

£9 MILLION HERITAGE LOTTERY BID FOR NEW CULTURAL CENTRE

A £9 MILLION application to the Heritage Lottery Fund has been made by the University of Aberdeen for a new centre dedicated to the cultural heritage of the North and North-east of Scotland.

In what is believed to be the largest such bid from the North-east of Scotland, the planned £12million Elphinstone Centre will house the resources and many of the activities of the Elphinstone Institute.

The Elphinstone Centre will be located next to the Queen Mother Library in Old Aberdeen. It will house thousands of artefacts, including a complete run of the Aberdeen Journal, student lecture notes from the seventeenth century, letters, books and diaries, bothy ballads, the George Washington Wilson photographic archives and illuminated manuscripts such as the Aberdeen Bestiary.

As well as providing a home for the Institute's rare archives and collections, the Centre, scheduled to open in the year 2000, will allow the public access to exhibitions, workshops and performances reflecting the

*Centre stage:
Professor James Porter
with the celebrated
Aberdeen fiddler
Carmen Higgins.
The Elphinstone Centre
will provide a new arts
space for the thriving
music and dance
traditions of the area.*



history, languages and traditions of the North and North-east.

A central atrium will house exhibitions and displays, while a 140-seat auditorium complete with stage will provide a vibrant new arts space for larger public performances.

The University commissioned an independent feasibility study during which members of the public living in the North and

North-east were given the opportunity to voice their opinions on the new centre. Institute Director Professor James Porter said the outcome of the survey had shown enormous public support for the project. "We will be opening up the collections and archives to the public in novel and exciting ways through exhibitions, performances and events for schools," he said.

A NEW TRADITION

WELCOME TO the first Newsletter of the Elphinstone Institute. As Director of the Institute, I want to assure readers of our mission, namely to study and promote the traditions of Northern Scotland.

The Institute follows in the footsteps of the man whose name it bears - Bishop William Elphinstone, founder of the University of Aberdeen - in his concern for the whole of the North of Scotland. Like him, we feel a powerful sense of leading an educational and cultural strategy in revitalising older traditions and encouraging newer ones.

The North, after all, has seen enormous changes over the past century and a half - the Highland Clearances, two World Wars, and the

coming of North Sea Oil are but a few notable causes of change. Yet the people of the North-east, Highlands, and Northern Isles are proud of their regional identity, and rightly want valued traditions to continue.

We share that deep sense of belonging. But while one of our major tasks is to record the past, the present too creates traditions. As a result, we will be encouraging young people in particular to look with a fresh eye at traditional dance, music, song, material objects, customs, crafts and the visual arts through the fun of special events and the fascinating mix of multi-media technology.

With events such as our September conference we intend to strengthen the links

between the University and the community. Come to our events. Be part of our Institute. And wherever you live, at home or abroad, write to me personally - by fax, letter, or e-mail - about traditions you know of and would like to see highlighted. After all, the Institute is here for you!

James Porter
Director



Page from the Book of Deer, compiled between the 9th and 12th centuries at the Celtic Monastery near Old Deer, Aberdeenshire. Reproduced by permission of Cambridge University Library.

RELIGIOUS ROOTS CONFERENCE

THE RELIGIOUS traditions of the North-east of Scotland will be examined at a major international conference at the University of Aberdeen this autumn.

The *After Columba, After Calvin* conference, from 5 to 7 September, will address issues of community and identity in the religious traditions of the area.

Organised by the Elphinstone Institute, the conference marks the Columban anniversary (597 AD) and features over thirty speakers. It includes a symposium on the Book of Deer and will also examine the religious communities in the North-east since the early period, including Baptists, Brethren, Catholics, Episcopalians, Quakers, and charismatic groups.

DORIC DIALECT PROJECT

THE STRENGTH and character of the traditional Buchan dialect down through the generations is one of the Institute's many research projects.

The North-east Language Project, under the direction of Institute Associate Dr Catherine Macafee, is assessing changes in the Doric dialect in different walks of life.

So far an attitude questionnaire has been produced which tests how positive individuals are about the Doric, and to what extent they see themselves as participants in it.

A grant from the Carnegie Trust will allow the compilation of an authoritative dictionary of North-east Scots that will be available via the World Wide Web.

HALL FELLOWSHIP

ONE OF the leading figures in the folksong world is to be remembered by a special fellowship at the Elphinstone Institute.

The Peter A Hall Fellowship has been established in memory of the late Peter A Hall, the prominent student of bothy ballads, who wrote the authoritative introduction to Volume 3 of the Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection.

The Fellowship, set up with the generous support of Mr Hall's wife Dr Marion Hall, a consultant obstetrician at Aberdeen Maternity Hospital, will allow the Institute to employ a researcher initially for three years dedicated to the study of the music and song of Northern Scotland.



Peter A Hall ...new Fellowship bears his name.



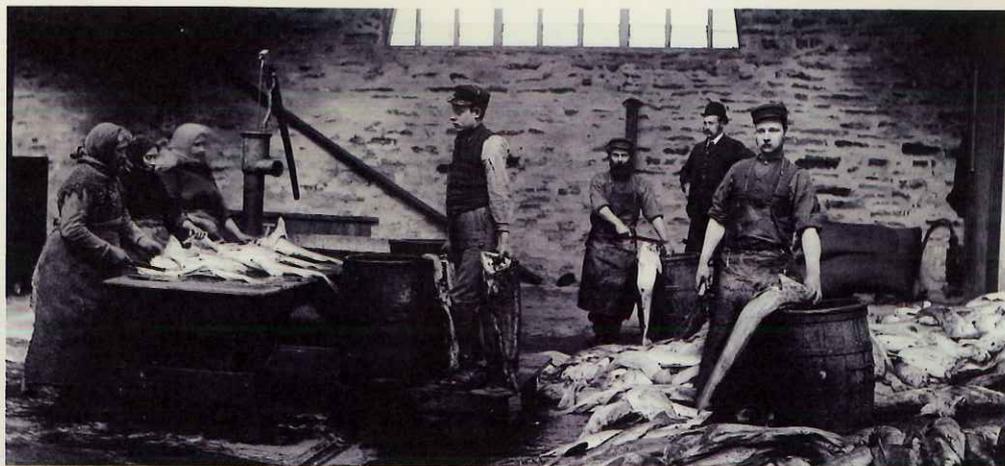
ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

INFORMATION

EXPLORING NORTHERN TRADITIONS

The aims of the Elphinstone Institute are to study, record, and promote the traditional culture of North and North-east of Scotland through an imaginative programme of exhibitions, conferences, concerts, workshops and lectures.



Fish-curing at Kirkwall. ... One of the thousands of rare photographs from the University's Collections.

The Elphinstone Institute is a place to explore and enjoy the rich traditions of Northern Scotland. It seeks to promote the University's

nationally important collection of heritage resources, embrace information technology to share its knowledge - particularly

with scattered communities - and undertake research for the support of the cultural and economic life of the North.

An Unmatched Resource

A Thriving Community

On its five hundredth anniversary in 1995, the University of Aberdeen established an Institute named after its founder, Bishop Elphinstone, dedicated to preserving, studying and promoting the cultural heritage of North and North-east Scotland.

The North of Scotland has an established and thriving culture, with an influence extending far beyond the borders of Scotland itself. Despite the dramatic changes in North-east and Northern Scotland in the last twenty years, the traditions and dialects of the north are still among the best preserved in Britain. And its recent history shows how a community with strong roots can absorb large-scale immigration, and the presence of a multi-national industry, without losing its identity.

The Elphinstone Institute's emphasis is not on scholarship for its own sake, but on work which will add to the growing public interest in the culture of the North of Scotland.

The University has unmatched resources for the study of this unique culture.

The Library holds well over quarter of a million items relating to the region - manuscripts, archives, and printed books, maps, prints and photographs - and its city-centre Marischal Museum has important collections reflecting its material life.

Together with Museum's research, curatorial and teaching expertise, the Institute is a partnership with the people and communities of the region - from the general public to scholars, archivists, performers and teachers.

Elsewhere in the building, project and seminar rooms and a lecture theatre will be provided, as will facilities for recording, broadcasting, video conferencing and interactive distance learning.



Potted history: Scholars and schoolchildren can understand and enjoy the influence of international cultures on the area through the Institute's outreach activities.

THE PLANNED ELPHINSTONE CENTRE, A NEW BUILDING NEXT TO THE QUEEN MOTHER LIBRARY IN OLD ABERDEEN, WILL BECOME THE HUB OF THE INSTITUTE'S ACTIVITIES IN THE YEAR 2000.

THE ELPHINSTONE CENTRE WILL HOUSE THOUSANDS OF ARTEFACTS, INCLUDING A

THE CENTRE WILL ALLOW THE PUBLIC ACCESS TO EXHIBITIONS, WORKSHOPS AND PERFORMANCES REFLECTING THE HISTORY, LANGUAGES AND TRADITIONS OF THE NORTH AND NORTH-EAST.

AN AUDITORIUM, COMPLETE WITH STAGE, WILL PROVIDE A VIBRANT NEW ARTS SPACE FOR LARGER PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

A Cultural Centre

COMPLETE RUN OF THE ABERDEEN JOURNAL, STUDENT LECTURE NOTES FROM THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, LETTERS, BOOKS AND DIARIES, BOTHY BALLADS, THE GEORGE WASHINGTON WILSON PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES AND ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS SUCH AS THE ABERDEEN BESTIARY.

ILLUSTRATING THE CONTINUING VITALITY OF THE CULTURE OF NORTHERN SCOTLAND IN MUSIC AND DANCE, SONG AND STORY.



Bishop William Elphinstone

WHO'S WHO AT THE ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE

Professor James Porter, Director *Scottish Ethnology, European folklife, ballad and folksong*

Dr Colin Milton, Associate Director *Scottish literature, folklore and literature, poetry and prose of the North-east*

Mr Colin McLaren, Associate Director and University Librarian *Cultural history of Aberdeen and the University, information technology*

Professor Bill Nicolaisen, Fellow *Ethnology, place names, traditional narrative*

Dr John Smith, Fellow *Cultural geography of Northern Scotland, historical geography*

Mr Alan Anderson, Fellow *Scots language, information technology*

Dr Robert Millar, Fellow *North European languages, North-east speech*

The Peter A Hall, Research Fellow *North of Scotland music & song*

Elizabeth Curtis, Development & Activities Officer *Events programming, exhibition directing*

Dr Valentina Bold, Research Fellow *Scottish ethnology, James Hogg, auto-didacts*

Dr Thomas McKean, Research Fellow *Ballad and song, Doric and Gaelic song texts and singers*

Professor Donald Meek, Associate *Professor of Celtic*

Professor Allan Macinnes, Associate *Burnett-Fletcher Professor of History*

Dr Catharine Macafee, Associate *Reader in Scots Language, Socio linguistics*

DIVERSE

Typical Institute themes:
Doric and Gaelic
fishing and farming
the culture of the oil rigs
uses of granite and sandstone
local artists, writers and performers
children's lore
religious life
immigration and emigration
ethnic identity
the environment
popular theatre
sport
tourism

TRADITIONS

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THE BOTHY AND THE BARD

CHARLES MURRAY AND THE GREIG-DUNCAN FOLK-SONG COLLECTION

THE TWENTIETH century has seen an extraordinary flowering of poetry in all three of Scotland's literary languages – Gaelic, Scotland English. But in the early nineteen-hundreds, many people thought that the first two were unlikely to survive. English, the language of progress, would sweep the others aside.

It was the work of Alford-born Charles Murray which first challenged these forebodings. Seen nowadays as the laureate of North-east rural life, Murray was hailed early this century as the man who had brought the dying vernacular verse tradition back to life. His *Hamewith* (1909) proved that the auld leid was not dead, but had a bright literary future. So like Burns, Murray was seen as a national rather than a merely local poet, and his poems were committed to memory and recited all over lowland Scotland – and even in the non-Scots speaking Highlands and Islands.

Murray was a natural target for the iconoclastic C M Grieve, who dismissed him as someone who had 'not only never written a line of poetry in his life, but [is] constitutionally incapable of doing so'. And in choosing to write in North-east Scots he had chosen a dialect in which he lacked 'the advantage of a single forerunner of the slightest consequence': the Doric of the North-east was completely underdeveloped as a literary medium.

True the North-east is scantily represented in the Scots literary canon, but since the

City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museum Collections



Charles Murray by Henry Gamley RSA.

beginning of interest in folk-tradition in the eighteenth century, the North-east has been recognised as one of the most important areas in Scotland for ballad, song and folk-tale.

Murray had many 'forerunners of consequence' – but they were anonymous contributors to a largely communal and oral tradition. His father Peter, carpenter turned factor, was one of them. In his son's words, he had 'done a bit of rhyming in his time – too pointed to be printed'. He was a singer

too, with a rich stock of songs, rhymes and local lore which he passed on to his son.

So it is not surprising to find Murray contributing to the great folk-song collection made in the North-east early this century by Gavin Greig and the Rev James Duncan (he figures in five of the Singers/Sources references in volume 3 of the Greig-Duncan Folk-Song Collection). Writing to Duncan in July 1916, Murray enclosed what he described as 'some scraps of Donside verse – eight foolscap pages – ranging from a version of the bothy ballad 'Darra Hill' to 'Coming Home from the Wake', an unapologetic celebration of female sexuality – illustrating the ability of the folk tradition to absorb all kinds of diverse material.

Murray's account of how he got his material is a useful reminder of the roundabout ways in which traditional material circulates. He had heard Darra Hill sung by a Ellon man, James Mackenzie, in Johannesburg in 1890; twenty-six years later, he sends Mackenzie's version back to Duncan on Donside. There are more direct routes from Ellon to Lynturk – indeed it would be difficult to think of a clearer case of going to Birmingham by way of Beachy Head, but such serpentine journeys are by no means uncommon in the realms of folk-song collection.

Dr Colin Milton
Institute Associate Director,
Senior Lecturer, Department of English

SCHOLARLY VOLUMES

THE LIBRARIES of two distinguished North-east scholars have been entrusted to the care of the Elphinstone Institute.

The outstanding ballad scholar Professor David Buchan of Aberdeen, who died in St John's, Newfoundland in 1994, has bequeathed his library to the Institute. David Buchan, Research Professor at Newfoundland's

Memorial University, was the author of a *The Ballad and the Folk* (1972, reissued in 1997 by Tuckwell Press).

Dr David Murison of Fraserburgh, who died earlier this year in his native town, was Editor of the monumental *Scottish National Dictionary* and a noted scholar of Scottish language and literature.

Institute Director Professor James Porter said: "We are extremely fortunate to have been given these libraries. Our expert staff within the Department of Special Collections and Archives will ensure that they are given meticulous care for future generations to enjoy."



PRESSING HOME NORTHERN LIFE

AN EXCITING series of CD Roms on Northern Scotland is being created as part of the research programme of the Elphinstone Institute.

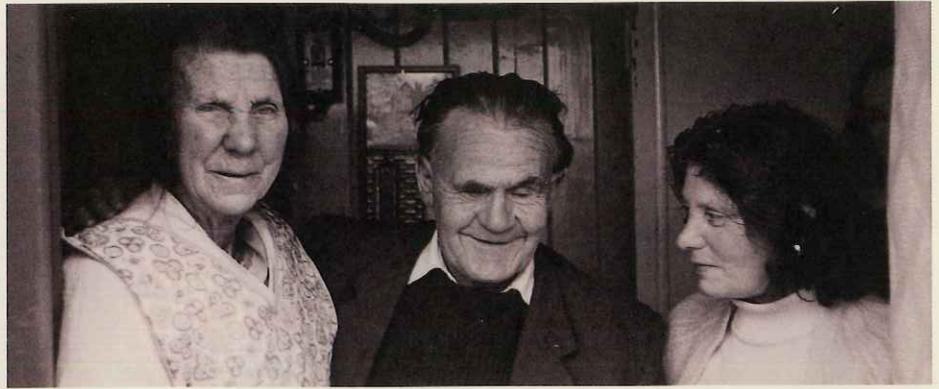
Three CD Rom 'samplers' of Northern cultural traditions will explore the main areas of the North - the North-east; the Highlands and Islands; Caithness, Orkney and Shetland - in challenging and innovative ways.

The series, which is being developed by Institute Research Fellows Valentina Bold and Tom McKean, aims to stimulate wider interest in the North of Scotland and its culture, and will embrace one of the Institute's core themes of harnessing the latest technology to study and promote Northern Scottish traditions.

The first volume, *An Introduction to North-east Traditions*, will offer a 'virtual tour' of North-east culture featuring wide-ranging material including the history and singing of the ballad, 'The Battle of Harlaw', the tradition of Burning the Clavie at Burghead, and people's experiences of Aberdeen's famous Tivoli Variety Theatre, at which Charlie Chaplin once performed.

Dr Bold said that the series was being devised to offer a fresh approach, in content and design, to the cultural riches of the region.

"By reaching audiences at home and abroad,



North-east trio ... traditional singers Tina Stewart (left), Cameron and Jane Turriff, outside their Fetterangus home in 1972, will be among the many performers featured on the Institute's first CD Rom.

this first sampler due out next Spring will create a wider awareness of the value of traditional culture in North-east Scotland," she said.

The idea of contrast, sometimes subtle, often dramatic, always absorbing, is embedded in the overall interpretation of the North-east's cultural personality.

Institute Director Professor James Porter explained that in-depth handbooks are also being produced on each of the three areas of the North to accompany the series. "These will explore in greater detail the significance of the traditions that images portray but cannot always analyse," he said.

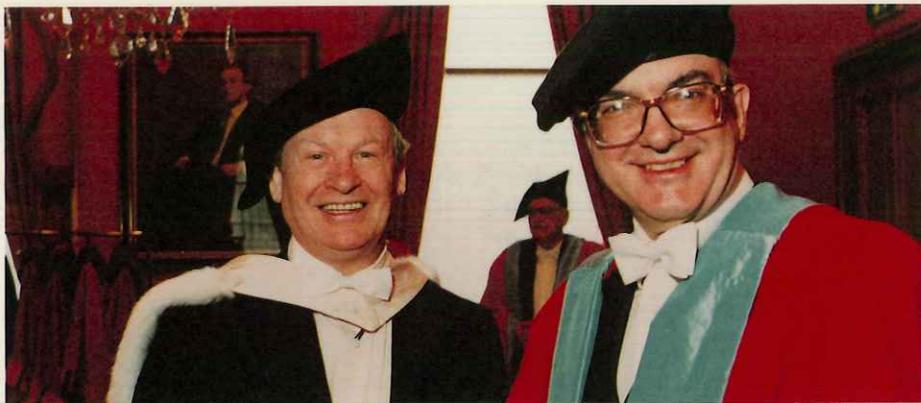
Dr McKean added: "They will form an indispensable companion to the CD Rom samplers and will also exist in on-line versions through the Institute's World

Wide Web Site as well as in printed format."

The CD Rom series is a three-year research project which will develop into a second phase - a series of related video cassettes with in-depth generic studies of material already introduced in the samplers: music and song, customs, material culture, children's lore.

Can you help? Drs Bold and McKean are looking for material (photos, cine film, objects, videos) relating to any of these subjects: the oil industry, fishing, whaling, farming, music and song, cooking, place names, customs, cinema and dance hall-going, variety theatres, clubs, football fandom, popular entertainment, landscape, emigration and immigration.

If you can help please call them on Tel 01224 272996, Fax 01224 272728 or E-mail: Elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk



Linklater honour: Elphinstone Institute Director Professor James Porter (left) congratulates Dr Magnus Linklater on receiving the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from the University at a Special Graduation Ceremony in Marischal College following the Installation of Lord Wilson of Tillyorn as the University's tenth Chancellor.

Dr Linklater, a distinguished journalist and broadcaster, is Chairman of the Scottish Arts Council and a former Editor of *The Scotsman*. His father, Eric Linklater, the famous novelist and University Rector from 1945 to 1948, was the donor of the Linklater Collection of Scottish Colourist paintings to the University.

FUTURE EVENTS

After Columba, After Calvin
Conference on Religious Roots of the North-east, 5-7 September, King's College

Brush, Wood & Taffeta
Exhibition Exploring the North, 11 July-26 September, Marischal Museum

The Role of Collections in the Scottish Intellectual Tradition
Conference co-sponsored with Marischal Museum, 16-17 April, 1998, Marischal Museum

Festival: Northern Bows, Northern Bridges
International Fiddle Festival, 17-20 September, 1998, King's College, Aberdeen Music Hall

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