From the Tartan Lady to a spectral pilot – town’s spooky sightings revealed

**Haunted hotspot**

**Non-fiction**

Haunted Darlington by Robert Woodhouse (The History Press, £9.99) ***

FOR a writer who admits he has never witnessed any supernatural activity in the Darlington area, it should be a big ask to believe the stories in this book. But reading is believing and Woodhouse’s researches have revealed Darlington to be a truly haunted hotspot, whether for good or ill.

Who would have thought that peaceful Piercebridge could be haunted by a phantom coach (spooky); or that a ghost caused a walk-out at Darlington and Simpson Rolling Mills (even spookier); or that when an apparition threatened a soldier stopping at Blackwell Grange he shot it twice. Apparition disappears, but two bullet holes are found in a portrait of the feared “Tartan Lady” displayed in the corridor leading to his bedroom (enough to spook anyone). But there are so many other examples such as the “Grey Lady” at Darlington Memorial Hospital, a spectral RAF pilot at Durham Tees Valley Airport and a whole host of spirits at Darlington’s Civic Theatre, that Darlington deserves to be at the top of the country’s Premier Haunting League.

Steve Craggs

Dark Matter And The Dinosaurs: The Astounding Interconnectedness Of The Universe by Lisa Randall (Bodley Head, £25)

If you’ve been craving a more substantial read following a season of stocking stuffers, renowned theoretical physicist Lisa Randall’s latest book might be just what you are looking for.

In Dark Matter And The Dinosaurs, she suggests a wildly exciting idea – that dark matter could be responsible for influencing the movement of celestial bodies. As a result, she suggests, the asteroid or comet falling to earth that brought about the extinction of the dinosaurs could be down to this invisible force – and, in turn, have had a huge influence over the development of our own species. Randall is transparent from the off that this is a theory – not proven fact, so you are drawn on an exciting journey exploring the depths of her ideas.

Harriet Shephard

Chinese agribusiness firms and entrepreneurs who have developed links with Africa since the 1960s and are ready for expansion. But the picture looks more of a paler pink when you take into account China’s decision to scrap its one-child per family policy, the explosive rise in the populations of African countries and the devastating effects of climate change on the continent. China could indeed secure food security for itself, but what security would there be for Africa?

Steve Craggs

Will Africa Feed China by Deborah Brautigan (OUP, £18.99) ***

WHAT a rosy red picture Brautigan paints of a future in which Africa feeds China’s one billion-plus population. Yes, Africa will be able to deliver the food, no problem. And yes, in the process Africa’s agriculture will improve and become more commercially viable. And yes, the process has already started, with...
SPOOKY: Darlington Civic Theatre is said to be home to a host of spirits