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## *The Threadneedle Rabbit*

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Built in 1734, the Bank of England, at the corner of Princes and Threadneedle streets, occupies a most unfortunate site. Constructed over the remains of a church and a graveyard, the stones in the central courtyard are said to be headstones from the cemetery, turned with their inscriptions facing down. As a result, the bank building is a Mecca for strange happenings ... not to mention the occasional haunting. One of them is called the Threadneedle Rabbit.

About sixteen inches tall, it appears as a brown crocheted or perhaps knitted rabbit doll. With black beads for eyes and a black triangle sewn on as the nose, with three or more threads for whiskers to either side. It wears a tan bow tie and a green jacket, complete with three tan buttons. It has been seen at various times on the bank grounds, frequently sitting on the high upper windows of the first floor. Maintenance men, set to retrieve it, find it is gone once they climb to the top of their ladders to remove it.

Several theories exist as to the origin of the Threadneedle Rabbit. Some insist it is the toy of a child, Catherine Meadows who was buried with the doll in the cemetery upon which the bank was built. She died in 1698. Although the bank insists all the burials were relocated to the St. Mary le Bow Churchyard when the bank was built, Catherine Meadow's grave is not marked in the new internment site, even though her burial is recorded in the original cemetery records. Others claim the doll predates Catherine Meadows and represents the spirits of a trio of starving poachers, executed on the spot in 1397 for killing a rabbit. Whatever the case is, the Threadneedle Rabbit has several respected witnesses to its visitations.

One known eyewitness of the Threadneedle Rabbit was the English author Charles Lutwidge Dodgson who wrote *Alice in Wonderland* under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll in 1865. Some claim the Threadneedle Rabbit is the inspiration for the White Rabbit, who appears at the beginning of the book, in chapter one, wearing a waistcoat, and muttering "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!"

Banking customers noticed the rabbit most often, and regularly make comments about it to the staff, asking after its origins. All the staff have been trained to answer that the rabbit, "comes and goes as it pleases." A few have been known to refer to it as the "Devil Doll Rodent."

Normally, a stuffed rabbit, that manifests itself infrequently would not even be considered a dangerous poltergeist, but the Threadneedle Rabbit is recognized as a harbinger of doom. The first written bank records of the rabbit appearing was on January 22, 1879. The bank manager made note of the appearance of the doll in the margins of the transfer sheets for funds being sent to purchase materials for the British Army. Meanwhile, on the same day, over 1,300 British officers and men were slaughtered in South Africa at a place called Isandlwana.

The rabbit appeared again for several months during the summer of 1900, during the Siege of the Beijing legations in Peking, China. The Boxer Rebellion appearance compared in length only with its 1798 visitation during the Irish Rebellion. The appearance of the hare during the Irish Rebellion of 1798,

however, is one of the few undocumented instances of the Threadneedle Rabbit. It exists only as folklore. One bank employee proudly noted in the bank's logs that the creature had made no appearance for the entire year on 1906.

Its most famous sighting was on the afternoon of April 14, 1912. It appeared all over the building, by some accounts 2,224 times. The exact number of those who would perish in the sinking of the RMS Titanic on that fateful night. Other appearances include July 1, 1916 ... the date of the opening of Battle of the Somme. As well as on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 1917, the beginning of the Battle of Passchendaele. The hare made two well-known winter appearances. The first on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1952 and again the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1965. The dates of the deaths of King George VI and Winston Churchill.

The doll has not escaped the notice of bank employees. A group of bank workers spotted the bunny in a rare appearance on the second floor, the Albany conference room on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1988. The day Pan Am Flight 103 blew up over Lockerbie, Scotland. Other bank employees noted the Threadneedle Rabbit in the north side of the banks' inner courtyard on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1934 sitting next to a piece of coal. The date of the Gresford mining accident near Wrexham, North Wales.

One appearance of the rabbit was recorded on the building security monitors. Shortly after midnight on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1997 the doll appeared on the main floor of the bank. Since the bank had long been closed for the day, and fearing a break-in, the security team rushed the lobby with several officers from the Metropolitan Police. Nothing could be found, even though the Threadneedle Rabbit had clearly been seen on the security cameras. A review of the tapes revealed no one entering the room until the security team arrived in the lobby. The rabbit can be seen right up until the first door is opened by the police. Once the door was opened the rabbit simply vanishes. Later the next morning, Princess Diana died, after being in a car accident shortly after midnight the night before. Several years before, the popular Princess of Wales had been photographed on that spot in the lobby where the sighting occurred.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2005, the Threadneedle Rabbit appeared again on security monitors. As a series of coordinated terrorist bombings struck London's public transport system during the morning rush hour, killing more than fifty people and injuring hundreds.

To the average person, a bank is a place of exchange, a place of logic and solid mathematical rules. Most people come to such a place to conduct a human curiosity called business. The Threadneedle Rabbit has his own reasons. Of course, we all know dolls can't appear out of thin air, and they certainly can't predict the future. Yet hidden within the rock-solid logical world of the gentleman of commerce, a simple rabbit doll, once an object of make-belief, may have its own talents.