THE LEAP CASTLE ELEMENTAL

From anomalous report to occult entity: tracing the construction of a haunting tradition

NICREADH - Research Edition 1.4

Publication-ready research edition. This version preserves the full source-by-source argument while distinguishing documented testimony, later interpretation, folklore and unresolved provenance.

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Research question

What can the surviving historical record, eyewitness testimony and later interpretations actually establish about the phenomenon called the Leap Castle Elemental - and how has that description changed over time?

Central thesis

The Leap Castle Elemental is not one simple legend with one stable description. It is a layered tradition built from a small number of unusually vivid historical reports, later witness experiences, occult classification, literary retelling, local folklore, paranormal-investigator culture and successive explanatory systems.

Edition note

This is a living research paper. Research Edition 1.4 incorporates direct examination of newly acquired physical copies of C. H. Rolleston (1939) and Oliver St John Gogarty (1958), allowing earlier library-mediated and secondary references to be checked against the printed texts. Later editions may incorporate further primary material and oral-history interviews where those sources materially clarify provenance.

METHOD AND EVIDENCE HIERARCHY

The central methodological rule is simple: do not begin by deciding that a witness saw 'the Elemental.' Begin with what the witness reported, then ask how and when that report entered the Elemental tradition.

Evidence categories

- DOCUMENTED PRIMARY - contemporaneous or near-contemporaneous material created by an identifiable participant or witness.
- HISTORICAL ACCOUNT - early published narrative or correspondence whose provenance is substantial but may include literary shaping, pseudonyms or retrospective interpretation.
- ORAL TRADITION - information transmitted person-to-person without a presently identified earlier documentary source.
- PARANORMAL TESTIMONY - first- or second-hand anomalous testimony, preserved separately from any claim that its interpretation is objectively correct.
- LEGEND - traditional or repeated story for which historical provenance is presently weak or unresolved.
- LATER INTERPRETATION - an explanatory framework added after the underlying experience or story was already in circulation.

Three forms of continuity

Phenomenological continuity concerns what people report: grey form, dark eye areas, smell, animal disturbance, fading, fear, nausea or weakness. Interpretive continuity concerns the classification placed upon those reports: ghost, Elemental, guardian, magical construct or psychic residue. Mythological continuity concerns the biography subsequently attached to the named entity: creator, age, purpose, historical origin and motivation.

> *A motif can be old even when its explanation is new. A name can be old even when the biography attached to that name is comparatively recent.*

PART I - THE FORMATION OF THE ELEMENTAL TRADITION, 1898-1909

1. Introduction

Leap Castle in County Offaly is frequently described as one of Ireland's most haunted buildings. Among the many apparitions associated with it, none has become more distinctive than the presence now usually called the Leap Castle Elemental: a foul-smelling, animalistic or humanoid entity commonly presented as ancient, malevolent and intimately connected with the castle's violent history.

The modern description is deceptively coherent.

When the earliest surviving published material is examined chronologically, the tradition does not begin with a fully formed creature called "the Elemental." It begins with a collection of anomalous experiences: sounds, lights, animal disturbance, tactile sensations, apparitions, a grey humanoid "Thing," and a bestial, foul-smelling "Creature." Only later is an occult classification applied to some of those experiences.

This study therefore does not begin by asking whether witnesses encountered "the Elemental." It asks a more basic historical question:

What was actually reported, by whom, when - and how did those reports become the entity people describe today?

The distinction is essential. If every unusual event at Leap is retrospectively classified as an encounter with the Elemental, the modern mythology is projected backwards into sources that did not necessarily contain it.

The early record instead suggests a process

reported experience -> recurring motif cluster -> occult classification -> named entity -> origin mythology -> modern synthesis.

The question is not merely whether a supernatural entity exists. It is also how an anomalous experience becomes a named entity, and how that named entity acquires a mythology.

2. The 1898 baseline: before the Elemental had a name

The earliest detailed source presently identified is "A House of Horrors," published under the name Andrew Merry in Belgravia in January 1898.

The narrator identifies himself as a thirty-two-year-old captain in a Native Indian Regiment and frames the narrative as a true account of events occurring during "November last year." The closing page places the experiences explicitly in "this year of grace 1897."

The article is important not only because of its age but because it provides a baseline against which later versions can be compared.

The word "Elemental" does not appear in the 1898 text.

Instead the anomalous presence is described through ordinary and deliberately vague terms such as "It," "Thing" and "Creature."

This is the first major methodological point: the reported phenomenon predates the occult taxonomy later attached to it.

Betty's grey "Thing"

Within the narrative, Betty - the fictionalised name used for the castle's mistress, corresponding to Mildred Darby - describes an encounter on the gallery or stairhead.

She feels hands placed upon her shoulders and turns to find a grey "Thing" only a couple of feet away. It is approximately human in shape, slightly shorter than herself, with raised or bent arms. Its face is suggested rather than clearly defined: great eyes, sharp features, and a whole form described as grey, unclean, bluish and resembling cotton wool.

Her response is immediate terror. She screams, runs, and nearly faints.

What she does not do is call it an Elemental.

Indeed, the account distinguishes "It" from the castle's more conventional ghosts. Betty can catalogue the banshee, soldiers, lights and other apparitions, but "It" occupies a different category even before an occult explanation is supplied.

This is phenomenological distinction without formal taxonomy.

Gordon's Creature

Later in the same article Captain Gordon encounters something substantially more animalistic.

He first becomes aware of a profoundly offensive smell. The odour intensifies as the apparition becomes perceptible and produces severe nausea. He describes lustreless, partly decomposed-looking eyes, a bestial form, and a lower body that is indefinite or semi-transparent.

He fires his revolver.

As the Creature becomes less distinct, its bestial features gradually merge into the grey, featureless shape previously described by Betty.

This passage is fundamental because later retellings frequently collapse Betty's and Gordon's experiences into a single description.

The famous foul-smelling, animalistic or sheep-sized monster belongs most clearly to Gordon's first-person encounter.

Betty's own original sighting is a grey humanoid form.

The 1898 narrative nevertheless links them. Gordon himself perceives the bestial form changing into the grey form Betty described. Thus the earliest source already contains a narrative basis for later consolidation, but it does not present one stable morphology.

The distinction is therefore not "two completely unrelated ghosts" versus "one unquestionably identical entity."

The source gives us something more ambiguous: two different-looking manifestations explicitly connected within the story.

Sensory motifs before classification

Several motifs later associated with the Elemental are already present in 1898

• animal disturbance, especially dogs reacting around half-past eleven;

• intense fear;

• tactile phenomena;

• a grey humanoid form;

• a bestial form;

• foul odour;

• nausea;

• gradual fading or merging;

• an impression that "It" is different from ordinary ghosts.

These motifs are historically early.

The explanatory framework is not.

That difference becomes critical ten years later.

3. December 1908: the Thing becomes an "Elemental"

In December 1908 The Occult Review republished and revised the Kilman Castle narrative as "The House of Horror."

The setting and major events remain recognisable, but the new version contains material that significantly changes the interpretation of the grey Thing.

The decisive addition occurs in Betty's description

"My friends who are clever about occult things say it is what they call an 'Elemental.'"

This appears to be the earliest explicit Elemental classification presently identified in the Leap material.

The wording deserves attention.

Betty does not claim that local tradition has always called the apparition an Elemental. She attributes the classification to friends "clever about occult things."

The term therefore enters the record as an occult interpretation applied to an already reported phenomenon.

That is a very different proposition from saying that Leap Castle possessed an ancient local tradition concerning an entity historically known as "the Elemental."

The 1908 revision also adds that Betty's brother saw "It" briefly and subsequently died, followed by the statement that seeing the apparition is said to be a sign of very bad luck.

Death and bad luck enter the tradition

These additions strengthen another later characteristic: the idea that encountering the presence is dangerous.

The 1898 account contains terror and physical distress, but the 1908 version explicitly associates sighting "It" with death and misfortune.

The issue's prefatory material goes further. Andrew Merry states that two people who saw the "elemental apparition," as well as Captain Gordon, died not long after their experiences. Merry also claims personally to have seen the Elemental once and says that two serious accidents subsequently nearly killed him.

Whether these claims can be independently verified is a separate question.

Historically, however, they demonstrate that by 1908 the tradition had acquired

an occult category;

a danger association;

and an emerging retrospective pattern in which later deaths or accidents were interpreted through the encounter.

The source is no longer simply describing a strange apparition.

It is beginning to describe an entity with consequences.

Retrospective reframing

The change also illustrates a general problem in paranormal source history.

An experience may be reported first. An explanatory framework can then be learned later. When the story is retold, the later interpretation can become embedded within the earlier experience.

By 1908, the grey Thing of the 1890s is no longer merely "It."

It has become something that occult acquaintances identify as an Elemental.

The experience has acquired taxonomy.

4. January 1909: three letters, not three Elemental witnesses

The January 1909 issue of The Occult Review published three letters supplied by Andrew Merry in support of the previous month's article.

The editor states that they came from friends who had stayed at the castle and experienced phenomena of a psychic nature.

It is tempting to describe these as three additional Elemental encounters.

That would be inaccurate.

They describe three substantially different experiences.

Letter I - the scarlet woman

The first correspondent reports waking during a stay at Kilman and perceiving a very tall figure dressed from head to foot in red, apparently internally luminous and holding its right hand or a weapon menacingly.

The witness checks the physical environment and ultimately concludes that the experience was supernatural.

This is useful evidence for the wider haunting tradition.

It is not, on the evidence presently available, an Elemental report.

Letter II - the grey gallery Thing

The second letter is much more important to the Elemental question.

After the dogs begin barking and howling at approximately half-past eleven, the writer and companions observe something on the gallery.

The figure is grey and approximately the height of a small adult. Instead of normal eyes it has dark areas resembling holes. Grey arms appear folded over or resting upon the gallery railing.

The writer's brother also sees it and runs upstairs, apparently assuming that someone is playing a joke. The observers below continue watching.

As he reaches the gallery, the Thing gradually fades without moving.

This is one of the strongest historical morphological matches to Betty's grey apparition.

It is also potentially important as a multi-observer event.

But the evidential language must remain precise.

The letter does not appear to call the figure an Elemental.

Nor does it include the characteristic foul smell.

It supports continuity of a grey gallery apparition; it does not independently prove the later taxonomy.

The identity and provenance of the original letter are also important. If the surviving physical letter held in the NICREADH archive is the same document published in January 1909, comparison of handwriting, wording, paper and provenance may materially strengthen the documentary chain.

Letter III - the invisible weight

The third correspondent claims to have been a stranger to Kilman and its stories.

During the first night in the Priests' House, the witness wakes with the sensation of a heavy body lying on the bed and nearly forcing the sleeper out. Reaching toward it produces an ice-cold hand-like sensation. When a candle is lit no figure is visible, although a deep impression remains in the counterpane. Other unexplained sounds are subsequently reported.

Again, this belongs to the castle's anomalous corpus.

It does not closely resemble either the grey Thing or Gordon's bestial Creature.

Three letters therefore do not equal three Elemental witnesses.

The January correspondence instead demonstrates the variety of phenomena associated with Kilman Castle at the beginning of the twentieth century.

5. From report to entity

The 1898-1909 sequence allows us to observe an unusually valuable transition.

In 1898, the narrative contains experiences.

By 1908, one class of experience has acquired an occult explanation.

By 1909, similar morphology can recur in additional testimony without the taxonomy necessarily being repeated.

This distinction suggests two different kinds of continuity.

Phenomenological continuity concerns what people report: grey form, dark eye areas, gallery location, fading, animal disturbance, smell, nausea and fear.

Interpretive continuity concerns what those experiences are said to mean: ghost, Elemental, guardian, magical construct, accumulated psychic energy, spirit of a particular person.

The two should never be treated as interchangeable.

A recurring sensory motif can be historically old even if its explanation is comparatively new.

6. The construction of the modern entity

The modern Leap Castle Elemental is usually described as though all of its characteristics belonged to one stable entity from the beginning.

The early sources do not support that simplicity.

The grey humanoid morphology belongs most clearly to Betty and the 1909 gallery letter.

The animalistic morphology and powerful foul odour belong most clearly to Gordon.

The 1898 narrative itself links the forms through Gordon's perception that one changes into the other.

Later transmission appears increasingly to compress these distinctions.

The result is the familiar modern composite

a grey or dark, roughly humanoid being;

animalistic or sheep-like characteristics;

black or empty eyes;

a foul smell;

nausea or weakness;

malevolent presence;

and a reputation for danger.

This does not mean that later witnesses fabricated the composite.

It means that the historical description of the entity cannot be reconstructed by simply collecting all later attributes and projecting them backwards into 1898.

7. A working model of transmission

The evidence presently supports the following provisional model

Stage 1 - reported experience

A cluster of anomalous events is associated with the castle.

Stage 2 - recurring motifs

Certain characteristics recur or become narratively linked: grey form, animalistic form, smell, animal reaction, fear, fading.

Stage 3 - occult classification

By December 1908, Mildred's occult acquaintances identify the Thing as an "Elemental."

Stage 4 - named entity

The classification increasingly becomes attached to a particular recurring presence rather than remaining a generic occult category.

Stage 5 - origin mythology

The named presence later acquires explanations involving Druids, Gerald FitzGerald, O'Carroll history, human remains, occult experimentation and accumulated violence.

Stage 6 - modern synthesis

Different historical descriptions, witness accounts and explanatory traditions are compressed into the apparently coherent entity now called the Leap Castle Elemental.

8. What remains unresolved

Several questions remain open.

When exactly did Mildred first encounter the grey Thing?

Who were the occult friends who supplied the Elemental classification?

Was "Elemental" already circulating orally at Leap before the December 1908 publication?

Can the witnesses represented in the January 1909 correspondence be securely identified?

Is the surviving physical reply letter identical to Letter II?

When did the foul-smelling bestial form and grey humanoid form become routinely described as one entity outside the original narrative?

When did "an Elemental" become the proper-name-like "the Elemental"?

And, most importantly for the next phase of research

When did the entity acquire its supposed origin?

9. Preliminary conclusion

The earliest record does not reveal one consistently described ancient entity whose biography was preserved unchanged.

It reveals a recurring cluster of anomalous motifs to which an occult identity was subsequently attached.

The Leap Castle Elemental therefore appears to have existed as a reported phenomenon before it existed as a named entity, and as a named entity before it acquired a mythology.

INTERLUDE - E. KATHARINE BATES AND THE OCCULT HOUSEHOLD NETWORK

9A. E. Katharine Bates: identifying the psychic visitor

Identifying Seymour's Miss B.

E. Katharine Bates provides an important bridge in the source history. In Seen and Unseen she states that she spent several days in the pseudonymous "Castle Rush" in September 1898. Her description of the household - two young daughters, an earlier deceased son and another child expected around Christmas - strongly corresponds to the Darby family.

Bates therefore appears with very high confidence to be the visitor later identified by St John D. Seymour simply as Miss B.

Bates and the skeletons in the wall

Bates says she experienced no visual or auditory apparition during the visit. While walking through the circular hall with her hostess, however, she suddenly touched a particular part of the stone wall and said there was something uncanny there. She later learned that two skeletons had previously been discovered bricked into that wall and resealed.

This is clearly the source behind Seymour's later account of Miss B. touching a wall at Kilman and identifying the place where two skeletons had previously been discovered.

Bates practised automatic writing

After leaving the castle, Bates became convinced that the deceased brother of her host wished to communicate. She deliberately obtained pencil and paper and attempted automatic writing. The resulting message concerned malicious spirits supposedly still present at the castle, urged prayer and predicted the birth of a male heir.

This remains the earliest directly documented automatic-writing episode presently identified in connection with Leap. The practitioner was Bates, not Mildred.

Seymour modifies the Bates story

In True Irish Ghost Stories (1914), Seymour describes Miss B. as having been invited to Kilman specifically to locate buried treasure. He repeats the wall-and-skeleton incident, then says Miss B. either practised automatic writing or attended a seance and received a message claiming treasure was buried beneath the chapel pavement.

Bates's own published account does not contain this treasure episode. Her visit is not described as a treasure hunt, and her automatic-writing message concerns the Darby household and its spirits. The story had therefore already changed by 1914.

Possible explanations include additional information supplied orally to Seymour, an unpublished episode, or conflation between Bates, treasure traditions and psychic practices. The evidence does not presently allow a definitive choice.

An occult household network

Bates's account also mentions an unnamed older woman who said she had conducted a small service to clear a haunted room. Combined with the later 1908 reference to Mildred's occult-informed friends, the early environment around Leap contains several psychically or occult-inclined people.

This matters because later folklore often collapses the whole occult environment into the single figure of Mildred Darby. The better historical model is an occult household network rather than an originally solitary 'occult Mildred.'

Source note: E. Katharine Bates, Seen and Unseen (1907), chapter 'A Haunted Castle in Ireland'; compared with Seymour and Neligan (1914).

PART II - FROM "IT" TO AN ESTABLISHED ENTITY, 1909-1917

10. 1914: Seymour visits Kilman

By 1914 the Kilman material had moved beyond the pages of The Occult Review and into a wider collection of Irish supernatural testimony.

In True Irish Ghost Stories, St John D. Seymour and Harry Neligan devoted a substantial section to "Kilman" Castle. Seymour states that he had personally visited the castle only a few months previously and had been shown around by its mistress, whom he identifies as the writer "Andrew Merry." He also explicitly connects her with the December 1908 and January 1909 Occult Review material.

This makes Seymour important in a way that later retellings are not.

He is not merely copying an anonymous ghost story decades later. He is writing within approximately sixteen years of the original Belgravia publication, only six years after the Occult Review revision, and after personally visiting the castle and speaking to Mildred.

A castle containing many phenomena

Seymour does not organise the haunting around a single supernatural entity.

Instead he describes a heterogeneous collection of reported phenomena: strange lights in the chapel, treasure traditions, skeletons found within walls, apparitions of a monk, an old man and woman, a bed-weight phenomenon, and the tall woman in red already represented in the 1909 correspondence.

This is methodologically important.

Even after the word Elemental had appeared in Mildred's 1908 version, the wider Leap/Kilman haunting tradition had not yet been collapsed into one dominant entity narrative.

Seymour presents a haunted site containing numerous reported phenomena, not a castle haunted principally by one ancient entity.

Miss B. and the occult-practice question

Seymour also records a striking episode concerning a psychic visitor whom he calls "Miss B."

According to the account, Miss B. was invited to Kilman in the hope that she might psychically locate a supposed buried treasure. While walking through the hall she reportedly stopped at a stone wall and sensed something uncanny there; Seymour says two skeletons had previously been discovered at that location.

Some time later, Miss B. allegedly received a message concerning the treasure through either automatic writing or a seance. Seymour admits that he does not remember which.

This distinction matters because later Leap Castle folklore frequently connects Mildred Darby's own occult activity with the appearance or awakening of the Elemental.

The 1914 text does not support that claim.

It documents occult or spiritualistic experimentation connected with the castle, but the person explicitly performing the automatic-writing or seance activity in this episode is Miss B., not Mildred.

It therefore remains possible that later retellings have compressed several separate elements: Mildred's interest in supernatural phenomena; psychic visitors to the castle; seances or automatic writing; discovery of human remains; and the already named Elemental.

At present, however, the source does not justify saying that Mildred summoned, awakened or created the phenomenon through occult practice.

That remains a later interpretation unless earlier evidence is found.

11. Seymour's version of "It"

Seymour eventually turns to what he describes as the most unpleasant of the castle's ghosts: the inexplicable thing "usually called 'It.'"

That wording is revealing.

Despite knowing Mildred's Occult Review contributions, Seymour does not call the apparition an Elemental.

He records the vernacular identity as simply: "It."

He then recounts Mildred's gallery encounter.

The major features remain recognisable: she is standing on the gallery overlooking the hall; two hands are placed on her shoulders; she turns and sees a humanoid figure; it is approximately four feet high; its eyes resemble black holes; its whole body appears grey and cotton-wool-like; the encounter causes a prolonged shock.

But Seymour adds something striking.

He says the apparition was accompanied by an appalling smell comparable to decaying human flesh.

The odour problem

In the 1898 Belgravia text, the foul odour belongs most clearly to Captain Gordon's bestial Creature, not to Betty's initial grey-Thing encounter.

Gordon describes the smell as horribly offensive and later says it intensifies enormously when the Creature is directly before him, producing deadly nausea.

Betty's 1898 account of the grey Thing, by contrast, describes its appearance and her physiological terror but does not include a foul smell in the relevant passage.

The 1908 revision strengthens the eyes into "big black holes" and introduces the Elemental classification, but the passage as printed there still does not clearly attach Gordon's characteristic smell to Betty's original encounter.

By 1914, however, Seymour associates the decaying-corpse odour directly with Mildred's grey apparition.

This is potentially one of the most important small changes in the entire tradition.

At least three explanations remain possible.

Mildred may have supplied Seymour with additional oral information in 1914 that was omitted from her earlier published versions.

Seymour may have inadvertently merged Gordon's olfactory experience with Mildred's visual description.

Or by 1914 the two forms were already becoming conceptually fused in oral retelling.

We currently cannot distinguish between these explanations.

What we can establish is that by 1914, the odour motif and the grey humanoid morphology had become associated in a way that is not explicit in the earliest published account.

That is exactly the kind of transmission change this study is attempting to track.

12. A paradox in terminology

Seymour's treatment creates an intriguing chronological paradox.

By December 1908, Mildred had already published the explicit explanation that occult acquaintances called the phenomenon an "Elemental."

Yet in 1914, after personally visiting Kilman and speaking with her, Seymour refers to the apparition simply as the thing "usually called 'It.'"

A full-text search of the available transcription of True Irish Ghost Stories returns no occurrence of the word elemental.

That does not prove that Mildred had abandoned the terminology.

But it demonstrates that Elemental had not yet become the inevitable public name by which every informed writer referred to the phenomenon.

This matters enormously for the development of the tradition.

The old vernacular identity - It / the Thing - remained alive even after the occult classification had appeared in print.

The transition from description to taxonomy was therefore not instantaneous.

For a period, the two systems apparently coexisted

traditional/phenomenological: It; the Thing

and

occult/interpretive: an Elemental

The modern proper-name usage - The Elemental - may represent a later stage again.

13. The 1915 letter: taxonomy becomes personal vocabulary

The next major documentary point occurs in Mildred Darby's correspondence with Sydney Carroll.

The National Library of Ireland catalogue preserves a group of six photocopied letters from Mildred to Carroll, dating approximately from 1915 to 1922 and explicitly concerning psychic phenomena at Leap Castle and its later destruction. The archive identifies the collection as NLI MS 17,877.

One of these accounts describes what Mildred calls the last appearance of the Elemental, dated 25 November

14. 25 November 1915

According to Mildred's account, two servants had invited two soldiers from the Birr barracks to the castle while they believed her husband would be absent.

At approximately 7:15 in the evening Mildred and her husband had gone upstairs to dress when a sudden terrified yell from male and female voices sounded from the hall.

Her husband went ahead and Mildred followed onto the gallery.

There, she writes, she saw "the Thing - the Elemental" leaning against the gallery rail and smelled it.

Her husband stopped roughly ten feet away.

His reaction is extraordinarily useful because it introduces an ambiguous internal counter-witness into the account.

According to Mildred, he angrily accused her of dressing something up in order to frighten him, while simultaneously insisting that he had seen nothing paranormal.

He therefore appears to have perceived something unusual enough to interpret it as a staged object or trick, while explicitly rejecting Mildred's supernatural interpretation.

That ambiguity should be preserved.

It is not responsible to classify him simply as either witness to the Elemental or witness to nothing.

Mildred's own account presents a third possibility: he perceived an object or form but interpreted it conventionally.

That distinction is evidentially valuable.

Four additional reported observers

Mildred states that the two servants and two soldiers were downstairs and that all four had seen and smelled the presence before fleeing.

They reportedly became physically sick, and the two female servants left the castle the following day.

This gives the 1915 incident the appearance of a strong multi-witness event.

But its documentary structure must be stated correctly.

We currently possess Mildred's account of what those four people allegedly experienced.

Unless independent statements from the servants or soldiers survive, they should not be counted as four independent documentary witnesses.

The evidence hierarchy is

Primary direct testimony: Mildred describing what she herself saw and smelled.

Reported contemporary reaction: her husband's behaviour, as described by Mildred.

Secondary witness claims inside the primary document: the reported experiences of the two servants and two soldiers.

This distinction prevents a common inflation problem in paranormal literature, where one surviving narrative saying "five people saw it" gradually becomes "five independent eyewitness accounts."

Those are not the same evidential object.

15. Smell becomes increasingly central

The 1915 account provides one of the clearest points of continuity in the entire tradition.

Mildred explicitly says that she both saw and smelled the phenomenon.

The other reported observers are likewise said to have perceived the smell and to have become sick.

This is significant when placed beside the earlier chronology.

1898 - Gordon experiences a profoundly offensive smell in association with the bestial apparition, accompanied by nausea.

1914 - Seymour attaches an appalling corpse-like stench to Mildred's grey "It."

1915 - Mildred explicitly reports smelling "the Thing - the Elemental" during her gallery encounter.

The visual morphology is variable.

The olfactory motif is becoming unusually persistent.

This does not establish a paranormal cause.

But historically it means that odour may be a more stable element of the tradition than exact visual form.

That distinction will become especially important when twentieth- and twenty-first-century reports are introduced.

16. What still has not appeared

By 1915 we have a recurring grey humanoid form; black or void-like eyes; gallery localisation; animal disturbance; foul odour; nausea or sickness; gradual fading; intense fear; an established "It" identity; an explicit occult classification as an Elemental; and a growing association with danger or misfortune.

What we still do not have securely established in these early sources is a detailed origin mythology.

No source examined in the 1898-1915 sequence has yet demonstrated that the apparition was created by Druids to guard the site; magically placed at Leap by Gerald FitzGerald; the spirit of a leprous O'Carroll; awakened by discovery of the oubliette; created by accumulated suffering in the castle; summoned by Mildred; or demonstrably tied to any single historical death.

That absence matters.

By 1915 the phenomenon possesses many of the attributes later associated with the Elemental.

But it does not yet possess the elaborate biography familiar from modern folklore.

The sensory tradition appears older than the explanatory tradition.

17. A revised developmental sequence

1898 - anomalous corpus. Several different phenomena are published. The grey Thing and bestial Creature are narratively linked, but the word Elemental is absent.

1908 - occult classification. The grey Thing is explicitly interpreted as an Elemental by Mildred's occult acquaintances. Death and bad-luck associations intensify.

1909 - corroborative but heterogeneous testimony. Additional reports are published. One grey gallery apparition strongly resembles the earlier Thing, but the letters do not uniformly refer to an Elemental and clearly describe different phenomena.

1914 - oral consolidation. Seymour visits the castle and records Mildred's account personally. "It" remains the public name, but a foul corpse-like smell is now attached directly to the grey humanoid apparition. Occult experimentation is documented at the castle, but in the relevant episode it is undertaken by Miss B., not demonstrably by Mildred.

1915 - named recurring presence. Mildred writes of "the Thing - the Elemental." The occult category has developed into the identity of a particular recurring presence. The smell motif is now explicit in Mildred's own testimony. Yet the later origin mythology is still absent.

18. From classification to biography

This period suggests that the creation of the Leap Castle Elemental tradition occurred in at least two distinct phases.

The first was taxonomic.

A pre-existing body of experiences was interpreted through contemporary occult language and classified as an Elemental.

The second was mythological.

At some later point, the now-named entity acquired explanations for its origin, history, function and motivation.

These processes should not be confused.

Naming an anomalous experience does not establish what produced it.

Likewise, supplying an origin story to a named entity does not demonstrate that the origin story existed when the original experiences were reported.

The historical problem therefore becomes increasingly precise

When did "an Elemental" become "the Elemental," and when did "the Elemental" acquire a past?

That is now the critical bridge into the later twentieth-century tradition.

INTERLUDE - LATER OCCULT INTERESTS AND LITERARY TRANSMISSION, 1917-1958

18A. Mildred's later occult interests: a necessary correction

Freeman-Attwood's 2001 account, drawing on Mildred's letters to Sydney Carroll, materially refines the picture. A February 1917 letter reportedly says that, on the advice of Miss Bates, a medium, Mildred had begun praying for the souls of the spirits at Leap. Mildred said that after following this advice her terror of the 'poor things' disappeared.

Freeman-Attwood also describes an undated letter in which Mildred speaks further of mediums and occult means of communicating with the dead, including the then-fashionable planchette.

The strongest historically defensible formulation is therefore no longer 'Bates, not Mildred, was involved in occult practice.' Rather: the earliest directly documented automatic-writing episode belongs to Bates, while Mildred's later correspondence shows a genuine subsequent interest in mediums, planchette and communication with the dead.

What still remains unsupported is the stronger modern claim that Mildred summoned, created or accidentally conjured the Elemental during a seance.

> *The distinction is now sharper: Bates supplies the earliest directly documented automatic-writing episode; Mildred later shows genuine interest in mediums, planchette and communication with the dead; neither fact by itself establishes the later claim that Mildred summoned or created the Elemental in a seance.*

Source note: Marigold Freeman-Attwood, Leap Castle: The Castle and Its People (2001), pp.128-129, drawing on Mildred Darby letters to Sydney Carroll.

18B. The literary transmission bridge: Yeats, Rolleston, Gogarty and Smith

Freeman-Attwood's warning about proliferation

Freeman-Attwood explicitly warns that the stories of the Leap entity proliferated as time went on and that writers could alter anecdotal material to fit their own interpretations. This observation is unusually valuable because it comes from a Darby descendant who had access to family material and who was herself sceptical of several later accretions.

Her chapter therefore does more than preserve folklore: it independently identifies the same process of narrative mutation that this study is attempting to reconstruct.

Yeats in 1937: the composite entity enters literary interpretation

Freeman-Attwood identifies W. B. Yeats as a major literary transmitter and points to the revised 1937 edition of A Vision. Direct inspection of the 1937 text confirms that Yeats explicitly names Leap Castle and describes its haunting as an evil spirit appearing as a sheep with short legs and a decaying human head.

This direct wording makes 1937 a firm chronological marker for composite morphology. By then, a recognisably fused animal-human Leap apparition was sufficiently established for Yeats to treat it as an example within his own occult theory of the post-mortem 'Husk.'

The inspected Leap passage does not itself supply the foul-smell motif. That feature remains independently strong in the earlier and later Leap tradition, but it should not be attributed to Yeats on the basis of this passage alone.

Rolleston in 1939: direct verification of the composite

Direct inspection of the first 1939 edition of C. H. Rolleston's Portrait of an Irishman now confirms the Leap passage on p.86. This corrects the p.62 locator supplied in the 2006 Tipperary Libraries correspondence. Rolleston describes the Leap Castle ghost as half-human and half-animal, covered with dirty-looking brown hair, walking more or less upright, and heralded and accompanied by an appalling sickly stench.

Rolleston also adds a distinctive claim absent from the earlier published sources examined here: the apparition 'used to be seen most frequently by the children at Leap,' while also appearing before adults. He names no children, gives no dates and supplies no provenance for that statement. It is therefore evidence that a child-witness tradition was in circulation by 1939, not independent verification that particular children encountered the apparition.

The direct inspection is nevertheless important. It confirms that by 1939 the fused humanoid-animal morphology, upright movement and smell motif had all entered a single compact published description, only two years after Yeats's composite sheep-and-human-head formulation.

Gogarty in 1958: a divergent ram-bodied branch

Direct inspection of Oliver St John Gogarty's 'The Most Haunted House of Them All,' in the first 1958 edition of A Week End in the Middle of the Week and Other Essays on the Bias, confirms a substantially more elaborate branch of the tradition across pp.202-209. Gogarty openly presents the material as a reconstruction from stories: he says that he and Yeats had to piece together many accounts, only one of which was initially at first hand.

Gogarty preserves several otherwise distinctive witness traditions: a bishop who wakes beside a heavy warm presence and encounters a foul atmosphere and fleece-like texture; a young officer who

apparently fires a revolver at what he sees and leaves at daybreak; a man shaving who is injured after seeing something over his shoulder; and a visitor on the great stair who feels weight on his shoulders, sees hooves and the hindquarters of a gigantic black ram, and again encounters the smell motif.

The Roscrea informant in Gogarty's account gives the most extreme morphology: a human face attached to the body of a great black ram, later explained as a woman transformed into a ram. This is not simply a repetition of Mildred Darby's grey Thing. It is a literary and oral-tradition reorganisation in which animal morphology, decomposing human features, smell and an origin story have been fused into a new narrative.

Gogarty then reports returning to Dublin and discussing the story with Yeats. When Gogarty asks whether the spirit is an elemental, Yeats - in Gogarty's retrospective account - explicitly rejects that classification and instead describes someone partially metamorphosed into an animal body and seeking release. Because this conversation was published in 1958, long after Yeats's death, it must be treated as retrospective literary testimony rather than as a contemporaneous Yeats primary text. It is nonetheless significant evidence that competing interpretations of the Leap apparition were circulating within the same literary-occult network.

Gogarty also states that all those reported to have seen the apparitions were guests. That claim sits uneasily beside Rolleston's 1939 assertion that children at Leap saw the apparition most frequently, and beside other strands of the witness tradition. The contradiction is useful: it demonstrates that mid-century accounts were not preserving one stable witness list or one stable morphology.

Grover Smith as a transmission analyst

Freeman-Attwood also points to Grover Smith's essay 'Yeats, Gogarty and The Leap Castle Ghost,' published in a 1972 collection on modern Irish literature. She says Smith compares the two writers and shows how both their interpretations and their underlying material differed.

Grover Smith's later comparative essay remains useful for reconstructing the literary pathway by which the Leap entity moved from Mildred's testimony into Yeats's and Gogarty's different frameworks. Direct inspection of Smith remains outstanding.

Source note: W. B. Yeats, A Vision, revised edition (Macmillan, 1937), p.224; C. H. Rolleston, Portrait of an Irishman (Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1939), p.86, physical first edition directly inspected 15 September 2026; Oliver St John Gogarty, 'The Most Haunted House of Them All,' in A Week End in the Middle of the Week and Other Essays on the Bias (Doubleday, 1958), pp.202-209, physical first edition directly inspected 15 September 2026; Marigold Freeman-Attwood, Leap Castle: The Castle and Its People (2001), pp.122-123. Direct inspection of Grover Smith remains outstanding.

Comparative occult context: Dion Fortune and the significance of greyness

One recurring characteristic in the Leap corpus is the entity's unusual lack of normal colour and visual definition. The earliest descriptions repeatedly use terms such as grey, bluish-grey, cotton-wool-like, indistinct or otherwise difficult to resolve into an ordinary physical form. This feature should first be treated phenomenologically: witnesses reported something that appeared to lack the colour, solidity or definition expected of a normal person or animal.

Later paranormal and spiritualist interpretations sometimes explain grey, mist-like or poorly defined apparitions as incomplete manifestations - forms supposedly unable to acquire greater visual definition or solidity because of limited available energy. There is no established scientific basis for that explanation, and it should not be imposed retrospectively upon the Leap witnesses. It is relevant here only as a later interpretive model for the kind of appearance repeatedly described at Leap.

A considerably earlier and more useful occult comparison appears in Dion Fortune's Psychic Self-Defence (1930). Fortune discusses 'artificial elementals' and recounts what she interpreted as the accidental creation of one while brooding intensely on resentment in a state between waking and sleep. After thinking of Fenris, the wolf of Norse mythology, she reported a large wolf-form materialising beside her. She described it as grey and colourless, apparently possessing weight and later even a dog-like odour.

Fortune's account becomes still more relevant to the question of morphology when she describes deliberately reabsorbing the entity. As she withdrew what she believed to be its sustaining psychic energy, the wolf-form faded until only a shapeless grey mist remained, which she then said she reabsorbed. Within Fortune's own occult framework, a defined animal form and an indistinct grey manifestation were therefore not separate categories but different states of the same artificial elemental.

The resemblance should not be overstated. Fortune's experience was reported decades after the earliest Leap accounts, concerned an entity she believed she had generated herself, and provides no evidence that the Leap phenomenon had the same cause. Nor is there presently evidence that Fortune's account influenced the Leap tradition. Its value is comparative: by 1930, Western occult literature contained an explicit model in which an elemental could be generated or sustained through concentrated emotion, possess unstable animal morphology, appear grey or colourless, display apparent physicality and odour, and finally dissolve into an indistinct grey state.

This leaves several possible ways of reading the greyness reported at Leap. It may simply reflect witnesses attempting to describe an ambiguous visual experience. Later paranormal interpretation may regard such greyness as incomplete manifestation. Within an occult model such as Fortune's, unstable or partially formed morphology could itself be considered characteristic of an elemental. The historical evidence does not allow us to choose between these explanations. Their value lies in showing that the same reported feature can generate very different interpretations depending on the conceptual framework applied to it.

> Comparative source note: Dion Fortune, Psychic Self-Defence (1930), discussion of artificial elementals and the author's wolf-form account. The later 'incomplete manifestation' explanation is included only as a modern paranormal/spiritualist interpretive model, not as an established explanation of the Leap reports.

18C. The leprous O'Carroll and priest traditions

The leprous O'Carroll tradition

Freeman-Attwood records that several people had asserted that the Elemental was the ghost of an O'Carroll who died of leprosy after being kept in isolation at the castle for many years.

Crucially, she does not present this as established family history. She calls it an accretion - an ingenious later addition intended to lend authenticity to the supposed sightings and smell.

The publication date of 2001 now gives us a firm latest-known date for the leprous-O'Carroll strand. Its origin must be earlier than 2001, but remains to be traced.

Priest intervention: documented event versus folklore elaboration

Freeman-Attwood reports that Mildred described an unsuccessful exorcism carried out by a Catholic priest at her husband's request. This is presented as deriving from a letter by Mildred to Sydney Carroll.

She then contrasts it with a later local story in which a priest catches the Thing in a bottle, buries it, and is found prematurely aged after the entity escapes. Freeman-Attwood treats this as a humorous or grotesque later addendum.

This provides another unusually clear example of a documented or near-documented event generating a more colourful folkloric sequel.

What the early sources still do not contain

Even after incorporating Freeman-Attwood's material, the distinction between occult interest and origin mythology remains essential.

The early corpus now supports Mildred's later interest in mediums and planchette, but it still does not establish that she created the Elemental. Nor does the early documentary record yet securely establish a Druid creator, Gerald FitzGerald as magical author, a leprous O'Carroll as original identity, or the oubliette as the mechanism that awakened the entity.

These are later explanatory modules, not nineteenth-century facts.

Source note: Freeman-Attwood (2001), pp.121 and 126.

PART III - RUIN, CONFLATION AND THE POST-1922 MYTHOLOGY

19. The destruction of Leap Castle

The destruction of Leap Castle in July 1922 created a dramatic rupture in the history of the site, but the surviving evidence does not support the common modern implication that the Elemental tradition itself originated in the fire, in a 1922 discovery of the oubliette, or in the uncovering of large quantities of human remains at that time.

The castle was attacked on 30-31 July 1922. Caretaker Richard Dawkins later described eleven armed men arriving in the early hours, holding him at gunpoint and giving him time to remove his wife and child before petrol was poured through the building and the northern portion set alight. A second fire destroyed the surviving southern section the following morning.

The National Library of Ireland catalogue independently confirms that Mildred Darby's surviving correspondence with Mr Carroll extends to approximately 1922 and includes references both to psychic phenomena at Leap and to the castle's destruction during the Civil War. A separate archival group contains newscuttings concerning the burning and a 1923 letter from Mildred regarding compensation for the loss of the castle.

These archival records establish something important: the destruction and the paranormal tradition belong to the same surviving correspondence archive, but they should not automatically be interpreted as causally connected.

20. The oubliette problem

One of the most repeated modern Leap Castle stories is that workmen discovered the oubliette during the Darby period or around 1922 and removed three cartloads of human skeletons, sometimes quantified as approximately 150 bodies.

The earliest detailed source examined in this study says something quite different.

In the 1898 Belgravia account, the oubliette is already known and described. Gordon is told that "a couple of cartloads of old bones and bone dust" had been removed and buried in the churchyard by an ancestor.

The same passage then immediately introduces an entirely separate story: an O'Connoll ancestor allegedly employed 150 mercenaries, poisoned them after a military engagement, and killed them rather than pay them.

The December 1908 Occult Review version preserves essentially the same distinction: a couple of cartloads of bones from the oubliette, followed separately by the story of 150 mercenaries.

This is decisive for the chronology.

The bones cannot first have been discovered in 1922 if a published account from 1898 already describes them as having been removed by an earlier ancestor.

Whatever historical reality lies behind the anecdote, the story of bones in the oubliette predates the 1922 fire by at least twenty-four years.

21. How two stories became one

The modern tradition commonly states that three cartloads of skeletons, representing approximately 150 bodies, were removed from the oubliette.

But the primary text strongly suggests a process of narrative compression.

Event A: a couple of cartloads of bones and bone dust removed from the oubliette.

Event B: a story about 150 poisoned mercenaries.

Later retellings increasingly produce: three cartloads of bones = approximately 150 bodies.

That equation does not exist in the 1898 passage.

It appears to be a later synthesis of two neighbouring but separate stories.

This may be one of the clearest demonstrable examples of folklore mutation in the entire Leap Castle corpus.

The process does not require deliberate fabrication.

Repeated retelling tends naturally to compress adjacent memorable details. "Cartloads of bones" and "150 murdered men" belong to the same grisly explanatory landscape. Once the precise textual distinction is lost, joining them is almost effortless.

The result is a factoid that sounds much stronger than either original claim

"150 bodies were found in the oubliette."

The earliest source examined does not say that.

22. 1922 as a chronological displacement

A further distortion appears in later retellings that date the discovery of the bones to 1922.

That date is narratively seductive.

The castle is burned. The building is opened and ruined. Hidden spaces become exposed. Human remains are imagined emerging from the structure. The Darbys leave. The haunted house becomes an abandoned shell.

As a story, the pieces fit beautifully.

As chronology, they do not.

The oubliette and its removed remains are already described in print in 1898.

Modern accounts nevertheless sometimes relocate the discovery into the period immediately before or around the fire. These are therefore not independent confirmations of a 1922 discovery.

They represent a later chronological reassignment of material demonstrably present in the nineteenth-century narrative.

23. The awakening theory

Modern Leap lore sometimes develops the displaced discovery into a causal explanation for the Elemental.

The sequence becomes

human remains are uncovered -> emotional or psychic energy is released -> a dormant presence is awakened -> Mildred encounters the Elemental.

The chronology creates a serious problem for that interpretation.

Mildred's principal grey-Thing encounter is already situated in the 1890s, and the first detailed published version appears in 1898. The Elemental label is introduced by 1908. The oubliette bones were already said to have been removed by an ancestor before either publication.

So the later causal sequence - discovery of bones -> awakening -> Mildred's first encounter - cannot be reconciled straightforwardly with the early documentary chronology.

This does not prove that no disturbance of remains occurred during Mildred's lifetime or that no one later interpreted such disturbance paranormally.

It means only that the specific modern narrative cannot be treated as the historical explanation supplied by the early sources.

24. The burning as a folklore accelerator

The 1922 fire still matters enormously.

But its importance may be cultural rather than supernatural.

Before 1922, Leap was an inhabited house in which Mildred, family members, servants and guests could be connected to particular rooms, routines and episodes.

After 1922, it became a ruin.

That transition changes the ecology of a haunting tradition.

A lived-in house produces testimony.

A ruin produces legend.

The physical destruction removed furniture, room use, domestic context and much of the material environment against which earlier narratives could be checked. The Darbys ceased to occupy the building. Later visitors encountered an atmospheric shell whose visible destruction appeared to confirm its violent reputation.

The historical place and the supernatural story therefore became easier to fuse.

Contemporary reporting remembered the destroyed Leap as a loss not only to antiquarians but also to students of psychical research.

That framing is fascinating.

It shows that the castle already possessed a recognised paranormal reputation at the moment it was destroyed.

The fire did not create that reputation.

It inherited it.

But the ruin provided an extraordinarily powerful visual container in which the reputation could grow.

25. What disappears with the Darbys

The destruction also creates an important evidential boundary.

Up to 1922, much of the tradition can be traced through people with direct relationships to the castle: Mildred Darby, Jonathan Darby, named or partially identifiable guests, servants, correspondents, and visiting writers such as Seymour.

After the Darby era ends, that chain becomes much thinner.

The distinction between first-person testimony and inherited narrative therefore becomes increasingly important.

A later visitor saying "Leap is haunted by an Elemental because 150 bodies were discovered in the oubliette" is not merely reporting an experience.

They are inheriting a pre-existing explanatory package.

The historical task changes accordingly.

Before 1922 we can ask: What did particular people report?

After 1922 we increasingly need to ask: What story had people been told before they arrived?

That is the moment at which prior knowledge becomes a major methodological variable.

26. A post-fire reputation without an origin myth

The next obvious checkpoint is Sacheverell Sitwell.

By the 1930s Leap's supernatural reputation was sufficiently established for Sitwell to write that perhaps no house in the world contained so many suggestions of the supernatural and that Leap "has to be seen to be believed."

That is important evidence for reputation, but not yet for the later Elemental mythology.

No early Sitwell text has yet been located attaching the Druidic guardian, Gerald FitzGerald, leprous O'Carroll or oubliette-awakening stories specifically to the Elemental.

So at this stage we should resist another tempting assumption

famous haunted house does not equal fully developed modern Elemental mythology.

Leap can have become nationally or internationally notorious for ghosts without the entity's later biography having crystallised.

27. The mythology is demonstrably mature by the early internet era

By contrast, the later package is unmistakably developed in modern accounts.

The older Leap Castle site contains the major competing origin theories almost in the form familiar today: a Druidic guardian; a hostile magical intervention associated with Gerald FitzGerald; a leprous O'Carroll; Mildred's occult activity; and disturbance of human remains awakening the entity.

By 2012, outside writers were reproducing essentially the same cluster and elaborating it still further - adding sacrificial speculation, vampiric interpretations and an explicit claim that Mildred's encounter followed the clearing of the oubliette in 1909.

That date is particularly revealing.

The 1909 claim appears to be an attempt to synchronise the Occult Review publication date, the supposed discovery of the oubliette, Mildred's encounter, and the awakening of the Elemental.

But we can now separate all four

the encounter belongs to an earlier narrative chronology;

the word Elemental appears in December 1908;

the 1909 material consists of correspondence;

and the bones story was already published in 1898.

This is not a minor chronological mistake.

It demonstrates the process by which separate historical events are compressed into one satisfying supernatural origin scene.

28. A stronger model: three kinds of continuity

The evidence now suggests that we should distinguish three kinds of continuity rather than treating the Elemental tradition as one thing.

Phenomenological continuity

Certain reported motifs recur: grey form, dark eye areas, fading, animal disturbance, foul odour, fear, nausea or weakness. Some of these can be traced to the nineteenth-century material.

Interpretive continuity

The term Elemental enters by 1908 and is later adopted by Mildred as the name of a particular presence. This continuity begins later than the experiences themselves.

Mythological continuity

The entity is supplied with an origin, purpose and biography: Druidic guardian, magical weapon, O'Carroll spirit, oubliette awakening, occult provocation.

The documentary origin of this layer remains unresolved and appears later still.

The distinction is crucial.

A motif can be old even when an explanation is new.

A name can be old even when the biography attached to the name is new.

29. The Gerald FitzGerald branch

The Gerald FitzGerald theory belongs squarely in this third category.

Its known provenance within this research project is oral.

Barry Fitzgerald communicated the tradition to the present researcher, who subsequently incorporated it into the Leap Castle website.

That establishes a transmission route

unknown earlier source -> Barry Fitzgerald -> NICREADH -> leapcastle.net

It does not yet establish the beginning of the story.

Further questioning of Barry Fitzgerald should therefore concentrate on provenance rather than interpretation:

Where did he first hear the Gerald FitzGerald tradition?

If the source was Sean Ryan or another local source, the oral chain can potentially be pushed backwards.

If it was a book or documentary, that source can be dated and checked.

If it arose among investigators in the late twentieth or early twenty-first century, the theory can be located much more recently.

Until then its appropriate classification remains

ORAL TRADITION - PROVENANCE PARTIALLY ESTABLISHED.

30. 1922 reconsidered

The burning therefore occupies a subtler position in the Elemental story than later folklore sometimes gives it.

It was not the beginning of the haunting.

It was not the beginning of the grey Thing.

It was not the beginning of the term Elemental.

And the evidence examined so far does not support it as the original date of the oubliette discovery.

Its importance lies elsewhere.

1922 marks the transformation of Leap from a haunted residence with identifiable witnesses into a haunted ruin with an inherited reputation.

That is precisely the environment in which historical testimony can begin to become mythology.

The physical castle was fragmented.

The stories increasingly became whole.

INTERLUDE - THE HAUNTED RUIN AND LATE-1930s MORPHOLOGY

30A. The haunted ruin in the 1930s

Freeman-Attwood preserves a family recollection that, in the mid-1930s, a man known as Brown accepted a challenge to spend time alone in the ruined castle, remained for roughly an hour and then left hurriedly without explaining why.

The anecdote is not strong evidence for any particular phenomenon, but it is useful evidence that Leap's supernatural reputation remained active during the ruined period. The story belongs to the history of reputation rather than to the evidential corpus of the Elemental itself.

Source note: Freeman-Attwood (2001), p.129.

30B. 1937-1939: composite morphology in print

Late-twentieth-century press material once appeared to provide the clearest marker for a fully composite half-human/animal Leap apparition. The literary trail now moves that marker much earlier.

Direct inspection of Yeats's revised 1937 A Vision confirms an animal-human composite at Leap: an evil spirit appearing as a sheep with short legs and a decaying human head. This makes the interwar literary period a major phase in the consolidation of the modern morphology.

Direct inspection of the first 1939 edition of C. H. Rolleston's Portrait of an Irishman now independently strengthens that conclusion. The relevant passage is on p.86, not p.62 as stated in the 2006 Tipperary Libraries correspondence. Rolleston describes a half-human, half-animal apparition with dirty-looking brown hair, an approximately upright gait and an appalling sickly stench.

Rolleston also says that the apparition was seen most frequently by the children at Leap, while sometimes appearing before adults. Because he supplies no names, dates or source for this assertion, the statement should be treated as evidence for a child-witness tradition in circulation by 1939 rather than as verified witness testimony.

Taken together, Yeats and Rolleston establish that composite animal-human morphology was firmly in print by the late 1930s. Rolleston further demonstrates that the smell motif had by then been integrated into that composite description.

The 1988 press account therefore remains a valuable public marker, but it is no longer the earliest evidence presently identified for a fused animal-human Leap apparition. Yeats securely moves that morphology to 1937, and the directly verified Rolleston passage reinforces it in 1939.

Source note: W. B. Yeats, A Vision, revised edition (Macmillan, 1937), p.224; C. H. Rolleston, Portrait of an Irishman (Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1939), p.86, physical first edition directly inspected 15 September 2026; Marigold Freeman-Attwood (2001), p.123. The earlier 2006 Tipperary Libraries reference to Rolleston p.62 is corrected by direct inspection of the 1939 first edition.

PART IV - THE BARTLETT ERA: THE MODERN ELEMENTAL BEGINS TO CRYSTALLISE

31. The return to habitation

Leap Castle remained a roofless ruin for decades after the 1922 destruction. The usual modern chronology states that Australian historian Peter Bartlett acquired the property in 1974 and began its restoration with builder Joe Sullivan. The surviving architectural record credits Bartlett and Sullivan with rebuilding the gatehouse and beginning preliminary reconstruction of the upper floors.

A legal document, however, provides a more precise ownership date.

A later High Court declaration states that Bartlett acquired Leap Castle by an Indenture of Conveyance dated 31 December 1975, from Peter Gerrard.

That creates a small but useful distinction

1974 may represent the beginning of Bartlett's involvement or restoration period, while the surviving legal conveyance dates formal acquisition to 31 December 1975.

The ownership chronology should therefore distinguish between the commonly repeated 1974 date and the surviving legal conveyance dated 31 December 1975.

Bartlett's acquisition marks another fundamental change in the ecology of the haunting tradition.

For roughly half a century Leap had principally been encountered as a ruin.

Under Bartlett it once again became a place of occupation, restoration, visitors, conversations and active storytelling.

That matters because the folklore again had living custodians through whom it could be transmitted.

32. The Gerrard interlude

Bartlett's immediate predecessors appear to have been Peter and Mide Gerrard, who owned the property during the early 1970s. Simon Marsden later recorded an interview with them.

Peter Gerrard told Marsden that his mother had known Cicely O'Carroll-Darby and had once stayed overnight at Leap after a dance. According to her later recollection, she slept badly and repeatedly felt as though someone or something were hovering over the end of the bed. Gerrard also expressed a

much broader conviction that the district around Leap was malign and that ownership of the property had brought misfortune.

These statements are valuable not because they establish paranormal activity, but because they demonstrate continuity of supernatural reputation before Bartlett.

Bartlett did not purchase an anonymous ruin and subsequently turn it into a haunted castle.

He inherited a site whose supernatural reputation was already active.

33. Bartlett and the restoration phenomena

The later Leap archive preserves a claim that both Bartlett and Sean Ryan encountered unusual activity during restoration.

Bartlett's case, however, is frustratingly unspecific.

The surviving account says only that Bartlett mentioned to a friend an extraordinary amount of apparent poltergeist activity during restoration work. No detailed chronology, location, object movement or contemporaneous document has yet been identified.

This should therefore be classified conservatively

PARANORMAL TESTIMONY - SECONDARY / PROVENANCE INCOMPLETE.

Until Bartlett's own papers, correspondence or an identifiable interview can be found, it would be wrong to construct individual "Bartlett incidents" from later summaries.

The National Library of Australia catalogue records a collection of biographical cuttings on Peter Bartlett, specifically identifying him as writer, historian and owner of Leap Castle. That collection remains a potential source for further Bartlett-era clarification.

34. Tim Winton at Leap, 1988

An unusually useful independent witness to the late Bartlett period is Australian novelist Tim Winton.

Winton later recalled that Bartlett offered him and his family use of the gate lodge at Leap Castle during the winter of 1988. He describes Bartlett warmly and states explicitly that the castle was already infamous as a haunted place, noting that writers including the Sitwells had discussed it.

This is significant for chronology.

By 1988 Leap's haunted reputation was not merely a private story circulated by Bartlett to visitors. It had become part of the cultural identity through which outsiders approached the site.

Winton's later autobiographical treatment also appears to show him as essentially sceptical but affected by the atmosphere and accumulated stories of the place, while Bartlett attempted to restore not only the building but a more positive human life around it.

That contrast is important.

Bartlett was not simply a paranormal custodian.

He was restoring a physical ruin while inhabiting a location already saturated with folklore.

35. September 1988: the composite entity is already here

A Spanish newspaper article published in El Pais on 14 September 1988, while Bartlett was still alive and still associated with Leap, describes the supernatural presence at the castle.

Its description is already strikingly modern.

The article calls it an evil spirit capable of appearing in human form and with sheep-like heads, and says witnesses associate it with an odour resembling sour milk. It also describes an oubliette supposedly discovered in 1910, containing enough human remains to fill three carts.

That gives us a firm latest-known date for the claim.

By September 1988, at least three developments had already occurred.

First: Betty/Mildred's humanoid form and Gordon's animalistic form had effectively been consolidated into the attributes of one supernatural being.

Second: smell had become one of the entity's characteristic identifiers.

Third: the original "couple of cartloads" story had become three cartloads, and the discovery had been reassigned to an early twentieth-century date.

This predates the internet-era folklore by more than a decade.

And crucially, it predates Simon Marsden's Phantoms of the Isles.

36. The morphology has fused

Compare the 1988 description with the source history reconstructed above.

1898

Betty sees a grey humanoid Thing.

Captain Gordon sees a sheep-sized bestial Creature, accompanied by foul odour and nausea.

The Creature then merges visually into Betty's grey form.

1908-1915

The phenomena acquire the Elemental classification.

The grey form, smell and identity become increasingly associated.

1988

A general newspaper account now presents a single supernatural entity capable of animalistic and human manifestation.

The witness distinction has largely disappeared.

This is precisely the transition anticipated in the model

narratively related forms -> recurrent entity -> composite morphology.

By the Bartlett period the modern entity is therefore substantially assembled even if its complete origin mythology is not.

37. The smell changes - but survives

The 1988 account is also intriguing because its smell is not described as decomposing flesh or an indescribably vile stench.

It is compared to sour milk.

That variation is useful.

It argues against defining the olfactory tradition too narrowly.

Across sources the semantic descriptions change

horribly vile;

corpse-like;

sickening;

sour milk;

and, much later, sulphur / burnt matches in the 2006 NICREADH/Barry Fitzgerald experience.

What remains comparatively stable is not the precise chemical quality.

It is an unusually strong, unpleasant and anomalous odour associated with the perceived presence.

That formulation will be much harder to overstate.

38. The three-cartload mutation is established by 1988

Recall the 1898 text

"a couple of cartloads" of bones and bone dust were said to have been removed from the oubliette.

The number 150 belongs to the immediately following story concerning murdered mercenaries.

By 1988, however, the reported quantity has become three carts of human bones.

So we can push the "three cartloads" mutation to at least 1988.

And perhaps earlier.

Simon Marsden later repeats the three-cart version, saying that three cartloads of bones were extracted after the castle was destroyed by fire in 1922.

Marsden's Phantoms of the Isles was first published in 1990.

So we now have

1898: couple of cartloads

->

1988: three carts, allegedly discovered c.1910

->

1990: three cartloads, associated with aftermath of 1922 fire

->

later modern folklore: three cartloads approximately 150 bodies, variously dated 1909/1910/1922.

From a folklore-transmission perspective, this is particularly valuable.

We do not yet know who originated the change, but we can show that the quantity stabilised before the date did.

The story had settled on three carts, while the supposed discovery wandered through time.

39. Simon Marsden, 1990: another decisive transmission node

Simon Marsden's Phantoms of the Isles becomes extremely important rather than merely another ghost book.

Its first edition appeared in 1990, immediately after the Bartlett era.

Marsden had personally visited Leap and interviewed people connected with it. His surviving Leap text describes the castle as the most sinister building he had photographed and states that local people remained fearful of its supernatural reputation.

His account repeats the Bloody Chapel; the oubliette; three cartloads of bones; secret passages and buried remains; and a strongly malevolent supernatural atmosphere.

But his chronology differs from the 1988 newspaper account.

Marsden attaches the removal of the bones to the period after the 1922 destruction.

Again

same motif, moving date.

That is exactly what we would expect from an actively transmitted legend rather than a securely sourced archaeological event.

40. The Mexican medium / "white witch" tradition

Marsden also gives us the earliest solid lead so far for another later Leap story.

He records Lady Rosse saying that she had attended a recent attempt to exorcise the castle involving a Mexican medium and had found the experience disturbing.

Later internet accounts simplify this considerably.

They generally say that the Australian owner brought a Mexican "white witch" to Leap to exorcise the spirits.

Some add that she spent hours in the Bloody Chapel and emerged saying the spirits would remain but were no longer malevolent.

But Marsden's text, as presently available, does not establish all of those later details.

It establishes

a Mexican medium;

an attempted exorcism;

Lady Rosse reportedly present;

the event described as recent.

It does not yet establish

that Bartlett commissioned it;

that the practitioner called herself a white witch;

that she spent hours specifically in the Bloody Chapel;

or the exact later speech attributed to her.

This is another strong mutation candidate.

The later story may be based on a genuine reported event but increasingly dramatised in transmission.

41. What the Bartlett period does not yet give us

Despite contemporary or near-contemporary Bartlett-era material describing a malevolent supernatural presence; human/animal manifestation; smell; the oubliette; three cartloads of bones; a

Mexican-medium exorcism; general poltergeist claims; and Leap's extreme haunted reputation, no Bartlett-era source has yet been found clearly supplying the full modern origin package:

Druidic guardian;

Gerald FitzGerald magical weapon;

leprous O'Carroll;

Mildred awakening it through occult practice.

That does not prove those stories were not circulating orally.

But it means we should not assume they were.

This suggests an unexpectedly fine-grained development

By the late 1980s, the modern Elemental's appearance and behaviour were already substantially consolidated, while its later origin biography may still have been fluid or absent.

42. The end of the Bartlett era

Peter Bartlett died in 1989, ending approximately fifteen years of restoration-era involvement with Leap. The project had rebuilt the gatehouse and begun stabilising or reconstructing portions of the castle, but much remained unfinished.

His death occurs at an extraordinary point in the folklore chronology.

Immediately beforehand, in 1988, we can demonstrate that a modern composite supernatural figure was already circulating publicly.

Immediately afterwards, Marsden's 1990 book provides a highly influential visual and literary presentation of Leap as a terrifying haunted ruin and repeats several altered traditions.

Then in 1991, Sean and Anne Ryan enter the story.

That gives us a remarkably clean historical hinge

Bartlett era = consolidation.

Ryan era = transmission into modern paranormal culture.

43. Current refined model

The evidence now supports a more sophisticated developmental sequence

experience -> recurring motifs -> occult classification -> named presence -> sensory/morphological consolidation -> historical distortion -> origin mythology -> modern paranormal synthesis.

The Bartlett period appears to sit directly in the middle of consolidation and distortion.

The chronology then turns to the Ryan era and the 1990s media record: Simon Marsden, Sean and Anne Ryan, and the television documentary Castle Ghosts of Ireland.

The central question remains

When, and through whom, did the Elemental finally acquire the complete Druid / Gerald FitzGerald / leprous O'Carroll / occult-awakening biography familiar today?

PART V - THE RYAN ERA AND THE BROADCAST ELEMENTAL, 1991-2004

44. Reoccupation under Sean Ryan and Anne Callanan

Sean Ryan and Anne Callanan acquired Leap in 1991 and resumed restoration. Their long-term testimony is valuable because they report numerous unusual experiences without treating every disturbance as the Elemental. Sean's approach is notably different from the later confrontational ghost-hunting model: he has spoken of spirits rather than simply ghosts and of coexistence rather than provocation.

The Ryan-era haunting tradition therefore remains broader than the Elemental.

45. Negative evidence matters

Sean Ryan's testimony is especially important because a long-term custodian can report unusual experiences at Leap without automatically confirming the Elemental as a routinely encountered malevolent presence. A 2005 Irish Times account reported that Sean had never seen the Elemental and knew of no recent sighting. The older NICREADH Leap material similarly records that the Ryan family had not experienced the sinister Elemental attributed to earlier tradition. This is not evidence that earlier witnesses were wrong. It is evidence against treating the Elemental as a constant, universally perceived feature of the castle.

46. Early Ryan-era film and television

David Bickley's The Book of Ghosts preserves one of the earliest Ryan-era filmed discussions. The known material does not foreground the Elemental to the degree later commercial paranormal media would.

The Elemental was therefore not necessarily the central organising principle of Leap's supernatural identity for its residents.

By the mid-1990s programmes such as Castle Ghosts of Ireland were presenting Leap to international audiences within a broader narrative of ancient supernatural forces. The foul-smelling apparition becomes a headline feature.

This is best understood as media consolidation: the complexity of the historical corpus is compressed into recognisable components - haunted castle, Bloody Chapel, violent history, bones and a malevolent Elemental.

47. The broadcast simplification problem

Television requires a recognisable subject. A diffuse historical corpus containing multiple apparitions, contradictory morphologies and uncertain provenance is difficult to package. A foul-smelling, half-human/half-animal hostile entity is comparatively easy. The broadcast era therefore matters not because television necessarily invented the Elemental, but because it rewarded coherence. It encouraged the many-stranded Leap tradition to be narrated as one entity with one identity.

48. The modern morphology before the web

The surviving late-twentieth-century material now sits within a longer sequence. By 1988 the composite entity was clearly public; direct inspection of Yeats moves animal-human composite morphology back to 1937, while the Rolleston transcription points to a similar form in 1939. The key question for the broadcast era is therefore no longer whether the morphology existed. It is what television added to the

entity's biography: antiquity, hostility, ritual creation, magical purpose and causal connection to the castle's violence.

PART VI - THE EARLY INTERNET TRANSMISSION LAYER, 2005-2006

49. A surviving conversation rather than a finished legend

A thirteen-page printed thread from the DC Hauntings forum titled "Leap Castle Fire Elemental" survives in the NICREADH private archive. The active discussion begins on 31 May 2005 and continues into July.

This source is unusually valuable because it does not present one finished mythology. It preserves paranormal researchers actively asking questions, supplying claims, challenging explanations, researching historical candidates and combining traditions. The mythology can be observed in motion.

50. The research network: Al Tyas -> Barry Fitzgerald -> NICREADH

Private correspondence dated 27 April 2005 establishes the route by which NICREADH was introduced to Barry Fitzgerald. Al Tyas of DC Metro Area Ghost Watchers explained that Barry Fitzgerald was his UK/Ireland correspondent, had visited Leap frequently and supplied his contact details.

The information chain can therefore be reconstructed as Al Tyas -> Barry Fitzgerald -> NICREADH.

51. Barry Fitzgerald and deliberate magical placement

In private correspondence dated 27 May 2005, Barry Fitzgerald described the Elemental as something deliberately produced or placed at Leap. He stated that creating an Elemental required knowledge of darker magical arts and suggested that a person involved in an invasion of the castle possessed such knowledge. The entity was allegedly intended eventually to destroy Leap from inside.

At this point, the surviving private correspondence gives an unnamed magical invader, deliberate placement and a destructive function. It does not yet securely name Gerald FitzGerald.

52. The ancestry statement is documented

In the 31 May 2005 forum discussion, Barry Fitzgerald explicitly connected the relevant FitzGerald attackers with his own ancestry, writing in substance that the FitzGeralds were 'yes, my ancestors.' He then referred to family traditions concerning wizardry and one individual reputed to possess unusual abilities.

This point is no longer unresolved: the surviving forum material directly documents Barry Fitzgerald's ancestral identification and his FitzGerald-magician framework by 31 May 2005.

53. Mildred-conjuration theory is demonstrably circulating by 31 May 2005

On 31 May 2005 DCMAG Chief offered a different explanation, stating that Mildred Darby had inadvertently conjured the Elemental during a seance and later expanding the theory into a composite involving bloodshed, victims associated with the oubliette and Mildred's alleged ritual activity.

This shows that the seance-conjuration story was already in circulation by 31 May 2005. Freeman-Attwood's 2001 book now complicates the analysis in an important way: Mildred genuinely did have later occult interests, but the surviving historical material still does not show her summoning the Elemental.

The later myth therefore appears to amplify a real biographical feature into a much stronger causal claim.

54. Barry Fitzgerald: Mildred woke it rather than created it

Barry Fitzgerald argued that Mildred already possessed knowledge of the entity before personally encountering it and suggested that she merely reawakened something already present. He then introduced the FitzGerald family and a possible magical-placement theory, while keeping his language qualified.

The FitzGerald explanation therefore enters the surviving exchange as investigator interpretation and oral tradition rather than established medieval fact.

55. Gerald FitzGerald enters the documented exchange

After reading Barry Fitzgerald's comments, NICREADH researched the FitzGerald family. On 2 June 2005 he returned to the discussion and proposed Gerald FitzGerald as the possible individual behind the tradition, noting Gerald's folkloric reputation for magical ability and shapeshifting.

The presently surviving sequence is therefore precise: Barry Fitzgerald supplies the FitzGerald-magician framework; NICREADH then identifies Gerald FitzGerald as a possible historical candidate.

Any private correspondence explicitly naming Gerald must still be dated against 2 June 2005 before priority can be assigned.

56. Druidic ritual site is a separate module

In the 2005 forum archive, the explicit claim that the castle stood on ley lines and on a site used for Druidic ritual is made by Al Tyas. This should not be attributed to Barry Fitzgerald without separate evidence.

The distinction matters because a Druidic ritual-site claim is not yet the same as a claim that Druids created the Elemental as guardian. Modern versions often combine those propositions, but the surviving 2005 discussion preserves them as separable ideas.

57. leapelemental.txt is NICREADH's compilation, not independent corroboration

The surviving leapelemental.txt document is now identified by NICREADH as his own composite research notes, probably prepared for later website use. It includes the claim that the Elemental existed before the castle and guarded a 'holy power rock.'

This document should therefore not be treated as an independent witness or independent tradition. It belongs to the NICREADH research stream and may preserve material from earlier oral, printed or web sources that still need to be identified.

The research question is now not 'who wrote leapelemental.txt?' but 'what upstream source or sources supplied its guardian and holy-site material?'

58. The three-cartload mutation survives into investigator culture

The DC Hauntings discussion refers to three cartloads of bones being removed from the oubliette. Compared with the 1898 'couple of cartloads' wording, this shows the numerical mutation already firmly circulating by June 2005.

The visible progression is: couple of cartloads -> three cartloads -> three cartloads equated with approximately 150 bodies. Separate historical details become progressively consolidated.

59. Rolleston re-enters the research through Tipperary Libraries - and is now directly verified

In April 2006 Mary Guinan-Darmody of Tipperary Libraries directed NICREADH toward C. H. Rolleston's Portrait of an Irishman and supplied a transcription of the Leap Ghost passage, citing p.62. Direct inspection of a physical first edition on 15 September 2026 confirms the substance of that transcription but locates the passage on p.86.

The 1939 text can therefore now be treated as directly verified. It describes the familiar half-human/half-animal form, dirty brown hair, upright movement and sickly stench, and additionally says that children at Leap saw the apparition most frequently. The p.62 locator should be retained only as part of the history of the 2006 correspondence; the publication citation in this paper is corrected to p.86.

60. Anna West: second-hand contemporary testimony

Private correspondence from Barry Fitzgerald in May 2006 records an experience attributed to Anna West. Fitzgerald wrote that West described the Elemental in a way he considered consistent with established descriptions and felt that it lingered in darker lower areas of the castle.

Unless West's own original account can be located, this remains second-hand contemporary paranormal testimony.

61. The 2006 television threshold

By late 2006 the Elemental had become suitable material for international paranormal television. The surviving 2005 archive proves that modern origin theories were already circulating before the television episode later marketed as 'Attack of the Irish Elemental.'

Television therefore need not be treated as the origin of those stories. It is better understood as an amplifier of an increasingly composite tradition.

62. The 18 June 2006 NICREADH / Barry Fitzgerald odour incident

A later first-person NICREADH account describes an incident at Leap on 18 June 2006 while leaving the spiral-stair area. NICREADH reports a sudden sulphur or burnt-match odour, likened to boxes of matches, which Barry Fitzgerald also noticed. NICREADH additionally experienced a strong subjective impression of an animal-like presence, comparable to a bear or lion, while tension increased. Barry Fitzgerald closed the relevant door and remarked, 'To let sleeping dogs lie.'

For evidential purposes the components must remain separated. The shared observation is the unusual sulphurous odour. The animal-like presence belongs to NICREADH's personal phenomenology. Identifying either experience as the Elemental is interpretation. This separation allows the 2006 event to be compared honestly with the older olfactory tradition without pretending that the witnesses independently perceived the same visual entity.

> Source note: NICREADH first-person testimony; private research archive. Public paper should distinguish shared sensory observation from individual interpretation.

63. Barry Fitzgerald's 18 June 2002 testimony

Barry Fitzgerald's earlier first-person account, later preserved on the Leap Castle website, describes an investigation on 18 June 2002 involving a UV camcorder near the battlement passage. He reported movement or glow, progressive weakness, a white mist-like mass moving rapidly around a corner, disturbed rubbish, acute pain through the right side and back, sweating, dread and weakness.

This account is valuable as modern paranormal testimony but should not be retrofitted into the nineteenth-century morphology. It does not simply reproduce Mildred's grey cotton-wool figure or Gordon's bestial creature. Its importance lies in the recurrence of physiological distress, perceived aggressive movement and a location-specific sense of threat within modern investigator culture.

Source note: Barry Fitzgerald first-person account as preserved in NICREADH / Leap Castle web archive; exact publication history to be documented in final apparatus.

PART VII - HOW THE MODERN BIOGRAPHY WAS ASSEMBLED

64. One entity, several origin modules

By the early twenty-first century the modern Elemental could be explained through several distinct modules: an ancient or Druidic guardian; a magical weapon associated with a FitzGerald attack; the ghost of an isolated leprous O'Carroll; a force awakened by Mildred's occult interests; a presence activated by the oubliette or accumulated violent death; or a fire Elemental intended to destroy the castle from within. The historical mistake is to assume that because these explanations can coexist in a modern story they must always have belonged together.

65. Reconciliation creates apparent antiquity

Competing explanations do not necessarily eliminate one another. They can be reconciled into a chronology: an ancient force is placed or created; centuries of violence feed it; the oubliette intensifies it; Mildred awakens it; modern investigators encounter the result. Once arranged sequentially, contradictions become biography. This mechanism can make a recently synthesised narrative appear to be an ancient continuous tradition.

66. The Mildred mechanism

Freeman-Attwood's evidence makes the Mildred strand especially instructive. There is a genuine historical substrate: Mildred lived in a household visited by psychically inclined people; Bates practised automatic writing; Mildred later corresponded about mediums, planchette and communication with the dead. A later storyteller therefore did not need to invent an occult Mildred from nothing. The stronger legend could emerge by compressing several true or near-true details into the causal claim that Mildred's seance summoned the Elemental.

67. The Gerald mechanism

The 2005 archive allows an unusually fine-grained reconstruction. Barry Fitzgerald introduces a FitzGerald-family magical-attack framework and identifies the attackers as his ancestors. NICREADH then researches the family and names Gerald FitzGerald as a plausible candidate. Later web tradition presents Gerald's role far more definitively. Unless earlier evidence is located, the surviving chain demonstrates how a qualified hypothesis can acquire the grammatical form of historical fact.

68. The Druid mechanism

The same caution applies to the Druidic strand. In the surviving 2005 discussion, Al Tyas asserts that Leap stood on ley lines and a site of Druidic ritual. NICREADH's later composite notes preserve a separate claim that an Elemental guarded a holy power rock before the castle existed. The fully developed 'Druid guardian Elemental' may therefore represent synthesis of previously separate propositions. Its upstream source remains unresolved.

69. The oubliette mechanism

The oubliette story shows numerical and chronological fusion rather than occult-biographical fusion. The 1898 source has a couple of cartloads of bones and, separately, approximately 150 murdered mercenaries. Later accounts stabilise on three cartloads and increasingly identify the remains with about 150 bodies. The quantity stabilises before the discovery date does. This is one of the clearest demonstrable examples of folklore mutation in the entire Elemental corpus.

70. The leprous O'Carroll mechanism

By 2001 Freeman-Attwood records the claim that the Elemental was the ghost of an O'Carroll who died of leprosy after long isolation. Her own judgement is important: she calls the story an accretion designed to lend authenticity to the sightings and smell. This is direct evidence not merely of the legend but of contemporary scepticism about its provenance.

PART VIII - REVISED SYNTHESIS

71. Phenomenological continuity

Across more than a century, certain motifs recur with enough persistence to deserve separate attention: powerful unpleasant odour; nausea or weakness; fear or dread; grey or indistinct form; animalistic characteristics; dark or empty eye areas; fading, transformation or uncertain solidity; and occasional reports of animal disturbance. None is universal. Their value lies in recurrence, not in perfect consistency.

72. Interpretive continuity

The classification is less stable than the motifs. The same broad phenomenon can be treated as ghost, Elemental, spirit, psychic projection, magical construct, guardian, demon-like force or accumulated negativity. 'Elemental' itself enters the documentary record as an occult interpretation supplied by knowledgeable friends, then becomes Mildred's own vocabulary and eventually functions almost as a proper name.

73. Mythological continuity

The origin biography is the least secure layer. Its major components appear later, often through identifiable secondary or investigator networks. The mature mythology is therefore best treated as a historical object in its own right: not merely a claim about what happened at Leap, but evidence for how communities construct explanatory narratives around recurring anomalous testimony.

74. Revised developmental sequence

reported experience -> recurring motif cluster -> occult classification -> named presence -> sensory consolidation -> literary reshaping -> historical distortion -> competing origin theories -> reconciliation into biography -> broadcast and internet amplification

75. The central finding

The Leap Castle Elemental appears to have existed as a reported phenomenon before it existed as a named entity, and as a named entity before it acquired a mythology.

The modern Elemental biography appears to have emerged partly through reconciliation of competing traditions rather than preservation of a single tradition.

The Leap Castle Elemental did not acquire one mythology. It accumulated mythologies.

CONCLUSION

The earliest record does not reveal one consistently described ancient entity whose identity, morphology and biography remained unchanged. It reveals a cluster of anomalous experiences that became narratively linked. An occult classification was applied to that cluster by 1908. By 1915 Mildred herself used the classification as the identity of a recurring presence. Literary writers then reshaped the entity, the inhabited castle became a ruin, sensory motifs fused, historical details migrated, and explanatory traditions accumulated.

The newer Bates and Freeman-Attwood evidence strengthens rather than weakens this model. It prevents an overcorrection in which Mildred is stripped of all occult interest: her later correspondence

shows that interest clearly. But it also prevents the opposite mistake of turning interest in mediums and planchette into evidence that she created the Elemental. Direct inspection of Rolleston and Gogarty now strengthens the literary-transmission argument further. Rolleston confirms that by 1939 a compact half-human/half-animal, foul-smelling description was in print and adds a previously underexamined child-witness tradition. Gogarty's 1958 essay preserves a much more elaborate ram-bodied branch and, retrospectively, a Yeats interpretation that explicitly rejects the term 'elemental.' Together these sources demonstrate that the tradition was already being reshaped into competing forms decades before modern paranormal media or the internet.

The research task is therefore provenance. For every major attribute or origin claim, the question is not simply whether it is repeated, but when it first appears, who transmits it, whether the transmitter presents it as fact or speculation, and what earlier material may have been compressed to produce it. That approach does not decide the ultimate ontological question of what, if anything, witnesses encountered. It does something more historically tractable: it reconstructs how the thing reported at Leap became the Elemental known today.

Edition note: Research Edition 1.4 is the current publishable baseline. It incorporates direct examination of the acquired 1939 Rolleston and 1958 Gogarty volumes. Further revisions may incorporate Grover Smith's 1972 essay, additional archival discoveries and oral-history interviews with Barry Fitzgerald and Sean Ryan, with each new source classified according to the evidence hierarchy used throughout this paper.

APPENDIX A - FUTURE RESEARCH AND PENDING VERIFICATION

- Establish the earliest publication history of Oliver St John Gogarty's 'The Most Haunted House of Them All' before its verified appearance in the 1958 collection, if an earlier publication can be identified.
- Locate Grover Smith's 1972 essay 'Yeats, Gogarty and The Leap Castle Ghost' and compare its analysis against the primary texts.
- Investigate the provenance of Rolleston's 1939 claim that the apparition was seen most frequently by children at Leap: identify whether he drew this from T. W. Rolleston, a Darby-family source, local oral tradition or an earlier publication.
- Attempt to identify Gogarty's unnamed bishop, young officer, stairway visitor and Roscrea informant, and compare those stories against the earlier 1898-1915 documentary corpus for possible antecedents.
- Trace the leprous O'Carroll explanation earlier than Freeman-Attwood's 2001 publication.
- Identify the upstream source or sources behind NICREADH's 'holy power rock' / pre-castle guardian research notes.
- Locate and date any private Barry Fitzgerald correspondence explicitly naming Gerald FitzGerald, especially relative to NICREADH's 2 June 2005 forum post.
- Identify the source from which Al Tyas / DCMAG Chief obtained the Mildred-seance/conjuration story circulating by 31 May 2005.
- Audit Mildred's surviving letters to Sydney Carroll for every reference to Miss Bates, mediums, planchette, prayer, exorcism, the Thing and the Elemental.
- Trace intermediate versions of the oubliette story between 1898 and the late twentieth century: couple of cartloads -> three carts -> approximately 150 bodies.
- Audit Castle Ghosts of Ireland from the NICREADH DVD copy statement-by-statement, separating narration, interview testimony and visual reconstruction.
- Trace the first explicit source that combines 'Druidic site' with 'Elemental created as guardian,' rather than assuming those were always one tradition.
- Conduct and incorporate oral-history interviews with Barry Fitzgerald and Sean Ryan when available, treating recollection as testimony rather than retroactive documentary proof.

APPENDIX B - SELECTED 2005-2006 TRANSMISSION CHRONOLOGY

27 Apr 2005 - Al Tyas
Introduces NICREADH to Barry Fitzgerald as an investigator familiar with Leap.

27 May 2005 - Barry Fitzgerald
Deliberate magical-placement / fire-Elemental interpretation; surviving text currently does not securely name Gerald.

31 May 2005 - Al Tyas / DCMAG Chief
Mildred-seance/conjuration explanation circulating.

31 May 2005 - Barry Fitzgerald
Mildred merely woke it; FitzGerald attackers identified as his ancestors; magical family framework introduced with qualification.

2 Jun 2005 - NICREADH
After researching the FitzGerald family, names Gerald FitzGerald as possible responsible figure.

3 Jun 2005 - Al Tyas
Druidic ritual-site / ley-line claim; distinct from a Druid-created guardian claim.

Jun 2005 - Forum
Three-cartload oubliette version and competing mundane smell explanations visible.

19 Apr 2006 - Tipperary Libraries
Mary Guinan-Darmody supplies a transcription of the Rolleston passage, citing p.62, and points to Freeman-Attwood. Direct first-edition inspection in 2026 locates the passage on p.86.

May 2006 - Barry Fitzgerald
Second-hand Anna West testimony.

18 Jun 2006 - NICREADH / Barry Fitzgerald
Shared sulphur/burnt-match odour; NICREADH reports animal-like presence impression.

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