



The Ghosts of Tallinn

By Jüri Kuuskemaa
historian

Part 1

English scientists have claimed that paranormal phenomena occur mostly above the tectonic fissures of the Earth's crust. And in the Northern countries. In places where it is mostly dark from autumn till spring so that the creatures who fear daylight can creep out of their hiding places to reveal themselves.

In the Estonian church calendar there is only one day, 2 November, that is dedicated to the dead but as the popular name of the same month indicates – the month of the spirits – the period for the souls to release the chains is considerably longer. According to some estimates, the period of the souls starts on 29 September, called Mihkclipäev (Michael's day) in the old Estonian calendar, and lasts till Christmas. People used to believe that the souls of their ancestors come to visit us to see how we have been doing since they

passed away. Usually they are believed to be kind if we respect, greet and leave them gifts or ask them to eat with us. Naturally there are also evil souls who want to avenge old deeds.

Nowadays people tend to fear the souls of our ancestors and we call them ghosts when we see them. In old towns there are more of them than in new towns. Also in Tallinn where in the course of many centuries there are have always been some dead people who have not found their peace on the other side. They return now and then to check the place where they died or where their destiny got stuck. Everybody does not meet them. They reveal themselves only to people who have a more delicate nervous system. But where?

The Ghosts of Toompea

One of the tectonic fissures in Tallinn runs **along the city wall, on the edge of downtown and Toompea, from Kiek in de Kök to the Long Leg gate tower**, comprising all the towers.

The "ghost line" is even longer: near the Kiek in de Kök tower it reaches the Ingeri bastion where only recently three workers asked to be fired because they

The "ghost line" runs along the city wall between downtown and Toompea. On the photo: Kiek in de Kök, Neitsitorn (Virgin tower) and city wall.



were scared of the unworldly white lady who sneaked in the archways.

From the Long Leg, the "ghost line" continues till the **City Museum on the corner of Pühavaimu and Vene Street**. As a many-branched whip, the favourite road of those who come from the other side runs in many directions in Toompea as well as in downtown.

A Ghost Ship and Haunting Monks

The most notorious area where ghosts appear is near the **Garden of the Danish King** (Taani kuninga aed). Even as far as in 1627 the city council meeting minutes mention horrible things that the son of one Burgomaster had to experience when he was kept in the Tallitorn (Stable Tower) prison for "inappropriate behaviour in love affairs".

The prisoner begged to be taken to some other prison that wouldn't be so haunted. It is written that "when the wife of the Burgomaster entered the tower to visit her son, she saw something so terrible that she fainted". Unfortunately it is not said what it was that she saw.



In the Short Leg gate tower people have witnessed an old Hansa cog-like ship floating through a room.



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MEETING PLACE
SINCE 1937**


WABADUS



In the Long Leg gate tower lives a haunting monk.



But in the 1930s a book was published in German, entitled "A House in the Short Leg", to retell stories of many people who had experienced strange things in the **Short Leg gate tower** (Lühikese Jala väravatorn) and in the surrounding area. People had witnessed many times a monk on his knees in front of the crucified, in a room that used to be for lifting the lattice. People also saw monks dancing around a table in a red hue. Or a Hansa cog-like ship floating silently through a room, sails full of wind. Even the walls did not stop the ship. It appeared from one wall and disappeared into another, so that the witnesses only gazed in wonder.

That was not all. In the same tower people witnessed a phenomenon that preceded television: now and then a cruel face of a man appeared on one wall. After different expressions it got tired of its own show, started to shrink and only a light spot was left before it disappeared completely. An old artist who lived there till the Olympic Regatta in 1980 in Tallinn also described these four types of ghosts.

A haunting monk who sometimes has a vague and other times clearer shape is known to live in the **Long Leg gate tower** (Pika Jala väravatorn). During the Soviet times when the tower housed studios of different artists the floating monk appeared to Heinz Valk who invented the famous exclamation: "One day we will win anyway!" during the singing revolution in 1988.

The Ghosts of Cafes

Since Estonian's re-independence strange things started to happen behind the wall of the Short Leg gate tower, in a café called "**BogaPott**". Some visitors sitting on a terrace were forced to startle from time to time as flowers in a vase flew up in the air and



An apprentice of a hangman, a boy who later joined a monastery and became monk Justus likes to take flowers out of vases in this building.

fell on the floor. A sensitive from Helsinki came to investigate this poltergeist kind of thing, fell into a trance and when he recovered he claimed to have talked to an ancient monk Justus. Justus had started as an apprentice of a hangman, joined a monastery after that, but did not find peace even after death. The hangman's house was situated in the neighbourhood, right at the Kiek in de Kōk tower where recently a gypsy restaurant was opened in a house situated on the same spot.

When **Neitsitorn (Virgin Tower)** was restored and a café was opened in the tower then the first people who arrived in the morning saw often a group of men

If you are on Vabaduse square in front of café Wabaduse and start walking uphill towards Toompea you will see, on the right hand side, Neitsitorn (Virgin tower) where people have seen ghosts of city guardians sitting and singing old songs.



in ancient clothes singing merrily. They disappeared as soon as they were seen. Women working at the café were not afraid of ghosts. They believed that these old city soldiers had forgotten to leave their posts and they protected the café and people working there.

Haunting Ladies

In the garden of the Danish King (Taani kuningas aed) people have seen a lady in an old fashioned green crinoline dress walking on the city wall with rats as big as cats.



The city council meeting minutes from 1627 describe ghosts that walk around in the Garden of the Danish King. For example, a lady walking with rats has been seen.

Ghosts have also been seen in the building that now belongs to the Finnish Embassy.



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Ghosts love to visit the Museum of Adamson Eric.



Two haunting ladies like to visit this building. One of them who has extra-long nails and smells of a tomb tends to kiss men.



A person who once got killed in this house during a party is still visiting the house from time to time.

Uncanny phenomena have also occurred at the **Finnish Consulate in the Long Leg** and **Adamson-Eric Museum in the Short Leg**.

Not far from the Finnish Consulate there is a Greek tavern and a house with flats on the left corner of

the **Piiskopi (Bishop's) Street** where there used to be a Roosikrantsi gate tower – an entrance to the Big fortress during the Middle-Ages. It is said that someone got killed there during a party and since that neighbours have been hearing haunting sounds of a party. Current dwellers say that the invisible ghost who used to be hostile and made them stumble on the stairs has changed its mind: once the smallest child of the family was about to fall down the stairs but stopped all of a sudden as if somebody had held out a protective hand.

The most haunted house in Toompea is the one right next to the Toompea castle: it used to belong to the Uexküll family and nowadays houses The Embassy of Canada. Towards the end of the rouble-period, in 1991, the same house in **Toom-Kooli Street (Toom-Kooli 13)** was in the centre of Illis Vets' movie "Haunted houses in Tallinn". In this house on the edge of Toompea the dwellers have been teased by two ladies, one in black and the other in grey. The one in grey, with extra-long nails and smelling of a tomb, tended even to kiss living men who were not very happy and fainted instead. In 1919 a maddened English naval officer was taken to a mental hospital after he had seen every night a ghost of a lovely lady who laughed like a devil.

Even sadder was the fate of a French military attaché who lived in a house that belonged to the Fock family in **Rahukohtu (Peace Court, Rahukohtu 4)** Street, now a home to Irish ambassadors. The attaché ran out of the building one night in his nightgown and yelled in French: "A lady in white! She follows me!" After that the poor man collapsed. When help came,



In the house of the Fock family a lady in white has been seen.

the frightened military man was dead as a doornail. Heart attack!

In Court Because of Ghosts

The ghost of the Toom-Kooli Street caused trouble also in the beginning of the first Republic of Estonia (1918-1939) when a nobleman called von Brevern who owned the house was asked to buy the house back, together with its troublesome ghosts. A famous graphologist Isabella von Ungern-Sternberg who lived in Toompea at the time told this story in her memoirs. When the case was discussed in court and the lawsuit was read out, the judge told the court: "As the laws of the Republic of Estonia do not mention ghosts, the lawsuit is thrown out!" The dwellers of the house got rid of the evil laughing lady for some time when they bricked up their bathroom where the lady used to appear. This did not spare the Soviet times' dwellers who were troubled by evil haunting ladies. One of them was the lover of a baron who died in a duel and the lady was looking for her lover even after her death. The other ghost was told to be that of an Estonian lady who married a nobleman which used to be a shame for a noble German man. The parents of the young man killed their unwanted daughter-in-law and bricked her corpse in a wall. No wonder that a victim who was disappointed in love and people came to tease the generations to come.

However, there are also kinder haunting ladies in

Toompea. Once an Estonian guest stayed at baron Korff's house. Although he was offered a stylish Bidermeyer bed made of red wood the guest could not get sleep. As soon as he fell asleep the bed started to shake and the Estonian saw an old lady with grey hair and old fashioned green dress standing on the door. The lady showed herself for a second and then disappeared. And repeated it many times. When the guest complained at the breakfast table that he could not get sleep, baron Korff shouted in a cheerful manner: "We forgot to tell you. It is our dear grandma who loves to joke from time to time."

Ghosts in Our Days

In Toompea people have problems with ghosts even nowadays in the very building that houses the Estonian government and that used to belong to **count Stenbock (Rahukohtu 3)** and was built to be a courthouse. They have their own haunting lady, not a very evil one, who loves to fondle some men. In addition people see strange sparkles in Stenbock house, as if little silent flashes.

Strange things take place also in the building that used to belong to the **Estonian Knighthood (Kiriku plats 1)** and is situated right behind the Dome Church. Night watchers claim to hear voices from a onetime kitchen and once a young artist who mocked the ghosts fell down the stairs, broke his bones and was



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In the house of the Estonian Government that used to be a courthouse ghosts come to tease people even nowadays. There is a lady ghost who wants to caress some men.

unable to speak for many months after the accident.

Rev. Jakob Hurt encouraged people to start gathering historical things in the end of the 19th century but unfortunately it did not include city folklore. Ghost stories were considered to be inappropriate during this rational era and they were not written down. After the Baltic Germans who



In the house of the Estonian Knighthood people hear inexplicable and strange voices.

owned most of the houses in the Old Town were driven out of the country because of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed on 23 August 1939, there is nobody to turn to in order to ask about the ghosts. That is why only a small portion of ghost stories and their historical background has survived till our days.

Photos: In Tallinn



Restaurant-bar-café Kloostri Ait

on Vene street has been a mainstay of the Old Town restaurant scene since 1994. Like the old medieval granary building it's named after, the establishment has had a colourful history.

The heart of Kloostri Ait – great stone hearth – along with the antique piano, wrought iron hinges on the door leading into the Dominican monastery's outbuilding, and limestone masonry create a characteristic milieu.

Intimate in the evenings, when the warm colours come to life, Kloostri Ait isn't less cozy during the day, when it makes a good stop for lunch. The spacious dining area is well-ventilated and there's plenty of room for guests with baby carriages or wheelchairs.



Jazz is played as the house music. At weekends, Kloostri Ait welcomes both established and young artists onstage. The art exhibited on the Ait's walls is rotated on a regular basis, creating a different ambience.

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