



The Greig-Duncan Celebratory Ceilidh held at New Deer, 27 September 2003, to mark the completion of the publication of the eight-volume folk song collection was a truly memorable evening. It was hosted by the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute. Senior Editor, Dr Emily Lyle was the guest of honour. The performers included - standing: Jim Taylor, John Crawford, Tom McKean, Elizabeth Stewart, Gordon Easton, Robbie Shepherd, Geordie Murison, Jake Simpson, Sheena Blackhall, Jock Duncan, Kathleen Robertson; seated: Ian Russell, Sheila Douglas, Emily Lyle, Katherine Campbell, Anne Reid, Stanley Robertson; kneeling: Carol Anderson, Barbara-Ann Burnett, Sara Reith. Photograph by Lynne MacDonald

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.

Elphinstone to Host Major Music Conference



Members of the British Forum for Ethnomusicology, the main UK body for the study of music and song traditions across the world, are holding their 2004 conference at the University of Aberdeen from Thursday 15th to Sunday 18th April. The University's Elphinstone Institute and Music Research Group will welcome delegates from all over the world to explore two important themes – 'Ethnomusicology at Home' and 'Transformed States'.

Over 50 papers will be delivered on subjects ranging from Taiwanese temple music to Los Angeles jazz, with 'home' interests, sometimes very local, also well represented - one talk on Scots song traditions is entitled 'A'tween Stanehive and Lauren'kirk.' One entire session is captivatingly headed 'Music and Trance' in contrast to the more familiar 'Music and Dance.'

The keynote address (what else would it be called in a music conference?) will be given by Jeff Todd Titon, Professor of Music at Brown University, Rhode Island, USA. His talk, intriguingly titled 'Homesick for Heaven' will be concerned with 'Distance and Nostalgia in Ethnomusological Fieldwork.' Jeff has worked on religious folk music – including Old Regular Baptist singing – and on blues and old-time fiddling. His two most recent books are *Old-Time Kentucky Fiddle Tunes* (University Press of Kentucky 2001) and *American Musical Traditions* (Gale 2002). He plays guitar, fiddle and banjo as well....

On the evening of Friday 15th, there will be a concert-cum-ceilidh with traditional singing and instrumental music from Stanley Robertson, Elizabeth Stewart and Paul Anderson followed by dancing to Shindig (caller Lorna McLaren). The event is open to all whether registered for the conference or not.

If you are interested in attending the conference, in part or whole, or you would just like to come to the evening concert and ceilidh, please contact the Institute Secretary or download the programme and a booking form from the Elphinstone Institute website, www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/.

'Now Fyvie's lands are bonny' ... The Friends' Ballad Bus Outing

On Saturday 29 May, the Friends of the Institute have organised a 'Ballad Bus', courtesy of First Bus, to explore Fyvie's lands and some of the other places which feature in the ballads. Our guides in song, Elizabeth Stewart, Barbara-Ann Burnett, Gordon Easton, and Stanley Robertson, will lead us from 'The Mill of Tifty's Annie' to 'Monymusk', from the beauties of 'Bonny Udny' to the bleakness of 'Harlaw'. If you would like to join us on this unusual adventure, you can book a place through the Secretary.

'Jessie's Journey' Leads to Woodend Barn

Great crack to be had by all!

Best selling Scottish author, Jess Smith, is one of eight storytellers joining us for the Traditional Storytelling Weekend at Woodend Barn, 1-2 May. Like Stanley Robertson and Elizabeth Stewart, Jess is one of Scotland's Travelling People, and loves to share the stories, songs, and culture of 'the campfire'.

The weekend will also have a maritime/island theme, with two master storytellers from Scotland's remoter communities – Lawrence Tulloch from Yell in the Shetland Isles and Ian Stephen from the Isle of Lewis. Both have led extraordinarily rich lives; Lawrence as a lighthouse keeper, postman and tourist guide; Ian as a coastguard, yachtsman, writer, poet, and visual artist (he is also an Aberdeen alumnus).

Any worries that the weekend might become too intense, should be dispelled with a good dose of Pennine humour from John Cocking, whose skill with comic monologues is unsurpassed. And there are local storytellers, Sheena Blackhall and Susie Minto.

The weekend is especially for those who like to hear and tell stories, and enjoy a ceilidh atmosphere which includes songs and music. Informal and friendly, there's something for everyone – from workshops to storyrounds, from talks to ceilidhs featuring the guests. To book, phone Woodend Arts (01330 825431) or the Institute, or see our website.



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*

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

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

Judith Herring, 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 and lexicography*

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, or would like to be removed from our mailing list, 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 and/or become a Friend of the Elphinstone Institute, please contact the Secretary.

Dates for your Diary

15-18 April 2004 - British Forum for Ethnomusicology Annual Conference, University of Aberdeen, 'Ethnomusicology at Home'

16 April 2004 - A Special Concert and Ceilidh of Scottish Traditional Music, Elphinstone Hall, King's College, to mark the visit to Aberdeen of the BFE

21 April 2004 - 'Work and Play', songs and stories with Stanley Robertson and friends, Elphinstone Institute, 5.30-7.00pm

1-2 May 2004 - The Traditional Storytelling Weekend at Woodend Barn

29 May 2004 - The Friends of the Elphinstone Institute 'Ballad Bus' – a trip round the north-east with singers and storytellers

23-25 July 2004 - The Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie

Public Lectures

Marischal Museum, Marischal College, Aberdeen, 7.30-9.00pm

20 April 2004 - Dr Julia Bishop, University of Aberdeen, *'The Most Valuable Collection of Child Ballads Never Published? The James Madison Carpenter Collection and North-East Ballad Singers'*

18 May 2004 - Christine Robinson, Scottish Language Dictionaries, Edinburgh, *'Beyond Words: The Work of the Scottish Language Dictionaries'*

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Why not become a Friend of the Institute and support its work? Just send a cheque for £10.00 annual subscription to the Institute Secretary, made out to 'The Friends of the Elphinstone Institute', including your name and address.

Cullerlie Aye!

With the 'Best Scots Singer'



Karine Polwart

For the fifth year running our Traditional Singing Weekend will be held at Cullerlie Farm Park, 23-25 July 2004. It is the express wish of Anne Reid and her family that the festival should run again this year in memory of her husband, Tam (1929-2003)

Once again we have a wonderful line-up of guests, including Karine Polwart, voted Best Scots Singer in the Scots Trad Music Awards at the Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, 13 September 2003.

Other guests include: from Donegal's Inishowen tradition – Jimmy McBride and Breda McKinney; from England - Jill Pidd from North Yorkshire and Eddie Upton from the South West; from Scotland – Joe Aitken, Geordie McIntyre, Alison McMorland, and Elizabeth Stewart; and from one of the UK's most remote communities - Anne Sinclair from Fair Isle, a fine singer, who will also be running one of the craft workshops on Fair Isle Knitting.

There will be ceilidhs featuring the guest singers, singarounds for everyone who wants to join in, and workshops on crafts and song. A talk by Jimmy McBride will explore the shared heritage of songs between Scotland and the north of Ireland.

For further information and a leaflet, please contact the Institute or phone Cullerlie Farm Park on 01330 860549.

Studying at the Institute

'The taught M.Litt in Ethnology and Folklore has given me a wonderful opportunity to augment my personal studies. The course, while engaging and stimulating offers a wide vista of research possibilities, and I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in the 'folk' looking for academic excellence within historic surroundings.'

Hilary Crockatt, M.Litt Student

On Song - Two Major Publications

Two volumes on folk song and ballads have just been published. Both are from Institute staff and each represents a major international contribution to the field.

The first, published in the Elphinstone Occasional Publications series, is *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation*, edited by Ian Russell and David Atkinson. It brings together 36 selected essays, which explore the revival movements, key men and women who made them happen, and some significant singers and songs.

Subjects covered range from ballads to folk rock, from the engravings of Hogarth to the Manchester Runway protest, and there are features on several of the prime movers, including Annie Gilchrist, Lucy Broadwood, Gavin Greig, William Walker, and Ewan MacColl. Two remarkable Scots singers who are the focus of chapters are Bell Duncan and Bell Stewart.

This timely and fascinating collection tackles such issues as cultural politics, national identity, commercialisation, gender, mass media representation, adaptation and acculturation, fakelore, creativity, and singing style(s).

The Flowering Thorn: International Ballad Studies, edited by Thomas McKean and published by Utah State University Press, is a collection of 25 selected essays, representing the latest trends in ballad scholarship and embracing the multi-disciplinary nature of the field.

Its title symbolises the dual nature of the ballad, as a distinctive expression of the European tradition, but also as a form which is tricky to approach from a scholarly perspective, requiring a range of disciplines to illuminate its composition. Among the subjects covered are the interpretation of narrative song, structure and motif, context and transmission, repertoire and regions, and the mediating collector. This is a wide-ranging collection of articles from major scholars in the fields of folklore, history, literature, and ethnology.

Both publications are available from the Institute by post at £25 and £20 respectively.

Folk Song Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation, edited by Ian Russell and David Atkinson, Elphinstone Institute Occasional Publications 3, Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2004, 563pp. Illus. Music. Bibliog. Song Index. General Index. ISBN 0-9545682-0-6, GB£25.00 (including UK postage & packing).

The Flowering Thorn: International Ballad Studies, edited by Thomas A. McKean, a project of the Kommission für Volksdichtung and the Elphinstone Institute, Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2003, 388pp. Illus. Music. General Index. Song Index. ISBN 0-87421-568-4, GB£20.00 (including UK postage & packing).

Sheena's Swansong?

At the beginning of November 2003, Sheena Blackhall's time at the Elphinstone Institute, as SAC Creative Writing Fellow, sadly, came to an end. We are very grateful to the Scottish Arts Council for funding the Fellowship. Her enthusiasm and inspiration is sorely missed.

Ian Russell, Director

On my last day at the Elphinstone Institute I was asked what had made my time there special. I was stumped. This was akin to asking the Israelites what they'd miss about Israel, before the camel train had left. Currently teaching, I can now provide the answer.

As Creative Writing Fellow in Scots I was in the unique and enviable position of being paid to do what I enjoy best – writing. Old Aberdeen, secluded and quiet, is the perfect setting for this – in total I wrote two short story collections, fifteen joint and solo poetry collections and two Scots novellas, as well as joint editing the Elphinstone Kist (www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/kist) during my time in post.

The first novella, *Loon*, was commissioned by Matthew Fitt and James Robertson for the Itchy Coö imprint, and was published in 2003. It's contained in the book entitled *Double Heider*! - the second 'head' being that of Hamish MacDonald with his novella *The Girmin Gates*. *Loon* tells the story of a thirteen year old North East boy Donnie Paterson who moves from the shire to an inner-city school when his family splits, and encounters many of the problems today's teenagers face.

Minnie, on the other hand is a young teenage girl growing up in the 1920s – a farmer's daughter who also travels from country to town for different reasons. Three chapters from *Minnie* scooped three firsts in the Robert McLellan short story competition run by the Scots Language Society, though the rights to the entire work were bought by the Scots Language Resource Centre in Perth, where the entire novella was recorded on three CDs. Taken together, they present a snapshot of two very different North-East youngsters – the 21st century boy and the 20th century girl. *Minnie* is due out later this year and class lessons will be available to accompany it.

I hope this has answered the question, why was my time at Elphinstone special? It's when you're drinking water from the tap that you begin to appreciate the oasis. The tap slakes the thirst, but wasn't the oasis nice!



Sheena in Good Company

A Bothy Ballad Writing Workshop with singer Geordie Murison giving encouragement, the Cullerlie Traditional Singing Weekend, 25-27 July 2003



Hands on Craft

John Buchan's Latest

Two-Foot Fifie under

Construction

The Boddam Boaties Craft Workshop, sponsored by the Scottish Arts Council and Aberdeenshire, opens at Peterhead Maritime Heritage Centre on 8 June 2004 and runs until the end of August. Skilled model boat builders from Boddam and Peterhead, will be in residence to show how the fifie, a traditional North East sailing drifter, is built. As well as the craft activity, it is planned to build a travelling exhibition and make a video, illustrating the history of the tradition and recording the construction stages. We also hope to create a photo archive of every boatie that we can locate in the district. Anyone who would like to come along to have a go at building or just to watch will be welcome. Party visits will also be welcome. Further information is available from the Institute.