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What the researchers found

The 2003 paper, in its own wording and figures.

Wiseman, Watt, Stevens, Greening and O'Keeffe (2003), "An investigation into alleged 'hauntings'," British Journal of Psychology, 94, 195–211.

The official figure	What the paper says
The main result	Significantly more unusual experiences in areas with a haunted reputation. The effect was not related to prior knowledge. Locations correlated with environmental factors, including magnetic-field variance and lighting.
The authors' caution	Alleged hauntings "may not necessarily represent evidence for 'ghostly' activity, but could be, at least in part, the result of people responding to 'normal' factors in their surroundings."
Hampton Court	Late May/early June 2000. 462 participants remained. 215 (46.5%) reported at least one unusual experience. About two thirds of experiences involved an unusual change in temperature. 3.72% said 'definitely yes' it was a ghost; 8.37% said 'definitely no.'
The vaults	218 participants, ten minutes alone in one of ten South Bridge Vaults. 95 (43.58%) reported at least one experience. Correlation with the Haunted Order: rho = .76, and rho = .87 after excluding prior knowledge. Magnetic readings were within natural ranges and not inherently anomalous.
Both experiments	"Highly consistent, with around 45% of participants in each experiment reporting at least one unusual experience."

Three questions

1. Was the haunted-area effect related to prior knowledge?
2. What share of remaining Hampton Court participants reported at least one unusual experience?
3. What happened to the vaults correlation after prior knowledge was excluded?

Answers: No. 46.5% (215 of 462). It remained, and was rho = .87.

Source: Wiseman et al. (2003), British Journal of Psychology, 94, 195–211. Wording checked from an author-posted copy, 17 November 2026. This sheet is independent of the authors and of Historic Royal Palaces. No photographs are included on this sheet.

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