

Factsheet

Ghosts at the Tower of London

“One of the most haunted places in Britain”

- The earliest known sighting of a ghost at the Tower of London was that of Thomas à Becket in the mid thirteenth century. He appeared during the building of the inner curtain wall, apparently reducing the work to rubble by striking it with his cross.
- One of the best known and saddest hauntings at the Tower is that of the Little Princes (12 year old King Edward V and his 9 year old brother Richard, Duke of York) who died in suspicious circumstances in 1483. They have occasionally been seen in the Bloody Tower dressed in white nightgowns standing silently, hand in hand, before fading back into the stones.
- Perhaps the grisliest haunting at the Tower is that of the 70 year old Countess of Salisbury - “The last of the Plantagenets” - executed by Henry VIII for political reasons. She refused to put her head on the block like a common traitor and, running from the executioner was pursued by his hacking axe until he had hewn her to death. The haunting has been seen as both a re-enactment of this gruesome scene and the shadow of a great axe which falls across the area.
- The most persistent ghost at the Tower is that of Queen Anne Boleyn. Described by witnesses as a headless female figure, she drifts from Queen’s House to the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula and leads a procession of dignitaries down the aisle to the site of her final burial place under the chapel’s altar.
- Possibly the most haunted part of the Tower is the Salt Tower. Not only do dogs refuse to enter it but Yeoman Warders are also unwilling to visit after nightfall following an incident when one of their number was nearly throttled by an unseen entity.

- Lady Jane Grey was last seen by two Guardsmen as recently as 1957. On 12 February, the 403rd anniversary of her execution, a white shape was seen “forming itself on the battlements”.
- The prize for the strangest supernatural encounter goes to a rifleman who, in 1864, was court-martialled for neglecting his duty after being found lying unconscious at his post outside the Queen’s House. In his defence he argued that he had been approached by a white figure. His three challenges had received no reply so he charged with his bayonet - only to go straight through the figure. His story was corroborated by two witnesses who had seen the whole incident from a window in the Bloody Tower, and the soldier was acquitted.
- Human apparitions are not the only spirits to haunt the Tower. At the stroke of midnight on a dark night in January 1815, a sentry patrolling outside the Martin Tower saw, to his horror, a huge bear emerge from the doorway. Desperately, he lunged at it with his bayonet, only for the weapon to pass straight through the animal. His colleagues, hearing the commotion ran to his aid to find him unconscious on the ground. Within two days the sentry had died of fright.
- The most recent eerie occurrence happened in 1998. During a photo shoot for a well known magazine, the photographer became increasingly uneasy when flashes went off unexpectedly and bulbs blew for no reason. When the pictures were developed that evening, he found to his dismay that many were blank and one contained an unexplainable ball of white light which seemed to explode in the centre of the picture. The photographer, by this time convinced of ghostly interference, vowed never to return to the Tower.