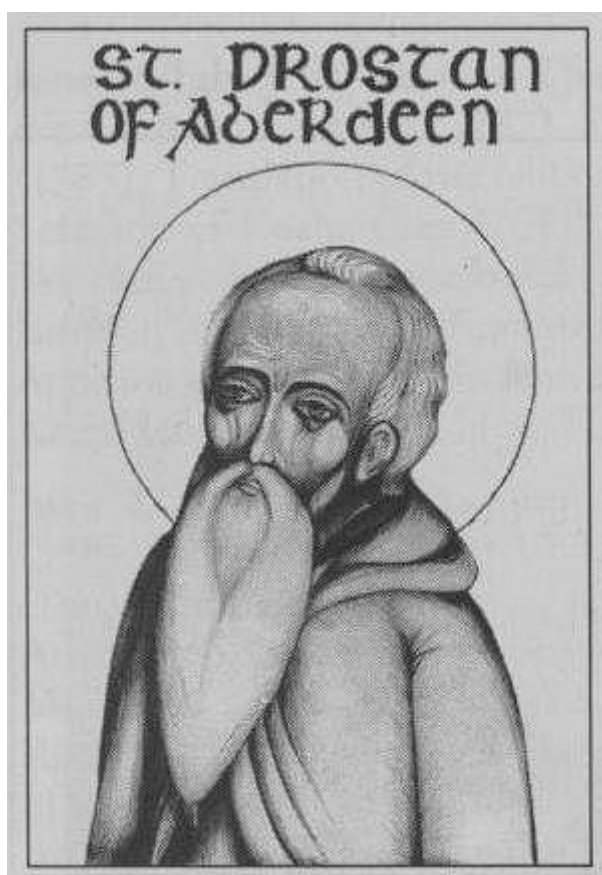


Venerable Drostan of Deer

Commemorated: July 11/24

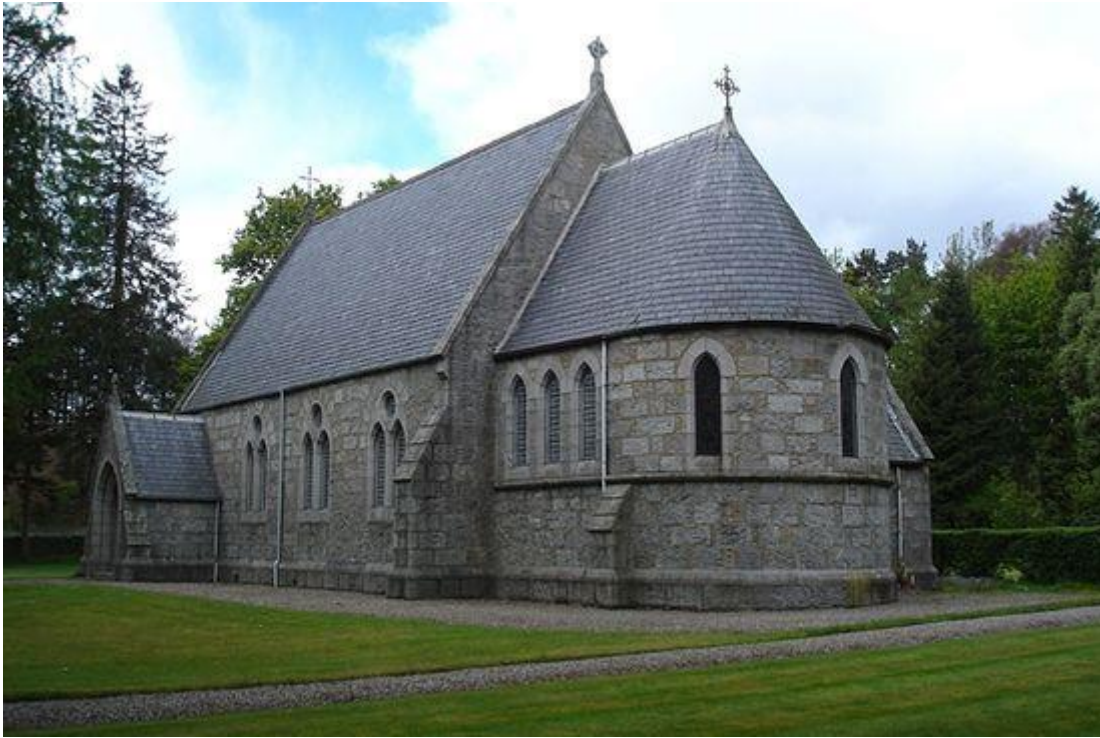
By Dmitry Lapa

Source: *orthochristian.com*



St. Drostan

St. Drostan lived late in the sixth to early seventh centuries. Among the sources which mention him are the tenth-century Book of Deer and the Aberdeen Breviary, mentioned above. He was born in Ireland and became a close friend of St. Columba of Iona, and one source claims that St. Columba was even his uncle. St. Drostan would often accompany the holy enlightener of Scotland in the latter's missionary journeys. This holy man eventually became one of the founders and first abbot of the great monastery of Deer in Aberdeenshire (now the village of Old Deer in the county of the same name). With time Deer Abbey grew into a significant monastic and missionary center, gaining royal Pictish support as well. Thanks to the influence of St. Drostan a large number of churches were erected near the coast of the inlet of Moray Firth in northeastern Scotland. Many years later the faithful persuaded Drostan to become a new abbot of Holywood Monastery but soon afterwards, feeling a call to lead the solitary life of a recluse, he left it and retired far to the north – to Glen Esk near the River North Esk. A parish church approximately on that site is dedicated to our saint to this day. This church is Episcopal, and its exact location is Tarfside.



St.

Drostan's Church in Tarfside, Glen Esk (source - Stdrostans.org)

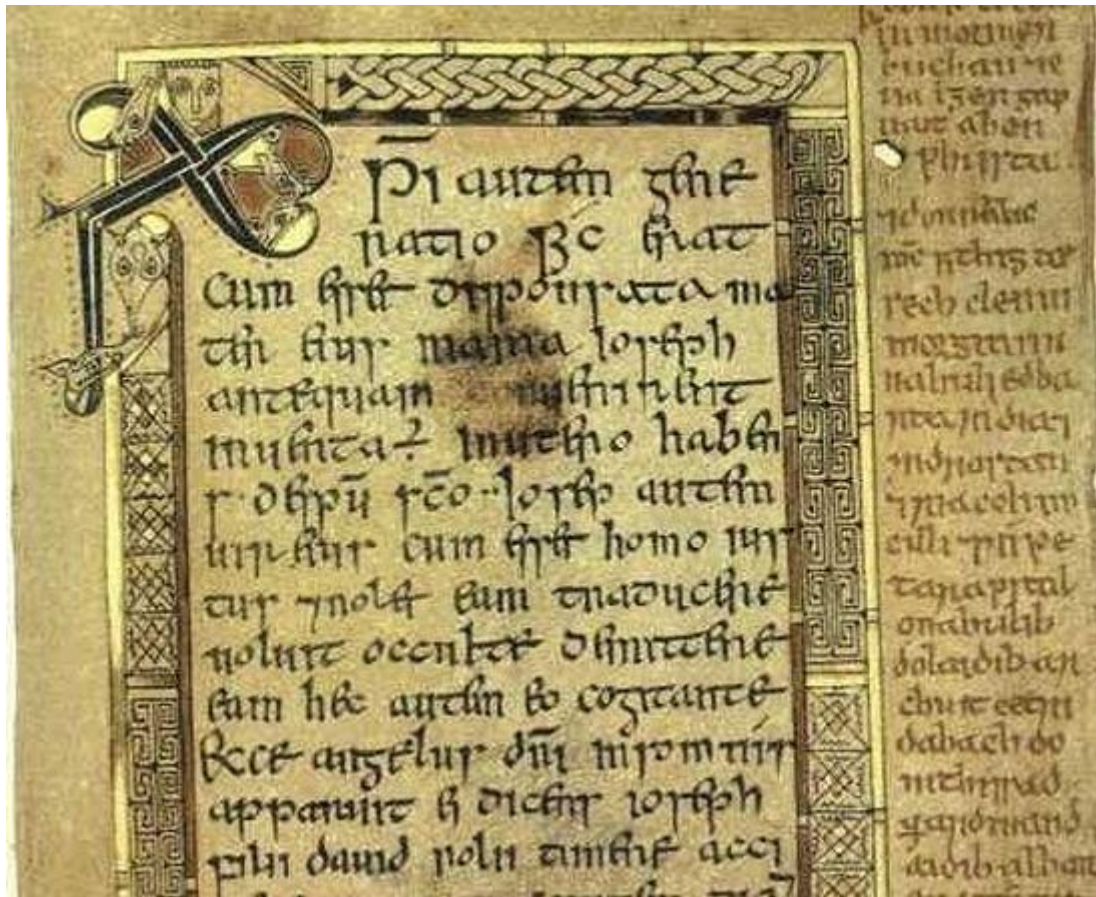


Glen

Esk

Soon the poor, the sick and the needy began to flock to the ascetic on whom God bestowed the gift of performing miracles. There is, for instance, evidence that St. Drostan restored the eyesight of a priest called Simon. The Venerable Drostan reposed in the Lord probably in about 610. Some called him one of the apostles of Scotland. His holy relics rested in a stone coffin at the Aberdour church, to the south of the Moray Firth coast, and many miracles occurred. Now this is the village

of New Aberdour, where the church was always considered to be one of the earliest in Scotland, originally built by Sts. Columba and Drostan. In the nineteenth century, the Old Aberdour Kirk of St. Drostan was closed and a new parish church was built in the village. This exists to this day. Now the well-preserved ruins of the old church that once held the relics of Drostan survive: its earliest fabric is from the sixteenth century. The holy well of St. Drostan still exists nearby.



A folio of the Book of Deer

In the tenth century at the Monastery of St. Drostan in Deer, the unique Gospel called “The Book of Deer” was created in Latin with some Old Irish and Scottish Gaelic additions. This rare and precious treasure survives to this day. The Book of Deer contains the earliest surviving Gaelic text in Scotland. The manuscript is illuminated, it was written on vellum probably by the same scribe. It contains the whole text of the Gospel of John, fragments of the other three Gospels, the Creed of the Apostles, fragments of the Old Irish Liturgy, and mentions some thirteenth-century charters. It is presumed that the manuscript was intended for private and not public use. Since 1715, the Book of Deer has been in the possession of the University of Cambridge Library. This priceless relic was presented to the university together with the collection of a Bishop of Ely by King George I.



Abbey ruins

As for the greatest abbey founded by Drostan in Deer, it flourished for several centuries. In the thirteenth century a new Catholic Cistercian Monastery of the Mother of God was founded close to this site and it existed until the Reformation. Today there are two villages in the area: those of Old Deer and New Deer lying seven miles from each other. Nothing is left of the original Celtic monastery of St. Drostan, but there are ruins of the Cistercian monastery in Old Deer. The ruins are located half a mile west of the original St. Drostan's Abbey. The village's main street is dominated by the church known as New Kirk. It was built in the 1780s to replace a much older church (Old Kirk) the origins of which may be connected with St. Drostan directly. Ruins of the Old Kirk lie next to the New Kirk. As for New Deer village, it once had a chapel built by the Cistercian abbey which no more exists.

St. Drostan is also closely associated with the village of Aberlour in the Moray council area in northern Scotland, surrounded by extremely picturesque landscapes. According to tradition, the saint once had a chapel and a holy spring there and used its water to baptize the local population. In the nineteenth century a distillery for producing single malt whisky appeared in Aberlour (Scotland, among other things, is famous for producing high-quality whisky and biscuits) and St. Drostan's holy well became a source for the distillery! It is not the only case in Scotland when an ancient pure holy well has become a source for a whisky distillery. Interestingly, Aberlour has for centuries also produced the fine "Walkers" shortbread. An Episcopal Church of St. Drostan can also be found in Insh in Aberdeenshire.