

Carpenter's 'Secrets'

The James Madison Carpenter Collection is beginning to yield up its secrets more than sixty years after it was made. Songs, mummers plays, dances, and instrumental music from the more than 13,000 manuscript pages will be entered in the customised XML database, making these snapshots of tradition easily accessible for the first time since the 1930s.

The collection contains a great deal of unique material, including cylinder recordings which will allow us to hear some of Gavin Greig's and James Duncan's contributors, previously only available through pen and paper transcriptions.

According to team leader Dr Julia Bishop, writing in a special Carpenter issue of *Folk Music Journal* (1998), one of the great treasures in the collection is the repertoire of Bell Duncan of Lambhill, Alford, which is eagerly anticipated by enthusiasts and scholars alike. Duncan sang a wide range of songs, including more than sixty classic ballads. Carpenter wrote: 'Her texts are long and full, [with] many of the songs learned from her mother and others sixty-five, seventy years earlier', that is, around 1860 or 1865.

Such a repertoire is just one example of what we have to look forward to from this rich and diverse source, surely the most important unpublished collection of North-East material known.

Thomas A. McKean



Bell Duncan - 'the greatest ballad singer of all time'

American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Publications News

Our latest publication – *The Bedesman and the Hodbearer: The Epistolary Friendship of Francis James Child and William Walker*, edited by Mary Ellen Brown – has been well received, with the reviewer in *The Leopard* commenting: 'This publication is a mine of information about the North East and its song and language towards the end of the 19th century, while the letters are a delight to read.' It is available from the Institute for £10.00 plus £1.00 p & p.

Publications in the pipeline include: *The Ballad World*, a collection of papers from the 1999 Ballad Commission Conference (Kommission für Volksdichtung: SIEF) held in Aberdeen; *Crossing Boundaries*, a collection of papers from the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, 2001; and *Folksong: Tradition and Revival*, a selection of papers presented at the conference to celebrate the centenary of the founding of the Folk Song Society in 1998.

The Ballads of Glenbuchat, edited by the late David Buchan, presents a previously unpublished manuscript from the University's Historic Collections, which is attributed to the Rev Robert Scott, parish minister at Glenbuchat, and dated 1817. It is accompanied by an essay on the socio-cultural context of the manuscript and the ballads it contains, by Professor James Moreira (Director of the North East Archive at the University of Maine). Publication is due later this year.

Dates for Your Diary 20-21 April 2002 Traditional Storytelling Weekend at Woodend Barn

28-30 June 2002 Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie **10-13 October 2002** Hugh Miller Bicentenary Conference, Cromarty

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*
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*
Joy Fraser, Ph.D. student researching - *'the haggis as food, legend, and popular culture'*
Roddy Mackenzie, M.Phil. student researching *the contemporary use of healing wells*
Siobhan Tolland, Ph.D. student researching *'Mary Brooksbank of Dundee'*
Catriona Low, Secretary

Honorary Research Fellows

Dr Mary Anne Alburger, *Traditional music and song, fiddle making, 18th century culture*
Dr Caroline Macafee, *Scots Language, Scottish National Dictionary Association*
Professor Bill Nicolaisen, *Ethnology, folk narrative, name studies, Scottish place names*

Research Associates

Evelyn Hood, *Scottish traditions of dance*
Dr David Northcroft, *Education in the North East*
Les Wheeler, *Scots language, education*

Postscript

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

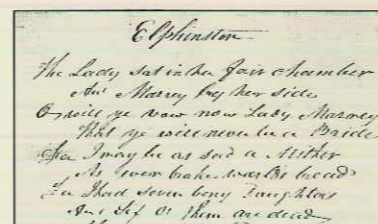
The Institute relies on outside financial support to make many of its activities possible. If you would like to help us in this way and/or become a Friend of the Elphinstone Institute, please contact the Secretary.

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Opening of the ballad 'Elphinstone' (Child 91) from Glenbuchat MS, Historic Collections, University of Aberdeen

ELPHINSTONE



INSTITUTE

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

2002

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, education initiatives, and publications is underway.

Scottish Traveller Project Gets Major Funding



Scottish Travellers at the famous Aikey Brae Fair, Aberdeenshire, c.1906.

William Rennie, Sturfield

A project to research, archive, and promote the oral and cultural traditions of Scottish Travellers in the North East is to receive major support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The award of £90,000, supplemented by a further £10,000 from the University's Development Trust, was announced in the New Year. The project will run for three years under the direction of a keyworker appointed for the purpose. As well as researching and documenting Traveller lore, the keyworker will visit schools and community groups to promote storytelling and other Traveller traditions.

The significance of Scottish Travellers' culture has been recognised since the 1950s through the pioneering work of Hamish Henderson and others connected with the School of Scottish Studies. Jeannie Robertson of Aberdeen (1908-1975) is acknowledged as the greatest singer of ballads ever recorded in Scotland, and other Travellers from the North East, such as Jane Turriff, Stanley Robertson, Elizabeth Stewart, Carmen Higgins, Lucy Stewart (d.1984), and Davie Stewart (1901-1972), are considered pre-eminent tradition bearers.

The Institute will provide the ethnographic expertise and guidance for the project, making 'the record' available through sound and video, on the internet, and through publications. The keyworker will also work with young Travellers to encourage their active participation in the project, through the Traveller Education and Information Project (North East) based at Aberdeen Foyer.

'It is a great boost to the work of the Institute,' commented Ian Russell. 'We aim to build relations with schools, so that pupils become aware of the rich heritage of Scottish traditions among the Travellers. It will help counteract the negative images of the Travelling People that abound in Scottish society by demonstrating the creative contribution that Travellers have made, and continue to make, to our cultural identity.'



The Traveller Education and Information Project - Girls from Aberdeen in a real Gypsy wagon at the Open Roads Festival in Glasgow in 2000

Elphinstone Public Lectures

From New Year to May, a series of public lectures has been arranged at the Regent Lecture Theatre, Regent Walk, Old Aberdeen, 7.30-9.00p.m. on the following Tuesday evenings:

22 January – Dr Ian Russell, University of Aberdeen, *'The Flute Bands of North-East Scotland: Music, Tradition, and Community'*

19 February – Dr Katherine Campbell, University of Edinburgh, *'Three Centres of North-East Fiddling: Fochabers, Banchory, and Tarland'*

19 March – Sheena Blackhall, University of Aberdeen, *'Taking the Doric Forward'*

16 April – Dr Heather Holmes, Napier University/Scottish Executive, *'The Potato in Scotland: A Social History'*

21 May – Dr James Robertson, Kingskettle, Fife, *'Hugh Miller: Scenes and Legends'*

George Reid Remembered

The George Reid Memorial Fellowship Appeal was launched last November by its patrons Roddy Begg, Buff and Margaret Hardie, John and Sheila Hargreaves, Sheila Reid, Graeme Roberts, Steve and Eva Robertson, Ian Russell, and Robbie Shepherd – the aim: to fund a position at the Elphinstone Institute.

This aim reflects George's great interest in and passion for the oral and cultural traditions, and language of North-East Scotland. The fellowship will enable Stanley Robertson, one of Scotland's leading storytellers and ballad singers, to document his own lore and that of his family and community, and visit local schools to conduct storytelling and singing workshops. We plan to dovetail this important initiative with the HLF funded project announced above. If you would like to learn more about the Fellowship and/or offer support for it, please contact the Secretary.



George William Reid (1944-2000), MA LLD, OBE



2002 promises to be a very busy year with new avenues of research opening up, the taught M.Litt. in Ethnology and Folklore coming on stream, a conference on Hugh Miller, two weekend festivals, the evening public lecture series, and our education outreach work – not forgetting our publications programme.

Hugh Miller in Context

To mark the bicentenary of Hugh Miller (1802-1856), a conference is being held in Cromarty, 10-13 October 2002, under the auspices of the Cromarty Arts Trust. The Elphinstone Institute has been invited by Convenor Lester Borley, to organise one of the three conference themes: 'Ethnology and Social History'. This will address, in particular, Miller's *Scenes and Legends* and *My Schools and Schoolmasters*. The other two themes are geology/natural history and Miller's role in the socio-political debate that led to the Disruption. As well as the Elphinstone Institute, the National Trust for Scotland, the University of the Highlands and Islands (Highland Theological College at Dingwall), and Scottish Natural Heritage are involved in the organisation. This will be a high profile event, attracting international speakers and delegates.

New Research

We have recently welcomed Roddy Mackenzie to the Institute. Roddy, whose background is in nursing, is registered for an M.Phil and will be researching the contemporary uses of healing wells.

Congratulations

Warm congratulations to the broadcaster Robbie Shepherd, MBE, who was awarded the honorary degree of Master of the University at the November graduations. Robbie is Chairman of the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute.

The Friends

The AGM of the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute will be held in the Seminar Room, Queen Mother Library, on Monday 18 March, 7.00 – 8.30 p.m.

M.Litt in Ethnology and Folklore

This new postgraduate course will begin in October 2002. It can be taken full-time (12 months) or part-time (24 months). The course covers the theory and practice of Ethnology and Folklore. It aims to develop a broad-based understanding of how the disciplines evolved, and offer an introduction to the major genres of study – material culture, custom and belief, oral traditions, childlore and games, sports and pastimes – with a special concentration on Scottish materials. For more information contact the Institute.

KIST UPDATE

www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/kist/

According to the factsheet on the Scots Language issued by the Education Department's Arts and Cultural Heritage Division (April 2001), the Scottish Executive 'considers the Scots language to be an important part of Scotland's linguistic and cultural heritage'. It goes on to note that Scots has an important place in schools, where it can help 'to foster a sense of personal and national identity through pupils' experience and study of Scots writing and Scots songs and through their conscious awareness and use of Scots language.'

The National guidelines on English language acknowledge that Scots history should be studied, and teachers are now encouraged to value the spoken language which pupils bring to school. Scottish texts are to be used in classrooms in the form of poetry, fiction, song, etc. from past and present sources. The Elphinstone Kist, a rich repository of local history, poetry and song, is a valuable and accessible teaching resource for developing knowledge and understanding of Scots in the classroom. The material in the Kist is easily accessible with the click of a mouse, and can be downloaded to supplement material in primary and secondary schools, or for use by the wider community in the North East and beyond.

The hundreds of website pages in the Kist cater for every taste and have all sorts of uses. The background and context section is an excellent introduction to anyone interested in the origins of North-East Scots in the wider academic community. Social conditions past and present are presented first hand, through interviews conducted with local people, or via their own writing. To promote the language and culture as widely as possible, many strands make up this particular web: bothy and traditional ballads, information on the artistic heritage of the area, writing that reflects contemporary life, and a sampling of the very rich literature from pastmasters of Scots.

Although the work of augmenting and updating the contents of the Kist continues, the next phase is to identify ways in which it can best serve the purpose it was intended for: to promote the North East in schools, at home and abroad, its language, culture and people. *The thrissle-heid is wechty wi seeds...Dimma be blate tae blaw them tae the fower airts!*

Sheena Blackhall

'Doric's no Dodo'

by Sheena Blackhall
Tune: 'Barnyards o Delgaty'

*Fin I wis young an gaed tae skweel,
Ye cudna spikk the Scots ava,
Bit learnin English wisna hard,
Instead o ae tongue I hid twa.*

*Chorus:
Mart an office, near an far,
Scots is lowpin, moo fae moo;
Wirds ye canna bind nor bar;
As weel cheenge girse fae green tae blue.*

*Open up yer lugs, it's thrivin
At the shops, the fitba match;
Scots is like the seeds o thissle,
Grows in ony neuk or patch.*

*Dreich an dour an gleg an roosty,
Phrases like 'Ca cannie noo',
Are as much a pairt o Scotland's
Tattie crisps an irn bru.*

*Ye can legislate or rule
Tae banish Scots or heeze it quick;
There's a far mair powerfu tool:
Fowk are votin wi their spikk.*

Cullerlie Singing Weekend

Once again Tom and Anne Reid's farm at Cullerlie will be the venue for the Traditional Singing Weekend, 28-30 June 2002. The third in the series, we plan to make it every bit as good as the 2000 and 2001 festivals.

We have an impressive line-up of guests from all over the UK and from Ireland. The home team includes Margaret Bennett, Sheena Blackhall, Janice and Kathleen Clark, Danny Couper, Jock Duncan, and Jim and Kate Taylor. From Cornwall we welcome Vic Legg, from Northamptonshire, Jeff Wesley; and from Mullaghbawn in Northern Ireland, Patricia Flynn and Mick Quinn. Our Orcadian guest is Billy Budge, former Coxswain of the Longhope Lifeboat.

Included in the workshops are bothy ballad writing, waulking songs, quilting, sheep clipping, a sheepdog demonstration, farmhouse cooking, and a tour of Cullerlie Farm Museum. Dr Margaret Bennett will be giving a talk on the Saturday morning entitled 'Highland Folkways'. There will also be several singarounds and two ceilidhs featuring the guests.

Last year's guests were exceptional and, together with many fine singers from the floor, helped to create a superb atmosphere. Thank you to Róisín White, Jerry O'Reilly, Hannah Hutton, John Cocking, Billy Jolly, Barbara-Ann Burnett, Allan and Gordon Mackenzie, Geordie Murison, Sheena Blackhall and Charlie Allan.



Three of last year's guests - Hannah Hutton with Allan and Gordon MacKenzie

Wendy de Ruiter

Storytelling at Banchory

The Institute, in partnership with Woodend Arts Association, is organising a storytelling festival on 20-21 April 2002 to present the very best in traditional and local storytelling. The weekend will be the first of its kind in the North East, and will be of great interest to the many enthusiasts for a good yarn, as well as budding storytellers and hardened *shenachies*.

The guests represent a rich mix of talents from a range of backgrounds, including Traveller tradition. John Campbell and Len Graham from Mullaghbawn, County Armagh, will be joined by Bob Pegg and Alec John Williamson from Ross-shire, together with Aberdeen's Stanley Robertson and Sheena Blackhall. Other talented local storytellers at the festival include Sandy Stronach, 'Bunty' Penny, Lorna Alexander, and Jackie Ross. Besides workshops, storygroups, and ceilidhs, there will also be two talks – one by Professor Bill Nicolaisen on contemporary legends, and the other by Dr Mairi MacArthur on the Gaelic storytelling tradition.

This will be a very special occasion, and one not to be missed. Bookings can be made through Woodend Barn (01330 825431) or through the Institute. Don't delay, places will be limited.

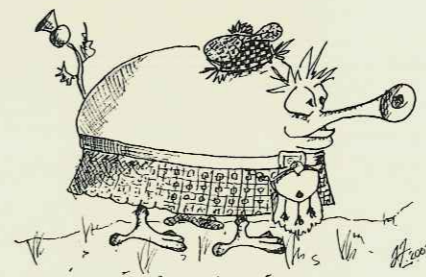


John Campbell and Len Graham

'Gie her a Haggis!'

In October 2001 I started work on a PhD at the Elphinstone Institute on the subject of 'Haggis as Food, Legend and Popular Culture'. My aim is to present an analysis of this prominent symbol of Scottishness as a 'cultural complex' involving interrelated narratives, beliefs, customs and material culture. I am approaching these diverse expressive cultural materials from three main perspectives: foodways, narrative and popular culture studies. Firstly, I am tracing the history of the dish, and considering the processes underlying its construction as a cultural symbol. Secondly, I am analysing the legends which portray the haggis as a living creature, considering issues of context, style and form, and the meanings and significance of the legends for their tellers and audiences. Thirdly, I am exploring how haggis is represented in Scottish tourism and popular culture, for example through popular literature and media, souvenirs, the performances of tour guides, and so on. I hope in particular to use the case of the haggis to explore the complex interplay between symbol and stereotype in representations and perceptions of Scottishness on the part of both in- and outsiders. Any materials or anecdotes whatsoever relating to haggis as food and/or as living creature, forwarded to me at the Institute, would be very gratefully received.

Joy Fraser



Mary Anne Alburger plays a copy of a fiddle from the Mary Rose

Music from the Mary Rose

During the recent holidays you may have heard Dr Alburger on BBC Radio 4's 'Sounds from the Seabed'. The programme, recorded in Portsmouth, featured instruments recreated from those found on Henry VIII's ship, which sank in 1545.

The photograph here was taken during the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention in July 2001, when Mary Anne, with Senior Curator Neil Curtis, put on Marischal Museum's 'Fiddles High and Low' exhibition. Now the Flora MacDonald Teaching Fellow in University Music, she is a consultant for a forthcoming web-based project for Historic Collections featuring the University's collection of manuscripts associated with the famous North-East fiddler, James Scott Skinner.

'The Kind They Used To Burn'

I am at the moment writing up my thesis on Mary Brooksbank and the Dundee socialist women's tradition. Mary Brooksbank was born in Aberdeen in 1897, but moved to Dundee at an early age and spent most of her life there. It was in Dundee that Mary gained her reputation as a socialist orator, poet, and folk singer, and it is these three aspects of her life that are explored in my thesis. The thesis examines Mary's ideas about herself and her community. It looks at Mary's reputation as a communist, and analyses Mary's attempts to challenge the way in which she was seen by taking control over her own represented identity. Mary Brooksbank considered herself as a woman driven by the need to improve the conditions of her community. Her political activity and art reflect her desire to assert control over her own identity, as well as being part of a communal socialist articulation. I am also looking at Mary as a local legend within Dundee, and I would be grateful if anybody with information regarding this aspect of Mary could get in touch with me at the Institute.

Siobhan Tolland