

Factsheet

Ghosts at Hampton Court Palace

Hampton Court Palace, with its 500 years of history, has seen many dramatic royal events from the death of Henry VIII's third wife, Jane Seymour, to the condemnation and house arrest of his fifth, Catherine Howard, for adultery. Over the centuries, staff, visitors, workmen and residents have experienced strange phenomena for which there is often no practical explanation. Many of these experiences have been recorded, the better known of which are below.

Catherine Howard and The Haunted Gallery

- The hauntings of Catherine Howard, fifth wife of King Henry VIII, at Hampton Court Palace are so well known that the Haunted Gallery was given its spine-tingling name.
- In November 1541, Catherine was charged with adultery, placed under house arrest and confined to her rooms at Hampton Court. It is claimed that she broke free from her guards and ran down the corridor to reach King Henry, who was in his private chapel, and plead for her life. Her guards soon caught up with her and dragged her back to her rooms, despite her protests. Catherine was later executed at the Tower of London.
- It is said that a female form, dressed in white, has been seen floating down the Haunted Gallery 'towards the door of the Royal Pew, and just as she reaches it, has been observed to hurry back with disordered garments and a ghastly look of despair, uttering at the same time the most unearthly shrieks, till she passes through the door at the end of the gallery'. (*A Short History of Hampton Court* by Ernest Law, 1897)
- During totally separate evening tours of the palace one evening in 1999, two female visitors fainted on exactly the same spot in the Haunted Gallery approximately one hour apart. Both of them felt frightened and uncomfortable and one lady declined to re-join the tour.

Jane Seymour wanders in Clock Court

- Catherine Howard isn't Henry VIII's only wife whose presence is still felt at Hampton Court. His third and favourite wife, Jane Seymour, died at the palace following complications after the birth of Henry's only son, Edward, in 1537.
- Jane is said to walk through the cobbled courtyard of Clock Court carrying a lighted taper.

Sibell Penn and 'The Lady in Grey'

- Sibell Penn was nurse to Prince Edward, Henry VIII's only son.
- She died in 1562 and was buried in a nearby Hampton church. When the old church was pulled down in 1829, Sibell Penn's remains were disturbed and it is said that she returned to the rooms she inhabited during her time at Hampton Court Palace. The sound of a spinning wheel could be heard from behind a wall in the south-west wing of the palace shortly afterwards. When the wall was demolished, a small forgotten room was found, containing an old spinning wheel.
- Sibell Penn is the most persistent ghost at Hampton Court Palace. There have been sightings as recently as 1986 when a 'lady in grey' was reportedly seen in various Tudor courtyards and cloisters.

The Wolsey Closet Dog

- This Wolsey Closet has long been commented on by visitors, warders and other staff as having a "strange atmosphere". A caterer at an evening function refused to enter the little alcove in the room because he felt it was "evil".
- A dog has been seen and heard in the room on more than one occasion, and the presence of a dog felt by somebody "sensitive" to paranormal activity.

Caught on camera!

- In October 2003 something very spooky was caught on the palace's CCTV security footage.
- On several occasions palace security guards were alerted to an open Fire Door. After securing the door each time, they returned to their office to view the CCTV footage to see who opened them. On the first occasion the footage showed the doors flying wide open, but no evidence of why they had. On the second occasion they were stunned when a ghostly-looking figure in period

dress suddenly appeared on the screen and closed the doors. The same thing happened on a third day, but again no figure appeared.

- It wasn't just security guards who thought they were seeing things. A visitor noted in the palace's visitor book that day she thought she had seen a ghost in that area.
- The footage of the figure caught to world's media attention with reports in newspapers and on TV and radio as far afield as India, Australia and Peru.
- To date palace officials have no idea who the figure was!