

## 8/19/2004 Visit Britain: Britain offers a spine chilling escape for Halloween

**NEW YORK, August 19, 2004** - Halloween heralds the macabre fascination with ghouls, ghosts, goblins, and anything that may go bump in the night. To honor this day, VisitBritain, the national tourist office for England, Scotland and Wales, encourages U.S. travelers to escape for a spine tingling weekend on the trail of supernatural sites throughout Britain.

Here is a snapshot of Britain's supposedly haunted locations:

### England

**York**, 200 miles north of London, claims the most spooking sightings. Visitors can take nightly ghost walks through its atmospheric narrow streets, winding passageways and over-hanging Medieval gables. On the ghostly trails, reports have been made about a ragged legion of Roman soldiers, groans from wounded Cavaliers, and headless ghosts of the 7th Earl of Northumberland. These images are just some of the ghostly sightings on a nightly tour.

In the north-west of England, *The Pendle Witches Trail* recalls the days under King James I, and how his local magistrates conducted ruthless witch-hunts in 1612. One story dwells on Alizon Device, her arrest for setting a curse and paralyzing a peddler, her confession to the crime and her implication of two other women, Demdike and Chattox. Reports have been made by investigators finding human bones and clay figures of individuals who have disappeared rather mysteriously. The witch-hunts led to the arrest and execution by hanging of 11 other women. The 45-mile Pendle Witches Trail, which can be explored by bicycling, driving and walking, focuses on historic points of interest to unravel the mystery of the Pendle Witches.

**Levens Hall**, near the edge of the Lake District, in the north of England, also has reports of a resident ghost. Legend has it that a gypsy woman placed a curse on the house saying no son should inherit it until the River Kent has ceased to flow and a white fawn has been born in the park. For many years, Levens Hall passed through the family line until the birth of Alan Desmond Bagot in 1896. At his birth, it is reported that the river froze and a white fawn was discovered in the park. Throughout the years, the gypsy woman has been seen quite often on the back drive and bridge over the river.

**Muncaster Castle**, in Cumbria, is known as the haunted headquarters of the World Owl Trust and is home to a fine collection of snowy 'Hedwig' owls (180 endangered birds living in a natural and safe environment). Since the 11th century, the Penington family has occupied this castle. Occasionally, visitors are permitted to stay in the castle. The Tapestry Room is the most haunted in the castle and stories have been reported about phantom heavy weights falling on

guests asleep in the four poster bed, hooded figures, footsteps, children crying and women's voices singing lullabies. In 1994, the Association for Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena confirmed the presence of restless spirits in the castle.

**Raby Castle** in County Durham in the north-east of England has reports of a woman creeping into the room of a sick boy and putting poison in his medicine. The ghost, the first Lady Bernard, is reputed to haunt the ramparts, knitting with red-hot needles. Further north, in the foothills of Northumberland's Cheviot Hills, **Chillingham Castle** has been named Britain's most haunted castle with two ghosts still roaming the castle: a Radiant Boy who died in a fireplace, and a Grey Lady who killed herself after her husband ran off with her sister.

**Ordsall Hall** in Manchester tells of ghostly sightings of The White Lady roaming the Great Hall and Star Chamber, sometimes climbing the stairs to a tiny room above the Oriel. Although no one knows for sure the identify of The White Lady, some people believe she could be Queen Elizabeth's favorite maid of honor, Margaret Radclyffe, who died from a broken heart following the death of her brother, or a jilted bride.

**Salisbury**, 80 miles south-west of London, invites visitors to experience three days of terror to unravel more than 20 ghosts, hear stories about wizards and witches and to explore the hidden graveyard in Fearsome Fisherton.

In **London**, the Langham Hotel reputedly has up to seven ghosts in the property. The most famous is believed to haunt room 333. Tales describe a man, with his legs cut off some two feet below the ground, arms outstretched and eyes staring emptily, wearing Victorian evening wear complete with cloak and cravat.

## **Scotland**

**Mary King's Close** is one of the most haunted locations in Edinburgh, Scotland with reports of ghostly sightings on its streets. After the mid-17th century plague, the area was closed to the public. Initially, Mary King's Close consisted of a number of narrow streets with houses on either side, stretching up to seven miles in length. In 1753, the Burgh Council developed a new building on the site, the Royal Exchange (known now as the City Chambers). At the top of the close, the houses were knocked down and part of the lower section was kept to be used as the foundation for the Royal Exchange. The remnants of the closes were left beneath the building: dark and ancient dwellings steeped in mystery. Today, Mary King's Close offers guided underground tours to unravel the history and ghostly stories dating as far back as 300 years ago.

The **Edinburgh Dungeon** offers special Halloween tours focusing on macabre periods of Scottish history. The tours dwell on the horror, history, grisly clan wars, vampires and tales of grave robbings. Visitors can also participate in **The Witchery Tours**, guided walks to torture, scandalous murder and execution sites in Edinburgh.

**Glamis Castle**, in Angus in the north-east of Scotland, is believed to be the most haunted castle in Britain with more than 30 spirits. The castle has been the family home of the Earls of Strathmore and Kinghorne since 1372 when Sir John Lyon of Forteviot became Thane of Glamis and was given the castle by King Robert II of Scotland. Four years later, Sir John married Princess Joanna, the King's daughter. Since then, Glamis Castle has been the home of many members of the British and Scottish royal families, including the childhood home of HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother and the birthplace of Princess Margaret.

**Stirling Castle**, in the city of Stirling between Edinburgh and Glasgow, is home to the ghost of a 'Green Lady,' the attendant of Mary, Queen of Scots. Legend has it that one night the attendant saved the Queen from death when the draperies of her four-poster bed caught fire. Today, the appearance of the Green Lady is taken very seriously as it is supposedly a bad omen, heralding disaster or bad fortune.

## Wales

**Gwydir Castle**, located in Conwy in North Wales, reports numerous ghost sightings. One report tells the tale of a young woman who haunts the North Wing and the paneled corridor between the Hall of Meredith and the Great Chamber. Another story describes sightings of Sir John Wynn on the spiral staircase leading to the Great Chamber where his portrait hangs in the Lower Hall. Other ghostly tales include children crying, a dog, a short Elizabethan lady in a yellow dress and a night torch-lit procession on the Great Terrace.

Built in the early 20th century as a hunting lodge, **Plas Pen**, which is located between Denbigh and Pentrefoelas in the south-west of Wales, reports a luminous skeleton dancing on the ruins. Located in Ceredigion, **George Borrow Hotel** also has its claim as a haunted property. It is said to be haunted by a former landlady from the 1950's, Miss Withers, who moves around furniture, keys and plates.

In Denbighshire, North Wales, **Bodelwyddan Castle**, which has parts dating from the 17th century, has more stories of ghostly encounters. Reports include a lady in a Victorian dress appearing in the sculpture gallery, a soldier in one of the galleries, shadowy figures drifting down corridors and a lady wearing a blue dress and cloth mop cap in a tea room.

Tales of ghouls, ghosts and goblins in England, Scotland and Wales are endless. For more information about visiting these locations, please contact VisitBritain by calling (877) 899-8391, visit the website [www.visitbritain.com/usa](http://www.visitbritain.com/usa) or E-mail [travelinfo@visitbritain.org](mailto:travelinfo@visitbritain.org).

# # #

**VisitBritain media contacts:**

New York: Paul Chibeba, tel. 212 850 0311; E-mail:  
[paul.chibeba@visitbritain.org](mailto:paul.chibeba@visitbritain.org) / Joanna Allen, tel. 212 850 0312; E-mail:  
[joanna.allen@visitbritain.org](mailto:joanna.allen@visitbritain.org)

Chicago: Steve Ball, tel. 312 787 0464 ext. 10; E-mail: [steve.ball@visitbritain.org](mailto:steve.ball@visitbritain.org)  
Los Angeles: Wendy Missenden, tel. 310 470 2782 ext. 25; E-mail:  
[wendy.missenden@visitbritain.org](mailto:wendy.missenden@visitbritain.org)  
Online: [www.visitbritain.com/mediaroom](http://www.visitbritain.com/mediaroom).

**Photographs** relating to this news release can be downloaded at:

<http://www.britainonview.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/BOV.woa/1/wa/shareLightBox?id=7494>

VisitBritain  
551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 701  
New York, NY, 10176-0799

*'Leading the world to Britain'*