



# FRIENDS OF GRACE DIEU PRIORY

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## “Newsletter - Spring 2010”

### Grace Dieu Priory 2009

Another year has passed and we are at the start of 2010 and now is an appropriate time to get you all updated on our year's events and progress. This Newsletter also gives for the first time a snapshot of what it was like to be a nun at the Priory in 1239 and there will be follow-ups to it in subsequent Newsletters.

The year was, I believe, a successful one for the Priory despite the inclement weather at two of our events. For the first time we had three events for fundraising. The first, an afternoon concert in May and was staged by 'Greasepaint', a local theatre group and the 'Friends'. The morning started well with sunshine but unfortunately at the time the gates opened it was throwing it down. The music played and the singers sang and despite the foul weather some hardy souls turned out to watch and listen and I am told, enjoyed. So it was not a complete loss.

In July we had our Garden Party and on this occasion the sun did shine and we all had a fabulous day. Three local schools took part in providing entertainment these were Belton Primary, Shepshed Newcroft Primary and Thringstone. In addition there was a record number of diverse stalls and activities to keep all the visitors occupied. The 'Friends' provided refreshments.

The last event of the year was our Carol Singing in December regrettably again the weather was good until the event started and then down came the rain. Despite this, it was the best-supported winter event so far that we have organised. There being plenty of mulled wine and mince pies to keep the visitors in good spirits. This year the singing was led by a local group from Belton 'The Beltones' and it was agreed by all that they transformed the evening.

The walks, talks and ghost walks have continued to be a great success and this year provided the bulk of our income.

During the summer we also dedicated an afternoon to entertain disabled people;

this was in memory of Rod Evans who was a staunch supporter of the Grace Dieu Project, but passed away and is sadly missed.

This year we again had on sale Christmas cards designed by one of our members David Fairbrother.

We suffered some low level vandalism during the year but thankfully nothing too severe.

The grass was cut by NWLDC and although a little more expensive proved to be a tremendous improvement.

We also this year had installed a large block of granite engraved in gold with the name of 'Grace Dieu Priory'. This was a direct result of the effort of Grace Warrington one of our members, Belton Parish Council and East Midlands Airport.



Our final first for the 'Friends' group this year was an 'Away Day' at Ulverscroft Priory when Ernie Miller provided hospitality and a guided tour.

Plans are going ahead for our 2010 events and the summer Garden Party is fixed for 4 July.

I wish to thank all the committee and other helpers who have worked so hard to make the Priory attractive to visitors and our events a success this year and the NWLDC for continuing to support us when possible.

Also thanks to Grace Dieu School and the Bull's Head for their continued co-operation for car parking and to Lorraine for our website.

**David Whitt (Chairman)**

### A Nun's Life at Grace Dieu Priory

*Taken from Farnhams Village Notes and Hastings Manuscripts.*

Grace Dieu Priory was founded in 1239 by Roesia de Verdon of Belton. The Priory was for Augustinian Nuns, whose rules were quite strict.

The Rule of the St. Augustine;

In order that no part of it should be neglected through forgetfulness, the rules were to be read to the sisters once in every week.

They were to live in a convent, not calling anything their personal property, but holding all things in common.

They were to be constant in prayer at the appointed hours; not singing except what was directed to be sung.

They were to overcome their flesh with fasting and abstinence, and when at table were to listen attentively to the lecture, "that not only their mouth might receive their food, but their ears also might feed on the word of God"

Bathing was to be allowed if deemed necessary for health.

The care of the sick was to be confined to one person, who should direct the cellarer to provide what was necessary for them.

Books were to be asked for at a certain hour daily, at which only they were to be obtained.

Their clothes were to be washed at the pleasure of their superior, either by themselves or by fullers and were made up of:

Two chemises of white flannel, one for daily use, the other for washing.

One gown of grey cloth with a cowl and sleeves extending not further than the end of the middle finger, the folds of which around the hand, when they perform their manual services, shall be bound to the arms with a buckle.

One mantle also of grey cloth, which also ought in summer to be single, but in winter lined, not with delicate skins but with

## Membership application

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those of lambs or sheep. The said mantle shall not reach the earth and shall be fastened by a wooden buckle at the breast.

Of skins of this kind a pilch (outer garment made of skins) may also be made for the winter.

For the clothing of their feet they shall have, in summer shoes reaching to their ankles and stockings to their knees, but in winter, boots to their knees, lined with cloth and stockings equally high.

The head-dress shall be a fillet, by which the fore-head and chin shall be surrounded and the face be partly opened, the ends of which shall be joined by one pin at the back of the head. Over this shall be placed a veil of black linen which shall be fixed with three pins, one on the fore-head and two at the ears.

Their usual beds were to be of straw, over which they might have two blankets of cloth or linen and mattresses. Under the heads they were to have a cushion covered with a web and a pillow covered in the same manner.

Their day was divided into seven parts, called the Canonical Hours:

Matins or Lauds	3am
Prime	6am
Teirce	9am
Sext	12 midday
Nones	3pm
Vespers	4pm
Compline	7pm

The night was also divided into 4 watches, the first beginning at 6pm and each lasting 3 hours.

All nuns took a vow of Obedience, to do whatever they were told by their superiors. Every day the nuns would meet in the Chapter House. They would discuss the business of the priory and to be given their duties for the day, and also to deal with those who had done wrong. For a slight offence, the punishment might have been reciting the psalms, but if the offence was more serious they could be beaten.

### Is this proof that spirits DO exist?

At first, it seemed no more than a curious coincidence. Professor Klaus Heinemann, a researcher for NASA, the U.S. space agency, was studying a collection of photographs his wife had taken at a gathering of spiritual healers when he noticed that many of them featured the same pale but clearly defined circle of light, like a miniature moon, hovering above some of the subjects. Like most rational people, he

assumed that the pictures were faulty. 'I presumed the circles were due to dust particles, flash anomalies, water particles and so on,' says Prof Heinemann.

An orb appeared on this photo taken by Klaus Heinemann.



'I was sufficiently intrigued that I returned to the room in which the pictures were taken, in the hope of finding an explanation - like a mirror in the background. None was forthcoming.' Nor could he find any faults with his wife's camera. As a scientist with considerable experience in sophisticated microscope techniques - examining matter down to atomic levels of optical resolution - his methods were nothing if not rigorous.

Still puzzled, Heinemann set out to discover what else might have caused the mysterious circles. He and his wife began taking hundreds of digital photographs at random events to see whether they could recreate the mysterious effect. The answer was that they could make these shimmering 'orbs' appear again, but only - absurd as it may sound - if they 'asked' the apparitions to make themselves visible to the camera. They found this method worked particularly well when the couple photographed spiritual gatherings.

What on earth was going on? 'We were quickly able to eliminate the common problems associated with photography - such as dust particles, water droplets, reflections and a host of other likely causes.' Yet the orbs still kept appearing, and the more images he took, the more he was able to study the bizarre properties of these shimmering lights. Heinemann set up dozens of experiments using two cameras on static tripods under controlled conditions. His early experiments found that orbs can move very fast, up to 500mph or more. He also found that during his numerous dual camera experiments, when he used twin cameras to capture an object from two different angles, a single orb shape would often appear - but

only in one of the two images take simultaneously. It was as if the orbs somehow chose which camera to appear on, or whether to appear at all.

Eventually, Heinemann was left with only one conclusion: that he was witnessing some form of paranormal intelligence.

'There is no doubt in my mind that the orbs may well be one of the most significant "outside of this reality" phenomena mankind has ever witnessed,' says Professor Heinemann.

Until now, there has been a huge amount of anecdotal evidence that the spirit world exists. I believe it's no longer anecdotal. Thanks to digital technology, we can see it for the first time. We are dealing with a non-physical - albeit real - phenomenon.' The temptation, of course, is to dismiss such claims as bunkum. Indeed, many of Professor Heinemann's colleagues consider his research to be 'utter flaky nonsense', and yet a growing number of respectable scientists refuse to write off the possibility that these orbs, which are starting to appear on cameras around the world, just might offer a fascinating glimpse into the unknown.

### Finance and Membership

Thanks are due to all members involved in fundraising activities, which means that we continue to be in good shape financially. All funds raised are used to keep the site in good order and to improve access and information for visitors.

We are grateful to the Helen Jean Cope Charity for a grant towards a leaflet which we intend to place in libraries and other public spaces, and also to distribute to schools to encourage educational visits.

We are also grateful for a very substantial gift from a family member of the last prioress at Grace Dieu Priory, Agnes Litherland.

Membership fees are £5 for individuals and £8 for families (£3 and £5 concessions respectively). Concessions are available for senior citizens, students and those not in paid employment.

If you would like to join the Friends please contact the Treasurer, Malcolm Allsop, 15 Dauphine Close, Coalville, LE67 4QQ, Tel 01530 833632. (email [mjandfmallso4346@sky.com](mailto:mjandfmallso4346@sky.com)).

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