



UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

Elphinstone Institute

Public Events 2024–2025

ELPHINSTONE



INSTITUTE

studying culture in context

Welcome, fit like?

We're affa pleased tae hae sae mony Elphinstone Institute public events for 2024–25! The Elphinstone Institute wis startit in 1995 tae mark the Varsity o Aiberdeen's five hunner years, an is dedicatit tae researchin, teachin, and celebratin the rich cultures o the Nor-East and Nor o Scotland, wi Ethnology, Folklore, an Ethnomusicology at its hairt.

Dinna miss oot! Come alang and jyne us tae celebrate oor cultures.

Welcome!

We are pleased to present so many Elphinstone Institute public events for 2024–2025! The Elphinstone Institute was founded in 1995 as part of the University of Aberdeen's quincenary, and is dedicated to researching, teaching, and celebrating the rich cultures of the North-East and North of Scotland through the disciplines of Ethnology, Folklore, and Ethnomusicology.

Don't miss out! Come along and join us to celebrate our cultures.

Booking Events

Please book ticketed events by e-mail: elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk or telephone: 01224 272996. Events free with no booking required unless otherwise noted.

What's on/Fit's on...

Elphinstone Institute Public Events 2024–2025

TO BOOK TICKETED EVENTS E-MAIL: ELPHINSTONE@ABDN.AC.UK OR TELEPHONE: 01224 272996

2ND AND 4TH THURSDAYS OF THE MONTH

Polish-Scottish Song Group

POLISH-SCOTTISH SONG WORKSHOPS

Time: 7 to 9pm | Location: MacRobert Building 055

Join the Polish-Scottish Song Group and exchange culture through the traditional songs of Scotland, Poland, and many other countries. All welcome! **From 26 September to 12 June.**

Wymiana kulturowa poprzez tradycyjne utwory ze Szkocji, Polski oraz wielu innych krajów. Wszyscy są bardzo mile widziani! Zapraszamy! **Od 26 września do 12 czerwca.**



Vist with Polish Ambassador to the UK, Piotr Wilczek | Credit: El Archives

1ST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

FIRST FRIDAY FLING STORYTELLING SESSIONS

Time: 7 to 9pm | Location: St Peter's Heritage Centre, Peterculter

Join the **Grampian Association of Storytellers** (GAS) from October to June for their cosy monthly get together, which is a safe place to try out a story or simply listen to experienced and newcomer storytellers alike tell a tale in a friendly setting. Check the GAS Facebook page for details.

SUNDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2024

Festival

ABERDEEN MELA: ONE WORLD DAY

Time: 12–6pm | Location: Union Terrace Gardens, Aberdeen



Desi Bravehearts, Mela | Credit: Aberdeen Multicultural Centre

Aberdeen Mela is a one-day festival of music, food, and dance, showcasing the city's exciting cultural diversity and vibrancy. We are thrilled to be a key partner of this important event, organised by **Aberdeen Multicultural Centre**.

FRIDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2024

WayWORD Festival

TOULMIN PRIZE EVENT

Time: 3 to 4pm | Location: King's Pavilion | Free but ticketed www.waywordfestival.com

In honour of Aberdeenshire writer David Toulmin (John Reid, 1913–1998), the Toulmin Prize is sponsored by the Reid family and held annually by the Elphinstone Institute. Join us for this appreciation of North-East writing with 2024's winning stories announced and read aloud by North-East Maker, **Sheena Blackhall**.



Author David Toulmin | Credit: El Archives

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THURSDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2024

Ethnographic Film Series

KING FOR A DAY (2022), DIR. BY BARBARA SANTI. FOLLOWED BY Q&A WITH FILMMAKER

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: MacRobert Building 051

King for a Day is a poetic, archive-led documentary immersing us in the personal story of the people of Padstow, their ancient rituals, and the challenges they face in a rapidly changing world. Tensions between tradition and progress highlight the importance of cultural identity and folk customs in our globalised society.



Stills from *King for a Day* | Credit: Barbara Santi

THURSDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2024

Public Lecture Series

RAINBOW PATH(S) TO THE GRANITE CITY

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: MacRobert Building 051

The LGBT+ community has left its mark on Aberdeen and its culture, yet its own history tends to be invisible to the public eye. **Jakub Ivanecky** and **Deejay Bullock** from **Four Pillars** will discuss Queer people of the past and also how LGBT+ Pride made its way to the Granite City.



Grampian Pride 2024 | Credit: @toxicstudio

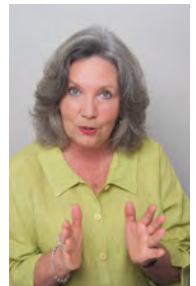
TUESDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2024

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

STORIES AND SONGS OF IRELAND

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7, Craig Suite | Free but ticketed

In Ireland it was and still is the custom to combine stories with music, and many musicians carried stories along with the tunes. In this relaxed session, storyteller **Nuala Hayes** and musician **Aoife Granville** share stories and music inspired by Irish people and places they know and love.



Nuala Hayes
| Credit: Kate Horgan

SATURDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2024

Tribute

A TOAST TAE ROBBIE SHEPHERD

Time: 7.30pm | Location: His Majesty's Theatre, Aberdeen | Contact APA for tickets

This very special variety show celebrates the life and career of Robbie Shepherd MBE, longtime supporter of the Elphinstone Institute and Hon. President of the Friends of the EI, and household name thanks to 'Take the Floor'. Performers including **Karen Matheson**, **Donald Shaw**, **Aly Bain**, and **Violet Tulloch**, will grace the stage.

WEDNESDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2024

Workshop

NEEPIE LANTERN HOWKING WORKSHOP

Time: 6.30–8.30pm | Location: Dunbar Street Hall, AB24 3UJ | £5 (includes neep and refreshments); booking required



Sara Stroud & her daughter show their lanterns | Credit: Alison Sharman

Join **Alison Sharman** for a neep howking workshop to create your own traditional neepie lantern for Halloween, just in time for our Neepie Lantern Competition. Neeps, candles, and string will be provided. Please bring a strong dessert spoon and vegetable knife for howking. Parents are responsible for their children (one child per adult, please).

FRIDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2024

Prize

NEEPIE LANTERN COMPETITION DEADLINE

Get your knives and spoons ready and get howking! When you've carved your masterpiece send a pic of your entry to elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk including your full name and postal address. Winners will receive one of our Elphinstone publications and an announcement on social media.

THURSDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2024

Ethnographic Film Series

BAYE FALLS (2023), DIR. BY ADELINA SASNAUSKAITE. FOLLOWED BY Q&A WITH FILMMAKER

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: MacRobert Building 051

Baye Falls documents Sufi spiritual teacher **Ibrahima Fall**, who played an important role during French colonial rule in strengthening the morale of oppressed Senegalese working and lower classes. His teaching prioritised hard work, modesty, and sharing, and Baye Fall ceremonies hold space for indigenous traditions to crossover within Islam.



Still from *Baye Falls* | Credit: Adelina Sasnauskaite

MONDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2024

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

THE DESPERATE BATTLE OF THE BIRDS

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7, Craig Suite | Free but ticketed

'The Desperate Battle of the Birds' is a classical Gaelic folktale which shares its name with a stirring piobaireachd from the piping tradition. Storyteller **James MacDonald Reid** will tell the tale of creatures, giants, kings, and queens, and cellist **Ryan Williams** will punctuate the narrative with motifs from the piobaireachd and atmospheric sounds to set the scene.



James MacDonald Reid | Credit: Jess Lennon



Ryan Williams | Credit: Joly Riley

THURSDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2024

David Buchan Lecture

DAVID BUCHAN LECTURE: GLOBAL HEALTH CRISES, HERITAGE, AND THE GHANAIAN FOLK

Professor Kwesi Yankah

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7, Craig Suite | Free but ticketed

Two diseases have ravaged Africa in the past fifty years: HIV/AIDS and COVID-19. These have triggered folk responses in Ghana framed within cultural attitudes to calamity and the considered potency of the spoken word. At the same time, because the very nature of these crises constrains verbal production, Ghana's presidency has resorted to a heritage of visual symbolism as an integral part of crisis management. This paper is based on research with HIV patients returning to die at home as well as indigenous responses to COVID-19.



TUESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2024

Information Session

MLITT ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORE INFORMATION EVENING (ONLINE)

Time: 6.30–7.30pm | Location: Online

Meet staff and students and learn about our **Master's Programme in Ethnology and Folklore**, which can be completed in 12 months or 24 months (full-time/part-time study). Students learn how to research the cultures around us and how we make meaning through tradition and innovation. Individuals of varying life and educational experiences are welcome.

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SATURDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2024

Friends of the Elphinstone Institute

FRIENDS OF THE ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE LUNCH

Time: 12.00–3.00pm | Location: The Royal Northern and University Club Aberdeen

Join us for lunch celebrating the good work of the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute. Renowned singer and presenter **Isla St Clair** will speak about her career and sing a few songs bringing to light the importance of culture in North-East Scotland. Places will be prioritised for Friends. Enquire for available spaces.



Isla St Clair, 1967 | Credit: Grampian TV

FRIDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2024

Polish-Scottish Song Group

AN EVENING OF CAROLS IN POLISH, SCOTS, AND ENGLISH

Time: 6.00–7.00pm | Location: King's College Chapel
| Suggested donation £5/free for students

Join us for a festive evening of carols sung by the Polish-Scottish Song Group in the beautiful and ancient surrounds of King's College Chapel.

Zapraszamy na świąteczny wieczór pięknych kolęd, głównie szkockich i polskich, śpiewanych przez Chór Polsko-Szkocki w pięknym i historycznym otoczeniu King's College Chapel.

THURSDAY, 9 JANUARY 2025

Ethnographic Film Series

BALLAKÉ SISSOKO, KORA TALES (2023). DIR. BY LUCY DURÁN AND LAURENT BENHAMOU FOLLOWED BY Q&A WITH FILMMAKERS

In this film, the award-winning musician from Mali **Ballaké Sissoko**, takes us on a unique journey in search of the origins and development of the twenty-one-string harp through legend, history, tradition, and innovation. Join us for this special screening as part of the **British Forum for Ethnomusicology and Royal Music Association Research Students Conference**.



Ballaké Sissoko | Credit: Lucy Durán

THURSDAY, 16 JANUARY 2025

Public Lecture Series

VENEZUELAN GAITA MUSIC AND THE GRANITE CITY

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: MacRobert Building 051

Julián Hernández will speak on gaita, a genre of folk music from Venezuela often heard at Christmas and the New Year. It features complex rhythms played on instruments like the furro drum, maracas, cuatro, tambora, and charrasca. Thanks to musicians like Julián and the band Abergaitas, gaita is now part of the musical world of Aberdeen.

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WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2025

Open Evening

ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Time: 6.30–9PM | Elphinstone Institute, MacRobert Building

Celebrate our 30th anniversary with staff, students, and friends. **Visit the Elphinstone Institute**, enjoy a glass of bubbly, join in with some songs or tunes, and listen to interesting short talks about all of the excellent work that takes place in the Institute and with the wider community in the North-East and beyond.



Elphinstone Institute staff and students | Credit: Brian Stewart

TUESDAY, 28 JANUARY 2025

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

WILD AND FREE? STORIES OF LAND AND SOUL

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: Divinity Library, King's College (please note that the venue is on the first floor with no lift access) | Free but ticketed

Cara Silversmith tells stories from the heart, rooted in our environment. She uses her detailed knowledge of Scotland's ecology and biodiversity to develop and tell stories which examine our relationships with our wider environment.

THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2025

Ethnographic Film Series

IN THE MOMENT: POETRY DUELS AND IMPROVISATION (2022), DIR. BY STEVE ZEITLIN AND AMANDA DARGAN. FOLLOWED BY Q&A WITH FILMMAKERS

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: MacRobert Building 051



In the Moment poster | Credit: Steve Zeitlin and Amanda Dargan

This hour-long documentary introduces viewers to improvisational artists from South and North America, Europe, and Central Asia. The film features poets and musicians who are **masters of the art of improvisation**, duelling with one another and commenting on the meaning of the traditions and of life itself in improvised rhymes.

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, 15–16 FEBRUARY 2025

Polish-Scottish Song Group

BESKIDIAN SONGS: ŻYWIEC POLISH HIGHLANDER SINGING WORKSHOPS

Time: 11am–5pm | Location: MacRobert Building, Fl. 6, 614

All are welcome to these free workshops – part of the **Polish-Scottish Mini Festival** – with talented singer, musician, and ethnomusicologist **Brygida Sordyl**, who is a lecturer in traditional music at the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Poland.

TUESDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2025

Information Session

MLITT ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORE INFORMATION EVENING (ONLINE)

Time: 6.30–7.30pm | Location: Online

Meet staff and students and learn about our **Master's Programme in Ethnology and Folklore**, which can be completed in 12 months or 24 months (full-time/part-time study). Students learn how to research the cultures around us and how we make meaning through tradition and innovation. Individuals of varying life and educational experiences are welcome.

THURSDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2025

Public Lecture Series

'NO PIGEONHOLES, PLEASE!': FIONA KENNEDY'S DIVERSE LIFE AND CAREER

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: MacRobert Building 051

Join **Fiona Kennedy OBE** for a 'nothing off limits' talk on her marvellously varied career. From Peterhead to Portree and Motherwell to Malawi, Fiona will describe her life as a singer and her important roles in charity work and business, with some tips on failure and success mixed in.



Fiona Kennedy | Credit: Laurence Winram

WEDNESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2025

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

WEAVING SOUTH AND NORTH: TALES AND SONGS OF SYRIA

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: Divinity Library, King's College (please note that the venue is on the first floor with no lift access) | Free but ticketed

Stories are all about weaving threads of memories that make us who we are. Join us for an evening with poet and storyteller **Sahar Abdulla**, who will tell tales about living between two worlds, South and North. **Ali Al Daioub** will complement the tales with songs in Arabic.

THURSDAY, 6 MARCH 2025

Ethnographic Film Series

HAULOUT (2022), DIR. BY EVGENIA ARBUGAeva AND MAXIM ARBUGAEV. FOLLOWED BY Q&A WITH FILMMAKER

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: MacRobert Building 051

Haulout follows a man waiting in his hut in the desolate expanse of the Russian Arctic. He is holding out in order to observe a natural event that occurs here, every year, but ocean warming is taking its toll.

THURSDAY, 20 MARCH 2025

Public Lecture Series

SIMPLE HERALDY – CHEERFULLY ILLUSTRATED

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: MacRobert Building 051

Aberdeen is one of Scotland's most heraldic cities, where everything from street bollards and litter bins to council vehicles and granite buildings features coats of arms. Celebrated heraldist **Gordon Casely** highlights how twenty-first century Scots heraldry marks, decorates, identifies, and informs.

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THURSDAY, 25 MARCH 2025

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

OF BEGINNINGS AND OF THE NORTH: TALES FROM FINLAND AND BEYOND

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: Divinity Library, King's College (please note that the venue is on the first floor with no lift access) | Free but ticketed

Finnish storyteller **Riikka Palonen** shares ancient stories and songs from Fenno-Baltic, Karelian, and Lappish traditions, hoping to connect us to our beautiful planet, and in doing so create a spell to help heal our dear Mother Earth...worth trying!



Riikka Palonen | Credit: Riikka Palonen

MONDAY, 14 APRIL 2025

Refugee Festival Scotland

SHARING OUR STORIES: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT STORYTELLING WORKSHOP 1

Time: 10am–12pm | Location: Buchan Library, Elphinstone Institute

Led by experienced storyteller **David Heathfield**, this workshop will encourage intercultural storytelling, allowing participants to share the stories of their lives and their cultures and traditions. Two workshops (the next is 12 May) will culminate in an informal sharing of stories as part of **Refugee Festival Scotland** on 16 June.

MONDAY, 12 MAY 2025

Refugee Festival Scotland

SHARING OUR STORIES: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT STORYTELLING WORKSHOP 2

Time: 10am–12pm | Location: Buchan Library, Elphinstone Institute

Talented storytellers **Jackie Ross** and **Phyll McBain** will lead this workshop of intercultural storytelling, encouraging participants to share the stories of their lives and their cultures and traditions. Two workshops (the first is 14 April) will culminate in an informal sharing of stories as part of **Refugee Festival Scotland** on 16 June.

THURSDAY, 15 MAY 2025

Public Lecture Series

THE GRANITE MEN: 1914–PRESENT

Time: 6.30–8pm | Location: MacRobert Building 051

Following on last year's talk on its early history, **Jim Fiddes** continues the granite industry's story in Aberdeen and the North-East, discussing the industry's changes from the outbreak of the First World War to the present day.



Jim Fiddes at the Rockery, Duthie Park | Credit: El Archives

TUESDAY, 3 JUNE–FRIDAY, 6 JUNE 2025

Academic Conference

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORE (SIEF) CONGRESS

Time: All Day | University of Aberdeen

The Elphinstone Institute is pleased to be hosting the biennial Congress of SIEF, the leading international society for Ethnology and Folklore. The conference will attract hundreds of scholars from around the world to discuss culture around the theme of 'unwriting'. See www.siefhome.org/ for more details.



MONDAY, 16 JUNE 2025

Refugee Festival Scotland

SHARING OUR STORIES: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT STORYTELLING PERFORMANCE

Time: 6–8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 2, Seminar Rm 224 | Free but ticketed

Participants from the previous workshops (14 April and 12 May) will join storytellers **Jackie Ross** and **Phyll McBain** for an informal evening of friendly intercultural storytelling.



Refugee Festival Scotland | Credit: Jamie Simpson

WEDNESDAY, 23 JULY 2025

Peterhead Scottish Week

SEA SANGS AND SATTIE TALES

Time: 7.30–9.30pm (TBC) | Location: Buchanhaven Heritage Society (TBC)

Join storytelling and singing enthusiasts and special guests for an exciting evening of tales and music of the sea, all as part of the brilliant **Peterhead Scottish Week**.

FRIDAY, 25–SUNDAY, 27 JULY 2025

Festival

TRADITIONAL SINGING WEEKEND AT CULLERLIE

Time: All day | Location: Cullerlie Farm Park | Tickets: Contact 01330 860549

The weekend is a unique celebration, bringing together **outstanding traditional singers** from Scotland, England, and Ireland. The weekend includes informal concerts featuring the guest singers, unaccompanied singarounds for everyone who wants to join in, workshops, craft demonstrations, and a song-related talk.

JULY/AUGUST 2025 (DATES TBC)

Festival

SCOTTISH CULTURE AND TRADITIONS (SC&T) YOUTH CAMP

Time: All day | Location: University of Aberdeen

A perfect opportunity to get involved in **Scottish traditional music** right on your doorstep in Aberdeen. With an amazing selection of Scotland's finest tutors, there are a range of class choices from total beginners to advanced ability in fiddle, guitar, clarsach, chanter/pipes, penny whistle, rhythm, and more!

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Festival
**SCOTTISH CULTURE AND TRADITIONS (SC&T)
YOUTH CAMP**



Photos clockwise from top left: Still from *Hollo* | Credit: E. Arbugaeva & M. Arbugaev / Brygida Sordyl, Beskidian Songs / Storyteller Cara Silversmith / SC&T Youth, 2023 | Credit: Laura Harrington / Heraldist Gordon Casely

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Many thanks to all our partner organisations.



**ABERDEEN
 MULTICULTURAL
 CENTRE**



*friends of the
 ELPHINSTONE
 INSTITUTE*



**REFUGEE
 FESTIVAL
 SCOTLAND**



Polish Consulate
 Edinburgh

The Elphinstone Institute,
 MacRobert Building, University of Aberdeen,
 Aberdeen AB24 5UA
 Email: elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk, Tel: 01224 272996
abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone