

# Boaties Presentation

There is no question that the Institute's Boaties Project based in Peterhead has proved a huge success. Six talented young craftworkers from the North-East, who completed their model boat-making apprenticeship, were rewarded for their efforts at a special presentation at the Sea Cadet Corp HQ in Peterhead on the 8th December. The youngsters, all aged between 13 and 16-years-old, took part in a seven-week training scheme at Peterhead Maritime Heritage Centre during the summer holidays.

The Boaties Craft Residency was the first event of its kind organised by the Institute and attracted visitors from all over the UK and beyond. The residency showcased the talent of a team of highly skilled model-makers from the local area, including John Buchan, Jim Reid, Ali Law, and Sam Wesley Allan, coordinated by former skipper, Stephen Ritchie.

The Boaties Apprenticeship attracted six junior apprentices from the Peterhead area - David Hogarth, Heather Locke, Philip Stephen, Peter Fowlie, Peter Buchan, and Stuart Ritchie, pictured above. A further seven senior apprentices, aged between 30 and 70 also completed their boats. The junior apprentices were presented with a toolbox, complete with all the tools they will need to continue with their model boat making, a £100 cheque, and a commemorative certificate by Dr Ian Russell. He said: "This is a great achievement for the apprentices. They have worked very hard indeed and acquired a unique craft skill that is part of their local heritage. They can be justifiably proud of their excellent models."

'Boaties' are a model-making skill that dates back at least 150 years in North-East Scotland, centred on Boddam. The models are based on the traditional Scottish fishing boat known as the 'fifie' and sail without rudder, motor, or remote control; trimming the boat and setting the sails in a way appropriate to the conditions requires great skill from the maker/owner. They are made in various sizes of hull from 1ft 6ins to 4ft, but boats as large as 6ft have been made in the past. Most of the models built as part of the residency are 3-foot. The aim of the workshops was to raise awareness of the fascinating craft of model sailing boat building, as well as to introduce children and young people to the skill of their construction.

*The Boaties project was supported by Aberdeenshire Arts and Heritage, and the Scottish Arts Council. Other sponsors include: Buchanness Model Yachting Club, Friends of the Elphinstone Institute, Willowbank Adult Training Centre at Peterhead, Robertson Road Resource Centre at Fraserburgh, Banff and Buchan College, Peterhead Bay Authority, Shell UK, Jackson Trawls, Peterhead Common Good Fund, Peterhead Network Development Group, Davidson's Ship Painters at Peterhead, Paul Williamson at Peterhead, Peterhead & District Round Table, Squarmen at Stonehaven.*



Presentation to the Young Apprentices for the Boaties Project at Peterhead's Sea Cadets HQ

## 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'  
**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.

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## Elphinstone Public Lectures

### Dates for your Diary

#### Public Lectures

**Tuesdays, 7.30-9.00pm**  
Admission £2.00 includes refreshments  
Marischal Museum, Marischal College, Aberdeen  
**22 February 2005**

Dr Fiona MacLean, Glasgow Caledonian University, 'What'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

**Friday 11 March 2005**  
'A Boorach an' a Barrie Nicht': A Celebration of the Oral and Cultural Traditions of Scottish Travellers, Stanley Robertson and friends, Marischal College, 10.00am - 10.00pm

**23 - 24 April 2005**  
The Traditional Storytelling Weekend

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

ELPHINSTONE



INSTITUTE

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SPRING 2005

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

## Childlore comes to the fore

From 'The Bumble Bell' to 'Rum Scum Scoosh!'

The Elphinstone Institute has been awarded funding by the British Academy to produce an edition of James T. R. Ritchie's collection of children's lore and language - 'The Bumble Bell'.

Ritchie (1908-1998) was a maths and science teacher at Norton Park School, between Leith and Edinburgh. He began documenting his pupils' play traditions from the 1950s. His work led to radio broadcasts and, with fellow-teachers from the school, the pioneering film, *The Singing Street* (1951), featuring the children's demonstrations of their games and songs. Two books followed, *The Singing Street* (1964) and *The Golden City* (1965), containing a wide range of children's songs, games, beliefs, customs, football chants and graffiti.

Ritchie's third book, 'The Bumble Bell' (referring to the playground bell), never reached publication. It contains a host of vivid examples of children's lore, language and games. These include Valentine's Day rhymes, skipping songs, and descriptions of peevers and bools. As part of the one-year project, Dr Julia Bishop will edit the manuscript and research into Ritchie's biography. The resulting edition will feature an introduction which considers the collection in relation to Ritchie's life and

times, and compares Ritchie's work to that of other collectors in Scotland and that of the contemporary children's folklore researchers, Peter and Iona Opie.

A recent CD compilation from the Alan Lomax Collection released on Rounder Records (82161-1795-2) - *Singing in the Streets: Scottish Children's Songs*, with notes by Ewan MacVicar - not only includes children's songs from Norton Park School, Edinburgh, but also Aberdeen children from Cedar Place. Both groups were recorded in 1951 (see photograph).

As part of the Institute's ongoing project, 'The Oral and Cultural Traditions of Scottish Travellers', a CD compilation will shortly be released of children's songs, rhymes, and stories by Stanley Robertson - *Rum Scum Scoosh! Songs and Stories from an Aberdeen Childhood*. The album will feature dozens of examples of the games and songs with which Stanley grew up in the 1940s and 50s, together with a selection of the stories which



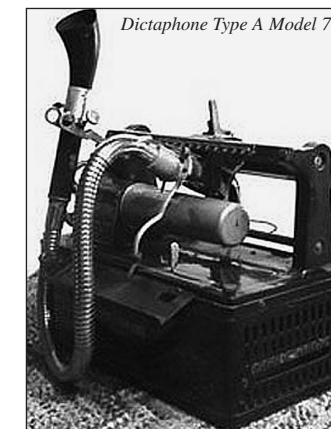
Children from Norton Park School at play, 'Monday is my working day' reproduced from *The Singing Street*, by James T. R. Ritchie, Plate 3.

he was told. He often draws on these stories in his work with schools and great favourites included here are 'Nippit Fit Clipped Fit', 'Washadish', 'Twa Humpies', and the chilling 'Wee Aipolies and Oranges'. From local songs, such as 'We're awa' tae the Torry Rocks' and 'The Timmer Market Song', to others full of the fun of language, such as 'Pipe Fu the Hashie Gavals' (in Travellers' cant) to 'A Doo Fella, A Doo Fella' (a punning jingle), the collection will be of wide interest to all those who value the importance of childhood and play.

## North-East Voices Brought to Life: Work Begins on the James Madison Carpenter Audio Recordings

The James Madison Carpenter Team has been awarded a further AHRB Resource Enhancement grant to catalogue the Dictaphone cylinder recordings of traditional song, music and drama made by James Carpenter in 1928-35. There are 179 cylinders, each around ten minutes long and featuring as many as a dozen performances, making at total of nearly 30 hours of audio material.

Ranging from a rare recording of a traditional mummies' play to sea shanties, from fiddle tunes with their dance songs to ballads and bothy songs, the cylinders give a unique snapshot of tradition in the early thirties. Among the highlights are the singing of Bell Duncan, one of Carpenter's most remarkable contributors, and Willie Mathieson, the farm servant later recorded



as an old man by Hamish Henderson.

For the North-East, these recordings fill a gap between the Greig-Duncan collection (1904-14) and the 1950s recordings of the School of Scottish Studies. They are among the earliest, and certainly the most extensive, audio recordings from this part of the world.

Folklorists and enthusiasts have long been aware of the cylinders' existence, but they have been inaccessible due to their fragility. Now digitised by the Library of Congress as part of the Save Our Sounds project, the audio material will take its place in the Online Catalogue (<http://hrionline.ac.uk/carpenter/>) and in the critical edition now being prepared by the team for completion in 2008.

The work is painstaking—some of the recordings are in very poor condition—but very rewarding as the voices whose names and materials we've been working with over the last five years now come to life. Eventually, we hope that the recordings can be digitally restored to accompany the final publication.

## From the Director



As always it is a very busy term with some interesting and exciting times ahead. First of all, we are moving premises. Sadly we have to leave our 'wee hoosie' on the High Street and take up residence in a ground floor suite in the newly-refurbished MacRobert Building, where we will join education and music colleagues. (This is the nine storey building adjacent to King Street.) The move is timetabled for June/July. We will keep our telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. However, our postal address will change to: The Elphinstone Institute, MacRobert Building, University of Aberdeen, 581 King Street, Aberdeen AB24 5UA. Once installed, we hope you will not be put off from visiting us. We would love to see you. We will be organising an Open Evening at the start of the new academic year in autumn 2005.

The Friends of the Elphinstone Institute have put in place plans for another Ballad Bus, following the great success of the last one. The date will be announced shortly. We are very grateful to First Bus for their support of this event.

We are holding a special day, - 'A Boorach an' a Barrie Nicht' - to mark the climax of our Travellers' project - 'The Oral and Cultural Traditions of Scottish Travellers', on Friday 11 March 2005. It will be a celebration with most of the contributions from members of the Travelling community, including a showing of Tim Neat's classic film, 'The Summer Walkers'. The events of the day will be followed by an evening of song, music and stories introduced by Stanley Robertson. Please contact the Institute for details or to book a place.

Stanley's time as the Keyworker for the Travellers' Project sadly comes to an end in April, when the HLF grant finishes. However, it is planned to take forward this important aspect of our work through the George Reid PhD Studentship and other initiatives including CD publications and a website. Congratulations are due to Sara Reith who was awarded the studentship.

In 2001 we really pushed the boat out when we held an international festival and conference under the title 'The North Atlantic Fiddle Convention' (NAFCo). It was a huge success and the clamour to repeat the event, especially from North American and Scandinavian friends, has never stopped. In 2006, from 26-30 July, we are hosting NAFCo 2 in partnership with the Aberdeen-based Scottish Culture and Traditions Association (SCaT). At the moment, we are just starting discussions to ensure that we have the necessary support we will need to make it a success. We will keep you informed of our progress. Don't forget to pencil these dates in your diary.

## Stanley's School Visits



Stanley Robertson

none. These people taught me to get right inside the rubric of the matter and, using the power of the psychic, to tune in to natural settings.

It gives me great pleasure to get good results from the children.

'What is the river saying to you,' or 'What language does the wind speak?' Sometimes I get them to go inside a box with their minds and let them create and explore the magic of their journey. The results are amazing. Some of the children

send me back the most beautiful, inspiring stories with visually stunning images. I have amassed hundreds of these stories and filed them in my office.

With the younger children I tell old tales and play my electric pipes. Occasionally I sing a ballad or spend time on Robert Burns's work.

I also teach street songs and old-fashioned games to the children. The children seem to like my visits and when I revisit a school I am cheered by the pupils. It gives me great encouragement in the work of the Travellers Project.

My work with the Elphinstone Institute has given the opportunity for a younger and wider audience to appreciate the culture handed down by the Travellers through their oral traditions.

**Stanley Robertson,**  
Keyworker, Travellers Project

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the work I am engaged in as the Keyworker for the Traveller's Project at the Elphinstone Institute is sharing my culture with the children in the schools. I have visited more than a hundred schools within the city of Aberdeen and in the county.

When I go to the schools, I try to make each child aware of the rich culture of the Travelling People through the media of stories and ballads. Furthermore I also teach children of primary 5, 6, and 7 how to develop effective styles of writing and help them to find their personal creative 'muses'. I share with them the experiences and techniques by which I was taught, as a young Traveller, to read, write, and remember.

Very few of the old Travellers in the generations before mine could read and write, but they had a form of literacy second to

## First Impressions

Carley Williams reflects on studying for the MLitt

After five years studying away from home I thought it might be old hat, but as I headed to Vancouver airport in the early hours of September 16 my nerves were high. I had been to Scotland on a number of occasions to visit relatives and do the 'tourist circuit', but this time would be different; this time I was heading to Aberdeen, and for an entire year at that. In my previous travels, I had never made it up to the North-East, and from the reports I had from friends and relatives, I should expect cold, wet and grey. Not too encouraging, but I kept reminding myself that I had made it through two years in Newfoundland, where winter lasts from October to May - and it surely couldn't be colder than that.

I arrived in Aberdeen on a sunny afternoon, and was amazed by the beauty of the 'Granite City'. Aberdeen University campus was an even greater pleasure to see (I still get excited walking along the cobbled High Street). The age of the buildings - the Chapel was built between 1500 and 1507 - and their seeming resistance to wear and tear is baffling to me - where I come from, wooden houses from the 1920s are preserved as 'Heritage Homes', and the local museum's exhibit only goes back to the 1890s. I had no idea what to expect the first day of the



Carley Williams

course. With the historic role of the university, I almost expected to see professors walking the grounds in caps and gowns. What a relief, when I found my way to the Elphinstone Institute, to see the smiling and inviting faces of the staff. The group of students enrolled in the MLitt, though slightly tentative at first, and despite our vastly different cultural backgrounds, soon became comfortable with our new surroundings, and able to fit ourselves into the small Elphinstone 'family'. The course prospectus promised a year of intellectual stimulation and cultural enrichment, which I was eager to explore.

With the encouragement of Dr Russell and Dr McKean, I was introduced to the flourishing traditional music scene in the city, and armed with my fiddle, I found myself overwhelmed with sessions, dance classes, and even Gaelic lessons. Within weeks, I was part of a local ceilidh band - I had established my niche. As the autumn term progressed, I realized that though the course provides a thorough academic background to the culture and traditions of Scotland and the North-East, it is through my own immersion in the living and thriving traditions of the region that I will truly understand the 'ethnology and folklore' of North-East Scotland.

# From Blair to Bhangra

• STORYTELLING AT THE WOODEND BARN, 23-24 APRIL 2005 •

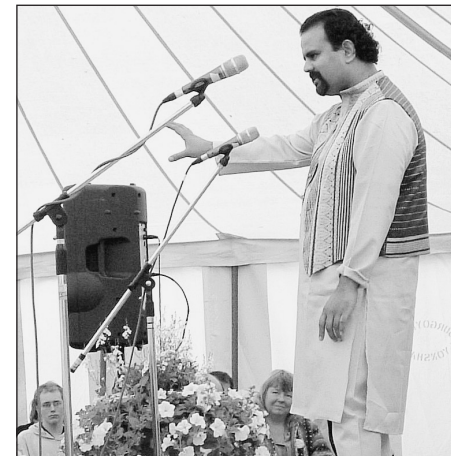
Storytelling is an art that crosses continents and cultures. To the Traditional Storytelling Weekend at Banchory, we welcome among our guests Peter Chand from Wolverhampton, whose traditions are drawn from the Punjab in India. Stanley Robertson met Peter at last year's Whitby Folk Week and took to him immediately: 'He's a genuine man wi a keen sense o humour, and I was really impressed wi his storytelling'.

Peter is joined by England's best loved storyteller, Taffy Thomas from Grasmere in the Lake District. His skill, experience, and knowledge of tales is highly respected, and has been built up over many years. In his younger days, Taffy was a street performer and puppeteer (fire eating, tumbling, sleight of hand, and a marvellous 'gift of the gab') in 'The Fabulous Salami Brothers' and 'The Magic Lantern'. His work in schools has been prolific, where he appears with his extraordinary 'tale-coat', a ceremonial garment designed to inspire

and honour the teller.

Our other three guests - the 'home team' - are all members of Scotland's Travelling People who have done so much to keep traditional stories and ballads alive. Sheila Stewart of the famous 'Stewarts of Blair', learned her stories from her father Alec, her Aunt Agnes, and from her Granny (her husband, Alec's father, the famed 'Jock Stewart' of the song, was also noted for his storytelling). Stanley's stories are also from a number of family sources, including his famous aunt, Jeannie Robertson. The Stewarts of Fetterangus are represented by Elizabeth Stewart, who joins us for the Saturday evening. She is an outstanding singer of her family's ballads, but will also be entertaining us with her wonderful traditional piano playing.

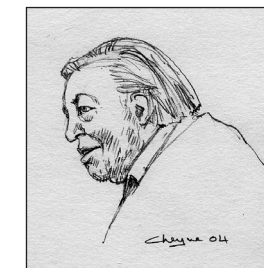
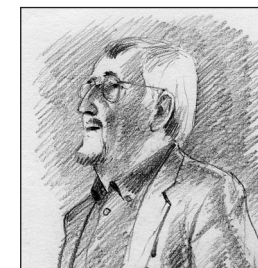
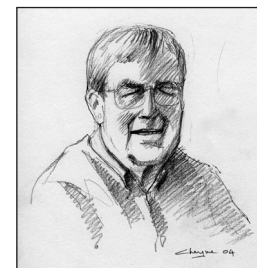
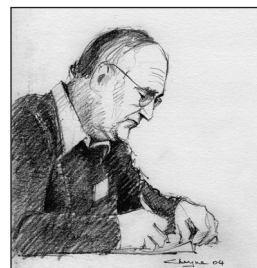
Together with workshops, storyrounds, and a talk, there will be plenty of opportunity to mix and mingle, join in and listen, in what promises to be a very special weekend.



Peter Chand



Sheila Stewart



Sketches by Sandy Cheyne

Sandy Cheyne's Rogues Gallery from 2004. Names to faces?

## 'Such a Parcel of Rogues'

The Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie

Sandy Cheyne (the well known cartoonist behind the drawings of Northamptonshire, Breda McKinney from Belfast, Jimmy McBride from Donegal, and Geordie MacIntyre (a Glaswegian) from Dunblane, but not necessarily in that order. If you want to see the rest and find out who's who, you'll find them all on our website <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone>

This year (22-24 July) our guests include the inimitable John Campbell and Len Graham, both from Mullaghbawn in County

Armagh. John and Len featured in the 2002 Storytelling Weekend at Woodend Barn and were an absolute delight. John, with Mick Quinn, are recognised as Ireland's foremost storytellers, but more to the point, John, like Len, is also a great singer in his own right and a fine 'lilter' (lilting is the Irish version of 'didlin' or mouth music). John is also a skilful player of a favourite North-East instrument, 'the Trump' (Jew's Harp). Len was born in County Armagh to a family steeped in traditional music, song, and dance. He has been cultivating the song tradition of his native Ulster all his life, and is recognised



Len Graham and John Campbell

internationally as a truly outstanding traditional singer. Not only will the two of them be entertaining us in song, as only they know how, but also giving us their insight into the lives of two great 'Plooman Poets', Robbie Burns and Paddy (Patrick) Kavanagh.

Our other guests include Bob Lewis from Sussex, Peta Webb from London and Sarah Jane Greive from Orkney, who are joined by Gordon Easton, Scott Gardiner, Katherine Campbell, Kathleen Robertson, and Ian Pirie, all from the North-East.