

The Keep – Newcastle’s Most Haunted?

Every city up and down this Fair Isle probably has a location or two with a reputation of being it’s most haunted, a location where stories abound and ghost hunters converge.

For Newcastle, most would claim The Keep as the heir to that title. It has everything a good haunted location should have. The Keep is blessed with a long history replete with accounts of human tragedy or suffering – and of course many a ghostly tale.

Strategically situated above the River Tyne, human habitation has been recorded on the site for around 2000 years. From a 2nd Century Roman fort to an 8th Century Anglo-Saxon burial ground, to the 11th Century new castle (subsequently giving the city its name) built by William the Conqueror’s son. In the 12th Century a stone castle was built. Over the years this stone construction has faced in turn addition, dereliction and eventual renovation, with the last major project undertaken in the 1990’s.

Death has certainly been associated with the location. There are records of individuals losing their life here in addition to the mentioned burial ground. Of course there is also the account that body parts belonging to William Wallace (famously given substantial poetic license in Mel Gibson’s *Braveheart*) were displayed here after he was hung, drawn and quartered in London, 1305.

With the above and more, one might expect a veritable gamut of ghostly sightings and experiences. Indeed, so it would seem.

Ghostly experiences and stories regarding the keep are fairly bountiful. From apparent Roman and World War II figures, a female apparition and sounds of chanting to orbs, mists, temperature drops and assorted audible phenomenon.

The history and tales ensure barely a weekend passes without at least one investigation or event taking place. And with each passing weekend, more experiences and tales feed the haunted reputation of The Keep.

But here lies a question. Did the stories spawn the investigations or the investigations spawn the stories?

Actual ghost tales prior to modern day ghost hunters investigating the location are hard to come by. It is certainly true that the familiar ghostly tales associated with The Keep have been given life by investigation and event groups rather than culled from old literature or newspaper archives. Some of these stories continue to be retold, despite questionable foundations. For example, a photo of a small, crouching and apparently hooded figure which turned out to be a local investigator retrieving a data logger continues to do the internet rounds. Furthermore, the near legendary “Poppy Girl” has, despite communicating with visiting psychics and mediums, a somewhat unverified origin – apparently not making an appearance until mentioned by a local radio DJ.

This said, people have, and continue to have, experiences at the location which are interesting and may speak to more than mere imagination or simply a desire to experience the otherworldly. Maybe the ghosts within the Keep walls, should they exist, have simply found a willing and regular audience...and an audience showing no signs of leaving just yet.

Located in the heart of the city and with inexpensive admission The Keep is well worth visiting if you're in the area. The history alone makes it a fascinating location and the associated ghostly tales, whatever their credence, only add to the allure of this Newcastle landmark.