

Stanley Robertson Celebrations

This year marks ten years since the passing of Institute colleague and friend, Stanley Robertson. A storyteller, ballad singer, piper, and author, Stanley was one of Scotland's most celebrated ambassadors of Traveller culture. In his honour, we have launched the Stanley Robertson Celebrations with the hopes of sharing some of the rich knowledge and culture he was always so keen to pass on.



Stanley Robertson tells a tale at the 2004 Barrie Nicht

The celebrations got off to a great start on 6 November with a phenomenal night of North-East ballads celebrating Stanley's memory and that of his aunt Jeannie Robertson and cousin Lizzie Higgins. Stanley's son, Tony, compered and he was joined by his brothers Clifford and Robert, as well as friends Angela Masia, Mandy Hunter, and Bob Knight.

On 15 November our friends at The World's Room at Edinburgh's Waverley Bar host a Stanley Robertson Night, featuring two singers, Janice Clark and Iona Fyfe, who respectively have been directly and indirectly influenced by Stanley's singing.

The very special 'Barrie Nicht: Remembering Stanley' is on 16 November at the Lemon Tree and

features Sheena Blackhall, Tony Robertson, Nicole Robertson, and Institute Director Thomas A. McKean. Interspersed through the evening will be recordings of Stanley from the Elphinstone Institute Archives.

On 5 February, Tony hosts a night of storytelling in memory of his father, once again joined by family and friends. Stanley's storytelling influence is not limited to the North-East but is truly international, and this will

be a chance to come along and help celebrate Stanley's boundless tale-telling talents.

'Finding Stanley in Scotland's Archives' on 26 March rounds out the celebrations, with a talk on the wealth of Stanley Robertson-related archival materials. We're pleased to host Cathlin Macaulay, Curator of the School of Scottish Studies Archives, who will join Lauren Hossack who has been cataloguing and digitising the Stanley Robertson Collection at the Elphinstone Institute Archives.

We hope you will be able to join us for these events and that you will continue to share Stanley's songs and stories as he would have wanted.

Nicolas Le Bigre

New North-East Cultural Heritage and Tourism Project

Recently I took up the post of Co-ordinator for the North-East Cultural Heritage and Tourism Project. Since then, I've been all over Aberdeenshire meeting heritage groups, crafters, local historians, country dance groups, and schools who are all keen to get involved.

With funding from the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas through LEADER, we're working with Visit Scotland and other tourism stakeholders to create source material. This will be employed by a marketing company to create tourism assets. These include short films, blogs, eBooks, and other materials which aim to promote Aberdeenshire's unique cultural treasures to the world.

Aberdeenshire's cultural identity is a complex whole; from our landward agricultural communities to our coastal fisherfolk, there is a wealth of lore, tradition, and legend.

For instance, local author, Mike Shepherd of Cruden Bay's Port Erroll Heritage Society, has discovered the village was a favourite holiday destination of Dracula's creator, Bram Stoker. Stoker spent thirteen summers in Cruden Bay writing and researching his Gothic-themed short stories which were heavily influenced by the fisher culture around him.

In the Mearns there are stories recalling Pictish times reflected in the landscape, such as the Den of Fenella, recalling the death-defying leap to freedom of Fenella, a local chieftain's daughter who murdered Kenneth II in revenge for the execution of her son.

Traditional crafts are also alive and well in the North-East; for example, strawmakers create corn 'dollies' in Kemnay, and the Culter Heritage group have put in a million stitches to a tapestry illustrating the major attractions of their section of Deeside.

All these enthusiastic local tradition-bearers and collectors will help shape the face of tourism in Aberdeenshire for the foreseeable future, contributing material for 2020's Year of Coasts and Waters, and the Year of Scotland's Stories in 2022.

Fiona-Jane Brown



From the Director

Phase 2 of the North-East Culture Initiative is gathering pace. We've partnered with Visit Scotland on our new North-East Heritage and Tourism project, we're pressing ahead with the successful Home-Home-Дом-Dom project, and most importantly, we're partnering with the communities and individuals that make the North-East the lively cultural place that it is.

In addition to these projects, we've brought in some exceptional people to work with us on developing certain strands of activity. Jo Gilbert is working on promoting Doric/North-East Scots in education and other walks of life. David Donaldson is designing a series of workshops on cultural confidence to be run by Travellers for Travellers and is running a BEMIS-funded Traveller's Ceilidh at Dunbar Hall. Last but not least, storyteller and activist Jackie Ross has joined us looking at narrative and storytelling across the region, and is working with Jo to integrate our language, education, and community storytelling work. There's more to come, with music, skills, crafts, and other themes to be addressed, but we're making progress.

This year's Buchan Lecture, 'Building Community Self-Esteem: Advocating for Culture', delivered by Professor Amy Skillman of Goucher College, is absolutely germane to our North-East Culture Initiative. Skillman will explore her own journey from scholar to activist to facilitator of change, and back again. She'll make a strong case for our role as cultural advocates in helping to build and foster community self-esteem and

well-being here in the North-East.

The year ahead will be our 25th anniversary, and we have more than 30 public events scheduled, many of them partnering with local groups, as well as our regular Public Lecture Series, Ethnographic Film Series, and Polish-Scottish Song Group. Highlights include our partnership with the Across the Grain Festival, our Stanley Robertson Celebrations, five events celebrating North-East and international storytelling, a talk on Aberdeen cinemas by the city's Lord Provost, Barney Crockett, and many other diverse events. Please join us on 23 January 2020 for our 25th Anniversary Open Evening at the Institute.

Congratulations to Carley Williams on her Aberdeen Ambassador Award as NAFCo Director, and also to Nicolas Le Bigre, recipient of the Scottish Samurai Award. Congratulations go to MLitt students Wenqiu Chen, Eleanor Telfer, Rebecca Palomino, Mara Shea, and Anne Greig as they graduate in November. Their dissertation topics, diverse as ever, include Aberdeen Folk Club, music at funerals and memorial events, the Grey Man of Ben Macdui, a fiddler's tune book from the mid-nineteenth century, and the contemporary use of the ballad, 'Mill o Tifty's Annie'. Their work is fascinating to read and stands as proof of the depth and diversity of North-East culture.

We look forward to the upcoming busy year; please join us at some of our events and share your ideas of what you would like to see the North-East Culture Initiative doing and supporting.

Thomas A. McKean

Home-Home-Дом-Dom Project Update

Home-Home-Дом-Dom is a creative learning project that aims to bring people of different nationalities and backgrounds together to build a sense of community and belonging. The Elphinstone Institute is working in partnership with the Workers Educational Association and Modo to deliver a programme of activities in Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Banff, Macduff, and Turriff.

Over the summer we carried out a community consultation, and we're currently running a series of taster workshops in all the project locations. These have included sewing, photography, international folk dance, and silversmithing to date, with wool engineering, reflexology, and more still to come. Last month we started a Creative Café in Peterhead. This is an informal place where people can get together, talk to each other, practice English, try something new, and have a coffee. In November Creative Cafés are starting in all the other locations, and will take place each month on a Saturday afternoon between 1-3pm.

For more information please contact Claire Needler, Project Co-ordinator (claire.needler@abdn.ac.uk), look at the Home-Home-Дом-Dom Facebook page, or come along to any event. All welcome!

Claire Needler

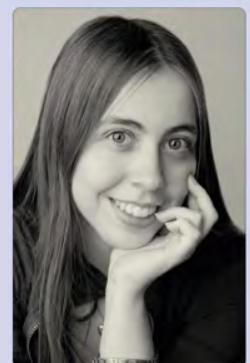
Letter from America

To my Elphinstone Family, I finally did it! I got the dream job! I am now the Manager of Youth and Family Programs at the Greenwich Historical Society. What that means is that I'm running all their educational programs for visiting schools, girl/boy scouts, and similar groups. I also run the summer camp and family events. It's great! I'm getting to teach all my favourite parts of history, and none of the wars.

The historical society has a campus with three colonial homes, one of which became an important artist colony in the 1890s. There is also a museum and an archive on campus. The only thing they don't have is a hearth I'm allowed to cook in. But maybe one day. I'll see what I can do.

I just wanted to share my good news and thank you for teaching me so much. I watch your Facebook and am so proud of all you're doing.

Heather Lodge, MLitt Graduate 2015



Elphinstone Research and Fieldwork

Showcasing North-East Culture Online

This November we're delighted to be launching our newest digital initiative: The Elphinstone Sessions. Our aim is to make the North-East's incredibly rich culture more widely available through a series of high-quality videos showcasing the region's people and their cultural expressions. Currently, few high-quality videos exist online of the region's creative people and we aim to ensure that anyone, anywhere, can find footage of North-East identity and creativity in a few clicks. Videos will be released regularly through our social media channels and will be uploaded to the University's YouTube channel. The first video features the award-winning North-East makar, Sheena Blackhall, performing her poem 'Allt Darrarie'.



Simon Gall

Staff Research Presented at Home and Abroad

As always, our staff continue to be busy presenting research locally and internationally. Lecturer Frances Wilkins spoke on 'Non-Sacred Contexts for Gaelic Psalmody Performance' in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the symposium of the International Council for Traditional Music study group on multi-part singing. Closer to home, Frances gave a talk on 'Musical Reflections of Community and Landscape in Banffshire and the North-East' to the Banff Preservation Society.

I presented the paper 'Concepts of Integration in the Personal-Experience Narratives of Scotland's Immigrants' at the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung Humboldt-Kolleg in Iași, Romania. More locally, I spoke on 'Finding Home in the North-East of Scotland' for the Aberdeen Saltire Society.

Director Thomas A. McKean was invited to speak at the American Folklore Society 2019 Annual Meeting in Baltimore on a panel exploring perspectives Folklore can bring to the #MeToo movement and how #MeToo challenges the discipline. Tom also participated in the

first-ever Doric PechaKucha night at the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses in Fraserburgh, alongside project co-ordinator Claire Needler.

Claire recently attended the British Education Research Association Conference in Manchester and presented 'Fair Trickit! (*adj.*) pleased, happy, delighted: An Exploration of Scots – Our Local Language and What It Means to Us'. She also attended the TLANG Languaging in Times of Change conference in Stirling, where she presented 'Researcher or Activist? My Journey within the Scots Language Movement'.

Carley Williams, NAFCo Festival Director, attended a Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore Executive Board meeting in Marseilles with Tom for a workshop on developing SIEF's position regarding UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage. All told it has been a very productive past few months for Institute staff! If you're interested in inviting a member of staff to speak to your organisation, do please get in touch.

Nicolas Le Bigre

Sacred Singing Fieldwork in the Western Isles



Frances Wilkins (right) with Alasdair and Cathie Laing, North Uist, October 2019

I was recently in South Uist and Skye conducting fieldwork associated with my research project, 'Seinn Coisrigte anns a' Ghaidhealtachd an Iar agus 'sna h-Eileanan Siar | Sacred Singing of the West Highlands and Western Isles'. The project, funded by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, explores various traditions, including Gaelic psalmody and hymnody, which are being practiced and performed today. It has a special focus on local compositions and performance contexts, the meaning of the music to participants, and how regional and occupational identity may be reflected in repertoires and performance style. If you would like to be involved or to find out more, please contact me on frances.wilkins@abdn.ac.uk. Many thanks to all those who have so far helped with the research and contributed to the project.

Frances Wilkins

Elphinstone News



David Buchan Lecture

Amy Skillman

Academic Director of the M.A. in Cultural Sustainability at Goucher College

Building Community Self-Esteem: Advocating for Culture

Thursday, 21 November 2019

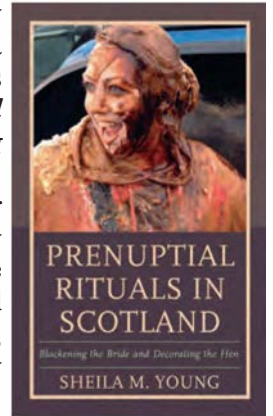
6:30pm, Craig Suite, The Sir Duncan Rice Library
University of Aberdeen

Booking required: www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone

Dr Sheila Young, Honorary Research Fellow and alumna of the Elphinstone Institute, has just published her book *Prenuptial Rituals in Scotland: Blackening the Bride and Decorating the Hen*.

The book, based in part on her PhD work, has received very positive reviews and is part of the series *Studies in Folklore and Ethnology: Traditions, Practices, and Identities*, published by Lexington Books.

Well done, Sheila!



Polish-Scottish Song Group

For the workshop, performance, and practice schedule see: www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/public-engagement/polish-scottish-schedule

MLitt Field School 2019

Standing underneath Aul Cruvie – a special tree celebrated by Stanley Robertson – on the Old Road of Lumphanan. The first stop on the MLitt Field School trip in September.

Photo (right) by Jan Tavendale



Who's Who at the Institute

Patron

Very Rev. Prof. Sir Iain Torrance, Pro-Chancellor

Staff

Dr Thomas A. McKean, Director, Ethnology and Folklore, ballads, custom and belief, Gaelic tradition, J. M. Carpenter Project

Dr Frances Wilkins, Lecturer, Ethnomusicology, 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

Nicolas Le Bigre, Teaching Fellow, Ethnology and Folklore, archives

Simon Gall, Public Engagement Officer

Dr Fiona-Jane Brown, Project Co-ordinator

Claire Needler, Project Co-ordinator

Carley Williams, NAFCo Festival Director

Alison Sharman, Administrator

Research Students

Athanasios (Sakis) Barmpalexis, contemporary shamanism in Scotland

Kristin Borgehed, North Studentship, an ethnographic study of northern cultural performance

Mary Cane, the Grandmother experience in family life today

Ronnie Gibson, relationships between contemporary and eighteenth-century fiddle traditions

Lauren Hossack, literature, heritage, and the making of Scottish communities

Nicolas Le Bigre, narratives of immigrant experience

Claire Needler, Elphinstone Scholarship, bilingualism in North-East schools

Máire Ní Bhaoil, traditional singing among children in Ireland

Lorna Summers, community boatbuilding on the Moray coast

Carley Williams, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Scotland

Chris Wright, Elphinstone Scholarship, the role of traditional arts in place-based education

Honorary Research Fellows

Paul Anderson, North-East fiddle styles and repertoires

Dr David Atkinson, J. M. Carpenter Project

Dr Pat Ballantyne, Scottish step-dance traditions

Dr Julia Bishop, J. M. Carpenter Project

Sheena Blackhall, creative writing in Scots

Dr Elaine Bradtke, J. M. Carpenter Project

Dr David Northcroft, education in the North-East

Dr Robert Young Walser, J. M. Carpenter Project

Les Wheeler, Scots Language, education

Dr Sheila Young, women's pre-nuptial rituals in Scotland

What's On

Look out for our booklet featuring events hosted by the Institute.

Keep up to date with all of the exciting things that we are up to at the Elphinstone Institute: search for us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Support the Institute

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