

The Book of Deer Project Chairman's Report – AGM 2011

It has been a great privilege to have been Chairman of the Book of Deer Project for another year, not least because of the renewed interest in the book and its Gaelic notes. Each year sees us turning a new page as through academic research and archaeology we systematically peel away the layers of history. We underplay the important role that we as a group have in this unfolding story. Were it not for the continuing efforts of all of the team, over many years, the book and its secrets would be confined to the dusty shelves of university libraries. Instead, through the website which is tended so assiduously by Andrew, we are able to share the charm and majesty of this little book with a worldwide audience.

Conscious of the advantages of modern presentation opportunities, we have set about upgrading the presentation in the Project Room. This will involve professional display boards and video presentation techniques. This will enhance the artefacts that we already have which include models and carvings by Sandy. The Sunday presentations were enhanced last summer with extra events relating to the book and this was a popular addition. Thanks to Bunty for her creativity and inventiveness; and to all those who contributed to these extra events. With the future of Aden Park still uncertain, we will be as supportive as is possible to those who are working towards creating a Trust to operate it as a going concern, but mindful of this uncertainty all the displays and improvements to the Visitor Centre will be portable.

Andrew and I have met with the Librarian at Aberdeen University and are confident that there will be a permanent display of artefacts relating to the book in the Library there. This will introduce the book to a much wider and younger audience and I hope will generate new academic research in the book. We have reserved funding to ensure that this display will be of the highest quality.

Uncertainty in the academic world means that our archaeology team has undergone some change. Recently they have reformed, as a separate group from Glasgow University, and taken up with York University as "Northlight Heritage." The next phase will be conducted by the same team except that Olivia and her family have moved to France and will be replaced by Heather James. We have met with the team and they are now going to investigate the anomalies discovered during the sonar investigation of the Old Deer Churchyard. This will require permissions to dig, but we are hopeful that these anomalies will point to the position of the monastery. At the same time, they will attempt to establish the existence of a vallum or enclosure of the loop formed by the river. If found this would be a significant indicator to the presence of the monastery.

A major player in making documentaries for television will come to film our outreach to schools, which we will tie in with the archaeologist's fieldwork.

On the advice of Mr Charles Ritchie, we have secured our Intellectual Property Rights – a topic which is a growing concern in the business and academic world and heightened by the easy access to material through the internet.

The “Friends” organised an excellent seminar in Aberdeen when Father Benedict Hardy of Pluscarden Abbey gave a wonderful illustrated talk on medieval church music. We look forward to the talk tonight when Gordon Hay will talk about his translation of the King James Version of the New Testament into the Doric. In the meanwhile, Joyce and Bunty are enhancing their communications with Friends, the Media and other parties interested in the Book of Deer; and I wish to express great thanks for the contribution of the Friends of the Book of Deer.

The walks earlier this month were of a different format but nevertheless equally successful and in the new format will continue to be an important feature of our activities. Many thanks to George for all of his efforts; and to Derek for his assistance in the extra dimension he has added with his knowledge of archaeology.

I am sorry that I am not with you tonight – bad timing. I would like to thank all of the team for their continuing support and hard work on behalf of the Project – especially Andrew who works tirelessly and enthusiastically bringing all his manifold skills together on behalf of the Project.

Alan I Cameron
Chairman
June 2011