

NEWSLETTER

Friends of the Book of Deer

www.bookofdeer.co.uk

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STUDIES ON THE BOOK OF DEER—Edited by Katherine Forsythe Publisher—Four Courts Press, Dublin.

This volume of high quality is available at long last. However, it is listed at 85 euros (£75). There is a hint that it may become available on www.amazon.co.uk for £33.50. We will do our best to keep you informed.

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Project engaged the Glasgow University Archaeological Division (GUARD) to carry out an archaeological "desk based assessment" of the possible site of the early medieval Monastery of Deer. This assessment has found an array of evidence to indicate that the monastery may well have been located on the site of the Old Deer Church. GUARD are now in the process of producing a detailed programme of trial trenching.

PITFOUR: "THE BLENHEIM OF THE NORTH."

A TALK BY ALEX. R BUCHAN TO BE GIVEN IN THE KEMP HALL, OLD DEER VILLAGE ON SATURDAY 7th MARCH 2009 AT 2 PM.

The Friends have arranged for Alex. to give a talk on his studies which led to the publication of his book "PITFOUR: THE BLENHEIM OF THE NORTH" — A donation of £2 would be appreciated.

Alex was born and educated in Peterhead and went on to Aberdeen University from where he graduated B.Sc.(Eng). He served his National Service as an officer in the Royal Engineers. This was followed by ten years in industry and two years as a lecturer at Napier College, Edinburgh. In 1967 he moved to the University of Strathclyde to lecture in Structural Engineering. He retired to his native Peterhead in 1989.

His lifelong interest in the history of Peterhead led to his researching and writing articles on aspects of the Blue Toon's history. He was awarded an M.Litt. degree in 1980 for a study of the history of Peterhead Harbours. His book *The Port of Peterhead* sprang from this work.

Alex served on the Committee of the Buchan Field Club from 1994 to 2002 and was Club President from 1997 to 1999. In 1993, the Centenary of the last whaler to sail from Peterhead, the Club published Alex's *The Peterhead Whaling Trade* which was the first in a new series of Occasional Publications, the most recent of which, *Pitfour: The Blenheim of the North*, is the subject of the advertised talk.

CULTURAL ICONS OF MEDIEVAL SCOTLAND

The Book of Deer Project, together with the Celtic Department of Aberdeen University is hosting a seminar at Kings College in July 2009. It will take place on the evening of the 22nd July and the following day, Thursday the 23rd. This event will highlight the cultural achievements of the Medieval North and the objects which help us define the identity and early history of Scotland. The event is free of charge and open to all.

In summary:

Speakers will be Dauvit Brown (Glasgow), Ewan Campbell (Glasgow), Peter Davidson (Aberdeen), David Dumville (Aberdeen), Jane Geddes (Aberdeen), Ragnall O Floinn (National Museum of Ireland), Heather Pulliam (Edinburgh), Gareth Williams (British Museum), Alex Woolf (St. Andrews), Louise Yeoman (BBC), Susan Youngs (Oxford).

Topics will be Book of Deer, Stone of Destiny, Pictish Stones of St. Vigean, Monymusk Reliquary, St. Ninian's Island Hoard, Skail Silver Hoard, Declaration of Arbroath, Aberdeen Breviary.

Chairing the various sessions will be Alan Cameron (Book of Deer), Sally Foster (Historic Scotland) Alastair Macdonald (Aberdeen) and Colm O'Boyle (Aberdeen)

More details <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/celtic/Deerconfdetail.pdf>



Our annual **Pilgrimage** took place on the 21st of June, 2008. The Pilgrims met at Slains Church and were invited in by the Revd. Steve Emery who gave them a short history of the beautiful Church before sending them on their way with a blessing.. Some thirty Pilgrims enjoyed the walk, culminating in hospitality and socialising in Aden Park, as can be seen in the photograph . The 2009 pilgrimage "In the Footsteps of St. Ethernan" will set off from Rathen West Church on the 20th June. Full details will be published in good time.

After the business at the A.G.M.s on the 31st May, 2008, Fred Crawford of Ellon gave a talk "**The Harrying of Buchan**". Fred has made a study of this little known episode in our history and he gave a comprehensive account of the families involved and the events leading up to the harrying. In short, it was Robert the Bruce's revenge on the Comyn family who had supported John Balliol's (Toom Tabard) claim to the Scottish crown. 2008 marked its 700th anniversary.



The fourth and last talk of the Friends season "**DOWSING THE STONE CIRCLES**" was given by the Revd. Angus Haddow, formerly Minister of Methlick Parish Church and a teacher of Science. He gave an account of his experiences and findings, particularly in Aberdeenshire. There may be many doubters of the value of "dowsing", but Angus gave a robust defence of the practice, using his knowledge of Science and the results of his findings. These findings resonated with many in the audience who had taken an interest in Stone circles. There were several "Dowsers" attending, and they, along with Angus gave us practical demonstrations of their skills.

The Friends of the Book of Deer and Derek Jennings, Vice-Chair of the Peterhead and Buchan Tourism Initiative (Land of the Big Sky) invited children and their parents to the finale of their **colouring in competition** in Aden Park Theatre on the last Saturday. in October. There were many entries of a very high standard, all the more creditable as the work was carried out from pages containing intricate Celtic designs and doodles inserted by the monks in the 10 th Century. After light refreshments, those children adjudged worthy received a small prize and a Commendation. Derek Jennings then gave a DVD presentation "A Brief Tour of Buchchan", cleverly arranged as a question and answer session on the landmarks , flora and fauna of Buchan. This had a great reception from parents and children alike as they expressed delight at what they recognised and surprise and wonder at those they failed to recognise! The afternoon was rounded off by a hearty expression of thanks to the schools, schoolchildren, parents and Derek for taking part. Heather Holligan, one of the many excellent entrants, displays her work.



It is with great sadness that we note the passing of Jimmie Burr, Albert Lowe, David Ogston, Frances O'Boyle and Alistair Melville who all were friends of the Project. We will miss them. Our sincere condolences go out to their families.