

Film: "The Book of Durrow"
Scribes and Scholars Series, 26 mins.
The Art of Ireland, Dr. T. W. Bizzarro

Book of Durrow: a gospel book in Latin, smaller than Kells

Columba sailed ca 563 to Iona, an island off the west coast of Scotland

Aidan from Iona went later to Northumbria, in England. Columba, ca 564, before going to Iona, founded Durrow monastery.

1006 - Kells stolen (as recorded in the Annals of Ulster)

Durrow means plain of the oak tree

The Venerable Bede (writing in 8th C) praises Durrow as "noble monastery" and sent his student there for free books and free food and lodgings.

--Clonmacnoise, west of Durrow toward the Shannon, is also a monastic center.

--Durrow is also mentioned in Annals of Clonmacnoise.

--Two tailpiece or colophons indicate something about the author of Durrow. It is written there, "Pray for me brother, I have reached the end of the manuscript."

A copy of the colophon reads: "Patrick wrote this in honor of Columba and he took 12 days to write it." It was perhaps written (but not decorated) in 12 days.

Book of Durrow has one evangelist per full page in the old Latin order: Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark. It is a copy of Jerome's Vulgate of 383 AD.

In Durrow, the ornament is highly abstract. It has figures of humans, animals, birds, beasts, and fishes in addition to abstract rectilinear and curvilinear ornament.

Initial Pages:

St. Mark's Initium stretches for 12 lines; hairspring decoration at final or corner

New paragraph: Vox clamantes in middle of page is example of diminuendo effect, wherein letters diminish in size as line proceeds.

Pigments:

--yellow orpiment

--green from copper (verdigris)

--red lead

--vellum prepared in monastic cashel; dipped in water with lime to free hair; 3 or 4 weeks later it is stretched in the sun and smoothed; blemished are removed; finished manuscript is housed in shrine such as Stowe shrine ornamented with precious stones;

Patterns:

--interlocked roundels

--biting animals

--crosses

--trumpet or pelta pattern

--scrollwork

--interlace

Decoration resembles Sutton Hoo ship burial motifs (found in Sutton, England).