Traditions, including singing, music-making, and drama. Dr Thomas A. McKean, Carpenter Collection of traditional song and drama.

Dr Julie C. Bishop, NEH Research Fellow & team lead 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 Specialised dollmaking community.

Kristin Borgehed, MLitt Res student, researching traditional singing among children in Ireland.

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, Scottish fiddle traditions in northern Canada.

Dr Caroline Macafee, Scots Language: history, dialectology, sociolinguistics and lexicography; Scottish National Dictionary Association.

Professor Bill Nicolson, 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 Fiona 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 Donald Kerrish, Education in the North-East.

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

Lea Wheeler, Scots language, education.

The Toulmin Prize Competition for short story writing, with a prize of £500 to the winner, is open for entries until 31 March 2014. The prize commemorates the work of the celebrated North-East writer, David Toulmin and 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 (Standard or the Doric), English, or a mixture of the two. The competition is open to all amateur writers over the age of 16 years. (N.B. 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 5% of his income from writing.)

Elphinstone Institute Publications

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

IMPORTANT DATES for your DIARY

15 October, and 3 November 2013
Polish Scottish Traditional Singing Group

7 November 2013
Open night, 6-9pm, with entertainment from the Polish-Scottish Song and Story Group, and Pajak Ian Ksawer.

17 November, and 1 December 2013
Polish Scottish Traditional Singing Group

31 March 2014
Closing Night for the Toulmin Prize

9-11 May 2014
Elphinstone Institute events at the University’s May Festival.

11 May 2014
Toulmin Prize celebration with readings.

25-27 July 2014
Cullerlie Traditional Singing Weekend.

29 November 2014
Friends of the Elphinstone Institute Ball-Bus.

Public Lectures 2013-14
Tuesday 27th 7:30-9:30, Admission £3.00 includes refreshments.
Room 3, MacRobert Building, King’s College, University of Aberdeen.

24 Sept 2013
Title: ‘Parsony’s Scottish Traditional Boat Festival’
Speaker: Roger Goodyear and Lorna Summers Institution: Parsony, Scottish Traditional Boat Festival.

29 Oct 2013
Title: ‘Voiceing Place: The Folk Voice in Modern Scotland’
Speaker: Gary West Institution: Dept. of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Aberdeen.

26 Nov 2013
Title: ‘The Power of the Fiddle’
Speaker: James Alexander Institution: Folkheids Fiddlers.

22 Jan 2014
Title: ‘Glaschu: Gaelic Songs from the Glasgow Globe’
Speaker: Mary Ann Kennedy Institution: Musician-in-Residence, Sabhal Mo’ 里, University of the Highlands and Islands.

25 Feb 2013
Title: ‘Scots Herring Girls, 1900-1950: Oral History and Visual Narrative’
Speaker: Ill in Frennes Institution: RCAHMS.

20 May 2013
Title: ‘The “mouth” of the River Don: Metaphor in Language and Visual Narrative’
Speaker: Sandy Hoby Institution: University of the West of Scotland.

27 May 2013
Title: ‘Special Event, The Tums-Coo-Canty’
Speaker: Gretna Crotchcock Institution: Independent Researcher.

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

The Sounds of the Sub-Arctic Come to the Institute and Northern Scotland

James Cheechoo, of James Bay, Canada, visited Aberdeen from 13-20 May 2013 on an exciting one-off visit to meet musicians and give performances and a workshop on the James Bay fiddle tradition and its historical connections with Scotland. This was part of a two-week Scottish tour funded by grants from Aberdeen City Council’s ‘Vibrant Aberdeen’ programme and the ‘North’ Research group at the University.

James, who travelled over with his wife, Daisy, and daughters, Treena and Rita, visited the Institute for an afternoon of music and song with staff and students. He also gave performances, accompanied by Daisy and Treena on wooden spoons and drum, at the Blue Lamp and the Cowdray Hall. At the university, he led a fascinating workshop on James Bay fiddle music and dancing which was attended by Institute staff and students, among others, funded by the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute.

Now in his eighties, James is the last person in James Bay to perform a repertoire of fiddle tunes originally believed to have been learnt from Scots for traders who travelled to the region from the late 1600s with the Hudson’s Bay Company. He is a member of the Moose Cree First Nation, a reservation community located on the old island settlement of Moose Factory in Northern Ontario and one of the oldest settlements in the region. The island is situated on the Moose River just off the coast of James Bay which is at the southern end of Hudson Bay; the settlement dates back to the 1670s when it was established as a major fur trading post for the Hudson’s Bay Company.

The family, whose first language is Cree, has travelled to numerous festivals showcasing the Cree fiddle style, the most recent of which was the American Fiddles Tunes Conference at Port Townsend, Washington. Their visit to Scotland was a very special occasion as it was a one-off opportunity for them to take their music, and themselves, outside North America. While they were in Scotland, they gave performances at the Breakish Hall on the Isle of Skye and at the Orkney Folk Festival in conjunction with the 200 year anniversary of the explorer John Rae’s birth.

They were also interviewed by Bruce MacGregor for BBC Radio Scotland’s ‘Travelling Folk’, and for BBC Radio Orkney.

The Institute was proud to be part of this rare bit of history. We wish the family well and thank them for their unique contribution to Scotland’s musical life and historical legacy.

Frances Wilkins

Young Travellers Connect with their Heritage

Time Travelling is a new project for young Travellers, and their community at Clinterty, exploring Scottish Traveller history and heritage. Young Travellers will have the opportunity to take part in a series of research trips, talks and creative workshops, working towards a creative, heritage-based output. The young people will explore heritage in creative ways, perhaps through film or photography, and will tell a different story about Scottish Travelling life past and present than that which is often seen in the mainstream media. In a previous project on the site, the young people explored simple book making and the use of libraries and the internet to research Traveller culture.

The project is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and coordinated by partners including the Elphinstone Institute, the Creative Learning Team at Aberdeen City Council, Grampian Regional Equalities Council and Aberdeen Library & Information Services.

Nicolle Gildea

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Ethnomusicologist Frances Wilkins Joins the Institute

Frances Wilkins was appointed this spring as a part-time Lecturer in Ethnomusicology, a five-year post funded by a generous bequest from the late Margaret Jones. Frances completed her PhD on coastal sacred singing traditions in 2009 and has since engaged her research to include Scottish and North American fiddle music, English performance traditions, and traditional music education and transmission. She has conducted extensive field-based research into Scottish musical traditions and since 2011 has been investigating the historical connections between Scottish and Cree fiddle music in the James Bay area of Canada (see p. 1). Her latest journal article, ‘The Fiddlers of James Bay: Transatlantic Flows and Musical Indigeneity’ among the James Bay Cree, appears in MUSICultures, 40/1 (2013). She has been guest editor for academic publications including the peer-reviewed MUSICultures and MUSIKé journals, and is website reviews editor for the journal of music, world of music (new series) journal of ethnomusicology.

Frances will be lecturing on our Taught MLitt in Ethnomusicology and Folklore as well as offering a PhD supervision module where she teaches courses in World Music, Scottish traditional, Soundscapes, and Ethnomusicology for the Department of Music. She maintains close links with the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Rostock in Germany, where she worked as a guest ‘Eurolecturer’ and researcher funded by the Toepfer Foundation, in collaboration with Dr. Barbara Alge, from 2010–2011.

We are very pleased to welcome Frances to the Institute and congratulate her on her new role and partner Ronan on the recent birth of their son, Seumas.

Hupa, Yurok, and Karuk Traditions at the Institute

In May, the Institute welcomed Clarence Hostler, Sr, and Deborah Bruce-Hostler from Hupa, Yurok, and Karuk Traditions at the Institute. In September we had a visiting scholar, Thomas McKeen, from the University of Oregon, who has been guest editor for academic publications including the peer-reviewed MUSICultures and MUSIKé journals, and is website reviews editor for the journal of music, world of music (new series) journal of ethnomusicology.

We came to Scotland in late May to honour our niece Natalie Brown’s year of graduate study at the Institute, travelling from an area of north-western California known as the Klamath-Siskiyou which is a mountainous place nourished by salmon-bearing rivers – where Clarence’s indigenous Hupa, Yurok, and Karuk ancestors lived for thousands of years. We came to Scotland to hear Natalie and other music-makers play traditional music, and hope to come back soon among some very old songs and to share some of our culture, in which traditional songs play an essential role in spiritual practices.

We were in Port aux with Natalie and her violin, to hear traditional music; Clarence brought his square brim made of California redwood and elk hide, and after listening to traditional Scottish tunes he offered a drum song – a luck song. Walking to a second music venue, another singer stopped us to thank Clarence for his song. Grimriabor Rhubrid himself introduced himself and said he’d like to sing for Clarence. He stood in the street and sang the song of the swan, ‘Guilleag i’, ‘guilleag o’, ‘sgueloa mn daumhgh’, ‘Guilleag i’ / ‘Rinn mo leir’, / Guilleag o / ‘Mo chasan dubh’, / Guilleag i / ‘Si mi fe ghe’-ghle’.

In Aberdeen, Clarence talked about his family’s version of this tale, ‘a heavy song’ that he sings when the Brush Dance takes place at certain ancient village sites. We much appreciated the chance to offer a glimpse of cultural survival from our part of the world.

European Union Interpreters Get to Grips with Doric

A group of 60 interpreters from the EU headquarters in Brussels on a tour of the North-East joined us for a talk on our local dialect. Sheena Blackhall and I had agreed to deliver a presentation about Doric, that we could keep it light. The fact that our visitors were language specialists was a plus and we decided to show them how Doric is used, and was, used. We gave them a brief history and Sheena demonstrated how the ‘Doric’ in our local schools is a matter of surprise to some friends who are local dialect being taught in schools at all). We also gave them some examples of how the dialect is used in verse and song and Sheena was able to read from her own works as well as that of other poets from the area. Sheena decided to show them how to test their patience with a bawdy song.

One of the interpreters had his young son with him, a ladde of about three years old, who sat quietly throughout until we gave them an example of a Doric rap. The sounds delighted him and he laughed and clapped the whole way through. What is it about sounds that fascinates children?

A number of our guests asked if the dialect was still spoken with any frequency an comic fa Muid was I leis ta tell them that in oor airt we ar aw haudin it gyan an aul tongue is aye knypin on.

We ended our visit and, on their departure, our visitors were kind enough to say that our wee presentation was one of the highlights of their tour. Sheena and I were the recipients of some very tasty, expensive Belgian chocolates and what they might be a gey chyaav turned out to be a most enjoyable way to spend a July afternoon.

Fiona Dow writes from Brussels. ‘We all absolutely adored Sheena and Les, it really is not an exaggeration to say that they were one of the highlights of the trip! Their passion for their subject shone through and they had us all in stitches. We are more chueped up than you now.’

Fiona Dow writes from Brussels.

Snippets of Cullerlie 2013

The thirteen Traditional Singing Weekend at Cullerlie, 26–28 July, proved to be a great success with all the weekend tickets sold and some very positive feedback. One of our younger singing guests was Stuart Carolan from Drogheda in County Louth, who followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, Matthew Carolan, a renowned performer of Irish ballads and songs. Stuart gave some stunning performances, which included singing in Irish, playing the fiddle and brought along his loop pedal. He was accompanied by his wife, Siobhan, and his father, Pat, who is also a fine singer.

Alain Lomax, Hamish Henderson and Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo

This September, I joined the Institute as a visiting scholar to pursue a project comparing the fieldwork methodologies of Luiz Heitor Correa de Azevedo (1905–1973) in Brazil and that used by Alain Lomax (1915–2002), the renowned American sociologist and intellectual of the Scottish Heitor, in his fieldwork and Scotland and England in 1951–52. At a later stage, I hope to investigate why Lomax’s work with Hamish Henderson, among others, was able to leverage a revival of interest in folklore in Scotland, England, and the United States, while that of Luiz Heitor did not have the same effect in Brazil. 

Hennie Drach

Snapshots of Cullerlie 2013

By now, you will be familiar with our long list of Cullerlie Instigator events in the calendar. Since inception, our renowned druid and storyteller, Stephen Moore, has accompanied us each year, and this year he returned to celebrate the completion of our MLitt in Ethnomusicology.

This year, with the departure of Alain Lomax, our Ethnomusicology lecturer, Stuart and Carolan have taken over the role of instigators for our Taught MLitt in Ethnomusicology.

Every year at the festival we try to ensure that a number of rural/country crafts are featured, but this year was a little different. We focused on two unusual skills – the craft of making Scottish faamit and the art of making Doric, the ancient tongue taught by Graeme Eddie, a senior member of Scotland’s only surviving club, the Dunnottar Quotating Club in Stonehaven.

Stuart and Pat Carolan Photo by Mary Mason

Downing at Cullerlie Photo by Ian Russell