

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

The Carpenters Go to Washington

In April, the James Madison Carpenter Project team spent a week at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., working with the original materials of the collection: Carpenter's 14,000 typescript and handwritten pages of folk drama, shanties, ballads, fiddle music, dance notations and songs. For many in the team, this was their first direct contact with the original documents, contact which brought to life Carpenter, his achievements and his time in Scotland and England, as well as driving home the importance and scale of the collection itself. The team was able to assess the accuracy of the digital surrogates used up to this point in the editing process and to learn more about Carpenter's collecting practice. The team also presented the Botkin Lecture at the Library, introducing the collection to interested members of the public; the lecture will be available on-line next year.

The critical edition enters a new phase this year with another funding success by Julia Bishop, her team, and the American Folklore Society, our partner institution. The grant of \$200,000, from the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, will enable the team to complete the editing of texts for the publication of the first two sections of the collection: the folk plays and the shanties, each of which will take up two volumes of a projected twelve, as well as complete the editing of ballad and lyric song material. More funding will be sought for the drafting of headnotes, and the edition will be well on its way to fruition.



The Carpenter Team at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. – Julia Bishop, Robert Walser, Edward Cass, David Atkinson, Elaine Bradtke, Thomas A. McKean, Tim Lloyd (Executive Director, American Folklore Society)
Photo: Stephen Winick, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

NAFCo 2008, St. John's, Newfoundland

In August, some of the key players from NAFCo 2006 in Aberdeen journeyed to my alma mater, Memorial University of Newfoundland, in St. John's, to celebrate the third North Atlantic Fiddle Convention.

NAFCo 2008 had the appropriate theme of 'Crossing Over', symbolizing the first time the event has been hosted outside of Scotland. Historically, Newfoundland has been a physical point of crossing over; as the most easterly land-mass in Canada, it is situated between the Old and New Worlds and for centuries it was one of the first ports of call for new settlers from Ireland, Scotland, England, Portugal, and France, resulting in a uniquely-blended local culture.

As I remembered, Newfoundlanders are some of the friendliest people you will ever meet. Claire White and I got the full experience of local hospitality, billeting with the NAFCo coordinator and her family in St. Thomas' Line, Conception Bay. The regular local sessions welcomed the masses of fiddlers into the small pubs of Water Street (the oldest street in North America) and the infamous George Street. The local dance community came out in full force for our late-night ceilidh dance.

The line-up for the week was outstanding, showcasing Newfoundland musicians alongside the cream of the crop of the fiddle world from Canada, USA, Scotland, England, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, France and Spain. It was great to catch up with old friends from NAFCo 2006, and to meet new fiddlers from around the globe.

The Newfoundland committee did a fabulous job of carrying the spirit of NAFCo forward. It definitely got me geared up for NAFCo 2010 (14–18 July) back here in Aberdeen!

Carley Williams



The First Nations Fiddle Project at NAFCo St. John's, led by 'Teddy Boy' Houle (far right)
Photo: Ian Russell

NAFCo 2008 also saw the launch of *Driving the Bow*, the second in the series, Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic, edited by Ian Russell and Mary Anne Alburger. Based on the theme of 'Connecting Cultures' and drawing on the papers presented at the 2006 Convention, this is a fascinating and timely collection of new insights in the field of international folk music and ethnomusicological studies.

From the Director



The winner of the Toulmin Prize, Bill Robertson (4th right) – with Prof. Chris Gane, Ian Russell, Lindy Cheyne (Editor of *The Leopard*), and Prof. Paul Dukes
Photo: Patrick McFall

Leopard, illustrated by local artist Gabrielle Reith. Bill, who is a project manager for Scottish Enterprise Grampian, was brought up in Banchory and through his parents has connections with Lumphanan, where the story is set.

I am pleased to announce that the Toulmin Prize will be running again in 2009, with a prize of £500, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor. The prize, commemorating the work of the celebrated North-East writer, David Toulmin, aims to encourage creative writing. An unpublished short story of up to 4,000 words should be submitted to the Institute by 31 March 2009, marked 'Toulmin Prize'. Each submission must be made in hard copy as an A4 typescript and as an electronic file in MS Word. The story should be concerned with some aspect of life in North-East Scotland, and may be written in Scots (including the Doric) or English, or a mixture of the two. The competition is open to all amateur writers over the age of 16 years. (NB For the purposes of the competition a professional writer is considered to be one who has had a solo work published with a recognised UK publisher or earns 51% or more of his/her income from writing.) The award will be made at the WORD Festival at the University of Aberdeen (13–17 May 2009), where the winning story will be read out by a well-known writer. Once again the winning story will be published in *The Leopard*. For full competition rules, please contact Dr Ian Russell at The Elphinstone Institute (the address is on page 4).

The Toulmin Prize 2008 and 2009

It is with great pleasure that I congratulate Bill Robertson, the winner of the Toulmin Prize for short story writing. His entry, 'Beth's Birthday Sheen', the first story he has written, was judged to be the best out of a total of 77 entries. It is a love story about two young people – John and Beth – who have grown up together in the Lumphanan area of Aberdeenshire. John is a shoemaker while Beth is a housekeeper to the minister at the manse. John's promise to make a pair of dancing shoes for Beth's birthday is foiled with the outbreak of the Second World War, when he is forced to leave his sweetheart and his much-loved Deeside.

The competition judges – Lindy Cheyne of *The Leopard*, Professor Paul Dukes, Norman Harper, and Les Wheeler – were very impressed, both by the level of interest and by the standard of writing. Bill was awarded the £500 prize at the University's WORD Festival and 'Beth's Birthday Sheen' was read aloud by Sheena Blackhall. The story was also featured in the June/July issue of *The*

Celebrating Folklore in Film

The Legacy of North-East Song and Traveller Culture

Two exciting new 'folklore in film' projects are currently underway at the Institute. The documentaries aim to capture important visual aspects and the vitality of live performance in two major areas of traditional North-East culture.

The first project will take the form of a musical tribute to the memory of Tom and Anne Reid of Cullerlie Farm Park and Heritage Centre. Tom, crowned the Bothy Ballad King in 1977 and Anne, also a fine singer, were dedicated to promoting the song traditions and farming culture of the North-East through community entertainment, workshops in schools and by hosting regular local ceilidhs. Their work has been an immeasurable influence, and an encouragement to many young singers over the years. Since 2000, the family has welcomed singers from many traditions to the Cullerlie Traditional Singing Weekend, organized in conjunction with the Institute. Thanks to proceeds raised from the 2003 Tom Reid memorial concert, shooting for the film was completed at this year's Singing Weekend. The DVD will feature highlights of the 2008 event in combination with archival footage and is intended for release before Christmas.

Filming was directed by Amsterdam film-maker Mark van Hugten. Mark is no stranger to the North-East and his previous work in the locality has gained him three awards at Aberdeen Film Festival. His most recent work, with a soundtrack played by Aberdeen fiddler Sandy Tweddle, was featured in the Dutch National Film Festival 2008.

Mark will also be working in collaboration with the Institute on another important documentary film, this time about the life and legacy of Aberdeen Traveller and renowned ballad singer, Jeannie Robertson. 2008 marks the centenary of Jeannie's birth, a fitting time to create a permanent tribute to her life and influence upon local and international singers.

The documentary will be narrated by Jeannie's nephew, Stanley Robertson, and her life history will take the form of a Traveller's journey in song through the North-East. 'Jeannie's Legacy' will feature commentary from family members and singers to whom she became a mentor, and will involve young actors and members of the Grampian Association of Storytellers in creating dynamic re-enactments of several traditional stories as told by Jeannie. An important aspect of the project will be involving young Travellers in the making of the film, with workshops in various aspects of film-making planned in collaboration with Peacock Arts. Through celebrating the life of an important North-East figure, 'Jeannie's Legacy' aims to create a valuable visual, educational resource, emphasising the importance of Traveller culture and traditions to Scotland.

'Jeannie's Legacy' will be completed in 2009. We welcome involvement from any enthusiastic young Travellers, individuals or organisations with an interest in taking part, and though previous acting or film-making experience would be valued, it is not essential. Interested parties can contact Sara Reith at the Elphinstone Institute.

Sara Reith



Mark van Hugten (Director) with singer and MLitt student Christine Kydd Photo: Sara Reith

New Music for *Sunset Song*



The cast of *Sunset Song* on stage at His Majesty's Theatre, Aberdeen – Shona and Paul are on the far right
Photo: His Majesty's Theatre

My first experience of Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song* was as part of my higher English at Aboyne Academy in the 1980s. I've read it several times since and it is still a firm favourite. Having been born and brought up on an Aberdeenshire farm, there is much in *Sunset Song* which I can relate to, especially regarding the land, and to this day I don't think there is any other author who has so accurately described the sights and sounds of the North-East of Scotland.

Sunset Song, by Grassic Gibbon (James Leslie Mitchell), is an undoubted classic of Scottish literature; in 2006 it was voted 'the best Scottish book of all time'. Prior to the BBC Scotland mini-series of the late 1980s, interest in Grassic Gibbon's work had seriously waned and *Sunset Song* was in danger of going out of print. The series, which made a star of Vivien Heilbron who played the heroine, Chris Guthrie, did much to bring the book back to public consciousness and it was soon added to the school curriculum.

It is of little surprise, therefore, that His Majesty's Theatre in Aberdeen chose *Sunset Song* as its first in-house production in fifty years, in a version adapted for stage by Alastair Cording. Though this adaptation has run on a smaller scale previously, the new production, directed by Kenny Ireland, features further development of Alastair's original script and introduces some additional scenes from the book.

My own involvement with the production began as far back as the summer of 2007 when I was asked by Duncan Hendry (Managing Director of Aberdeen Performing Arts) to be Musical Director for the play. After meeting Kenny Ireland, the director, and giving the matter some serious thought, I agreed to take it on. Although it was an exciting prospect to compose and arrange music for this classic North-East tale, it was also a rather daunting one as I'd never taken on anything on this scale before.

Most of the original music was composed at home in Tarland although some work was also done whilst on a week's holiday in South Uist in April. Fitting the music round the script was much harder than composing the tunes; there are so many strong characters and images in the book that I found it almost endlessly inspiring. In addition to my original compositions, I also used a handful of well-known traditional tunes, such as 'Drumdelgie', 'The Flooers o the Forest', and 'The Braemar Gathering', to help give an authentic feel. Indeed, 'The Flooers o the Forest' and 'Ladies of Spain' are recurring themes throughout the book and really had to be included.

Sunset Song has without a doubt been one of the most rewarding musical experiences of my life and I hope that my own modest contribution to the story has been sympathetic. Ultimately, it probably doesn't matter too much as, in the words of Grassic Gibbon himself, 'only the land endures'.

Paul Anderson, AHRC Research Fellow

The Boaties, 2008

This year, the Boaties Project ran on a slightly smaller but no less rewarding scale. The senior craftsperson, Alec James Stephen, reports on the challenges and rewards of a demanding season: 'We have successfully completed another year, our fifth, building three boats. Everybody was very pleased; we had two sailing up at the Den Dam and they performed very well indeed. I have enjoyed every moment of this excellent project. It has also been very encouraging to see the benefit of the course to each of the apprentices. John Davidson, who had suffered a stroke a year ago, came to us with no confidence in his own ability. It took him the whole of the first week to pick up tool of any kind, yet by the end he was so much better and up at the Dam, he was the proudest man on the planet. Ewen Douglas, also disabled, did very well and worked very hard to produce his boat. The third boat completed was my biggest challenge. Young Blair was nineteen years old, and autistic, but together we managed to get his boat finished, too. I'm already looking forward to next year.'

Alec James Stephen



John Davidson pinning a plank
Photo: Ian Russell

North-East Sacred Singing Presented in Toronto and Warsaw



At the end of July, I presented a research paper, on Brethren congregational singing in North-East Scottish assemblies, at the North American British Music Studies Association bi-annual conference, which took place over three days at York University, Toronto, and included a fascinating mixture of papers on classical, traditional, popular and film music. I was delighted to be asked to join an English Country Dance band under Dorothy de Val (and learn some new tunes) to play for a dance workshop on the final morning. In September, I travelled to Warsaw to present on sacred singing at the European Seminar in Ethnomusicology annual conference, which was also of great value, the main themes being music in totalitarian states and comparative musicology. In May, I was lucky to be selected to take part in a video archiving summer school as part of the Ethnomusicological Video for Instruction and Analysis (EVIA) Digital Archive, to be held for two weeks in June 2009 at Indiana University, Bloomington. The main task will be to annotate field video recordings made by Dr Ian Russell and me as part of our research into the sacred singing traditions of North-East Scotland.

Frances Wilkins

The Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen

I feel extremely privileged to have been granted access to Trinity Hall and to the relevant records of each of the Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen, their Convener Court and other management committees. I have also been granted permission to record interviews with officials and members. My research will hopefully provide material for two projects (a) the publication of 'A History of the Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen' from 1887 to the present and (b) the presentation of a thesis of academic rigour that will meet the requirements of a PhD. The Seven Incorporated Trades are supporting the projects and generous individual members have donated funds to facilitate the research. My studies will investigate the Incorporated Trades' role in supporting manufacturing enterprises and their part in promoting superior craft skills through supervision and training. Many other areas of research will be undertaken, including the production of creative and utilitarian craftwork, the valued concept of mutuality and Trades' contribution to Aberdeen's traditional, cultural and economic life. A review of Craft Guilds at home and abroad will place The Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen in a wider setting.

In a Scottish historical context, the royal favour bestowed upon craftsmen and men of commerce can be traced to its origins in the twelfth century; William the Lion, King of Scots, granted two charters in 1179. These confirmed the privileges previously granted to the Burgesses of Aberdeen by David I. In the thirteenth century two distinct groups of Burgesses evolved, the Burgesses of Trade (Craftsmen) and the Burgesses of Guild (Merchants). Gradually, certain crafts came together and formed Seven Trades or Incorporations: Hammermen, Bakers, Wrights and Coopers, Tailors, Shoemakers, Weavers and Fleshers, each led by a Deacon. In order to act as a united body the seven deacons elected from their number a Deacon Convener, the first in 1587. The present Trinity Hall, the home of the Seven Incorporated Trades, was built in 1967 and was extensively refurbished in the 1990s. It bears witness to the continued high standards and well being of the organisation.

I look forward to carrying out research in this fascinating area of study. **Les Donaldson**

Les Donaldson Graduates with Commendation



Les Donaldson graduates at Marischal College, July 2008
Photo: Thomas A. McKean

Les Donaldson was awarded an MLitt in Ethnology and Folklore, graduating with commendation at the July ceremonies in the Mitchell Hall. His dissertation, 'The Call-Up', explores the wide-ranging National Service experiences of eight North-Easterners.

Who's Who at the Elphinstone

Dr Ian Russell, Director, *Ethnology, oral traditions, including singing, music-making, drama and speech*

Dr Thomas A. McKean, Deputy Director, archives and research, *ethnology, ballads, beliefs, Gaelic tradition, preparing a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection*

Dr Colin Milton, Associate Director, Hon., *Scottish literature and folklore, especially of the North East*

Dr Julia C. Bishop, NEH & BAc Research Fellow & team leader for: *a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*

Dr David Atkinson, NEH & BAc Research Fellow, *preparing a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*

Dr Elaine Bradtke, BAc Research Fellow, *preparing a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*

Dr Eddie Cass, NEH & BAc Research Fellow, *preparing a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*

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*

Fiona-Jane Brown, PhD student, *researching Belief in East and West Coast Fishing Communities*

Les Donaldson, PhD student, *researching the Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen*

Jennifer Fagen, PhD student, *researching the landscape of the Garioch*

Adam Grydehøj, PhD student, *researching Tradition and Cultural Promotion on Shetland*

Sara Reith, PhD student, George Reid Studentship, *researching Ethnology and Folklore of Scottish Travellers*

Irene Watt, PhD student, *researching lullabies*

Frances Wilkins, PhD student, *researching Sacred Singing in Coastal Communities in North-East Scotland and the Northern Isles*

Alison Sharman, Secretary

Honorary Research Fellows

Dr Mary Anne Alburger, *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*

Stanley Robertson, *Scottish Travellers*

Dr Robert Young Walser, *Maritime musical traditions, the J. M. Carpenter Collection research team*

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.

IMPORTANT DATES for your DIARY

Public Lectures

Tuesdays at 7.30-9.00pm

Admission £3.00 includes refreshments

Room MR028 (CPD Suite/James Scotland Room)

25th November 2008

Title: 'They That Go Down to the Sea in Ships: Aspects of Identity in the Scottish Fisherman.'

Speaker: Fiona-Jane Brown, PhD Researcher

Institution: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen

27th January 2009

Title: 'Burns and the Bardie Clan'

Speaker: Derrick McClure

Institution: University of Aberdeen

24th February 2009

Title: 'Aspects of the Gaelic Song Tradition of Cape Breton Island and Eastern Nova Scotia'

Speaker: Robert Dunbar

Institution: University of Aberdeen

31st March 2009

Title: 'Journeys through Local Landscapes: Exploring the Bennachie Colony'

Speaker: Jennifer Fagen, PhD Researcher

Institution: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen

28th April 2009

Title: 'North-East Scotland and Russia'

Speaker: Emeritus Professor Paul Dukes

Institution: University of Aberdeen

26th May 2009

Title: 'Roots and Custody of North-East Bothy Ballads'

Speaker: Charlie Allan

Institution: Retired farmer/broadcaster/lecturer/writer/performer

Other Events

6 November 2008

Institute Open Evening, 5.00-9.00pm

Refreshments and music from Paul Anderson and friends

15 November 2008

'Sacred Singing: Musical Spirituality' conference,

Elphinstone Institute, MacRobert Building,

University of Aberdeen

7-10 May 2009

'Taking Shetland out of the Box' conference,

Shetland, co-sponsored by the Elphinstone

Institute, UHI Millennium Institute's Centre for

Nordic Studies and the Shetland Museum &

Archives

24-26 July 2009

The Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie,

includes ceilidhs featuring the guest singers,

singarounds, workshops, and a talk on the songs

of Robbie Burns.