

In the summer of 1969, two 14-year-old Wirral girls named Anna and Nancy went to stay with Anna's grandmother, an old Welsh woman named Hilda Jones, who lived in a thatched cottage in a picturesque part of Wales, situated about 5 miles south of Abergele, on the outskirts of Llangernyw, Conwy. Anna loved her grandmother, but had warned her friend Nancy that her Gran was a very strict person. She also told Nancy that her Gran knew hundreds of ghost stories, and that she told tales around the fire in the cottage late at night. Nancy found Anna's Grandmother exactly as she had imagined her. The woman dressed in dark, old-fashioned clothes, and she was a very serious person who rarely smiled.

The girls spent the first day on their two-week holiday roaming the countryside, exploring old wells, chasing colourful butterflies and soaking up the sun. One Sunday afternoon, Anna and Nancy came across an old Gothic-looking church. In the churchyard, there stood a gigantic Yew Tree. From behind this tree stepped a young man of about fourteen or fifteen years of age. He seemed very shy, and the girls thought he was quite handsome. He had a pencil behind his ear and under his arm, he carried a large A3-sized sketchbook. Anna and Nancy giggled and then said hello to the boy, and he self-consciously nodded back to them. After a while he introduced himself as Rhys Davies, and he showed the girls his pencil sketches of the Yew Tree and the old church. Anna asked Rhys if he would sketch her and Nancy, and he blushed and said, 'What for?'

He eventually agreed to sketch the girls and told them to keep still as they sat under [the tree](#). Rhys remarked that the tree was 3,000 years old, which the girls found [hard to believe](#), but Rhys was [telling the truth](#), the Yew of Llangernyw does date back to the Bronze Age. However, that was nothing. Rhys then told the girls about the church - which was built in medieval times - and the thing that haunted it. He said, 'My father says this churchyard is a very ancient place. Pagans used to come here to make sacrifices to something evil,' And Rhys pointed to two large [standing stones](#) in the churchyard. He told how they were supposed to be part of a gateway to a magical, mysterious locale. The girls giggled, and Nancy said her friend fancied Rhys, and Anna went red and said she didn't. Then Rhys told the girls to stop moving and [messing](#) about. He then told them about the thing that appeared in the church - the sinister entity that the local villagers named Angelystor - the Recording Angel of Death. This was a tall lanky-looking figure with a pale, skeletal face. It wore a long black silken robe, and appeared in front of the church altar twice a year. Around the end of July and on Halloween. It called out the name of all the people who were going to die in the parish. Priests had seen the terrifying apparition, and many other members of the congregation. Every name the Angel of Death mentioned died within the space of a month. Rhys said his auntie had seen the tall vision in black one night on October 31st, three years before. She had been a cleaner at the church. When the apparition appeared, it said, 'Those I will now name shall soon be dead...'

Rhy's Aunt realised what the thing was and she put her fingers in her ears, then ran to the church door. As she unbolted the door she heard the angel of death's annunciation echoing down the aisle. One of the names was Veronica Davies - the name of her sister - Rhys Davies' mother. Weeks later, Veronica Davies - who had apparently been in perfect health - died of a massive brain haemorrhage in her bed.

This story scared the girls from Wirral, especially because they were so near to the haunted church. Rhys handed them the sketch he'd drawn of them, and they smiled. It was very good. But then the Welsh boy sketched the Angel of Death, based on what he'd heard from his Auntie. The girls shuddered. Anna mentioned Rhy's tale to her grandmother, and the old woman went pale and seemed lost in thought. She then warned the girls not to go anywhere near that church. But the girls ignored the warning, and they would meet Rhys there. One day he convinced them to meet him at the church late at night on July 31st - when the Angel of Death was said to put in an appearance. On that night, the locals kept away from the church, and even the old priest was said to go on leave. Anna and Nancy thought it would be a romantic adventure to meet Rhys at night, and they managed to sneak out the cottage after Anna's grandmother had gone to bed. What happened that night was to give the girls fits. They met Rhys at around eleven o'clock that Thursday night, on July 31st, 1969. A waning moon shone low in the sky, and Rhys and Anna and Nancy were nervously giggling as they approached the church - when they suddenly heard a strange sound. It sounded like large stone blocks sliding against each other. Then they saw a long black shape, about twelve feet high, come from between the two standing stones. It floated silently across the churchyard and went straight through the wall of the ancient medieval church. Nancy clung to Anna, trembling, and Rhys stood there with his mouth open, unable to speak. Anna started to cry,

she was so scared. Then the three teenagers heard a deep unearthly voice echoing inside the church. Only Rhys could understand the voice, because it was speaking in Welsh. It was saying, 'Those I will now name shall soon be dead...'

And the very first name was Rhys Hywell Davies - that was Rhys's first name. The boy stumbled away from the churchyard with the girls screaming behind him, and all the way down the lane outside, he kept saying, 'It said my name, it said my name.' The girls were hysterical.

Up the lane came a woman in black - it was Anna's grandmother. She was livid, and she reprimanded the girls for sneaking out the cottage, and she told Rhys to go home. She'd be having words with his father in the morning. The next day, Anna and Nancy went home to Wirral. Anna later received a letter from her grandmother, a fortnight later. She said that young Rhys Davies had been killed in a terrible road accident in Wrexham.

Taken from "Haunted Wirral"
Tom Slemon 2002