

Who were the 'ghosts' in Sue's home?

by JOHN CHAPMAN

AT FIRST glance, noting appeared out of place when Susan and Peter Whiting return home after a weekend away.

Except for one puzzling thing.

Standing on the sink was a half-used bottle of milk which had not been there when they left.

Mrs Whiting, 33, assumed her neighbour, who had been minding the house and feeding the animals, must have put it there.

But the discovery of the milk bottle was the start of a bizarre mystery that has left the Whitings, their fellow villagers, and the police baffled.

One week later, when Mrs

Whiting was shopping in the village, the riddle really began.

She met her husband's cousin, Mrs Sue Singleton, who had recently moved into the village.

Mrs Singleton described how she and her husband called unannounced at the Whitings' house a week earlier. But they got no further than the gate.

To their surprise they saw an elderly grey-haired woman, wearing a dress and cardigan, standing in the garden path. There was a white caravan in the driveway, and a green saloon car parked in the road by the gate.

Before the Singletons had a chance to speak, the front-door opened. Out came a wizened old man dressed in

tweeds. He put an empty milk bottle on the doorstep.

The old couple seemed at home, and looked at the Singletons with a proprietorial air. So, without saying anything, the puzzled Singletons left, assuming that the Whitings had sold their home.

The story amazed Mrs Whiting. She called on her neighbour, Mrs Catherine Smith, the only person with a key while they were away. She had popped in several times to feed the family pets, which included a cat and a rabbit.

Mrs Smith, 40, said that throughout the Saturday, Sunday and Monday the Whitings were away, she had seen no sign of the mysterious caravan, car, or elderly couple.

She had certainly not left the half-bottle of milk in the kitchen.

But during one of her visits she noticed the lounge door, which she knew had been closed earlier, was fully open. Worried about intruders, she checked the house, but found nothing out of place and let the matter drop.

Mrs Whiting checked with other villagers at Chieveley, near Newbury, Berkshire. Some said they had seen no sign of mysterious visitors. But half-a-dozen others spoke of seeing the white caravan parked in the driveway on the Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Strange

Businessman Michael Perry saw it while he was out jogging on the Sunday morning. He said: "It was definitely there when I passed the house."

Housewife Mrs Janice Roberts said: "I thought it was odd because I remembered Sue telling me she was going away for a few days."

Mrs Smith said: "It's even more strange because the caravan was seen at times when I was popping over. But I didn't see anything except that lounge door jammed open."

Mrs Whiting said: "It's a complete mystery. We just have no idea who these old people are. It's enough to make you believe in ghosts. We have changed all the locks as a precaution."

The only people who lived in the 50-year-old house besides the Whitings were an elderly couple by the name of Bennett. They died more than four years ago.

Police at Newbury have investigated. A spokesman said: "No crime was committed. The whole thing is a mystery."



BRAVE SMILES: Peter and Susan Whiting yesterday.