

THE MAKING OF THE SANDMAN AT LINCOLN'S INN



(The Sandman (2022), courtesy of Netflix)

Film London's Winona Navin-Holder spoke to Naomi Johns, Filming Manager at Lincoln's Inn, and Casper Mill, Supervising Location Manager, about their experiences working on the highly anticipated Netflix adaptation of *The Sandman*.

How long did you have *The Sandman* filming with you at Lincoln's Inn?

Naomi Johns: "The team filmed with us on two separate occasions across 6 days in total in October 2020 and March 2021."

Which scenes filmed with you? Was the location used for any particularly notable moments that audiences might recognise?

NJ: "The production used several different areas of the Inn. The first weekend focused on exterior areas of New Square, particularly the corner of New Square and the Old Buildings, as well as number 8 Stone Buildings. The Stone Buildings at Lincoln's Inn were constructed from 1774 to 1780, and are Grade I listed. During the shoot the crew also used one of our interior chamber rooms, and the Ashworth Centre as a crowd base. The second visit was an interior shoot in our Library and Upper Vestibule, with our Great Hall being used as a video village."

"The production shot a variety of scenes during their time with us, including an exterior establishing shot of what was meant to be hospital, and the exterior and interior of Unity Kinkaid's townhouse. One of the key 'mortal' characters featured in the comic books."

Casper Mill: "As Naomi mentions, 8 Stone Buildings was used to portray St Thomas' Hospital in the 1920's. We also shot in New Square for the street scenes outside the Kinkaid townhouse."

(The Sandman (2022), courtesy of Netflix)

NJ: "Audiences might also recognise a comedic scene that was filmed in our Upper Vestibule, which was used to represent the Library of Congress that appears in the comics. If you spot a funny scene, with jokes around the letter Z, that was filmed with us! Look out also for scenes featuring Dream, Lucienne and Matthew the raven, as we feature as the interior of the Palace Library."

How much set dressing took place at the venue? Did it look radically different or do you think it will still be easily recognisable when you watch the series?



NJ: "For the exterior shoot, very little dressing was required."

CM: "It didn't take much to create a period look in New Square, as the area hasn't been altered a great deal over the years. Once the cars have all been cleared, you essentially have a blank canvas to add whatever you require. Which in our case was primarily horses and carts, and then a quick period change, where the horses were swapped out for 1920's vehicles."

NJ: "For the Upper Vestibule shoot, we removed artwork, busts and furniture, and for the Library, we relocated books on the ground level, so that the set could be dressed."

CM: "The Library really didn't need too much work, as the building speaks for itself. The main job was removing and covering modern day items like photocopiers and computers, then adding in our own desks, and chairs, as well as a bit of book rearranging. This was a pretty simple process though, as Naomi, her colleague Nick, and the Library team were very willing to assist wherever they could to fulfil our requests."

It's one of those locations where you feel privileged to do the job that we do.



(Lincoln's Inn Stone Buildings)

NJ: "Although in many ways the interior was very recognisably Lincoln's Inn Library, the props used to dress the set totally transformed it. Our Library is essentially a modern barristers' library in a Victorian building. However, once the computers and modern chairs had been swept away and replaced with impressive period furniture. The tables dressed with books, ledgers, ink pots and quills, it looked completely different. We rather wanted to keep it in its new guise!

"In addition to the physical set dressing, there were also plans for visual effect

alterations post production. So it will actually be a fun surprise to watch the finished series and discover what is or isn't recognisable as the Inn - if you spot a raven and a man with a pumpkin head though, that's us!"

Casper, what made you decide to shoot at Lincoln's Inn?

CM: "One of the reasons for choosing New Square, aside from the architecture being perfect for a period London street scene, is the fact that you get total control of the area, being on private land. This avoids the issue of setting up road

closures for a public highway, which can be nigh on impossible with the short turnarounds required when working a TV schedule.

"In terms of choosing the Library, it just gave us such a wonderful scale and look to begin with. It's one of those locations where you feel privileged to be doing the job we do, enabling us to view places that aren't accessible to everyone."

How important do you think it is within the fantasy genre to use 'real' locations as well as set-builds and green screen? What do you think it adds to a series like this?

CM: "I think the Library is a good example of having the opportunity to work with what is already a great location, which can then be expanded into something amazing, once the VFX team have worked their magic."

Naomi, what do you think makes Lincoln's Inn such a great filming location for a production of this size and scale?

NJ: "The Inn has developed from a palace building in the 13th century into an 11-acre estate based in central London. It offers an array of both interior and exterior backdrops from the 15th century to the modern day, with our most recent suite of

rooms having been completed in 2019. On one level Lincoln's Inn *is* the Legal Profession. The Great Hall is recognisable across the world as being one of London's four Inns of Court, which are central to the legal profession in this country. As such, it is in high demand for legal dramas. It is much more than this however, presenting a range of opportunities for genres including period dramas, sci-fi, fantasy and crime to name a few. Its mix of styles also serves to make it recognisably 'London' to people across the world. For street scenes it offers an archetypal London square and an elegant row of large Georgian

buildings. With no street markings on the ground, they are an almost ready-made set. These streets also have the benefit of being on our private estate, so road closures aren't required for filming and access points are managed by the Inn.

"The interior of the Library is particularly adaptable. It is a vast space, with three floors of books, each accessed by cast iron galleries. Large stained glass windows cast a mysterious light over the space, meaning not only is it well suited as a stand-in for a university or

(The Sandman (2022), courtesy of Netflix)



large public library, but its mediaeval, church-like atmosphere also offers possibilities for fantasy or sci-fi.

"We are also able to provide onsite parking during the shoot for tech vehicles, as well as green rooms and crowd holding space for hair and make-up. All these elements combine to make Lincoln's Inn an extremely varied and adaptable venue for filming, which we believe makes it an attractive choice for Location Managers and productions."

Is there anything about Lincoln's Inn that might surprise first time visitors?

NJ: "Virtually everyone who visits the Inn for the first time is amazed that such a space exists in the centre of London. People talk about it being 'a world within a world' and 'an oasis of calm'. The tower-blocks and skyscrapers that dominate much of London's skyline can hardly be seen from the Inn. In many ways it is as though time has been stopped. The public will have a chance to see for themselves on Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 September as we will be throwing open the Inn's doors to take part in [Open House Festival 2022](#). This will be unique opportunity for the public to explore our spaces for themselves and decide how recognisable they are without the set dressing and post-production effects!



(The library at Lincoln's Inn)

"Our team is continually learning and developing as we work with more and more film crews. We are always open to considering requests which involve combinations of spaces that we had not considered before. Our approach is if we can make it work, we will. There are still new corners or areas of the Inn that Location Managers discover for their scripts that we have not filmed in before, and we are flexible to the possibility of using any space where feasible."

Casper, what was your experience like finding locations for *The Sandman* as a whole? How many of your locations did you manage to find within London?

CM: "The majority of the locations were within an hour of Shepperton Studios. We did look further afield in some circumstances, but a variety of factors meant finding alternatives closer to London just worked better for the needs of the production overall. I would say up to 50% of the locations used were within the M25!"

How much were your location briefs impacted by the comic books the series is adapted from? Were you tasked with matching the illustrations as closely as possible, or would you say the series has its own interpretation of the locations and aesthetics found in the books?

CM: "On a few occasions there was the need to match the visualisations found in the books as closely as possible, but it wasn't a factor that dictated the location choice for every site. I think the series will stay true to the books original aesthetics, whilst also reimagining locations and scenes in new and exciting ways. It will be great to see what the response is like from fans, who have been eagerly awaiting an adaptation of this particular comic book series for a while."

What was your overall experience like shooting with Lincoln's Inn? Were there any particular challenges within the shoot that you had to overcome or 'problem-solve' around? Or any particular highlights?

CM: "I have filmed at Lincoln's Inn a few times over the years, and each time the experience just seems to get that little bit easier. In part because of my understanding of the location, but more so because of the support given by Naomi

and Nick. They are with you every step of the way, in order to understand from very early on what the requirements and expectations of the shoot are, doing their best to make everything work. This includes discussions with other parties and stakeholders on site, who may feel some trepidation about a film crew arriving in full force! Naomi and Nick are able to use their powers of persuasion where possible to make sure that the shoot can happen, whilst also keeping everyone affected happy."

Naomi, what was your experience like from the perspective of the location?

NJ: "Our experience was extremely positive. The cast and crew were a delight to deal with from the first recce all the way through to completing strike of the set. They were obviously pleased to be filming in such a unique venue and were sensitive to the demands of filming in a historic location. Where we recognised limitations in our space we specified these issues during our recces with the Location Managers to try and contain challenges during the shoot.

(The Great Hall at Lincoln's Inn)



"I can't think of any specific challenges that we came up against on set. We remained as flexible as we could be around any last minute requests, and in instances where we were unable to facilitate something, tried to provide an alternative solution.

"The Location managers and crew were great at communicating with us throughout the day, whether it be to make us aware of any changes, or just to reassure us that they were following any particular instructions we had asked of them prior to the shoot.

(The Sandman (2022), courtesy of Netflix)

The team completely understood the importance of respecting the historic interiors and worked with us to make the running of the day go smoothly.

"A particular highlight for us was seeing a raven being used on set, and a drone being flown through the central aisle of the Library. It certainly created a buzz for the staff working that day, as it was the first time we had permitted use of a drone in the Library, and it was definitely the first time we'd have a raven amongst the cast! We are very much looking forward to seeing the outcome once the series is released and seeing how it translates from our experience on set."

Are you keen to host more productions of this size in the future? Perhaps you already have some projects lined up?

NJ: "Absolutely! We are very much open to hosting more shoots of this size. We have had other productions on site since and have another shoot in July which we are really looking forward to.

"Almost every filming request we receive is different and so we are continually learning and adapting to using a different combination of our spaces together. It keeps things interesting!



"Although traditionally we have only been able to host filming at the weekends, our focus with filming has shifted and we are now looking at ways we can accommodate requests at other times across our various spaces. We have also had a long stretch of major building works for the last six years which are now coming to an end, so we are actively seeking and would welcome the opportunity to host more filming here."

Interview by Winona Navin-Holder

The Sandman is streaming now on Netflix, and you can watch the trailer [here](#).

You can find further details about filming at Lincoln's Inn [here](#).

