



FRIENDS OF GRACE DIEU PRIORY

David Whitt
1 Sadlers Wells
Belton, Loughborough
Leicestershire LE12 9TS
Tel: 01530 223201

“Newsletter - Summer 2012”

News from the Chairman

Although the weather does not feel like summer, the calendar says it is, and at Grace Dieu Priory we are looking forward to another very active year. However, before moving on, I can report that the Christmas Carol singing was a great success with a large crowd of choristers attending, enjoying the ambience, mince pies and mulled wine. This time the weather was friendlier, no snow and ice.

Now for this year, we have had an evening talk, which covered the results and interpretation of last year's Geophys, and from this we think we know where the infirmary was. The talk also covered the progress made to get Dame Petronella's Account Book translated.

Dianne's stepping stones across the Grace Dieu brook were installed, unfortunately we were not able to carry out the formal opening last year but we now have the Plaques made and the formal opening ceremony will be Saturday 30th June. We are pleased to say that people are already enjoying the **Stepping Stones**.



We have had a meeting with English Heritage to discuss our ideas for carrying out more archaeological work at the Priory. High on the agenda was the restoration of the fishponds, which were so badly overgrown many may not know of their existence. With the energetic help of the **BTCV volunteer group (www.btcv.org.uk)** much of the jungle of willow, alder, rushes and other growth has already

been cleared away revealing the size of the ponds. **Our thanks also go to Vitax (www.vitax.co.uk) for help with weed control.** Work on the ponds will continue throughout this year including hopefully finding the source of the water to them.

Our main social event of the year is again to be a concert and this will be on the 30th of June with a musical theme based on the Queen's Jubilee Year, the final plans and arrangements are now well under way and we hope that it will be well supported and prove to be another enjoyable occasion for all the people who attend. There will be other entertainment and light refreshments as previously.

This year we have tried for the first time to do other things within the scope of the "Friends" amongst which was a very enjoyable evening meal, soon to be repeated and two of our members Ann and Bill have led very interesting and pleasant walks in the woods surrounding the Priory. Both grew up at Grace Dieu and have tremendous in depth knowledge of the area and its history.

As I always say if anyone is interested in the Priory and our events then please contact me, New Members are ALWAYS welcome.
David Whitt

Finance and Membership

We are in good shape financially and have been able to invest surplus cash in Charities Commission funds which give us a good return, but most of our income comes from guided walks and talks given by members, the annual summer party, and carol concert.

The purpose of our fund raising events is to generate money to keep the site in good order, especially grass cutting which is our biggest expense. NW Leicestershire District Council grounds maintenance depart-



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 30 June 2012** there will be 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: mjandmallso4346@sky.com

Also visit our website at www.gracedieupriory.org.uk
for forthcoming events and publications.

ment do an excellent job for us in this respect. In addition some members are able to give their time to spray the weeds and clear the paths.

We are grateful for grants by the Leicestershire & Rutland Heritage Forum and NW Leicestershire District Council which have enabled us to purchase a display panel a number of high visibility jackets.

Membership has been stable at about 50 and we are grateful for members subscriptions and donations and for the time that some members are able to give to keep the Priory in good condition. We are always looking for new members, you will be made very welcome.

Treasurer: **Malcolm Allsop**

Talks, Guided Walks, Ghost Walks & Paranormal Visits

Hi all .

What an amazing spring we have had snow, hail, wind, rain, & freezing nights, but yes the Ghost walks carry on. Yes there have been a few cancellations but that was to be expected, but bookings kept coming in and the ghosts kept appearing, thankfully.

Here is a photo taken by one of our clients with their own camera in their own time. What explanation can there be?

Photographs have been taken like this over the last nine year by clients on these Grace Dieu Priory Ghost Walks and I don't think there has been a group that did not capture some paranormal phenomena on their cameras.

Why not come and join us on the second and third Thursdays of every Month, sceptic or otherwise, matters not a jot, come and have a go. Prove it to yourself.

Walks advertised on internet and local press, contact: John 01530 458872 **John Dickinson**

The Draft Account Book: 1414-1418 - A Progress Report

"Progress" might seem a misnomer, since a similar number of years to the Account Book's length have passed since we started on the transcription and translation. And there lies the rub: **transcrip-**



tion. Not only is the Latin a medieval version; not only are there abbreviations and worse scattered like confetti throughout; not only do the writers make grammatical and other errors; but book is small (6.25 x 9.0 inches), obviously the worse for wear and extremely difficult, if not impossible in some cases, to read. There nearly 120 folios, recording receipts (*recepta*) and paymernts (*solutiones*). Many entries begin with the abbreviations *rec'* (or even *r'*) received, and *sol'* 'paid', with the sums of money shown in abbreviated form.

Even a small priory such as Grace Dieu needed a staff of administrative officials (stewards, bailiffs, receivers), various household members and agricultural labourers. There are accounts for the wages paid at four harvests, which lists all the recipients. In fact, there are over 400 secular names mentioned - they range from officials clearly integral to the smooth running of the daily life of the priory, through lists of the seasonal workers, to those mentioned once or twice - such as John othe Hyll, which probably referred to where he lived rather than the quality of his work; Idenie, the Ulvescroft milkmaid, who was strangely owed money dating back to 1400; and the splendidly named John Sowgelder from Loughborough, who castrated 16 piglets on one occasion and returned with his knives for more on another.

Another recurring expenditure in the Account Book is the employment of the various building trades to carry out repairs not only to buildings, but to walls and fencing. Robert and John Slater (or Sclater) often appear; John Reynaldson was paid "for the roofing of a new place in Belton"; while John Smalley was paid sixpence (21/2p) "for the roofing of pea straw through two days".

John Sawyer lived up to his name and was paid "for the sawing of timber at Belton", whilst his son helped with the ploughing. Other names occasionally occur: examples include a payment to Thomas Cok at Asheby (de la Zouch) for "exchanging gold"; another to John Tyler "for making fag-gots in the newoles"; and to William Wattes "for carting earth for one day at Belton".

Of course, animals needed to be purchased and looked after. One folio has several entries detailing purchases of nine sheep bought at Swannington from Helen Vyse, priced twenty one (old) pence each; three score sheep bought at Worthington for twenty pence each; and another six sheep purchased from John Paynteur of Tonge. Over several months, two bullocks were bought for 28/- (£1.40); one sow for for 4/- (20p); and two steers for 20/- (£1.00).

There were many other expenses: shingles and tiles for roofing; "stonlathnayles" and "bordnayles"; wax for the shepherd's room; oil bought for wool; tar and bitumen bought for the sheep at Merrill; eight bowls and eleven dishes for the guest house; two earthen pots bought for milking; and so on. All these expenses were dwarfed by that of food and drink.

They came from two main sources - from the priory's own produce and from purchase. The main crop planted on its lands was grain of several kinds: barley, oats, rye and wheat.

Oats was also used for horse feed, whilst barley was not only used in bread-making but for ale. Vast amots of the latter were drunk in medieval times and Grace Dieu typically had its own brew house.

There is so much more to relate, but why spoil a good book! The transcription and translation is finished, bar a few phrases and words which are proving very hard to decipher.

The Introduction is ready; as are the Glossary and, nearly, the two Indexes (of people and places). There will, inevitably, be errors; but we are trying to minimise them. Please be patient.

Ken Hillier