

### THE OWLMAN AND OTHERS

JONATHAN DOWNES

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EASTER 1976 - Two young girls playing in the churchyard of Mawnan Old Church in southern Cornwall were frightened by what they described as a "nasty bird-man" flying over the church tower. A few months later it was seen again, and the witness said: "It was like a big owl with pointed ears, as big as a man. The eyes were red and glowing. At first I thought that it someone dressed-up, playing a joke, trying to scare us. I laughed at it. We both did. Then it went up in the air and we both screamed. When it went up you could see its feet were like pincers!" Her friend added some details of her own: "It's true. It was horrible, a nasty owlface with big ears and big red eyes. It was covered in grey feathers. The claws on its feet were black. It just flew up and disappeared in the trees." These were the first of a series of sightings of what has become known as 'The Owlman of Mawnan' - a series of sightings that has continued to the present day. These grotesque and frightening episodes have fascinated researchers for three decades now, and one man has spent years collecting all the available evidence into a book. To mark the 30th anniversary of these sightings, Jonathan Downes, the Director of the Centre for Fortean Zoology - the world's largest mystery animal research group has published a special edition of his book 'The Owlman and Others' which was first published in 1997. A witness who saw the creature in 1995 likened it to a vision from hell, and another witness (identified only as 'Gavin') describes how his Owlman sighting in 1989 has blighted his life ever since. The book also tells the story of Morgawr - the Cornish Sea Serpent, and the summer of 1976, which was not only the hottest on record, but was the year that the whole of southern Cornwall went crazy! "I have explored various explanations for the events in the book" says Jon, "and I am not completely sure which one is true. But I know one thing for sure. I wouldn't let my children play alone in those woods...."



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