

The following extract from *Ghosts of Our Pioneers: Investigations into the Paranormal* was written when Mary followed the Spookspotters around to write this book, she has since become an official team member as a researcher and also conducts ghost tours at Como House based on the findings there.

Walhalla is known for its paranormal activity, although there was little said about Windsor House. However, its spooky reputation is quickly making up for lost time. Over the years there have been reports from owners and visitors about locked doors opening and opened doors locking of their own accord. Whenever a male adult sleeps in one particular bedroom (the snoring room adjacent to the Aberfeldy suite) situated on the first floor, the door locks trapping the occupant inside, yet opens easily for women.

A little girl has been seen standing by the top left-hand window looking out onto the street. The apparition has been seen numerous times from locals and visitors from outside of the building.

A presence, not initially known until the Spookspotters uncovered her identity, is often described as a housemaid who was in charge of the running of the household. It is claimed by some locals that it is this lady that makes her dislike of smokers known. Whenever someone flicked the butts of cigarettes anywhere outside of the house it apparently annoyed the ghost so much that she got into the habit of knocking the butts out of the smokers' hands. The butts always managed to land quite a distance away, and then roll away into the drain. Some of the locals believe the sightings are that of two separate ghosts.

People have said that they heard furniture being dragged across the floor when they were walking down the street. This happened when the building had fallen into ruin, and the owners of that time were renovating. The odd thing was that there were no floorboards in the area where the noises emanated from at the time; the floor was bare earth so how could such a noise be made? Tools that were laid at workers' own feet while renovating suddenly went missing, only to be found out in the garden after the owners of the mislaid tools went looking for them.

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I arrived at Walhalla with my sisters on Saturday 1 March 2008. We booked into the Windsor House as a perfect way to spoil ourselves a little. Lugging bags up the stairs, we headed to our rooms. As soon as I reached the bedroom's doorway I felt like I was intruding and expected to see someone else already in there. I was alone, as far as I could see, but I felt as if someone else was there. I shook off the feeling, told myself not to be silly and enjoyed the room's décor.

It was hard to tear my eyes away from the majestic canopy bed with its crafted wooden post. There were so many treasures to behold, such as the black marble mantle covering the disused fireplace that served as a home for teddies dressed in silk and sitting upon old suitcases. The windows had a perfect view of the garden below and the native bush. This room, the Aberfeldy suite, was left for my sisters to share. I moved into the adjacent room called the snoring room and dropped my bags beside the smaller yet equally beautiful brass canopy bed. There was not much room to manoeuvre around the bed and chair in the corner, but it had a marvellous view of the vegetation growing wild on the hillside.

Luck had it that we were the only guests staying at this beautiful historic building for the weekend so we were given permission to look around. We were in our element, the building, its furniture, and its atmosphere was one of charm and elegance. While I had visited Walhalla before, I had never stayed at Windsor House and was anxious to take some photos. We wandered upstairs into the attic, which we knew used to be the maids' quarters.

As my foot left the last step behind I turned to look to my right, mostly because it was so bright, which confused me as it was not a particularly sunny day. It was difficult to understand what I was seeing, but in the far room brilliant sunshine streamed through the gleaming window and bounced off the newly painted greenish-yellow walls. A painting with a pretty assortment of flowers in a vase hung on the wall beside a window and near a small wooden table and chair, both painted white. For a fleeting moment I wondered if the owners had fixed this area up for potential accommodation for guests as well, but then it was suddenly gone and I was faced with an empty attic. At that point my sisters had caught up to me; unsure what I had seen and not wanting to try and explain it to anyone for fear of ridicule I decided to keep it to myself and pretend it never happened.

At this point, I had not heard about the timeslip that three team members had experienced in the area, in fact it would have been safe to say I did not even believe in them until this day. It was after I had returned from this trip that I received some of the team's reports and was sorting through them when I stumbled on one report written by one of the team members who had experienced the timeslip. Everything in the report was what I had seen, although I thought the paint was a little more yellow than cream, but that could have been due to the amount of sunshine I saw streaming into the

room or personal interpretation of shades and colours.

I had often felt sorry for servants being forced to live in small, dark areas, banished to somewhere out of sight, but after seeing how cheerful the room was I did not feel the servants at this homestead needed my pity. Of course it would have been easy to become scared at seeing the past in such a fashion, but I felt privileged to be allowed to see a glimpse of how these people lived so long ago. You will have to make up your own mind if you believe in timeslips or not, I now know it is possible as I witnessed it with my own eyes.

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After an exhilarating investigation at Spetts Cottage, I returned to Windsor House to sleep in the snoring room, a little room adjacent to the Aberfeldy suite where my sisters were already fast asleep. I was wide awake, and not suffering any weariness even though it was after two in the morning. I prepared for bed and slipped under the covers where I thought about the events of the night, and wished for the umpteenth time that I had packed a novel to read.

I was considering getting up again when I heard footsteps in the attic directly above me; initially I dismissed it thinking it was rats. Listening closer I realised it was someone wearing hard-soled shoes on a wooden floor; I briefly wondered why the owner would be walking around up in the attic at such a late hour. But it was a little more difficult to come up with a logical explanation when the sound of a chair scraped across the wooden floor. My sisters and I had been up to the attic earlier so I knew there was no furniture up there. This happened a couple of times: a chair scraping the floor and footsteps wandering around. I listened to the footsteps come down the attic's wooden stairs and along the polished floorboards in the passageway that led to the rooms we were sharing. The otherwise quiet night made the footsteps deafening. The odd thing was that I was not scared; it was thrilling to hear noises that I knew had no logical explanation. Shortly after, things settled down again and I finally managed to drift off to sleep.

It was not a sound sleep, occasionally I stirred wondering whose adults' voices I could hear murmuring, and twice I heard the laughter of children playing and talking out in the street. I wondered why children were out so late. It sounded like a school's playground. I drifted off again.

Suddenly I awoke, certain that something had disturbed me. Although the beds were extremely warm, hot actually, I suddenly grew icy cold. I shook violently from the coldness as surely as if someone had engulfed me in snow. I felt a hand resting on my hip and was shown the image of a man's face, drawn and thin, with ghostly pale skin. His eyes were shut as if he was dead or unconscious, a beardless chin clearly showed a slightly creepy smirk. He had little to no hair. That was all I could see, his face slowly submerged into murky water until it disappeared completely. Then it repeated itself as surely as if I was watching a film that had got stuck on a particular scene, playing it over and over, multiple images of the same face falling to its deadly grave beneath the water.

I had the distinct feeling that it was a male showing me these things and that he was taking particular delight in my discomfort at what I was experiencing. Sensing his delight unnerved me more than the image or the coldness. I ordered him to leave immediately in a firm voice. Suddenly the image and coldness were gone. As quick as it is to click your fingers the warmth of the bed returned. I lay awake listening for sometime, but the rest of the night was quiet and uneventful.

In the morning I asked my sisters if they had heard anything, but they had not heard a thing, which resulted in them teasing me throughout breakfast. The owner overheard my sisters' taunts and enquired what was going on. I explained about the noises (leaving out the ghostly man's face that I had seen—I needed time to digest that information for myself before I told anyone else). She nodded when I had finished explaining and said that other guests had told her that they have heard the same sort of noises.