



Penhill Hauntings

The year 1973 was the year of *The Exorcist*.

The film dubbed 'the scariest of all time' told the terrifying story of a young girl possessed by a demon in Washington DC. But much closer to home that year, a BBC TV documentary series based on the paranormal, broadcast an episode showing an actual exorcism in Swindon.

'Leap in the Dark: Hauntings', shown on 6 March, documented the story of a young couple from Penhill plagued by a poltergeist. Dave and Sheryl Pellymounter and their three-year-old son Alan lived in a small two-up, two-down on Westbury Road, and all would have been domestic bliss if not for the unusual and spooky goings-on which had shattered their nerves to the extent that they were driven to seek outside help.

The feeling of being watched, belongings being moved around, the radio being turned on and off and doors opening of their own accord were just some of the strange occurrences the family experienced.

Interviewed in the programme, Dave Pellymounter said of one particular incident: "I came home from work one Saturday dinnertime and left my wallet on the windowsill. I put it in my coat and went upstairs for a shave. When I came down I put my coat on and put my hand in my pocket to check it was there and it had gone. So, I traced my steps and looked all-round the house and eventually I found it in the bedroom, under the bed and I hadn't even gone into the bedroom. Somehow it had gone from my pocket to under the bed."

Most of the trouble in the house was centred on the ground floor. The couple's young son Alan feared going into the hall and it was felt this area was the focus of the evil in the house, and rather than cross it, the child would stand at the threshold crying.

Sheryl said: "In the hall you could hear whispering noises and rustling noises as if someone was walking by."

The escalation of these unnerving events led to them contacting their local vicar, Father Walker, who in turn called in Canon Harman from the local Diocese to conduct an exorcism. In the programme, Canon Harman is shown performing the exorcism, first blessing the water and salt, then going through the house from room to room pronouncing the ceremony prayers. Talking after the exorcism, Dave said: "The temperature just seemed to drop, it went ever so cold and just as the Canon finished it just went back to normal."

BBC - Leap in the Dark: 'Hauntings', shown on 6 February 1973

OPC Note:

The recording is not available to view in its entirety due to the BBC's wiping policy of the time. However there is a [6 minute clip available here](#)