

28th June 2021

Ghosts

“Wherefore, seeing that we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight ...”

Bible, Hebrews 12:1

A recent News Report indicated that some people in Scotland had breached the most severe travel restrictions during the pandemic. These included hillwalkers and campers, and those who'd "got bored". One man said he was "doing it for a bet". Takeaways were also high on the list – though why people travelled miles to find a suitable fast-food outlet is beyond me. But the excuse that surprised me most was "ghost-hunting".

Hillwalking, camping, boredom, travelling to a well-renowned takeaway, even fulfilling a bet, I can understand. But ghost-hunting? Oh, come on! But it's true! The police reported that three vehicles containing eight people from five different households arrived at derelict premises for the purposes of ghost-hunting. They were – the police indicated – "all from outside their council area".

I *could* suggest that they should have searched for ghosts in their own Council area without breaking the travel restrictions and coming into mine. But I'll simply offer my scepticism – indeed, my disbelief – in the ghosts that were the objects of their search.

George Dunn, a Scottish poet, writes in *At Falkland Palace*:

In a country like this, our ghosts outnumber us.

In a place such as Falkland Palace, enshrined in history, I can understand that sentiment. But I don't think George Dunn would have been thinking about *physical* ghosts at all, but about the influence, memories and closeness of all those who had been there before him. In that sense, we are all outnumbered by ghosts. It's what the Church calls "The Communion of Saints", or "The Blessed Departed", drawing on the writer to the Hebrew's concept of the "Cloud of Witnesses". But this cannot translate itself into a belief in a physical presence of people who have died.

Let the "ghost-hunters" play their games. But tell them their searches will always be fruitless, even if they *are* willing to break travel restrictions to go on a fantasy ghost-hunt.

A prayer for today

I thank you today that I am outnumbered by real loved ones – not ghosts! Amen.