



Greyfriars Kirkyard Official Report Unclassified

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- **Grade Level:** PG2
- **Alert Level:** AL2

Introduction

The Kirkyard contains memorials covering centuries of history and is the final resting place of many famous Scots including the graves of poet William McGonagall, chemist Joseph Black and philanthropist Mary Erskine among many. This ancient resting place also contains the Covenanters' Prison and the tombstone of Thomas Riddell Esquire, the real inspiration behind a famous Harry Potter villain, Voldemort. Perhaps the most frightening of all is the Mackenzie Poltergeist, the evil spirit of Sir George MacKenzie who has left people on ghost tours passed out, scratched, bruised and severely shaken. This place is described as a very beautiful place, but with a dark history. Greyfriars Kirkyard is the graveyard surrounding Greyfriars Kirk in Edinburgh, Scotland. It is located at the southern edge of the Old Town, adjacent to George Heriot's School. Burials have been taking place since the late 16th century, and a number of notable Edinburgh residents are interred at Greyfriars. The Kirkyard is operated by City of Edinburgh Council in liaison with a charitable trust, which is linked to but separate from the church. The Kirkyard and its monuments are protected as a category A listed building. Greyfriars takes its name from the Franciscan friary on the site (the friars of which wear grey habits which was dissolved in 1560. The churchyard was founded in August 1562 after Royal sanction was granted to replace the churchyard at St Giles Cathedral. The Kirkyard was involved in the history of the Covenanters. The Covenanting movement began with signing of the National Covenant in Greyfriars Kirk on 28 February 1638. Following the defeat of the militant Covenanters at Bothwell Brig in 1679, some 1200 Covenanters were imprisoned in a field to the south of the churchyard. When, in the 18th century, part of this field was amalgamated into the churchyard as vaulted tombs the area became known as the "Covenanters' Prison. During the early days of photography in the 1840s the kirkyard was used by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson as a setting for several portraits and tableaux such as The Artist and The Gravedigger.

Findings

Greyfriars traces its origin to the south west parish of Edinburgh, founded in 1598. Initially, this congregation met in the western portion of St Giles The church is



named for the Observantine Franciscans or "Grey Friars" who arrived in Edinburgh from the Netherlands in the mid 15th century and were granted land for a Friary at the south western edge of the burgh. In the wake of the Scottish Reformation, the grounds of the abandoned Friary were repurposed as a cemetery, in which the current church was constructed between 1602 and 1620. In 1638, National Covenant was signed in the Kirk. The church was damaged during the Protectorate, when it was used as barracks by troops under Oliver Cromwell. In 1718, an explosion destroyed the church tower. During the reconstruction, the church was partitioned to hold two congregations: Old Greyfriars and New Greyfriars. In 1845, fire ravaged Old Greyfriars. After its reconstruction, the minister, Robert Lee, introduced the first organ and stained glass windows in a Scottish parish church since the Reformation. In 1929, Old and New Greyfriars united and the church was restored as one sanctuary. In the following years, the depopulation of the Old Town saw Greyfriars unite with a number of neighbouring congregations. The church of Greyfriars is a simple aisled nave of eight bays; the style is Survival Gothic fused with Baroque elements. The church initially consisted of six bays and a west tower. After the explosion of 1718 destroyed the tower, Alexander McGill added two new bays and a Palladian north porch to create one building divided into two churches of four bays each. After it was gutted by fire in 1845, David Cousin rebuilt Old Greyfriars with an open, un aisled interior. Between 1932 and 1938, the interior and arcades were restored by Henry F. Kerr. Notable features of the church include historic stained glass windows by James Ballantine; the 17th century monument to Margaret, Lady Yester; and an original copy of the National Covenant of 1638. Since the 18th century, the congregations of Greyfriars have been notable for their missionary work within the parish. This continues to the present day through the church's work with the Grassmarket Community Project and the Greyfriars Charteris Centre. Greyfriars holds weekly Gaelic services, maintaining a tradition of Gaelic worship in Edinburgh that goes back to the beginning of the 18th century.

Covenanters. The National Covenant was signed in the graveyard as it was a place of legal free public assembly in 1638. Whilst some depictions of the event show them leaning on table stones, these stones did not exist at that time and the signing was done during the period of ban on central gravestones. Following the Battle of Bothwell Bridge 22 June 1679, some 1200 prisoners were brought to Edinburgh. Their being too numerous for containment in the prison or castle a makeshift "prison" was formed in a field south of Greyfriars Kirkyard, to hold around 400 not containable elsewhere. This area was conveniently enclosed on two sides by the Flodden Wall and on a third side the west by the high enclosing wall of George Heriot's School. The fourth side faced the churchyard and was separated by an easily patrolled and guarded picket fence. The name Covenanters Prison stuck. The bulk of the area was built on by the city Bedlam around 1690. A remaining strip of land, sandwiched between the Bedlam and George Heriot's School, was used for additional burial ground from around 1700. The style at the time was to build in enclosed vaults, and this is the dominant form in this section. As the vaults did not exist at the time of the area's prison use, despite their potential to be used as prison cells, this was never the case. The area was open to



public view until around 1990, but was thereafter locked by City of Edinburgh Council to stem persistent vandalism and use by drug users. The area is accessible during the day by special arrangement with the guides at Greyfriard Kirk during their opening hours and at night by going on a City of the Dead Tour where the Black Mausoleum can be visited.

Greyfriars Bobby . Greyfriars Bobby 4 May 1855 14 January 1872 was a Skye Terrier who became known in 19th century Edinburgh for spending 14 years guarding the grave of his owner until he died himself on 14 January 1872. The story continues to be well known in Scotland, through several books and films. A prominent commemorative statue and nearby graves are a tourist attraction. The best known version of the story is that Bobby belonged to John Gray, who worked for the Edinburgh City Police as a nightwatchman. When John Gray died he was buried in Greyfriars Kirkyard, the kirkyard surrounding Greyfriars Kirk in the Old Town of Edinburgh. Bobby then became known locally, spending the rest of his life sitting on his master's grave. In 1867 the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Sir William Chambers, who was also a director of the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, paid for Bobby's licence and gave the dog a collar, now in the Museum of Edinburgh. Bobby is said to have sat by the grave for 14 years. He died in 1872 and a necropsy by Prof Thomas Walley of the Edinburgh Veterinary College concluded he had died from cancer of the jaw. He was buried just inside the gate of Greyfriars Kirkyard, not far from John Gray's grave. A year later, the English philanthropist Lady Burdett Coutts was charmed by the story and had a drinking fountain topped with Bobby's statue commissioned from the sculptor William Brodie erected at the junction of George IV Bridge and Candlemaker Row opposite the entrance to the churchyard to commemorate him.

George Mackenzie's Mausoleum. The tomb of one of Scotland's bloody historic villains is a magnet for bumbling desecrators. IN 17TH CENTURY SCOTLAND, AN INTENSE religious struggle was ignited when King Charles introduced the Common Book of Prayer as the prescribed liturgy and declared all opposition to the book an act of treason. The draconian lawyer George Mackenzie was the man responsible for putting the opposition down. George Mackenzie was a lawyer and the Lord Advocate during the rule of Charles II and quickly earned a reputation as one of the most vicious persecutors of the Covenanters, the people who rose up and signed the National Covenant in 1638. Mackenzie's brutal and unfeeling treatment of the protesters even earned him the moniker Bluidy Mackenzie." He imprisoned many Covenanters in a section of Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh, where he delighted in their torture; guards were allowed to beat the Covenanters at will, and eventually, their heads would decorate the spiked gate. After his death, Mackenzie was entombed in a mausoleum in the Greyfriars Kirkyard the very same graveyard where he prosecuted those who resisted the new law. His mausoleum has been the site of a number of desecrations. In 1999, a homeless man sought shelter in Mackenzie's mausoleum and fell through the floor the resulting hole can still be seen. More recently, in 2004, a duo of teens broke in to the tomb and removed a number of unidentified remains, even beheading one corpse and using the skull like a hand puppet. They were found and tried under a centuries-old



grave-robbing law described as “violation of sepulcher.” After all the disruption in the mausoleum, it has become the focus of much local superstition. People have reported ghostly activity around the tomb, including scratches and bruises- all attributed to Mackenzie’s poltergeist, as horrific in death as he was in life. Thanks to the many violations, the doors to the mausoleum remain locked, but visitors can still peek through and recite the old children’s rhyme.

Here we have an article from the Edinburgh live. Edinburgh ghost hunters capture terrifying photos in Greyfriars Kirkyard poltergeist hunt. A pair of ghost hunters say they have captured terrifying images of paranormal activity at one of Edinburgh’s most haunted spots. Lee and Linzi Steer of Project Reveal - Ghosts of Britain (GOB), were filming a live stream at Greyfriars Kirkyard, reputedly one of the most haunted places in the UK, when they caught the apparition on camera. The distinctive domed tomb of Sir George ‘Bloody’ MacKenzie has long had an association with rumours of ghosts and is said to be the home of a violent poltergeist. The ghost hunters say they caught signs of the paranormal on camera at the Kirkyard. There are also extensive vaults beneath the churchyard, known as ‘Covenanters’ Prison’ also said to be a hotbed of paranormal activity. Lee and Linzi, who run GOB - the UK’s largest paranormal investigation team with 600,000 followers – said they had stopped off in Edinburgh as part of a tour of Scotland. Lee said: “We did the investigation and got some very interesting results. We did a spirit box session at the start of the investigation and it said “graveyard” then “burial” and a few names. People saw a strange balls of light, blue and red. We went to try find the poltergeist with a Scottish team called Scottish Paranormal.”The MacKenzie Poltergeist has a fearsome reputation and is said to haunt the graveyard – causing physical injuries to people who incur its wrath. The graveyard reportedly has over 3,000 eyewitness accounts of poltergeist activity, including scratches, burns, bite marks and people being knocked out cold. The pair said they also were contacted by spirits. Meanwhile, Lee reported strange apparitions appearing on the camera as they live streamed the ghost hunt. Our cameras seemed to pick up a few spirits maybe,” he said. Looking through the black gate towards the prison. We captured some strange images of what fans think is a man.”Linzi said: "Up by the prison I we've got the most amazing picture - it was pitch black in there but it looks as though there's two faces looking out at us. It's quite bizzare. The other one looked like a lady looking away to the right," she added. The ghost hunters were able to communicate with the spirit of a little girl and Lee and a member of Scottish Paranormal had an unnerving experience near one mausoleum.

Body snatchers, violent ghosts, a loyal dog, and Harry Potter characters may seem like strange bedfellows, but in Scotland’s gorgeous, gothic capital city of Edinburgh, the four merge to make up the ghostly lore surrounding one of the world’s most haunted graveyards. In the city’s historic center, perched on a hill overlooking the “new” town built in the 1700s Greyfriars Kirkyard is a seemingly idyllic cemetery dating back to the 1560s. But, to this day, it has enough strange goings on to attract a steady stream of ghost hunters, wizarding fans, and the television producers and writers who follow in their wake. Haunting the cemetery is George



MacKenzie, called the MacKenzie Poltergeist, who is said to be one of the most aggressive and active paranormal figures around. Known during his lifetime as a ruthless persecutor of the Scottish Covenanters, a Presbyterian movement in the 17th century, MacKenzie's spirit, according to legend, was released in 1999 when a homeless man looking for a spot to sleep broke into his final resting place, the Black Mausoleum. It was a fate predicted by famed Scottish poet Robert Louis Stevenson who referenced MacKenzie in his 1879 book "Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes," writing, "When a man's soul is certainly in hell, his body will scarce lie quiet in a tomb however costly; some time or other the door must open, and the reprobate come forth in the abhorred garments of the grave. The Covenanters' Prison is connected to Greyfriars Kirkyard by a stone gateway and locked metal grate near MacKenzie's mausoleum. It was once home to an estimated 1200 unfortunate members of a failed anti-government revolution in 1679. Conditions at the prison were so brutal that only 257 of the prisoners came out alive a portion of whom escaped or pledged loyalty to the crown four months after their mass incarceration. Today, tour purveyors conducting nighttime excursions around the graveyard have reported some mysterious happenings; many participants have emerged from inside the prison and mausoleum with bruises, burns, scratches, and even broken bones, attributed to long-dead prisoners and their violent oppressor. In 2006, The Scotsman wrote that there had been 450 documented attacks, 140 people who had collapsed, and even suspicion that the Mackenzie Poltergeist was responsible for the death of one local psychic. In the daylight hours, Greyfriars Kirkyard is a beautiful place for a tranquil stroll, revealing only hints of its bloody past. Typical of most old cemeteries, eerie carved-stone Angels of Death and other ghoulish figures adorn many of the tombstones. But it's the imposing metal grills covering some of the graves that really stand out. In the early 1800s, the University of Edinburgh's prestigious medical studies program flourished, inadvertently sparking an underground trade in corpses stolen by body snatchers and sold to local students. Soon, the nefarious practice became an epidemic. To prevent these entrepreneurs from making off with their loved ones, families would protect the graves by boxing them in with iron cages, called mortsafes, that ran deep into the ground. But not all of the cemetery's legends are so ghoulish. For the past 140 years, a noble-looking, bronze Skye terrier has stood guard outside the grounds and watched over the kirkyard. Edinburghers have championed the story of the Greyfriars Bobby: a loyal dog that stood vigil over his deceased owner's grave for 14 years until his own death, when he was buried near his beloved master's plot. The story has been memorialized in books and movies, but historians now say that while the pup existed, his extended mourning was probably a fabricated marketing ploy by the cemetery curator and a nearby restaurant owner to encourage tourism. He most likely stuck around for the food and attention he got from visitors. The cemetery is also just steps from the now-landmark Elephant House Cafe, where J.K. Rowling first scribbled the lines of Harry Potter in a window seat overlooking George Heriot's, an uncannily Hogwarts-esque school. Among the graves in Greyfriars Kirkyard is one with a headstone reading "Thomas Riddell," which many fans think may have inspired the birth name of Lord Voldemort, the series' villain. Harry Potter devotees make pilgrimages to the site, leaving notes and flowers on the 197-year-old grave.



Recommendations

Overall, the recommendations that were made from this report were that of no further investigation is warranted. There is sufficient evidence to conclude the investigation.

Conclusion

To conclude this report, the findings show that the evidence presented is that of inconclusive. There is conclusive evidence of paranormal activity. With multiple witness reports and photographic evidence, it is clear that this report should conclude on the basis of paranormal activity.

This report was conducted by the authority of the International Bureau of Paranormal Investigation and Research.