

# NEWSLETTER No 18 — March 2014

## *Friends of the Book of Deer*

[www.bookofdeer.co.uk](http://www.bookofdeer.co.uk)

**Contacts:** Area Office, Nethermuir Road, Maud, AB42 4ND. E-mail : [bookofdeer@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bookofdeer@yahoo.co.uk)

Company No. 179541 registered in Scotland local Scottish Charity SC 030656

Newsletter Editor: Alan I Cameron - 5 Fechil Brae, Ellon, Aberdeenshire AB41 8NS - [aicameron21@gmail.com](mailto:aicameron21@gmail.com)

**PLEASE NOTE THE SEMINAR IS ON THURSDAY 27th MARCH AT 3.30 (SEE PAGE 2 FOR DETAILS)**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

The AGMs of the Project and of the Friends were held in the Kemp Hall, Old Deer on Saturday, 29th June 2013. The very positive news was that for the first time for many years, new members were appointed to the committees. These are: Emma Gibson, Neil Hutchison, Heather Jennings, Dr Douglas Nicol, Anne Simpson and Jackie Taylor.

These join the existing committee: Alan Cameron (Chairman) Dennis McHugh (Vice-Chairman) Joyce Brown (Secretary) Andrew Kellock\*(Treasurer) Buntly Penny (Friends) Betty Campbell (Hostess) Sandy Ritchie (Fundraising), George Smart, Sandy Cowie, Derek Jennings (Archaeology). In addition, Geordie Burnett-Stuart agreed to become a patron.

\*Andrew has subsequently stood down from the committee but continues to support the work of the Project. Indeed the contribution Andrew has made to the Book of Deer over the years is incalculable. He was treasurer, looked after the website, and responded to e-mail correspondence. He edited the newsletter, looked after the equipment, dealt with disclosure issues and in fact there were very few issues in which Andrew was not involved. We owe him a huge debt for the work he has done and hope that he will continue to involve himself in research issues from which he gains much satisfaction. The **treasurer** is now Anne Simpson.



Andrew Kellock

To show our appreciation of the immense contribution which Andrew Kellock has made to the project over the years, the committee decided to make Andrew an Honorary Life Member.

Alan reported on the highlights of 2012-13. These included improvements to the display in the Project Room at Aden; the way in which the school children engaged with the archaeological digs; the excellent seminar in the University Library and Sandy Ritchie's fund-raising concert. Most of all, Alan thanked the committee for the way in which each one contributed to the success of the project.

After the formal part of the meeting, we had a very interesting illustrated talk given by Dr David Walker on "*The Development of the Country House in Banff Buchan and Formartine from the mid 17th century to the present day*". Among the many stately homes and buildings which we were shown, were some hidden gems which most of the audience had not heard of along with many familiar buildings and some which have either been modified or demolished.

### WEBSITE:

Apparently, if you log on to book of deer, you may be directed to access a ladies' clothing site. The correct address is **[www.bookofdeer.co.uk](http://www.bookofdeer.co.uk)** (no spaces) or even **bookofdeer**. We will try to sort this out.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

The archaeology dig in 2013 focussed in an area to the north and west of the buildings at Aden. The archaeologists were again Charles and Hilary Murray of Murray Archaeological Services and the investigation took place from 2nd - 8th October with local schools participating on Monday, 7th. There was also help from a band of volunteers. There were few material finds and these tended to be of recent origin. The site was chosen because of the unusual nature of the earthworks which

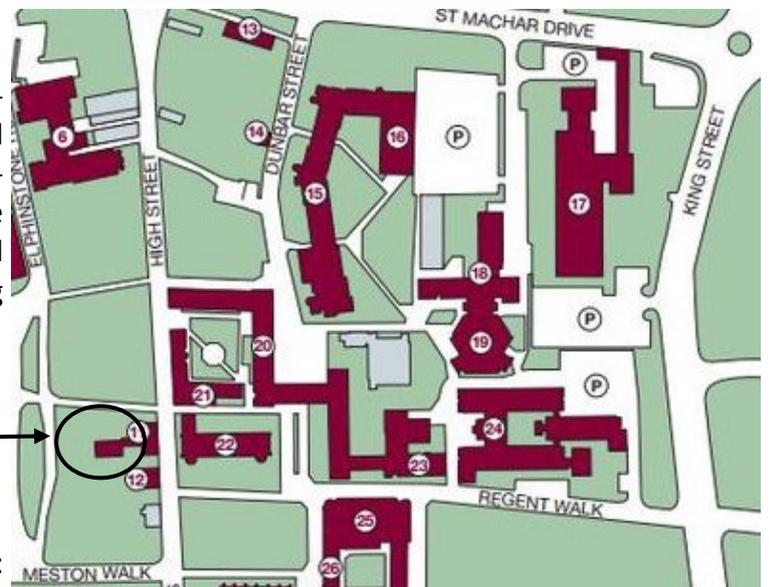


suggested walls of circular buildings and these were in fact found. Without carbon dating, it was not possible to accurately date the workings but the features have similarities to parallel discoveries at Loch Kinord near Dinnit which have been dated to the late 1st millennium BC. However, there has been some damage to the site as a result of estate management. There is, however, potential for further investigation by Aberdeenshire Council who own the Country Park, and the results have been passed on to them.

## THE NEXT SEMINAR

The first seminar of the year will be held in the Chaplaincy Centre, 25 High Street Aberdeen University and will be given by Dr Gordon Noble who is a Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at the University. His talk will be based on some recent work conducted by Gordon and his team on a Pictish site at Rhynie and the amazing finds which they have made there. Dr Noble is an excellent speaker and his talk will be illustrated with slides taken during the excavation. The date is Thursday 27th, March and the talk is entitled:

**CHAPLAINCY CENTRE 25  
HIGH STREET  
OLD ABERDEEN AB42 3EE**



**“Uncovering the Northern Picts”**. Doors are open at 3.00 and the talk will begin at 3.30. Light refreshments will be available from 3.00. There is limited parking at the rear of the building which can be accessed from Meston Walk or Elphinstone Rd.

Details from Derek Jennings ([bookofdeer@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bookofdeer@yahoo.co.uk) or by telephone 01779821343).

**The second seminar** will be in the Autumn—probably November and we are still awaiting confirmation from the speaker. Details will be in the next Newsletter.

## FUND RAISING CONCERT

The annual fund raising concert which we also refer to as *Sandy's Concert* because it is Sandy Ritchie who organises it and what a great job he always does. The 2013 concert, held on 1st November featured the Garioch Fiddlers They entertained with a wide range of Scottish and international music. The star attraction was member and assistant conductor Nicola Tierney (Auchnie) who demonstrated why she was the Glenfiddich Scottish *Fiddle* Champion, 2010. As always her playing was first class. There was also a weel kent face in Geordie Smith whose recitations and amusing stories gave us all something to smile about. In November 7th this year, Geordie Smith and friends will putting on a special concert.



## BUS OUTING TO LOCH KINORD

George Smart is currently busy arranging a bus trip to Ballater to visit sites at Loch Kinord. We hope this will be in May. There are many important and interesting historic sites including a stone cross dating from the end of the Pictish period. There is a quaint geological feature at Burn o' Vat, and Stone Circles at Tomnaverie. In the old ruined kirk at Tullich there is a worn Pictish stone carved with traditional Pictish symbols of a mirror, beast, double disc, and Z-rod. These resemble those found in the Book of Deer.



This is a great idea and I hope you will support it. What makes it even better, is that it will be free to members who have paid their annual subscription for 2014. So why not make a day of it, take along your friends and fill the 50 seater bus. There will be comfort breaks and an opportunity to pick up a snack lunch. Details to follow.

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## BOOKS FOR THE LIBRARY

The committee have purchased two books to be kept in the Project library and to be available for members who wish to pursue research on aspects of the Book of Deer. The first Book was first published in 1972 and was the original authoritative interpretation of the Gaelic notes in the margins of the Book of Deer. The notes although in Scottish Gaelic were in an early form more akin to Old Irish. They tell the story (probably invented) of how the Monastery of Deer was founded by St Columba and his nephew Dròstan. They also give us an insight into the structure of Scottish society in the 10th/11th century and many of the place-names mentioned are still used in the area around Old Deer.

The second book is the proceedings of the Spalding Society of Aberdeen Book dated 1869 which records research done at the time on the manuscripts of the **Book of Deer**. The Club issued 38 volumes on various subjects 14 of which, including the Book of Deer were compiled by John Stuart.

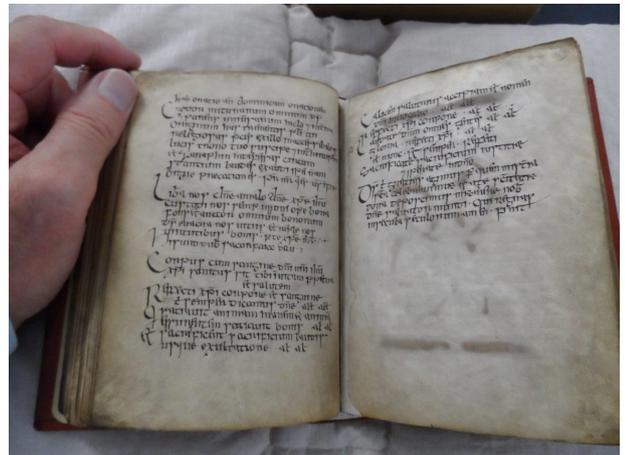
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## ANDREW'S VISIT TO THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

TO VIEW THE MANUSCRIPT NOW CALLED THE BOOK OF DEER in September 2013.

Application to visit the library can be made online, but no formal acceptance is available until you present yourself at reception with your application, photo I.D. and a letter of introduction; supplied by Chair of the Project in my case.

The formalities took no time at all and an identification card with my photo, taken there and then, allowed me into the library. Although my online application and letter stated the purpose of my visit, the librarian on duty was unaware of my intention, and indeed of the existence of the manuscript itself. However, it appeared in what seemed no time at all. Visitors are allowed to take in digital cameras, but no flash or tripods.



It is contained in a sturdy box which also contained the Victorian binding. The modern wine coloured binding seemed to me, even more inappropriate than I could have imagined. Further examination, though, revealed that a sturdy binding was required as the folios were fragile. The extent of the repair work which had been done in the 1960's is not entirely apparent in the scanned high resolution images, but clear to see on examination of the manuscript as are numerous stain marks throughout the manuscript.

I checked the dimensions, really because I have never noticed a value given for the thickness in any publication that I have read. Result is 107 x 154mm and the thickness for the 86 folios is 22.5mm. This is equivalent to about 270 leaves of 80gsm paper. Natural calf vellum on sale at present would have created a book 24 mm thick.

I was not required to wear gloves, but was told not to spread my hand across the pages or put a strain on the binding. I have been led to believe that the natural lanolin in the hands is not harmful to vellum and parchment.

## MUSIC PREMIERE

The première of a piece of music specially written to celebrate the Book of Deer will take place next month in the North East. The Book of Deer Suite was written by St Andrew's University academic, Richard Ingham and features music based on the plainsong genre. Richard is a composer and saxophonist and is Fellow in New Music and Composer in Residence at St Andrews University.

The Première of this piece will be held in Crimonmogate House, the home of William and Candida, Viscount and Viscountess Petersham on the evening of 26th April 2014. Tickets for this most special event (restricted to 60) will be available from Central Buchan Rotary Club who are sponsoring the event. For further information and tickets, contact:

Derek Jennings, Toll House, Main Street, Longside, Peterhead AB42 4XJ  
Tel: 01779-821343 : E-mail: derekjennings@sky.com address



## How can I help?

Members often ask how they can help with the ongoing work of the project. The answer is that all of you can help in some way or another. There are many tasks at all levels. For those of you so inclined there is the opportunity to undertake research into the history associated with the monastery. We need to have the content of the website reviewed regularly. There are opportunities to help with archaeology. We need help with fund-raising. We need help with manning the project room when it is open. If you are interested in genealogy you could help with the many queries we receive from home and abroad. If you have special skills in IT or sound systems or video or photography we can use your help. If you have artistic skills, these can be used in updating our materials. We have to produce posters and tickets. We have to do mailings to members. We keep a database of our members and that has to be kept up to date. In fact there are so many jobs associated with the project that there is not enough room here to list them all. So please come forward and join in wherever you feel comfortable. This is your project.

## Marketing the Book of Deer



For some years, we have marketed knitwear bearing the iconic dog image which is of course taken from one of the pages of the Book of Deer. It has been decided that we should extend the range of products that we offer for sale. These might include key-rings, mugs, coasters, lapel pins, USB sticks and so on. There is a wonderful range of images in the book and as well as being useful and attractive, by buying them you could show in a concrete way your support for this project. Details of the products available will follow.

## THE 2014 AGM

The 2014 AGM will be held on **Saturday 21st of June** at 2.00 in the Crichton Hall, Stuartfield. The formal business will be followed by a talk on Mediaeval coinage by Dr Douglas Nicol. There will be light refreshments available from 1.00.

## FRIENDS ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

It is time to renew your subscriptions again. It was agreed at the 2013 AGM that the annual fee should be £10.00 per person. These should be sent to **Book of Deer Project, Area Office, Nethermuir Road, Maud AB42 4N.**

Cheques should be made payable to **FRIENDS OF BOOK OF DEER PROJECT.** Please note that if you opt to go on the bus trip to Ballater, that will be free if you are a member.