spectral figure of a woman descending the stairway was seen seconds before the shutter was snapped by Mister Shira. (Apparently Colonel Provand never

saw the figure at the time because he was preoccupied with setting up for the next shot beneath the camera’s hood and only snapped the shutter upon Mister Shira’s command.)

The negatives for this photo have been scrutinized by literally hundreds of experts (and no small number of skeptics) over the years, and none have been able to find evidence of it being either a hoax or a double exposure. It has been, however, suggested the figure could be the result of a smudged fingerprint or grease of some kind smeared on the lens, though this seems like a stretch to me--especially since, were that the case--the smudge should appear on preceding and subsequent photos taken as well.

One interesting element usually missed by most observers (and seen only in the full, uncropped photo as

shown above) is the free floating dark mass to the left of the spectre just beneath the framed photo on the wall. What that might be remains unknown, but it seems considerably less transparent than the other anomaly and every bit as spooky. Certainly, it deserves more careful examination

In any case, the “Brown Lady” remains among the best known and, in the opinion of many, the best spirit photo ever taken.