

◆ Ghouls are said to haunt Cromwell's Room at Chavenage House where Oliver Cromwell once stayed  
SMW2232105



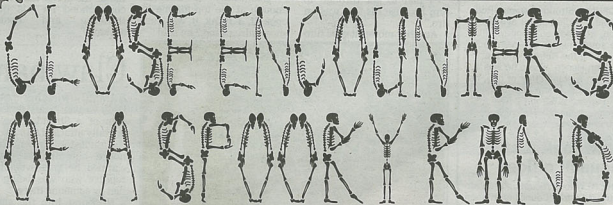
◆ ABOVE: Owlpen Manor near Uley ZSEM4443H05



◆ The Ragged Cot at Chalford SCL2297H05



◆ Chavenage House near Tetbury SMW2232H05



Even sceptics stood up and took notice when paranormal experts claimed to have photographed a ghost at the notoriously haunted Woodchester Mansion recently. And if the ancient druids are right, hordes of ghouly ghouls will be creeping about on Monday. Reporter JAMES DAVIS looks into the background of Hallowe'en, and finds out where to look for fright in the Five Valleys.



◆ Woodchester Mansion ZSEM5505H05

HALLOWE'EN will see many people dressing up as zombies, vampires and witches, ducking for apples and trick-or-treating.

Although considered a light-hearted affair these days, the celebration of All Hallow's Eve has evolved over the centuries.

Started by the druids, it was thought to be a night when spirits, ghosts and ghouls came back to haunt the living. It was adapted further by the Romans, who incorporated the spiritual aspects into their harvest festival celebrations to give us apple-bobbing and toffee apples. After crossing the Atlantic to America, the tradition mutated further - pumpkin lanterns took over from the English turnip, although both were used to scare away mischievous spirits.

There have been many reports of sightings of paranormal activity in the Stroud area over the centuries. Here's a run-down of the Five Valleys very own Most Haunted.

**Woodchester Mansion**

Ever since work on this gothic structure was mysteriously abandoned in the 19th Century, there have been numerous reports of strange goings on.

With claims of sightings of headless horses and floating coffins, as well as wailing, banging sounds and voices, this haunted house is full of eerie activity and is even home to one of the UK's largest colonies of rare bats. As events co-ordinator, Wendy Milner has had more than her fair share of frights.

"I'm a sceptic but on one bizarre occasion something

suddenly started pulling my hair," she said.

During a recent visit, Gloucestershire Paranormal Research Group captured CCTV footage of what appears to be a hooded figure.

**Chavenage House near Tetbury**

Moments after owner Nathaniel Stephens died in 1648, servants spotted a mysterious black horse-drawn carriage driven by a headless coachman pulling into the drive.

Having taken his last breath, the former Gloucestershire MP is then

reported to have drifted down the stairs, out of the front door and into the awaiting coach.

Legend has it that every owner dying in the house leaves in the same way.

**Owlpen Manor, Uley**

Along with apparitions of a monk and a mischievous girl, the floors of this Tudor Manor house near Uley are also home to the ghost of Margaret of Anjou, queen consort of Henry VI.

**The Ragged Cot, Chalford**

One bitterly cold December night in 1780 the pub's desperate and broke landlord Bill Clavers accidentally pushed his wife and child down the stairs in a drunken stupor while rushing out to rob a stagecoach.

The heist was a success, but soldiers caught him by following his footprints in the snow.

They arrived at his home to be confronted by the ghostly apparitions of his wife and child, who are said to haunt the pub to this day.

**Stroud Auctions November Sale**

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Moorcroft

**Win a bag of creepy-crawlie goodies**



Win! A Trick-or-Treat goodie bag of frighteningly good Thornton's chocolates.

Help create the eerie mood for your Hallowe'en party with these spooky treats which include colourful chocolate coins embossed with Hallowe'en horrors, a skeleton lolly, scarily spider, and pumpkin balls. All these are available from Special Occasions, High Street, Stroud and if you spend £5 or more

you get a free trick-or-treat bag. To win, all you have to do is answer the simple question and send it on the coupon to SNJ/Hallowe'en Competition, 56 Lansdown, Stroud, Glos GL5 1BE to arrive no later than Saturday, October 29, 2005.

The first winner out of the hat on Monday morning will be required to collect the bag from the SNJ offices.

Q. Which scary treat has eight legs?

**SNJ/Hallowe'en competition**

A.....  
 Name.....  
 Address.....  
 Daytime tel.....  
 No.....