



## Congratulations to Dr Fiona-Jane Brown

Fiona-Jane Brown was awarded a PhD for her dissertation, 'Faith, Fear and Folk Narrative: Belief and Identity in Scottish Fishing Communities', which combines oral history and ethnology to illustrate how identity is shaped by the stories we tell and how we tell them. Fiona-Jane writes, 'The study encompasses fishing communities in the North-East of Scotland, the Outer Hebrides and Shetland. We can learn a lot about fisher identity — its substance and mechanism — through the study of personal narratives, the stories fishermen tell about themselves, their heritage, their environment and their skills. The major themes of this study are faith and fear, the former encompassing a range of strategies — some supernatural, some natural — which fishermen employ to cope with the latter. I also considered the factors which isolate fishermen from society at large, and those which fishers have used deliberately to isolate themselves from the landward community and even, at times, from other fishermen who are often their economic rivals at sea. I think the study demonstrates that belief and faith, as they are lived, form a major facet of fisher identity in Scotland. The expression of this identity is extended back to the past and forward into the future by the telling and retelling of personal narratives which will continue as long as their context exists: the sea.'

The Institute extends its congratulations to Dr Brown for her achievement.

## Open Evening

Thursday 11 November, 6–9 pm

The Open Evening is a chance to meet the staff and students and see the results of some of our projects. We'll have refreshments and an hour of entertainment from 7–8 pm.

## Elphinstone Institute Publications

Our publications, including books, CDs and DVDs, are now available at the University's on-line store. Point your browser to <http://tinyurl.com/2g8ao9s>, to purchase *The High-Kilted Muse*, *Crossing Over*, *The Elphinstone Collection*, Stanley Robertson's and Elizabeth Stewart's CDs and a range of other publications on fiddle traditions, songs and ballads, education, and more.

## 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 Research Fellow and team leader *preparing a critical edition of the J. M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*  
**Dr David Atkinson**, NEH Research Fellow, *preparing a critical edition of the J. M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*  
**Dr Eddie Cass**, NEH Research Fellow, *preparing a critical edition of the J. M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*

**Dr Frances Wilkins**, Ethnomusicology, *Sacred Singing in Coastal Communities in North and North-East Scotland and the Northern Isles*  
**Pat Ballantyne**, PhD student, *researching Scottish step dance traditions*  
**Janet Byth**, MLitt Res student, *researching schooling in the Fintry area of Aberdeenshire*  
**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*  
**Sheila Young**, PhD student, *researching women's pre-nuptial rituals in northern Scotland*  
**Alison Sharman**, Secretary

### Honorary Research Fellows

**Dr Mary Anne Alburger**, *music and song, fiddle making, 18<sup>th</sup> century culture*  
**Dr Caroline Macafee**, *Scots Language, Scottish National Dictionary Association*  
**Professor Bill Nicolaisen**, *ethnology, folk narrative, name studies, Scottish place names*

### Research Associates

**Paul Anderson**, *North-East fiddle styles and repertoires*  
**Sheena Blackhall**, *Creative writing in Scots*  
**Dr Elaine Bradtke**, *Preparing a critical edition of the J. M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*  
**Dr Katherine Campbell**, *Scots fiddle, instrumental and song traditions*  
**Evelyn Hood**, *Scottish traditions of dance*  
**Dr David Northcroft**, *Education in the North East*  
**Dr Robert Young Walsler**, *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

**Open Evening – All Welcome**  
11 November 2010, 6–9pm, with refreshments, music and song

**Harlaw Remembered**  
9 June 2011

**Public Lectures 2010/2011**  
*Tuesdays at 7.30–9.00pm Admission £3.00 includes refreshments*  
Room MR055, MacRobert Building, King's College, University of Aberdeen  
(NB 25 January's talk is in NK 10, New King's, King's College)

**28 September 2010**  
*Title: 'In the Heart of a Cultural Renaissance: Bagpipe Making and the Rebirth of Scottish Dance Music'*  
Speaker: Hamish Moore  
Institution: Musician and pipemaker

**19 October 2010**  
*Title: 'What's Not Out There: North-East Singers from the Alan Lomax and Howard Glasser Collections, 1951–63'*  
Speaker: Ewan McVicar  
Institution: Singer, writer, composer

**30 November 2010**  
*Title: 'Lost, Hidden or Just Unnoticed? The Archaeology of Gardens in North-East Scotland'*  
Speaker: Dr Shannon Fraser  
Institution: National Trust for Scotland

**25 January 2011**  
(NB in NK10, New King's, King's College)  
*Title: 'Special Burns Evening: The Ploughman Songmaker'*  
Speakers: Sheena Blackhall and Derrick McClure  
Institution: University of Aberdeen

**22 February 2011**  
*Title: 'George Washington Wilson and Scottish Commercial Photography'*  
Speaker: Antonia Laurence-Allen  
Institution: University of St Andrews

**22 March 2011**  
*Title: 'Fastern's Even: Shrovetide Ba Games in the Traditional Calendar'*  
Speaker: Neill Martin  
Institution: University of Edinburgh

**26 April 2011**  
*Title: 'The Killing Stones: Memories from Vanishing Traveller Campsites'*  
Speaker: Jess Smith  
Institution: Writer, storyteller and singer

**31 May 2011**  
*Title: Traditional Medicine and Healthcare in the North-East: The Transition from Simples to Scientific Medicine'*  
Speaker: Alex Sutherland  
Institution: University of Aberdeen

# ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

AUTUMN 2010

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

## The North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, 2010

NAFCo 2010, the largest celebration of fiddle and dance held in the UK, fulfilled expectations in all respects. Artistically it was a huge success with many inspirational performances and great chemistry between all the performers and participants. Workshops were of a consistently high quality with an excellent take up, as well. The concurrent conference was both stimulating and enlightening with new ideas and original research presented. One particularly notable success was the event's media impact with a number of advance features in newspapers and magazines, complemented by extensive national radio and television coverage. Significantly, the impact on the city and shire was considerable in terms of cultural tourism such that hotels and restaurants benefited substantially, and the wider general public were fully aware of the event, taking advantage of the many free performances, both by busking groups and at the free concerts at St Andrew's Cathedral, the Kirk of St Nicholas, and the Cowdray Hall.

It was a truly North Atlantic event with twelve countries represented and many different



Ross Hull. Photo by Ellice Milton

cultures, besides, with the artists from Canada, for example, comprised of fiddlers from five distinct traditions — Cape Bretoners, Newfoundlanders, francophones from Québec, natives of Toronto, and First Nations people including Ojibwe and Métis. Of the several Scottish traditions represented, the Papa Stour Sword Dancers from Shetland on only their third visit to the mainland proved to be stars in more ways than one, alongside many well-kent names — including Alasdair Fraser, Natalie Haas, Paul Anderson, Lori Watson, Ronan Martin, Jonny Hardie, Liz Doherty, Kimberley

Fraser, Troy MacGillivray, Lauren MacColl, Göran Premberg, Éric Favreau, Sabin Jacques, Alfonso Franco, Bryan Gear, Violet Tulloch, and many more. It is perhaps invidious to single out any one performance but the magic of Nic Gareiss's dancing to Bruce Molsky's masterful Appalachian fiddling is a memory that will abide, just as the energy and excitement of the First Nations fiddlers — the Oméigwessi Ensemble led by Teddy Boy Houle — infected everyone who saw and heard them.

Congratulations are due to all those who helped make NAFCo 2010 such a success — our partners Scottish Culture and Traditions (SC&T, especially Malcolm Reavell), our local steering committee, our funders and sponsors, our volunteers and stewards, our many supporters, and the organising team based at the Institute — Alison Sharman, Jill Strachan, Tom McKean, Norma Russell, and Carley Williams (from the University's Events Team).

The next NAFCo is all set for the City of Derry, Northern Ireland, in late June 2012, under the expert stewardship of Dr Liz Doherty of the University of Ulster.

Ian Russell

## NAFCo 2010 – A Participant's View

The latest incarnation of an extraordinarily successful combination of festival, multiple workshops, and scholarly conference, the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, returned to Aberdeen in July of 2010, hosted by the Elphinstone Institute in partnership with the Scottish Culture and Traditions Association. This was, once again, a truly delightful and stimulating composite event. One could attend the academic conference on four successive mornings, then adjourn to one of many free concerts over lunch, then attend workshops and concerts in the afternoons, and finally enjoy still more concerts in the evenings and long into the nights. At the morning paper sessions at King's College, I sampled papers and multi-media presentations exploring the 'Roots and Routes' of fiddling offered by scholars from as far away as Australia and as nearby as northeastern Scotland itself. Though I did not attend any workshops, I saw lots of happy faces emerging from them, and found the concerts uniformly excellent. My personal favourites included Scottish fiddler Carol Anderson, Hardingfele virtuoso Ingebjør Sørboen, and fiddle/accordion duet of Éric Favreau and Sabin Jacques from Québec. These performers, whose homes' geographical spread aptly represents that of the total event, weren't even among the distinguished headliners, who included Alasdair Fraser and Natalie Haas playing at the opening reception.

Aberdeen itself and the surrounding countryside contributed mightily to my enjoyment of the visit, with its bustling centre — a gargantuan cheeseburger I vanquished there was both the costliest and best in my considerable experience — a pleasant introduction to haggis, and daunting spectacle of salmon negotiating cascades on their way inland. But the strongest impression I retain of my trip is of how the constituent parts of NAFCo reinforced each other. The caution characteristic of responsible scholarship and the boldness required of performance interacted, so that papers were uncharacteristically adventurous and concerts historically-informed without becoming stuffy. I look forward eagerly to NAFCo 2012.

Chris Goertzen, University of Southern Mississippi



Above: Papa Stour Sword Dance team. Photo by Derek Summers

Below: Alfonso Franco (2nd left) leading a workshop on Galician tunes. Photo by Geoff Banks





## From the Director

The past six months have been among the busiest that we at the

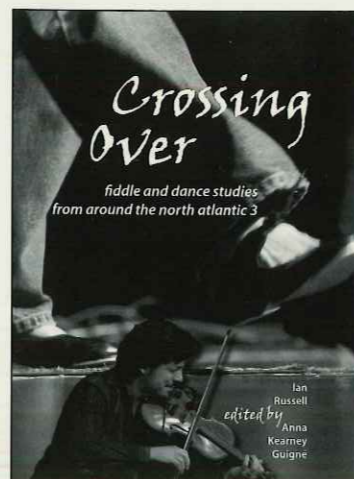
Institute have known, with two books published (*Crossing Over* and *The High Kilted Muse*), two festivals organised (NAFCo and Cullerlie), and an academic conference convened (NAFCo – ‘Roots and Routes’), plus several other worthwhile ventures. Foremost among these has been the news that the James Madison Carpenter Research team has achieved further success with a fourth major award from the National Endowment for the Humanities in the USA of \$210,000. Another venture to mention is the day organised with the City of Aberdeen at the Arts Centre, A Celebration of Traveller Culture and Tradition, held on 1 October. Among the principal guests were Jess Smith (storyteller and writer) and Elizabeth Stewart (singer and pianist), who were joined by Anthony and Gaby Robertson, and PhD student Sara Reith, who spoke about her work with the late Stanley Robertson.

We offer our sincere congratulations to Fiona-Jane Brown who achieved her doctorate and graduated in July (see back page). Congratulations are also due to our PhD student Jennifer Fagen and husband Henry on the birth of their son, Maxwell. We are pleased to welcome six new students to the Institute – Sheila Young (PhD), Janet Byth (MLitt Res), Nicholas Le Bigre (MLitt), Jay Wilson (MLitt), Hazel Macfarlane (MLitt), and Liz Campbell (MLitt). Irene Watt (PhD student) and I will be representing the Institute at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society in Nashville, Tennessee, 13-16 October. Both of us will be making presentations, Irene’s poster session is entitled ‘Should We be Waking Up to Lullabies?’, while I will be presenting a paper on ‘Managing Traditional Music in Scotland’.

Among the many highlights coming up in 2011 will be the conference day on 9 June to mark the 600-year anniversary of the Battle of Harlaw, organised in association with the Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen.

Ian Russell

## Fiddle Papers Published



NAFCo 2010 also saw the launch of *Crossing Over: Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic 3*, edited by Ian Russell and Anna Kearney Guigné. This volume, the third in the series, features selected, refereed essays drawn from NAFCo 2008 in St. John’s, Newfoundland. The theme of ‘crossing over’ highlights long-standing two-way intercultural communications between communities and cultures, across generations, between tradition and modernity, between innovation and revival, between music and dance, and between artistic

performance and academia. The twenty-one selected essays cover a range of themes, from cultural politics to the aesthetics of fiddle music and dance, from the performer’s creativity to the contesting forces of continuity and change. Rhythm and local accent are acknowledged as the distinguishing features of different fiddle styles. The North Atlantic, in providing a unifying frame for these studies, is not conceived in terms of boundaries that separate and divide peoples, but rather as corridors through which cultures have flowed and continue to flow in a process of exchange and communication. (See back page to order).

Contributors include: Paul Anderson, Elaine Bradtke, Liz Doherty, Greg Dorchak, Laura Ellestad, Karin Eriksson, Holly Everett, Alfonso Franco Vásquez, Chris Goertzen, Jessica Herdman, Juniper Hill, Andy Hillhouse, Sherry Johnson, Anna Kearney Guigné, Anne Lederman, Mats Melin, Colette Moloney, Mats Nilsson, Evelyn Osborne, Ken Perlman, Sarah Quick, Owe Ronström, Ian Russell, Frances Wilkins.

## Studying Pre-Nuptial Rituals in Northern Scotland

Pre-nuptial rituals for women in the north of Scotland have undergone a massive shift in the past thirty years, with the media describing hen nights as ‘female versions of stag nights’. With the recent development of commercialised, ‘package’ hen nights, there is a pressing need to document the vernacular traditions involved and, in view of the negative light in which they are currently regarded, to learn what their present form has to tell us about women as they approach marriage in the twenty-first century.

Over the years, I have worked as a career advisor and then a teacher of English Speakers of Other Languages for sixteen years in the Netherlands, Australia, Thailand and New Zealand. Returning to the North-East, I completed a part-time undergraduate degree in Scottish Cultural Studies, during which I did projects on ‘The Oilfield Names of the North Sea’, ‘The Route Names of Lochnagar’ and ‘Place Name Evidence for the Royal Forest of Drum’. At the same time, I set up my own business as



an intercultural trainer, which I still run. This work has made me even more aware of Scottish and regional traditions, as I help incoming business people and students adjust to UK culture. Pre-nuptial rituals are surely some of the most distinctive features of Scottish cycle of life traditions, so my PhD research will examine the form, meaning and function of these customs as they are practised today, their local and regional variations, as well as how they have evolved and how they are communicated and perpetuated. The ‘hen night party’ gives women the opportunity to engage in collective activities which license otherwise taboo behaviour. What impact does this have on group and individual identity, on attitudes towards the marriage, on society’s attitudes towards women? I hope that my work will go some way towards answering these questions and help us gain a better understanding of the social function of the traditions we see around us.

Sheila Young

## The High-Kilted Muse: Peter Buchan and his Secret Songs of Silence

Ballads from Peter Buchan’s manuscripts and his *Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland* (1828) and *Gleanings of Scarce Old Ballads* (1825) contributed mightily – and still controversially – to F. J. Child’s *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882–98). But lovers of Scottish ballads and songs have long been aware of the existence of Peter Buchan’s ‘other’ manuscript, the *Secret Songs of Silence*, a collection of bawdy, ‘high-kilted’ songs, which the ethos of the time prevented him from publishing. Peter’s friend David Laing gave him this piece of advice: ‘as a father of six representatives of Father Adam, you ought to have some regard to the morals of those who come after you, to keep you from meddling in such things’. Eventually, the manuscript found its way to Harvard and, although it has been available in a few places to consult on microfilm, now, thanks to the perseverance of editor Murray Shoolbraid, you can hold it in your hands and turn the pages of a handsome hardback volume.

*The High-Kilted Muse* presents an eclectic selection of some of the more racy songs from the first decades of the nineteenth century, and in some instances earlier. Some of them are familiar, ‘The Crab Fish’ and ‘The Haggis o’ Dunbar’, for instance, but there are rarer items too, such as ‘The Soutter o’ New Deer’ and ‘The Lasses of Kinghorn’. The latter was known to Greig and Duncan’s contributor Bell Robertson, and seems to come from a fairly obscure broadside, illustrating the diversity of sources represented in the *Secret Songs*.

Of course, we have always known that Scottish song was, and is, extremely diverse. Greig and Duncan showed that in the early twentieth century, and the *Secret Songs* helps flesh out the picture. There is plenty to explore. Bawdy songs at their best are often satisfyingly witty songs, and among my favourites are the tricking of the Devil pieces, ‘The Di’el and the Feathery Wife’ and ‘The Baker o’ the Town o’ Ayr’. The edition comes with an introduction, commentary, appendices, and indexes, and a foreword by the master of bawdy, Ed Cray. Following the *Glenbuchat Ballads*, the University Press of Mississippi has once again done the Elphinstone proud.

David Atkinson



*The High-Kilted Muse*  
PETER BUCHAN AND HIS  
SECRET SONGS OF SILENCE

Edited by Murray Shoolbraid With a foreword by Ed Cray



From left to right: Lise Sinclair, Jim Taylor, Joe Rae, Moira Stewart, Tom Spiers. Photos by Derek Summers

## Traditional Singing Celebrated at Cullerlie

The Cullerlie Traditional Singing Weekend got off to a great start on Friday night with the informal ‘come-all-ye’ ceilidh. In the relaxed atmosphere of the tea room, the organisers, guests and audience had equal opportunity to chat, sing and recite. Despite a few thoroughly deserved sore heads, a diverse range of workshops got underway on time next morning – all well attended. Elizabeth Stewart talking about her forthcoming book, *Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen* about the Stewarts of Fetterangus, was a perfect end to the morning activities, and after lunch a series of informal sessions and singarounds made the afternoon fly past.

The Grand Ceilidh Concert on Saturday night was the first ‘formal’ event, and in their selection of guests, the organisers had ensured a varied and interesting line-up: Dave McCracken (Northumberland), Ellen Mitchell (Glasgow), Kevin Mitchell (Derry City, now Glasgow), Will Noble (Yorkshire), Mary-Anne Roberts (Trinidad & Tobago, now Wales), Lise Sinclair (Fair Isle), Tom Spiers (Aberdeen), Moira Stewart (Turriff), Grace Toland (Inishowen), and John Valentine (Cove, near Aberdeen). The marquee was packed, the audience were in singing mood and a good time was had by all.

A surprising number of survivors made it along to breakfast in the tea room on Sunday morning and the workshops and singarounds were once again all well attended.

All too soon the Farewell Ceilidh Concert was upon us and the guests, aided by a selection of floor singers – many of them guests from previous years who just keep coming back – produced another inspired performance to bring the weekend festival to a close.

Cullerlie is a gem in the Scottish festival calendar. The friendly atmosphere and seamless organisation make it a joy for enthusiasts of traditional, unaccompanied singing. Long may it continue.

Tom Spiers

## Battle of Harlaw Commemorated

As part of the commemorations of the 600th anniversary of the battle of Harlaw (24 July 1411), the Institute is promoting a conference, open to all, which will explore the historical and cultural background to the battle and its repercussions across the centuries.

The day-long event, to be held on 9 June 2011, will feature Dr Tony Pollard, Director of the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, University of Glasgow, discussing the material legacy of the battle in ‘What evidence for Harlaw?’. Also on hand will be Professor Richard Oram, Department of History, University of Stirling, to speak about the background history of the time. An array of other equally distinguished speakers will join us, including Dr John Purser on the music of the period and Charles Burnett, Ross Herald of Arms on identity and heraldry. Lastly, there will also be an exploration of the military strategies employed during the battle and David Irvine of Drum will speak on his ancestor, Sir Alexander Irvine of Drum, killed at Harlaw. Other topics covered will include archival evidence for the battle, the Gaeltachd and the Lordship of the Isles and the cultural legacy remaining with us today in balladry, music, stories and place names.

The event is planned for the Trinity Hall of the Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen, where the Harlaw banner and sword are on permanent display. Some 100 places are available to the public, to academics, historians and members of interested groups and societies. The fee of £12 (concs £10) includes registration, morning and afternoon tea and coffee breaks and a conference pack. There will be a separate paid-for lunch of soup and sandwiches in the Trades Hall. You can register your interest through the Institute (contact details on back page).

Gordon Casely