

# Spooked and spooky [2016] EWHC 13

We need to think creatively about useful things for judges to do when they no longer have real cases to try, writes **Richard Barr**



Richard Barr is a consultant with Scott-Moncrieff & Associates [www.scomo.com](http://www.scomo.com)

**T**he government's persistent assault on access to justice will soon have the desired effect, as would-be clients will no longer be able to pay court fees, nor solicitors afford to deliver legal services, and there will be no courts to go to as they will all be closed. One of the less obvious effects will of course be a surplus of incisive judges.

I suggest the first case to be considered should tackle a subject that fascinates many – and directly affects a few of us – like me. I want to know, on the balance of probabilities, please, whether there are such things as ghosts. I therefore offer my proof of evidence.

**In the High Court of Justice**

**Spooky Ghost Division**

**In the matter of a missing dictating machine and pair of glasses**

**Between:**  
**RICHARD BARR**  
**Claimant**  
**-and-**  
**A GHOST**  
**Defendant**

I, Richard Barr, being of fairly sound mind (apart from a few minor lapses) will state:

1. I am the claimant in this action
2. It has long been rumoured that the house in which we live is haunted, following a double murder sometime in the 19th century.
3. Divers people (many of whom are not divers) have reported what appeared to be supernatural phenomena occurring at the house, to wit:
  - a. My stepson woke up one morning to see someone walking downstairs into his room, even though there are no stairs there. Subsequent investigation revealed that there had once been a staircase in the exact position where the event was witnessed;
  - b. Children were once heard shouting and running along an upstairs corridor but when this was investigated there were no children in the house; and
  - c. Many items have, over the years, disappeared, only to reappear in unexpected places days or months later.
4. I now refer to the events that have led me to bring these proceedings. I work from home. On the day in question I was about to start dictating, but when I reached for my dictating machine, it was not there.
5. Despite me obsessively spending the rest of the day searching high and low, sifting through (and in) piles of files, looking under every cushion, under mattresses, between the pages of broadsheet papers, and even inside the *Daily Mail* (please do not ask how a copy of the *Daily Mail* found its way into the house). But there was no trace of it anywhere.
6. A few days later my wife had laser surgery, which meant that she could not wear her contact lenses. Her glasses vanished almost instantly: one moment they were in her hands and the next moment they were gone.
7. The searching resumed – this time for two missing objects. For days we searched and struggled to survive – me dictation-less, she nearly blind.
8. Then I was forlornly sifting through a pile of papers that both of us (and my secretary) had already searched many times. There, slightly larger than life, sat my dictating machine in the middle of the pile (to my slight annoyance as I had already ordered a replacement).
9. A few days after that, my stepdaughter spotted the missing glasses on a kitchen chair in full view, slightly behind the cushion. In the days between, many bums of various weights and sizes had been on that seat. The chair and cushion had been peered under many times. Had the glasses been under the cushion they would not only have been seen instantly but also crushed.
10. There is no other logical explanation for the disappearance and reappearance of these objects. It is therefore my case, on the balance of probabilities, that it was a ghost that had perpetrated these mischievous deeds.
11. I invite this honourable court to conclude that said dictating machine and spectacles had been removed by said ghost and, in so far as this court has jurisdiction over supernatural matters, to order that henceforth said ghost desists from further such activities and do pay punitive damages (to be paid in gold sovereigns and left in some suitably unexpected place in the house).

This statement is true, bla, bla, bla.

I now await the court's judgment. For a full report of the proceedings you will need to consult future issues of SJ. **SJ**