



## Code of ethics relating to the paranormal and ghosts

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Many historic buildings in the UK play host to ghost stories often inherited from former owners. This is the case at Preston Manor.

The house has a legendary White Lady, a Lady in Black and the ghost of a disembodied hand reported in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Visitor interest in this sort of story is high generating footfall and hits on digital media. Public events with a supernatural theme, such as ghost-hunting nights, are especially popular.

Although intended as entertainment the subject nevertheless makes Brighton & Hove Museums (B&HM) open to scrutiny regarding our stance on the paranormal and spiritualism, which is a recognised belief system. Having a code of ethics specific to ghosts sets out key principles supporting the programme of public engagement, its users and the staff delivering the programme. The code also protects the institutional integrity of B&HM regarding a subject atypical of a museum service.

We will:

### **1. Institutional integrity**

- 1.1. Proactively champion ethical behaviour regarding the subject of ghosts and the paranormal.
- 1.2. Act in stewardship of the ghost stories bequeathed to the people of the City of Brighton & Hove through the legacy of Charles and Ellen Thomas Stanford.
- 1.3. Agree how we present the Preston Manor ghost story and actively maintain research.
- 1.4. Safeguard the reputation of B&HM via material made public by any media.

### **2. Public engagement**

- 2.1. Provide public access to our ghost stories and operate in a rational and logical manner.
- 2.2. Protect the vulnerable.
- 2.3. Never present material that is dishonest, trivial, or unscrupulous avoiding the validation of pseudo-science whilst remaining mindful of alternative viewpoints and the strongly held beliefs of others.
- 2.4. Avoid language that is inappropriate, offensive, and unclear whilst telling stories and presenting material that is engaging, thought-provoking and sometimes frightening.
- 2.5. Scrupulously risk assess public events and continually update our records.
- 2.6. Give great value for money by offering well-run ghost-themed events to entertain, cause acclaim, inspire enthusiastic recommendation, generate income, and encourage repeat visits by nurturing curiosity.

### **3. People**

3.1. Ensure people employed or contracted to undertake work within our historic properties are unperturbed by paranormal reputation.

3.2. Never ask staff to undertake work relating to the paranormal if they are uncomfortable doing so because of their cultural, religious, professional views, or personal opinions and beliefs.

3.3. Ensure staff are trained to present material and answer questions relating to the paranormal with competence and confidence.

3.4. Ensure staff are protected and informed regarding confidential data disclosed to them during paranormal public events and activities in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018

### **4. Priorities**

4.1. Be mindful of our function as a museum as recognised by the public. The historical origins of the Preston Manor hauntings will be explained in relation to evidence held in B&HM collections as reported by the Macdonald and Stanford families who were resident in the house in a specific period of British history, namely the mid-late Victorian and Edwardian eras.

4.2. Be open to scrutiny and criticism and respond with institutional integrity.