



A “microcosm of the world’s great libraries”

The Gibson Library was founded in 1832 as the Saffron Walden Literary & Scientific Institution, and the Library is still housed in the Grade II listed building that became the home of the Institution in the 1850s. The collections, which are continually added to, consist of more than 40,000 volumes, old maps, photographs, newspapers, directories, periodicals and local ephemera.

Whether you are interested in local history, Victorian studies, medieval manuscripts, academic research or just looking for a quiet place to study, the Gibson Library is open to everyone. Visitors come from all over the world to make use of the Library’s resources. All are welcome.

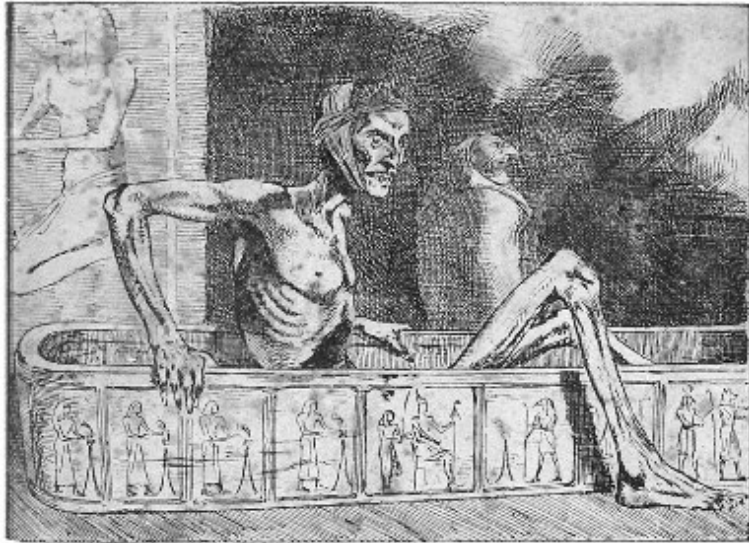
The Gibson Library
2 King Street
Saffron Walden
Essex CB10 1DE

A Gibson Library Reading Guide, 2025

GHOST STORIES

~ A Reading Guide ~





Martin Van Maële's illustration of Arthur Conan Doyle's "Lot no. 249" in Société d'Édition et de Publications, 1906.

Source: https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Lot_No._249).

Cover image: "Marley's Ghost", original illustration by John Leech from the 1843 edition by John Leech - This file has been provided by the British Library from its digital collections.

Catalogue entry., Public Domain,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31452749>

LOCAL GHOST STORIES (TRUE OR OTHERWISE)

Essex Ghost Stories, Robert Hallmann, 2009

Ghosts of Essex, Betty Puttick, 1998

Ghosts of East Anglia, Harold Mills West, 1989

Favourite haunts in and around Saffron Walden, Jean Gumbrell, 1995

More favourite haunts in and around Saffron Walden, Jean Gumbrell, 1998

The Enigma of Borley Rectory, Ivan Banks, 2002

The End of Borley Rectory: the most haunted house in England, Harry Price, 1946



Braddon's *Lady Ducayne*, "if not quite a ghost then at least one of the time-defying undead" (source *Strand Magazine*, 188), illustrated by Gordon Browne.

GHOSTLY APPARITIONS

Wuthering Heights, Emily Brontë, (County Library copy)

The Woman in White, Wilkie Collins, 1892

The Turn of the Screw, Henry James, 2019



'Every drop of my blood in my body was brought to a stop'. A woman in white appears to Walter Hartright.

(<https://theartsdesk.com/theatre-tv/she-has-escaped-my-asylum-woman-white-returns>, 2025)

The Gibson Library Collection holds a large collection of Victorian Fiction and Classics related to the era in which it was formed and the interests of those whose collections are held here. Amongst these are a selection of Ghost Stories and popular novels, such as Wilkie Collins' 'The Woman In White', which whilst not about ghosts in the accepted sense, feature pale apparitions.

Ghost stories were something at which the Victorians excelled: a story set in the past, often in an old mansion, with a mystery and a supernatural spirit at its heart. Among still the most popular today are the 'Antiquarian Ghost Stories' of Cambridge Scholar Montague Rhodes James, whose uncanny stories have become a mainstay of Christmas.

Besides J. S. Le Fanu, Arthur Machen, Charles Dickens, and Algernon Blackwood, the collection covers key women writers - Elizabeth Gaskell, M. E. Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, Mrs Henry Wood, Amelia B. Edwards, Charlotte Riddell, B. M. Croker, and E. Nesbit. Along with the most famous writers Charles Dickens, Henry James, Wilkie Collins, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and R. L. Stevenson.

The titles on this reading list are a mix of reference only and items that can be borrowed on an Essex Libraries card. Please enquire in advance.



From A Christmas Carol; illustration by Arthur Rackham (1915)

ANTHOLOGIES

Victorian ghost stories: an Oxford anthology, Michael Cox, 1991
(Elizabeth Gaskell, Mrs Craik, Rhoda Broughton, Mrs Henry Wood, M.E. Braddon, Amelia B. Edwards, Charlotte Riddell, B.M. Croker and E. Nesbit).

The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories: From Elizabeth Gaskell to Ambrose Bierce, 2010 (Famous ghost stories amongst those lesser known.)

The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories (J. S. Le Fanu, M. R. James, Elizabeth Gaskell, Rhoda Broughton, and Charlotte Riddell, Charles Dickens, Henry James, Wilkie Collins, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and R. L. Stevenson).

Classic Victorian and Edwardian Ghost Stories, David Stuart Davies, Rex Collings (Includes a story set in Australia and another in Calcutta, plus a story by Sir Walter Scott (a Victorian in spirit if not in fact), Edgar Allen Poe, Sheridan Le Fanu and Edith Nesbit's classic 'Man-Size in Marble').



"It leapt towards him upon the instant". Ghost Stories of an Antiquary, illustration by James McBryde, Page 252 (Wiki Commons, 2025)

CLASSIC GHOST STORIES

The Willows, Algernon Blackwood, 2019

The Empty House, And Other Ghost Stories, Algernon Blackwood, 2022

Rhoda Broughton's ghost stories: and other tales of mystery and suspense, Rhoda Broughton, 1995

The Ghost Stories of Wilkie Collins, Wilkie Collins, 2025

The haunted hotel: a mystery of modern Venice, Wilkie Collins, 1993

The "Pears" Edition of Charles Dickens' Christmas Books: A Christmas Carol, Charles Dickens, 1912

M.R. James ghost stories, M. R. James, 2022

Best ghost stories, Sheridan Le Fanu, 1973

Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton, Edith Wharton, David Stuart Davies, 2009

WRITERS OF GHOST STORIES

Dead secrets: Wilkie Collins and the Female Gothic, Tamar Heller, 1992

Charles Dickens: A Life, Clare Tomalin, 2011

M.R. James: an informal portrait, Michael Cox, 1983

Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland, W. J. McCormack, 1980