

Going batty over a new Dracula Trail

2024 marked the 100th anniversary of Count Dracula's first ever appearance on stage when Derby hosted the play's world premiere on 15 May 1924 - before it moved to the West End and then on to Broadway, where Bela Lugosi made the part his own.

So "fangs for the memories..."

And - while this might not be the first place you would immediately associate with Bram Stoker's *Dracula* - the city's links with the Count have been discovered to run so deeply that there's now a brand new Dracula Trail for visitors to now follow around the streets of Derby.

Derby's Grand Theatre, which once stood on Babington Lane, was the site of the world premiere of Hamilton Deane's adaptation of *Dracula*, on 15 May 1924. And Bela Lugosi, no less - the Hungarian-American actor who played the role in the 1931 film - lowered the opera cloak from his face to appear in a revival of the play at Derby's Hippodrome Theatre in 1951.

Whitby, of course, has long been associated with the Dracula of Bram Stoker's novel, but Derby is now two years into letting the world know that this is the birthplace of the character's journey from monster, to international cultural superstar. When the curtain went up, the Derby Dracula was suave and charming, wearing evening dress and an opera cloak. And *this* is the character that was adapted by Hollywood to take over the world.

The original stage version of Dracula eventually reached the West End, in 1927, with a revised version of the play - starring Bela Lugosi in his first major English-speaking role - being staged on Broadway later that year.

The stage play returned to the UK in 1951, in the hope of once again making it to the West End. The producers had been able to persuade Lugosi to play Count Dracula, and the production reached Derby on 17 September at The Hippodrome. Lugosi - 68-years-old, exhausted, in low spirits - made the decision while playing at the Hippodrome in Derby to withdraw from the play. The tour ended the following month.

Derby - already dubbed the 'dead centre of England', for having more ghosts than most other cities in the country - has been "celebrating" all-things Dracula through a programme of highly creative, imaginative and eye-catching events and activities.

There are 20 different Dracula "haunts" highlighted on the new trail, which can either be downloaded as a printable version, or followed directly on tablets and phones. These range from the sites where the Hippodrome Theatre and Grand Theatre once did such great business in sales of tickets to see Count Dracula, to haunted buildings, pubs, museums and historic houses.

To see a copy of the self-guided trail, visit:

https://www.visitderby.co.uk/application/files/8317/7876/4296/Dracula_Trail_Digital_version_2026.pdf

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