

Willem Montagne

The story of Snaily House.

When they planted the Bellever plantation there was a little patch of the conifer plantation on the eastern side of the East Dart, so the main bulk of the plantation is on the west side, and in that [on the eastern side] was, when I first started walking along there, was really deep conifer plantation, very dark and very big trees all around it and in amongst those trees there are, and you can still see them today, the ruins of some buildings, one of which is known as the Snaily House, and since then those conifers have been clear felled and actually the ruin is now out in the open, so to imagine that there were once a pair of old ladies living there takes quite a leap of the imagination, but there you go. Apparently these two ladies led a very secretive life, and nobody really knew how they continued to exist because they were reclusive, they didn't talk to people very much and of course this invoked quite a lot of curiosity, people on Dartmoor being quite curious folk, and I think at one point some local chap had a real look around, when they weren't apparently in, and had a sniff around the garden and discovered that basically they lived off snails, but I think the word snail was applied to snails and slugs, and I suspect that they would have been the big black slugs that you see quite regularly on Dartmoor, and yeah, apparently that's what they lived on, bottled slugs, and, the sad bit of the story is that this was a source of great shame for the two old ladies and when the discovery was out, that they were living off snails and slugs I think they were so shamed by this that both of them died quite soon afterwards, leaving the little ruined house where it is today.