

Did the Knock Apparition Really Stand Two Feet Above the Ground?

About 15 people said they saw the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary appear in a great light flanked by St Joseph and St John at the gable wall of the Roman Catholic Church in Knock on the 21st August 1879. A lamb standing on an altar was also reported.

They did not see the apparition coming or going. Nor did any of them claim it was the actual Mary, Joseph and John they saw.

Witness testimonies were compiled at a Church investigation in 1879 and 1880.



The above picture shows how there are indications that the images at Knock thought to be an apparition appeared in a ball of light as marked by the yellow circle. A witness said he saw a globe of light - that is it was 3-D. Thus the globe would have been high up. No other witnesses spoke of a globe of light. The position above fits the witness's claim that he saw a brilliant a light that appeared high up in the air above and around the chapel gable. You would expect the images to be standing inside the light. Could it be that the hoaxer made a mistake and the light was in the wrong place? Were the images below it and just brightened up by the light reflecting on them? Or were the images themselves within the light and thus higher up than traditionally believed?

Did the Vision really stand two feet above the ground?

Witness Patrick Walsh's testimony,

My name is Patrick Walsh; I live at Ballinderrig, an English mile from the chapel of Knock. I remember well the 21st of August, 1879. It was a very dark night. It was raining heavily. About nine o'clock on that night I was going on some business through my land, and standing a distance of about half a mile from the chapel, I saw a very bright light on the southern gable-end of the chapel ; it appeared to be a large globe of golden light ; I never saw, I thought, so brilliant a light before; it appeared high up in the air above and around the chapel gable, and it was circular in its appearance ; it was quite stationary, and it seemed to retain the same brilliancy all through. The following day I made inquiries in order to learn if there were any lights seen in place that night; it was only then I heard of the Vision or Apparition that the people had seen.

Ballinderrig is a townland in the vicinity of Knock in the Ballyhaunis direction. You would get no good or direct view of the gable from it at all. If he saw a light then it was not on the gable but higher up. Research presented to scientific investigator Joe Nickell has found that there would have been sun shining at an odd angle on to the school house and possibly reflected from it to the gable - so did Walsh actually mistake the light on the school gable for the Church gable?

The Walsh testimony is altered. Tradition including that of Walsh's own family members say he thought he saw a fire. Now if Walsh had seen a fire then it would have to appear to be coming from the roof of the Church! If Walsh saw a light at the Church then it was high up and not where the Church wants you to think it is. Also the heavy rain tale is refuted by other sources. It was drizzle. We choose however to make do with what we have that is attributed to him.

The entities stood within the globe for the testimonies say they were within a light.

What we have here is a globe of light that was high up in the air. The light light up the gable by reflection. The globe itself was above and around the gable meaning the globe of light appeared so high up that part of it semi-obscured the top of the gable and the rest shone above.

It is said that some of the witnesses saw the vision close up and one even tried to touch it as it stood on top of the long grass. Nobody seems to wonder why the grass was talked about as very erect when it is alleged that the wind came from the south up against the gable and helped the torrential rain batter it without mercy. The claim that the apparition was lower down than Walsh's testimony would indicate does not hold water!

Interestingly, Patrick Hill stated the following in 1879, "When we, running southwest, came so far from the village that on our turning the gable came in view, we immediately beheld the lights, a clear, white light, covering most of the gable, from the ground up to the window and higher. It was a kind of changing bright light, going sometimes up high and again not so high."

This contradicts Walsh - the only thing that agrees with Walsh is that the light did go up high. Even then there is an inconsistency. Walsh said the light stayed high and Hill says it moved up and down. Walsh said the light was golden and Hill said it was white.

Hill said, "I saw the figures and brightness ; the boy, John Curry, from behind the wall, could not see them ; but I did ; and he asked me to lift him up till he could see the grand babies, as he called the figures". The boy could not see the images though they were high up. Patrick Hill was baptised in 1868 meaning he was only 11. Hill would not have been very tall. His view would have been handicapped - unless the vision was higher up than generally believed. A vision near ground level is harder to see over a wall that's high for you.

Walsh was not too far away from the Church. It was half a mile. Nobody can say he was too far away and made a mistake in judging the height. He was a farmer who knew the landscape well.

His statement that the globe of light was high up makes liars of those who said the images were just two feet above the ground. This would be Patrick Hill, Mary Beirne and Bridget Trench. Judith Campbell said that she went within a foot of the images: "I went within a foot of them."

The images being very high up would mean that Bridget Trench did not try to touch Mary's feet. It would mean that Patrick Hill did not see as much detail as he pretended to. It would eliminate all the evidence for a miracle. The testimony of those three is the greatest block to attempting a natural explanation.

Without it a natural explanation such as a magic lantern would suffice.

The vision being high up and out of reach accounts for the following information.

It would explain why the visionaries were standing far away from the vision. They were at the ditch leaning on the wall next the schoolhouse to look at the vision. The school house can be seen below. They stood where the wall meets the schoolhouse gable. Patrick Hill's testimony tells us that. Mary McLoughlin said she stayed at the ditch near the school house: "at the time I was outside the ditch and to the south-west of the schoolhouse near the road, about thirty yards or so from the church ; I leaned across the wall in order to see, as well as I could, the whole scene". Dominick Beirne also said that they gathered around the wall. You stand some distance away if figures are high up. If they are nearly ground level you go closer and you stay close.



They stood at an angle to the gable. It was as if the vision was not clear unless they stood at that angle. You would have expected them to stand between the wall and the gable facing the gable directly. Some would say that though they didn't admit it, they stood where they stood because standing at the more natural spot meant the image was being obscured by their bodies. This would happen if the projector was hidden in the wall and they were stepping in front of it.

The position they stood at is very strange. It is stranger though if the images were nearer the ground. It makes a little more sense if the images were higher up. If images are high up and out of reach you feel little inclination to go close or to look at them directly and not at an angle.

The picture at the top shows the position of the globe as Walsh saw it. We can still accept all the witness accounts and hold that the altar and the lamb were just below the window sill. All we contest is the three who said the vision was near the ground.

Walsh says he saw the gable in his testimony. "I saw a very bright light on the southern gable-end of the chapel ; it appeared to be a large globe of golden light ; I never saw, I thought, so brilliant a light before; it appeared high up in the air above and around the chapel gable." People who say he saw the chapel from the side and that was why the light seemed high up are fantasists. This is a lie they tell in the hope of making out that he saw the sight from the side and didn't see the gable directly so that they can make the excuse that from his standpoint the light looked high up. He saw it from a half a mile away. He should have seen the images if they were plain. Significantly, he didn't. This backs up Patrick Beirne who described them as like something cast by moonlight. That wouldn't be very visible from beyond a certain distance.

It is odd that if the light was so bright that he didn't get closer to investigate. A half a mile isn't a long distance. Was he misremembering?

According to Patrick Hill, "When we, running southwest, came so far from the village that on our turning the gable came in view, we immediately beheld the lights, a clear, white light". Though he was running in a direction that gave him a view of the gable it seems he saw nothing until he got closer. This too helps back up Beirne. The light was like moonlight. It was white too. It shows that Walsh was wrong to say the light was as brilliant as he claimed.

The vision being high up explains problems such as these better. Some witnesses saying there was a cross and others saying there was definitely no cross. Hill saying there was angels going around the altar while Mary Beirne said it was just flashing lights. Why Trench wasn't sure that the thing Mary wore on her head was a crown.

Patrick Beirne and Mary Beirne said in the 1930's that the vision was not far about the ground. Patrick said, "I saw three figures on the gable surrounded by a wonderful light. They appeared to be something like shadows or reflections cast on a wall on a moon-light night" (page 53, *The Apparition at Knock*). If that is not confirmation that some of the witnesses were making the vision sound more impressive than what it really was and that it was caused by a magic lantern then what is? Patrick Beirne's 1879 testimony was glossed over by the priest or priests who wrote it down for him. " I saw the figures clearly, fully, and distinctly — the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and that of a bishop, said to be St. John the Evangelist. Young Beirne then told what he saw regarding the Vision, just as it has been described already by several persons who were present." Very suspicious! This is clearly an attempt to paper over indications that the young lad saw limelight images. Patrick Beirne caused problems for the Church as he once stopped going to Mass. Perhaps the evidence of human gullibility in relation to religion was too much for him!

Patrick Hill in 1879 declared, "There was a line or dark mearing between the figure of the Blessed Virgin and that of St. Joseph, so that one could know St. Joseph, and the place where his figure appeared distinctly from that of the Blessed Virgin and the spot where she stood." Hill claimed he saw the vision close up and even saw Mary's irises. Here he slips up and shows that a shadow was needed to make Mary and Joseph look separate. He says without it you would not know it was St Joseph. This corroborates Patrick Beirne's assertion that the images were as unclear as shadows cast on a wall by the moon. Hill then was probably lying that he saw the vision close up. No other witness said he had managed that. If the vision was high up the blackness was needed to make it clearer.

There was a cross on top of the gable. Is it possible that as the vision was so high up that the witnesses who said there was a cross meant that cross? It would have been illuminated. Did the witnesses who said they saw no cross mean that they didn't see a cross that was part of the vision?

Thanks to Mary Beirne, it was recorded in 1880 that the Archdeacon upon being told of the vision said it was a reflection from a stained glass window. That could indicate that he was told the light was high up and around the stained glass window and he thought or pretended it caused an illusion.

On 8 November 1879, somebody claimed there was a light above the gable of the chapel. The Archdeacon said this was exactly what Patrick Walsh saw on the 29 August. So the light was high up.

The vision being high up eradicates the following indications that the vision was supernatural. The rain not falling on the figures is one. It would look that way if one couldn't get close enough. And some of the witnesses did see flashing lights like tiny stars. Sounds like rain catching the light-source causing the apparition. The witnesses did not say that no shadow could be cast over the apparition. This silence is used by believers as an excuse for arguing, "If the vision was caused by a

projector somebody or something would have cast a shadow at some point. They would have got in the way of the light." This is an unfair argument from silence. Maybe they did make a shadow and we just don't know? But if there was no shadow, was that because the vision and the light source were too high up to be interfered with?

Trench allegedly tried to feel the Virgin's feet but her hands just met thin air. This did not happen if the vision was higher up the wall. Would the others present have let her do that in case the Virgin would be offended or dirtied and disappear? The real testimony taken from Trench as opposed to the version fabricated by the Church goes,

LIVES IN THIS PLACE. ON THE EVE OF 21 AUGUST A PERSON SICK SENT FOR HER THAT SHE MIGHT SEE HER. SHE CAME THAT EVENING TO THE CHURCH [SOMETHING ERASED]. SHE WAS IN THE HOUSE OF THE SICK WOMAN. SHE CAME BY THE ROAD AND SAW GREAT LIGHT. SHE ENTERED AT HER RIGHT HAND. SHE LEFT HER HAND ON THEM. SHE SAW ST JOSEPH AND THE BVM AND ST JOHN AND THE ALTAR AND THE LAMB. THEY WERE NOT STANDING ON THE GROUND BUT PROBABLY TWO FEET ABOVE THE GROUND.

How reliable was she though?

Patrick Hill's existing testimony goes, " I distinctly beheld the Blessed Virgin Mary, lifesize, standing about two feet or so above the ground, clothed in white robes, which were fastened at the neck." But in the absence of the original, can we trust this version? A boy like Hill would say a small Virgin Mary was lifesize if she was only about his height.

Mary Beirne said that the Virgin was life-size and the figures of Joseph and John were smaller or lower down. Judith Campbell said the Virgin was higher than the other two. Patrick Hill mentions only the Virgin being lifesize. Nobody else comments on the size of the images. The Virgin was the centre of the apparition.

Life-size does not necessarily mean adult size.

Joseph and John may have been small.

It does not sound very plausible that we really have a supernatural vision here.

We conclude that the Knock apparition was a hoax and may have been placed high up and caused by a projector put on the window of the Church.

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