

## Who counted the beads? And who carried the hod?

Due out this Easter, following the success of *After Columba, After Calvin*, is the next publication in our Elphinstone Occasional Publications series, *The Bedesman and the Hodbearer*. This intriguing title describes the epistolary relationship between Aberdeen pawnbroker William Walker, and Harvard professor Francis James Child, during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Edited and introduced by Professor Mary Ellen Brown, Director of the Folklore Institute at the University of Indiana, the book brings together for the first time the two halves of their correspondence, the one from the Houghton Library at Harvard, the other from our own Historic Collections, Special Libraries and Archives. Child's monumental *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-1898), the standard text for ballad studies, was published without an introduction, which he had intended to remedy but for his untimely death in 1896. This fascinating correspondence helps the reader to gain an insight into Child's method of working, as well as the remarkable friendship the two men established.

Copies will be available from the Institute at £10.00 plus £1.00 postage.



Francis James Child



William Walker



**Double congratulations!**  
**Jack Webster**, Master of the University of Aberdeen, 24 November 2000  
**Robbie Shepherd MBE**, New Year's Honours List

### Greig-Duncan publications near completion

Several members of the Institute have contributed to the last of the eight volumes of ballads and folksongs published under the editorship of Dr Emily Lyle, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh. Professor Bill Nicolaisen has compiled the Place-Name Index; Dr Colin Milton has written about Charles Murray and David Rorie; Dr Thomas A. McKean about John Milne of Atherb, John Quirrie and James and Thomas Spence of Fyvie; and Mary Anne Alburger about J. Scott Skinner and George Riddell. Their contributions will add to our understanding of the collection as a whole and knowledge of some of the North-East men and women, whose songs were collected in the early twentieth century by schoolmaster Gavin Greig, of New Deer, and the Reverend James Duncan of Lynturk.

At the Institute's invitation, the Saltire Society is to hold its AGM at the University of Aberdeen, 29-30 June 2001, when it is planned to celebrate the completion of the publication of the Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection with several special events.

#### Who's Who at the Elphinstone

**Dr Ian Russell**, Director, *Ethnology, oral traditions, including music, drama and speech*  
**Dr Colin Milton**, Associate Director, *Scottish literature and folklore, especially of the North East*  
**Mary Anne Alburger**, Peter A. Hall Research Fellow, *Traditional music and song, fiddle making, 18th century culture*  
**Sheena Blackhall**, Scottish Arts Council Creative Writing Fellow, *Creative writing in Scots*  
**Dr Thomas A. McKean**, Archives and Research, *Oral tradition, songs and ballads, Gaelic tradition*  
**Siobhan Tolland**, Ph.D. student researching *'Mary Brooksbank of Dundee'*  
**Sally Atkins**, Secretary  
**Honorary Research Fellows**  
**Dr Caroline Macafee**, *Scots Language, Scottish National Dictionary Association*  
**Professor Bill Nicolaisen**, *Ethnology, folk narrative, name studies, Scottish place names*  
**Research Associates**  
**Dr David Northcroft**, *Education in the North East*  
**Evelyn Hood**, *Scottish traditions of dance*  
**Postscript**

If you have any information, comments or suggestions of relevance to the work of the Institute, do not hesitate to contact us.

The Institute relies on outside financial support to make many of its activities possible. If you would like to help us in this way and/or become a Friend of the Elphinstone Institute, please contact the Secretary.

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### Braes o Skene

Words by Sheena Blackhall  
Music: traditional - *Plooman Laddies*

Fan first I cam tae the Braes o Skene,  
The corn parks they stood thick an green.  
*Noo ferm rigs they growe hooses gray*  
*Anither change comes wi ilkie day.*

The milkin kye gaed frae park tae byre,  
An Hillie's wids fed a lowpin fire.

The bramble buss fuled the berry pen,  
The chaumer bed held the orra man.

Noo cottar bairns they hae roved awa,  
An swallas bigg in the kitchie waa.

The toon creeps oot like a swallin tide,  
Haps steen an lime ower the kintraside.

Fin last I cam tae the Braes o Skene,  
The fowk war gaen an the fermhouse team.

### Elphinstone Public Lectures

From New Year to May, a series of public lectures has been arranged at Marischal Museum, from 7.30-9.00 p.m. on the following Tuesday evenings:

**16 January** - Ian Hendry, Banchory Primary School / Grampian Enterprise, *'Foo Muckle's Left an for foo Lang? Prospects for the Survival of North-East Scots'*

**6 March** - Professor Ted Cowan, University of Glasgow, *'The Folk Beliefs of the Covenanters'*

**3 April** - Mary Anne Alburger, University of Aberdeen, *'The Fiddling Detective: William C. Honeyman of The People's Friend'*

**8 May** - Shari Cohn, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, *'Second Sight in Scotland: Fact or Fiction'*

**5 June** - Thomas A. McKean, University of Aberdeen, *'Traditional Song and Remembered Community in the Isle of Skye'* (Rescheduled)

ELPHINSTONE



INSTITUTE

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

2001

The Institute exists to study, record and promote the cultural traditions and language of communities in the North of Scotland and, in particular, of the North East. It is also concerned with the cultural traditions of groups that have recently come to live in the region and of Scottish expatriate communities abroad – the Scottish diaspora. Under its Director, Dr Ian Russell, an imaginative programme of fieldwork, research, outreach, collaborative projects, and publications is underway.

## Carpenter funding success



James Madison Carpenter

One of the greatest collections of folksong and folk drama ever assembled in the British Isles is to be made accessible with support of an Arts and Humanities Research Board grant for £120,852. Dr James Madison Carpenter (1888-1984), a Harvard postgraduate, undertook fieldwork in Britain between 1928-1935, amassing a huge collection of material. During this period he recorded traditional singers and participants in mummings' plays, with the aid of the latest technology, the Dictaphone.

The collection includes an estimated 700 texts and 850 tunes of the Child ballad canon, 500 sea songs including sea shanties, and 1000 other songs and ballads, 200 children's singing games and nursery rhymes, 300 mummings' plays, a number of folk tales, and information on customs. Over half of this material was recorded in North-East Scotland, including most of the ballads. Not only is the collection impressive in size, it also bridges the gap between the work of Greig and Duncan (1903-1917) and the notable collectors of the 1950s, like Hamish Henderson and Alan Lomax. The collection was acquired by the United States Library of Congress in 1972, and microfilm copies of the manuscripts are held by Aberdeen Public Library and the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in London.

The funding will enable a joint Sheffield-Aberdeen team, led by Dr Julia Bishop of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, to produce an annotated catalogue of the collection. Dr Thomas A. McKean, with support from the Director, will be responsible for the Scottish contribution to the project.

The research is likely to take two years to complete and will be the basis for the publication of a critical edition, the ultimate goal of the project.

As part of the overall project, the Library of Congress has recently attracted funding to have all of Carpenter's Dictaphone cylinders digitally restored and re-mastered.

### 'Sweeping through the gates' of 'InverSaintCairn'

The Christmas and New Year's walks at Inverallochy (25 December), Cairnbulg (1 January), and St Combs (2 January) have been the most recent focus of the survey of North-East cultural traditions. Ian Russell visited the three fishing villages to record the annual Walks led by the Flute Bands and to interview the key players. The instruments used are fifes tuned in B<sup>b</sup> and each band mustered between 25 and 50 players. There is a fluidity about the numbers as each band welcomes members of the other bands to play with them. Accompanying the flutes is a percussion section of bass drum, tenor drum and triangle (played respectively by a man, a youth and a boy). Their compelling tattoo is strongly reminiscent of the drums of another fishing village, Padstow in Cornwall, on May Day.

Unlike the flute bands of Northern Ireland, the local bands have no political or sectarian allegiances; in fact their origins lie in the Temperance Movement of the last century. They are heavily influenced in their repertoire by evangelical hymns especially those from Ira D. Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos*. Among the favourites are 'Sweet By and By', 'Shall We Gather at the River', 'Sweeping through the Gates', and 'Will Your Anchor Hold?'. About a third of their tunes are secular, including favourite Scottish and First World War songs alongside Victorian parlour ballads. Hence 'The Lea Rig' and 'Bonnie Lass o Fyvie' may be followed by 'Pack Up Your Troubles' or 'Maggie'.

Behind the band come the 'walkers' in couples, wearing their 'Sunday-best' clothes. It is the custom to walk with a friend or neighbour and not a member of your own family. The largest Walk this year was that of St Combs, which numbered an impressive 100 or more couples. Each Walk perambulates every street of their village, pausing at various stations to play for the old and sick, before making a sortie to the neighbouring settlements. They combine the Walk with a wreath-laying ceremony at the War Memorial, dating from a time when the fishermen and women would have been away during November following the herring trade down the east coast to Great Yarmouth, consequently missing Armistice Day.

For many households in the villages, their Walks day is the occasion for the main festive meal of the year, with extended family gatherings and visiting. Curiously, before 1954 the St Combs Walk was on Old Yule (January 5th), but with the introduction of a second New Year Bank holiday in Scotland, it was moved to the 2nd of January (or the day following the Cairnbulg Walk).



St Combs Walk, 2 January 2001

## From the Director



### Who needs friends? We do!

With the support of an active Friends Organisation we can become more effective in fulfilling our cultural, community, and academic remit.

With your support we would be able to:

- Involve the Friends in the work and development of the Institute;
- Raise the public profile of the Institute, by bringing our work to the notice of a larger audience;
- Make contact with more individuals and groups whose story, lore, song or music might be recorded;
- Launch new publications;
- Catalogue and curate new collections, such as that of dancer Bobby Watson;
- Build up our archives – sound, video, photographs, documents, manuscripts;
- Access, provide, and network information more efficiently;
- Organise events and conferences, such as the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention;
- Increase our holdings of significant North East publications and recordings, such as the 78s of George Morris;
- Fund specialist equipment (such as a digital camcorder);

The Friends of the Elphinstone Institute will be officially launched on Monday 12 March 2001 at the Queen's Hotel, Queen's Road, Aberdeen with an Inaugural General Meeting at 7.00 pm, chaired by Robbie Shepherd, followed by an informal ceilidh from 8.15 pm. There will be no charge. Everyone is welcome to come. Please bring a friend.

### 'Tradition Bearer' in Residence

It is planned to create a post of 'Tradition Bearer in Residence' at the Institute, once funding has been secured. The first candidate for this position will be Stanley Robertson, who is part of a splendid chain of transmission with a repertoire comparable to that of his aunt Jeannie Robertson (1908-1975). He has an extraordinary knowledge of Scottish oral tradition, including songs, ballads, folktales, and Traveller lore, which he would document for the archive. He would also visit schools on a weekly basis to introduce children to storytelling and traditional singing, and work with young Travellers, encouraging them to recognise and participate in their rich heritage. As an 'insider' he would be well placed to gain the confidence of other members of the Traveller community and to document and research their lore. About a quarter of the necessary funding has been raised and an approach to the Heritage Lottery Fund is being made.

### 'Take the Floor' Comes to the University

Not the well-known programme featuring Robbie Shepherd, but ten years of recordings of the programmes, have, with help from the Institute, been generously given to the University's Special Libraries and Archives on long term loan by the BBC. The Institute hopes the collection will form the basis of a substantial and important research resource, and the beginning of a sound archive which will serve as a permanent home for musical records of North-East and other Scottish traditional music.

### President Bill

Professor W. F. H. Nicolaisen has been elected President of the Scottish Society for Northern Studies for a three-year period.

### Portraits

Friends and family of the late Professor David Buchan, who was appointed first Director of the Institute, have commissioned a portrait by the noted painter Colin Dunbar. The picture, which is now finished, will hang in the Institute in his memory. You are welcome to call in to see it.

I would also like to acknowledge the gift by Mrs Vera King, on behalf of her late husband, Charles, of three portraits of contemporary Scottish writers – Sheena Blackhall, Alastair Mackie, and Ken Morrice – by another well-known painter, Michael Knowles.

## Traditional singing at Cullerlie



Ropemaking: Singeing and singing

The weekend of traditional singing held at Tom and Anne Reid's farm at Cullerlie, 21-23 July 2000, proved a great success. Uniformly positive feedback has been received from guests and participants alike, and Jack Webster gave the event a glowing report in his *Herald* column.

Besides Tom's and Anne's fine contributions, we were treated to superb singing from the guests: Grace Toland and John Kennedy from Ireland; John Waltham, Will Noble, and Roger Hinchliffe from England; Barbara Grieve from Orkney; and a strong home team, including Joe Aitken, Scott Gardiner, and Gordon Easton. There were also many excellent singers from the floor. Not only was the singing of a high standard but the craft workshops were very well received – drystone dyking from Will Noble, crook-making from George Forbes, farm-baking from Anne, and rope-making from Tom – while Sheena Blackhall helped inspire potential writers of bothy ballads.

The event is to be repeated, 6-8 July 2001, with an equally impressive line-up of guests, including: Róisín White from Armagh, Jerry O'Reilly from Dublin, Hannah Hutton from Northumberland, John Cocking from the Yorkshire Pennines, Billy Jolly from Kirkwall, and from the North East: Barbara-Ann Burnett, the Mackenzie Brothers (Willie, Allan and Gordon), Sheena Blackhall and Charlie Allan.

For a booking form, please contact the Institute.

## Scots in schools Sheena Blackhall

We are delighted to announce Sheena Blackhall's appointment to the Scottish Arts Council Writing Fellowship at the Institute, which will enable her to develop and expand her role in schools and the community, encouraging the use of the local tongue and creative writing in Scots. One of her many projects is an on-line web-mounted resource for primary teachers.

Scots, like any living thing, is constantly growing, but the soil it springs from has altered in character. Technologies change, populations change. The soil can vary in quality from rather stony to well cultivated. A visiting Scots specialist cannot determine, prior to a school visit, how many pupils will have access to Scots at home and therefore much of the work in the primary sector involves presenting Scots to children through the medium of poem, picture, story, song and movement, tailored to suit the age group involved and the particular project they are working on, delivered at a pace and level they can understand. Classes enjoy writing their own songs, and one group working on the theme of *Explorers* produced several verses to the tune of 'The Ball of Kirriemuir', one of which is reproduced below:

*Sir Christopher Columbus set aff tae sea ae day  
He wis luikin fur the Indes bit he fand Americay  
Chorus: In a plane or a boatie on the ocean blue,  
The een tae reach it first, is a famous body noo.*

It is a simple formula, but one that children enjoy. Scots on a sugar lump ... the language has to be enjoyable and relevant. In another city school, I hijacked the tune of 'Wha Saw the 42nd', supplied a new first verse and chorus and encouraged children to add their own:

*Fa sells ye minty sweeties  
Far div ye buy them, ma?  
Fa sells ye minty sweeties  
Is't a corner shop or staa?*

Chorus: *Some folk shop in supermarkets  
Some folk niver shop ava,  
Some folk noo e-mail their eerins  
Niver leave their hoose at aa*

*Fa sells cassettes an cds  
Far div ye buy them, ma? etc*

By the secondary stage, children can be encouraged to write in Scots. Often, they can tell a story (the oral tradition) in Scots. Almost all children know a ghost story. It is a small step from speech to paper, but it is one that many people never take. Everyone is full of stories, but most people are like a bottle with a very stiff cork. My job is to pop that cork ... in Scots, if possible.

Any school wishing a teaching visit from the Writing Fellow should contact the Elphinstone Institute to arrange a suitable time. Travel expenses are met by the host school; otherwise the service is free.

### Dates for Your Diary

**12 March 2001**  
Launch of the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute

**6-8 July 2001**  
Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie

**25-29 July 2001**  
North Atlantic Fiddle Convention

## Crossing boundaries

Plans are coming together for the first ever North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, to be hosted by the Institute this summer in Aberdeen.



The conference, timed for the mornings, has attracted numerous offers of academic papers on a wide range of subjects from an international field; keynote speakers have been invited; guests for the concerts and workshops have been identified (to be held at Marischal College, the Music Hall, the Lemon Tree, and Woodend Barn); and venues and timings programmed. One feature of the event is a busking trail around the City, providing free performances and taking the music to new audiences. And there are the 'fiddle friendly' pubs that will welcome *ad hoc* sessions.

The Convention is being co-ordinated by an enthusiastic and experienced local group, which includes James Alexander, Pete MacCallum, Malcolm Reavell, Sandy Tweddle, Cheryl Croydon (for the Arts and Divinity Faculty), and the convenors Mary Anne Alburger and Ian Russell.

Our international partners are also finalising their plans. Professor Jan-Petter Blom of the University of Bergen, in collaboration with the Ole Bull Academy and Hardanger Folk Museum, has brought together a group of scholars and performers, Åse Teigland, Frank Rolland, Håken Högerno, Øyvind Vabø, Håkon Asheim, largely from Hordaland County,

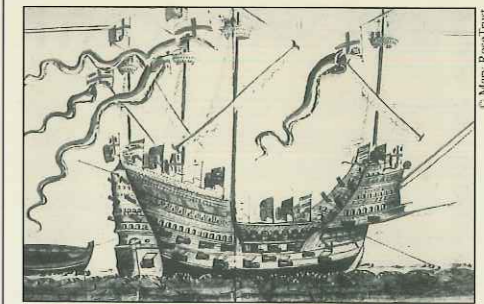
home of the Hardanger fiddle. Professor Birgitta Skarin Frykman of the University of Gothenburg with her colleague Dr Ingrid Lomfors has made similar plans. Their performers will include a nickleharpen player as well as

fiddlers and dancers (Goran Premberg, Karin Eriksson ...). The group from the Irish World Music Centre at the University of Limerick, co-ordinated by Sandra Joyce with their director, Professor Mícheál Ó'Súilleabháin, will include several fiddlers of international fame, including Liz Doherty and Matt Cranitch. Finally we will be welcoming a party from Inverness, Cape Breton (the Ceilidh Trail School and University College), which will include fiddler Carl Mackenzie, step-dancer Mary Janet MacDonald, pianist Janine Randall, and scholars Sheldon MacInnes and Richard MacKinnon.

We are not short of Scottish and North-East talent either. The Cullivoe Band will travel from North Yell in the Shetlands. James Alexander, Carole Anderson, Paul Anderson, Jean-Ann Callender, Carmen Higgins, Sara Reith, Sandy Tweddle, Karen Steven (plus others ...) and the great Alasdair Fraser will be with us. We also look forward to seeing the 'grand old man' of North-East fiddle, Bert Murray MBE, and our Patron, Aly Bain.

To register an interest and receive a booking form, please contact the Institute. Offers of help and support, or sponsorship, will be warmly welcomed.

## News from the Peter A. Hall Research Fellow



### Fiddles from the 16th century to play again

For the first time, music will be heard based on fiddles found on Henry VIII's ship the *Mary Rose*, which sank in 1567. Mary Anne Alburger, the Peter A. Hall Research Fellow, whose article about the instruments, 'The "Fydlill in Fist"', appeared in the *Galpin Society Journal*, April 2000, has been asked by the Mary Rose Trust to help reconstruct the two instruments. She hopes to work with violin-maker, David Rattray, curator of the instrumental collection at the Royal Academy of Music, London.

### Romance from Sir John Clerk of Penicuik

By a pupil of Corelli, Clerk's 1702 Cantata 'Odo di Mesto Intorno', has been recently performed in Edinburgh, at St Giles Cathedral, and at St Cecilia's Hall, in an edition by Mary Anne. The cantata was written to celebrate the coming-of-age of a child bride, and the consummation of a marriage made when she was only 13. This charming work was originally edited by Mary Anne for her group 'Kist of Musick', set up with Aberdeen-born fiddler Alastair Hardie. Mary Anne currently plays with the Aberdeen baroque group 'Apollo's Banquet'.

### The perils of patronage

Simon Fraser of Knockie (1773-1852), was a Scottish fiddler, composer, collector of Gaelic airs, and publisher of *Airs and Melodies Peculiar to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (1816). In a paper given at the annual conference of the Society for Research into the Eighteenth Century, in Aberdeen, Mary Anne presented some of Fraser's unpublished correspondence with Sir Walter Scott, through which, from 1816 to 1826, Fraser tried to gain Scott's patronage and support. However, he failed to get his later works either dedicated to the King, as he desperately desired, or published.



The Cullivoe Traditional Fiddlers from North Yell, Shetland

## Leave it to the bairns: the child in Dundee jute strikes

Siobhan Tolland writes ... The photo to the right depicts Dundee jute strikers playing 'jingo-ring', a popular children's game at the turn of the century. In Dundee, the jingo-ring was also a popular strike custom that contributed to the distinctly carnivalesque nature of jute strikes. Dundee had one of the highest child labour rates in Britain, but most analyses (past and present) tend to represent the child as a naturally passive subject. Enacting the jingo-ring as child's game and strike custom, however, suggests that children not only actively participated in strikes, but that they also contributed to the 'cultural dialogue' of the Dundee strike tradition. Far from being passive in labour disputes, children are reported as being the most aggressive pickets, as well as being the actual instigators of the month-long spinners' strike of 1912. Children therefore seem to have been active political and cultural agents in the customs and culture of the Dundee jute strikes.



Dundee City Council, Central Library