

ROAD GHOSTS



THE HAUNTED BY-PASS

A stretch of motorway which skirts Stocksbridge, to Sheffield's northwest, is gaining a reputation for a malevolent phantom hitch-hiker. Since it was opened on Friday the 13th May 1988, it has been the scene of many serious accidents and eight fatalities, and Hillsborough MP Helen Jackson has called for it to be declared an 'accident black spot'.

Official blame for this disastrous record indicts a number of "design faults", but locals and regular users now talk openly of a resident phantom, said to be the unhappy shade of a monk who died at nearby Hunshelf Hall whose wish to be buried in Stannington was not granted. The story has him interred in unhallowed

ground which was disturbed when the by-pass was constructed.

When a motorist was killed on the by-pass in July 1993, June Beevers (below), a psychic who lives at nearby Penistone, rang the *Sheffield Weekly Trader* to say that eight of her clients had told her, separately, of feeling an "eerie presence" in the car with them on this road. She feels uneasy driving there herself, and once sensed "a big black shadow in the passenger seat" beside her. She was convinced that similar manifestations of the unhappy monk must have distracted the other doomed drivers.

The growing cluster of stories attracted the attention of David Clarke, Fortean and author of *Ghosts & Legends of the Peak District* (Jarrold 1991), who discovered that the earliest account

relates to one of the original roadworking sites in 1987. Dick Ellis, a Deepcar-based policeman, was dispatched to investigate the claim by two frightened security guards that they had seen a "weird cloaked figure" floating above the ground. "I got a brief sighting of it next to the car and then something banged on the back of the vehicle ... my partner saw it as well and felt the same eerie feeling. I can't explain it. It was scary," PC Ellis told Andrew Slater of the *Weekly Trader* (15 July 1993). An immediate request to exorcise the road was made to the vicar of Stocksbridge as the witnesses assumed an ancient burial ground had been disturbed. If he did so, it had no effect - but then it's not necessary to have a 'real' ghost when a growing belief in one will have the same effect.

