

*The Theatre Royal, Dumfries, is said to be haunted by a Green Lady.*

another research group at Kielder, Northumberland. Currently they're attending a course on paranormal investigation at the University of Glasgow, covering both research methods and the gadgets used in ghost hunting.

"We've made up our own minds about equipment," Kathleen explained. "Every suggestion is discussed among ourselves: is it valid for our team, would it work for us? We don't want to get too embroiled in the technical side — although you need something for the purposes of recording."

They decided to use tried and tested devices. Many of the expensive hi-tech instruments were designed for other uses and, having been adapted for paranormal activities the group felt they didn't always give reliable results.

"If something's going to happen, then it will happen without the aid of scientific instruments," Derek commented. "All our trigger objects are simple. It's far more compelling if anything happens to them, rather than seeing a freak surge on some meter that turns out to be a solar flare."

"We didn't want to be so distracted by equipment that we weren't taking in any of the ambience," Kathleen summed up. "We wanted to record the experience ourselves as well."

So when and where to make a start? They decided to launch on Hallowe'en when the veil between the living and the dead is at its thinnest, it is claimed. Their first investigation was the Theatre Royal in Dumfries, the oldest working theatre in Scotland, which had Robbie Burns as one of its founding members back in 1792.

All good theatres have ghosts, so it's said: the Theatre Royal is no exception. Over the centuries, there have been many incidents. The most common are hearing footsteps at various points in the deserted theatre, or sensing someone standing beside you in the wings, or watching you at various other locations — the



basement is a place where many people feel uneasy. Also, actresses have reported seeing the image of a man in their dressing room mirror while they were making up, and when they spun round . . . nobody was there.

There is a long tradition of make-up kits or bunches of keys disappearing, then turning up later at the side of the stage or on the stairs. A couple of years ago, a technician locked up the sound room and went home: next morning, he found that everything in the locked room had been trashed — DVDs, CDs and cassette tapes were scattered everywhere.

The most compelling tale is of the legendary Green Lady. She is said to be a woman who fell off the balcony during an early performance and landed on the audience three levels below. She broke her own neck and killed the person she landed on. Now locals claim her restless spirit haunts the theatre — and goes into simmering huffs if children behave badly during the pantomime season. As they did this Christmas past.

"She wasn't best pleased," said Shiela Howatt, the current Master of the Guild of Players. "I can feel this, every time I come here . . ."

A tough nut to crack, for a first investigation. "We planned how long to spend in each location, and where to set up our equipment," said Derek, "including the most high-tech thing we've got — a data logging thermometer, which takes a reading every 10 seconds, and picks up any sudden drop in temperature."