

# ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE

studying culture in context

## Diane Goldstein Launches the David Buchan Lecture Series

The inaugural Buchan Lecture was given by Professor Diane Goldstein to an audience of more than one hundred and twenty gathered in the King's College Conference Centre, and



simultaneously streamed. The series showcases the range and reach of Ethnology and Folklore across the disciplines and Professor Goldstein, a prominent folklorist and member of the EU 'Tell Me: Transparent Communications in Epidemics' committee, discussed how her pioneering work on narrative and legend yields insights into how disease, and knowledge about it, travel from person to person and region to region. This knowledge can, in turn, be of great use in how health professionals and international bodies such as WHO react to rapidly moving health epidemics and public awareness of them.

Introducing the lecture, Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, remarked on our twenty years of 'scholarship, teaching, and research of the highest level', adding that 'the language, the culture, the folklore of the region is incredibly important, and the Institute is at the heart of that. And we will continue to move it forward'. The talk, attended by scientists, folklorists, anthropologists, historians, Institute Friends, and the general public, is available online at [abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/public-engagement/david-buchan-lecture-2015](http://abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/public-engagement/david-buchan-lecture-2015).

*Thomas A. McKean*

*Professor Goldstein with Professor Sir Ian Diamond and the Director at the inaugural David Buchan Lecture. Photo by Brian Stewart.*

## Iain Torrance Becomes Patron to the Institute

I am honoured to be Patron of the Elphinstone Institute. I became aware of the Institute early on in Ian Russell's tenure and was immediately attracted by his enthusiasm. As Dean, I played a part in the appointment of Stanley Robertson as an HLF-funded Key Worker. At the interview he appeared wearing his cap and he kept it on. This is an interesting man, I thought, and, as he told us a story, I became intrigued. He then produced a chanter from an inside pocket and played 'Teribus', first in the civilian way of it, then the army style, and finally as Travellers play it. I was utterly entranced, and at that moment I became a firm supporter of the Institute and all it stands for and tries to do.

Aberdeenshire is rich in its oral tradition of ballads and stories, its pipe and fiddle music, its folklore, customs, international reach, its embeddedness in the fishing, farming, whisky industries, and in religious life. The Institute is committed to exploring and promoting these traditions, making it distinct from the rest of the university, in terms of research method, material, and ethos. I took particular pleasure in a recent visit to the Polish-Scottish singing group, which not only brought Poles and Scots together, but led to the discovery that the two cultures share some seafaring traditions.

The Institute is particularly successful in tapping the immense troves of knowledge that ordinary people in the North-East area



possess and it has a tradition of encouraging mature students

*Very Rev. Iain Torrance, Pro-Chancellor, HRH the Duchess of Rothesay, Chancellor, and Prof. Sir Ian Diamond, Principal and Vice-Chancellor.*

and allowing them to explore their own histories.

The Institute is now very creatively led by Tom McKean and Frances Wilkins, supported by Alison Sharman. I believe in them and am certain that the Institute provides something priceless to the University, and to the wider area, as well as being known by folklorists all over the world.

*Very Rev. Professor Iain R. Torrance*

## Kuutma Joins Field School



We were fortunate this year to be joined by Kristin Kuutma, Professor of Cultural Research at the University of Tartu, Estonia, a leading scholar on intangible cultural heritage and identity, and the social processes that create them. We look forward to strengthening links and exploring areas of cooperation with Tartu and Professor Kuutma, who writes, 'I have safely returned home and to my office, but processing all the excitement of experiencing Scotland in its wonderful variety from woods and highlands to sea and islands will take quite a bit of time, for sure. Thank you for this amazing opportunity!'

*Kuutma on the way to Uamh Fhraing, Isle of Eigg, followed by Wirujana Prasansaph, Alannah Cooke, Maia Daniel, Rod Nicol, and Tallen Sloane.*



## From the Director

We could not have asked for a better speaker for the inaugural David Buchan Lecture than Diane Goldstein, an innovative and highly regarded scholar in medical folklore, legend, and belief studies. In addition to being a leading international scholar in Ethnology and Folklore, she has long-standing connections with the North-East, having spent 1959–60 living in Strichen with her father, distinguished folklorist Kenneth S. Goldstein, and mother Rochelle, as well as being David Buchan's partner.

On other fronts, we've been busy as well. In June, I attended the bi-annual conference of the Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore in Zagreb, where I convened a panel on 'knowing by doing', the value of learning by active participation, which will become a book over the next year or so. I also took part in the SIEF video shorts programme in which ethnologists and folklorists talk about their formative first encounters with tradition.

In September, I returned to Kosovo for the International Ballad Conference of the Kommission für Volksdichtung at which I gave a paper on micro variation in North-East ballad singing. We were very well cared for by our hosts, the Institute of Albanology, University of Prishtina, led by Leontina Musa, Arbnora Dushi, Lumnije Kadriu, and Visar Munishi. I can particularly recommend the Prishtina Ethnographic Museum and its wonderfully informed and enthusiastic curators, Valon Shkodra and Bekim Xhemili.

We congratulate Siân Burke, Ian Kinnear, and Heather Lodge on being awarded the MLitt, while welcoming our new cohort, Maia Daniel, Tallen Sloane, Wirujana Prasansaph, and Jennifer Porath, along with Anne Greig, continuing from last year.

This year and next we are radically revamping the Taught MLitt in Ethnology and Folklore to give the courses more intensive fieldwork training. Emphasis will initially be on practical work and its theoretical underpinnings, before we move on to the main genres and analytical perspectives of the disciplines.

Joining us for PhD study are two former MLitt students,

Athanasios Barmpalexis and Hazel Macfarlane, researching shamanism in Scotland and retirement in the context of regional museums, respectively.

This year's Field School was a great success, taking in Tomnaverie stone circle, Lumphanan, with thanks to Tony Robertson who joined us on the Old Road, Glenfeshie and Newtonmore, Drumnadrochit, Culloden, and the Clava Cairns, before heading onwards to the isles of Canna and Eigg. On Canna, we were privileged to spend some time with Magda Sagarzazu, who worked with John Lorne Campbell and Margaret Fay Shaw for over thirty years, and on Eigg to explore and discuss island life – community, energy sustainability, history, and religion – with local residents Lucy Conway and Eddie Scott.

NAFCo 2015 took place at Cape Breton University, Nova Scotia, 13–17 October, convened by Professor Heather Sparling. We were well represented, with a panel featuring Ronnie Gibson, Carley Williams, Frances Wilkins, and Natalie Brown, chaired by Ian Russell, and our presence was rounded out by presentations and performances by Pat Ballantyne and Claire White.

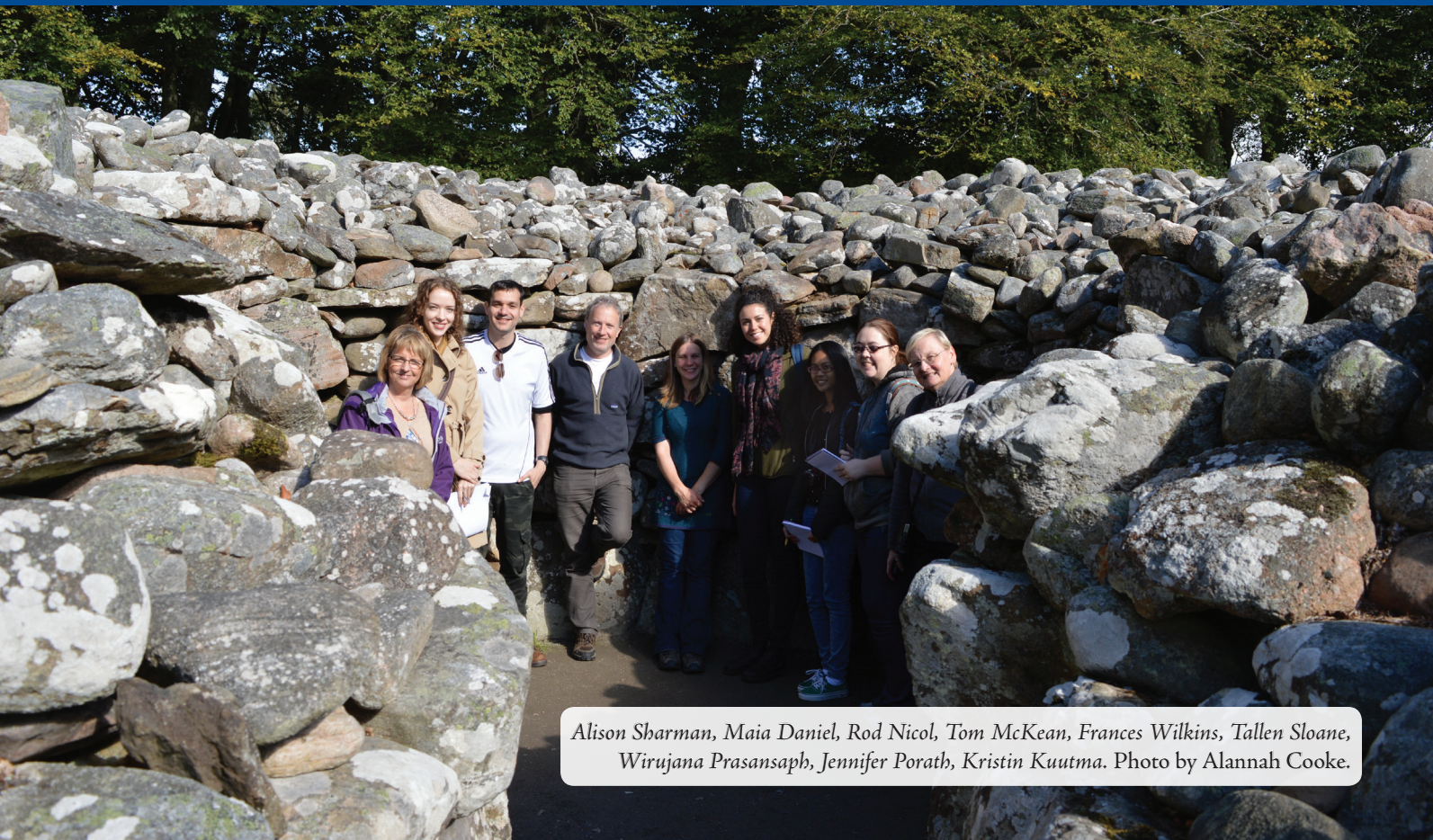
At the end of October, Frances Wilkins led the new MLitt students down to Whithorn for a Funeralscapes re-enactment, a great opportunity for them to acquire some real-life fieldwork experience. Together, they documented the event with audio, video, and still images, and the event made a very positive appearance in the local press.

This November, we hosted the fourth Button Boxes and Moothies Convention, together with a British Forum for Ethnomusicology study day on free reed instruments, organized by Frances Wilkins and Ian Russell. Once again, the event was graced with some of the truly outstanding musicians on these lesser-known instruments (see our website for the latest news on this and other Public Engagement activities).

Still to come are the Ritual Year conference in January, our field trip to the Borders, this year's Banff Academy project, and a developing partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland.

*Thomas A. McKean*

## Field School 2015 - Clava Cairns



*Alison Sharman, Maia Daniel, Rod Nicol, Tom McKean, Frances Wilkins, Tallen Sloane, Wirujana Prasansaph, Jennifer Porath, Kristin Kuitma. Photo by Alannah Cooke.*

# Ritual Year Conference 2016

The 12th conference of the Ritual Year Working Group, a sub-committee of the Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore, will be hosted by the Institute at Findhorn, on the shores of the Moray Firth, 8-12 January 2016. Following two days of papers on calendar customs from around the world, delegates will witness the Burning of the Clavie in the neighbouring village of Burghead, held each year



on 11 January, Aul Eel (Old Yule) according to the old Julian calendar.

The working group on the Ritual Year was established at the SIEF conference in Marseille in Dan Ralph, Clavie King, with the Clavie. Photo by Thomas A. McKean.

2004 and was founded by distinguished ballad and customs scholar Emily Lyle of the department of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh. A wide range of topics will be covered, all built around the turning of the year.

Our conference theme – Regulating Customs – explores the parallel, intertwined systems that regulate customary practices. These largely unwritten mechanisms have a traditionality of their own, based on social relationships, hierarchies, and interactions with law-making institutions. Together, these symbiotic systems affect stability and change within customs: creativity and innovation, control and regulation, preservation, and even ossification. They shape, preserve, and develop the enactment of calendar customs.

The conference will be a great opportunity to host a diverse range of delegates, show them the work of the Institute, give our students some hands-on experience with organizing an international academic conference, and to show off one of the gems of Scottish tradition, the Burning of the Clavie.

The Ritual Year Working Group



Thomas A. McKean

## Memory, Music, and Movement – AHRC Grant Success

Ian Russell, with Heather Sparling of Cape Breton University, Nova Scotia, has been awarded an AHRC Research Networking grant for a project aiming to energise a network of North Atlantic fiddle and dance scholars in new and challenging directions. The Institute's North Atlantic Fiddle Convention is a uniquely structured event involving scholarly presentations, practical workshops, and live performance events. With this Networking grant, we aim to develop the network, creating opportunities for enhanced interaction, collaboration, and innovative research in North Atlantic fiddle and dance traditions.

*Memory, Music and Movement: Inspiring and Facilitating Innovative Research in North Atlantic Fiddle and Dance Studies* will include international, interdisciplinary workshops on how music and dance are related to memory, on performance studies and embodiment, and how we can use digital technologies to document, and later

recall, music and dance traditions. There will also be a public lecture series building on the workshops, featuring international speakers from academic, performance, and heritage contexts, and an extensive web platform hosting all previous and future NAFCo publications in Open Access. The website will also feature an interactive, moderated online forum to enable informal discussion among scholars, performers, and other individuals, as well as debate about research questions and observations seeded by keynote presenters; an annotated list of relevant URLs and websites; video content featuring keynote presentations, workshops; and short, accessible 'snappers' describing and illustrating North Atlantic fiddle and dance research.

A project coordinator will work with Russell and Sparling to organise the various project elements and engage stakeholders through social media and broadcast media in both Scotland and Canada to maximize the project's audience.

Thomas A. McKean

## North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, Cape Breton



Jermaine Doucette from the Eskasoni Mi'kmaq First Nation Community leads NAFCo participants in a Mi'kmaq dance; l-to-r, NAFCo founder Ian Russell, 2015 convener Heather Sparling of Cape Breton University, Claire White, Arne Anderdal, and Norma Russell.

The experience of NAFCo – this year part of Celtic Colours Festival on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia – was wonderful. Having been part of every NAFCo since 2006, it was great to see this Aberdeen-born institution become part of the international Celtic Colours Festival. The touring component of our visit gave a useful insight into the Gaelic and Mi'kmaq cultures of Cape Breton which underpinned all aspects of our island adventure. Watching world-class fiddle performances at night, then attending presentations about the minutiae of music by day, gave delegates a balanced experience which felt firmly grounded in reality while offering an intriguing window into specialist research. The range of topics addressed at the conference was impressive, straddling global, local, high-tech, and traditional aspects of fiddle music and dance. Some papers will be re-formatted into three minute 'snapper' films which will be used to summarise and publicise the conference in bite-sized segments online. Hopefully, this content will engage yet more musicians and performers in the unique blend of scholarship and performance that is NAFCo ahead of the convention's Aberdeen 'homecoming' in 2018.

Claire White

# What's On – Public Lectures, Ethnographic Film Series, and Other Events

Events start at 7:30, unless otherwise noted.

- 29 Oct 2015 (Linklater Room, Elphinstone Hall)  
**If Stones Could Speak:**  
**Irish Tales from Liz Weir**
- 3 Nov 2015 • **FILM** (MacRobert Lecture)  
**Regarding Our Father**
- 6 Nov 2015 (MacRobert 028)  
British Forum for Ethnomusicology Study Day
- 6–8 Nov 2015 (venues around Aberdeen)  
Button Boxes & Moothies  
Free-Reed Convention
- 19 Nov 2015 • **TALK**  
King's College Conference Centre, 6:30pm  
**Recycled Stories: Health Legends, Epidemics  
and the Politics of Risk**  
The David Buchan Lecture  
Diane Goldstein  
Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology  
and the Folklore Institute, Indiana University
- 20 Nov 2015 • **FILM** (MacRobert Lecture)  
**Halloween and Bonfire Night:  
What Do You Do?** (free)
- 24 Nov 2015 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)  
**Timespan – Remote Possibilities in Scotland's  
North: A Cultural Organisation on the Edge**  
Anna Vermehren  
Timespan Museum, Helmsdale
- 1 Dec 2015 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)  
**The Fiddlers of James Bay (1980); Scots in the  
Sub-Arctic: Fiddling among the James Bay Cree  
(2015)**  
Bob Rodgers, dir.; Frances Wilkins, dir.
- 26 Jan 2016 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)  
**Funeralscapes**  
Frances Wilkins
- 2 Feb 2016 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)  
**Say Amen, Somebody (1982)**  
George T. Nierenberg, dir.
- 23 Feb 2016 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)  
**10,000 Letters and Counting: Working on the  
Hamish Henderson Archive**  
Steve Byrne
- 1 Mar 2016 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)  
**Fae Ploo tae Plate, Forty Years of Video in  
North-East Scotland**  
with film-maker Don Carney
- 26 April 2016 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)  
**Shetland Boats, Fishing, and the Sea**  
Marc Chivers
- 3 May 2016 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)  
**Hanoi Eclipse (2010)**  
with film-maker Barley Norton
- 27–29 May 2016 (MacRobert 051)  
May Festival, with Institute guests  
Toulmin Prize Celebration at the May Festival
- 31 May 2016 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)  
**Digging for Wishes: The Ardmaddy  
Wishing-Tree Project**  
Ceri Houlbrook
- 22–24 July 2016  
Cullerlie Traditional Singing Weekend

## Polish-Scottish Song and Story Group

For the workshop, performance, and the practice  
schedule for the group, see  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/public-engagement/  
polish-scottish-schedule](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/public-engagement/polish-scottish-schedule)

## Retirement and Community

What happens to the individual on retirement? How does this impact on their sense of community and their contribution to it? My PhD research is built on my MLitt, a small project which examined a very large subject: retirement and the place of retired people in the community. My primary source was recently-retired individuals who volunteered in Nairn Museum, but now I would like to expand this work to examine different communities throughout the North and North-East of Scotland. Primary sources will include museum volunteers, curators of museums, directors and trustees, and umbrella bodies such as museum forums and Museums Galleries Scotland.

Today large numbers of museums are dependent on volunteers, a significant portion of whom are retirees, a group that brings with it a wide range of work and life experience. They contribute in many ways from front of house to collections research and documentation, but also to management and governance. Their needs may be altruistic but they also work alongside professional staff, and young people who also volunteer in museums, whose interest is to gain vocational experience for their careers. This is a very diverse group of individuals all working towards a well-defined goal, and consideration must be given to sustainability.

*Hazel Macfarlane*



## Who's Who at the Institute

### Staff

- Dr Thomas A. McKean**, Director, *Ethnology and Folklore, ballads, custom and belief, Gaelic tradition, J. M. Carpenter Project*
- Dr Frances Wilkins**, Lecturer, *Ethnomusicology and Ethnology, sacred singing in coastal communities, Scottish fiddle traditions in northern Canada*
- Professor Emeritus Ian Russell**, *Ethnology, Folklore, and Ethnomusicology, 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 and Folklore, folk narrative and contemporary legend, name studies, Scottish place names*
- Dr Irene Watt**, *lullabies and project work*

### Research Students

- Pat Ballantyne**, PhD student, *Scottish step-dance traditions*
- Athanasios (Sakis) Barmpalexis**, PhD student, *shamanism in Scotland*
- Kristin Borgehed**, PhD student, *North Studentship, an ethnographic study of northern cultural performance*

- Les Donaldson**, PhD student, *The Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen*
- Ronnie Gibson**, PhD student, *the relationships between contemporary and eighteenth-century fiddle traditions*
- Bee Kerr**, PhD Student, *women's domestic work in the twentieth century*
- Nicolas Le Bigre**, PhD Student, *Margaret Jones Studentship, narratives of immigrant experience, archives*
- Hazel Macfarlane**, PhD Student, *retirement and volunteering in museum contexts*
- Máire Ní Bhaioill**, PhD student, *traditional singing among children in Ireland*
- Roderick Nicol**, PhD student, *legends and mythology of Piper Alpha*
- Carley Williams**, PhD student, *safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Scotland*
- Sheila Young**, PhD student, *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*

### 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.