



THE LEEDS LIBRARY
Paranormal investigations
2026



A rich history of the unexplained

Founded in 1768, The Leeds Library moved to its present home on Commercial Street in 1808. Both the institution and its building have been shaped by constant expansion: extensive remodelling and a rear extension in the 1880s, the conversion of the basement into storage in the 1920s, and—most recently, in March 2025—the incorporation of adjoining premises, further extending the oldest subscription library of its kind in the UK.

Yet alongside this well-documented architectural history runs a stranger narrative.

Since the famous case of The Leeds Library Ghost—later featured in *The Strand Magazine*—staff and visitors have reported a steady stream of unexplained phenomena. Shadowy figures glimpsed between the shelves, echoing footsteps in empty rooms, and disembodied voices are all said to be part of the library's living folklore.

Situated in the heart of the city centre, The Leeds Library offers a rare and compelling setting in which centuries of history and the unexplained appear to coexist.

Paranormal investigation group visits

A non-refundable deposit of £150 is required to secure a booking, and payment must be made in full before the agreed date

Package 1



*6 hours
Friday or Saturday
6pm - 12midnight
£530 including VAT.*

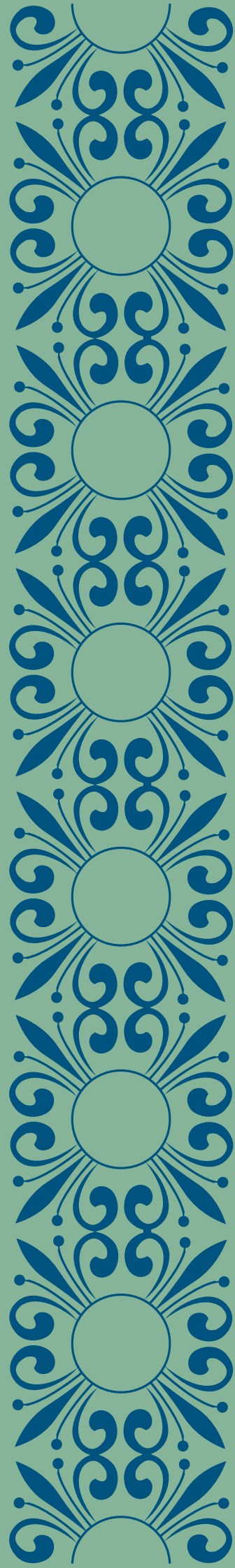
Package 2

*8 hours
Friday or Saturday
6pm - 2am
£680 including VAT.*



Bespoke packages

Investigations may be negotiated outside the times, days, and prices above.



Group paranormal investigations

The library hosts paranormal investigations by exclusive arrangement with individual groups.

Bookings may be arranged on a Friday or Saturday evening (see page 3 above) or by arrangement, and are subject to staff availability.

A booking provides exclusive access to most areas of the library when we are closed to members and the public. We will provide a duty manager on site for the duration of the booking.

We do not sell tickets via any third-party provider, and all bookings must be to existing investigation groups. Tickets to the investigation may not be advertised or re-sold outside of any group. We also ask that all groups provide their own equipment, and have relevant valid liability insurance (minimum £2million).

Alcohol must not be consumed during any investigation.

What's included?



Exclusive access to the library, including almost all areas of the building

Introductory tour, including a short history of the library and its paranormal past (and present...)



Use of our Events Space as a base to leave bags and coats, including a kitchen for hot drinks and microwave

Access by pre-visit appointment to the library collection, including an extensive section on the occult



On-site duty manager throughout your visit

Things to bear in mind



You'll need to bring your own ghost-hunting equipment, as we do not provide this.

The library has a lift to most floors, but due to its heritage status, not all areas have level access.



Maximum 30 per group. Tickets for any event must not be advertised for sale outside your group.

You are welcome to take photos and make audio/visual recordings during your visit.



Please see our terms and conditions for full information.

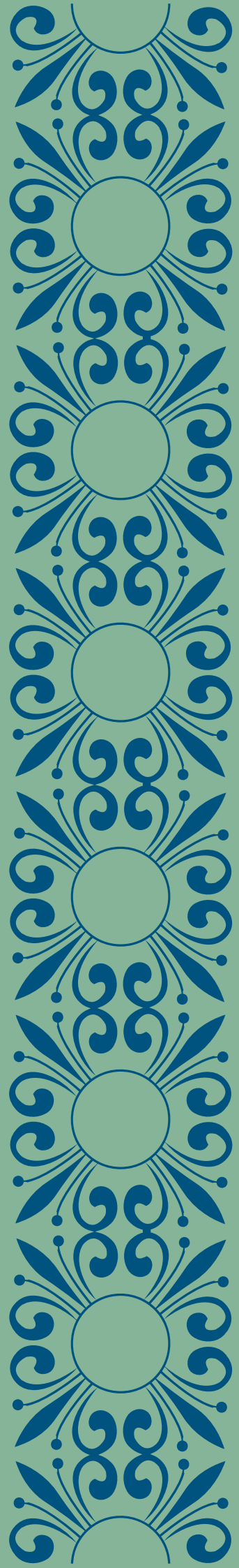
The case of Vincent Sternberg

Like all good historic buildings, the Leeds Library has a ghost.

Many staff—both past and present— have felt the presence of someone or something not of this earth.

The 1908 Christmas edition of *The Strand Magazine* featured six allegedly true ghost stories, and the second story is an account of the appearance of the ghost of former librarian Vincent Thomas Sternberg in 1884.

Sternberg was appointed Librarian in 1857, and died in early 1880. His successor was 24-year-old John Y. W. MacAlister, who had been the sub-librarian at the Liverpool Library. MacAlister and Sternberg had never met; the significance of this will soon become clear...



A Victorian ghost story

In the spring of 1884, MacAlister was working alone in the library late at night. Realising that he must leave or risk missing his train home, MacAlister left his office, and using a lamp to guide him, headed towards the passage to the Main Room. At the far end of the passage, he saw a man's face, and thinking that a thief had entered, MacAlister went back into his office and took his revolver from the safe.

On returning to the Main Room, he called loudly for the thief to show himself. MacAlister then saw the face looking round a bookcase – in fact, it looked like the body were in the bookcase as the face came so close to the edge. The face was pallid and completely hairless and the eyes were dark and deep set. MacAlister advanced on the intruder, who turned and with a quick, shuffling gait, walked to the door of the small lavatory.

MacAlister, hearing no noise, followed the man and to his extreme surprise, found the room empty. He began to experience an “eerie” feeling and left the library only to find he had indeed missed his train.

Contemporary experiences

Since 1884 and the library's most famous ghost story, members and staff have reported many strange and unexplained occurrences: shadow figures; heavy footsteps walking steadily across empty balconies; terrified contractors refusing to work in the building again; audio of an unaccountable breath in the Main Room; and sounds of children playing were recorded in the basement.

Neither are strange occurrences confined to our historic spaces: footsteps have been heard in our latest extension, and there were reports of the unexplained during the spaces' previous incarnations.





Conduct

The Leeds Library is the oldest library of its kind in the UK, a treasure for the city of Leeds and beyond.

We ask that its staff, members, building, and collection are treated with respect at all times.

Anyone not doing so may be asked to leave, and the Leeds Library withholds the right to terminate an investigation without providing a refund. Any group must consent to our full terms and conditions, which are available on request. The key points are:

- Please leave everything as you found it
- Everyone in your group must be aged 18+
- No alcohol is to be consumed during the investigation
- Please ask the duty manager if you would like to move any furniture or see items from the collection
- We do not provide any ghost-hunting equipment
- Investigations are strictly by arrangement directly with the Library. We do not advertise on third-party websites

How to book

Please email us at enquiries@theleedslibrary.org.uk, with the following information:

- Your name and the name of your group
- Any Friday or Saturday evenings that you are specifically interested in booking
- Which package you are interested in (see page 3) - package 1, 2 or bespoke

We will then confirm if we have availability, and if you wish to proceed, we will send you a booking form and an invoice for a deposit of £150 to secure the investigation.

The full cost of the booking must be paid in full before the investigation commences. Our preference is for a bank transfer, but we can also arrange to take card details over the phone and in-person. Payment links can be sent, but incur an additional charge.

Paranormal investigation booking form

Name: Group name:

Address: Postcode:

Email address: Phone Number:

No. of people
expected to
attend:

Which package
are you
interested in?
(see page 3)

Package 1
Package 2
Bespoke

Please state any
particular dates
of interest:

Public Liability
Insurance
provider:

If you are
interested in a
bespoke
investigation,
please give
details here:

Minimum PLI
cover (£):

PLI policy
number:

