

Researching, recording, and promoting the cultural traditions of North and North-East Scotland

The Glenbuchat Ballads in Print

We are pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of *The Glenbuchat Ballads*, edited by David Buchan and James Moreira, by the University Press of Mississippi in association with the Elphinstone Institute.

Sometime in the early nineteenth century, most likely in the year 1818, the Reverend Robert Scott, minister of the parish of Glenbuchat in Aberdeenshire, compiled a collection of traditional ballads that until now has not been published. Most of the ballad collections produced during the Scottish Romantic Revival were eventually anthologized in Francis James Child's seminal *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (five volumes, 1882-1898). Yet, the Glenbuchat manuscripts, containing sixty-eight ballads in four folio volumes, were not included. The manuscripts only came to light in 1949 when they were donated to the Special Collections of Aberdeen University Library by a descendent of the original compiler.

Scott did not give the precise locations of where he collected his ballads, or name the performers, but the texts are unique and appear to have been drawn from oral sources. As such, the ballads reveal a great deal about the nature of traditional music at the time they were collected.

The Glenbuchat Ballads were originally prepared for publication by David Buchan, one of the leading ballad scholars of the twentieth century. Upon David Buchan's death, his former student James Moreira took up and completed his work and wrote the detailed introductory essay and annotations for this volume. To purchase a copy, please complete the order form, which is also available on line. Orders received before 1 July 2007 will be dispatched post free.



Glenbuchat Castle
Photograph by Thomas A. McKean



David Buchan

Photograph by Diane Goldstein

David Duncan Buchan (1939-1994) was born in Aberdeen where he also grew up and had his schooling. He entered the University of Aberdeen in 1956 and graduated with an honours MA degree in English Language and Literature in 1960. He received the degree of PhD in 1965, having begun his academic teaching career in Canada (1961-1963, 1964-1965).

After a spell as assistant professor of English at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst (1965-1968), he returned to Scotland to a Lectureship (1968-1971) and later a Senior Lectureship (1971-1979) at the University of Stirling, where he devised and organised an innovative and popular 'English Studies with Folklore Studies' degree programme, before being appointed to a professorship (1979-1994) in the Department of Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland, where he also served as Head of Department from 1979-1985. He was the natural choice by the University of Aberdeen for its newly created Chair in Scottish Ethnology, but sadly died of cancer in 1994 before he could return to his home town and alma mater.

Although a general folklorist with an interest in a wide range of fields within the discipline, he devoted most of his scholarly activities to the study of traditional ballads, especially those of the Scottish North-East. In 1972, he published his book *The Ballad and the Folk*, a much revised version of his PhD thesis of 1965. In it he followed what he regarded as 'the groundbreaking studies of Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord' in their fieldwork among Yugoslav 'singers of tales', which gave him an opportunity to combine a structural approach with an emphasis on the social context and the creative performance of individual singers. At the time of his death, his research into the so-called 'Glenbuchat Ballads' was incomplete. It is hoped that his collected papers, as gathered from a variety of sources will also be published in the near future.



Glenbuchat Ballad Manuscript of 'Baby Livingston'
University of Aberdeen



James Moreira

Photograph by Valentina Bold

Canadian folklorist, James Moreira, earned his MA and PhD degrees at Memorial University in St John's, Newfoundland, where he concentrated on studies in folk song and balladry. At Memorial, he was especially drawn to David Buchan's work on orality and literacy, and his theses (both of them supervised by David) examined the impact of literate culture on folk song. In addition to his work on Scottish balladry, Moreira has done extensive research on Norwegian ballads and on the song traditions of the Maritime Provinces of Canada and northern New England. Between 1987 and 1991, he collected nearly 100 songs from Nova Scotian singer Fred Redden, and released a CD of the recordings in 1999. He is currently the Director of the Maine Folklife Center and teaches folklore at the University of Maine, Orono.

From the Director



2006 was undoubtedly our busiest year to date and the main reason for this was due to the hosting, together with our partner Scottish Culture and Traditions (SCaT), of the second North Atlantic Fiddle Convention in Aberdeen from 26 to 30 July. The event was a great success – being the largest of its kind in the UK and certainly the largest we have ever organised, with concerts in all the main city-centre venues as well as at Haddo and Woodend. With 100 workshops and parallel academic conference, scholars, fiddlers and visitors came from all over the world, and we achieved outstanding visitor numbers of 13,111. Finally, with all the bills paid and the last of the funding bodies' final payments released, I can safely report that out of a balance sheet of almost £100,000, we actually finished in the black – but only just! The next NAFCo event will be in Newfoundland, 3-7 August 2008 (new dates) with a possible return to Aberdeen in 2010. I have been closely involved in the planning for 2008 as consultant for the St John's team, which is led by Professor Anna Kearney Guigne of Memorial University.

Although 2007 will be a little quieter, there is still much happening, notably our celebration of the culture and tradition of Scottish Travellers at the end of March, and the Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie in July. In addition, there are three other significant and separate events – two conferences and a convention.

Two of our research postgraduates, Sara Reith and Frances Wilkins are organising the Third National Graduate Conference in Folklore and Ethnology, 23-25 March 2007, in Aberdeen on behalf of the Institute. Several papers have been proposed and the keynote speaker will be Dr Margaret Bennett.

Another conference to be hosted by the Institute is the 37th Annual Ballad Conference of the *Kommission für Volksdichtung*, convened by Tom McKean, which will be held in the Balmacara Hotel overlooking Loch Alsh and the Isle of Skye, 29 August to 3 September 2007. The conference theme is 'Voicing Subcultures: Songs of People on the Move'.

The third event is the second Free Reed Convention, 'Button Boxes and Moothies', 26-28 October 2007, which will celebrate the vibrant traditions of playing such instruments as mouth organs, concertinas, melodeons, and button boxes. Further details will be available soon.

And don't forget the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute Ceilidh on 27 April 2007, 8.00-12.00pm in the Elphinstone Hall, dancing to music from Reel Din.

Finally, in the past six months, the Institute has delivered a number of ethnology and oral history training days. Tom and I ran an all-day workshop at the Highland Folk Park in Newtonmore at the request of the Cairngorms National Park, with participation from the Laggan Heritage Society, Badenoch and Strathspey Local History Society, the Highland Folk Museum at Kingussie, and Am Baile. Tom has also talked on recording, ethics and digitization for the Formartine Project (a community-based oral history initiative coordinated by our own Fiona-Jane Brown), for North East Coastal-Heritage, based in Stonehaven, and for the Aberdeen & Region Oral History Association conference in Fraserburgh. Anyone interested in arranging a training workshop should contact me.

Welcome to Visiting American Anthropologist

The Elphinstone Institute is delighted to welcome leading American Anthropologist, Professor Jane Nadel-Klein, an expert in fisherfolk and fishing communities of North-East Scotland. Chair of the Anthropology department at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, Professor Nadel-Klein received her BA in Anthropology from Barnard College and her PhD from the City University of New York. She has been teaching at Trinity College since 1987, and has published articles in a number of professional journals and edited collections.

Her research interests include the impact of the oil industry on both sides of the Atlantic; social stratification in English villages; the cultural construction of progress; and the impact of tourism and heritage projects on communal identity. It was the latter which brought her to research the Scottish fishing industry, firstly with contributions to the volume *To Work and To Weep*, published by Memorial University, Newfoundland – which looked at women's experience in fishing communities – and secondly with her own book, *Fishing for Heritage: Modernity and Loss along the Scottish Coast* (Berg, 2003), which focused on the former Angus fishing village of Ferryden. Her more recent scholarly interests have included the anthropology of gardening.

As part of the Elphinstone Lecture Series, Professor Nadel-Klein will be giving a talk entitled 'Looking Back on Fisherfolk', and describes its subject-matter as follows:

It has been over thirty years since I began research on Scottish fisherfolk. In that time, much has changed, both in the state of the fishing industry and in the discipline of social anthropology: in the former, 'perpetual crisis' continues, but a new generation is confronting it; in the latter we talk less about community and more about multi-sited research. In this talk, I will reflect on how my book, *Fishing for Heritage*, addressed these changes and how my own commitments as an ethnographer were transformed in writing it.

The lecture will begin at 7.30pm on Tuesday 27 March in New Kings, room NK1.

Trawler Radio Gospel Singing

Singing psalms and hymns at sea has been part of the culture of North-East fishermen since the start of commercial fishing in the 1700s. During the twentieth century the introduction of the ship's radio gave an impetus for Gospel singers to transmit their music much farther afield. Fishing families would commonly own a trawler band radio, and those on other boats and on land would tune in to listen. The singing usually took place in the evenings when the nets had been shot, and during times of bad weather when there was no work to do.

Jim Mair (1905-1962), a fisherman from Peterhead, was possibly the best known of these singers. In the evenings, he would sit in the wheelhouse and sing for hours over the radio, unaccompanied, as a form of musical ministry to those who had tuned in to hear. Hundreds of people would listen in to him, with requests and appreciative comments coming from other ships' crews following each hymn.

Other well-known radio singers include William Whyte (both senior and junior), of Fraserburgh. Dod Wood, one time leader of the Peterhead Fishermen's Choir, had the idea to take his portable harmonium to sea, transmitting on the radio in the form of a 'request programme'. In the latter half of the twentieth century, with declining interest in religion, the singing of hymns at sea had become the domain of the older generation of fisherfolk. The whole form of musical communication over the trawler band came to a halt some time during the 1960s as the authorities became aware of the activity and discouraged its use as non-essential.



Frances Wilkins

Jim Mair Singing over the Trawler Radio
Photograph from John Mair

The Singing Continues at Cullerlie

We are pleased to announce that Anne Reid's daughter Tracey and husband Eric Walker, with their children, Paul and Sarah, have taken over Cullerlie Farm Park and plan to run it along much the same lines as before. One of the first commitments they made was to offer to host the Traditional Singing Weekend in 2007 on 20-22 July, and to assure us that the festival has a future home. The family's unique tradition of singing is in safe hands with Sarah, who is a delightful singer with a growing reputation.

As far as possible, it is intended to run the weekend along the same lines as that which had been planned for last year, unfortunately cancelled because of Anne's untimely death. The Traditional Singing Weekend will be a very special celebration in memory of Tom and Anne Reid in the company of some great singers.

Our Irish contingent includes two fine stylists with strong commanding voices – one from the country and the other from the town. Grace Toland was born and raised at Clonmany, Inishowen, where she learnt most of her songs from the older singers; Jerry O'Reilly is from a Dublin singing family and is noted for his declamatory ballad style. Our guests from England are Brian Dawson, a favourite singer from Lincolnshire, who will be giving an illustrated talk on Percy Grainger's folk song collecting. He will be joined by Bella Hardy, from Edale in the Derbyshire Peak District, who was a finalist in the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Awards for 2005.



Tracey and Eric Walker, with Paul and Sarah at Cullerlie

Our Scottish guests include Billy Jolly from Orkney, Janet Weatherston from Dalkeith, and Carole and Alan Prior originally from Edinburgh. Three fine North-East singers complete the bill – Geordie Murison from Stonehaven, and Grace Banks and Graham White from Aberdeen.

Part of the weekend experience is learning about and enjoying the local craft traditions. This year is no exception and we are featuring three excellent examples – 'Fisher Knitting' with Edith Rattray, 'New Pitsligo Lace' with Annie McWilliam, and 'Blacksmithing' with John Findlater.

If you are planning to join us down on the farm, please book early as we always sell out. Write to: The Traditional Singing Weekend, Cullerlie Farm Park, Echt, Skene, Aberdeenshire AB32 6XL (telephone enquiries: 01224 645486 or 01224 272996).

Peter Milne Remembered

In my last article for the newsletter back in the autumn I closed by suggesting that my next endeavour should be to arrange for a suitable memorial to be erected at the last resting place of Peter Milne. Because he lies along with the bodies of hundreds of Aberdeen's poorest, no stone marks the grave of one of Scotland's greatest traditional fiddlers and composers.

Shortly after writing that article, I sounded out the Aberdeen and North East Branch of the Saltire Society as to whether erecting a memorial to Peter Milne might be a project which they would consider. They offered their support for this very worthy cause, but regretted that they didn't have the necessary finances to fund the erection of a suitable stone. I decided therefore to take the bull by the horns and do it myself.

My first stop was Robertson Memorials in Tarland to get a quote for a granite stone. Gregor Robertson, who is very experienced at this type of work, was extremely helpful and also donated his time and work on the lettering for free. In addition, he made contact with the appropriate authorities and was given permission to erect a memorial at Peter's graveside.

The next step was raising the money, so a fundraising concert was duly held in the MacRobert Hall, Tarland, on 9 December 2006. It was a sell out and exceeded all expectations. Performing that night was a host of the North-East's finest – compère Jim Taylor, singers Shona Donaldson, Geordie Murison, and Joe Aitken, the Banchory Strathspey and Reel Society, and myself on the fiddle.

The unveiling of the stone is now set for Sunday 11 March 2007 in Nellfield cemetery at 4.00 pm, the ninety-ninth anniversary of Peter Milne's death. The stone will be unveiled by Angus Farquharson, the Lord Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire, and the ceremony is open to all. I hope to see many people there to remember this remarkable Scottish musical genius. It's been a long time coming.



The Unveiling of the Peter Milne Memorial in Tarland, 20 February 1932 [credit unknown]

J. B. Anderson (Headmaster, Logie Coldstone), Alex Innes (Souter, Tarland), Lady Aberdeen, Sir Malcolm Barclay-Harvie MP, Lord Aberdeen, [unidentified], Pipe Major Meldrum, Rev. W. Marshall Low (Tarland)

Paul Anderson

The Third 'Boorach and a Barrie Nicht'

Following the success of the previous two years, we are pleased to be hosting another 'Boorach and a Barrie Nicht' in celebration of the distinctive culture and traditions of Scottish Travellers. This year's event will be held on Friday 30 March and will take place in Marischal College. The day from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm will include talks, workshops and demonstrations from a number of well-known contributors and will be followed by an evening of traditional music, song, and storytelling from 7.00 to 10.00 pm.

Guests confirmed to date include Stanley Robertson of Aberdeen (storyteller, ballad singer and author), Sheila Stewart of Blairgowrie (traditional singer, storyteller and author), Elizabeth Stewart of Mintlaw (a fine North-East piano player and singer), Jess Smith from Crieff (writer, storyteller, and singer), Robert Knight of Aberdeen (singer and song writer), Elaine Taylor of Inverurie (reading the future), and Isabella McPhee (Travellers and Schooling). There will also be an opportunity to talk to the artists and buy signed copies of their recent work.

Registration for the day is free of charge, but must be booked in advance through the Elphinstone Institute, where tickets for the 'Barrie Nicht' can also be purchased, priced £4.00 (£3.00 concession). Registration forms and a finalised programme are available on our website <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/>.



Stanley Robertson and his grandson Simon at the 'Boorach' in 2006

Who's Who at the Elphinstone

Dr Ian Russell, Director, *Ethnology, 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 Thomas A. McKean, Deputy Director, Archives and Research, *ethnology, ballads, beliefs, Gaelic tradition, preparing a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection*

Dr Julia C. Bishop, NEH & BAc Research Fellow, *preparing a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*

Dr David Atkinson, NEH & BAc Research Fellow, *preparing a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*

Dr Elaine Bradtke, BAc Research Fellow, *preparing a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*

Dr Eddie Cass, NEH & BAc Research Fellow, *preparing a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*

Paul Anderson, AHRC Research Fellow in the Creative and Performing Arts, *Reconnecting today's Scottish traditional musicians with Scotland's North-East traditional fiddle styles and repertoires*

Fiona-Jane Brown, PhD student, *researching Belief in East and West Coast Fishing Communities*

Adam Grydehoj, PhD student, *researching tradition and cultural promotion in Shetland*

Sara Reith, PhD student, George Reid Studentship, *researching Ethnology and Folklore of Scottish Travellers*

Shirley Ann Watson, PhD student, *researching Contemporary Interpretation of Battlefields in Scotland*

Frances Wilkins, PhD student, *researching Sacred Singing in Coastal Communities in N. & N.E. Scotland and the Northern Isles*

Stephen Ritchie, Co-ordinator of the Boaties Project

Alison Sharman, Secretary

Honorary Research Fellows

Dr Mary Anne Alburger, *music and song, fiddle making, 18th century culture*

Dr Caroline Macafee, *Scots Language, Scottish National Dictionary Association*

Professor Bill Nicolaisen, *ethnology, folk narrative, name studies, Scottish place names*

Research Associates

Sheena Blackhall, *Creative writing in Scots*

Dr Katherine Campbell, *Scots fiddle, instrumental and song traditions*

Evelyn Hood, *Scottish traditions of dance*

Dr David Northcroft, *Education in the North East*

Stanley Robertson, *Scottish Travellers*

Les Wheeler, *Scots language, education*

Postscript

If you have any information, comments or suggestions of relevance to the work of the Institute, do not hesitate to contact us.

The Institute relies on outside financial support to make many of its activities possible. If you would like to help us in this way and/or become a Friend of the Elphinstone Institute, please contact the Secretary.

IMPORTANT DATES for your DIARY

Public Lectures

Tuesdays, 7.30-9.00pm

Admission £2.00 includes refreshments

New Kings 1, King's College, University of Aberdeen

30 January 2007

Title: 'Putting the Dirt Back In: Percussive Step Dancing in Scotland since 1990'

Speaker: Mats Melin

Institution: Irish World Music Centre, University of Limerick

27 February 2007

Title: 'The Concert Party Tradition of North-East Scotland: Understanding the Experience of Vernacular Performance'

Speaker: Dr Ian Russell, with Dr Tom McKean

Institution: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen

27 March 2007

Title: 'Looking Back on Fisherfolk'

Speaker: Professor Jane Nadel-Klein

Institution: Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut

17 April 2007

Title: 'From Westminster to Nashville: The Unlikely Journey of the Psalms'

Speakers: Rev. Dr Robin Hill & Very Rev. Colin Williamson

Institution: Independent Scholars

29 May 2007

Title: 'Niel Gow's Lament for the Death of his 2nd Wife': The Changing Performance Style of Slow Airs since the Early Nineteenth Century'

Speaker: Iain Fraser

Institution: Scottish Borders Council Education Department

Other Events

23-25 March 2007

Graduate Conference in Folklore and Ethnology, Elphinstone Institute, MacRobert Building, King's College

30 March 2007

Travellers' Celebration Day – 'A Boorach and a Barrie Nicht', Marischal College, Aberdeen

27 April 2007

Ceildh, hosted by the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute, Elphinstone Hall, King's College

20-22 July 2007

Traditional Singing Weekend, Cullerlie Farm Park, Echt

29 August – 3 September 2007

Ballad Conference, Balmacara, Kyle of Lochalsh, hosted by Elphinstone Institute

26-27 October 2007

Button Boxes and Moothies, venues to be confirmed

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