

## Donald Smith Podcast.wav

**Speaker 1** [00:00:03] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:21] Hello and a very warm welcome to the Culture and Everyday Life podcast produced by the Elphinstone Institute at the University of Aberdeen. The Elphinstone Institute is a centre for the study of Ethnology, folklore and ethnomusicology, with a research and public engagement remit covering the east and north of Scotland through interaction with researchers and practitioners. This podcast explores cultural phenomena in everyday life.

**Speaker 3** [00:00:45] Hello and welcome all to, I think, our last regularly scheduled public Talk of the year. Before you go, I would ask you maybe to grab one of these programmes for the May Festival, at which we have a lot of interesting events to do with North East Culture, Travel and Continental, the David Tilman Prize and a number of other events related to North East culture. So please take one of these programmes with you there on the piano as you go out. And without further ado, I search Oliver Stone Smith, the redoubtable Donald Smith, the director of Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland, and the storyteller and the scholar and man about Town of the Arts and Culture of Scotland. So here we go.

**Speaker 2** [00:01:33] Donald, thank you very much. Hi, everybody. Nice to be here this evening. And and I just I would like this evening in the place I have to kind of open a door and what I think is almost a kind of hidden or half hidden chamber of Northeast culture, which is the older traditions of drama. And it's really it's it's fascinating. It's lovely as a start, and it's very, very rich. And I hope that will will have some enjoyment in doing that. And I think this is in my experience, this is not untypical of the Northeast. You have these hidden hearth chambers. So I did a lot of work. I researched the book, The Pilgrim Guide to Scotland, looking at old pilgrim routes and sites. Again, Northeast Scotland. It's just absolutely saturated in this stuff. But do people make much of it? Not really. It's, you know, it's that Northeast thing. It's kind of there, you know, So and I want to touch on this drama thing and I'm going to go about this to be a little bit of a narrative in it, just looking at some of the developments. And then I'll draw out a couple of kind of overall ideas. Just to sum up the are interesting that are are good perhaps to explore and think about relation to this material. And then finally maybe and maybe that is getting into the discussion bit to say does this still have any relevance for the Northeast and or further afield? And if so, what might that relevance be? And that's where you might help me. I don't necessarily intend to recruit everybody to cross-dressing in the course of this talk, but there is quite a bit of cross-dressing, which is where the blonde wig or maid Marian comes from. So I want to start by going to a little a lovely, excellent little anthology, actually, which seeks to encompass the heyday of Scotland in the Renaissance and late medieval period. And this was put together by Gregory Smith, who was a pioneering scholar of Scots literature from Queen's University, and I think he was here in Aberdeen for a spell. I might be wrong, but but and he puts together this anthology in which Aberdeen plays a good part in the central flowering of Scotland's Renaissance. And and hey, one of the the things that that catch your eye immediately is what he describes as an old laughable custom in the borough. Now that is a translation, right of a phrase that you'll be hearing several times this evening from the Burgh Records of Aberdeen Ye Olde lovable constituent and right of E Borough right consume it. You give a Latin for us and right here we're meaning are are I t a ceremony, an old lovable custom and ceremony of the borough. So here is one of them. It was found by the old lovable custom and right of the borough, but in the honour of God and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the craftsmen of the scene in their best story cast and

adorned the procession on Candlemas day yearly, which old and lovable custom The Provost Bailey's and Council. Right. He advised, ratified and approved, and moreover statutes and ordained that the said craftsmen and their successors shall perpetually in time to come observe and keep the said procession as honourably as they can, and they shall in order to the offering in the plea pass two and two together. This is a fascinating level of detail for Council about Community Arts event, right? It gets better. They shall pass two and two together socially. First, the flashers, barbers, bakers, shoemakers, skimmers, Coopers, Wrights hat makers and boilermakers together. Then the Fullers, Dyers, Weavers, tailors, goldsmiths, blacksmiths and hammer men and the craftsmen show furnish the pigeons, the shoe makers, the messenger, the Weavers and Fullers, Simeon and the Smiths and Goldsmiths, the Three Kings of Cologne, the Dyers, the Emperor, etc. The tailors Our Lady sent Bride and Saint Helen and the Skimmers, the two bishops. We'll hear more about them later. Even after these two bishops are. And two of each craft to pass with the pageant that they furnish to keep their gear. And if any person happens to fail and break any point before a written and be convicted thereof, he shall pay 40 shillings to St Nicholas work. Isn't young Nicholas here? But this is to keeping Saint Nicholas Kirk upright and the Baileys on law Unforgiven. Right. So you have to do it. Now I am Candlemas. A 2nd of February is the feast of the purification of the Virgin. This is in the New Testament. When Mary goes to the temple for the ritual of purification. After the six week period, after the birth of the child, according to the Jewish law. And there's a thank offering and there's a wonderful storytelling thing where Simeon comes in and all the different characters, old and on the Temple is a wonderful storytelling. But the point is that seasonally, the 1st of February in Scotland was St Brian's day. Okay, I behind to miss the figure of breach the Celtic goddess of the spring. And it is in no way coincidental that these two things conjoin. And there we are, our Lady of St Bride and St Helena. And if anybody thinks the Irish Celtic Saints tradition is not relevant to the North East, you have to go there and visit all these old churches up and down because there are Irish Celtic dedications on maps in Aberdeen, China. So this is very fascinating. But I mean it gets even more interesting in a sense because the minute the council minute also goes on to detail how many people each of the guilds is supposed to provide for the drama. So it describes, you know, the Smiths and the Hammer men are to provide the three Kings of Cologne, the Tailors, Our Lady St Brides and Helen Joseph and as many squires as the me. So there's got to be a pile of kind of attendants as well to go in this add possession the skimmers two bishops and four angels, the Weavers and Fuller, Simeon and his disciples and the flashers, two or for madmen when the bike boggles at the Brethren of the Guild, Knights and Harness and Squires. Honestly, I read. And then finally it's light. You know, it's it's like I say, production notes and bakers, the Minstrels. The bakers are responsible for the music now. And to my mind, that is it is quite extraordinary. It's quite extraordinary. And I'm going to push that door open further in a minute. But if you think this is some kind of one off flash in the pan, the council does this big thing for Candlemas that referred to Stanley to 1505, the specific date and year. And we also have from 1511 the Scottish medieval poet William Dunbar's description of the royal entry of James the fourth Queen. So that's the young Margaret of England, the thistle and the marriage of the thistle on the rose. She comes to Aberdeen. Okay. And this is how Dunbar describes the arrival of the Queen, the welcome of the Queen in Aberdeen. And I'm hoping at the end of this journey to come back in 1580 to the Aberdeen welcome to King James, the six the new Protestant king in 1580 and first term meant the burghers of the town richly arrayed just became them to be of whom they chose for a man of renown in gowns of velvet, young, able and lusty to bear the pall of velvet crime as the sort of ceremonial kind of, you know, a cover above her head. The custom had been great was the sound of the artillery be blithe and blissful borough of Aberdeen. A fair procession met her at the ports. That's the gate and a cap of gold and silk food pleasantly with many a fear to sport, received her on the street lustily

where first the salutation honourably of the sweet virgin goodly might be seen the sound of minstrels blowing to the sky be blithe and blissful borough of Aberdeen. And then they describe the place see the dramas even as the hour played in the street and sign that cause the Orient King is three offered to Christ gold sense and Martha, with all humility shine have an angel with sword. The violence forth of the joy of paradise. Put clean Adam and Eve for disobedience That all you're all sinners, You're damned to hell. Nonetheless be blithe and blissful borough of Aberdeen and then unsigned The Bruce Robert the Bruce the ever was bold in sture thou art as Roy come raging under crown so that still you can still see that in Aberdeen Robert the Bruce statue the normal steward's be blithe and blissful borough of Aberdeen Then came four and 20 maidens young all clad in green of marvellous beauty with hair, detritus, threads of gold, detaching, etc. etc. and the streets were all hung with tapestry. Greek was the press of people about unpleasant pageants made principally images. All did to their lady lout who was convoyed with a royal road of great barons and lusty ladies welcome our Queen. The Commons gave a shout Be blithe and blissful borough of Aberdeen. So this is what they call a joyful entry. You know, a ceremonial welcome to the monarch and Aberdeen did not stint and an essential part of the process was the dramatic pageants and ceremonial played in the street as part of the welcome which was able to be done because Aberdeen had this a strong tradition of civic theatre, of civic community drama. And that's going to be you can describe this and let's just dig into that bit. Now, why does this happen in the late medieval period? Well, it very interestingly, Aberdeen, the dioceses of Aberdeen all saw records, one of the earliest attacks on pagan games and shameful and goings on in churchyards right in 1200 in the 13th century, in the 1200s. And that is a fascinating glimpse into a period for which we have so little evidence or card. But you what you can do is join up with the material evidence of the importance of the parish church yards across Aberdeen Shire and where you can see that many of those churches are positioned in older sites on older religious sites and that that tradition of there being games, contests, archery and how the mind encompasses everything. That could be a shameful lady deemed, you know, and encouraging lascivious notes. The document says you know so the mind can roam but and that the the the sites of the churches and the church yards remained focuses of all these communal and festival festival activities which might have had an origin going back hundreds and hundreds of years into pre-Christian tradition. So that in itself is a very fascinating thing that you can look at the physical evidence and this very slender and documentary evidence. But what then essentially happens is if you can't beat them, join them. Right. So gradually, the medieval church evolved a kind of policy or an approach that it sought to incorporate and to a degree, influence and control the popular festivals of the people. So what you get is a massaging of what you could describe as a genuine full tradition about which we know very little with an actual active kind of church policy of saying, Well, we want to encompass this community thing, you know, so let's actually let's actually organise these processions and these please. So obviously that didn't happen like that. It evolved and developed. And the key point is that when you and I'll illustrate that from the detailed, detailed records of all this, the council is the instrument of and I mean almost in forcing this pattern of activity in which the town acts through the town council, the guild, So all the working people of the town, all the trades and guilds and crafts are involved and the church is involved and they all come together in order to underpin these key ceremonies and festivals with this street theatre stuff very much at the centre of it. And it's, it's centred. The central kind of connected feature of it is Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of Aberdeen. And you actually know Saint Nicholas, probably the patron saint of Aberdeen because he is the saint of sailors and of shipwrecked mariners. So there's kind of an appropriate notice to the Port of Aberdeen. But honestly, the Saint Nicholas thing, is it serious if people think global is a kind of nominal thing, you know? Nicholas, Patron saint of Aberdeen, when you actually go through this stuff. It's it's the Saint Nicholas theme that

kind of holds it together. And there are four key points in the year where all this is going on, right? There are two festivals where the church side of are quite strongly emphasised. Candlemas although as I've described that very connected with the beginning of spring Feast, the Bride and then the Feast of Corpus Christi on the 20th of June. Now that was a 16th century innovation in the Catholic Church at that time, that we are the universal church. We are again, it was a deliberate policy to take religion out of the churches into the streets. And what they did was they took the A the sacred horse, the body and blood of Christ as that where the reserved sacrament was taken out of the churches and paraded through the streets with a huge procession. And please. Right. So 20th June, very interesting. Again, it's it's midsummer. Right. And then there were two more major seasonal festivals that were huge in Aberdeen. Both do a strongly connected in their presentation and articulation with the Cult of Nicholas. But these are much more folk festivals and and they wear in me the MIDI festivals, but they weren't just restricted to the first of me. It spilled through me. And here you are still having a me festival in Aberdeen. I just thought there's not going to be any shameful, moody and lascivious goings on in that festival. Tom. But a And then the other is, is the Christmas period. Now, here's the fascinating thing. The traditional in Western church, the Feast of Saint Nicholas, is the 6th of December. Right. But it kind of seems that the Saint Nicholas season got going on. The six of December, then intensified as usual. Midwinter. I came into fame and was then kind of collated with the Feast of the Holy Innocents and 28th December, when all the schools were on holiday and the kids got to know good just part of all this and continued essentially until epiphany on the six of January. Now what you have again there is this collision of the traditional seasonal character with the Christian calendar. And the expression of that philosophy was and was worked out through these processions, pageants and pleas. Now, the other thing that will come out and just as. As a tip to a few examples of this is that for reasons that I think we can understand the detail that we have in these official records about the two religiously orientated festivals is much greater than the more folk orientated stuff. Right. It's not because it's not mentioned and covered, but the detail about Corpus Christi and Candlemas is is extraordinary. But once we get to May media and December and it becomes a bit more coy and coy is the word because it's not until post reformation disapproval comes in that it begins to spell out what actually has been going on. Okay, so there are some juicy bits coming. Don't despair. Right. So we've touched on I've done that kind of extract from 15 five about the and the candlemas now the cat, the the constant reference in detail to this candlemas thing in the council minutes. Because what happens is the the half the thing, the set up and everybody is supposed to the different guilds supposed to contribute to the cost of the candles. Right. Now imagine St Nicholas Church the scale of it. Right. And I mean, it's not much bigger now than it was then. You've got a dark season of the year. The aim was to illuminate the church in a blaze of gold and light. That was a lot of candles. So there's a lot of reference to the specific, the amount of wax, the candles, how everybody's supposed to contribute, and also how everybody is supposed to take part in the procession is supposed to pay their share of the costs and to take part. And when they don't put their hands out in front of the council and approved. So there's just numerous about, you know, so-and-so is Unforgiven because of the offence done at the Candlemas plea for not appearing. And the two offences are, you know, they didn't and you know so-and-so fine because he keep it, not your procession of candle, mostly snipe sit quick as as our craftsmen did. There's wonderful prose Scots in the theatre, but the way it is tied to this is Scots. If the Northeast butchered its Scots needs models of what Scots prose go to the Aberdeen Council records. And then the other offence is what they call an offence done to ye situation of the kind of asleep. That's what they mean. There's the order of the procession. There were arguments about what the order should be, who should go where. And then there was, you know, people were reprove for not being in the great position. That's a festival look and, and there's a

fascinating one here as well which is quite interesting you see where at because they're laying down the law. They say what people have failed to do, they fail to furnish their parts and bad badges of the same sort. And there's this detailed description that each guild supports not just be in this possession, but to bring banners and to contribute to what are described as the pageants. Now, there's a dance in question there, which medieval drama, you know, are we talking here about almost like a movable pageant. So in some of the English town traditions, they actually have these wagons which were moved along with the scene possibly that happened in Aberdeen. There's no physical evidence of it. Or was a pageant something that happened en route in the procession on a fixed position, either in the church in Candlemas or Corpus Christi, out in the town, in the streets, there would be certain locations, crossroads at the market cross where particular scenes or pageants would be played. Okay. So and similarly, a Corpus Christi. Huge amount of detail about what everybody's supposed to do about the procession of a year. Everybody should be part of it according to due for a conform to you all to lovable con circus and right of the borough. Yeah you know this is a now that's a very interesting phrase if you think about it for a minute. This is not a law. There's no. All of it says you should take part. Yet people are fined and reprove for not taking part in it. And the authority is tradition, the old lovable custom and right of the borough. It's it's all founded on a sense of tradition. I think that in itself is a whole sort of fascinating ballgame. Right. And here we go. The crafts are charge it to furnish their pageants, underwritten the flashers. Sebastian and his tormentors listen at the barber's St Lawrence and his tormentors, the Skinners. Since Stephens tormentors yet saw the big emphasis in this Corpus Christi about the martyrs. So I don't know. Is there a lot of flagellation and whatever going on? I don't know. And the Cards and St Mark's and the Taylors. The coronation of Our Lady. Right. The Coronation of the Virgin. These are the scenes that they are to to buy a the dress. That's the Dyer's Saint Nicholas. The story of Saint Nicholas and the Websters, the Weavers, St John, the Baxters, St George and the Slaters and Coopers, The Resurrection, The Smiths and the Hammer. Men to furnish the bearers of the cross. So this is a mystery play. I have full faith ad, but not just I as the whole medieval thing. You see that in the art conflicts, the biblical. There's no there's no line drawn between. That's the biblical narrative and that's the narrative of the saints of the church. They're they're all in one and not very detail. We have no script unless one's lying somewhere and some old documentary records and Aberdeen archives. But, you know, you can see the comparability there of the scripts that do survive from the different cycles. So and again, we have the issues of enforcement of those who don't turn up and don't play their part. They are they are then ticked off and reprove. And I won't get to the age of all that. But there's a core of a row about the Corpus Christi procession, because the Smiths, you know, if you want to have trouble gas Smith You know, but the Smiths do it themselves at the front of this procession in Corpus Christi, 1553. And the road continues for a year and into 1554, because all these other across it all the Smiths went in the wrong part of the procession. Now, the issue here is, you know, I described that we're burying the sacred horse at the front, you know, with all the clergy and the bands for ever. So presumably it was the position of greatest honour to be nearest the sacred horse. So there was considerable debate and rivalry and of course the debate centred on what was the custom, what was the tradition of the orator. So the total increase of minutes become more and more detailed about who's to go where this ruddy procession. Now I just have to tell you the I had something in me, kind of a response to that. I have been involved through my what had been numerous Galatea, B, d, you know, I'm still in the media committee for Ed Rendell, the and all that. And this is the meat and dream of these things you know, where is everybody going to go? The procession and who's going to be offended? The community choir is junior, the pate body. You know, I mean, this is this is what's going on here, you know, except it's kind of serious stuff. Okay. So let's turn to the two big, more folk orientated commemorations and festivals and wham! We are right into the two critical

figures, the abbot of reason by which we mean unreason and the Pryor of Bon Accord. Now they seem to be a kind of double act. At some points it seems like it's one person who has that overall title, but then it becomes clear or it develops as it's two people and they are the people who are the kind of masters of sanity who are responsible for organising the street processions and activities and games. And as much as they can be organised both in May and then in December. So the kind of have a year. Now, classically in 1445 the council decided that. He would stop paying them. Right. This is a classic kind of Howard Dean decision, perhaps. I don't know. The council still working for this year, I think. But. And so what? I can. I can't be certain of this. We have to look at more complicated things. But I think that perhaps this was a situation where at one point professional jesters and street performers were hired to lead this stuff, and then the Aberdeen Council took the decision. No, what we will do is we will elect and appoint two of our own number bellies and craft tickets. I mean, the mind boggles. You know, the convenor of the recreation committee will be appointed the Lord of Misrule for the next year. And you know what I mean? That seems to be the equivalent and that seems to have an effect. It becomes it becomes, you know, very much a civic thing. There's no external professionalism in this. It's, it's, it's all the resources of the civic society, including the musicians, and all the rest of it are brought to bear. And also it causes problems and issues because these poor guys, it gets a point. You get appointed to this thing sometimes of all kinds of difficulties, actually getting other people to cooperate and do the business. And then as I see it, it will trickle out as we go through this. Just what might be involved in some of what went on, particularly at the B one. Okay. So anyway, and a fast here's a passing wee. We reference 1497 F me and the four city Alderman Bailey's and counsel present for your time at YE. No, I think this is a wrong transcription. Woman Hill I think it's a windmill Hill at Windmill Hill So Windmill Hill was where the Aberdeen play Green was the traditional playing green was in Windmill Hill Right. And that's, that's the earliest reference that I know of to establishing that. But there's references later, as late as the 1600s to the poor state of the play green on Windmill Hill. And so and for upholding of you old lovable concerted honour, consolation and pleasure if this borough like has been in times past etc. and the appointed so and so and so and so conjointly Abbott and Pryor of Bon Accord now and what a phrase now begins to come in of what they call a riding. So it would seem that both in May and December, part of the A the the forecasts are content was around a processional riding of the streets OC with attendant pageants banners play activities as we went and this seems to have happened on a number of occasions in May and then again on a number of occasions in December with the build up to you. Okay. And there's quite a lot of detail about the and the banners. And so here, here, just here's a wee flavour. In honour of the glorious patron, Saint Nicholas, all persons of Burgesses, Neighbours of Burgesses and Burgess sons are to write, to decor, to ornament and decorate and honour the town in their array. And and everybody is to ride with the abbots and the prior of a bona card. And if you don't do this, they want to know why you're not turning out to date Palm. Okay. And in addition, it's not just, you know I'm bad. I know, you know, you turn out in proper costumes and banners and whatever, you know, it doesn't specify this. So frustrating, but it clearly says, you know, you're to turn out, but you're also it's turned out in style and ceremonial style for all that. So. Okay. So, you know, usual stuff and and then then 1517 seems to be the earliest reference with nor am. No prior kind of discussion or intermission or whatever. Suddenly, alongside the Abbot of Unreason and the prior of one accord. We have Robinhood and Little John. Suddenly Robinhood and Little John are in the mix here. Their dawn appear to be replacing the habit of reason and the prior, but they do get mentioned more often and their par of the ridings and the procession and all the rest of it, and extraordinarily the same kind of minutes as if you don't turn out to ride with Robinhood And Little John, you're, you know, you're in trouble, you accept your duty. You are I you couldn't sort of make up in a kind of a week, could you?

You know, and so I this goes on. This is this is very important. And you can see from the references and again, it's all unified. But this idea that it's all part of the Saint Nicholas tradition, right? So even though we've got Robin Hood and Little John and more, that's about to come and it's all contained within this idea. It's part of the civic tradition of a Saint Nicholas. And and but what clearly we have going on here is we have this mixture of, okay, so the business community, the cross, whatever. But then you've got to imagine there's also the apprentices as the apprentices girlfriends, there's you know, there's a whole kind of widening circle of participation around this and it's all kind of seems to be contained in a harmonious whole until all of a sudden, right, instead of the language of the lovable custom and right of the bar and sort of critique comes in. 1553rd April 1553 There is a criticism of the Lords of Bon Accord because of the many great sumptuous and superfluous banqueting, ensuring the time at which is neither profitable nor godly. Now, this is fascinating because what we're talking here is gluttony and drunkenness and probably a dose of lechery. Okay, Now the thing is that must always have been part of the picture, okay? But suddenly it becomes a focus of critique. And instead of the council minutes reflecting this wholesale endorsement of these traditions, a critical note comes in. But what is fascinating is that they try and I would love to have been a fly on the wall of this suitcase. I would just love because this time you've got to remember we've had a field Lutheran Reformation in Scotland. We're now heading towards a Calvinist reformation. It's not a majority supported thing in Aberdeen by any manner of means. So what the council clerk who drafted this tries to do is maintain a distinction between this sumptuous, excessive, you know, drinking and banqueting that obviously implies some kind of recent development with the cause, principle and good institution in holding of the good tune in gladness and blight. This with dances, farces, plays and games. So we now actually get a description of what is the lovable tradition. Dance games, Farces, please. That's good. That's we want people we don't want this access. We don't all this drunkenness, you know, Union Street in a Saturday night. No, that's not good. We're we're we're holding for the the lovable tradition. Now, that is extremely fascinating. And a quote, of course, then happens is that this tension around these traditions grows. And it grows because in 1555, the Scottish Government, in the shape of Mary of geese, not a Protestant government, hadn't had the Reformation year. Mary and. Guys band LA please. The Me revels and pleads and we have the proclamation by which she band them which is incorporated engrossed as the technical term is in the Aberdeen and so minute seeing and it is statues in ordained no manner of person be chosen Robin Hood or little John habits of unreason me queen neither in butter and land of any time to come Any Provost Valium Council who chooses such a personages Robert Little, John Abbott of Unreason or me Queen shall forfeit their freedom for the space of five years, etc. etc.. Fines and the lovely bit. There's always a kind of gender issue here and anybody who makes perturbation, the women perturb ours. The parents are betas, the female parts are betas shall be taken, handled and put upon the cock stool of every borough or town. Right. So there no, you know. No. And of course this was quite an effective and a even in Edinburgh. So at my place of work right beside the old Nanopore, there was a huge riot when the judge enforced this. There was a popular uprising against it with violence that was broadcasted all over Europe. Now, Aberdeen was in a more difficult situation because basically the majority view was to keep going. They wanted to keep going. Right. And and they then a started 1562. They started under pressure. But this time we've had the Protestant Reformation in 1562 have to bring people to book for continuing what was really the old laughable custom. But in doing that, we learn more about some of the things that happened. So, for example, 4th May 1562, the sad time John Taylor Bellman was accused for passing through the town with the handbell by open voice to convene the Hill community to go to the wood to bring in summer upon the first Sunday of May, contravening acts, acts and statutes of he Queen's Greece and the Lords of Council. So that is the first mention the part of the Aberdeen

custom was, which is recorded in Edinburgh, that on the morning of the first near you went out to the woods. So this is when you wash your face in the dew and you cut the first green boughs and bore them back into the town. And that's probably the origin of the maypole is these green bays for circular dances. And of course Mary Hale then brought loose with street and that's when the Robin Hood and made Marion blonde wigs and the whole raft went on, you know, So suddenly now I don't believe that what we're seeing suddenly is a different and a happening from what had happened before. What we're actually hearing is all the different dimensions of what. So, yes, that was an official procession with Paget's thing, but there was all these popular traditions going on as well. And then there's another reference and seeing that none of them take up on hand to meet with Tamburlaine, with Tavern playing on pipe or fiddle, and to convene for the choosing of Robin Hood and Little John and the abbots of Reason. But they must stick to the statutes of the Parliament and not make any tumult, system or convention any gathering. So obviously there's this popular push to keep the whole thing going, to keep having Robin who that join and and and the mean queen. And in 1565 the poor provost is summoned down to Edinburgh to have the riot. I dread for the enormities of what is going on in Aberdeen. That's the word, the enormities and the pure prophesies to come back and read this letter from Mary Queen of Scots now. And by the way, it well, the reason that the the reason that this enforcement began underneath of games was that these popular festival occasions were being utilised by Protestant protesters and riot to stir up disorder. And that's why we saw this sort of movement, as it were, to start controlling these things was not solely a Protestant versus a Catholic issue. It was an. Issue about social order and and in particular, I think, a breakdown now of the relationship of the the civic, the church and the popular tradition. They begin to divide. You know, and that that's reflected in a whole lot of. You know and and again, it becomes interesting because it's describing more and more fully what's what had been going on. So I'll I'll flick on just finally now. And the last bit of this is then there's there's a strong surviving aspect that's particularly evident in Aberdeen where I saw all this pressure. And by the 1570s you've got Protestant regions, you've got quite hardline Protestant government in Scotland, the young Mary's in exile. The young James is a minor and you know, you have their money and their love. MARTIN And all this hardline Protestants in charge of the government bought the school. The grammar school is very resistant to abandoning the popular tradition of the Christmas the Yule Games. So what appears to have happened is that the schoolboys maintained a tradition of appointing a boy bishop. Right. Which in some way and this is interesting because the galoshes, please, were kept going by the kids after the can. I don't think of the squeeze. So it seems that that was a very strong move in Aberdeen for the kids, the high school kids, to keep this thing going. And their opportunity came by insisting on these customs and traditions and games happening after Christmas. So this is now Saint Nicholas, associated with the Feast of the Holy Innocents on the 20th of December. And it was a chance for the schools to have a good old holiday. And then the council began to crack down on that under pressure for the government. And there's a whole ongoing to and fro over that which I you need to go into the school records to completely understand the ins and outs of it. And but by the time we get to the mid-to-late 1570s, the language has become a about superstitious festival days. The lovable custom of the Burgh has been replaced by superstitious festival days. Does that mean that it has ended? No. And I just want to sort of finish on this and then I will summary thing. We then begin to pile up records that are coming from the new Protestant Kirk Sessions, a lambasting these folk game traditions that are obviously still a, you know, in full flight saw an admonition given to the master of the sang school to give no plea or privilege to scholars in the days dedicated to superstition and papist. ST So that's that crack down on these holidays. And the boy Bishop 14 women charged for playing, dancing and singing of filthy carols on new all day even and on Sunday. It's only 1517. But this is all in Aberdeen, you know, isn't that. And,



and we've been fined for the abusing of our self in cleaning of clothing herself with men's clothes at the wake of George Allen Helmsley's. Now, that's interesting. But some of this stuff went on at weeks weeks. I saw some of this partying singing guys it. Several women convicted as dancers in men's claws under silence of night. So this is whatever. And deletion given again some young men and young women of the city for dancing through the town together. The A the young men being clad in women's apparel, which is a committed abomination by the law of God and the young women for dancing openly with them through the streets with masks on their faces, thereby passing the bounds of modesty and shamelessness, which ought to be in young women, namely in a reformed city. How could this be going on in Aberdeen? You know, we were now a godly town, you know, and if any man or woman be convict in the light, monstrous behaviour in time, coming to wit, other men dancing in women's apparel or women in men's apparel, or yet if women be found dancing publicly through the streets, mask it and disguise it and seek a wanton and unjust balm in company with men that the doer shall pay a pecuniary penalty to the poor according to the modification of the session. So am I, you know. And it goes, it goes on. And in 605, five men accused it of being fosters of superstition and going through the town mascot and dancing with bells on you all day, late at night, saw and fought the Am I now 69. William Stuart Fittler warned to refrain from his wanted superstition in playing and singing The Sundays of Me in the Morning. And there you get the I. That idea was back that the the whole procession I went out on every Sunday and me there was procession and games through the town as part of the ME celebration. So you've come full circle. However, I was say the wounded to the issue of it. To my mind, there's a slightly self-justification. I led the explanation that in 1580 King James the Saints comes for the first time to Aberdeen and the council lays on the full ceremonial as fake games pageants. Three it costs £3,000 or guineas or something. I a you could have gone to back to that Dunbar podium and they did the full fig of a joyous entry and 1580. And you wonder was that because the saints you know the wind was moving a bit. James was going to be a bit more. James loved the theatre. He loved, as you ever saw. Was there a kind of whatever? Or was that the Count council? Kind of. And as you see it, is it's quite closely grinding. We're doing this because this is the old custom. This is what was done before. So me a little description, the plays at the gate, the wine and the fight, the everything that was to be done. It was all to be done again in the old, lovable custom. Okay, so I just want to finish by saying there's there's several interesting kind of things I think that are worthy of think about in exploring this. There's this whole business of how this whole church civic thing evolved with connections to older, quote, paganism, unquote, to a And therefore you look at the seasons and festivals that were chosen Candlemas, MIDI, Corpus Christi and the Yule St Nicholas I staff and add clearly there's such a strong relationship in all of these between older seasonal traditions and customs and what the church was doing and and that those were reflected in the nature of the performances, the writings, the processions, the pageants. And again, and there's there's, I think, a very fascinating thing to try and explore that in more detail. And can we nail more precisely some of what was going on there at dancing? Agents, please. Pharmacies, pharmacies. And we surveyed those are William Dunbar. And in crying of the plea and Lindsay sat out the three estates and there's a farce, an interlude, farce which I mean I think we're pretty close there. I can we do specifically tie any of those to Aberdeen? I'm not sure. And there's this fascinating I think, you know, are these really folk please? I mean if the whole thing is to a degree organised by the church is where's the folk element in it. Yeah. Actually when we began to organise with the council in the church, when we begin to see the further information that develops as the thing becomes more controversial and can learn more, we can clearly see there is a folk dimension that's outside some as civic and then combined, and then we see a development where that relationship becomes contentious, that some of this masking and disguising becomes dissident. You know, it's consciously dissident and there's elements of

repression and all of that going on. Is there a legacy from all this? Well, I think that spore and discussion. That's me.

**Speaker 1** [00:56:09] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen.