



ST DROSTAN and the book of deer

The origin of the Book of Deer is uncertain however it is reasonable to assume that it was made at Deer in Aberdeenshire.



Probably the oldest surviving manuscript made in Scotland it is reckoned to date from the 9th century. It contains the Gospel of St John and fragments of the other Gospels, other offices and the Apostle's Creed. In the form of a 'pocket book' measuring 6 x 3 inches and having 68 leaves, the book is mainly written in Latin but it has been endorsed on the margins by another hand said to be the first example of written Gaelic found in Scotland, Roddy Maclean wrote, "The margin notes are only of historical linguistic importance

telling the touching story involving a Pictish king and two of Scotland's greatest saints —Columba and Drostan."

According to the Book of Deer, Drostan was the son of one of Columba's followers who travelled with the saint from Iona, possibly completing the last leg by sea and arriving at Aberdour on the Buchan coast near Fraserburgh. The Pictish Mormaer of Buchan called Bede donated a site for a monastery and after its creation, Columba and Drostan moved inland to Deer where the Mormaer was beseeched to donate a second a site for a monastery at Deer. He declined at first but then his son fell ill.



Columba and his disciple prayed for the boy and on his recovery the Mormaer gratefully relented and granted the land. The Book of Deer then recounts the

For 340 years, a community of monks lived and prayed in the great monastic house whose ruins stand before you.

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|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Infirmary | 6 Refectory or dining room |
| 2 Abbot's house | 7 Cloister |
| 3 Chapter house | 8 Lay brothers' dormitory |
| 4 Dormitory | 9 Nave and lay brothers' choir |
| 5 Latrine block | 10 Monks' choir |

tale of how the monastery got its name. As Columba was leaving, the devoted Drostan burst into tears (*déara* in old Gaelic). Columba immediately declared that from now on, let Deer be its name —perhaps a fanciful tale.



The pictures show a model of Deer Abbey devised by Robert Marshall for Historic Scotland as an information board about the site; the western aspect of St Drostan's Church Inch; local historian Dr Douglas Simpson pointing out the details of the ruined structure on a Diocesan Pilgrimage made in 1947; and St Drostan's Church, Old Deer.

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