

Researching, recording, and promoting the cultural traditions of North and North-East Scotland

Carpenter Team Makes Critical Breakthrough



David Atkinson, 'Bob' Walser, Tom McKean, Julia Bishop, Elaine Bradke, Ian Russell, Eddie Cass

In 2001, a joint Sheffield-Aberdeen team won a major award from the Arts and Humanities Research Board to produce an annotated catalogue of the vast collection of folk song and folk drama collected in Britain by Harvard postgraduate James Madison Carpenter between 1928 and 1935 (see <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/carpenter/>). Carpenter's collection is important in its scale – over 2000 ballads and songs, some 200 singing games and nursery rhymes and 300 folk plays – but it is also important because Carpenter was one of the first collectors to use the new technology of mechanical recording in his work.

A British Academy Larger Research Grant has recently been awarded to the team to enable cataloguing, transcription, and annotation work to be undertaken on the Dictaphone cylinders, which have been digitised by the Library of Congress. Under an AHRB award for the Creative and Performing Arts, the project leader, Dr Julia Bishop, has recently completed work on the biographies of some of the North-East contributors to the collection.

A recent \$150,000 award from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the main humanities funding body in the United States, will allow work on the collection to continue. In this phase, the Carpenter team will undertake the detailed editorial work necessary to produce a critical edition of Carpenter's materials. The project will proceed under the auspices of the American Folklore Society in the USA and the Elphinstone Institute in the UK.

Dr Julia Bishop, Dr Tom McKean, and Dr Ian Russell will be directly involved, with Institute Secretary, Alison Sharman, giving administrative support. Other members of the team are Dr Tim Lloyd (AFS), Dr David Atkinson, Dr Elaine Bradke, Dr Eddie Cass, and Dr Robert Young Walser. A North-East input to the project is highly appropriate, as more than half of Carpenter's material was recorded in the region.

Identity Conference

On 13 July, a one-day conference was organised by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), 'Who do we think we are? - Heritage and Identity in the UK Today', at the British Museum, which included an eclectic line-up of celebrities and experts ranging from Melvin Bragg to Billy Bragg. The Elphinstone Institute's 'The Oral and Cultural Traditions of Scottish Travellers', headed by Stanley Robertson, was one of a select group of three projects featured in a multi-media exhibition in the concourse.

The exhibition, designed by the University's Central Printing Services, depicted images of Travellers from the past alongside contemporary photographs of Travellers, together with the project brief.

In the conference interesting insights into 'our' identity were provided by the Director of the British Museum, broadcaster Patrick Wright, and Professor Paul Gilroy (Yale University). HLF Chair Liz Forgan and Deborah Mattinson (Director of Opinion Leader Research) then spoke about the work of Citizen's juries and public research into what heritage is. (Dr Ian Russell had appeared before one of the juries in Glasgow on 8 May to answer questions on the Travellers project.)

A panel comprising Billy Bragg, writer Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Prof. Fiona McLean (Glasgow Caledonian University), and Common Ground's Sue Clifford, talked about their views of a common heritage and identity. A wide-ranging discussion covered issues such as the BNP hijacking Britishness and the point that we are in fact a very diverse rather than homogenous nationality – English itself has over 50 linguistic roots.

The afternoon featured a roller-coaster presentation, which was scripted as an interview but turned out to be a monologue, by Ruby Wax on an American's view of the British. Finally the media finished off with offerings from *Big Brother /Restoration's* Peter Bazalgette and writer Tristram Hunt about how media do and can represent heritage.

The event was concerned more with the philosophy of identity than heritage in any other sense and it provided an interesting introduction to the HLF initiative. Stanley commented: 'We felt honoured to be selected... Throngs of people mulled round the display and asked questions about the work. I particularly enjoyed telling people about the project, singing songs, and sharing with them parts of my culture.'

Stanley was invited to the opening of the Scottish Parliament on 9 October as the special guest of MSP Brian Adam.



TOP: Stanley Robertson talks about the Travellers project to Liz Forgan (Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund)

BOTTOM: Stanley Robertson with Billy Bragg and Sue Clifford (Director of Common Ground)

Boaties Great Success

The Boaties, the ambitious Peterhead-based craft residency to pass on the skill of making model 'fifies', officially ended on 28 August. This local tradition, which goes back for a century and a half, was celebrated by the residency, which was organised by the Institute, with support from Aberdeenshire Council Heritage Division and the Scottish Arts Council,

Under the guidance of local craftsmen John Buchan, Jim Reid, and Sam Allan, six school-age 'apprentice' modellers and nine adults have spent the last three months constructing their own boatie at the Peterhead Maritime Heritage Centre. Between them, they have created an entire flotilla of fifies - some 15 models have either been finished or are in the last stages of construction.

Such has been the enthusiasm of the younger modellers that those who had not managed to complete the work when the Heritage Centre space had to be vacated are continuing in the Sea Cadets' workshop. In the words of one local, 'It has been a phenomenal success. The whole town has benefited from the "sense of place" the project has brought.' The aim of the project, to pass boatie-building skills on to a new generation has certainly been achieved.

Links have been established with Uddevalla in Sweden through the Bohusläns Museum, where there is a similar tradition of model boat building. The project owed much of its success to the tireless



Boatie apprentice Heather Locke lays the first plank, under the watchful eye of Jim Reid

enthusiasm of co-ordinator, Stephen Ritchie, who has exhibited at Portsoy Boat Festival, Eyemouth Maritime Festival, Cullerlie Singing Weekend, and at Peterhead Maritime Rescue Day.

The project has been fully recorded and the plans, photographs, interviews, film of work in progress, and of the sailing of the boaties at Boddam, will be the basis for a touring exhibition, which will be ready for early 2005 – the UK 'Year of the Sea'.



Students, staff, and Robbie Shepherd at the start of a new academic year

Iain Stewart, Martha Stewart, Robbie Shepherd (Chairman of the Friends of the Institute), Bee Kerr, Shirley Watson, Colin Milton, Ian Russell, Alison Sharman, Tom McKean, Carley Williams, Jen-Hao Cheng

Elizabeth Stewart at the Gates of 'Binnorrie'



'**Binnorrie**', the first of a projected series of recordings representing the rich musical heritage of the Travelling People of Scotland has just been released by the University of Aberdeen's Elphinstone Institute. The double CD has more than two hours of music and features over thirty tracks of songs and instrumental pieces by one of the finest living interpreters of the tradition, Elizabeth Stewart. As the late Hamish Henderson revealed some fifty years ago through his pioneering fieldwork, Scottish Travellers have played a key part in preserving native

musical traditions and the new CD is a vivid reminder of just how much we owe to the Travellers, the oldest of Scotland's minority peoples. It is not just a matter of preservation, however. The Travellers' relationship with Scotland's musical traditions has always been an active and dynamic one – one of the most effective tragic ballads in the collection, 'Lord Gordon's Bonnie Boys', is a contemporary composition by Elizabeth herself, and illustrates her deep inwardness with the ballad idiom, while in 'The Foreign Sailor',

she supplies a beautifully apt new tune for words recalled from her Aunt Lucy's singing.

The material on the album reflects the sheer variety of the folk tradition in tone and tempo, subject matter, and provenance : 'Lord Gordon' is preceded by the rural mock-pathos of a 'Big Strong Strappin Young Hizzy' lamenting that she canna get a lad, and is followed by the urban sentimentality of the nineteenth-century temperance song usually known as 'Faither's Old Coat' (here 'Peer Wee Jockie Clark'). One piano tune, 'The Queen o the Dukkker' is rooted in the local, taking its title from the family history of the Stewarts of Fetterangus, while the immediately preceding song, 'The Gallant Rangers' is originally from the other side of the Atlantic. But wherever the material comes from and whatever it is concerned with, it is performed with memorable musicianship and authority. The recordings have been impeccably produced by Alison McMorland of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, who also contributes an informative biographical note, drawing on the work she has been doing with Elizabeth Stewart for a forthcoming book on Elizabeth's life and music. Tom McKean of the Elphinstone Institute contributes full and informative notes on each of the songs.

Elizabeth Stewart, *'Binnorrie': Songs, Ballads, and Tunes*, Traveller Traditions of North-East Scotland No. 1, EICD 002, Elphinstone Institute, 2004, £16.00 plus post & packaging (£1 in UK, £2 in EU, £3 worldwide).

From the Director



At the start of a new academic year I would like to express my appreciation for the support the Institute has received, both from within the University and outwith. Under the new organisational structure of the University, the Institute has been placed within the College of Arts and Social Sciences, as part of the School of Education. This move reflects the contribution to outreach the Institute makes, especially in our work with local schools, teachers, and education students. It promises to be a very positive association, in which the work of the Institute will be able to develop and prosper. In turn, our contribution to raising the awareness of North-East language, culture, and tradition will be maximised.

Support from outside the University comes in many forms, most notably through the activities of the Friends of the Institute, and I would urge readers to take out membership. Among the many ways the Friends have given support are through the purchase of a state-of-the-art digital SLR camera, a listening station, and a growing library of commercial CDs and videos, which feature traditional performance or subject matter. The Friends have also given their all important backing to our events.

In addition there are individual donors and benefactors, whose support is vital to our future. I would like to mention Professor William B. McCarthy of Pennsylvania State University, who has generously donated to the Buchan Library a set of books, relevant to the North-East and ballad studies, none of which did we previously possess copies. Aberdeen Folk Club similarly donated a collection of books on folk song that had formerly belonged to the late Arthur Argo.

The Institute has also received excellent support for the Boaties craft project, based in Peterhead. Sponsors include: Scottish Arts Council; Aberdeenshire Council; Buchanness Model Yachting Club; Friends of Elphinstone Institute; Willowbank Adult Training Centre, Peterhead; Robertson Road Resource Centre, Fraserburgh; Banff and Buchan College; Peterhead Bay Authority; Shell UK; Jackson Trawls; Peterhead Common Good Fund; Peterhead Network Development Group; Davidson's Ship Painters; Paul Williamson; Peterhead & District Round Table; Stonehaven Maritime Rescue, and anonymous donors.

Finally I would like to commend our postgraduate study programme. Suitably qualified candidates can enrol for PhD and M.Phil by research or for our taught M.Litt programme. The M.Litt in Ethnology and Folklore includes both theory and practice and aims to develop a broad understanding of how the discipline has evolved. The component courses offer an introduction to the major genres of study, including oral tradition, custom and belief, material culture, childlore, language, sports and past times, with a special concentration on the Scottish context. Candidates are also given research training and fieldwork experience. For more information and an application form, please contact the Institute.

Scottish Schooling Explored

'The best educated counties in the best educated country in the world'. When Sir Henry Craik, the founding Secretary of the Scottish Education Department, made this pronouncement just over a century ago, he was voicing a widely held belief north of the border: that Scotland had, since the age of John Knox, led the world (and especially England) in its provision of education for all sections of its population, however poor and humble. And, with its lore of lads o' pairs, of dominies, of parish skweels and of 'getting on', it was the counties of the North-East which were the heartland of such ideals.

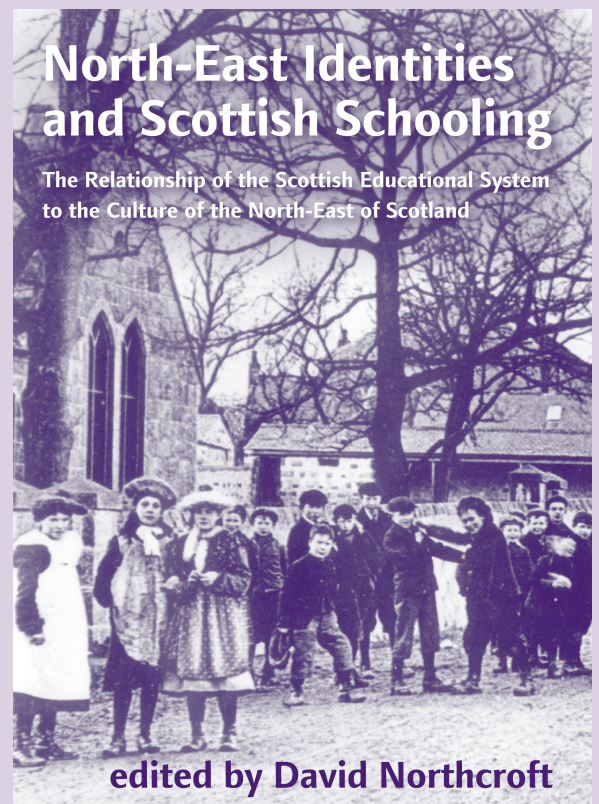
But when J. R. Allan recollected of one of his teachers that, 'A' he taught me was the weight o' the tawse', he was reminding us that behind the official version there has always existed a more complex story, one that is to be met in the personal recollections of those who were at the receiving end. For some 'opportunity' and 'getting on' were benefits of the system, but for others the local school is remembered as an austere and over-disciplined place, where individual needs, and the culture and the tongue of their own communities, were systematically repressed.

These are the issues which inform the Elphinstone Institute's forthcoming publication, *North-East Identities and Scottish Schooling*, edited and compiled by David Northcroft. Chapters by Ian Campbell, Derrick McClure, David Northcroft, and Douglas Young explore key aspects of Scottish schooling, such as the classroom treatment of the Doric, the ways in which individual memory and received myth intermingle to tell the story of the local parish school, and the ways in which writers such as Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Ian Macpherson, and Jessie Kesson have represented their own school experiences in their books. Gordon Booth provides a Victorian case study of the role of 'home education', while Robert Anderson – author of the definitive *Education and the Scottish People* – places the Scottish system in its wider European context. Two papers assess the value of efforts to introduce a radical child-centredness in place of the traditionally academic regime: Peter Murphy examines the fate of R. F. McKenzie's reforms at Summerhill Academy in the 1970s; Robbie Robertson makes an impassioned plea for a constructive upheaval in both methods and curriculum in order to meet the new realities of the computer age.

The collection is completed by the inclusion of generous excerpts from interviews with five 'North-East folk' talking personally about their own school experiences – a group that includes James Michie and Norman Harper. There is also an extensive bibliography of biographical, literary, and historical sources in the field.

With its combination of authoritative writing and first-hand accounts, *North-East Identities and Scottish Schooling* offers both the student and the general reader a lively reassessment of what is of enduring worth in the North-East's rich and frequently contentious educational inheritance.

David Northcroft is author of Scots at School (Edinburgh University Press, 2003) and Research Associate of the Elphinstone Institute



Concert to Honour the 'Bothy Ballad King'

A memorial concert to celebrate the life of the 'Bothy Ballad King' Tam Reid will bring together outstanding traditional singers and musicians from all over the UK when it is held later this month. The Tam Reid Memorial Concert, organised jointly by the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute, at the University of Aberdeen, and the Aberdeen branch of the Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland (TMSA), will be held on Saturday 30 October at Thainstone Centre, Inverurie, from 7.30 pm to 11.00 pm.

Tam Reid (1929 – 2003), was a legendary singer, having been crowned in 1977, the 'Bothy Ballad King', before a crowd of 10,000 people at the Haughs in Turriff, a title that remained his until his death in January 2003. Dr Ian Russell said: 'Tam was a great friend and supporter of the Elphinstone Institute. This is a wonderful opportunity to salute his memory and to hear some of the finest traditional singers and musicians from the UK, who will all be gathered to pay tribute to the great man.'

Guest performers who have been invited to take part in the concert include some of the country's best loved traditional singers and musicians, with Robbie Shepherd as compère, including Joe Aitken, the Foundry Band, Robert Lovie, Margaret Bennett, Sheena Blackhall, Brian Dawson, Jock Duncan, Gordon Easton, Shirley Foulkes, Scott Gardiner, Alex Green and Madeline Miller, Barbara Greive, Hannah Hutton, David McCracken, Allan McKenzie, Gordon McKenzie, Willie McKenzie, Frank McNally, Geordie Murison, Ian Pirie, Alan and Carole Prior, Sara Reith, Doris Rougvie, Tony Shearer, Jim Taylor, Kate Taylor, John Valentine, Sarah Walker, and John Waltham.

Tickets for the concert are priced at £10 (£8 concession), and are available from the Elphinstone Institute. Funds raised will support the British Heart Foundation, and the Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institution.



Tam Reid - 'the Bothy Ballad King'
(1929 - 2003)

Courtesy of the Press & Journal

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*

Dr Thomas A. McKean, Archives and Research, *Oral tradition, songs and ballads, Gaelic tradition*

Stanley Robertson, Heritage Lottery Fund Keyworker, *Scottish Travellers Project*

Dr Julia C. Bishop, AHRB Research Fellow, Carpenter Collection, biographies and social world of NE singers

Stephen Ritchie, Boatie Craft Residency Co-ordinator

Roddy Mackenzie, M.Phil student *researching the contemporary use of healing wells*

Siobhan Tolland, Ph.D. student *researching 'Mary Brookesbank of Dundee'*

Sara Reith, *Research Assistant*, Scottish Travellers Project

Alison Sharman, 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

Sheena Blackhall, *Creative writing in Scots*

Dr Katherine Campbell, *Scots fiddle, instrumental and song traditions*

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.

Dates for your Diary

Public Lectures

Tuesdays, 7.30-9.00pm

Admission £2.00 includes refreshments

Marischal Museum, Marischal College, Aberdeen

26 October 2004 - Professor Colm O'Boyle, University of Aberdeen, 'The Gaelic Harp in Irish and Scottish History'

23 November 2004 - Dr Ian A. Olson, Aberdeen, 'How has the remote North-East of Scotland come to have the richest of traditional song?'

7 December 2004 - Billy Kay, Fife, 'Knee Deep in Claret: A Celebration of Wine, France, and Scotland'

25 January 2005 - Dr John Shaw, Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, 'Post-Emigration Legends in Cape Breton: Continuity and Sea Change'

22 February 2005 - Dr Fiona MacLean, Glasgow Caledonian University, 'Wha's like us? National Identity and Heritage in Scotland'

22 March 2005 - Dr Valentina Bold, University of Glasgow, Crichton Campus Dumfries, 'Frank Miller: Scotland's Forgotten Collector'

26 April 2005 - Stanley Robertson, Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 'The Scottish Travellers Project'

24 May 2005 - Dr John Corbett, Department of English Language, University of Glasgow, 'Language On-Line: Introducing the Scottish Corpus of Texts and Speech'

Other Events

16 October 2004 - 'Gaither Roon the Glimmer': A Festival of Travellers Stanley Robertson and friends, Aberdeen Arts Centre, 7.30 – 10.30 pm

23 - 24 April 2005 - The Traditional Storytelling Weekend

22 - 24 July 2005 - The Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie

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