

Black Dogs

- Intro
 - New Patron
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 - [UNEXPLAINED! Strange Sightings, Incredible Occurrences, and Puzzling Physical Phenomena 3rd Edition by Jerome Clark published in 2013](#)
 - Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_dog_\(folklore\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_dog_(folklore))
 - Britain's Black Dog Legend: <https://www.davidcastleton.net/black-dog-legends-england-britain-ghosts-hellhounds/>
 - Devil Dogs: The Mysterious Black Dogs of England: <https://modernfarmer.com/2014/06/black-shuck/>

About Phantom Black Dogs

- Before I go into our topic this week I want to bring up a book I got on Kindle. I won't mention the name but I will say that if you're writing a book on a subject, don't put that subject off till the next chapter and then never actually talk about it in the book. Please, don't be a dick.
 - Speaking of dicks, it's like naming your book after a whale and not having him show up until 130 chapters in.
- This week we're going to talk about Phantom Black Dogs! Guys, what do you know about this?

- They sound like a mercenary group in a Metal Gear game.

- The Phantom Black Dog's origins are lost to the sands of time. What we do know is that the lore seems to originate in the UK. England specifically. Nearly every county in England has a legend of Black Dogs. A bulk of our cases this week will be from England with the rest coming from the American South and the East Coast.

- So did the dogs fight in the Revolutionary War as well?

- The Black Dogs are often referred to as "Guardians of the Threshold" due to their nature. They tend to be found along ley lines, rivers, and roads, or places associated with death such as gallows, churches, and graveyards. They've also been sighted around fairy mounds. So basically anywhere seen as a border between one place and the next. Whether it's the afterlife, Tir Na Nog, or just the next county, Black Dogs can usually be spotted there.
- Now what makes a Phantom Black Dog different from just seeing your neighbor's Great Dane?

- First there's the size. I know there are big dogs like Mastiffs but we're talking about a dog the size of a cow or a pony sometimes. Something so exceedingly huge that it leaves the realm of human experience. A vast majority talk about a dog of indeterminate breed the size of a calf.

- That sounds like more belly to scratch to me.

- Second, the eyes. Most animals have that thing where their eyes reflect light in the night, but PBD's eyes glow with an inner fire often red, orange, or yellow. Their eyes are ALWAYS commented on even if there's no light source.

- Third, they seem to have an intelligence that goes beyond your typical canine. They have their territory and stick to it. They stare at you with a look that seems to convey more than just a dog looking at an intruder.

■ RUFF RUFF GOT ANY TREATS?

- Fourth, they're ethereal. I can't tell you how many reports I've seen of people trying to hit a PBD with a stick and it just passes through like it's a ghost. When they reach the edge of the area they're guarding they vanish.

■ Well, it doesn't help that they've violating fundamental dogma by not throwing the stick to play fetch. No wonder it doesn't work.

- Lastly, and this is a question I know you're both thinking, they're visible in pitch black. The night time reports always say that no matter how dark the night is, the PBD is always blacker. It seems to be a hole in the night at times.
- The Dog is known to have different behaviors. We'll go into specific stories in a bit, but they are sometimes seen as guards that frighten people away from a specific location, guides that will keep people from taking the wrong path, and omens of coming doom.
 - It honestly just sounds like more spooky-dooky versions of dog behaviors to me. I always find cryptids that are a basic animal running at 200% to be fascinating.
- Now the Black Dog is known by many names. Some of them are.
 - Hairy Jack
 - Padfoot
 - Skriker

- Churchyard Beast
- Shug Monkey
- Capelthwaite
- Moddey Dhoo (or Mauthe Doog)
- Hateful Thing
- Swooning Shadow
- Bogey Beast
- Gytrash (or Guytrash)
- There's a couple of specifically named ones, but I'll be going into them later.

■ Tag yourself guys, I am "Guytrash."

- I do want to come in and add a couple of things here, if I may. I am pulling from an article titled ["The Black Dog: Origins and Symbolic Characteristics of the Spectral Canine"](#) from the journal *Cultural Analysis*, published in Sept. 2020. The author is Adam Zmarzlinks.

- So mythologically speaking, we should probably mention figures such as Anubis, Cerberus, and Fenrir. I am using Jackals and Wolves interchangeably here, a bit, but for our purposes they are black dogs that signify doom or serve as guardians of the threshold. These things are in a lot of cultures.

■ What do we remember about these figures?

- There is also the connection to trickster entities as well, which we'll see in some of the stories you'll mention later. The author of the text I am working from here mentions how common symbolic nature of the black dog in literature and psychology. I'll quote him here:

- “the Black Dog is a folktale staple drenched with folklore; hence it is only appropriate to adhere to the popular retellings. All theoretical works, such as Jerold Franks, "Loki's Mythological Functions in the Tripartite System," Michael Haase's "Nietzsche and Freud: Questions of Life and Death," or Marina Warner's *Once Upon a Time* are meant to enhance and illuminate the ancient symbolism of Cerberus and Fenrir, and provide a thematic mirror to that of the Black Dog--reflecting its past in the present while forecasting its future. The works of Freud (*The Uncanny* or *Civilization and its Discontent*) and Jung (*Man and His Symbols* or *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*) are meant to enrich the connection between the Dog's symbolism and the trickster archetype in the age of cultural chaos”
- So while figures such as Fenrir and the Jackal are not exactly the “black dog” we’re talking about here, I think it bears mention because of the associations to the black dogs. Almost a cultural memory thing going on here.
 - I think one could make a reasonable argument that we are wired to be uneasy around black dogs as they evoke predation from our early hominid days and even if we’ve tamed dogs to a large degree, the trickster element may be a kind of doubt or being suspect of our mastery of nature, such as nature always getting the last laugh.

Tales of the Black Dogs

- Like I said, a lot of these come from the UK and let me tell you there are a lot of them. Some of them are more famous than others. To quote the wiki article:
 - On [Dartmoor](#) in southern [Devon](#), the notorious squire [Richard Cabell](#) was said to have been a huntsman who sold his soul to the Devil. When he died in 1677, black hounds are said to have appeared around his burial chamber. The ghostly huntsman is said to ride with black dogs; this tale inspired [Arthur Conan Doyle](#) to write his well-known story [The Hound of the Baskervilles](#).
 - I want to know what made Richard Cabell so notorious as a squire. Was it selling his soul or was he already a guy with a reputation?
- Another is the story of blues musician Robert Johnson who made a deal with the Devil and his black dog at a crossroads here in Mississippi for his talent. He said in one of his songs ***“I have to keep moving - There’s a hellhound on my trail.”***
 - I have done a weird amount of reading about Robert Johnson and I think he deserves an episode of his own. I’d heard about him quite a bit from my interest in music, but he was also a fundamental component of the book *Reservation Blues* which really tuned me into some of the more supernatural aspects of his story.
- But let’s talk about a story I’ve known for a long time. The story of East Anglia’s “Old Shuck”.

- Aw shuck.

- On August 4th, 1577 in the town of Bungay outside of Norwich...

- Bungay? Really? Britain is not a real place.

- ... a church service was going on. A violent storm was raging and the parishioners were more than happy to be inside the house of God and safe. Suddenly, the door to the church burst open and standing in the doorway was a massive black dog with bristles like a boar and the size of a calf. Its eyes glowed like embers from the pit. Everyone looked on in confusion and not a little fear until the beast ran down the aisle and proceeded to kill two people including a young boy. The onlookers were so terrified by the demon dog to do anything until it ran back out into the storm.

- I am just seeing this meme in my head of the two huge arms meeting in a closed fist with one bicep that reads "Black Dogs" and the other reading "Pitbulls" with the hands reading "Mauling Children."

- Seven miles away in Holy Trinity Church in Blythburg shortly afterward, what may have been the *same dog* burst into the service and killed two men and a young boy before running back into the storm.

- If I asked listeners to take a shot every time they heard a stupid town name, our episodes involving Britain would be lethal weapons.

- Now, I might have written this off as early forms of yellow journalism, but the fact that both accounts were written by

witnesses after talking it over with everyone on whether they even wanted to talk about it says a lot. I can't imagine a lot of money was made with this. Even the author said that this all sounds completely insane and wouldn't blame people for not believing it.

- Old Shuck STILL haunts East Anglia. He's a violent and vicious spirit. He's seen so often a local lane is still called "Black Shuck Road" and let me tell you, they don't go there at night.

- The collective reluctance of a community to not talk about something is always offputting. Not even just supernatural stuff either, but there are instances of towns where people just don't talk about some fucked up shit that went on years ago. I've lived in a couple of those towns and the vibe is always kind of icky.

- Here's one from DavidCastleton.net about "Church Grim"

- *Legends from Britain and Scandinavia state that certain churchyards are haunted by a 'Church Grim', a spirit that usually appears as a large black dog. Rather than being a malevolent entity, the Grim protects the churchyard from all who would desecrate it, including vandals, witches, warlocks, thieves and even the Devil.*

- What about shooting Ramones music videos?

- *A tradition, apparently, once maintained that the spirit of the first person to be buried in a churchyard would be tasked with guarding it. In Scotland, the last person buried in a cemetery would have to be its guardian until a new interment took place. To save the spirits of the departed from these onerous duties, a*

large black dog would be buried either in the churchyard or in the foundations of the church itself, especially under its cornerstone.

- *Some say the black dog's ghost tolls the church bell at midnight on the eve of the death of a local resident. During the funeral service, the clergyman might spot the Grim staring out from the church tower and from the dog's behaviour be able to tell if the deceased will go to hell or heaven. The Church Grim is also associated with stormy weather. Though normally manifesting as a black dog, the Grim has been known to take the form of a horse or pig.*

- **First, that is a shitty deal for the dog.** Secondly, the transmutation of animals is pretty common in witch lore, especially if we're dealing with writings from the trials. While these are none one-to-one relations here, I find there is an interesting like between these ideas of the guardian spirit taking on different forms just as the devil took on the forms of goats, crows, dogs, and cats for those accused of witchcraft. Something about the transformational impermanence in the spiritual realm when it comes to animals.
- In fact, one case I am thinking of was the 1566 trial of Elizabeth Francis, which I pulled from one of my witch trial readers. She is allgined to have sought metamorphosis powers, one of which was the transfiguration into a black dog, but such a transfiguration is also independent of the type of black dogs we're talking about. Adam

Zmarzlinks's essay which I have been referring to point out that these sorts of examples have a thematic association with the thing while not quite being the thing. I just find that very interesting.

- I have some short encounters worth mentioning.

- Zmarzlinks quotes from the writer Theo Brown from a 1958 article "The Black Dog."

- "Domesticated animals sense the creature's presence. Brown notes that horses and dogs are terrified when they see the Black Dog. At Willoughton, Lincolnshire, a little dog was petrified by a ghost dog which, to the human being present, was not seen but felt. A case from France describes a series of Black Dog visitations in a house, culminating in two police dogs being set at it when it was invisible to humans; one dog was cowed, the other died from the encounter."

- In April, 1972 at Great Yarmouth a member of the British Coast Guard spotted a giant black dog running up and down the beach. He said the dog's actions seemed odd since it would stop and stare off at the horizon before running to another location and doing the same thing. He said it was like it was waiting for something. He found it strange enough to report to his superiors. The next day a freak storm hit and caused massive damage to the whole area.

- Cue that scene in The Simpsons where the hurricane shows up and Homer says "Somewhat the animals are always the first to know."

- Now America is no stranger to these. These I found in

“UNEXPLAINED!”

- Have we turned that into an option for the Supernatural Selection soundboard yet?

- This one is from Pennsylvania in the 1950's.

“One night when I was a boy walking with my friends along Seven Stars Road, a big black dog appeared from nowhere and came between me and one of my pals. And I went to pet the dog, but it disappeared from right under me. Just like the snap of a finger it disappeared.”

■ It's like me trying to pet my cat when I get home.

- Here's one David's going to love. This is from Hopkinsville, Kentucky in 1903! John Wingham was on his way home to Nevada, Kentucky on his horse when he heard a dog howling behind him. When he looked back and saw a dog the size of a cow charging at him with glowing red eyes! He lashed his horse and rode as fast as he could. When he looked back not only was the dog still there, it was keeping pace! As soon as he crossed the border of his home town, from one step to the next, the dog simply vanished. It just stopped being there. Apparently this happened in the area for a number of weeks!

■ I just need to see a couple of Goblins riding the back of that cow-sized dog and then I can die happy. Like Wargh-Riders.

- I have another one here for you, Kevin. This one was from the article I mentioned earlier.

- This is a story used by the author, Adam Zmarzlinksy and fits in with the idea of the Black Dog as a harbinger of doom.
- Quote: In the 1943 winter-issue of the Hosier Folklore Bulletin, Robert G. McGuire, a local journalist, recounts a curious story of a man named Johnnie, who at the time of the telling of his tale was older. While a young lad in Detroit, Johnnie accompanied his mother across the Irish section of the city, dubbed Corktown, to visit her friend, Mary. Johnnie recounts,
 - We'd not gone far...before Mother said, "Something's wrong, Johnnie," and a few steps after that, we saw a black dog running in front of us. He was a great big son of a gun, and all black as tar. First, he'd run before us and then behind us, but he never left us alone for a minute. "We're turning back," says Mother, "for when my father died, a black dog ran along the roof and howled the whole night."
- The next day, someone murdered Mary; witnesses sighted a black dog at the scene.

Well, What Are They?

- Now obviously some of these can be attributed to people seeing dogs. Just, you know, dogs. Some of them might be other animals misidentified as dogs. But the sheer number of them begs the question, is everyone making a mistake? Is this a spirit-being guarding liminal spaces? Is it some kind of archetypal spirit that's been with us since the days we first allied with wolves? Is it a psychological thing shared by humanity?

- What do you guys think?
 - I think we have at least another episode's worth of material on this. We didn't really even get a chance to talk The Black Dog of Newgate Prison, for example. I even have some more encounter stories I've found as well. If we stretch it to three episodes we can then call it our "dog pack" or "dog run."
 - But all puns aside, I find black dogs to be interesting because they are something still used for intense symbolism today. Look at Sirius Black in Harry Potter, the Gmork in The NeverEnding Story. There is something deep seated in our cultural memory about the black dogs that still seem to be influencing us today.
 - Also, I do want to throw the thought out there that there are correlations between Black Dog sightings and claims of lycanthropy, which we'll probably need to mention when we tackle werewolves - and by we I mean I - because I fucking love werewolves.

Questions

kickassatron(he/him) — Today at 11:52 AM

If a family of Bigfoots moved in next-door, what "welcome to the neighborhood" casserole would you bring them?

Sam — Today at 1:01 PM

where they want scratches

Themperor Ghostforge — Today at 2:22 PM

Would you want a phantom black dog as a companion, why or why not?

Plugs

They go here.