

INTERNET

Fortnum & Mason bewitches with spooky tales from its crypt

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Fortnum & Mason's The Shivering Chef

By STAFF REPORTS

British retailer Fortnum & Mason is taking a campy approach to explore the history of its Piccadilly flagship location.

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For "Tales from the Crypt," designed to promote the retailer's Halloween offerings, Fortnum & Mason shares the story of the five "troublesome" spirits said to haunt the flagship store. Heritage has become synonymous with luxury brands, but being able to refresh a historical angle to be seasonally appropriate, and beyond that, entertaining and fun, will leave a lasting impression on consumers.

Scary tales to tell in the dark

Fortnum & Mason has developed five characters that "look far from scary" for its Halloween communications. The retailer claims that despite looking friendly, the characters "may leave [consumers] with a chill down [their] spine" due to the historical truths behind each spirit.

Shared socially, Fortnum & Mason encourages consumers to get to know its troublesome spirits by following a link to its Web site. Here, Fortnum & Mason includes short biographies for its five characters: Mr. Gaius Backholder, The Grey Lady, Devilish Dandy, Stove-Hatted Gentlemen and The Shivering Chef.

Within each character blurb the consumer learns facts about Fortnum & Mason's history as well as how the store appears in modern times.



Fortnum & Mason's 5 troublesome spirits

For instance, Mr. Gaius Backholder ran the grocery department for more than 50 years and now his poltergeist haunts the Wine Crypt, a room original to the Piccadilly store. The blurb continues to note that the Wine Crypt is available for private parties "if you don't mind old Gaius hanging around."

The Grey Lady, also known as Anne Fortnum, has links to the store itself as she was the great-great niece of founder

William Fortnum. Ms. Fortnum's ghost is said to haunt the first floor staircase facing Duke Street as she mourns the love of her life, a soldier who died in 1847.

Many of the characters are interconnected; for example, Devilish Dandy is a Victorian spirit who is trapped in the store looking for cigars and wine, but cannot find the exit. This character coincides with The Grey Lady since in Victorian times the Duke Street Stairs were only used by men who stopped by Fortnum's on a daily basis to restock on wine and cigars. The retailer jokes that if consumers see Devilish Dandy, please direct him to an exit, not the Wine Crypt.

Playing to London's darker times, the Stove-Hatted Gentleman roams the department store's head offices, but the character is based on a man involved with a murder and suicide on Jermyn Street in the mid-19th century. Fortnum says in the blurb that the spirit "exudes a chilling, malevolent air" and has been the cause for resignation of many security guards working overnight shifts.

Lastly, Fortnum & Mason tells the tale of The Shivering Chef, who in the Edwardian era was criticized over his Welsh rarebit, a savory dish of meat, bread and cheese, and, sadly, took his own life. While Fortnum & Mason still serves the dish, it forewarns consumers to criticize it, as The Shivering Chef may pay a visit to the dining hall.

Given Fortnum & Mason's 300 years of history, the retailer likely has had many strange occurrences and eerie stories that it can share with consumers leaving space for further character additions each Halloween.

Below the blurbs, Fortnum includes a selection of chocolaty Halloween treats including skulls, black cats, pumpkins, coffins and haunted houses. A click-through brings consumers to a dedicated Halloween page filled with ghoulish treats, decorations and themed hampers.



Fortnum & Mason's Halloween treats for 2015

Last year, Fortnum & Mason prepared to "delight and fright" consumers of all ages at Halloween with themed events and seasonal gift items.

Fortnum & Mason divided the scheduled events between programs geared for adults and those ideal for children to ensure the retailer offered something for everyone. For children, attending a holiday event at a retailer, regardless of the occasion, will likely become a positive memory associated with the department store, thus establishing loyalty at a young age ([see story](#)).