

5 Haunted Places to Visit in Durham

The Shakespeare Tavern

Allegedly one of the most haunted buildings in Durham, this Saddler Street pub is located in a building that was the location of a theatre box office. Seems safe to hazard a guess where the name came from. The building itself dates back to the 12th Century. Despite its haunted reputation specific details on reported phenomena aren't easy to come by. Groups have investigated and by all accounts the reputation remained intact. The pub also has a reputation for an olde worlde charm and a decent pint.

Crossgate

Two stories, both involving spectral females are associated with this area.

A "Grey Lady" used to be reported by people travelling Crossgate Peth in horse-drawn carriages. Apparently holding a baby, she would hitch a ride until reaching Neville's Cross – where she would promptly disappear. The story goes that she was a woman made a widow after the death of her husband at the Battle of Neville's Cross in 1346, condemned by her yearning to search for her dead husband – though why her spectral-self needed a lift to get there was never made apparent. The demise of her apparition seemed to coincide with the demise of the horse-drawn carriage.

Another (this time baby-less) female is also said to haunt the Crossgate area. She is rumoured to be a Victorian girl from an Allergate workhouse. Legend has she was murdered by a soldier then thrown down some stairs.

Jimmy Allen

Jimmy Allen was a Northumbrian pipe player of some fine repute. Indeed, for a period of time he was the official piper to the Duchess of Northumberland. Unfortunately for Jimmy he also had a little sideline in petty, and apparently not-so-petty, crime. Arrested for stealing a horse in Gateshead, he was sentenced to death in 1803. His sentence was reduced to life imprisonment, and he spent the last 7 years of his life in a cell under Elvet Bridge. He died in 1810 aged 77 years, a few days before a pardon was received.

Where his cell was located there is now a nightclub that bears his name, Jimmy Allen's. It is reported that on occasion, as intoxicated stragglers meander through the city's post-closing time streets, the sound of Northumbrian pipes float through the air.

Durham Castle

Yet another Grey Lady can be found in Durham City. The castle became a college of the University of Durham in 1832. Various ghostly goings-on have been reported by students and staff.

A cowed figure has been reported around the basement of the Keep and reports also come from the Norman Gallery. The most famous apparition is probably the Grey Lady said to haunt the black staircase, where she apparently fell to her death. As the levels of the stairs have been altered, she is said not to walk on the current level, but at the level of the stairs at the time of her demise.

Vane Tempest Hall

Located in the Gilesgate area of the city, Vane Tempest Hall is currently used as a community centre. It was however formerly a military barracks and reported to have housed smallpox victims.

Recent years have seen the venue become very popular with local paranormal groups. Both its haunted reputation and the number of experiences reported have increased over this time.

There are several stories attached to the location. The ghost of a soldier killed while loading cannon is said to be seen on the parade ground. The figure of a Lady in White (not grey this time!) is also said to haunt the grounds.

Within the hall itself there have been reports of doors opening and closing, bangs and knocks, temperature fluctuations, murmurings and whispers. It must be said though; the reports of this type tend to originate with the groups that have investigated the place.

Still, the location does have an interesting history and is well worth a gander.