Book Week Scotland

November saw the Sir Duncan Rice Library and the Special Collections Centre host again a wide variety of exciting events for adults and children.

The Sir Duncan Rice Library has been a partner in the national Book Week Scotland since it started in 2012, with the Special Collections Centre running a wide variety of exciting events for adults and children alike. From the annual Flash Fiction Competition, which invites creative writers from Scotland and overseas to craft a 500-word short story inspired by images from the collections, to the ever popular bookbinding workshops and talks, and paper marbling for children, the last week in November is always bustling with activity.

This year’s Book Week Scotland featured not only familiar events from previous years but also a new partnership with the School of Language and Literature, with a very successful Fantasy genre creative writing workshop. Led by Lily Greenall, a creative writing PhD student at Aberdeen University, participants explored the works of renowned Aberdeenshire fantasy author George MacDonald while honing their own writing skills.
The Flash Fiction competition received its highest number of entries to date with 155 in total from the adult and children categories. Judged by prize-winning authors Wayne Price and Caroline Clough, the competition offered four images from the Special Collections as inspiration.

This year’s adult winner was Douglas Bruton, an Aberdeen University alumnus and dedicated Flash Fiction competition entrant, and the children’s winner was Keri Lewis, a 13-year-old pupil at Mearns Academy in Laurencekirk. All the Flash Fiction competition stories can be read on the Special Collections Centre’s webpages, along with the judges’ notes.

The Glucksman Conservation Centre featured heavily in the programme again this year, offering not only a bookbinding workshop and talk for adults but also a paper marbling and bookbinding event for families. Alongside the paper marbling workshop, an open event in the Reading Room invited members of the public to come and examine close up some of the rarest and most beautiful maps and atlases in the world.

By Sarah Chapman, Learning and Outreach Officer
2016 Special Collections Centre Visiting Scholar Awards

Applications are invited for the 2016 Special Collections Centre Visiting Scholar Awards at the Sir Duncan Rice Library, University of Aberdeen. These awards are available to academic researchers wishing to travel to Aberdeen to make use of materials held in the Special Collections Centre. They provide financial support towards the costs of travel and accommodation up to £2,000 to cover expenses incurred over a period of two to four weeks, while pursuing a research project directly relating to the University’s collections. The Special Collections Centre is home to the University’s historic collections of books, manuscripts, archives and photographs. Housed in climatically controlled facilities, the holdings comprise over 230,000 rare printed books and 5,000 archival collections, with material dating as far back as the 3rd century BC. For information about our holdings and facilities please see: www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/

Visiting scholars will be granted access to library facilities at the Sir Duncan Rice Library, including access to the Wolfson Reading Room in the Special Collections Centre. Information on previous award recipients can be found online: www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/visiting-scholar-awards/

Deadline for applications: 1 February 2016

Value of award: £2,000

Eligibility: The award will be granted to scholars for a project relating to materials held in the Special Collections Centre. Applicants will be in possession of a PhD but the award is open to researchers at any stage of their academic career. Independent and emeritus scholars may also apply. University of Aberdeen staff may apply on behalf of a visiting scholar, in which case the scholar is to be invited to share their research findings through a seminar, lecture or workshop.

Duration: Two- to four-week period of study to be undertaken any time between 1 April and 20 December 2016.

Residence: Scholars should normally be resident in the Aberdeen area for the duration of the award.

Expenses: Funds may be claimed against travel, subsistence and other reasonable research expenses. Scholars will make their own arrangements for travel and accommodation and will be expected to submit receipts in order to claim expenses up to the value of £2,000.

Schedule: Applications will be peer-reviewed under the supervision of the International Advisory Board of the Aberdeen Humanities Fund. Awards will be made by a selection committee composed of Library staff, members of the Humanities Fund Board and representatives of the Friends of Aberdeen University Library. Applicants will be notified of decisions by 29 February 2016.

Outputs: This award should be acknowledged in any future publications arising from the research undertaken during the time of the award. Visiting scholars will also be expected to provide a short report of their research findings, which will be made publicly available on our webpages.

To apply: Please submit a project outline of 500-1,000 words, explaining the scope of the project and the relevance of the University of Aberdeen’s library collections to this research, along with a two-page CV.

Enquiries and applications should be sent to: sccvisitingscholars@abdn.ac.uk

Funded by the Friends of Aberdeen University Library and the Special Collections Centre.
Introducing the New Exhibition Officer

Jen Shaw joined the Special Collections team in May 2015. After studying History of Art at St Andrews University, she went on to complete an MA in Museum & Gallery Studies at Manchester University. Her first job was as the Touring Exhibitions Officer for Gracefield Arts Centre in Dumfries. She followed this post with a curatorial position as Keeper of Art at Bolton Museum & Art Gallery and Arts Development work in Cheshire. Following 5 years living in Chicago where she was the Gallery Coordinator for two contemporary spaces at Columbia College and Moraine Valley Community College, she returned to the UK to a role as Exhibitions Office for Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery. The move to Aberdeen is a welcome return to Scotland for Jen and she is enjoying her new role as exhibition officer for the Gallery in the Sir Duncan Rice Library.

Special Collections Centre Exhibitions 2015-16, the Gallery, The Sir Duncan Rice Library

The 2015 season of exhibitions began with a journey into the Arctic with “The Far North – Frozen Stars, Shifting Ice and the Silence Beyond”. It explored the idea of the Far North through the Special Collections Centre’s rich holdings of manuscripts and illustrated books and objects from the University Museums. Contemporary art and music were also included to create a rich and evocative display which welcomed over 6,000 visitors. An accompanying series of talks featured speakers from the Anthropology Department whose subjects ranged from Inuit craft to the flora and fauna of the Arctic. Guest speakers included the artist Rhinehard Berens and Douglas Richardson from the Highland Wildlife Park who gave a fascinating account of the raising of polar bears in captivity.

“One Hot Day”

At the end of September, the Gallery hosted a 2-week contemporary video installation by Professor Alan Marcus, University of Aberdeen. His experimental, observational film marked 70 years since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and the beautifully shot images explored a single day in the city as it is today. The film was projected onto opposite walls in the gallery, creating an immersive, evocative environment of image and sound. Over 50 people attended the opening night and engaged in discussion with the film-maker.

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The current exhibition in the Gallery is "City of Ghosts", running until 21 February 2016. For this exhibition, the contemporary photographer John Perivolaris used the Special Collections Centre’s extensive archive of images by George Washington Wilson to inform a new suite of photographs that pay homage to the great Aberdonian photographer and the city he depicted.

In his research, John discovered that a Victorian collector had described the first urban photography as creating “cities of ghosts”. In Wilson’s images he found that a double-exposure effect that was common in early photography often created ghostly figures in otherwise pin-sharp cityscapes. These technical “imperfections” are highlighted in the display. A selection of Wilson’s images were printed onto Perspex and lit to accentuate the ghosting effects as a way of recalling the glass plate negatives in the collection and evoking a sense of time passing. The effect is further enhanced by an atmospheric soundscape recorded by Professor Pete Stollery, University of Aberdeen, at locations featured in Perivolaris’s photographs. A series of talks and events including Roger Taylor, the renowned historian of early British photography, and architectural historian, Professor Adrian Forty, will accompany the exhibition.
Satellite exhibitions and displays

We have also hosted a number of satellite displays in the Event space adjacent to the Gallery this year. “Germans in Britain”, a pop-up touring exhibition from the Migration Museum in London, was followed by “Unearthly Structures”, an exhibition of granite sculpture by Gordon Burnett as part of Tech Fest. In November, a display highlighting the activities of the Bennachie Landscapes Project was accompanied by a talk from members of the group.

What next?

Planning for the next exhibition is now well underway. “An Audience with Charles Dickens: Writer, Performer, Celebrity” will open in the Gallery in March 2016. The University’s Special Collections Centre has one of the most distinguished collections of Dickens’s books anywhere in the world and it will be displaying all 15 first editions of the writer’s novels – many of them collected at the time of publication. As well as celebrating the fact that this will be the first time all the first editions have been displayed together in the UK in over 50 years, the exhibition will look at Dickens as a performer of his own work and at his two visits to Aberdeen.

By Jen Shaw
Introducing the New King’s College Archivist

The Special Collections Centre has recently received generous financial assistance from the Friends of Aberdeen University Library to enable the appointment of an archivist to catalogue the King’s College Archives. The archivist is now in post and below is an introduction to herself and the project.

King’s College Archive Project 2015 - 2016

Hello, my name is Mary Sabiston and I am the King’s College Archives Project Archivist. I began working for the University Library in 2007 and for the Special Collections Centre in 2009 as a Collections Assistant. Since then I have been lucky enough to work with the George Washington Wilson Collection as a project archivist, the museum collections as the SPIRIT project assistant and I am currently an Archives Assistant at the Special Collections Centre. I started my current secondment to the King’s College Archives Project in October and am delighted to be working with this fascinating collection.

This one-year cataloguing project will arrange and make available online the catalogues of the King’s College Archive, opening up this rich but underused resource. This unique and significant archive is not just of importance to Aberdeen but to Scotland and to the global research community.

Collection in Context

King’s College was founded by Bishop Elphinstone, under a papal bull issued by Alexander the VI, in 1495. Elphinstone set about creating purpose-built college buildings in Old Aberdeen for what he planned to be the 36 staff and students of the University. King’s College taught and trained teachers, ministers, doctors, lawyers, politicians and philosophers, many of whom went on to have distinguished careers locally, nationally and some internationally in their respective disciplines.

The collection contains detailed resources on the foundation of the college, the evolution of the college curriculum, teaching methods, staff and students, financial papers (which range from staff salaries to routine accounts), legal disputes, the administration of the college, its properties, buildings, its land ownership and the college’s relationship with other institutions, particularly Marischal College and Aberdeen City.

The Project So Far...

The initial stages of the project have focused on researching the most effective method of cataloguing this collection to ensure the catalogue is flexible and user-friendly. At present there are a number of finding aids for the collection, which are all paper-based lists. One of the initial steps has been to collate the information from these various paper sources and become familiar with the content of the collection.

And Finally...

A number of documents have so far caught my eye, from the beautiful calligraphy and drawings of the foundation book to the lists of rules and regulations for the students. The following is a snippet from Principal John Row’s rules from 1659:

“The censor to watch all wanderers, and on days of study a spy to be sent to the links to report idlers to the sub principal.”

By Mary Sabiston
Imperial Possessions
Sir William MacGregor: Doctor, Governor, Explorer, Collector

“Unless we know the people we cannot sympathise with them, and unless we in some measure feel with them, and for them, we can only rule by force.”
William MacGregor, 1897

The latest exhibition in King’s Museum highlights the collections of Aberdeen graduate Sir William MacGregor, which he acquired during a long and varied career as a colonial administrator. He bequeathed it to the University of Aberdeen to inspire students that there was more to the world than “Aberdeen and twal mile roon”. Reflecting his approaches to colonial government, MacGregor’s collections are now the focus of international research. The objects show how European collectors acquired items from indigenous people through gifts, sales, war booty and confiscations, and the social and political relationships between governor and governed in which these exchanges took place.

Born in 1846, William MacGregor spent the first years of his life as a poor farm labourer in Aberdeenshire. He was a hard worker “who would give no trouble if he had his books” and was encouraged by his teacher, local minister and doctor. At the age of nineteen he went to Aberdeen Grammar School and then won a bursary to the University of Aberdeen, where he initially intended to become a church minister but switched to a career as a medical officer.

MacGregor was recommended to the Governor of the Seychelles, Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon, as “able bodied and energetic, and willing to make himself useful to science, his professional qualifications being also excellent”. So began a career as colonial medical officer and governor that saw MacGregor work and collect in what are now the Seychelles, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Nigeria, Canada and Australia. He remained proud of his Scottish background and in an exceptional career he was able to rise above his childhood expectations.

In 1875, William MacGregor started work in Fiji as Chief Medical Officer in the employment of Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon, the first resident Governor. MacGregor learnt from Gordon his approach to rule, which saw Fijian chiefs continue in power as imperial officials, and that “any useful native customs shall be retained, but improper customs shall be given up”. MacGregor first started collecting in earnest in Fiji, believing that traditional culture was threatened and should be preserved by collecting examples of its arts and handicrafts.

MacGregor was known as “an indefatigable collector and explorer and all who sail with him are expected to do their best to pick up something”. His annual reports during his time as the first Administrator of British New Guinea between 1888 and 1898 included sections about the botany, geology, zoology, languages and culture of the colony. Faced with governing a rapidly changing society, MacGregor wanted to create a representative collection “before it is too late”. However, his collections also show biases: he collected many weapons but little about the lives of women and children, and also preferred collecting in areas that were apparently unaffected by European contact. MacGregor’s desire to establish good relationships led him to be sensitive to local practice, as when a man “took me by the hand to lead me away, pointing to the temple... It was impossible to proceed further, or to not comply with the desire of our hosts so earnestly expressed, so curiosity could not be gratified by seeing what was inside the shrine”.

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He became Governor of the colony of Lagos (now part of Nigeria) in 1899. Unlike in New Guinea, MacGregor did not create an official collection in Lagos, presumably considering that it was already “too late” to make a collection unaffected by European influences. Nonetheless, he did amass a personal collection of over 100 items, while a dispute between chiefs led to the confiscation of a beaded crown that he presented to the British Museum as government property.

After a difficult time in Lagos, MacGregor was appointed as Governor of Newfoundland in 1904. Here, he regained a reputation as an effective colonial administrator and diplomat, and by the time he left was described as “the model of what a Colonial Governor should be”. Newfoundland was a long-established colony, with most of the population being settlers and with little place for indirect rule through indigenous leaders. The main issues MacGregor faced were therefore different from his previous experience, and his responsibilities included negotiating fishing treaties between Newfoundland, Canada, France and the USA. MacGregor’s concerns for indigenous people and the economic development of the colony, as well as his scientific interests, led to him being the first governor to visit the northern coast of the island of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MacGregor’s final posting, at the age of 63, was to Queensland, Australia, where he was Governor between 1909 and 1914. As in Newfoundland, he was faced with a well-organised settler society and a parliamentary democracy that meant that his political authority was very limited. He did, however, go on a number of expeditions and was very critical of the government’s poor treatment of Aboriginal people. He was also critical of the intellectual life of Queensland, complaining that “no scientific experiments worth mentioning are being prosecuted here, none on strict scientific methods”. He therefore became very active in the early years of the University of Queensland, becoming its first chancellor in 1910.

Throughout his career, MacGregor was renowned for respecting indigenous people and for his concern with improving health and establishing fair administration, though he felt under-valued by the British Colonial Office, often disagreeing with their instructions. His collections are now a remarkable record of an impressive colonial career, but also reveal much about how people responded to colonial rule. Aberdeen is fortunate to have been bequeathed this collection, and the exhibition is an indication of some of the areas of research that are now investigating the impact of this remarkable man.

By Gillian MacNee

Exhibition:
5 January - 29 May 2016
King’s Museum
Old Aberdeen Town House
Aberdeen AB24 3EN
If you picture archives and libraries as stuffy, repressive places where you must sit tight on your seat and keep buttoned up at all costs, think again and read on!

Every year the Special Collections Centre takes part in Arts Across Learning, a city-wide festival in which local organisations and venues work with freelance art practitioners to provide workshops and activity sessions for Aberdeen City Council's primary schools. For us, it's an opportunity to explore our historic collections in a fun way using different art genres and to keep adding to our repertoire of skills for interpreting our collections of rare books, manuscripts and archives for young audiences.

This year we were paired with a dance tutor to put together a creative movement workshop called "Big Book of Beasts" for very young children of P1-2 (roughly age 5-6). New territory for us!

Most of our school audience is upper primary, and while we use the visual arts, creative writing and even drama regularly in our workshops, dance was something new for us altogether. We chose the treasured Aberdeen Bestiary (MS 24), a sumptuous 12th-century manuscript book of animals, as our source material for the workshop. The Bestiary is a gift for working with children, with its gorgeous gold-illuminated illustrations and its quirky accounts of animal behaviour.

Our dance tutor was Linzy McAvoy, representing Aberdeen's Citymoves Dance Agency. We knew right from the start that Linzy was going to be fantastic to work with, and so it proved. Linzy immediately perceived the dramatic potential of the Bestiary and entered wholeheartedly into our plan to bring the book to life for the children, bringing her expertise in teaching dance to create a fun, movement-based exploration of the numerous mythical beasts of the book.

The structure of the workshop followed our usual format, where we introduce the children to the topic as a whole and then get down to showing the original items from the collection. Seeing an original historical book or archive is an awe-inspiring experience, and we always try to show them as much original material as possible. Of course, our Bestiary is one of the few items in our collections that is just too precious to be taken out (in fact, it is still "resting" after its star turn in the 2012 Gilded Beasts exhibition), but we do have a beautiful, high-quality facsimile copy of our Bestiary's sister book, the Ashmole Bestiary. Using digitised images from our book and showing the facsimile of the Ashmole Bestiary, the pupils got an idea of just how stunning the Bestiary is itself.
We talked a long time about the making of the Bestiary: who made it (monks), and how it was made (using vellum, gold leaf and ink written with a feather quill). We also speculated about how the monks knew about some of the more exotic animals in the book, in a time when very few people travelled and the only way you could travel faster than you could walk was by horse. In fact, it was remarkable how focussed the children were and how many pertinent questions they asked. I spent nearly twice as long talking about the book with these 5- and 6-year-olds as I usually do with the older children! Their curiosity about the book seemed limitless.

Then it was all about movement and energy! First of all the children warmed up by moving across the room like some of the real animals in the Bestiary, thinking about how each animal moves and what kind of noise it makes. We had lots of stomping elephants, wriggling snakes, scuttling crabs and hopping frogs.

Once the children were warmed up, we honed in on some of the rather more fantastical creatures in the Bestiary, such as the ever-popular Bonnacon (a bull-like creature that, when hunted, farts fire at its pursuers) and the anphivena (a two-headed, snake-like monster).

The children worked in pairs to experiment with ways they could make a two-headed creature like the anphivena by joining their bodies together in different places. After making a series of different two-headed monsters, they then tried to make their creatures move around the room – quite a difficult thing to do when you have two brains wanting to go in different directions. Some serious negotiation was required in order to get those two-headed beasts walking!

Then it was on to imagining new mythical monsters, made up of parts of different animals. Individually the children tried moving like one animal while making the noise of another. Then, after seeing Tony Meeuwissen's interactive book *Remarkable Animals*, which features real animals that can be mixed up with each other to create altogether unheard-of combinations, the children worked with each other again to figure out how they could each contribute different animal parts and amalgamate them to make new monsters. The workshop finished with a demonstration of all the different mythical beasts, and then it was back to school.

Although Linzy and I had initially both felt nervous about how well dance and rare books would go together, and also how well a rare books-based workshop would work for such a young age group, we were amazed at how successfully it went down with the children. Since then we have worked together on another similar-themed event for the Family Fun programme and we hope to find opportunities to create more creative movement workshops in the future.

By Sarah Chapman, Learning and Outreach Officer
Conservation of a Children’s Movable Picture Book

Erin Murray is currently working towards a Master's degree in Conservation at Camberwell College of Arts, the University of the Arts in London. In summer 2015 she was a book conservation intern at the Special Collections Centre. In this article she writes about a children’s movable picture book which was recently donated to the SCC and for which she wrote a condition assessment and treatment proposal during her internship.

As the Special Collections Centre’s summer book conservation intern, I had the pleasure of working on a number of special and interesting materials from Special Collections. However, it is one book in particular that I find especially fascinating. Not for its age, monetary value or greater impact on society. No, the book was made for and apparently used by very enthusiastic children. The book in question is The Surprise Picture Book and it contains very marvellous pieces of early technology.

Written by Lucy L Weedon, illustrated by Hilda K. Robinson and printed at the beginning of the 20th century in Bavaria, the book is comprised of poetry, small line illustrations and a set of transformation volvelles. The poetry and small illustrations are sedate items printed in brown ink while the transformation volvelles encompass the page filling it with bold patterns, bright colours and mysterious transformative imagery.

The volvelle, a structure appearing in the west around the 13th century, is a paper disc fastened to a primary support at a central point so that the disc may rotate freely. Initially appearing in astronomical, mathematical and philosophical texts, the volvelle has survived into the modern era by evolving into the world of movable and pop-up books.

The mechanical structure that appears in The Surprise Picture Book is certainly a volvelle, but it has been modified to entertain children instead of performing complex calculations as it once did. Instead of simply rotating around a central point, the two layers (the lower primary support paper and the upper secondary disc-shaped paper support) have been cut in such a way that the two layers interlock with each other, but still allow rotation of the upper disc. This modification allows a large portion of the lower primary support to be revealed above the upper disc when rotated in one direction and then recede beneath the upper disc when rotated in the opposite direction.
As the transformation volvelle mechanism is featured on 5 out of the 16 pages of the picture book it is surely of high importance to the book itself, and therefore an important element to preserve into the future. You could say that the whole book was produced just to showcase these playful images.

The problem that faces these transformation volvelles is the same problem, regardless of paper type, that has plagued volvelles since their invention: they break easily. Their mechanism is meant to be used, and used often. However, over-handling can lead to tearing of the primary and secondary paper supports, thus rendering the mechanism non-functional. As far as problems go, overuse is one of the better ones to have and focuses potential repair of the volume on restoring the functionality of the mechanisms, therein allowing the book to be accessed as it was originally intended, movement included.

It was through my exploration into potential conservation treatments for *The Surprise Picture Book* that I created a model of the mechanics of the transformation volvelles as part of my conservation project. Creating models can assist in understanding the object, planning of treatments and even during repairs to the paper to ensure that functionality is maintained.

Since completing her summer internship, Erin has agreed to take on the full treatment of the *Surprise Picture Book* as part of her training at Camberwell College. The treatment will include the production of a full colour facsimile of the volume.

**By Erin Murray**

For a moving model of the transformation volvelle mechanism, see Erin’s blog entry at: [https://specialcollectionslearning.wordpress.com/](https://specialcollectionslearning.wordpress.com/)
Friends of Aberdeen University Library Talks 2016

All events are free to attend and hosted in the Special Collections Centre Seminar Room of the Sir Duncan Rice Library.

25 February 2016, 18:00 - 19:00

In sickness and in health: NHS Grampian’s Archives

Speaker: Fiona Musk

Find out more about the historic records of NHS Grampian, going back to the founding of Aberdeen’s Infirmary in 1739 and the development of health care provision across the North East of Scotland.

Now based in the Special Collections Centre, the NHS Grampian Archives hold information on the development of the provision of health care across the North East of Scotland. Starting with the founding of Aberdeen’s Infirmary in 1739, this talk will focus on the various hospitals which followed in both Aberdeen City and across the former Grampian region. It will look at the different kinds of surviving records and the information contained within. This is a fantastic opportunity to find out more about the NHS Grampian Archives, which possess the most complete archival records for an NHS body and its predecessors, covering one of the longest time spans that can be found in the British Isles.

26 May 2016, 18:00 - 19:30

Shining Light on Medieval Manuscripts

Speaker: Professor Andrew Beeby, University of Durham

Understanding what gives illuminated manuscripts their vibrant colours gives an insight into the technology of book manufacture. The challenge is analysing the pigments on the page without damage or even touching the manuscripts.

“Look but don’t touch” – simple rules for the analysis of precious medieval manuscripts. Team-Pigment, a multidisciplinary team of chemists, historians and conservators, have developed instrumentation that allows the analysis of pigments on the page in a non-damaging way. The key techniques are optical reflectance spectroscopy and multi-spectral imaging, where a whole page can be analysed and pigment use mapped in the blink of a camera shutter. More precise complementary analysis is achieved through the use of Raman spectroscopy, a method in which a laser is shone on the page and the scattered light analysed to forensically identify the material. Normally this type of equipment is restricted to the research laboratory, and a major hurdle is the inability to move books to laboratory facilities. To overcome this challenge, Team-Pigment have built mobile instruments that can be moved in a small suitcase, set up and ready to run in half an hour but still match the performance of the research instrument. This allows the team to visit libraries to look at a wide range of books, enabling a comprehensive study of manuscripts. The talk will show results from some of our recent studies, including the exquisite Aberdeen Bestiary.
**Book Notices**

**Ian Olson, *Bludie Harlaw. Realities, Myths, Ballads* (2014)**

In the summer of 1411, the ageing Donald of Isla, Lord of the Isles, invaded mainland Scotland with a huge, battle-hardened army, only to be fought to a bloody standstill on the plateau of Harlaw, fifteen miles from Aberdeen, a town he had threatened to sack. One of the greatest battles in Scottish history, described by hardened mediaeval chroniclers as “atrocious”, “Reid Harlaw” left some 3,000 dead and wounded. Dismissed by Scott as a “Celt v. Saxon” power struggle, it has faded from historical memory, other than in the North East of Scotland.

Written records in Latin, Scots, Gaelic and English are presented in their original form, and with transcriptions and translations. Two major ballads are analysed, one contemporary and one fabricated over 350 years later – which is still sung. Lowland views dominate, because of the loss and destruction of Highland records, notably those of the Lords of the Isles themselves. The histories themselves fall into two groups: those written at or around the time and those composed some 300 years later. These later accounts form the basis of most modern descriptions of the battle, but they tend to be romantic and highly imaginative, creating noble order where chaos once existed.

**Ian Olson**, educated at Robert Gordon’s College and Aberdeen University’s Medical School, followed a largely medical science and teaching career in Aberdeen, Bristol, Nottingham and Kuwait. He had a parallel career in Scottish ethnology, especially the traditional and historical ballads, and traditional singing, with both academic and popular publications. Awarded an honorary degree by Aberdeen University in 2006 for his medical and ethnological career, he has now retired from medicine and is currently Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Aberdeen.

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**Hamish Fraser, *The Wars of Archibald Forbes* (2015)**

If you missed Hamish Fraser's talk to the Friends earlier in the autumn about the charismatic Victorian war correspondent Archibald Forbes, you can now read the book version. Forbes, who grew up in Morayshire and graduated from the University of Aberdeen in 1857, came to be regarded as the greatest war correspondent of the nineteenth century and modernised the profession. He appreciated the growing public demand for immediacy and transformed the fortunes of the *Daily News* by making extensive use of the telegraph. As Fraser's book demonstrates, Forbes's brilliant descriptive writing shaped images of overseas wars for a public greedy for information and excitement through the 1870s.

Despite persistent health difficulties, he covered the Franco-Prussian War, the Paris Commune, the Carlist Wars in Spain, the Serbian-Turkish War, the Russo-Turkish War, the occupation of Cyprus, the Afghan War, the Zulu War, the Indian Famine and the Prince of Wales’s visit to India. He was also ready to challenge the assumptions of the military authorities and to press for modernisation of the army. When ill-health forced him to abandon war work he became a tireless lecturer in Britain, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, and his predictions on the shape of future wars came all too true in 1914.
Friends of Aberdeen University Library
Annual General Meeting

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Mr Graeme Nicol
Dr Isabel Seidel
(Editor of Friends’ News)

Thursday, 26 May 2016, 18:00 - 19:30
Special Collections Centre, Seminar Room, Lower Ground Floor
The Sir Duncan Rice Library
The Annual General Meeting for Friends will be followed by a presentation by Professor Andrew Beeby from the University of Durham on “Shining Light on Medieval Manuscripts”.

www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/friends-of-the-library/