



'Folk Narrative as Terror Therapy' – Buchan Lecture 2017

Professor Carl Lindahl, University of Houston, joins us for the David Buchan Lecture, Thursday, 16 November 2017, at 6:30pm in the King's College Conference Centre.

Lindahl has worked with victims of natural disasters for many years, showing how telling stories helps people cope with disaster and terror. He writes, 'In oral traditions worldwide, tales tend to come out at night, and they do the work of darkness. Narrators from Scotland and Appalachia use the darkness from which their tales emerge as a ground for unseen, but colourful words. These words, in turn, inspire listeners to fashion vivid, visual worlds which they can see only with their eyes closed. Terror may be the sharpest spur to the



formation of these images and wise narrators manipulate the fear factor to shape unforgettable lessons for their most receptive listeners. Sharing terror creates a bond that transcends fear to accomplish healing.'

Lindahl will explore how narratives told in certain ways, and under certain conditions, bring survivors the most power possible to heal themselves, yielding a fascinating glimpse into folklore's power to heal.

Thomas A. McKean

W. F. H. Nicolaisen Memorial Symposium

In July we celebrated our late colleague, Emeritus Professor W. F. H. Nicolaisen. Bill was influential around the world in the fields of Onomastics and Folklore, and so it was no surprise that colleagues, friends, students, and family came from as far as Hawai'i to attend our memorial symposium.



To open the three-day symposium, Bill's former student, Professor Simon Bronner (Pennsylvania State University), delivered a keynote address on the themes of space and time in Bill's work, not only in his writings on place names, but also in his examinations of folktales, legends, ballads, material culture, and literature. This was a perfect place to start, as each day was dedicated to a different strand of Bill's academic interests: place names, narrative, and ballads, all influenced by his ideas about place and time.

Professor Carole Hough (University of Glasgow) delivered the keynote on onomastics, outlining Bill's continuing influence in the field and speaking of the challenges that his work presents even to contemporary scholars. The day's papers included a treatment of Lochnagar climbing route names, Norse place-names in Scotland, a sociolinguistic consideration of Scottish fishing communities, the concept of signed-names in British Sign Language, and unnamed narrators in oral storytelling.

On our narrative day, former Nicolaisen student Professor Cristina Bacchilega (University of Hawai'i-Manoa), spoke on Bill's 'stories about stories', and his notions that folktales bring

us beyond time and place, while being rooted in society's needs, fears, desires, and preoccupations. Other papers included such topics as the occupational narratives of potters, narratives of fire festivals in the North-East, the content and structure of contemporary legends, narrative reminiscences of Bill's conference contributions, the idea of 'rehearsing the future' in immigrant-experience narratives, and the very timely concept of 'fake news'.

Our final day was opened by Director Thomas A. McKean, who spoke on the concepts of singing time and singing place, demonstrated practically through song and theoretically by exploring how singers and composers are affected by time and place. To conclude the symposium, we heard papers on the Aberdeenshire song 'Harry Lumsden', Aberdeen street literature, folk arts in place-based education, the 'The White Fisher' ballad, North Carolina singer and musician Rick Ward, and notions of subversion and injustice in 'Green the Ganger'.

Each day also included a talented guest artist, with Dr Fiona-Jane Brown telling place-name legends, Sheena Blackhall telling stories, and Janice Clark singing ballads. We also went on several excursions, including a Hidden Aberdeen tour, as well as to Crathes and Dunnottar Castles, Potarch, Easter Aquhorthies, the Maiden Stone, and Harlaw battlefield. We were very appreciative that Fiona Nicolaisen, Bill's daughter, came with her husband, two daughters, and her mother May, to attend the symposium, and to share with us some thoughts about her father, both as a family man and academic.

We remember Bill with great fondness for his character and profound respect for his astounding academic output. Bill would have loved to know that his life and career brought friends, colleagues, students, and family together to discuss his work, sing songs, tell jokes, and share stories.

We plan to publish a volume of collected papers from the conference; until that time, a complete list of presentations can be found on the Institute's website.

Nicolas Le Bigre



From the Director

We've been increasing our Public Engagement activity over the last six months and getting things in place for the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention, 11–15 July 2018.

A warm welcome to our new MLitt students, Emma Barclay, Lauren Hossack, Jim Brown, and Eilidh Whiteford, alongside returning part-timers, Ania Treczyk and Cromar Collie, and congratulations to new PhD student, Claire Needler, researching bilingualism in schools, who won a University Elphinstone Scholarship, with a studentship contributed by the Institute.

Once more, the MLitt Field School was a great success. We travelled across Aberdeenshire to Newtonmore's Highland Folk Museum, touring the stores with director, Rachel Chisholm, to Balavil, home of James Macpherson, then Loch Ness-side and on to Lewis, via the Eagle Stone and the lovely museum of childhood in Strathpeffer. On Lewis, we sampled a range of Hebridean culture, from the ancient stones of Calanais, the Viking meal mill, and the Arnol Blackhouse, to the welcoming congregation of Back Free Church. The final day, we visited An Lantair, Stornoway, where we heard about their dynamic cultural programme from Alex Macdonald, and, on the road back to Aberdeen, stopped at the Munloch cloutie well.

In May, I attended the Kommission für Volksdichtung International Ballad Conference in Palermo, Sicily, where I talked about the hard-hitting rap music of Aberdeen's Jack Hughes. At our May Festival event, 'Celebrating Evolving Tradition', Jack talked about his art, alongside host Irene Watt on her lullaby work

with newborns and their mothers, Lorna Summers on the social impact of community boatbuilding in Portsoy, Jamie Fairbairn on the use of Doric and North-East Scots in social media, and music and song from Kristine Borgehed and Nathan Bissette.

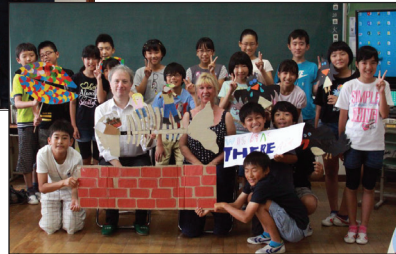
In June, thanks to a grant from the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, Irene Watt and I visited Nagasaki, Hiroshima, and Kyoto, Japan, to inaugurate 'The Glover Connection: Scotland-Japan Partnerships', the beginnings of an ongoing cultural exchange. We met Mayor Taue of Nagasaki, introducing our plans and the visit was covered on television and in print media.

I would like to thank Christina Cameron for her valuable work on our North-East Culture Initiative, as she moves back to Estates full time. Luckily, we have retained our summer intern, Alistair Heather, our Community Engagement Officer, who's been very effective in getting North-East Scots into venues across the region and is

working on a Doric package for teachers, as we develop a Pathway for Scots in education. We hope to welcome a second intern in the next few weeks.

Warm congratulations to Dr Sheila Young on achieving her PhD, for her study of women's pre-nuptial rituals. And also to Elizabeth Stewart and Alison McMorland for winning the Michaelis Jena Ratcliff Prize for Folklife Special Commendation Award for *Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen*. Finally, we happily welcome another Elphinstone baby to the world, Alison's grand-daughter, Holly.

Thomas A. McKean



Letter from America

I recently completed my post-MLitt summer internship at the 2017 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. They say interns just fetch coffee, but as part of the curatorial team for the Circus Arts programme, I often found myself instead fetching rubber chickens, oversized sunglasses, and Viking helmets for clowns. Working for the Festival was like being a Jack-of-all-trades: one day I might be in the office doing research for promotional work and entering data for the web schedule, the next I might be at the Festival site and up a ladder fixing a tent.

Once the Festival began, I mainly worked as a presenter in the foodways tent, interviewing cooks who had travelled with various circuses about their lives on the road. As we talked, they made dishes that they had served to circus staff, crew, and artists, or food based on recipes that other circus cooks had made. I greatly enjoyed our conversations and the food was delicious!

My favourite part of the whole experience was talking with the participants; it was fascinating to learn about what it was like to live and work on a circus from cooks, clowns, jugglers, and ringmasters. I will not soon forget their warmth, openness, and humour.

I was grateful to be a part of the Festival's 50th anniversary and fortunate to sit in on a number of production meetings which gave me a clearer understanding of what it takes, and how many people and various organisations are involved, to produce this type of event. As a new folklorist, it was wonderful to listen to panellists, some of whom were there when the event first started, as they shared stories about its history. It was an excellent opportunity to learn more about how to organize, curate, and promote a public, large-scale educational experience.

As always, I miss you all and Scotland very much.



Maia Daniel, MLitt Class 2015–2016

Carpenter Coach and Workshop Weekend

The James Madison Carpenter Project, based at the Institute, has catalogued Carpenter's remarkable collection of Folk Song and Drama made mainly between 1928 and 1935 and a critical edition is in preparation. Thanks to an Arts and Humanities Research Council grant, the collection will soon be available online through the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House in London. A variety of cross-border events are being planned, from workshops to schools' programmes, along with performer exchanges between Scotland and England.

On the weekend of 9 and 10 September, a group of enthusiasts for North-East Scotland's song and ballad tradition were treated to a real feast – an update on the last two decades of work carried out on the Collection.

On Saturday morning, we boarded a coach at the Institute and retraced some of the routes taken by Carpenter in the 1930s. There's no doubt that seeing the landscape and, in some cases, the actual dwellings, where so many of these fine songs and ballads were collected, gave a new appreciation of Carpenter's dedication to his quest. It also raised the question of how contributors like the remarkable Bell Duncan, living in extreme isolation, had acquired such vast repertoires. Throughout the journey, commentary given by Tom McKean and Julia Bishop of the Carpenter Project team was always interesting and informative, and gave a good insight to Carpenter's character. As usual at Elphinstone events, the coach had a good contingent of singers on board, and more than a few of the songs and ballads from the collection were given an

airing, with words or tunes quite different to the better-known versions – a real showcase for the collection as a resource.

On Sunday morning, survivors from the previous day gathered once more at Elphinstone for a workshop. Tom McKean and Julia Bishop started the day by giving details of the technologies and methods used by Carpenter, and explaining how the fruits of his work had eventually been recognised and rescued from potential oblivion by the Library of Congress in Washington.

This was followed by an excellent talk by Laura Smyth, Library and Archives Director at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, on how she and her team had tackled the task of presenting the digitised materials, bringing the original notes, typewritten copies, and various formats of recording, together



in an accessible way for the general public and academics alike. Quite a change from the days when *101 Scottish Songs* was the sourcebook of choice for us folkies!

Katherine Campbell rounded off the day nicely by looking at a number of songs and singers recorded in the earlier *Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (1904–14) who were also recorded by Carpenter two decades later (1928–35). The thread continued with Hamish Henderson's collecting work for the School of Scottish Studies, in the 1950s, and Kenneth S. Goldstein's in 1959–60. With these collections, and with the Carpenter Collection filling the interwar gap, we have a remarkable century-long record of folk song in the North-East of Scotland. Great stuff.

Tom Spiers

Summer Intern for Community Engagement

Owre the simmer I wis ane o sixteen Aberdeen Interns tane on by the University. Some warkit intae HR, some intae IT. I wis fortunate enough tae be successful in applyin tae the Elphinstone. Ma job discription wis grand – I wis here tae 'promote North-East culture'. Efter a guid blether wi the Elphinstone leadership aboot whit exactly this meant, I wis aff!

I warkit intae three main dreils: promotin the leid an music o the North-East in tourism an



the media, developin Scots education materials, an upheizin the visibility o Doric in wir communities.

The wark wis aye a plesure. The simmer fleed past as I owreset Doric quizzes for bairns aawye fae Fort George tae Elgin Cathedral tae Fyvie Castle, made Doric stickers that were pit aa owre Keith shop windaes an produced radio shows and podcasts showcasin wir unique music scene.

Noo I've been gien the privilidge o cairryin oan this wark as a Community Engagement Officer, a new pairt-time role. The key aims are tae mak Doric leid an culture mair visible in the media, an tae increase the teachin o Scots in schools roon the North-East. I cannae wait tae get stertit!

Alistair Heather

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

Events start at 7:30pm, unless otherwise noted.

- 26 September 2017 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)
Scots Radio - The Journey So Far
 Frieda Morrison
- 3 October 2017 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)
Cailleach, and Shepherds of Berneray
- 24 October 2017 • **TALK** (Taylor Building A21) 7:30pm
Music and the Memory Spectrum
 AHRC-North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo) Networking Project
 Michael Pickering, Emeritus Professor
- 26 October 2017 • **Storytelling** (Linklater Room) 6:30-7:45pm
Scotland Meets Pakistan: Trading Story & Song
 Scottish International Storytelling Festival
- 31 October 2017 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)
Living Tales in a Digitised World
 Grace Banks
- 7 November 2017 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)
The Barese Icemen of New York
- 15 November 2017 • **TALK** (University of Glasgow, 14 University Gardens, Glasgow, G12 8QH, Room 2) 5:15pm
Prolegomena to Practice-Based Research in Traitional Music
 AHRC-NAFCo Networking Project
 Simon McKerrill
- 16 November 2017 • **TALK**
The David Buchan Lecture
 King's College Conference Centre, 6:30pm
Folk Narrative as Terror Therapy in Scotland, Appalachia, and the Wake of Disasters World-wide
 Carl Lindahl
- 28 November 2017 • **TALK & Book Launch** (Linklater Room)
A Wolf Among Men
 Alec Finlay
- 6 December 2017 • **TALK** (Newcastle University, the International Centre for Music Studies, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 7RU) 4:00pm
Bass Culture in Scottish Fiddle Music from 1750
 AHRC-NAFCo Networking Project
 David McGuinness
- 30 January 2018 • **TALK** (MacRobert 028)
Ewen MacLachlan, Hebridean Dance Master
 Alasdair Roberts
- 6 February 2018 • **FILM** (New King's 1)
They Will Have to Kill Us First: Malian Musicians in Exile
- 27 February 2018 • **TALK** (MacRobert 028)
Heart of Granite – Stone Circles, Haddie Suppers, and Very, Very Conspicuous Consumption
 Mark Stephen
- 6 March 2018 • **FILM** (New King's 1)
Alive Inside
- 27 March 2018 • **TALK** (MacRobert 028)
'Publishing is an Adventure', From Penny Pamphlets to Print on Demand: James Leatham, Propaganda Publishing and the Rebirth of the Deveron Press
 Cally Wight



Field School 2017, Isle of Lewis



Cullerlie 2017



Lynturk and Beyond
 James Bruce Duncan Concert

Polish-Scottish Song Group
 for schedule see
www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/public-engagement



NAFCo at Shetland Fiddle Frenzy 2017

NAFCo content was a wonderful addition to our programme. We had a welcome from NAFCo founder, Professor Ian Russell, Shetland Fiddlers' Society and Shetland Folk Dance performances, a talk on Scottish dance history and a step dance workshop by Dr Pat Ballantyne, and a fiddle talk and masterclass from Douglas Lawrence. Participants found the day enriching and left feeling inspired about NAFCo 2018. Many thanks to everyone involved and especially to NAFCo 2018 Festival Director, Carley Williams.

Claire White

www.abdn.ac.uk/nafco

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*
- Dr Julia C. Bishop**, *J. M. Carpenter Project, AHRC*
- Nicolas Le Bigre**, Teaching Fellow, Archives
- Alison Sharman**, Administrator
- Alistair Heather**, Community Engagement Officer

Patron

Very Rev. Iain Torrance, Pro-Chancellor

Honorary Research Fellows

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

Research Students

- Athanasios (Sakis) Barmpalexis**, PhD student, *contemporary 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, *relationships between contemporary and eighteenth-century fiddle traditions*
- Nicolas Le Bigre**, PhD student, *narratives of immigrant experience*
- Hazel Macfarlane**, PhD student, *retirement and volunteering in museum contexts*

- Claire Needler**, PhD student, *Elphinstone Scholarship, bilingualism in North-East schools*
- Máire Ní Bhaioill**, PhD student, *traditional singing among children in Ireland*
- Erika Sidorenko**, PhD student, *traditional remedies and cultural change in the Hebrides*
- Lorna Summers**, PhD student, *community boatbuilding on the Moray coast*
- 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*
- Dr Pat Ballantyne**, *Scottish step-dance traditions*
- 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 Walser**, *maritime musical traditions, J. M. Carpenter Project*
- Dr Irene Watt**, *lullabies and project work*
- Les Wheeler**, *Scots language, education*

Postscript

The Institute relies on outside financial support to make many of its activities possible. If you would like to help, or join the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute, volunteer, or have suggestions, please contact the Administrator.