



FRIENDS OF GRACE DIEU PRIORY

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“Newsletter - Spring 2011”

News from the Chairman

Hello to all of our members and prospective members. Spring has arrived. The adverse weather played a big part in our 2010 activities but despite this the Priory had a successful year.

During the year we continued to try and develop our activities and also put in hand measures to see the future of the Priory secured for coming generations.

In 2010 we had planned to have two major events, the summer Garden Party and Carol Singing. The Garden Party proved to be the largest event that we have so far run since the Priory was opened to the public and although this was good it stretched our resources to the limit. Once again we had children from local schools, many diverse stalls, refreshments and activities including archery and the Sealed Knot. The event would have been a success but regrettably the weather intervened with gale force winds, which completely wrecked our main tent that we use for refreshments. Other stalls holders suffered damage to their Gazebo's but the show went on.

Prior to the event we opened our new car park which is adjacent to and accessed from the Bull's Head car park. We thank Grace Dieu Estates for allowing us to use this land and the management of the Bull's Head for allowing us to pass through and also use their car park on occasions.

Our second event was to be the Carol singing and again the weather intervened. With all arrangements in hand, mince



Summer Fayre 2010

pies on the production line, mulled wine obtained and masses of publicity the snow and ice arrived. This meant that

despite the disappointment of not singing in the snow at the Priory the event had to be cancelled because we could not guarantee the safety of the public.

Obviously because of the weather related problems our income from the events was seriously curtailed. On the bright side however, the Guided walks around the Priory and the Ghost walks have been a huge success.

There has been some damage to the Priory, mostly vandalism but this was rectified during the year and the costs incurred make us realise how we need to plan for the future.

As we had some money available in the funds we invested in the Charity Commissions funds to try and build a nest egg for the future to hopefully cover the costs of keeping the Priory open for future generations.

Our publicity officer Ann Petty has had a very busy year dealing with the Press, local radio and attending various events around and about to spread the word.

Another project we are hoping to do is to put stepping-stones into Grace Dieu Brook near to “Rusty Mary” thus enabling people to have a circular walk around the Priory and through the woods.

Finance and Membership

Thanks are due to all members involved in fundraising activities, mainly guided walks and ghost walks which remain very popular, and means that we continue to add to our funds. All money raised is used to keep the site in good condition and to improve access and information for visitors.

A substantial donation by the Helen Jean Cope Charity partially funded the production of a free leaflet and the first run quickly ‘sold’ out, so we have printed a further 5,000 copies. If you would like a copy please contact Ann Petty. We are grateful to North West Leicestershire District Council for a grant which has funded the purchase of three pull out display banners.

If you enjoy visiting the Priory and maybe you would like to help to make it available to future generations, why not



Stone opposite Grace Dieu Lane

Forthcoming Summer Event

Midsummer Picnic & Concert

We are already well on the way with planning for this years summer event which will be a different format.

On **Saturday 2nd July 2011** we plan to have an early evening concert of popular music, but prior to that we will open the Priory at 3.30pm for a family picnic and provide entertainment such as Archery etc. during the afternoon until the start of the concert at 5.30pm.

Contacts:

Chairman:

David Whitt 01530 223201

Treasurer

Malcolm Allsop 01530 833632

Ghost Walks and Tours

John Dickinson 01530 458872

Sunday Walks

Ann Petty 01530 831895

How to join the ‘Friends’

If you would like to join the Friends please contact the Treasurer, Malcolm Allsop, 15 Dauphine Close, Coalville, LE67 4QQ, Tel 01530 833632. e-mail:

mjandfmallso4346@sky.com

**Also visit our website at
www.gracedieupriory.org.uk**

for forthcoming events and publications.

think about joining the Friends group? Membership fees are nominal: £5 for individuals (£3 concessions) £8 for families (£5 concessions) Concessions are available for senior citizens, students and those not in paid employment.

Treasurer: **Malcolm Allsop**

Talks, Guided Walks, Ghost Walks & Paranormal Visits

Last year was the seventh year since the Talks, Guided Walks, Ghost Walks and Paranormal events programme began and it was another outstanding year of activities. The figures for the number of events and the attendances over the last three years have increased from: 38 events producing 722 attendances to 70 events producing 1,350 attendances. These figures indicate the growing popularity of Grace Dieu Priory as an important tourist attraction in North West Leicestershire.

Increase in the number of people joining the ghost walks and paranormal evenings have highlighted the growing reputation of the Priory as being one of the most "Haunted Locations" in the Midlands. We have had enquiries from "Ghost Hunting" groups from near and far and the Priory has been included in a number of web-sites relating to the paranormal. So our fame continues to spread and people attending the walks are travelling from places such as: Loughborough, Leicester, Market Harborough, Hinckley, Burton on Trent and Castle Donington. We are grateful to the Bulls Head Pub for allowing the parking of cars and allowing hospitality to often cold, wet and bedraggled ghost hunters!

Our calendar for 2011 is already very busy, with over 50 activities already booked. Our illustrated talk about the Priory, is given by Ernie Miller and can be booked by contacting Dave telephone no. 01530 223201. The Guided walks usually occur on the third Sunday of the month starting at 3.00pm from the Bulls Head Pub, and the contact number is Ann on 01530 831895. Finally the Ghost Walks are planned for the second and third Thursdays in the month, to book on these walks contact John on 01530 458872. The cost of attending a walk is £3.00 per head. Further details are on the web-site. This programme could not be run without the support of Ernie Miller, Rose & Dave Whitt, Ann Petty, Billy Newton, Steve Middleton, Jo Brown, John Dickinson, North West Leicestershire District Council, Charnwood Borough

Council and the ghosts of Grace Dieu Priory.

John Dickinson



Is this Wordsworth?

A Nun's Life at the Priory

Taken from Farnhams Village Notes and Hastings Manuscripts.

The nuns were endowed with land in various places, both locally and further afield. In 1244 the king granted the convent of Gracedieu, in the manor of Belton, a weekly market there on Wednesday and a yearly fair on a vigil day and morrow of the Octave of Holy Trinity.

1254, "the prioress of Gracedieu was summoned to answer John de Oly of taking John's cattle, namely 6 oxen, on Tuesday before St Hilary (13 Jan), 37 Henry 111, in Whatton, and driving them to the Priory of Gracedieu and there detaining them until Wednesday in the week of Pentecost next following, until he caused them to be delivered by the King's serjeant, and on Wednesday after the second week of Pentecost she did the same and detained the cattle for 8 days until he delivered them by the same serjeant, by which the damage was £10", because the said John held of her 2 caracates of land in Whatton rendering 20 shillings yearly, which John refused to pay.

1262 fourteen butts of arable land and meadow were given to the convent, by Alan de Threngestone, "for the salvation of my and my ancestor's souls".

1268 The convent received an annual rent of 20 silver pennies for land which was held in Bradlege and Sursant, Derbys.

1284 there was a complaint by the Prioress of Gracedieu "that Alan de Threngestone and others, felled and carried away trees from her several (enclosed) wood in Belton, impounded her beasts and kept them without food, by which 16 perished. They beat and maltreated the said prioress and her nuns".

1287 the Prioress was again having problems with Alan de Threngestone. She complains "that Alan disseived (deprived) her of 40 acres of wood where she was wont to common with all kinds of cattle the whole year".

1327 a complaint was made by "John de Cantebrige, parson of the church of Whitewyck, that John Talbot, knight and others assaulted him at Gracedieu, co Leicester".

Little is heard from the Priory until an account book written between 1414 and 1418 by Dame Petronella Dunwich, cellaress, and Dame Katherine Midelton, her assistant, was discovered at Kew Record Office. These were very basic accounts of the house. In 1415, the year of Agincourt, there were "5 boars, 10 sows, 41 small pigs of a year, 30 of 6 months and 10 full grown pigs and 10 suckling pigs" all in the keeping of Nicholas Swon (Swine). There were 32 cows, 3 bulls, 16 steers, 22 heifers and 8 bull calves. Also 27 yoke oxen and 29 calves, one of which, on account day "had gone to the cook to furnish forth the conventual dinner"

Henry the shepherd had 103 ewes and 52 lambs under his charge.

Thomas Hunte, a neighbour, had 2 daughters at school at the convent. There were other children under the care of the "White Ladies" of Gracedieu. Thomas Hunte appears to have paid 17s 4d for each of his 2 children. Lady Beaumont also had a daughter in the convent. She paid £2 13s 4d a year.

People came to stop at the convent for the celebration of some of the greater feasts. On one "All Saints Day", Mary de Ecton, Joan Villiers and the 2 daughters of Robert Neville were lodged and entertained by the nuns. On one occasion each of the Neville ladies paid 5s and Joan Villiers paid 6s 8d. Giles Jurdon paid 7s for the board of his daughter during the week of Pentecost when she came to visit her sister, Dame Elizabeth Jurdon, who was a nun in the convent.

At this time the Chaplain was "Sir William Granger, or Norwich". He was paid 38s 4d a year as a stipend and this was to include 6d as the price of a pair of gloves. On greater feasts he had help from "Henry the Chaplain" and the "Parson of Hatherun". Friar William Young was the confessor and was paid 1s 8d expenses each time he came to the convent.