

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

## The Margaret Jones Studentship in Ethnology and Folklore

The Institute is pleased to announce a three-year, fully-funded PhD studentship in Ethnology and Folklore – Scottish traditions – commencing September 2012. The studentship is funded by a generous bequest to the University Development Trust by the late Margaret Jones and applications will be considered from candidates wishing to undertake original fieldwork on crafts, traditional music, or narrative.

Margaret Jones, CChem MRSC, was an Aberdeen graduate who went on to work as an industrial chemist. Her bequest includes funding for the Institute, the Research Institute for Irish and Scottish Studies (RIISS), the Institute of Medical Sciences and the Department of Chemistry. We are delighted that Mrs Jones – a farmer's daughter from Fettercairn – chose to remember her North-East roots in this tangible way.

Specific PhD projects might focus on, for example, boatbuilding in the North of Scotland, ballad singing, or immigrant/emigrant and diasporic narratives. The successful candidate will contribute to our diverse team of

students and researchers, undertaking weekly work in support of the archives. The studentship includes a three year bursary, plus full tuition fees at home rate.

We currently have ten PhD students, researching subjects such as traditional fiddle styles, women's pre-nuptial rituals, the lullaby, landscape and community in the Garioch, Aberdeen's Seven Incorporated Trades, Scottish step dance, and intangible cultural heritage. The research will be supervised by the Director, Prof. Russell, drawing on the support of other staff as well as the archival resources of the Institute and the University's Special Collections.

We are looking for someone with a strong interest in Scottish oral and cultural traditions, and a commitment to ethnographic research. Informal enquiries about the studentship should be directed to Prof. Russell at the Institute and full details and application materials can be found on our homepage ([www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone)). The closing date is 16 March 2012 and interviews will be held 18 April 2012.

*Tom McKean*

## Polish Singing Workshops

Once a fortnight, enthusiastic singers make their way to the Elphinstone Institute, eager to exchange Polish and Scottish songs with fellow participants. Teas and coffees warm up the group, after which all present partake in vocal exercises that loosen the tongue and weaken inhibitions. Grace Banks leads the singing, sometimes accompanied by her harp, all the while carefully enunciating and explaining any tricky Scots words that might appear in the songs. After learning two or three new Scottish songs, requests are made to sing old favourites like 'The Bonnie Ship the Diamond', of which, as many singers have noted, a Polish version also exists.

At least one Polish song is shared and sung at each meeting. Thankfully, the poor pronunciation of most non-Polish singers is good-naturedly ignored by the Polish contingent and the focus turns to the sweet melodies and the cultural significance of the various lyrics. The narrative aspect of many of these songs is perfectly complemented at the end of

most meetings by a story told by Grace, whose warm yet suspenseful style is very popular with participants.

These Polish-Scottish cross-cultural singing workshops were originally envisaged by Agnieszka Waszkiewicz and Ian Russell, and Ian agreed to host the workshops at the Institute. The first few workshops were funded by a generous donation from the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute; since then, important funding for the workshops has been secured from the Polish Consulate in Edinburgh and from the University's Cultural Engagement fund. The workshops have proven to be popular and productive, and further demonstrate the Institute's eagerness to connect to all aspects of North-East culture and traditions.

*The next singing workshops will take place on 12 and 26 February, 6.00–8.00 pm. Noted Polish storyteller Michał Malinowski will host a storytelling workshop on 4 March, 6.00–8.00 pm. All are welcome.*

*Nicolas Le Bigre*



*Photo by Grace Banks*

## From the Director



The last few months have been a very busy time for the Institute with a festival and two seminars/conferences. From 11–13 November a third Free Reed Convention was held – see the separate report. This was followed by a weekend meeting of the Traditional Song Forum, 26–27 November, which marked the first time this group had visited Scotland. About thirty people from all over the UK participated in networking sessions during the weekend and a number of presentations were given by members of the Institute. These included a report on ‘The James Madison Carpenter Project’, from Julia Bishop; Irene Watt spoke about her ‘Lullaby Research’; Tom McKean gave a paper on ‘A Gaelic Macaronic Song from Easter Ross’; and I discussed ‘Vernacular Performance and Creativity in the North-East of Scotland’. In addition, Tom Spiers introduced the ‘The Peter Hall Collection’ and Elizabeth Stewart and Alison McMorland talked about their partnered forthcoming book, *‘Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen’: Travellers’ Songs, Stories and Tunes of the Fetterangus Stewarts*, which is due to be published this July by the University Press of Mississippi in association with the Institute. This was followed by an excursion to Fyvie to explore the setting of the ballad of ‘Tifty’s Bonnie Annie’/‘Andrew Lammie’ (Child 233). Tony Robertson gave a fine rendition of the ballad from his family tradition and Marc Ellington provided fascinating insights to the castle and Fyvie kirk.

To mark St Andrew’s Day, a one-day conference was held by the Centre for the Study of Myth, in association with the Elphinstone Institute and the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies. Three eminent speakers presented papers, followed by discussion: Prof. Edward Cowan (Glasgow) on ‘The Myth of Freedom in Scottish History’; Prof. Robert Segal (Aberdeen) on ‘Robert the Bruce – Myth, Legend and National Hero’; and Prof. Murray G. H. Pittock (Glasgow) on ‘The Myth of the Jacobite Clans: Ideology and the Construction of “British” History’. It was a very successful meeting and several of our students and friends attended.

The winner of the 2011 Toulmin Prize of £500 was Linda Smith of Kintore with ‘The Last Een’; a copy of her winning short story was published in the summer 2011 issue of the *Leopard*. I am very grateful to our judges – Jack Webster, Lindy Cheyne, Norman Harper, and Prof. Paul Dukes. The short story competition in memory of David Toulmin will run for the fifth consecutive year, supported by the *Leopard* magazine and the Scots Language Centre. The competition is open to amateur writers of 16 years and over. Entries should reach the Institute by 31 March 2012 and must be unpublished, of no more than 4,000 words in length, in MS Word format and sent as an A4 typescript as well. The winner will be announced in May at a special event. For full competition rules, please consult our website.

*Ian Russell*

## Button Boxes and Moothies Make Magic!

The Elphinstone Institute, in partnership with SC&T and the TMSA, hosted the third *Button Boxes and Moothies* festival on 11–13 November 2011. It proved to be a unique celebration of free-reed instruments, and included mouth organs, English and anglo concertinas, melodeons, diatonic button accordions, and Jew’s harps. Full houses enjoyed the appealing music of these delightful instruments which were played by some of the very best talents around, both local to Scotland and from further afield. Attendance at the 24 workshops which offered a wide range of choice and levels of difficulty was admirable, and there were also opportunities to ‘meet the artist’. We are very grateful to Sandy Brown and the Blue Lamp which hosted the informal sessions and the concerts (not forgetting Mac our soundman), and to Alex Cadogan and the Citadel which hosted the workshops.

Among the guests were legendary Irish box players Brendan Begley from Kerry, anglo concertina virtuoso Mary Mac Namara from East Clare, and mouth organ maestro Pip Murphy from Wexford. The musicians from England were Roger Digby on anglo concertina, whose wide repertoire encompassed jazz and ragtime; Ernie Gordon from Alnwick, who played some stunning airs on moothie; melodeon player Liam Robinson, who specialised in tunes from his native Lincolnshire, and Jew’s harp champion Michael

Wright. The Scottish contingent included the all-girl Lewis Melodeon Group, Norman Chalmers on English concertina, Fred Davidson on melodeon, and three great moothie players, Donald Black, George Current and Bryce Johnstone. There were also some fine contributions from Tom Roche, Leo McCann, Rob Say, Dave Lorimer, and two Newcastle University protégés, David Gray and Matt Quinn. A dance bonus featured a set dance workshop led by the redoubtable Jerry O’Reilly.

The seminar on Friday was equally well supported with presentations from Michael Wright, who spoke about the coming of the Jew’s harp into Europe; Máire Ní Chaoimh, who gave a history of the Irish button accordion based on her PhD research; and Roger Digby who illustrated the role of the Anglo concertina in English ‘country music’. We had some most encouraging feedback, as well.

*Excellent and inspiring! • Grand tunes, tutor personality, everything!! Superb!! • Very relaxed, great music and the best of company! • Fascinating insight, beautiful playing • So good to see so many dedicated people to help keep our music alive • One of the best events that I have been to. Fantastic weekend – even for a non-player. Just could not ask for more.*

A final vote of thanks goes to Pete Murray of Celtic Chords and Theo Gibb of the Box Place.

*Ian Russell*



# Cullerlie Singing Weekend Nominated for 'Event of the Year' Again!

The 2011 Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie, held in memory of Tom and Anne Reid, was nominated for 'Event of the Year' for the second time at the prestigious MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards, which took place at Perth Concert Hall on 3 December 2011. The competition was stiff and among the other nominees were Linlithgow Folk Festival, Hallaig (Blas), and Orkney Folk Festival, which was declared the winner. Tracey and Eric Walker with family and friends represented Cullerlie at the Awards, which proved to be an excellent evening combining tributes and entertainment. Congratulations are due to Siobhan Miller, one of our 2011 guests, who was voted Scots Singer of the Year.

Several outstanding singers have been booked for this year's event, including the winner of the 2010 Scots Singer of the Year Award and the 2012 Elgin Champion of Champions, Joe Aitken, and Jock Duncan, who in 2006 was inducted into the Scottish

Traditional Music Hall of Fame. Irish singing will be well represented by the acclaimed Len Graham from County Antrim, and Nell Ní Chróinín (*below, left*), from the Múscraí Gaeltacht, the Irish speaking area of West Cork. The guests from England are both from farming backgrounds – Jeff Wesley, from Northamptonshire, a great favourite at Cullerlie, and Mike Tickell from the North Tyne Valley, whose family are noted for their music and song. Other well-respected singers from Scotland include Kate Taylor from Garlogie, whose roots are in the North-East, Natalie Chalmers from Fraserburgh, who sang at the 2012 Bothy Ballad 'Champion of Champions' at Elgin, Chris Wright (*centre*), from Dundee, who works for the landmark Kist o Riches project, and Sarah Jane Gibbon (*right*), who recently co-led the Big Orkney Song Project which collected, investigated, revived, and taught Orkney songs within the local community.

There will also be the opportunity to take

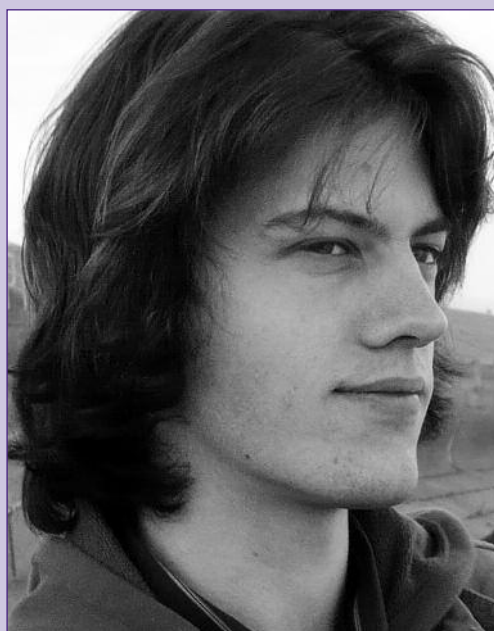
part in workshops, several of which are devoted to traditional crafts, including rug making with Isobel Gregory, rope making with Joe Aitken and team, and farmhouse cooking with Shirley Foulkes. Two other workshops relate to singing traditions – 'Songs from the Ulster Tradition', with Len Graham, and 'Songs from the Big Orkney Song Project', with Sarah Jane Gibbon.

One of the highlights of the weekend will be an illustrated talk and book launch of the long-awaited *'Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen': Travellers' Songs, Stories and Tunes of the Fetterangus Stewarts*, by Elizabeth Stewart, with Alison McMorland, which is to be published by the University Press of Mississippi in partnership with the Elphinstone Institute.

There will be a fund raising 'Ceilidh for Cullerlie' on 28 April in Garlogie Village Hall. Places can be booked by downloading a form at [www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/) or by phoning 01224 645486. **Ian Russell**



## Fiddle Style and Musical Lineage



I was delighted to join the Elphinstone Institute as a PhD candidate (jointly with the Music) last September after having spent two years at Oxford University achieving a Masters degree in musicology. My topic of study is Scottish fiddle music, which I intend to investigate from the perspective of performance – that is to say not just what fiddlers play, but also how they play it and in what contexts.

As a fiddler myself, I have always been uncertain about what people mean when they talk about the 'Scottish fiddle tradition'. To begin with, I would argue for there being many fiddle traditions (North-East, Borders, West-Highland, for example) – each of which has its own way of playing a shared repertoire of tunes. More specifically, I am curious about the implications of the word 'tradition' itself. The suggestion that fiddlers of today have a direct link with the past is, on the face of it, a fascinating prospect, but on closer inspection it becomes problematical. While there are fiddlers who can trace their musical lineage back to the great masters of the eighteenth century, what significance does that really have in terms of their performance today?

Developments in fiddle construction along with changes in musical tastes and practices separate us irretrievably from the past, but at the same time the fact that Scottish fiddle music has been in continuous transmission from then to now – both aurally from person to person and through manuscript and printed sources – is far from insignificant. I aim to establish just how historically informed present-day fiddling really is through a combination of archival research and observations of and interviews with living fiddlers.

**Ronnie Gibson**

## Who's Who at the Elphinstone

**Professor 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*

**Richard Bennett**, MLitt Res student, *researching a Speyside distillery community*

**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*

**Ronnie Gibson**, PhD student, *researching the relationships between contemporary and eighteenth-century fiddle traditions*

**Roderick McKenzie**, PhD student, *researching Scottish healing wells, their contemporary use and the implications for nursing practice*

**Máire Ní Bhaoill**, PhD student, *researching traditional singing among children in Ireland*

**Guglielmo Perfetti**, PhD student, *researching the changing role of music making in the social context of the public house*

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

**Irene Watt**, PhD student, *researching lullabies*

**Carley Williams**, PhD student, *researching Intangible Cultural Heritage in the North-East in relation to UNESCO policies*

**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, eighteenth-century culture*

**Dr Caroline Macafee**, *Scots language: history, dialectology, sociolinguistics and lexicography; 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 Walser**, *Maritime musical traditions, the J. M. Carpenter Collection research team*

**Les Wheeler**, *Scots language, education*

## IMPORTANT DATES for your DIARY

**The Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie**  
22–24 July 2011

### Public Lectures 2012

Tuesdays at 7.30–9.00pm Admission £3.00 includes refreshments  
Room MR055, MacRobert Building, King's College, University of Aberdeen

### 28 February 2012

Title: 'Scottish Pantomime'

Speaker: Paul Maloney

Institution: School of Culture and Creative Arts, University of Glasgow

### 27 March 2012

Title: 'Not Just for Babies: The Power of the Lullaby'

Speaker: Irene Watt

Institution: Elphinstone Institute

### 24 April 2012

Title: 'Scots in the Sub-Arctic: Musical Exchanges with the James Bay Cree in Canada'

Speaker: Dr Frances Wilkins

Institution: University of Aberdeen

### 29 May 2012

Title: 'The Moray Firth Gansey Project'

Speaker: Kathryn Logan

Institution: Moray Firth Partnership

## Elphinstone Institute Publications

Our publications, including books, CDs and DVDs, are now available at the University's on-line store. Point your browser to [www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/publications](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/publications), 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.

### 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.**



Recent MLitt graduates Nicolas Le Bigre and Carley Williams in the Buchan Library. Photo by Alison Sharman

**The Fifth Toulmin Short Story Competition, with a prize of £500 to the winner, is open for entries until 31 March 2012.** The competition is open to all amateur writers over the age of 16 and the story should be concerned with some aspect of life in North-East Scotland. The winning story will be published in the *Leopard* magazine. Deadline 31 March, 2012. For more information contact the Elphinstone Institute, 01224 272996, or [elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk).