

STUDLEY PARK HOUSE by Nic Hume

William Payne built Studley Park House, in 1889. It was often called "Payne's Folly" as the cost sent him broke and he was forced to sell it to his builder Francis Buckle. The next owner was Dr Henry Oliver who ran the Camden Grammar School there from 1903 to 1933. Arthur Gregory purchased the site in 1933 as a private residence until he sold it to the government during WW2 for army purposes. The Camden Golf Club now owns it.

For many years it has been inaccessible to the public though stories of it being haunted have been talked about for years. Several staff members have had eerie experiences when accessing the building. Used as a site for the TV series "Scream Test", convinced locals the building was indeed very haunted from the cellars to the tower. Two of the ghosts there are thought to be Ray Blackstone aged 14 who drowned in a dam in 1909 and Noel Gregory, 13 who died tragically of appendicitis in 1937. Their bodies lay in the house until burial.

The day consisted of theory for the Paranormal Investigators Course run by Attila and Andrea Kaldy from Validate. We covered everything from UFOlogy, equipment, interviewing clients, case work to actual investigating. This house always looks spooky in the darkness of night and is a pleasure to spend time in. We entered through the side door where on the right was the door to the kitchen. Along this short hall was a large safe door where human remains were believed to have been found. There was a staircase on the left, which led down to the cellar and the servant's stairs to the second floor. Off the ground floor main hall, there were rooms on the left and right and a grand staircase to the front of the house. Looking up towards the ceiling from the ground floor there was an oval banister section that led to a skylight to the roof of the house.

The second floor consists of six rooms and two bathrooms. Above this was the tower. The tower is meant to be specific as there are three other manors in the area and in days gone by it is said that they would communicate to each other from the towers. A stunning feature of the house is the entrance as it is decorated with painted glass windows depicting birds, flowers and fruit entwined in intricate twists of coloured glass. This marvellous stained glass has been covered by wire mesh to protect it from vandals. The flooring is made up of complex patterned tiles and polished wooden floorboards. The walls are adorned with panels, inlays and cornices. The staircase is breathtaking with its dark wood balustrades and massive stained glass window. Each main room has its own distinctly unique fireplace decorated with polished marble and hand painted tiles.

The vigils consisted of breaking into groups and spending time in certain areas of the manor. In the tower we had episodes of feeling light headed. We each felt as if there were two children poking their heads in to see what we were up to. We spent some time in one of the rooms on the second floor but the room felt flat and empty. In one of the bedrooms on the first floor we used the psychic board until things turned strange and we closed the circle. The cellar is a whole investigation on its own. There is a maze of crawl spaces, and if you are small enough you can get right up under the manor. We switched our torches off and one of the team was hit by what we think was a rock.

I had visited Studley Park House previously with the late Liz Vincent. This property has now been closed to all by the current owners. Renovations are underway for a new business development.