



## STEEPLE ASTON VILLAGE ARCHIVE TRUST

### A Ghostly Story for Christmas

I had been asked by the owner of Cuttle Mill, Mr Cottrell Dormer of Rousham House, if I would like to tidy the gardens of the mill. It was early evening around six p.m. when I arrived to start the task of clearing the nettles and weeds. Starting in the small orchard, I worked through until I reached the lawn, which had been the site of the original mill pond. The pond had been infilled and the streams diverted back into the river Cherwell, since the Mill ceased producing flour around 1901.

The house was, at the moment empty awaiting the tenants' return. It had been a warm sunny day, and was maturing into a pleasant evening as time wore on. The sun had disappeared behind the trees and parts of the garden were now in shade. Skeins of mist settled just above the surface of the water as the evening cooled. I pressed on hoping to finish the job by nightfall, and I became vaguely aware that I was being watched, a fisherman perhaps, fed-up with staring at his float, I mused?

I noticed that the evening was getting decidedly colder, colder than it should be! Have you ever experienced the feeling of someone or something staring at you: it seemed as if a pair of eyes were burning into my back. A feeling of foreboding and tragedy overcame me. I felt most uncomfortable, a shiver ran down my spine, but on turning I could not see any one. "Silly fool" I thought, "act your age", and I carried on cutting.

But still these eyes burnt into my back, it grew colder still, I shivered again whilst trying to dismiss this stupidity! I returned to my task, but still this presence persisted, again I turned more slowly this time, scared of what I might see, but nothing? Feeling even more confused and gripped with fear, my heart was now pounding. The mist seemed to engulf me like a blanket in the fading light. The silence was shattered by a blood curdling screech as a pheasant broke cover, knocking my hat as he rose to clear me! Petrified, I dropped the hook and fled to my car.

Paul added in a quiet voice "I still get the Colley Wobbles when I think about that evening". Paul Walsh related this Hair-raising story to E.O'Sullivan of SAVA.

**Footnote: James Allen the Miller** who original came from Ardley, is named as the miller in the 1821 & 1841 Census. The **Parish Burials Register** records that **James Allen** **tragically drowned** in the River Cherwell in February 1843. the records that he was 62 years old.

