



Royal Court Theatre in Liverpool Official Report Unclassified

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- **Case ID:** PIUP05
- **This report was conducted by:** Agent *****
- **Grade Level:** PG2
- **Alert Level:** AL1

Introduction

Contractors started to refurbish the theatre in 1999 being so scared to continue after numerous odd happenings and sightings of what they believed to be ghosts. Even the electricians working on the theatre reported strange experiences and feeling a presence in the basement. The main ghost reported seen there is a woman by the name of Elizabeth who was a cleaner for the theatre when it was a music hall in 1897. She roams the theatre's gallery level and has been mostly seen in seat A5

There have been reports of a Grey Lady who haunts the theatre, as well a gentleman in a frock coat and top hat.

Findings

The Royal Court Theatre is a theatre located at 1 Roe Street in Liverpool, England. The current Royal Court Theatre was opened on 17 October 1938, after fire destroyed its predecessor. It was rebuilt in Art Deco style and soon became Liverpool's premier theatre. The interior of the building has a nautical theme, in line with Liverpool's seafaring traditions. The design of the basement lounge is based on the Cunard liner Queen Mary. There are three viewing levels within the main auditorium: the Stalls, the Grand Circle and the Balcony. Although the Liverpool Blitz during the Second World War destroyed many of the buildings around it, the Royal Court itself remained intact. Throughout the war, many well known artists performed here, including Ivor Novello, Margot Fonteyn and John Gielgud. Richard Burton made his stage debut here and Judi Dench made her professional stage debut in September 1957. In the 1980s it became home to rock and pop concerts, hosting artists such as Slade, Tangerine Dream, Rage Against the Machine, R.E.M., Iron Maiden, David Bowie, Ozzy Osbourne, Roger Taylor, Brian May, U2 and George Michael. In 1990, the building was listed as Grade II, highlighting the fact that it is a major part of Liverpool's heritage. In 2005 Rawhide Comedy Club took ownership of the building. Following two years of stand up comedy, with a break in 2006 to produce Brick Up The Mersey Tunnels, they began producing plays all year round in 2007. The theatre has produced more than 100 shows since 2007, including Council Depot Blues, The Royal, Mam! I'm 'Ere and a sell out series of Christmas shows including: Scouse Pacific, Little Scouse On The Prairie,



The Hitchhiker's Guide To Fazakerley, The Scouse Nativity, The Scouse Cinderella and The Scouse Snow White The site of the Royal Court Theatre was originally that of a water well constructed in the 12th century. A circus owner, John Cooke, bought the site in 1826 for his circuses, plays, operas and concerts, and it became known as 'Cooke's Royal Amphitheatre of Arts'. During this time Pablo Fanque, the black circus performer and proprietor immortalised in the Beatles' song "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!", performed here as a part of William Batty's [circus](#). In 1881, the building was redesigned by Henry Sumner as a regular theatre and it was re opened as the Royal Court. In 1896 the theatre was taken over by Robert Arthur of Glasgow, who in 1897 put all his theatres into a limited company quoted on the Stock Exchanges, the Robert Arthur Theatres [Ltd](#). In 1912, following Arthur's bankruptcy, the shareholders appointed as chairman Michael Simons of the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, chairman and creator in 1895 of Howard & Wyndham Ltd. The direction and programming of the theatre, embracing plays, musicals, revues, opera and pantomime, now passed to Howard & Wyndham Ltd, chaired by Simons with its managing director Fred Wyndham, who would be followed in 1928 by A. Stewart Cruikshank after his King's Theatre, Edinburgh had joined the Howard & Wyndham group. A fire destroyed the building in 1933. Five years after demolition, construction works began in March 1938 to ensure the theatre was rebuilt and reopened in October of the same year. The title deeds of the theatre changed to Howard & Wyndham in 1941. The current Royal Court Theatre was opened on 17 October 1938. It had been totally rebuilt in Art Deco style to the designs of architect James Bushell Hutchins; its splendor and grandeur made it Liverpool's number one theatre. The interior of the building has a nautical theme, in line with Liverpool's seafaring traditions. The design of the basement lounge is based on the Cunard liner Queen Mary, which had been launched on the Clyde two years before the 1938 reopening. There are three viewing levels within the main auditorium: the Stalls, the Grand Circle, and the Balcony. Although the Liverpool Blitz during the Second World War destroyed many of the buildings around it, the Royal Court itself remained intact. Throughout the war, many well known artists performed in the Royal Court, including Ivor Novello, Margot Fonteyn and John Gielgud. Richard Burton made his stage debut at the Royal Court in an Emlyn Williams production. The 22 year-old Judi Dench made her professional stage debut here in September 1957, playing Ophelia in an Old Vic production of Hamlet. In 1980, two former Liverpool taxi drivers took the Royal Court in a new direction, moving away from traditional plays and instead of transferring the focus to rock and pop concerts. Their first year ended promisingly and proved to be a successful strategy for the venue, which went on to play host to artists as internationally famous as Tangerine Dream, Rage Against the Machine, R.E.M., Iron Maiden, David Bowie, Ozzy Osbourne, Roger Taylor, Brian May, U2 and George Michael. The music videos for "Let It Go", "High 'n' Dry Saturday Night and "Bringin' On the Heartbreak" by the British rock band Def Leppard were directed by Doug Smith and shot on 22 July 1981. The photo on the "Let It Go" single cover was taken from that shoot. In 1983, rock group Slade performed their last live UK concert with the original lineup featuring Noddy Holder. In 1990, the building was listed as Grade II, highlighting the fact that it is a major part of Liverpool's heritage. In 2005 Rawhide Comedy Club took ownership of the building. Following two years of stand up



comedy, with a break in 2006 to produce Brick Up The Mersey Tunnels, they began producing plays all year round in 2007. The stalls are now set out in a three tier cabaret-style arrangement with tables and chairs and a bar at the rear of the stalls. The current capacity is 1,186 Stalls 290 cabaret, Circle 403, Balcony 493. Audience members can dine before the show in the stalls seating. Following two years of being the home to the Rawhide Comedy Club, the Royal Court made a move back to producing theatre in the summer of 2007 with the sell out re run of Brick Up the Mersey Since then, the theatre has undergone extensive refurbishment which completed its third 'Act' in summer 2017. In 2010 the theatre began their sell out Variety Lunch Club series which provides lunch, a cup of tea, a singer, and a comedian for £6. More than 1,200 people a month come to these Wednesday afternoon shows.

The main ghost who is said to haunt the Playhouse is that of a woman named Elizabeth, a cleaner at the venue before it was granted its licence. In 1897, when it was a music hall and variety theatre, Elizabeth was on stage, going about her usual cleaning duties when the fire iron came down on stage and struck her. She fell into the orchestra pit and broke her neck. Despite her death being recorded as an accident, the fire iron at the time was water powered, and needed someone to operate it. Elizabeth's ghost is said to haunt the theatre's gallery level, specifically the seat A5, which is always cold and spooky. She was last seen sitting there by the actress Pauline Daniels, in 1996.

Pantomime at The Royal Court Liverpool. With no televisions and no cinema, Liverpool audiences of the late 19th Century flocked to the theatre. Liverpool possessed no less than 26 theatres and 38 music halls. The main theatres towards the end of the century were the Prince Of Wales in Clayton Square opened 1861 the Shakespeare Theatre off London Road opened 1866 and the Royal Court Theatre. The site of the Royal Court had been a theatre for many years. As Cookes Royal Amphitheatre of Arts, up to 4,000 people would gather to attend plays, operas, concerts and circus. In 1881 as ownership of the theatre changed, it was rebuilt and renamed The Royal Court Theatre. Along with the three other theatres it presented an annual pantomime. The Victorian pantomime was not only the template for today's show, but very much a vehicle for music hall stars. Combining a mixture of music hall, comic opera and a large chunk of spectacle, the pantomime appealed to all levels of society. The first Royal Court Pantomime, or "annual" as it was known, was Babes In The Wood. It is not clear whether this was a success or not, but no further pantomime was produced at the Court for fourteen years, until 1895 with the presentation of Dick Whittington. Three years later, Arthur Lawrence was appointed the theatre manager. Starting with Aladdin, it was Lawrence who put the Royal Court firmly in the centre of the panto map. The biggest music hall stars of the day would appear in the Court's "annual". George Robey, Harry Lauder, Little Tich, the Three Sisters Levey and the Poluski Brothers all helped to make the Royal Court's pantomime among the most famous in Britain. With the ownership of the theatre passing to Howard & Wyndhams Ltd at the turn of the century, the growth of pantomime blossomed. Arthur Lawrence quoted in The Liverpoolian, November 1938 In 1906, in Aladdin, I had Hetty King and Happy



Fanny Fields, together with Malcolm Scott and Harry Tate some combination. I produced at the Court, in twenty six years, twenty pantomimes. The 1906 panto was the biggest success. We averaged takings of just under £2,000 a week, and that in a theatre supposed to hold no more than about £275 at full capacity. Our pantomimes would run elsewhere for about five years, so Liverpool was thus a pantomime manufacturing centre. They were all made here- scenery, dresses, jokes and music, and all. I may mention, also, that we had a stage unsurpassed for its equipment. Every kind of trap ever known on a stage was in being”That pantomime Aladdin was repeated, with almost the same cast, at the Adelphi Theatre in London the following year. “A chorus of over 100 Voices” boasted the posters. A magazine was produced in Liverpool solely devoted to pantomimes. By the 1920’s the death of Music Hall was under way, and the Royal Court panto mirrored its decline. Gone were the stars with their own personal songs to be replaced by “free” songs that anyone could sing. The Royal Court panto ended, replaced each Christmas by musical comedy, or a visit by the D’Oyly Carte Opera Company. In 1933 the Royal Court Theatre was destroyed by fire. Eventually rebuilt, in the new “Art Deco” style. It reopened in 1938 and its first Panto was Humpty Dumpty, starring Gene Gerrard, Bobbie Comber, the Tiller Girls, and a cast “of Over 80”. The consecutive run of pantomime was not to be, With another World War the spectacle of pantomime found itself replaced with the comedy The Eric Maschwitz revue, featuring a young Charles Hawtrey of later Carry On Fame performing female impersonations. The following year Vivienne Leigh appeared in The Doctor’s Dilemma. It was not until 1943, with the arrival of A. Stewart Cruickshank as managing director that pantomime returned, again starting with Babes In The Wood. By the 1960’s television comedians and pop stars became the new stars of panto. In 1956, young heart throb Dickie Valentine took on the role of Aladdin. By the end of the fifties, facing stiff competition and dwindling audiences, the Royal Court Pantomime began a slow lingering death. In the Sixties occasional pantomimes always Cinderella) were interspersed by Christmas shows by Ken Dodd, Dora Bryan, Frankie Vaughan, the Bachelors and the Black & White Minstrels. Howard & Wyndham’s financial problems increased, and the Royal Court was offered to the City Council to purchase. They refused. An attempt to open the Court as a Bingo Hall in 1968 was abandoned after eight months. There was no Christmas show after Aladdin in 1975. An attempt to revive panto in 1981 with Snow White was not successful, and pantomimes were no longer performed at the Royal Court. In 1997 the Neptune Theatre in Liverpool presented Aladdin at the Court. Following on their success at the Neptune the previous year with Sonia in Dick Whittington, they presented Aladdin starring Julie Goodyear as Mrs. Twankey, and Danny McCall as Aladdin. Since then the Royal Court pantomimes have been Cinderella 1998.Babes in The Wood 1999.Aladdin 2000 and Dick Whittington 2001.

Recommendations

Overall, the recommendations that were made from this report were that of no further investigation is warranted. There is sufficient evidence to conclude the investigation.



Conclusion

To conclude this report, the findings show that the evidence presented is that of conclusive enough that no further investigation is warranted. There is sufficient evidence to prove that there is paranormal activity that can not be scientifically explained. No further investigation is warranted, and the case is concluded.

This report was conducted by the authority of the International Bureau of Paranormal Investigation and Research.