

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

‘Second Sight and Prophecy’ Conference in Aberdeen, 14–16 June 2013

This June, the Institute and the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy co-host an interdisciplinary conference on ‘Second Sight and Prophecy’, which will welcome participants from a range of academic disciplines including history, folklore, anthropology, divinity and sociology. The event is sponsored by the Folklore Society.

The future has always held a fascination especially in times of trouble and the subject is particularly worthy of academic discussion in the light of rapidly changing global contexts. Delegates will examine why divining the future has been and continues to be so important for humankind and they will explore the widely varying methods used by different cultures, both now and in the past. The role in culture of seers and prophets, by whatever name they are known, and the use of rituals, drugs and sacred sites will be investigated as well. The conference has attracted papers from across the globe on topics including biblical prophecy, politics and



The Brahan Seer by woodcarver Allister Brebner in the grounds of Strathpeffer Spa Pavilion. Photo by Mary Simpson, Simpson Visuals (www.simpsonvisuals.com)

prophecy, literature, poetry, art, drugs, shamanism, dreams, visions, oracles, and divination.

We are pleased to welcome Emeritus Professor Michael Hunter of Birkbeck, University of London, as our keynote speaker. His book, *The Occult Laboratory: Magic, Science and Second Sight in Late Seventeenth-Century Scotland*, showed that members of the Royal Society, including Robert Boyle, took a keen interest in the phenomenon. The conference convenor is Dr Alex Sutherland whose book *The Brahan Seer: The Making of a Legend* was shortlisted for the Folklore Society’s Katharine Briggs Award in 2010.

The weekend will include an art exhibition by Nicola Moss and museum artefacts will be on show. In addition, pre- and post-conference tours of interesting sites in and around Aberdeen will be offered.

The conference will be held 14–16 June at the Elphinstone Institute, MacRobert Building. Visit www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone for more information.

Alex Sutherland

The Elphinstone Institute Fiddle Bus, 21 September 2013



Paul Anderson with Gregor Borland and Douglas Lawrence
Photo courtesy Paul Anderson

2013 marks the 170th anniversary of the birth of one of the North-East of Scotland’s most famous sons, James Scott Skinner, ‘the Strathspey King’. Skinner was a legend in his own lifetime and he remains an iconic figure not just in his native Scotland but to the

traditional and Celtic music world at large. To celebrate this notable occasion, the Elphinstone Institute will this year be running a ‘fiddle bus’ on Saturday 21 September, instead of the annual ‘ballad bus’.

The successful format remains but, instead of visiting the sites associated with songs and ballads, the outing will visit places associated with some of the famous tunes and composers of the North-East. Of course, there’ll still be plenty of opportunity to sing along the way.

Before leaving Aberdeen we’ll visit the graves of James Scott Skinner at Allanvale Cemetery and Peter Milne ‘the Tarland Minstrel’ at the Nellfield cemetery on Great Western Road. Following that it’ll be up Deeside via the old ‘Mill o’ Hirm’ and then on to Banchory where we’ll have lunch in one of the town’s well-known hotels. After lunch it’s on to Tarland and Ballater before crossing over to Strathdon via Glengairn to hear about Alexander Walker, gardener and fiddler to the Forbeses of Newe. There will be a short photo stop at Huntly Castle, where we’ll hear about William Marshall, followed by the drive home to Aberdeen via the Glens o Foudland.

Music featured will include ‘The Bonnie Lass o’ Bon Accord’ and ‘The Miller o’ Hirm’ by James Scott Skinner, ‘The Muir o’ Gellan’ and ‘John MacNeil’ by Peter Milne, ‘Sir Charles Forbes of Newe’ by Alexander Walker, ‘The Reel o’ Tulloch’, ‘The Main’s o’ Gartly’ and ‘The Marquis of Huntly’s Farewell’ and ‘The Marquis of Huntly’ by William Marshall. There’ll be many more tunes besides and it’s going to be a great day. I look forward to seeing you there.

Paul Anderson



From the Director

I am pleased to announce that the Toulmin Prize for short story writing will be running

again this year with a prize of £500 for the winning entry. The prize, which commemorates the work of the celebrated North-East writer, David Toulmin, aims to encourage creative writing. A short story of up to 4,000 words should be submitted to the Institute by 31 March, marked 'Toulmin Prize'. Each submission must be made in hard copy as an A4 typescript and as an electronic file in MS Word. The story should be concerned with some aspect of life in North-East Scotland, and may be written in Scots (including the Doric) or English, or a mixture of the two. The competition is open to all amateur writers over the age of 16 years. (NB For the purposes of the competition a professional writer is considered to be one who has had a solo work published with a recognised UK publisher or earns 51% of his/her income from writing.) The award will be made at the University's May Festival (12 May 2013), where the winning story will be read out by well-known writer, Sheena Blackhall. Once again the winning story will be published in *The Leopard* magazine. For further information about the competition, please contact Prof. Ian Russell at The Elphinstone Institute (the address is on page 4). To celebrate the centenary of the birth of David Toulmin, there will also be readings from his works, recollections from those who knew him, and video of the man himself, introduced by Paul Dukes, as part of the May Festival.

This semester we welcome two new PhD students to the Institute: Amy Hoff, who is investigating the interface of Scottish folklore and the media in the Western Isles; and Lorna Watson, who will be researching the role of heritage museums and memorial halls in fishing communities in the North-East.

In order to develop the brief of the Institute to research, record and promote the musical traditions of North and North-East Scotland and the Scottish diaspora, a part-time lectureship has been created in ethnomusicology and ethnology. An appointment has just been made and we are delighted to announce that the successful candidate is Dr Frances Wilkins. **Ian Russell**

Polish-Scottish Singing Workshops

We come from different backgrounds, but we all love to sing. Our fortnightly workshops include Canadians, Chinese, Germans, Poles, Scots and Swiss. This was a small group, initially, and then we had a large rotation of people, but now there are many of us who are devoted to this fantastic singing opportunity, including yours truly.

We sing Scottish and Polish songs while some play instruments, so each rendition is different every time, depending on who is present and which instruments are involved. Usually, Grace Banks starts us off with some warm-up exercises to prepare our muscles and bodies for singing; a newcomer might be shocked by the variety of funny noises we produce during warm-up, but that's what it's all about: a lot of fun! There is much laughter, joy and spontaneity.



Some of us try to adapt Scottish songs for singing in Polish. Recently there were Polish translations of 'Caledonia' and 'Jeannie Jenkins'. Our singing is based on equality: words in Polish songs are as difficult to pronounce for English-speaking singers as Scots words are for Poles.

The group also participate in other Elphinstone events, such as storytelling gatherings, in which we proudly participate as a singing group. On 27 January, we had a fantastic traditional Burns Night in the home of two of our members, Prof. Robert Frost and Dr Karin Friedrich. It was a great opportunity to practise some tunes including traditional Burns songs and some Polish songs and poems. We had also a great performance of the 'Address to a Haggis', from Rev. Emsley Nimmo. For some of us this was a first encounter with this important event in the Scottish calendar.

The workshops are free, and are held fortnightly on Sundays from 6:00–8:00pm in room 055 of the University's MacRobert Building. The next workshop will be on 17 March. All are very welcome.

Adam Tomasiewicz

Boaties Project Relunched!

From 2004 to 2010 a craft residency was held at Peterhead Maritime Heritage Museum to build 'boaties', which is a model-making skill that dates back at least 160 years in North-East Scotland. During this period, over forty apprentices of all ages, from teenagers to octogenarians, successfully learnt to build their own boat.

Sadly, when the museum closed, suitable alternative premises could not be found. However, following the refurbishment of the building as a part of Banff and Buchan College, and its re-opening as the Scottish Maritime Academy, the Boaties Building project has been welcomed back. This summer, between 5 July and 15 August, the project will be led by Alex James Stephen supported by other experienced volunteer craft workers. Alex was apprenticed as a ship's carpenter and built wooden boats for most of his working life. He was an adult apprentice in the 2004 residency and has built several model boats as a result. He is President of the Boddam Junior Yachting Club.



Boaties are based on the traditional Scottish fishing boat known as the 'fifie' and sail without rudder, motor, or remote control, depending on the skill of the maker/owner to trim the boat and set the sails to match the conditions. Sizes range from 1-foot-6 to 4 feet, but boats as large as 6 feet long have been made in the past.

The centre for hand manufacture is the Peterhead district, especially Boddam, where boaties are raced at the Den Dam on a Saturday in the summer, when the conditions are right. Here the boaties are sailed competitively in various classes. Some of the boaties go back many years, their hulls having been re-painted and re-fitted many times. Each boatie is named for and dedicated to a particular child from the community and, if it wins, that child receives a trophy and a small prize at the New Year's party in Boddam village hall.

It will be possible to visit the craft workshop in the Scottish Maritime Academy where there is also a café. Please phone the Institute for further details.

There will be a 'Sea Sangs and Saatie Tales' evening on Wednesday 24 July, part of Peterhead Scottish Week.

Alex James Stephen helping one of the junior apprentices, Michael Thain. Photo by Ian Russell

Cullerlie ‘An a’ That’

Sheena Wellington’s singing of ‘A Man’s A Man For a’ That’ at the opening ceremony of the Scottish Parliament on 1 July 1999 was by critical and popular acclaim the highlight of a very special day. We are delighted to announce that this year Sheena will be one of our guests at the Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie, 26–28 July. Born in Dundee into a family of singers and factory weavers, her repertoire covers everything from Burns to ballads, as well as the best of contemporary songwriting. A passionate and articulate advocate for traditional music, she has played a leading role in the fight for recognition, status and improved funding for Scotland’s traditional arts. Honours bestowed on her for her work include doctorates from the Universities of St Andrews and Dundee, and the RSAMD (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland). In November 2009 she was installed in the Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame joining such luminaries as Jimmy Shand, Aly Bain, the Corries and Sheila Stewart.

Irish tradition is well represented, particularly the singing of the border counties of Armagh in the north and Louth in the south. Patricia Flynn is from the village of

Mullaghbawn, an area steeped in the traditions of music, song, dance and storytelling. Patricia has been singing for many years, encouraged first by her mother, who is still singing at ninety years of age, and also by local singers and friends – Mick Quinn and Len Graham, both former Cullerlie guests. Stuart Carolan comes from Drogheda and follows in the footsteps of his grandmother, Mary Ann Carolan, who was a renowned performer of ballads and songs in the style and tradition of County Louth. Now gaining a fine reputation in his own right, we are delighted to welcome Stuart and give a platform to another generation of an exceptional singing family.

Our English guest is from a rural background. John Waltham grew up in Dorset to a background of farm workers’ songs and his grandmother’s songs and stories. Long hours on the tractor resulted in many big ballads joining local and comic songs in his repertoire, along with songs gleaned from older Dorset and Somerset singers. Giving up the farm was a wrench, but has left time to attend more singing events. There will be a second guest from England still to be confirmed – watch this space!

Scottish singing is also strongly featured through Aberdonian, Arthur Watson, Geordie Murison from Netherley near Stonehaven, Chris Miles from Kirkcaldy, Alastair Ogilvy from Strathblane, and Lucy Pringle from Clackmannanshire.

There will be the opportunity to take part in workshops, several of which are devoted to traditional crafts and games, including furniture crafts with Tom Ironside, dowsing with Alan Brownie, the game of quoits with Graeme Eddie of the Dunnotar Quoiting Club, and farmhouse cooking with Shirley Foulkes. Two other workshops relate to singing traditions – ‘Love Songs from Ulster’ with Patricia Flynn, and ‘Songs of Working Women’ from Sheena Wellington.

Arthur Watson, who has sung with the Gaugers and with Shephard, Spiers & Watson, will give a talk, ‘Learning from Traveller Singers’, about his encounters with traditional song. Arthur is an artist who draws on traditional culture in his sculpture and is currently Course Director for Fine Art at the University of Dundee and President of the Royal Scottish Academy.

For booking and further information see www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone

Ian Russell



Above images, from left to right: Sheena Wellington, Alistair Ogilvy, Arthur Watson, Lucy Pringle, Stuart Carolan

A Day of Song to Celebrate the Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection



Broadcaster and presenter
Frieda Morrison

‘A Day of Song’ features a series of workshops and a concert promoting the culture, language and heritage of North-East Scotland, tied in with the University’s May Festival, 10–12 May 2013. These inclusive hands-on workshops will be run by some of Scotland’s most experienced traditional singers, while the concert, compered by well-known broadcaster Frieda Morrison, will showcase a line-up of great singers and songs from the magnificent *Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, published jointly by the University of Aberdeen and the University of Edinburgh from materials held in the University of Aberdeen’s Special Collections.

In the morning, Katherine Campbell, a joint editor of the *Greig-Duncan Collection*, will present a talk on the collection, its contents and formation, while Frieda Morrison will present a session on ‘Language and the Land – North-East Scots in Song’, with sung examples by Aileen Carr and Scott Gardiner.

The afternoon will see a set of four workshops – ‘Ensemble Singing’ led by Christine Kydd, ‘Singing the Greig-Duncan: Learning Songs from the Collections’, led by Jo Miller, ‘Songwriting using Scots’, led by Bob Knight, and ‘Local Songs for Local Singers’, with Arthur Watson.

The evening concert will present a showcase of songs from the *Greig-Duncan*, hosted by Frieda Morrison and Sarah Beattie. This will feature Christine Kydd, Scott Gardiner, Janice Reavell, Elizabeth Stewart and Shona Donaldson.

Tom McKean

For further information, visit www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone

Who's Who at the Elphinstone

Prof. Ian Russell, Director, *ethnology, oral traditions, including singing, music-making, drama and speech*

Dr Thomas A. McKean, Deputy Director, *ethnology, archives, ballads, beliefs, Gaelic tradition, preparing a critical edition of the J.M. Carpenter Collection*

Dr Frances Wilkins, Lecturer (part-time), *ethnomusicology, ethnology, sacred singing in coastal communities, Scottish fiddle traditions in northern Canada*

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*

Richard Bennett, MLitt Res student, *researching a Speyside distillery community*

Kristin Borgehed, PhD Student, North Studentship, *researching an Ethnographic Study of Northern Cultural Performance*

Janet Byth, MLitt Res student, *researching schooling in the Fintry area of Aberdeenshire*

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

Ronnie Gibson, PhD student, *researching the relationships between contemporary and eighteenth-century fiddle traditions*

Amy Hoff, PhD student, *researching the use of folklore in Hebridean tourism*

Nicolas Le Bigre, PhD Student, Margaret Jones Studentship, *researching narratives of immigrant experience*

Roderick McKenzie, PhD student, *researching Scottish healing wells, their contemporary use and the implications for nursing practice*

Máire Ní Bhaoill, PhD student, *researching traditional singing among children in Ireland*

Sara Reith, PhD student, George Reid Studentship, *researching ethnology and folklore of Scottish Travellers*

Irene Watt, PhD student, *researching lullabies*

Lorna Watson, PhD student, *researching cultural identity and heritage in Moray fishing communities*

Carley Williams, PhD student, *researching the North-East's intangible cultural heritage in relation to UNESCO policies*

Sheila Young, PhD student, *researching women's pre-nuptial rituals in northern Scotland*

Alison Sharman, Secretary

Honorary Research Fellows

Dr Mary Anne Alburger, *music and song, fiddle making, eighteenth-century culture*

Dr Caroline Macafee, *Scots Language: history, dialectology, sociolinguistics and lexicography; 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*

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

Les Wheeler, *Scots language, education*

IMPORTANT DATES for your DIARY

17 March 2013

Polish/Scottish Traditional Singing Group

31 March 2013

Closing date for the Toulmin Prize

14 April 2013

Polish/Scottish Traditional Singing Group

5 May 2013

Polish/Scottish Singing Workshop

11 May 2013

'A Day of Song', celebrating the Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection

12 May 2013

Toulmin Prize celebration with readings

12 May 2013

Polish Literary Event

14-16 June 2013

'Second Sight and Prophecy' conference

5 July-15 August 2013

Boaties Project, Peterhead

24 July 2013

Sea Sings and Saatie Tales, Peterhead

26-28 July 2013

Cullerlie Traditional Singing Weekend

21 September 2013

Friends of the Elphinstone Institute Fiddle Bus

Public Lectures 2013

Tuesdays at 7.30-9.00pm Admission £3.00 includes refreshments
Room MR051, MacRobert Building, King's College, University of Aberdeen

26 March 2013

Title: 'Simple Heraldry, Cheerfully Illustrated'
Speaker: Gordon Casely
Institution: Elphinstone Institute

30 April 2013

Title: 'Crafts and Tradition' (TBC)
Speaker: Malcolm Smith
Institution: Durham University

28 May 2013

Title: 'The Present Time is Oors'
Speaker: Frieda Morrison
Institution: Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh

The Sixth Toulmin Prize Competition for short story writing, with a prize of £500 to the winner, is open for entries until 31 March 2012. This year sees the centenary of Toulmin's birth. The award will be made at the University's May Festival on 12 May 2013, where the winning story will be read out by well-known writer, Sheena Blackhall. See 'From the Director' (p. 2) for more details.

Elphinstone Institute Publications

Our publications, including books, CDs and DVDs, are now available at the University's on-line store. Point your browser to www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/publications, to purchase *The High-Kilted Muse*, *Crossing Over*, *The Elphinstone Collection*, Stanley Robertson's and Elizabeth Stewart's CDs and a range of other publications on fiddle traditions, songs and ballads, education, and more.

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.**