Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

Ghost Stories

Tees Valley Museums

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Kirkleatham Museum · Captain Cook Birthplace Museum · Dorman Museum · Head of Steam Darlington Railway Museum · Preston Park Museum & Grounds · Museum of Hartlepool · Hartlepool Art Gallery · teesside dementia link services

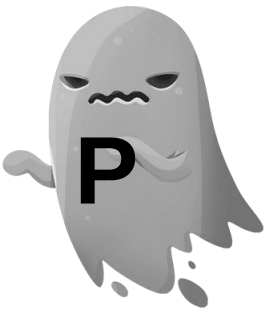
Tees Valley Museums

Welcome to another edition of the Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

Each month we use objects and photos from our museums in the Tees Valley to take a closer look at the lives and stories from people in our area.

It's Halloween, and this month we bring you some spooky tales from across the Tees Valley. From Middlesbrough Town Hall to some of the most haunted pubs in Hartlepool and Darlington, there are plenty of ghost stories to entertain you this spooky season!

Let's go on a ghost hunt!



Can you guess what another word for Ghost is?

Some naughty ghosts have stolen the letters and are hiding in the pack. Can you find them all and piece together the word?

All images and stories used in this pack are courtesy of Dorman Museum, Teesside Archives, Kirkleatham Museum and Grounds and Preston Park Museum and Grounds.

You can find all our Talking Tees Valley packs through the Tees Valley Museums website under 'Latest News' or here: https://teesvalleymuseums.org/news/

If you would like to share your stories or contact us about the packs please e-mail teesvalleymuseums@stockton.gov.uk

The Grey Lady of Acklam Hall

Acklam Hall was built in the 1680s by William Hustler, a cloth merchant. It was the home of the Hustler Family for many generations until it was sold in 1928 to the Middlesbrough Corporation and it became Kings Manor Comprehensive School. Nowadays it is a popular venue for weddings.

During its time as a school, teachers and children reported seeing a 'Grey Lady' standing at the top of a staircase, who would then disappear into thin air!

She is believed to be the spirit of Charlotte Hustler, a member of the Hustler family who had died in childbirth in the early 1800s. For a lot of children who studied there, it was a scary right of passage to see the 'Grey Lady'.

So Spooky!

The Britannia Steelworks was opened in Middlesbrough in 1870 and was one of the town's main steel producers. It rolled out its last piece of steel in 1971, and it was in the last months of the year that some workers saw a man banging on the door of the pay office. When they got closer they realised he was dressed in old work clothes. He then disappeared into thin air! No one could think of an explanation for this ghostly appearance, but perhaps this was a man who used to work there long ago and wanted to settle a pay dispute?

Oscar the Ghost

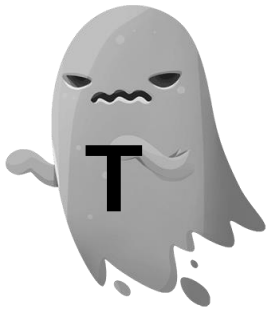
Middlesbrough Town Hall was once the town's base for its fire service, police, and law courts, and had police cells in its basement.

In the 1880s a man named Oscar Nevin was arrested and thrown into the cells. He had been drinking heavily and ended up in a violent brawl with another man. He would be put before the courts in the morning and charged.

However, when the police checked on him in the morning, he had died from unknown causes.

In the years following Oscar's death there were reports of a ghostly man seen in the cell where he died.

William Bastiman and the Empire Theatre



William Bastiman was a builder in Middlesbrough in the late 1890s who had a passion for entertainment. There was no one large theatre in the town so he, together with architect Ernest Runtz, built the Empire Theatre, which opened in March 1899.

Bastiman was an active member of the Empire Theatre's staff until the 6th of May 1940 when he collapsed and died suddenly.

His presence from the Theatre he founded was far from gone, however. He is suspected to haunt one of the main staircases where staff claim to have felt an unexplainable feeling. It could be that, even from beyond the grave, Bastiman wanted to stay connected to the Theatre he founded.

Fighting Ghosts at the Old Brunswick

In the 1970s The Bird's Nest pub in Stockton was the scene of frightening events. The staff had reported furniture moving without explanation, glasses thrown and breaking by invisible forces, and angry voices from the club room. Some staff even saw a strange shadowy figure.

In the past the pub had once been called 'The Old Brunswick', and one night a fight had broken out between two men. The fight became so intense that one of the men was thrown out of the front window and struck by a passing bus.

Perhaps this was the restless spirit of the man who died, still fighting on in the afterlife?

So Spooky!

The Bird's Nest was not the only pub in Stockton to be haunted. Some of the staff of the Green Dragon Inn claimed to have seen the ghost of the first landlord in the cellar!

The Cosmopolitan Hotel

Sitting a stone's throw away from St. Hilda's Church on Hartlepool Headland is one of the most haunted places in town. The hauntings were first recorded in 1972, when the landlord went down to the cellars and then fled back upstairs after being overcome by fear.

From then on staff reported banging sounds from the cellar, sounds of tables and chairs being dragged across the floor, and glasses being tipped over. Some even claimed to have felt someone brush past them when no one was there and feeling as if they were being held in a vice-like grip.

And there were other staff who claimed to have seen many different ghosts – a little boy sitting at the top of the cellar steps, a woman holding a baby, and a nun.

It was later discovered that there were bricked up tunnels in the cellar leading in the direction of the Church, which was once a monastery in the 7th century. It was sometimes raided by the Vikings, and the nun whose ghost haunts the Cosmopolitan was hiding in the tunnel when she met her untimely demise.

So Spooky!

Ghostly monks also haunted St. Hilda's Hospital from when it first opened in 1865 to its closing in 1984. Turns out the site on which the hospital was built used to belong to Franciscan monks in the 1250s.

William Brown and the Moss-Troopers

The Baydale Beck Inn at Darlington was once one of the most notorious haunts for thieves. In the 1700s it was used by Dick Turpin and the Catton's Gang to hide from the authorities.

It was also the favourite hideaway for William Brown, a leader of the Moss-Troopers, brigands who lived across the North of England. If caught, they were either condemned to death, or transported to the American colonies.

William Brown was caught and transported in the 1740s, but he escaped and returned to England, resuming his life with the Moss-Troopers. But he was caught a second time and sentenced to death in 1743. His ghost returned to the Baydale Beck Inn and he is said to haunt the place to this day.

Sir William Turner and his Almshouses

In 1676 Sir William Turner had a large hospital and almshouses built on the Kirkleatham Estate, which has been converted today into a retirement home.

He left a large inheritance to his nephew, Sir Cholmley Turner, who in turn built a school across the road from the almshouses. This school is now Kirkleatham Museum.

Following Sir William Turner's death in 1693, people who worked at the almshouses told stories of strange occurrences – unexplained shadows passing across the walls, the temperature inside becoming ice-cold, and the swinging open of doors which had been secured with catches.

These are all believed to be the actions of Sir William Turner's ghost, keeping a close eye on the new proprietors of the almshouses.

Do you have a ghost story of your own? Why not write it down below and share it with someone you know?

Happy Halloween!