

## Introduction

Has anything ever happened to you that you couldn't explain?

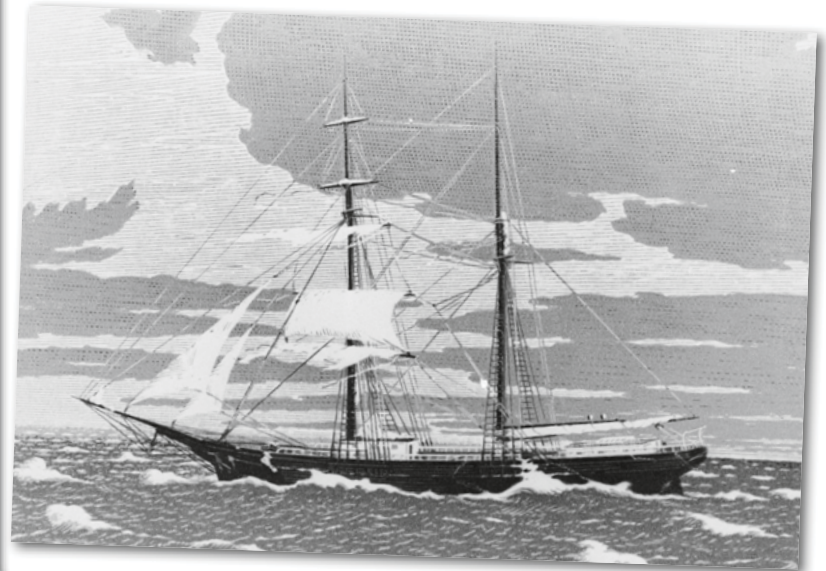
This book is about the strange things that sometimes happen: about odd events in puzzling places; about sightings of weird creatures; about planes, boats and people that have disappeared without a trace.

We think we understand most of what happens in the world, but some things are still a mystery – a mystery that we can't solve.

## A ship without a crew

Imagine seeing a ship sailing across the sea with nobody on board! That's what happened in the strange story of the *Mary Celeste*.

The *Mary Celeste* was a small sailing ship that carried cargo across the Atlantic. In early November 1872, she left New York, bound for Italy, with nearly two thousand barrels of pure alcohol aboard. The captain had his wife and little daughter with him, plus a crew of seven men.



On 4 December, a British ship saw the *Mary Celeste* drifting off the coast of Portugal. Some of her sails had been torn by the wind.

As they drew closer, the captain of the British ship shouted, "Ship, ahoy!" Nobody answered.

Two men were sent to board the strange ship.

It was creepy on the deck. The only sounds were the creaking of wood, sails flapping and a barrel rolling back and forth.



In the captain's cabin, they found a half-eaten breakfast on the table and clothes and toys scattered all over the floor. A pillow on the bed was still marked by the shape of a child's head.

The clock had stopped. The ship's sailing record ended suddenly on 25 November. Everyone seemed to have left the ship in a hurry.

The captain and the crew had left their money, sea boots and pipes.

