

NEWSLETTER

Friends of the Book of Deer

Www.bookofdeer.co.uk

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We apologise for the late publication of this edition and offer you our best wishes for a happy and healthy 2011. We very much look forward to meeting you at our events during the year

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

The Annual General Meetings of the Friends and the Project took place on Saturday the 26th of June 2010 in the Stuartfield Village Hall. Alan Cameron welcomed those attending and gave a brief outline of the achievements of the past year and thanked all those who had contributed to the Project and the Friends success. It was seen from the financial accounts that the Project was in a healthy financial position. Peter Elrick who had indicated his intention to step down was thanked for his not inconsiderable contribution as minute Secretary to the Project and an active member of the Friends.

The new Committees are on page 2.

After the business of the afternoon, Alan Cameron read his thought provoking paper "The Book of Deer" and in summation made the points:

There was an important Monastery in Deer, established by the Picts, surviving until it was replaced by the Abbey; that Gaelic was the spoken language in Buchan at that time; that it was important to establish its location; and finally, the Project's need to be pro-active in founding a centre locally where the Book can be on display on a temporary or permanent basis.

Copies of the talk can be obtained by contacting Andrew.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Although, up to now, there has been no success in locating the site of the Monastery, it remains a priority to do so. The final reports of the work done so far have been published in two volumes as "The Monastery of Deer Archaeological Project - desk-based Assessment and Field Evaluation" and "Old Deer Geophysical Survey". Arrangements will be made to distribute copies to libraries, and in the meanwhile they will be available at a small cost.

The archaeology has been undertaken by Glasgow University Archaeology Research Department (GUARD), but because of the well publicised cut backs, the University is discontinuing its support. The team who operated within this department are presently setting up a company which will offer an equal or improved service. This means that there will be a slight delay in progressing the search for the Monastery while the Project Management Committee assess this new situation.

There has been an 8-page feature in the December 2010 edition of "Back in the Day", masterminded by Derek Jennings and featuring Sandy Ritchie, entitled the "Mystery of the Monastery." This is an excellent piece and well worth the trouble to obtain a copy on sale for £1.30.

MAKING THE MOST OF ADEN COUNTRY PARK

This Project is to develop the Country Park, making full use of its rich heritage and environment. Funding has been secured to employ a Development Worker, who working with the Buchan Development will produce a 5-year strategic plan to further these aims. The results of initial research gathering the thoughts of park users has been encouraging and a major step has been taken in setting up the "Aden Development Group" who met for the first time on November 2010. The Project is well represented in this group and the success of the Park is a key issue in promoting knowledge of the Book of Deer. There is no doubt that the energy and expertise within this group will ensure a great future for the Park.

WEBSITE

Viewing figures have levelled out around 56,000 a year and analysis of the statistics indicate that a significant number of visitors are spending considerable time on their visit. A revamp of the site has been completed so as to make it easier for Project members to edit and update and easier navigation for visitors.

PROJECT ROOM

Joyce Brown and Cecilia Penny worked hard in what appeared to be a much less busy year in the Park than usual. There are special thanks to Bill Johnson, Denis McHugh, Pam Ross, Mary Melville, Derek Jennings and Sandy Ritchie for giving their time and expertise for the special events which were mentioned in a previous Newsletter.

SUMMER SEMINAR

Dr. David Bertie gave a talk on the poems and life of John Skinner (1721-1807), historian, poet and song-writer, who was brought up as a Presbyterian and became an Episcopalian ministering to a congregation at Longside for 65 years.

David (who featured recently in an Antiques Road Trip) gave us insights to the religious beliefs and practices of that era as well as regaling us with examples of Skinners's literary prowess.

"Grey Stone Zion" by the Reverend David Ogston

The third and last book, again written in the Doric, by David, who was a great Friend of the Book of Deer, has been published after his death. It is the story of his years in Aberdeen as a student studying for the ministry and it is full of humour as he shares his experiences. If you wish to purchase a copy, phone his wife Meg on 01738 553264. The book is priced at £7.50 with an extra £1.50 for postage. All moneys from the sale are donated to his Church St. John's Kirk in Perthshire. More details from Cecilia Penny. A copy will be on display at the Seminar on the 24th of February.

BOOK OF DEER FOLIOS


There are now high resolution images of all 192 pages of the BOOK on CD. These are available to borrow for personal study and may be used under the Project's authority for educational or publicity purposes. Contact Andrew if you are interested.

SANDY'S CONCERT

A brilliant evening of Scottish entertainment by Geordie Smith and friends. Sandy also displayed his collection of admirable carvings, by popular request. The event, once again, provided a welcome fillip to Project funds.

GUIDED TOUR

Delegates from *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig*, a biennial academic conference on all aspects of research on Gaelic, held in Aberdeen in August came to visit. They were given hospitality in the Kemp Hall where a display of the Project's work had been set up. Split into manageable groups, they were then conducted by Derek Jennings, Alan Cameron and Andrew Kellock around the Old Deer churchyard, pre-Reformation Church therein, and the sites of the archaeological digs and geophysical testing. The delegates expressed their appreciation and admiration for the excellent exposition of the work carried out by the Project members.



We are looking forward to the Friends first seminar of the year. It will be held in the University chaplaincy, Old Aberdeen on the 24th of February. Doors open at 3pm for registration and a little hospitality before the talk starting around 3 40.

The talk will be "**Medieval Church Music**" and given by **Father Benedict Hardy**, a monk from Pluscarden Abbey.

This is a most intriguing subject, as there are only scraps of written material from those times when the music would mainly have been passed on orally from generation to generation. Who better then to explore the subject than Father Benedict from Pluscarden Abbey?

Pluscarden Abbey is the home of a community of Roman Catholic Benedictine monks. It is the only medieval monastery in Britain still inhabited by monks and being used for its original purpose. Situated six miles southwest of Elgin in Moray, the monastery enjoys the peace and stillness of a secluded glen, but is easily reached by road from the town.

In September 2009, the Abbey hosted a 3 day event, a SYMPOSIUM ON SCOTTISH SACRED MUSIC, covering 15 centuries of Christian worship. It was attended by eminent musicologists and practitioners such as James McMillan, composer and Bill Taylor, clarsach player.

More details of this event at:

<http://www.pluscardenabbey.org/musicsymposium.asp>

Office Bearers and Committees:

Patron: Jack Webster **Hon President:** George Smart

Directors: Sandy Ritchie, George Smart, Denis McHugh, Cecilia Penny, Alan Cameron, Andrew Kellock.

Project: Alan Cameron (Chairman), Denis McHugh (Vice Chairman) Peter Elrick, Maureen Stephen (Treasurer), Andrew Kellock (Project Manager): Joyce Brown, Derek Jennings, Cllr. Albert Howie, Betty Campbell, Sandy Ritchie, Sandy Cowie, Bill Johnston, Sheila Johnston and Cecilia Penny.

Friends: Andrew Kellock (Convener), Bill Johnston (Vice Convener), Maureen Stephen (Treasurer), Cecilia Penny (Membership Secretary), Betty Campbell (Social hostess): Elizabeth Pirie, Sandy Cowie, Bill Johnston, Sheila Johnston and Joyce Brown.