



THE STORY OF TEDWORTH'S DEMON DRUMMER

Mr. Mompesson was a magistrate who lived in Tedworth, as Tidworth was then known. In March 1661, while on business in Ludgershall, he heard a drum beating and, wondering what was happening, sent for the local Bailiff to find out. The Bailiff informed him that the town had been plagued in this way for some time by William Drury, a vagrant with a drum, who had once served in Cromwell's army.

When questioned, the drummer indignantly insisted that he had every right to play his drum since he had a warrant entitling him to do so. Mr. Mompesson saw at once that the warrant was a forgery. He ordered the drummer to be arrested by the Constable and the drum to be confiscated and kept by the Bailiff. The drummer begged to be able to keep the drum, but his request was denied.

The following month, the drummer was released from prison but his drum was taken to Mr. Mompesson's house in Tedworth. When Mr. Mompesson returned home from business in London he found his household upset by strange drumming noises, knockings and disturbing incidents which continued, unexplained, for a couple of years.

These strange events were witnessed and meticulously recorded at the time by a Dr. Joseph Glanvil. Stories of ghosts and poltergeists spread like wildfire. Charles II even sent a special Royal Commission to the house but it failed to discover the cause of the ghostly disturbances. There was talk of witchcraft, a serious crime in those days.

The strange drummings at the house mysteriously ceased when the Drummer was again arrested in 1663 on charges of stealing. He was found guilty at Salisbury Assizes and sent to Gloucester gaol where he unwisely boasted to a visitor that it was indeed he who had been causing the disturbances to occur at Mr. Mompesson's house because he had confiscated his drum.

At the trial there were many witnesses to what had happened. The drummer was found guilty of witchcraft and sentenced to be transported for life.