

Halloween and Bonfire Night Practices in the North-East

The Institute will present a free documentary film compilation on how people celebrate Halloween and Bonfire Night in the North-East as part of 'Being Human: A Festival of the Humanities', 15–23 November.

After a workshop at which we showed participants how to record events and interviews, and discussed the ethical dimensions of doing ethnographic fieldwork, we'll gather audio and video recordings, together with images submitted and edit them together into a presentation to be shown to the public at the Belmont Filmhouse, 23 November, 6:30–7:30.

We are interested in how people celebrate these popular and significant occasions, which have deep roots in our culture. Do you carve neepie lanterns or pumpkins? Dook for apples? Go guising or trick-or-treating from house to house? Do you tell a joke, sing a song, or recite a rhyme at the door? Do you build bonfires or go to someone else's? Do you have fireworks? Or do you go to a public event?

We want to hear about the diversity of experience and meaning that people from all walks of life bring to these practices. People have been guising, building bonfires, and marking the turning of the seasons for longer than anyone knows, so these are important occasions

for individuals, for families, and for communities. Perhaps you go out yourself or maybe you take your little brother or sister out; maybe it's a family affair. Everyone will have a different way of celebrating and we want to hear people's stories, see what people do, and hear what it sounds like.

On 21 October, at our hands-on workshop, we shared techniques on ethnographic interviewing and recording, including advice on how to ask good questions.

Participants and the public are now invited to join us for the public film night at which contributions will be gathered together, along with historical background information, into a rich collage of how we pass the time on the old Celtic New Year.

Thomas A. McKean



Neepie lanterns. Photo by Nicolas Le Bigre

information, into a rich collage of how we pass the time on the old Celtic New Year.

We need your help! Use your phone to record an interview with a friend or relative about what they do, video or take pictures of guisers going house to house, trick-or-treaters telling a joke, or a bonfire. Then, send your files to us via www.mailbigfile.com, using the email address elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk.

The Elphinstone Institute Field School

This September, we ran the first MLitt Field School, an important addition to the taught programme. From 22–26 September, Tom McKean, Nick Le Bigre, Alison Sharman and I accompanied seven new students on a busy programme of activities which took us from Aberdeen to Tarland to Glenfeshie, Newtonmore, Drumnadrochit, Scoraig, and Culloden, stopping at a number of points of interest en route.

The field school was planned as an all-encompassing experience

of Scottish culture, traditions, and history, both from the present day and rooted in history. From interviews with musicians Paul Anderson and Shona Donaldson, and archaeologist, Cathy Dagg, to the Loch Ness Visitor Centre experience, Tobar nan Ceann at Loch Oich, the Clootie Well at Munloch and the battleground of Culloden, the School presented a number of different aspects of folklore and ethnology including cultural tourism, landscape and vernacular architecture, fieldwork, objects and their makers, ethics, and custom and belief.

In addition to this, Tom and Alison provided us a fine menu of Scottish traditional cuisine each day, including brose and por-

ridge, Cullen skink and milk soup, skirlie, black pudding, homemade oatcakes, haggis, salmon, langoustines, venison, dumpling and cranachan.

There were many highlights, but perhaps the most enjoyable for me were the visit to the seventeenth-century blackhouse village at the Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore, and the boat journey from Scoraig in near-gale force winds. MLitt student, Heather Lodge, summed up her experience of the Field School, 'It is the difference between reading music on a sheet and hearing it played. To me, seeing the places and the people was like hearing the music.'

The Field School will run annually each September as part of the MLitt programme and we hope to follow up with further field trips in the Spring.

Frances Wilkins



At the Clootie Well, Munloch.



Preparing to cross Little Loch Broom. Photos by Nicolas Le Bigre



From the Director

We are very pleased to welcome all of our new students, Ali Anwar, Anne Greig, Casey Griffin, Heather Lodge, Carriona Moore, Caroline Turner, and Natalie Weir to the MLitt programme, Andrew Woodward for an MLitt by Research on alternative healing, and Bee Kerr for a PhD on the changing patterns of women's work in the twentieth century North-East. We started off with our inaugural Field School, a great way to introduce our new group – from as far afield as Wisconsin and Aberdeen – to Scottish culture, to fieldwork, and to the ethnographer's eye.

On a sad note, we are very sorry to have lost Eddie Cass, a beloved member of our Carpenter Project team, a committed scholar, and a good friend to us all (see below). We are sad, too, to hear of the loss of Alex James Stephen, a stalwart of the Peterhead Boaties Project, and someone never averse to sharing his wealth of knowledge about model boat building traditions with the young apprentices involved in the project.

We do have good news, though: Éva Gyöngy Máté from the University of Debrecen, Hungary, spent the summer with us, researching writers of Scottish fiction and taking part in the life of the Institute. We had a spate of graduations, too, with Richard Bennett and Janet Byth graduating with MLitt Res on the whisky industry and Fintry school, respectively, and Roderick McKenzie receiving his PhD for his study of Highland cloutie wells.

Our public engagement programme continues with the very successful launch of the Institute's Ethnographic Film Series (see p. 3), and our free Belmont Filmhouse presentation on contemporary Halloween and Bonfire Night practices (see cover).

Finally, congratulations to Chris Wright and Zarya Rathe on the birth of their daughter Gwinna. We wish them health and happiness for 2014 and beyond.

Thomas A. McKean

The Harold George Project

We are pleased to welcome Dr Irene Watt as an Honorary Fellow at the Institute. Recently, she has been running workshops in eight Banff-area schools, based around the Harold George Collection.

Harold George, affectionately known as 'Singin' Doddie', was a music teacher and choirmaster in Banffshire from the 1930s until the late 1960s. Although based at Banff Academy, he also taught at some of the smaller schools along the Banffshire coast. Along with teaching music, he was very interested in traditional song, which he pursued as a hobby, visiting several local singers and taking down staff notation and texts from them. After his death, his papers were gifted to the University of Aberdeen by his widow, Lydia, who had also assisted him in his collecting work.

Because of the Institute's commitment to public engagement, we felt that the collection presented a great opportunity to connect Banff-area schools with local heritage and to raise awareness and appreciation for George and his work. I came on board through a grant from Enterprise Music Scotland, which allowed us to run a series of workshops in some of the schools in which George taught. Banff Academy jumped at the opportunity, too, thinking to use the project as part of their transition programme, so the project evolved to include all the Academy's feeder schools: Bracoden, Macduff, Banff, Whitehills, Portsoy, Ordequill (Cornhill), Fordyce, and Aberchirder.



Portsoy pupils ready for the workshop. *Photo by Irene Watt*

I visited those eight schools once a week from August to October, and at each we learned a song relevant to each town or area. The children were encouraged to research each song's theme, such as gathering mussels for baiting lines at Whitehills, the fisher lassies and the fishing industry in Gardenstown, the importance of the mart in Cornhill, what it meant to 'join up' and become a sodger in Aberchirder, the feen market and 'life doon on the ferm' in Macduff, and so on for each. We developed the 'story' of each song into a short sketch, the children suggesting the dialogue, all in the local language. We also discussed their characters and costumes, and even held auditions for the main parts. Each school was filmed performing their sketch and song, and the footage will be edited into a single film by Banff Academy senior pupils. Each primary school will receive a copy of the completed DVD.

The Harold George Project gives pupils at Banff Academy – the first school in Scotland to introduce a Scots Language module – a vital opportunity to use their own language in a school and media setting, while also providing the evidence required for them to attain their certificates.

The children loved their participation in this project. It brought the history of their town or village to life, built their sense of identity and connected them to their cultural heritage. We look forward to a future collaboration with Banff Academy, perhaps involving ethnographic work in the community. For my part it was a very productive way of connecting with the schools, revisiting my own past, and harnessing my own local knowledge, as well as my expertise as a musician and academic researcher.

Irene Watt



Eddie Cass

We have lost a great friend and colleague with the passing of Eddie Cass, part of the James Madison Carpenter Project team since its inception. Eddie was a specialist in the folk play, an insatiable collector of books, an unceasing champion of all things Mancunian, and perhaps above all a man who delighted in his wife and family.

Eddie had a remarkable career, encompassing work as a coal miner, a bank manager, and finally an enthusiastic and authoritative folk play scholar. The Carpenter Team are redoubling efforts to get Eddie's play volumes to press as soon as possible. He was serving president of the Society for Folklife Studies, and a vice president – and former president – of the Folklore Society. We send our condolences to his devoted wife, Sheila, and their family.

Thomas A. McKean

Eddie and Sheila in 2009, fixtures at the Abram Morris. *Photo by Elaine Bradtke*

Funeralscapes in a Viking, Pre-Christian, and Early Christian Landscape

The Kildonan region in the south-west of the island of Eigg has a remarkable concentration of early medieval sites, making it ideal for the reconstruction of pre-Christian, early Christian, and Viking Age funerals. In August 2014, I undertook fieldwork on the island, along with Carlos Galán-Díaz (an environmental psychologist at the University) and Shane McLeod (historian and archaeologist at the University of Stirling), with the participation of members of

the island community. The performances involved singing, processions, torch burning, shield percussion, and instrumental music. The emotional responses of participants to the music, funeral rites, and the landscape were assessed via questionnaires and interviews, and the video, audio, and photographic recording of events allowed us to develop important insights into the performance of funeral music in such an environment.



The project was made possible with 'How to Collaborate Virtually' funding, administered by the Centre for Academic Development at the University of Aberdeen. Subsequent support from the Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU), 'The North' research group, and the University of Stirling, has enabled us to produce an audio-visual exhibition and public lecture to be presented at 'Being Human: A Festival of the Humanities', at St Machar Cathedral, Aberdeen (15–23 November) and at the University of Stirling (December).

We will also be taking the exhibition and public lecture to Eigg in April 2015, as well as working on a co-authored article on the project over the next few months. We have been delighted with the success of, and enthusiasm for, the project so far, and hope to continue this participation-based research at other burial sites in Scotland in the future.

Frances Wilkins

Launching the Elphinstone Institute Ethnographic Film Series

Field research yields audio-visual materials ideal for the presentation of findings in alternative and accessible formats such as film, audio, and the internet. The MLitt in Ethnology and Folklore now has practical film and radio editing elements to it, so alongside this initiative, we have launched a monthly Ethnographic Film Series, hosted by Frances Wilkins. Our first film, *Ustad Rahim: Herat's Rubab Maestro*, offered a wonderful insight into Afghan musical culture and mentoring traditions, and was followed by a fascinating discussion exploring some of the regional cultural contexts and teasing out some of the issues raised.

Future films will cover a range of genres, from material culture to song traditions. November's film, *The Language You Cry In*, tells a remarkable scholarly detective story reaching from eighteenth-century Sierra Leone to the Gullah people of present-day Georgia.

Films show on the first Tuesday of each month; entry is free and all are welcome. See What's On, or our website, www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/events/filmseries, for details.

Thoughts from a Hungarian Visiting Scholar

Throughout the summer we hosted a visiting Hungarian PhD student, who became part of the Institute family. Here, she offers an insight into her Scottish experience.

In May I had the opportunity to visit the Elphinstone Institute thanks to Hungary's 'Campus Hungary Programme', designed to enhance international student mobility in higher education. My aim was to advance my doctoral research on landscape and cultural identity in contemporary Scottish fiction through extensive use of the Buchan and Duncan Rice Libraries, both of which hold wide-ranging collections of relevant material.

I quickly became familiar with the collections, along with the academic and social environment, which gave me a better understanding of the rich and diverse culture of North-East Scotland and helped to contextualise my research questions. I took part in the FEECA 2014 Steppin Steens o Knowledge postgraduate conference last July as a volunteer and a presenter. It was an immensely inspiring experience professionally and personally as it heightened my awareness and understanding of vernacular culture in a wider setting.

Also in July, I took part in the Cullerlie Traditional Singing Weekend where I not only encountered the fascinating world of traditional songs, but improved my dormant skills in singing and recording and discovered new ones, like weaving. Soon afterwards, I set out on a trip to explore the

actual and literary landscapes of the northern archipelagoes – Shetland and Orkney – where I conducted an interview with Liz and Brian Murray related to my work on George Mackay Brown.

Besides reading, I tried to gain a sense of place by visiting historical sites around Aberdeenshire and taking part in programmes promoting the vibrant cultural creativity so palpable in the area, such as Stonehaven Folk Festival, the Shetland Fiddle Frenzy Festival, the Institute Seminar Series, workshops with the Mearns Singers' choir and the literary Poetic Aberdeen group, or the storytelling event dedicated to the legacy of Stanley Robertson organized by Elphinstone MLitt student, Jessica Doble.

These memorable experiences led me to a much more nuanced view of Scotland's cultural identity. Returning to my home institute at the University of Debrecen, I have shared my experiences through public lectures and have started material for future publication.

Dear friends, I am grateful to you all for being so warm-hearted, helpful, supportive and welcoming, making my visit so enjoyable and productive. I shall spread the word. Köszönöm!

Éva Gyöngy Máté, University of Debrecen, Hungary



WHAT'S ON

Public Lectures, Ethnographic Film Series, and Other Events

30 Sep 2014 • **TALK**

Scots in Schools
Diane Anderson
Scots Language Co-ordinator,
Education Scotland/Foghlam Alba

7 Oct 2014 • **FILM**

Ustad Rahim: Herat's Rubab Maestro
John Bailly

28 Oct 2014 • **TALK** (Linklater Rooms)

Stories and their Stories
Lawrence Tulloch and Tom Muir
Storytellers

4 Nov 2014 • **FILM** (MacRobert Lect. Theatre)

The Language You Cry In
Angel Serrano and Alvaro Toepka

13 Nov 2014

Open Evening, 6:00–9:00pm
All Welcome – *A social gathering, along with an insight into what we do from current research students*

15 Nov 2014

Funeralscapes Public Lecture, 11:00am
St Machar Cathedral, Aberdeen

15–23 Nov 2014

Funeralscapes Exhibition
St Machar Cathedral, Aberdeen

23 Nov 2014

Halloween/Bonfire Night Film, 6:30–7:30
Belmont Filmhouse

25 Nov 2014 • **TALK** (MR Lecture Theatre)

Caring for Bennachie and Its Landscape
Jackie Cumberbirch
Forestry Commission Scotland

2 Dec 2014 • **FILM** (MR 051)

Our Lives in Our Hands/People's Stuff
Karen Carter and Harald Prins/LeAnn Erickson

27 Jan 2015 • **TALK** (MR 051)

Collective Compositions: The SHMU
Multi-Ethnic Recording Project
Simon Gall, and company
Station House Media Unit

3 Feb 2015 • **FILM** (MR 051)

Searching for Sugar Man
Malik Bendjelloul

24 Feb 2015 • **TALK** (MR 051)

Curiosity Killed the Cat: Margaret Fay Shaw,
Folklorist in the Southern Hebrides
Fiona Mackenzie
Freelance scholar and performer

28 Feb–1 Mar 2015

Pioneer Collectors Song Conference

3 Mar 2015 • **FILM** (MR 051)

Lomax the Songhunter
Roger Kappers

31 Mar 2015 • **TALK** (MR 051)

Timespan – Remote Possibilities in Scotland's
North: A Cultural Organisation on the Edge
Anna Vermehren
Timespan Museum, Helmsdale

31 Mar 2015

Closing date for the Toulmin Prize

28 Apr 2015 • **TALK** (MR 051)

A Filthy, Dirty and Abominable Practice:
A Short History of the Blackening
Sheila Young
PhD Researcher

5 May 2015 • **FILM** (MR 051)

Songs from the Inside
Maori Television

26 May 2015 • **TALK** (MR 051)

Banishing the Beastie: Pioneering Haggis
for Modern Times (with tasting)
Jo Macsween
Macsween of Edinburgh

29–31 May 2015

Elphinstone Institute Events
at the University's May Festival

31 May 2015

Toulmin Prize Celebration
at the University's May Festival

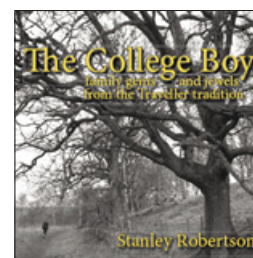
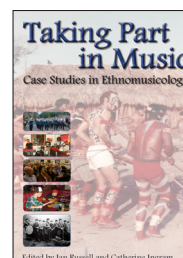
Chris Wright Wins Academic Prize



Congratulations to Chris Wright, MLitt student, who has been awarded the college-wide Ede & Ravenscroft Prize for Academic Excellence. Chris has been an exceptional asset to the Institute and we are very pleased that his imaginative, thorough, and consistent work has been recognized in this way.

Elphinstone Institute Publications

Our publications, including books, CDs and DVDs, are available at the University's on-line store. Point your browser to www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/publications, to purchase *Taking Part in Music*, *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 would like to volunteer, or have any information, comments or suggestions relevant to the work of the Institute, please 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, or join the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute, please contact the Secretary.

Who's Who at the Elphinstone

Staff

Dr Thomas A. McKean, Director, *ethnology, ballad and song, Gaelic tradition, custom and belief, archives, J. M. Carpenter Project*

Dr Frances Wilkins, Lecturer, *ethnomusicology, ethnology, sacred singing in coastal communities, Scottish fiddle traditions in northern Canada, funeralscapes*

Professor Emeritus Ian Russell, *ethnology, oral traditions, including singing, music-making, drama and speech*

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

Honorary Research Fellows

Dr David Atkinson, *J. M. Carpenter Project*

Dr Julia C. Bishop, *J. M. Carpenter Project*

Professor Bill Nicolaisen, *ethnology, folk narrative, name studies, Scottish place names*

Dr Irene Watt, *lullabies and project work*

Research Students

Pat Ballantyne, PhD student, *researching Scottish step dance traditions*

Kristin Borgehed, PhD student, North Studentship, *researching an ethnographic study of northern cultural performance*

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

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

Bee Kerr, PhD student, *researching changing patterns of women's work in the North-East*
Nicolas Le Bigre, PhD Student, Margaret Jones Studentship, *researching narratives of immigrant experience, archives*

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

Sara Reith, PhD student, George Reid Studentship, *researching cultural traditions of Scottish Travellers*

Carley Williams, PhD student, *researching the North-East's intangible cultural heritage in relation to UNESCO policies*

Sheila Young, PhD student, *researching women's pre-nuptial rituals in northern Scotland*

Research Associates

Paul Anderson, *North-East fiddle styles and repertoires*

Sheena Blackhall, *creative writing in Scots*

Dr Elaine Bradtke, *J. M. Carpenter Project*

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, J. M. Carpenter Project*

Les Wheeler, *Scots language, education*

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Ethnology, Folklore, and Ethnomusicology - Researching and Promoting the Culture of North and North-East Scotland