

Dr Ian Russell, Director, *Ethnology, oral traditions, including singing, music-making, drama and speech*

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 Colin Milton, Associate Director, Hon., *Scottish literature and folklore, especially of the North East*

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

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

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

Pat Ballantyne, PhD student, *researching Scottish step dance traditions*

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

Les Donaldson, PhD student, *researching the Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen*

Jennifer Fagen, PhD student, *researching the landscape of the Garioch*

Adam Grydehøj, PhD student, *researching Tradition and Cultural Promotion on Shetland*

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

Irene Watt, PhD student, *researching lullabies*

Frances Wilkins, PhD student, *researching Sacred Singing in Coastal Communities in North and North-East Scotland and the Northern Isles*

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

Paul Anderson, *North-East fiddle styles and repertoires*

Sheena Blackhall, *Creative writing in Scots*

Dr Elaine Bradtke, *Preparing a critical edition of the J. M. Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama*

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, *MUniv., Song, narrative and Scottish Traveller traditions*

Dr Robert Young Walsler, *Maritime musical traditions, the J. M. Carpenter Collection research team*

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.

Hector MacAndrew, Legend of the Scots Fiddle

Hector MacAndrew was the doyen of not just North-East, but Scots fiddlers at large. I have yet to meet a notable Scots fiddler who did not hold Hector in the highest regard. Even the great maestro Sir Yehudi Menuhin was moved by his encounter with Hector: 'To me of course, he was the voice of Scotland. When I met this man and heard him play, I knew I was in the presence of Scottish history.'

We are therefore delighted to announce that, in partnership with Greentrax Recordings, a new album of Hector MacAndrew, performing at his own fireside, is in production. The music comes from original reel-to-reel recordings in the possession of Pat MacAndrew and Florence Lowie and, despite initial doubts as to whether the tapes were even playable, it is a treasure trove of Scottish traditional music. In all, there are around twelve hours of music, which also includes Hector playing classical material with great skill. There could be a whole series of albums gleaned from these recordings, but for now I am content that sixteen tracks of previously unheard performances will be available to the public. Hector's playing is of an older Scots style seldom heard nowadays; the modern generation of Scottish fiddlers would do well to study it. Pat MacAndrew and I selected the tracks and though we had to make sure that the album was well balanced, we could easily have had an album's worth of slow airs alone.

It has been an honour to bring this project to fruition and I would particularly like to thank Pat MacAndrew and Florence Lowie, along with Ian Green of Greentrax, without whom this album would not have been possible. As a lover of Scottish music, culture and history this has been one of the most rewarding projects of my musical career.

Paul Anderson

The album launch will take place at 7.30 pm in the James Mackay Hall, King's College (beside the Chapel) on Monday 9 March 2009, and will include a talk by Pat MacAndrew and short recitals by Douglas Lawrence and Paul Anderson.

Ballad Bus: 'The Back o Bennachie'

Saturday 26 September 2009, 10 am – 5 pm. The bus will circumnavigate Bennachie, via Monymusk, Keig and Inch, giving us a chance to hear songs of the Garioch and maybe see a few of the outstanding neolithic sites in the area. As usual, we'll sing songs related to the places we go and feature some well known local singers and our famous Singing Passengers. Contact the Institute for details.

Friends of the Elphinstone Institute Ceilidh

Friday 30 October 2009,
8 pm – 12 midnight
Elphinstone Hall, King's College
Music by the fabulous **Rolling Stovies**
Tickets £9/7

Open Evening

Thursday 12 November, 5 – 9 pm
The Open Evening is a chance to meet the staff and students and see the results of some of our projects. We'll have refreshments and an hour of songs, stories and music from **Stanley Robertson** and Friends, 7–8 pm.

IMPORTANT DATES for your DIARY

Public Lectures
Tuesdays at 7.30–9.00pm
Admission £3.00 includes refreshments
Room MR028 (CPD Suite/James Scotland Room)

24th February 2009

Title: Aspects of the Gaelic Song Tradition of Cape Breton Island and Eastern Nova Scotia
Speaker: Robert Dunbar
Institution: University of Aberdeen

31st March 2009

Title: Journeys through Local Landscapes: Exploring the Bennachie Colony
Speaker: Jennifer Fagen, PhD Researcher
Institution: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen

28th April 2009

Title: North-East Scotland and Russia
Speaker: Emeritus Professor Paul Dukes
Institution: University of Aberdeen

26th May 2009

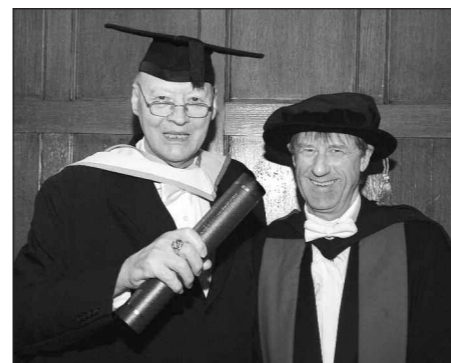
Title: Roots and Custody of North-East Bothy Ballads
Speaker: Charlie Allan
Institution: Retired farmer/broadcaster/lecturer/writer/performer

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

Stanley Robertson, Master of the University

On 27 November last year, an enthusiastic party of family and friends saw the investiture of Stanley Robertson with the honorary degree Master of the University, in recognition of his diverse achievements as a writer, storyteller and singer, passing on and fostering traditions of the Travelling people. The Institute is very proud of its association with Stanley over a number of years and we continue to benefit from his unrivalled knowledge, abilities and talents. Professor Tim Ingold delivered the Laureation address:

Stanley Robertson is a phenomenon, one that is much, much larger than the man you see before you. It is a phenomenon that wells up from the ground of the North-East of Scotland in which he was born and raised, and carries forth the lives, the dreams and the sufferings of generations of his people, the Scottish Travellers. In his ballad singing and storytelling, in speech and song, his voice reverberates with the voices of centuries of predecessors. Yet thanks to his performances, his writing, his educational work and his presence on an international stage, this chorus of voices – the voices of Scotland's Travelling People – have been gathered together and heard in places that earlier generations could never have imagined. They have been broadcast on radio and television, written in books and



Stanley Robertson, MUniv., with Professor Tim Ingold. Photos: Kate Sutherland.



Stanley Robertson, MUniv., with granddaughter Samantha, son Robert, daughters Gabrielle and Nicole, and wife Johann.

articles, recorded on CDs, and even analysed in doctoral dissertations. Stanley Robertson the phenomenon resounds around the globe; Stanley Robertson the man is with us here in Aberdeen: it is because of the singular unity of the phenomenon and the man that we honour him today. He has been a cultural ambassador of distinction for his people, for Aberdeen, and for Scotland in the world.

To complement Stanley Robertson's double CD of ballads and songs now in preparation, we are pleased to announce a six-track DVD of Stanley singing at The Blue Lamp in Aberdeen, recorded as part of the 'Jeannie's Legacy' film project. The disc, filmed by director Mark van Hugten and a crew from Pigeon Media, with the help of the Blue Lamp's Sandy Brown, captures the essence and expressiveness

of Stanley's stage presence. Through his unique approach to singing, Stanley's ballads communicate the heartfelt emotional content of local stories, such as 'The Lady of the Drum' or the tragedy of the ancient 'King's Sister', with a directness and intensity that has captivated audiences everywhere. On-stage, Stanley Robertson honours a long line of renowned Traveller singers such as his aunt, Jeannie Robertson, and the richness of the North-East singing tradition, which he sees as the inheritance of all members of the community. The DVD features some previously unrecorded material and offers a valuable visual accompaniment to the forthcoming audio CDs. Both publications will be available through the Institute.

Tom McKean and Sara Reith



From the (Deputy) Director

As Ian is away on research leave for six months, working on a book on North-East vernacular performance, I've taken over this column for now. Let's start off by congratulating our colleague and friend Stanley Robertson on his Master of the University degree awarded in November 2008. As if that weren't enough, Friends' chairwoman, Jenny Shirreffs has been awarded the MBE for services to the community in the New Year's Honours. Well done and well deserved, Deputy Lieutenant Jenny.

This term sees our MLitt post-graduates gearing up for their dissertation fieldwork

(remember the batteries, microphone, etc.). Last year's transatlantic students finished their dissertations: Jay Winogron gained an MLitt with Distinction for 'The Disappearance of Rural Family Landscape: Reminiscence of Community in Northern Scotland' and Dan Melnick the MLitt for 'Scotch Whisky: Mythos and Phenomena'. It is always inspiring to see students' hard work reaching fruition in such accessible, well-written and informative dissertations (available for consultation at the Institute). We welcome a new PhD student, Pat Ballantyne, and can report that our other PhD students continue their enthusiastic work (see below).

We are pleased to say that the Boaties project to go ahead again in 2009, details will be

confirmed and announced in the next few months.

In January, a group of Elphinstone allies wowed their listeners at the University Music Department's lunchbreak concert series in the Cowdray Hall; Sara Reith (tin whistle), Frances Wilkins (concertina), Martin Macdonald (guitar) and Ian Russell (songs) played a vibrant set of traditional music and song to an enthusiastic audience.

Lastly, don't forget our series of lectures, the Friends' ballad bus, and the Open Evening, during which we'll have some refreshments, chat and entertainment from Stanley Robertson, MUniv., and Friends.

Oh yes, and wish me luck.

Tom McKean

Student News



Pat Ballantyne has just joined the Institute as a PhD student researching the Scottish step dance revival. Pat writes: Step dance is a percussive form of dance which appears to have roots in dance steps performed in the eighteenth-century Highlands of Scotland. Although it went with Highlanders to many parts of the world, it was preserved and embellished particularly in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, along with music and the Gaelic language.

I have been involved with Scottish traditional dance and music for most of my life and have taught dance and piano for longer than I care to remember. Researching and creating the website *The Music of James Scott Skinner* for Aberdeen University's Special Libraries was such an enjoyable experience that I couldn't stop there. I have since visited Cape Breton Island on a couple of occasions to enhance my step dance skills and interview some superb dancers.

In the early 1990s, the step dance 'revival' started in Scotland when the Cape Bretoner Harvey Beaton visited Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic College in Skye, to teach dance on a summer short course programme. I plan to examine what has happened to this 'revival' by looking at how step dance has been and is currently learned in Cape Breton and comparing that with how it is perceived in Scotland.

Jen Fagen has been awarded a scholarship by the Bailies of Bennachie to research the nineteenth-century Bennachie crofting colonies, leading up to the 2009 Bennachie Homecoming Festival, 5-9 August (contact Jen on r05jf6@abdn.ac.uk for more details). She also achieved blanket media coverage for her project, with features on STV News, BBC Radio Scotland and Radio 5, Northsound, and Original FM, as well as in the *Glasgow Herald*, *Press and Journal*, and the *Evening Express*. Jen will give a talk on her studies on Tuesday 31 March as part of our lecture series.

Irene Watt, working on a dissertation on the power of lullaby, has begun several interesting initiatives bringing parent-child singing traditions back to life, in collaboration with health care services, and two mother and baby groups. Irene will teach a few traditional lullabies and give a short talk about some of the benefits of lullaby singing. Some of the mums will also be interviewed about their experiences and feelings, as well as their babies' reactions.

Last Autumn, with musician and dance caller Lorna Maclaren, and Sandra Morrison of the National Trust, Irene researched and coordinated 'Keek Back Syne Haud Gan', a local heritage project involving Barthol Chapel, Tarves, Methlick and Fyvie primary schools.

Another related project, also with the National Trust, will showcase stories and songs about 'Strong Women' in tradition. The project culminates in a concert at Fyvie Castle in July.

Hidden Sairs: for John Reid/ David Toulmin (1913-1998)

Ae day a loon on a fairm plunked skweel.
Thon day he learned these lessons:
That life wis wersh,
That the makie-on o bairnhood
Wis a fause bield.
That atween hissle an his faither
Lay a gulf as braid's an ocean.

The puppet show he vrocht
Wis a nochtie ferlie,
Whigmaleerie o shadda an paper
That the storm o his faither's rooze
Could blooter wi ae neive.

A loon, fa wad be a writer,
Booed in the peetiless rain
Tae hyew the neeps,
Blawn seed in a lane rig.

He grew, a chiel amang us
In the hard sheenin corn o the cauld Nor East
An aa the whyles
His harns spun gowd frae strae

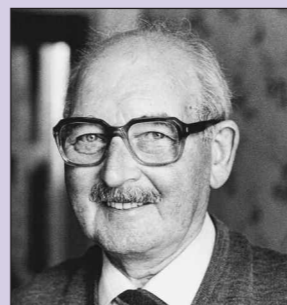
Briered in a roch airt
An ilkie year o warssle a hidden sair
The Clyack Shaif wis his,
Sprung frae a late hairst,
Lang in the growin,
Sweet in the gaiterin in.

Sheena Blackhall

David Toulmin Short Story Competition Returns

The 2009 Toulmin Short Story Competition, with a prize of £500 to the winner, has a closing date of 31 March 2009. Launched in 2008, with the ongoing help of an anonymous benefactor, the competition recognises John Reid/David Toulmin's contribution to written Doric. The award will be made, and the story read aloud, on Saturday 16 May, as part of the 2009 WORD Festival at the University of Aberdeen, 13-17 May. The winning entry will also be published in the *Leopard Magazine*.

John Reid (1913-1998) was an Aberdeenshire farm labourer, who spent most of his life working long hours for very small rewards. In odd moments he jotted down short stories, character studies, and both tales. Eventually, as David Toulmin, he had articles printed in local newspapers and the first of his ten books published when he was 59-years-old. For submissions, eligibility criteria and further information on the competition, contact the Institute.



Burns and Songmaking at Cullerlie's Homecoming Celebration

This year of Homecoming sees the Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie celebrating the songs of Robert Burns. The festival, at Cullerlie Farm Park, 24-26 July, includes among its guests two wonderful interpreters of Burns's songs, Gordeanna McCulloch and Christine Kydd. On Saturday Adam McNaughtan will give a talk on the bard and his gift as a song lyricist, illustrated with performances from Gordeanna McCulloch. On Sunday there will be a workshop on the performance of Burns's songs led by Christine Kydd, a distant relative of the poet himself.

The weekend will have contemporary as well as historical resonance through the inclusion of two outstanding songmakers who write in the traditional idiom. Con 'Fada' Ó Drisceoil from Cork has built up a great reputation for his humorous songs that combine his delight in words with hyperbole, an example of which is 'The Spoons Murder'. The popularity of Adam McNaughtan's 'The Yellow on the Broom', synonymous with the view of Traveller life encapsulated in Betsy Whyte's fine books, demonstrates just how its Glaswegian writer is in tune with the vernacular tongue. There is also a delightful synergy in that both song writers target their muse on Shakespearean tragedies, the one on *King Lear*, the other on *Macbeth*.



Singers at Cullerlie 2008: Jim Taylor, Shona Donaldson, Jimmy Hutchison, Sheila Stewart, Sam Lee, Jess Smith, Bill Gray, Viv Legg, Oliver Mulligan, Rosie Stewart, Ian Russell, Danny Couper (seated). Photo: Sara Reith

Songs in Gaelic and Irish will also feature, performed respectively by James Graham of Lochinver, Sutherland, who was BBC Scotland's Young Traditional Musician of the Year in 2004, and Alana Henderson, a gifted young singer from Belfast, who specialises in her native Ulster songs. Two exceptional English singers will be at the festival: Roger Hinchliffe, who farms in Lodge Moor near Sheffield, and Ken Hall, a Liverpoolian who champions traditional singing at his club in London. The line-up is completed by two of the North-East's

finest, Hector Riddell, winner of the 2009 Elgin Bothy Ballad Championship, whose background lies in the farming community of Leochel Cushnie, near Alford, and Irene Watt originally from Gamrie on the Moray coast, whose folk were of fisher stock.

In addition, a number of crafts are featured during the weekend including straw work from Elaine Lindsay, farmhouse cooking from Shirley Foulkes, threshing from Albert Calder, and exploring old agricultural implements from the farm museum with Eric Walker.

Ian Russell

Homecoming Conference in Aberdeen: 'Your North-East'

The Institute is hosting a day of illustrated talks about our distinctive region on Monday 20 July 2009. The day, hosted by Dr Ian Russell, will introduce visitors to aerial archaeological surveying, tower houses, castles and their interiors, heraldry, tartan, North-Easters abroad and the North-East song and fiddle traditions, and will include lunch and refreshments. Immediately following the conference, Aberdeen's 'Blue Badge' tourist guides will offer a short walking tour of Old Aberdeen to discover the hidden secrets of this historic part of the city, including King's College Chapel, with its stunning medieval woodcarving.

For many tourists, the *Year of Homecoming* will provide an



opportunity to visit ancestral homelands, discovering and reinforcing ties of kinship. The Aberdeen City and Shire Homecoming Partnership have therefore planned the 'North-East Clan Fortnight', 18 July-3 August, to complement Edinburgh's 'Gathering'. The event kicks off with a warm welcome at the National Trust for Scotland's Clan Ball at Haddo House on 18 July, or the ecumenical

Homecoming service at St Machar's Cathedral on 19 July. We hope to see you there. For more information and booking details for these events, see 'Your North-East' at www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone.

Andrew Hill