

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

The North Atlantic Fiddle Convention

Connecting Cultures

26-30 July 2006

Plans for the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention are making great progress. Venues are booked, the website is about to undergo a major facelift, and the guest list is first-rate. The only question is: where to start?

Joining our own Paul Anderson, the NAFCo 2006 guest list boasts a world-class line up of leading musicians from the far reaches of the North Atlantic – Scotland, Ireland, England, Wales, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Canada, USA – and we've had interest from a group in Lithuania.

Alasdair Fraser's dynamic fiddling, engaging presence, and deep understanding of Scotland's music has inspired listeners and learners around the world. His rich expressive playing transports people across a broad musical spectrum, ranging from haunting laments from the Gaelic tradition to classically-styled airs, up-tempo dance tunes, and improvisations based on traditional themes.

At NAFCo 2006, Alasdair will be joined by vibrant young cellist, **Natalie Haas**, a recent Juilliard graduate and virtuoso in her own right. The duo's teamwork reveals deep textures and powerful rhythms that drive the fiddle tunes, asserting the cello's role at the heart of the music. Their debut duo album, *Fire & Grace*, was awarded the Best Album of the Year at the Scots Trad Music Awards 2004. Alasdair will be teaching workshops and featuring in performances throughout NAFCo 2006, and Natalie will join us for the final two days of the Convention for a workshop and the Saturday night showcase.



'With fire in his soul and a twinkle in his eye, Alasdair Fraser breathed life into music by the earliest masters up to the present day. The many voices of the Scottish fiddle, whether derived from the skirl of the pipes or Gaelic song... were put across with consummate technical skill, sparkling humour and above all, a burning sense of commitment.' **Aberdeen Press and Journal**



Jerry Holland's emotional playing represents Cape Breton fiddle tradition with consummate artistry. Jerry spent many hours in the company of some of the greatest Cape Breton musicians of the last generation – Winston Scotty Fitzgerald, Bill Lamey, Angus Chisholm – and he honours their legacy in his playing today. Many of his own compositions have entered the fiddle repertory around the world and his settings of old traditional tunes, particularly on his legendary album *Master Cape Breton Fiddler*, have been hugely influential.

Liz Doherty, traditional Irish fiddle player and renowned teacher and academic, embodies the sheer fun and joy of Irish music. She brings energy to her playing that is both powerful and rhythmic, incorporating elements of her native Donegal tradition with aspects of Cape Breton, Scottish, and Quebecois playing styles. Her exuberance and enjoyment of the music is infectious to listeners and learners alike, and the NAFCo audience will not be disappointed.

Festival Club

An exciting addition to our 2006 programme will be the NAFCo Festival Club at the Lemon Tree. From morning to night, it will be our central hub of activity for the Convention. Our registration and information desk will be staffed all day, providing tickets, programmes and tourist information to Convention attendees. But, more importantly, the Festival Club will be a place where performers, workshop goers, and audiences can gather for concerts, family-friendly sessions, late-night dances, and all-round musical connections.

Something for Everyone

With over 100 events, including workshops, sessions, ceilidhs, concerts, and the academic conference, NAFCo 2006 has an exciting programme with something for everyone. Our website is being completely redesigned to include performer biographies and the programme, and online ticket sales (to begin in early Spring). We will be sure to keep it updated with all our news as NAFCo develops – so check back regularly!

Why Not Be Involved?

If you would like to be part of NAFCo 2006, we have a variety of sponsorship and volunteer opportunities available. We also have a mailing list, if you want to be the first to receive all our news. Please contact us for more information.

Tel: 01224 272996

Email: nafco@abdn.ac.uk

Website: www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/nafco

We hope to see you there!

The Team

Dr Mary Anne Alburger (Honorary Research Fellow), Paul Anderson (AHRC Fellow), Malcolm Reavell (SCaT), Alison Sharman (Secretary), Carley Williams (Convention Assistant), Dr Ian Russell (Director)

Towering Inferno – Burghead-style

The Burning of the Clavie, one of the few remaining fire festivals in the North-East, was something I knew about, but had never experienced. The Clavie ‘crew’, traditionally fishermen, led by the Clavie ‘King’, carry a flaming barrel above their heads on a wooden post stabilised by staves. They take turns to carry it through the streets of Burghead, Morayshire – a premier seaport in Pictish times – to Doorie Hill, the site of the Pictish fort. There, more bits of barrel are added and copious amounts of diesel are thrown at the Clavie to make it burn more intensely in its ‘altar’.

This year I made it to Burghead on the 11 January, Old New Year in the Julian calendar, and saw this calendar custom for myself. The excitement from the crowds of people thronging the streets and the hill in a normally quiet little former fishing village was palpable. Adults and children screamed with delight as the Clavie crew threw more flammable liquid at the inferno that was the barrel atop the post. It was a wild, carnival atmosphere and we stood as close as we dared to the fire while smoke and sparks flew everywhere.

The main concern of much of the crowd was getting a bit of Clavie for themselves. One of the crew presented a burning stave to a couple behind me, stating, ‘There’s yer luck,’ as getting a piece of the barrel is meant to bring luck for the coming year. I decided to try and claim a piece for myself and my friend. As we were talking about it, another member of the crew turned around and said, ‘Would you like a bit?’ We delightedly agreed and my friend took the flaming barrel stave in gloved hands. We had to wait for it to go out, then broke the piece in half and shared the ‘luck’ between us.

Everyone was so friendly, and it was clear some people had travelled far further than us to the festival, as I heard German and English accents alongside the local dialect. This is indeed a communal event, but the community seem happy to include whoever else is willing to join in. With shouts of ‘Happy New Year’ the crowd eventually dispersed after the Clavie crashed spectacularly down the hill, flooding the grass with flames. My friend commented, ‘Of course, it’s only New Year now for them!’



That’s why they’ve still got their Christmas lights up in the street.’ Indeed, following the old calendar would give the ‘Brochers’ more time to take their decorations down. It was wonderful to be part of such a truly communal event, and to see such an enthusiasm for keeping this custom alive without allowing it to be sanitised.

And my Clavie? It’s sitting in pride of place on the hearth in my living room, still exuding the scent of smoke and diesel. Has it brought me luck? I’ll tell you next year!

Fiona-Jane Brown – MLitt Graduate

Singing and Crafting



Bella Hardy

The Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie, 21-23 July 2006, is a very special celebration in a wonderful location in rural Aberdeenshire in the company of some great singers.

This year our Irish contingent includes two fine stylists with strong commanding voices – one from the country and the other from the town. Grace Toland was born and raised at Clonmany, Inishowen, where she learnt most of her songs from the older singers; Jerry O’Reilly is from a Dublin singing family and is noted for his declamatory ballad style. Our guests from England include Brian Dawson, a favourite singer from Lincolnshire, who will be giving a talk on Percy Grainger’s folk song collecting. He will be joined by Bella Hardy, from Edale in the Derbyshire Peak District, who was a finalist in the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Awards for 2005.

Our Scottish guests include Billy Jolly from Orkney, Sheila Stewart from the famous Blairgowrie singing family, and Carole and Alan Prior originally from Edinburgh. Three fine North-East singers complete the bill – Geordie Murison from Stonehaven, and Grace Banks and Graham White from Aberdeen.

Part of the weekend experience is learning about and enjoying the local craft traditions. This year is no exception and we are featuring three excellent examples – ‘Fisher Knitting’ with Edith Rattray, ‘New Pitsligo Lace’ with Annie McWilliam, and ‘Blacksmithing’ with John Findlater.

If you are planning to join Anne Reid and the rest of us down on the farm, please book early as we always sell out.

Write to: The Traditional Singing Weekend, Cullerlie Farm Park, Echt, Skene, Aberdeenshire AB32 6XL (Tel: 01330 860549)

NAFCo 2006

A Conference and a Festival

At the heart of the NAFCo idea is the synergy created by the combination of an academic conference and a performance celebration. The 2006 theme of Connecting Cultures in tradition will provide a unique forum for papers on the role of the fiddler (or dancer), musical interplay with dance, socialization and competition, leadership and transmission, tradition and innovation, and cross-cultural relationships.

We are privileged at the convention to be addressed by four eminent keynote speakers.

Dr Alan Jabbour is former Head of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, a position he held from 1976 to 1999. In 'Fiddle Tunes of the Old Frontier', Dr Jabbour will be speaking about the relationship between Old World and New World fiddle traditions, advancing the proposition that all the modern regional fiddle traditions of the English-speaking world are cultural cousins – born of a wider revolution in instrumental music and dance in the last half of the eighteenth century – a revolution for which the democratized Italian violin was the central catalyzing instrument.



Dr Alan Jabbour



Professor Colin Quigley

Shetland tradition and the world of fiddle music he encountered there when he undertook his fieldwork between 1970 and 1980.

One of the great strengths of NAFCo is that it draws on scholars who are also fine performers, as is Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin. This is also true of Alan Jabbour, who is a wonderful 'Old Time' fiddler, in the style of the Upper South, who learnt from musicians like Henry Reed of Glen Lyn, Virginia, and Tommy Jarrell of Toast, North Carolina. Other performer/scholars offering papers include Richard Blaustein of East Tennessee State University, Matt Cranitch and Mats Melin of the University of Limerick, Katherine Campbell of the University of Edinburgh, Catriona Macdonald and Kathryn Tickell of the University of Newcastle, Kimberly Fraser of Saint Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia, Karin Eriksson and Mats Nilsson of the University of Gothenburg, Sherry Johnson of York University, Toronto, Gaila Kirdienė of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, and Mary Anne Alburger of the Elphinstone Institute.

Professor Colin Quigley of the World Arts and Cultures Department at the University of California at Los Angeles has researched the inter-relationship of fiddle music and dance in Newfoundland and Eastern Europe. In 'Dancing Bows and Musical Feet', he will be considering rhythm as the most defining characteristic of local and regional style in fiddling around the North Atlantic, and especially within Canada where so much melodic material is widely shared.

Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, Director of the Irish World Music Centre at the University of Limerick, is both an outstanding performer and a respected scholar. He will be talking about the remarkable fiddle traditions upheld by Gypsy Travellers in Ireland, most notably the fiddler Tommie Potts (1912-1988), with whom he undertook fieldwork.

Dr Peter Cooke, formerly of the School of Scottish Studies and the Department of Music at Edinburgh University, is an eminent ethnomusicologist whose research includes both Scotland and West Africa. Dr Cooke will be revisiting his groundbreaking study of the



Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin



Dr Peter Cooke

The North Atlantic FIDDLE Convention - NAFCo 2006

A Celebration of fiddle and dance traditions from countries around the North Atlantic
"Connecting Cultures" 26-30 July 2006

Connect with fiddle traditions from
Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, England, Canada, USA, Scotland and more!

Over 100 events including
Workshops, Busking Trails, Concerts, Sessions, Ceilidhs, Demonstrations, and a Conference

From the Director



With a very busy summer ahead centred around the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, it is easy to overlook some of the other important work being undertaken by the Institute.

Boaties Craft Workshop - 12 June - 25 August 2006

For the third year our Boaties craft workshop will be running at Peterhead Maritime Heritage Centre. The project, coordinated by Stephen Ritchie, has proved a great success with strong local support in terms of skills, interest, and visitor numbers. To date 26 people have successfully completed an apprenticeship by building their own boat and eleven of these have been teenagers. We are in contact with model wooden boat builders in Uppsala, Sweden. In addition, an exhibition and website have been designed, and a film edited.

This summer's workshop will be led by Jim Reid, Alex James Stephen, and Sandy Forbes. Last year we successfully achieved welcome sponsorship from Aberdeenshire (use of premises), the Scottish Arts Council (core funding), Shell U.K. Limited, Peterhead Common Good Fund, Peterhead and District Round Table, Friends of the Elphinstone Institute and other anonymous donations. Regrettably, the Scottish Arts Council support is not available for this year's workshop, but the team has decided to run the project on an entirely voluntary basis. Nonetheless local sponsorship is needed for running costs including materials, equipment, and presentation toolboxes for the young apprentices.

Celebrating Traveller Culture - 24 March 2006

Once again we are holding a day to celebrate the culture and traditions of the Travelling People and their important contribution to contemporary life in Scotland. During the day at the 'Boorach' (gathering) there will be talks, workshops, and presentations, and in the evening at the 'Barrie Nicht' we will be entertained by songs, music, and stories.

Among the guests and presenters are Sheila Stewart from Blairgowrie (songs and stories), Elizabeth Stewart from Mintlaw (songs and piano), Martha Stewart from Ellon (storytelling), and from Aberdeen, Nicole Rodgers (ballads), Elaine Taylor (reading the future), Robert Knight (singer-songwriter), Betty Elgaen (flowermaking), John Mackay (piping), Carmen Higgins (fiddle tbc), and Simon Robertson (childlore tbc). The event will take place in the Cowdray Hall and will be introduced by Stanley Robertson, whose double CD, *Rum Scum Scoosh! Songs and Stories of an Aberdeen Childhood*, is to be launched on the day. Although there is no charge for the 'Boorach', if you would like to attend you will need to register with the Institute. The cost of the evening 'Barrie Nicht' is £4.00 (£3.00 concession) and tickets are available from the Institute.



Peter Buchan prepares to sail his 'Boatie'

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, Deputy Director, *Archives and Research, Ethnology, customs and belief, songs and ballads, Gaelic tradition*

Dr Julia C. Bishop, AHRB Research Fellow, *Carpenter Collection, biographies and social world of North-East singers*

Paul Anderson, AHRC Research Fellow in the Creative and Performing Arts, *Reconnecting today's Scottish traditional musicians with Scotland's North-East traditional fiddle styles and repertoires*

Roddy Mackenzie, MPhil student, *researching the contemporary use of healing wells*

Sara Reith, PhD student, George Reid Studentship, *researching ethnology and folklore of Scottish Travellers*

Shirley Ann Watson, PhD student, *researching contemporary interpretation of battlefields in Scotland*

Frances Wilkins, PhD student, *researching sacred singing in coastal communities in North and North-East Scotland and the Northern Isles*

Carley Williams, NAFCo Convention Assistant

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*

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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Email: elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk Website: www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone

IMPORTANT DATES for your DIARY

Public Lectures

Tuesdays, 7.30-9.00pm

Admission £2.00 includes refreshments

Marischal Museum, Marischal College, Aberdeen

21 February 2006

Dr Lesley Stevenson, RSAMD, *Traditional Music and Tourism in Scotland*.

21 March 2006

Dr Ian Russell, Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, *New Songs in the Bothy: From George Bruce Thomson to Ian Middleton*.

18 April 2006

Paul Anderson, AHRC Fellow in Creative and Performing Arts, Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, *What is North-East Fiddle Style?*

23 May 2006

Les Wheeler, Research Associate, Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, *The Poetry of North-East Scotland: Beyond the Sentiment*.

Other Events

7 March 2006

Ballad and Storytelling Session with Stanley Robertson and Friends, *'In Town and Country'*, at the Elphinstone Institute, MacRobert Building, 7.00-9.00pm.

24 March 2006

'A Boorach an a Barrie Nicht': A Celebration of the Oral and Cultural Traditions of Scottish Travellers. Cowdray Hall, Aberdeen, 09.00am-5.00pm (Free - but places must be booked) and 7.00-10.00pm (Tickets £4.00, concessions £3.00).

21-23 July 2006

Traditional Singing Weekend, Cullerlie Farm Park, Cullerlie.

26-30 July 2006

The North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, (NAFCo), various venues in and around Aberdeen. Tickets available from 1 April 2006.

9 November 2006

Elphinstone Institute Open day 5.00-9.00pm featuring music from Paul Anderson and George Donald between 7.00-8.00pm.