Editorial

Shortly before the Newsletter went to print we heard of the death of Ernle Beyts. Many of you will remember him from his years in the new Science Library and Marischal College Library in the 1960s and ’70s. See p7 for a longer tribute.

By now you should all have received a separate mailing from the Secretary with details of the Autumn/Winter meeting (see also p3) and a reminder about Queen Mother Library’s new access policy (see also p10).

You may wonder why, as Friends of Aberdeen University Library, I should think you’d be interested in the University’s biodiversity initiatives, but if you read on through the article on p9 you’ll see why.

On a more conventional note you’ll find, amongst the usual variety of items, coverage of the Friends’ latest activities, past and planned, news of visits to the Libraries by non-traditional users and what we’re doing for those with disabilities, an update on the St Albans Psalter project (now live) and other developments in Historic Collections.

Enclosed with your Newsletter, as always at this time of year, is the leaflet detailing the Marischal Museum Tuesday evening lectures for this Session, now back in Marischal Museum Lecture Theatre - an interesting year.

Happy reading …

Christine Miller
Editor

On a Summer’s Evening …
You brought a friend to meet the Friends

On a balmy evening in June more than 40 Friends and their guests were entertained to a recruitment Reception by the Principal of the University, Professor C Duncan Rice, at his home in Chanonry Lodge, in Old Aberdeen.

We were addressed by the Principal, Carole Munro, Librarian and Secretary of the Friends, and Roy Thomson, our Chair, all of whom hoped that the loyalty and goodwill shown to the University generally and the Library in particular by the numbers who were there for the evening would be translated into a boost to our membership numbers.

On show were items illustrating ‘How we spend your money’ in furtherance of the Library’s collections. Alan Knox, Manager, Historic Collections, brought with him Thomas Innes’ Collections for the history of Scotland (c1800) for which the Friends recently contributed the £450 necessary to acquire the manuscript for Special Libraries; Thomas Peckett Prest’s 1837 The sketch book by “Bos”, the first known Dickensian plagiarism, purchased with the Friends’ contribution of £500; and, on one of its first public appearances, the 1858 watercolour of King’s College by WP Burton. This is from the donated ‘Walker Collection’ of 120 prints and drawings gathered by James F Walker, a former Senior History Master at Aberdeen Grammar School and donated to us by David Walker, a descendant. (All 3 items are described more fully in the Spring/Summer Newsletter.)

It was a most enjoyable evening - punctuated by one very heavy momentary shower, perhaps explaining why no one ventured into the garden - and has helped to increase our membership by a further array of those with our interests at heart.

A very warm welcome to you all!

Editor:

It appears likely that the painting of King’s is by William Paton Burton (1828-83). The son of Captain William Paton Burton, an officer in the Indian Army, he was born in Madras, but educated in Edinburgh before joining the practice there of the architect, David Bryce. He devoted much time to landscape painting in watercolour and travelled widely, visiting continental Europe, India and Egypt. In the 1860s he moved from Edinburgh to Witley, in Surrey, and painted many Surrey and Sussex scenes. He retired to Cults, where he died, on 31 December 1883. Amongst other institutes he exhibited at the Royal Academy and Royal Scottish Academy. A copy of his watercolour, Storm, is in Aberdeen Art Gallery’s collection.
In antiquity, a sibyl was a woman - usually an old crone - endowed with the gift of prophecy, in particular a priestess of Apollo. By the end of the Middle Ages the western Church had appropriated the image of the ‘Sibyl’, interpreting her sayings as predicting the Christian story. Twelve Sibyls, each with a name representing her place of origin, were accepted as foretellors of the coming of Christ, pagan counterparts of the old Christian prophets with whom they were often represented (eg the Sistine Chapel Ceiling). In this context they were mostly represented as young women, each with an attribute of the Passion or other symbol indicative of Christ’s life. Certainly, a dislocation of the respective Sibyls from their traditional prophecies makes the Aberdeen series quite unique:

While we have no contemporary records of reaction to the arrival of the Sibyls at King’s, it is known that visitors to the University were intrigued by this series of paintings. In particular, there was understandable curiosity regarding the artist responsible for their execution. Who actually painted the Sibyls? The identity of the painter had not originally been recorded at the time of their presentation, but the artist was traditionally held to be George Jamesone (d.1644). Jamesone was an Aberdeen painter who trained in Edinburgh, renowned for undertaking portraits in the Flemish style. He was painting in Aberdeen from 1620; in 1633 he painted a series of historical portraits for Charles I’s visit to Edinburgh; and from 1634 he worked mainly in Edinburgh.

However, the matter of firmly attributing the painting of the Sibyls to George Jamesone was, indeed, a difficult one. By the mid-C18th, the Sibyls were still hanging in the Common Hall, but they had necessarily undergone major restoration and repair. Desperate action had been required since it was recorded that the Sibyl canvasses were ‘almost quite gone’, the damp air, and smoke from open fires having taken their toll over the years. So extensive was the remedial work that the original features were, at times, inevitably almost obliterated. One unkink 19th-century, damming of the C18th reworking, claimed that, “Some house painter must have set to work upon them, so badly are they done”.

Thanks to Sibyl Ægyptiaca, and the inscription in the ‘prophetic’ book which she holds as her particular attribute, we know that Cosmo Alexander had been commissioned to repair and restore the works in 1761. Indeed, it was fascinating to hear Mary recount the story of the discovery of the original receipt voucher in the University’s archives, which gave confirmation of payment, details of the work undertaken, and the artist’s full name: Cosmo Alexander (who was, in fact, Jamesone’s great-great-grandson). The voucher also names George Jamesone as the acknowledged artist of the works. So, with the Sibyl canvasses so comprehensively reworked, how might it be possible to measure realistically any veracity in the claim that Jamesone was, indeed, responsible for The Sibyls?

In one of the most absorbing chapters of her story, Mary explained that to establish the truth she had had to take her research beneath the surface of the paint. The two canvasses, Europæa and Ægyptiaca, were taken to the University’s Department of Radiology to be x-rayed. 18 radiographs (mammo grams) were necessary to produce images of the entire surface of each canvas, but the effort expended proved most worthwhile. Results were startling. The conventions of C18th feminine beauty were swept aside to reveal a more mannered, C17th approach to the portrayal of the female form. Also, crucially, parallels with certain of Jamesone’s extant oeuvre were uncovered. At last, ending centuries of speculation, it was possible to say that the Sibyls may well have been executed by Jamesone’s brush.

In his vote of thanks at the end of the evening, Bill Nicolaisen described this as painstaking scholarship and research of the highest calibre. Mary’s presentation and slide show certainly provided an excellent evening’s entertainment, with lots to excite the eyes and mind. Thankfully, there are more stories to be revealed about the University’s picture collection, and Mary has promised us a return visit in the not too distant future to share more of the same with us.

Finally, the story of the Sibyls is now being taken abroad. Mary tells me that she has recently received an invitation to give her presentation in Athens, towards the end of the year, as part of an international history conference. We are delighted to have this opportunity to wish her every success at that event.

Carole Munro
Honorary Secretary, The Friends
c.munro@abdn.ac.uk
We are delighted to welcome Professor David Hewitt, an authority on Sir Walter Scott, as speaker at our next meeting. Friends will remember that last year, with the help of a generous grant of more than £200,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the University purchased the Bernard C Lloyd Walter Scott Collection (see the main article in the Autumn/Winter 2002 Newsletter). It is the most comprehensive collection of original material by Sir Walter Scott and the most valuable library purchase the University has ever made, warranting a specific mention in the Principal’s ‘Month by month highlights’ in The Annual Review 2002. Aberdeen is the world’s centre for the study of Walter Scott and the acquisition enhanced our already superb library holdings.

Professor Hewitt is Professor of Scottish Literature in the Department of English and a specialist in the Scottish Literary Enlightenment and the Romantic era. He is also Editor-in-Chief of the Edinburgh edition of Scott’s Waverley novels. He will, we know, bring us both his extensive knowledge and abundant enthusiasm, to give a talk of interest to everyone, and not just the literary scholars among the Friends.

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Professor David Hewitt is editor-in-chief of the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels, the first scholarly edition of Scott’s fiction. The project is directed and supported from Aberdeen, the works published in 30 volumes by Edinburgh University Press and due for completion by the end of this year. At the moment the manuscript of Scott’s The Talisman is in Edinburgh at the National Library of Scotland, borrowed from the State Historical Museum in Moscow, to allow scholars to compare it with the printed text. In the process of converting Scott’s manuscripts, explained Professor Hewitt, “hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of mistakes were made”, a situation exacerbated by Scott’s notoriously illegible handwriting.

The exhibition was arranged by Professor David Hewitt, the prime mover in our acquisition of the Collection. He was assisted in curating the display by Hilary Murray of Marischal Museum, and Iain Beavan and Jane Pirie of the Special Libraries and Archives unit. In preparing it they felt they had found a new perspective in juxtaposing books and objects both from the Scott and the Museum’s other collections to give the impression of the Antiquary and to see what his study was really like.

The 6,000-plus items which make up the Bernard C Lloyd Collection are being catalogued by staff within Special Libraries and Archives. Meantime the preliminary catalogue which came with the collection is available on a trial basis on the web at: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/historic/walter_scott/walterscott.pdf

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FRIENDS’ ACTIVITIES continued

A Spring Visit to Trinity Hall, home of the Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen

We shall be arranging an evening visit to Trinity Hall, courtesy of Dr William Guild’s Trustees, in April/May. Our Treasurer, Graham Hunter, was Clerk and Assessor at the Hall for 26 years, during which time he found the interior of the building and its contents fascinating and has offered to arrange for other Friends to share his enjoyment.

Trinity Hall lies at the junction of Holburn Street and Great Western Road, Aberdeen, and is the third such Hall to be occupied by the Seven Trades. The original, created from the former Trinitarian Friary (hence the name), was acquired in 1631. The first purpose-built Trinity Hall dates from 1857 and is now incorporated into the Trinity Centre shopping mall in Union Street.

The current building re-uses the traceried windows of its predecessor and the dramatic interior contains many antique furnishings and artefacts used in all three Halls. These include a beautiful table and bible from the original monastery, one of the most important collections of antique chairs in Scotland, banners carried by the Weavers at the Battle of Harlaw and many old paintings.

All Friends - and their - friends - are invited, although we will need to know numbers. We shall let you know the details by a separate mailing, and also announce the visit on our website: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/friends

Our Secretary, Carole Munro, reports on a very busy few months since the last issue of the Newsletter for the Friends and members of the Executive Committee.

The AGM on 29 May was followed by an enthralling presentation by Dr Mary Pryor on ‘The King’s College Sibyls’ (more on Mary’s talk on p2). Our Convenor, Roy Thomson, reminded us of some of our most significant activities in the preceding session, including Isobel Murray’s fascinating talk on Jessie Kesson; the Greig-Duncan Celebration Dinner - a hugely successful joint enterprise with the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute; and the upgrading of the Friends website (many thanks to Mike McConnel of the Directorate’s Web Team). Graham Hunter, in his first year as Honorary Treasurer, was delighted to be able to report on a healthy financial situation, despite recent difficulties experienced within global financial markets.

Sadly, two members of the Executive Committee were noted as having tendered their resignations during the last session - Alastair Clark and Allan Stewart. It was proposed that Sheona Farquhar (Technical Services Manager within the Directorate’s Library Services) and Helen Stevenson (Secretary, Historic Collections) be co-opted to fill these vacancies. All other Committee members agreed to be re-elected. Thus a full and committed team were in place for the forthcoming year.

Some other significant matters of business were raised during the AGM proceedings, and, since these have featured as substantive items of Committee business since that time, each is reported on below.

The Principal of the University, Professor C. Duncan Rice, graciously agreed to host a reception at Chanonry Lodge on 3 June as the focal event in a major recruitment campaign. Current members were invited to ‘Bring a friend to meet a Friend’, to attract ‘new blood’ and boost membership numbers.

Many members rose to the occasion by bringing someone along to meet us. All copies of the membership leaflet were snapped up, with new memberships generated as a result. Particularly appreciated was the small display, arranged by staff of Historic Collections, of materials recently purchased for the University with the help of funding from the Friends.... something we must repeat at future events. So, all in all, a successful evening, although we must continue to bolster our numbers.

Reference was also made at the AGM to the ‘Library New Build Project’, a major initiative supported with great enthusiasm by the Principal. Roy highlighted the acute problems of space constraints and sub-standard library accommodation which were now, more than ever, a major cause for concern. The recent recommendation to secure a new library building fit for purpose in the 21st century was, therefore, excellent news. However, the project is in its infancy; and while this recommendation has been positively embraced, the configuration of a new building will depend, ultimately, on available funding. Of course, the Friends share in the huge excitement of this enterprise and are eager to give support as the concept for the new building evolves.

Discussions regarding Friends’ membership fees also took place at the AGM, although it was agreed by attendees that detailed deliberation would most appropriately be undertaken by the Executive Committee. Consequently, this topic has been included on recent agendas. While proposals are not yet fully formulated, it has generally been agreed that:

- the Life Membership fee (Friends + Library) of £150 still seems appropriate
- Library Members should not be expected to pay an additional £30 returnable deposit (basically an insurance against non-return of loans)
- the annual Friends’ membership fee should now be raised from £7.50 to £10.00
- it is hoped that Library membership fees for such members might be made even more attractive, and the Librarian is now considering this.

It is perhaps worth noting here that details of membership fees are specifically recorded in our Constitution, so that recent deliberations necessitate its updating.

Also, I’m delighted to report that, as part of these discussions, we have successfully negotiated a 10% discount on all George Washington Wilson or related products for current or new members of the Friends… really good news!

Finally, I can report that Executive Committee members paid a visit to King’s College Stack for a general tour on 10 June, to view at first-hand the works recently undertaken there. Details of these works are given in the (Spring/Summer 2003 Newsletter, p.9), but it was certainly gratifying to see just how much has been achieved through this major project to secure better conditions in which to accommodate our most prized collections.

Carole Munro
Honorary Secretary and Librarian
c.munro@abdn.ac.uk
Presidential Appearances

Our President, Jack Webster, was the guest speaker at a glittering National Trust for Scotland fundraising evening last Autumn. The dinner cruise was hosted by Wallace Forbes, son of the late Bertie Forbes, a native of New Deer and founder of Forbes Magazine, the American business bible and one of the most prestigious journals in the history of American publishing. The event was held aboard the Highlander, the Forbes’ family’s yacht, in New York harbour. Built at a shipyard in Holland and a veteran of countless voyages, artwork from the Forbes family collection is displayed throughout the vessel.

A full report with photographs, including Jack, appeared in the Spring issue of Scotland in Trust, the NTS magazine. It records that, ‘Jack Webster, a noted Scottish journalist, gave the keynote address, describing the rise of Bertie Forbes in the publishing world and the contributions also made by his sons to journalism, politics and Scotland. His talk was erudite and witty. Not surprising considering both the author’s and his subject’s roots in Aberdeenshire. (What Jack did not mention, but we have since learned, was that as a boy Bertie Forbes attended Church services at the Chapel of Haddo House.)’

With his exceptionally busy public life it’s not surprising that Jack had to give his apologies for our AGM and Spring meeting, but it makes us even more grateful that he was willing to take on the Presidential position and address our first meeting after that. He has promised to be back to regale us again.

Meantime, closer to home, the Dons’ centenary celebrations have continued to involve him after his publication of their centenary volume, The first hundred years of the Dons (Hodder & Stoughton, 2002). He was also the guest speaker at the University’s annual Ladies Lunch in September at the Marcliffe at Pitfodels Hotel, which raises funds for the benefit of Aberdeen University students.

And even more recently, Jack appeared in this year’s 10th anniversary Doric Festival extravaganza, involving many North East communities. Sharing the limelight with Charlie Allan and Robbie Shepherd he was one of the ‘three prominent sons’ of the North East for the Grand Opening Concert in Udny Green, all presenting their thoughts on the Doric and North East culture before forming a panel to ‘fend off with brilliant repartee’ questions from the audience.

Several of our Friends attended the formal dinner in February, hosted by the Friends of both the Elphinstone Institute and ourselves, for the Aberdeen launch of volume 8, the final volume of The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection, the manuscripts of which are housed in Special Libraries and Archives. [For a full report see the Friends’ Newsletter for Spring/Summer this year, p3-4] These celebrations also continued at the Doric Festival’s Greig-Duncan Celebration Ceilidh in New Deer Hall, with an array of North East singers and dancing to the ‘Greig-Duncan Ceilidh Band’. The special guest was Dr Emily Lyle, Honorary Fellow of the School of Scottish Studies in the University of Edinburgh and Senior Editor of the Collection. Later in the Festival, at the Buchan Heritage Society’s ‘Concert o’ Songs, Music an Verse’, also at New Deer, a copy of the complete published set of the Collection was handed over to the Aberdeenshire Library Service for use in primary and secondary schools in the county.

The website of the School of Scottish Studies has a photographic report of the Edinburgh launch of Volume 8 in December last year, showing Jack Webster - who is, of course, Gavin Greig’s great grandson - with Emily Lyle and Katherine Campbell, joint editors of the final volume. Katherine was also singing at the Doric Festival Ceilidh.

The website address is:
http://www.celtscot.ed.ac.uk/greig-duncan.htm

* Colour Notelets for sale from Reprographics and QML Copyshop *

Two of the notelets would make ideal Christmas cards

* GWW notelets also for sale *

three Bestiary notelets
Welcome - All Ages!

During the summer two groups representing the old and the new learned more about the Library in the electronic age.

The University’s annual Summer School for Access attracts potential students from all over the UK, and of all ages. This year the age range was extensive - from 17 and still at school, to 60 and possibly still remembering the use of slates! This year a bumper intake of over 150 attended the 10-week course, which guarantees a place at Aberdeen University to those who pass.

As the school is very intensive it is important for the students to gain basic study skills quickly. Learning how to use the Library and its resources – both print and electronic - is therefore very important. Books are still the primary source of information for Summer School students, although additional information on the Web is growing in relevance. This was reflected in the two workshops, which concentrated initially on print resources and the Library services.

Students of all ages, particularly those who have been away from school for a number of years, find the size of Queen Mother Library daunting, so a tour of the subject areas is always popular. I try to draw a parallel with shopping when I describe how to find material on the shelves. Thus those who pop into their local corner shop for a jar of coffee have little trouble looking along the shelves and finding what they want quickly. Try the same tactics in a large supermarket and your jar of coffee soon becomes a large basket of goods you didn’t really want, with money and time wasted. Exactly the same can happen in a large library with lots of exciting books on subjects you’re not studying but which sound fascinating. No money wasted but a lot of time involved as you wander aimlessly up and down the rows of books. Effective use of the catalogue and a judicious use of the signs and guiding services can save a lot of time for new students.

The same problems of finding relevant information quickly besets users of the Internet with its billions of web sites of variable quality. A group of Alumni spent part of their June reunion weekend trying to get to grips with the Internet. For some it was their first time in front of a computer, never mind the wonders of the Web. For more than two hours, graduates from the classes of 1939 to 1953 grappled with icons and scroll bars, gateways and search engines. Some had used the Web before, often with the help of a grandchild, and were able to develop their basic skills; others were content to wrestle with a mouse and click their way round the specific sites available on a web site specially created for them. If you would like to see what they saw try http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/library/resources/Alumni.html

They proved that age is no barrier to learning!

Gillian Davson
Information Consultant, and
Summer School for Access Library Coordinator

Doors Open Day 2003 at Queen Mother Library

On Saturday 13 September, the doors of QML were opened to the public.

This was the Library’s first contribution to Doors Open Day, a nationwide scheme begun in Europe and which has gone from strength to strength in Aberdeen every year since 1994. It gives everyone the opportunity to see the interiors of buildings of distinctive architectural worth or interest, many not normally open to the public.

For its 10th anniversary year 32 buildings were open, one focus being on Old Aberdeen, including the Divinity Class Library, in John Smith’s 1826 Tudor Gothic range on the West side of King’s College Quad, and the Queen Mother Library.

The core of the present Queen Mother Library building won an Aberdeen Civic Society award when it opened in 1965 as the Science Library (architects: George, Trew & Dunn). Extensive changes to the interior followed over the years, taking advantage of the spaciousness provided in the original building to provide facilities and services for the dramatic rise in student numbers in the ’70s.

When the extension, the ‘Link Building’ was opened in 1978, and the Social Science collections moved over from King’s Library, it became ‘New Library’.

In 1983 a 4-storey extension into the car park was opened by the Queen Mother - hence its third name, the ‘Queen Mother Library’ - to house the main administrative sections of the University Library, but with the closure of King’s the same year the building also had to find room for current arts and humanities material.

Between 9.00 am and 4.00 pm on 13 September a steady stream of Doors Open Day visitors appeared, all hoping to discover something fascinating or educational. Four extra members of staff were deployed at the Issue Desk to give guided tours of the main collections.

All the visitors expressed thanks for their tour and we certainly felt that the day had been worthwhile.

John Easton
Information Officer, QML
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Open Doors was an ideal opportunity to allow the general public to see important parts of the QML in operation which is not normally open to the public. It was decided to open the Bindery and the George Washington Wilson Collection to the public for the first time.

The exercise was well worthwhile and those who came thoroughly enjoyed the visit. Hopefully we can open the Units again next year, and play host to more visitors.

Thanks to Caroline, Helen and Fiona for giving up their day and making it such an enjoyable experience.

Mike Craig
Manager, Bindery & Reprographic Services
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Queen Mother Library Open Doors
George Washington Wilson Photographic Collection
Bindery
C. Ernle Beyts
1915-2003

It is with sadness that we heard of the death of (Clement) Ernle Beyts on 18 September, a member of the Library staff for more than 15 years.

Born in India where his father was an administrator in the Indian civil service, Ernle came to England at the age of three and was educated at Shrewsbury and Emmanuel College, Cambridge (M.A.). He started his career as an industrial chemist in Liverpool, his wife, Edna Davidson, also a chemist. They had married in 1946 at Portlethen Kirk, where the family still have the Davisons’ cottage, and moved to Scotland in December 1965 with their own family when Ernle joined Aberdeen University Library. At that time Dr W Douglas Simpson was still University Librarian, although soon to retire after 40 years.

Ernle was appointed to the new post of Assistant Librarian in the ‘magnificent new Science Library’. The building was opened by Lord Polwarth in 1965 and its completion was regarded as ‘the main event in the history of the Library as far as its buildings are concerned’ (Annual Reports of the Library Committee, 1964/65, 1965/66). This was, of course, the original core building of what is now Queen Mother Library, with a bright, spacious feel and lots of room for books and readers.

It was an exciting environment for Ernle’s first post, where he was able to bring his analytical mind to the nuances of cataloguing and classifying as a valued member of the cataloguing team. Dr Paul Lawrence, also on the staff at the time and who was to become Science Librarian there, remembers well the earnest discussions on the finer points of the process. Ernle’s distinctive handwriting was to remain on Branch cataloguing slips for many years.

With the opening of the Science Library some stock was moved from Marischal College Library, which shortly afterwards itself moved into the old gymnasium at the rear of the Quad. Ernle himself was to move to Marischal for his second post, in 1972.

Having proved himself at the Science Library he now had the extra responsibility of being in charge and dealing directly with readers; he quickly rose to the challenge. A popular ‘manager’, in today’s jargon, he was excellent with users and created good morale amongst his staff. He gained the respect and friendship of several generations of Marischal students and academic staff at a time of rapid expansion in student numbers and the extra pressure this put on anyone trying to maintain a personal service for readers. As one of the lecturers commented, ‘Ernle was always ready to give individual help, sharing also his enthusiasms for music, gardening and hill walking.’

He retired in September 1981, and Paul remembers the nostalgia of weeding the stock and generally clearing out at Marischal. These were the pre-Atkinson days, before the concept of the ‘self-renewing library’ became the vogue; Ernle adhered to the tenet of never throwing anything out.

He continued to attend Library social functions both at Marischal, until the Library closed in the mid-1990s as student teaching moved to Old Aberdeen and Foresterhill campuses, and at Queen Mother Library. He appeared regularly until the last few years, a cherity, gentlemanly figure, still interested in what must by then have been a whole new information world, apparently dominated by acronym jargon and things electronic, but with a core of staff who knew him.

Ernle had been diabetic since the age of 20, one of the longest living diabetics in Scotland and for which he received two medals. Latterly he was confined to a wheelchair and, unsurprisingly, his priorities changed. Just a few weeks before his death he expressed a preference for his weekly bath rather than attend a 30-year reunion: “I do so enjoy having my back scrubbed!”

Ernle and Edna were of the Quaker faith - he was a conscientious objector during WWII - and a Memorial meeting was held for him at the Quaker Meeting House in Aberdeen.

Christine A Miller
Editor

Reminder …
Friends on the Web

The web site for the Friends is informative and attractive and we hope it will interest both current and potential members as well as informing visitors about the University Library and its strengths.

You can now see copies of the Newsletter online, beginning with the Spring/Summer 2003 issue, and in the News section you’ll find announcements of any additional meetings or last minute changes. There is also coverage of exhibitions and displays at Marischal Museum and elsewhere whose showing falls between the appearance of our biannual issues of the Newsletter.

Click on live links and also view splendours such as the Aberdeen Bestiary and the Burnett Psalter. Additionally you can view a selection of images from the George Washington Wilson collection or browse through the Thomas Reid Papers.

A live link to the University Library also allows you to search the catalogue. It is hoped that in this way we can not only encourage people to join the Friends but also make use of our wonderful Library resources.

Do let us know if you have any comments or suggestions for the site.

Try it for yourself at:
http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/friends/

Directions, the Directorate’s newsletter to staff and postgraduates at the University, appearing in May and November, always has a variety of items which may be of interest to Friends.

For those of you with access to the internet issues of Directions are available at:
http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/news/directs/
Tales from the Caucasus …

In September Keith Nockels, then Site Services Manager in the Medical Library at Foresterhill (and now at Leicester University Library) ran in the Great North Run in Newcastle/Gateshead to raise money for Partnerships for Health Information (PHI). Keith ran the course in just under 1 hour 58 minutes. He has also run 2 full marathons and a previous half marathon.

PHI helps health librarians in some of the world’s poorest countries to develop information services and the Medical Library has linked up with the Groznyy Clinic in Chechnya. Much of Groznay’s hospital and education infrastructure has been destroyed and many health professionals have left for safer areas. Money raised by Keith has gone towards the Centre.

Last year the University’s Medical Library was approached by PHI, asking us to become partners with a health facility in Grozny, in Chechnya. We agreed to this worthy cause, a charity specialising in linking libraries in the more developed and more developing worlds.

Our Partners

Our partner is the Chechen Regional Clinical Centre for Infectious Diseases, in Grozny. The Centre was instituted in 1882, and aims to treat and research infectious disease, and carry out research in immunology and microbiology. It runs continuing education programmes, and co-operates with other health facilities in Chechnya on hospital-acquired infections. So far our partnership has been carried out through e-mail, as the political situation there does not allow us to visit.

Before the war started in 1994 the Centre had 300 beds and three buildings, but two are now in need of rebuilding. The war has reduced much of the health infrastructure to rubble and resulted in the deaths of many health professionals, while many others have left.

The Centre is planning a resource centre to support its programme of postgraduate level seminars, and this is where the Medical Library comes in, as their partners. We hope to be able to help them plan the centre and think about how it can be used to greatest effect. We also hope that the manager of the new centre will be able to visit the UK before too long.

Chechnya

Chechnya is on the very southern edge of the Russian Federation, on the border of Georgia and Azerbaijan. For the last ten years it has been the scene of fighting, which started after Chechnya declared independence from the rest of the Russian Federation. Fighting stopped in 1996, but started again in 1999 and continues today. Many people have fled to neighbouring Ingushetia; many died. Reported kidnappings are a regular occurrence and the Russian armed forces are conducting operations against the local population, looking for those they regard as terrorists.

The World Health Organization is working in the area, concentrating on infectious diseases, rehabilitation and primary care. Tuberculosis is common, more so than in the Russian Federation, and there are apparently no functioning X-ray machines and no film. There is also HIV, cholera, polio and diphtheria, and the situation is exacerbated by the war. Rehabilitation involves both the physical rehabilitation of people who have lost limbs, and also the psychosocial rehabilitation of children and adolescents who have seen the effects of the war on their immediate family and friends. Work in primary care involves rational prescribing of drugs and work in sexual health. Other organisations are also working locally, and we have made contact with Islamic Relief and Medecins du Monde.

More information

To find out more about Chechnya, see http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/library/resources/subjectaz/medicine/chechnya.html
To find out more about Partnerships in Health Information, see http://omni.ac.uk/hosted/phi/

In June Keith had attended a conference of the European Association for Health Information and Libraries in Oslo: Cross boundaries, join forces: Nordic Baltic conference. Many of the papers were interesting in the light of our cooperation with Chechnya.

Keith Nockels
Wildflowers and Oystercatchers: biodiversity on our doorstep

To publicise the University’s sustainable development initiative Dr Mark Young and John Forster led a field trip across Old Aberdeen Campus in June, looking at areas of wildlife interest, including roof-nesting birds, a new meadow and hidden gardens. In the article below Mark Young, Senior Lecturer in the Zoology Department, tells us more about the project, and you’ll see there the Library connection.

As part of a general ‘sustainability’ initiative for the University, we are conducting a survey of wildlife on the Campus and developing various schemes to make things more interesting for everyone living, working or visiting Old Aberdeen.

You may already have seen the newly planted wildflower meadow between the MacRobert (Agriculture) Building and King Street. If not then please go and see what 2,000 plants and some 20 staff and student volunteers can achieve for a 600 sq metre site! Professor Dominic Houlihan, Vice Principal (Research and Commercialisation), also joined in, explaining that it was hoped this would demonstrate the University’s commitment to sustainable development, improve the environment and promote biodiversity on Campus. Dr Wendy Seel, of the School of Biological Sciences, led the project, with specialist advice from local nurseries and conservation experts.

Nearer to the Queen Mother Library there are plans for a ‘Wildlife Garden’, to improve the amenity and wildlife interest of what is at the moment a somewhat dull and neglected landscape. If you look from QML entrance towards the Meston (Chemistry) Building you will see lots of concrete, an old greenhouse base covered in ‘horsetails’ (a very primitive plant) and a rather uninviting patch of grass, surrounded by a few shrubs. Guided by the University’s Estates Section, students of the University Conservation Volunteers aim to plant a wildlife garden here.

The old greenhouse base will become a flower border and the shrubs will be extended and strengthened. Plants are being chosen not only for their attractiveness to us but also because they provide shelter or food to other animals, birds and insects.

Thus berry-bearing shrubs, such as cotoneaster, provide a welcome food source for birds in winter, and buddleia are visited by many insects who need nectar to power their flight. If you walk through the Cruickshank Botanic Garden on St Machar Drive (open to all), with its wealth of plants and animals, you will see what we mean and we are using the experience of the gardeners there to advise on which plants to grow. If all goes well work will start during the winter – literally watch that space!

A final thought. Perhaps you know that oystercatchers regularly nest on the flat roofs of University buildings. However, they favour gravel and not the ‘felt’ that is now being used to replace the original roof coverings. It would be a tragedy to lose our birds and a local expert has come to the rescue. With the full cooperation of the Estates Department, Alistair Duncan has been placing small trays of shingle from the shore on the new felt roofs and to everyone’s delight the birds took to them immediately. We now have several pairs of oystercatchers perched happily on their custom-made nesting trays - those on the roof of the University Office visible from the upper floors of the MacRobert Building. QML’s own flat roofs have also proved their worth as nesting sites recently, namely the low wing near Bedford Road housing the Reprographic Unit, where one chick was fledged in both 2001 and 2002, although none this year.

Dr Mark Young
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John Forster
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Access to Queen Mother Library

By now you should all have received a letter from the Librarian, Carole Munro, Secretary of the Friends, explaining the new access procedure at QML. It was also announced at our Reception at the Principal’s house in May, but for those of you who may have forgotten and for whom the next Friends’ meeting on 17 November may be your first encounter with the new system, please read on ...

With the rise in the number of thefts from users of the Library, together with other unpleasant incidents, it had become necessary to install a security access system at Queen Mother Library and this was put in at the beginning of the Summer vacation. The aim of the security system is to protect our users and staff and we will, of course, continue to welcome all bona fide users of the Library. We trust that it does not discourage you from visiting Queen Mother Library and look forward to seeing you at any time.

Further details of the access policy are at: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/library/services/borrow/access.htm

Gillian Dawson
Information Consultant
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Inter-Library Loans

For those Friends using the Inter-Library Loans service from the University Library we regret that we now have to pass on to you an additional British Library charge if you keep an item out beyond the date when it is due back. Thus as well as the £6.50 we ask you for each request there is an additional charge for each overdue item of £2.50.

The ILL web pages at: www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/library/services/ill will keep you up to date, or ring the ILL section on 01224 272581.

User Services: what’s in a name?

As from 1 August the Directorate’s Consultancy and Client Liaison Division (more usually abbreviated to CCL) was renamed the User Services Division

Why? When the Directorate was formed in 1996, through a merger of Library, Administrative and Academic Computing services, a new divisional organisational structure was established, in which one division was seen as central to the integration of services. Staff from all three pre-converged elements joined this division, with the mission to ‘manage the relationship of the DISS with its clients to ensure the delivery of effective services to support the needs of the University’.

But what to call this new Division? We sought a name resonant of the strategic importance of effective liaison with the University community and, at the same time, covering the wide range of support services for which the new division would be responsible. While Computing Services referred to users, Library users were traditionally referred to as readers - until the advent of microform readers! and no one liked the term customer, client was the compromise choice.

Thus was the name Consultancy and Client Liaison born.

However, while we knew what we meant by the new name, it had not been readily understood by others:
- Consultancy, intended to convey the range of support services we provide, had a more specialist usage in IT and University communities, and was misunderstood.
- Client has been used only in the divisional name. Staff, within and outwith DISS, continued to refer to ‘users’ of our services and, as Library services became ever more electronic, the term reader was no longer appropriate.

I found I was having to explain my job title (Manager, Consultancy & Client Liaison) and the remit of the Division, much as I was used to having to explain and spell my Christian name.

At a Divisional Away Day earlier this year, we had spent some time reflecting on what we do and the objectives we shared across the seven teams within the Division - Liaison, Help Desk, IT Training, Documentation, Web, Learning Technology and Audio Visual. While all our activities focussed on enabling University staff and students to make better use of information technology and resources, we agreed that the Divisional name was not widely understood and did little to project our image as an integrated, service-oriented organisation. And so the thinking caps went on again to choose something better.

The result… User Services Division.

We hope that this simple - and unoriginal - name will convey our mission more successfully than did its predecessor.

Aenea Reid
Manager, User Services Division
a.reid@abdn.ac.uk

...
Publishing Plaudit

Sheona Farquhar, a recent recruit to your Executive Committee and currently Technical Services Manager within the Library Services division of the Directorate, has contributed to a new book, Centred on learning: academic case studies on learning centre development, edited by Edward Oyston (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

A review in the Managing Information Newsletter gave the work a ‘4’ rating (high):

‘At a time when an increasing amount of attention is being focused on everything virtual, it is refreshing to come across a book that is firmly situated in the physical realm. Utilizing the case study approach, the volume discusses the learning centre model through the experiences of four universities: Aberdeen, Leeds Metropolitan, Lincoln and Sheffield Hallam ….

The choice of universities … is intriguing: one old versus three new(ish) establishments. The elder statesman, Aberdeen, has developed integrated help desks for library and C&IT functions, but it has not actually gone as far as to create a learning centre in the style of the other three universities. However, rather than detracting from the value of the work … the inclusion of Aberdeen helps to widen its appeal. The latter’s experience of moving some way towards converged services and entering into the ethos of the learning centre approach, echoes what is happening within many universities up and down the country.

The book is recommended as, ‘… a well-written, practical study for all those interested in how universities are trying to meet the learning needs of their students. A strength of the book is the way in which it weaves personal experience and specific examples with wider issues and principles.’

Sheona’s Technical Services Manager post has a remit for Acquisitions, Serials and Interlibrary Loan, and she is thus a key figure in our current deliberations on a replacement management system for all library functions. She also has specific responsibilities for the Library’s web site and the Library’s participation in a JISC electronic theses project.

Before taking on this position earlier in the year Sheona was Help Desk Services Manager within the Directorate’s (then) Consultancy and Client Liaison Division. It was while she held this post that she was asked to write on Aberdeen’s experience specifically of the merger of the library and computing help desk functions. Sheona has been with the University most of her career, in a variety of front-of-house service positions.

We have a copy of the work in the Librarianship collection on the Ground Floor of QML at the shelfmark: 027.70941 Oys

Continuing Help for Users with Disabilities

With the extension of the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act to educational bodies from September last year we continue to enhance facilities and services for those with disabilities who need to use the Directorate’s resources.

The software on the computer classroom PCs now includes speech functions for rendering web pages, documents and files, and menu options and text, to a format accessible to those with a visual disability. This is particularly useful for students with dyslexia, as is a new mind mapping programme.

We have had PCs giving priority to disabled students for some time in QML, Taylor and Medical Libraries and this has now been extended to PCs in the Education Library at Hilton, a classroom in the Edward Wright building in Old Aberdeen, and in Hillhead Halls of Residence. The monitors on these screens have been upgraded to flat screens, sitting on electrically operated, height-adjustable desks.

More Facilities for Student Projects

A grant from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council has allowed the Directorate’s Audio Visual Unit to upgrade the Project Rooms in Queen Mother, Taylor, Medical and Education Libraries.

They can now be used by students to view and practise presentations at a far more high-tech level. Presentations are now a common feature of many courses from the earliest level and students had been asking for more equipment for some time.

The grant has also paid for a data projector in the QML Floor 2 Seminar Room, where Information Consultants teach information skills to students.

David Walton
DISS Audio Visual Unit
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Donation in Memory of Professor WS Watt

Some of you may remember reading the article in the last issue of the Newsletter (p7-8: Professor W S Watt and the University Library in the 1950s) marking the death of Professor Watt, the Regius Professor of Humanities here, Vice-Principal and also Curator of the Library Committee.

A copy of the Newsletter was sent to Professor Watt’s family and as a result we had a reply from his son, Robert, a (1973) graduate of Aberdeen now on the staff of the Department of English at the University of Dundee. Robert remarked on the ‘tribute to his father’s work for the Library, which was always dear to his heart, not only when he was Curator but later when he worked to secure the Queen Mother Library.

Following earlier informal discussions within the University Robert has now formally offered to assemble a complete set of Professor Watt’s scholarly articles, amounting to over 140 (120 written after his retirement), for deposit in the Library. We already have all but one of the published books and he will give us a copy of this one. He also hopes to send us a complete list of his father’s publications.

Dickens Gifts, courtesy of George Bruce

We have recently been able to add to stock a set of Dickens’ works previously not represented in our collection.

As those of you who have read your Newsletter diligently over the last few issues will know, we try to purchase specific copies of Dickens in line with a longstanding research interest in the Department of English. The Spring/Summer issues of the last two years have reported our acquisition of early editions of Sketches by Boz and Thomas Peckett Prest’s plagiarised version, The Sketch Book by “Boz”.

Earlier in the year we fell heir to the printed works from the personal library of George Bruce (his manuscript material has gone to the National Library of Scotland). This Fraserburgh-born North East poet and 1932 University alumnus died last year in Edinburgh, where he worked for many years as BBC Scotland arts producer, also contributing much to the Edinburgh International Festival from its inception in 1947 and to the Scottish arts scene generally.

Amongst the works reflecting George Bruce’s interest not only in modern Scottish poetry but also his love of literature of all periods in a much wider, international context, was a set of Charles Dickens. Dr Paul Schlicke, Senior Lecturer in the English Department and an expert on Dickens, was delighted with the addition to the Library’s collection, which has become, largely through his own enthusiasm, one of the best collections of material by and relating to Dickens in the world.

He commented, “This set is a valuable addition to OML holdings. In itself it isn’t authoritative (it was published 1901-06) but since it appears to have been printed from the plates used from the final authorised edition, overseen by Dickens before his death, then it is a particularly useful edition for double-checking details in the Charles Dickens edition of 1867-68. In addition it has not only the original illustrations but also those engraved for the Godshill edition of 1897-1908, which are the best (and best known) after Phiz’s original ones.

In short, it is one of the most significant complete editions of Dickens’s works, and well worth having.”

The works of Charles Dickens (The authentic edition)
21 volumes; with [coloured] illustrations by Phiz.
London: Chapman & Hall, (printed from the Edition that was carefully corrected by the Author in 1867 and 1868) 1901-06

We have added all these volumes to the material presently in King’s College Stack, at the shelfmark: x 822.33

Also in George Bruce’s library was another of Dickens’ works, with wonderful illustrations:

The Old Curiosity Shop illustrated in colour by Frank Reynolds, R.I.
London: Hodder & Stoughton, [1913]

[For a tribute to George Bruce by Dr Ian Olson see the University Newsletter, Issue 17, October 2002, p1: George Bruce: poetic voice of the North-east, where he is regarded as one of the last representatives of the Scottish literary renaissance. Available on the web at: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/newsletter/issue_17/story17.htm]

Thomas Reid developments

Professor Gordon Graham, a member of the Library Users Committee, is now Director of the University’s new Centre for Scottish Philosophy. Its new website, at: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cssp/ shows the database facilitated by a grant from the Friends, under ‘The Research Room’. There is also a searchable catalogue of the papers of Thomas Reid kept in Special Libraries and Archives, a biographical dictionary of the leading figures in Scottish philosophy and an electronic mail room, where scholars can seek information and exchange research findings.

The first issue of the new journal referred to in the Autumn/Winter 2002 issue of the Newsletter, Journal of Scottish Philosophy, edited from the new Centre and published by Edinburgh University Press, appeared two days before the launch of the Centre in March. It is held in Queen Mother Library on Floor 4, at the shelfmark Per 100 Jou and incorporates the earlier Reid Studies, whose run of vols 1-5, 1986/7-2002 is available at Per 100 Rei

The Centre will also be launching The Library of Scottish Philosophy, a series of expertly edited selections from the history of Scottish philosophy. They will cover specific authors and particular topics, the first two Selections from James Beattie and Art and Enlightenment. The main aim is to make less well known writings available cheaply to students, but also to become a series stocked by major bookshops, as with the highly successful Canongate Classics.
Head-dress goes Home

On 7th July a sacred horned head-dress with an eagle feather trailer from the University’s collections was returned to its Blood Tribe of Canadian Indians at a special ceremony in Marischal Museum.

This followed a process which had started in November last year with a visit to Aberdeen by members of the Blood Tribe. For many years the tribe had been able to use only three of its head-dresses, knowing that the fourth had been lost since the 1920s. The group of four head-dresses play an important part in the tribe’s annual Sun Dance.

Unlike some other claims, from the outset there was no dispute that the University of Aberdeen was the legal owner, having acquired it from an Aberdeen lady who had purchased it, together with other items from the North American Plains, in the 1920s. The issue was whether the head-dress should continue to be a museum object or whether it should return to its traditional treatment by the Blood Tribe, for whom ‘legal ownership’ of sacred items is an irrelevant concept.

The submission from the Blood Tribe acknowledged the physical care that the museum had offered for over 70 years, but pointed out that, far from preserving a ‘vanishing’ culture, the continued absence of the head-dress has meant that aspects of its culture were in danger of being lost forever.

Following the advice of an expert panel, the University agreed that the head-dress should be returned to its traditional role. We also agreed not to ask for a replica or publish photographs of it as this would run counter to our acceptance of its spiritual importance. In return, we have been offered a collection of cultural material representing the Tribe’s way of life and agreed that photographs of the head-dress may be displayed in a forthcoming exhibition in the Museum about the repatriation.

Lectures for All

Marischal Museum’s lecture series starts again on Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm from October until June. It also includes talks organised by the Elphinstone Institute, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and Egyptology Scotland. All are listed on the brochure enclosed with this Newsletter.

The lectures for this Session revert to the venue of Marischal Museum Lecture Theatre ie through the arch and in the door at the far end of the quad; then up the stairs to the 1st Floor.

Advance booking is not necessary - please pay any charge at the door.

A reminder:

Admission to Marischal Museum is free, via the main doors at the back of the Quad.

Opening hours are:

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And if you can’t get to Marischal Museum keep an eye open for the small exhibition cases in Queen Mother Library, the Senior Common Room and the Elphinstone Institute. These are changed regularly and often reflect the themes of our main exhibitions.

Neil Curtis
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The St Albans Psalter Web Project

Christina summons the Trinity for Geoffrey
St Albans Psalter p403, copyright St Godehard, Hildesheim

Dr Jane Geddes, Senior Lecturer in the History of Art Department, brings us up to date on the St Albans Psalter Project, now that its web site has gone live.

The St Albans Psalter, owned by St Godehard’s Church in Hildesheim, Germany, is one of the finest examples of English Romanesque art. It also contains the Song of St Alexis which is the earliest surviving example of French literature. In addition, it is connected historically to Christina of Markyate, a hermitess living near St Albans Abbey, in Hertfordshire, in the early part of the 12th century. Christina, aided by a monk from the abbey, collaborated in the production of her own biography, a remarkable and vivid document recounting the dramatic events of her life, several of which can be connected with the Psalter.

These features alone would make the Psalter manuscript worthy of full publication but its physical circumstances were also a consideration. Although it is owned by St Godehard’s, most people who wish to examine the text must ask for it to be transported to the Cathedral Library there, where its exposure has to be closely supervised. And of course, for British scholars, it is also long way to travel.

All these reasons made the Psalter the obvious candidate for a prestigious academic award. The Arts and Humanities Research Board of Great Britain provides a generous ‘resource enhancement’ scheme, to make rare source material more easily available to the general public, and the St Albans Psalter project won £57,000, with additional funds from Aberdeen University, to be digitised and put on the web.

You may recall reading the advance notice about the St Albans Psalter Project in the Friends’ Autumn/Winter 2001 Newsletter. Now it is ready, on line at www.abdn.ac.uk/stalbanspsalter. The previous article was clearly written with bubbling optimism, flushed with news about the grant, but before work began.

Quite rightly the Hildesheim librarian, Dr Bepler, wished to maintain total control of the manuscript throughout its photographic ordeal, and chose his own photographer for the job. That’s when the troubles began. After our budget was fixed, the library there decided to improve the quality of production by upgrading from 35mm slide film to large Ektachrome transparencies. The film itself cost only a little more, but the scanning costs were very much higher. Added to that, due to a chemical problem, all 700 transparencies turned out green. New scans had to be made, with a local computing firm in Germany comparing the manuscript with the digital images to achieve the correct colour balance. Aberdeen University’s Faculty of Arts and Divinity kindly funded the extra costs.

After that, the project moved to Aberdeen, into the hands of the experienced team from Special Collections. Here Mike Arnott and Kim Downie used all their digital skills to create the web site, while other Aberdeen staff worked on the text. Dr Margaret Jubb, Senior Lecturer in the French Department, dealt with the Song of St Alexis, Dr Jane Geddes, commented on the art and manuscript. Dr Gundula Sharman, Lecturer in the German Department, translated the entire contents of the manuscript and the new commentaries into German, forming a parallel web site for German readers.

A classic monograph, The St Albans Psalter, was written in 1960 by Otto Plöch, Francis Wormald and Charles Dodwell. This book [in Special Libraries at: S 096.1 Wor s] provided a complete set of the images in black and white, and a very learned discussion, particularly about the iconographic sources and calendar. However, it was being produced at the same time as the first edition of Christina’s Life, (The Life of Christina of Markyate, ed. C.H. Talbot, 1959, new edition 1998 [both on QML Floor 3 at: 879.8Chr]) so the authors were not fully aware of the detailed connections between the two works. Also, for a book whose astounding beauty derives significantly from the use of colour, new technology was needed to deliver this to a higher standard than the old photographs. The Project aimed to take full advantage of both the meaning and use of colour, and the connections with Christina.

Thus, for example, colour emphasises the writing of the so-called Scribe 3, who may be identified with Abbot Geoffrey of St Albans himself. Geoffrey was a former schoolmaster who had a scandalously intimate relationship with Christina and commissioned the book. Scribe 3 contributes so much material which suggests the hand of an ardent teacher, and the authority of someone who can over-rule the fine design of the text. His writing is in vivid alternating colours of ink, clamouring for attention. He writes equally in French and Latin, composing as well as copying, providing parallel texts in both languages, to assist a struggling reader. His impassioned introduction to the Psalms, hinting at the malicious gossip about his relationship, turns the beautifully planned frontispiece into a crowded mess. In the later section of the psalms, he asks the artist to draw attention to his handwriting: the busy characters who inhabit the initials point frantically to his own lettering.
Scribe 3 also reminds the viewer that looking at pictures is a good way for the illiterate to understand scripture. Christina may not have read the book a great deal; its pages are still pristine. She was a famed embroideress and may have stitched the little silk curtains which protect many of the images. However, the embroideress did not care that the stitches and curtains covered up the writing, making several psalms impossible to read. In her spare time, at the abbot’s gentle request, Christina also stitched specially coy underwear for him.

A powerful aspect of the iconography is the way in which it is tailored for a single female reader. Thus the numerous images of the Life of Christ cycle emphasise the importance of women. Mary at the Annunciation holds a book open on her lap, in the same way Christina recounts about herself. The women at the Massacre of the Innocents fight back against the soldiers, one of the earliest examples of female defiance in this episode. Christina spent most of her early years fighting back against the physical onslaughts of men, repelling a rape attempt by the Bishop of Durham, and the conjugal demands of her husband in a forced marriage. The Passion is particularly poignant, beginning with Mary Magdalene washing Christ’s feet and ending with her announcement of the Resurrection to the Apostles. In the centre, the Last Supper becomes merely a disastrous men’s meal where Judas’ betrayal and Peter’s denial begin. The sacred moment representing the Eucharist instead takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Christ is alone with the chalice, in the same way that an anchoress would be alone.

If Abbot Geoffrey commissioned the book for Christina, he also put himself into the picture, literally. Psalm 133 should illustrate ‘How happy it is for brothers to dwell together in unity’, an encomium for successful monastic life, but instead the illustration shows a leader encouraging one group of men while a rival plots angrily behind his back. Christina’s Life and documents at St Albans show that this was Geoffrey’s genuine situation: some monks followed his admiration for Christina’s visionary powers, others hated him because of his scandalous behaviour and generous donations to Christina’s small nunnery. The Litany illustration depicts a vision experienced by Christina, in which she was able to summon the Holy Ghost to descend upon Geoffrey. Her account emphasises her great powers of prayer but the illustration commissioned by Geoffrey shows himself as the centre of attention.

If the Life of Christ cycle has been tailored for a female viewer, one anomalous image, depicting St Martin, inserted arrestingily between Doubting Thomas and the Ascension, may be for Geoffrey. St Martin, a soldier who later became a monk, gave his cloak to a beggar who was later revealed as Christ. Geoffrey, who began as a schoolmaster, borrowed some expensive copes (cloaks) from St Albans Abbey, to use as props for a play, but in an accidental fire, the copes were burnt and Geoffrey offered himself to Christ as a monk. In recompense he later gave the Abbey several exquisite embroidered copes. He was thus placing his role model, St Martin, firmly in the company of the apostles.

The Project has already stimulated more research into the subject. In the summer a multi-disciplinary conference was held at St Albans Abbey itself, with papers given by three of the Aberdeen University staff involved, and both the manuscript and Christina were placed under the spotlight. A book of essays from the conference (edited by Henrietta Leyser and Samuel Fanous, and published by Routledge), is due in 2004. At St Albans, a choir delivered Vespers in plainchant, recreating the occasion when Christina first experienced the beauty of the church and decided to become a nun. This occasion was so moving that a new performance was subsequently staged locally for an Aberdeenshire audience. Laura Morley, a medical student at the University, sang ‘the voice of Christina’ at Birse Church, accompanied by illustrations from the Psalter. It is hoped that King’s College Chapel choir can be inspired to perform something similar, this time with the addition of male voices for the monks.

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Winifred Deans (1901-90) visits Scotland’s 1938 Empire Exhibition

A recent find amongst some long lingering tomes in the Basement of Queen Mother Library has proved to be an unexpected and colourful addition to a collection of personal papers deposited in Special Collections and Archives more than ten years ago.

A small bundle of printed material relating to the 1938 Empire Exhibition Scotland appeared on first glance to be a welcome addition to our printed collections. However, on opening the Exhibition’s souvenir brochure, tucked amongst a small collection of other souvenir mementoes, were found a season ticket belonging to University alumnus and benefactor, Winifred Deans (1901–90), and a postcard sent to her mother thanking her for “jam box” and reassuring her that “shoes not mildewed”!

Winifred M. Deans graduated from the University of Aberdeen, MA 1922 and BSc 1923, followed by a period of further study in Cambridge, from where she graduated BA 1925 and MA 1929. She was then appointed Assistant Mathematics and Physics Mistress at the County Secondary School for Girls, in Harrow, in 1925, but returned to Scotland in 1927, where she worked as Assistant Science Editor with Messrs Blackie and Son, Ltd., publishers, Glasgow. In 1945 she was appointed to the Commonwealth Bureau of Animal Nutrition at Aberdeen’s Rowett Institute, where she remained until her retirement in 1966. On her death on 7 June 1990 her estate, including a small volume of personal papers and many books of local studies interest, was bequeathed to the University.

After considerable sorting and some weeding, Winifred’s library was distributed amongst the University’s Special Collections and the general library stock. 11 boxes of personal papers belonging to her and her brother, Maxwell (1907–83), were deposited in the University Archives (ref. MS 3359). These personal papers include University lecture notes taken whilst studying in Aberdeen and subsequently, 1919 – 31; 29 issues of My Magazine, dating from the early 20th Century; albums of family photographs and postcards, late 19th C– c1940; together with miscellaneous notes on Swedish history and other topics.

The latest acquisition comprises an Official Guide: Empire Exhibition Scotland 1938, a season ticket issued to Winifred Deans, and official Exhibition lettercards and postcards showing images of the exhibition sites and buildings, in both sepia and colour views. The most appealing of these is a booklet of Valentine’s Snapshots, containing 12 beautiful photographs of the night time illuminations of the Exhibition lake and fountains.

Set within the 175 acres of Bellahouston Park, in Glasgow, the Empire Exhibition Scotland was described as ‘the greatest held anywhere in the world since the famous British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924’ (The Illustrated London News, no. 804, 7 May 1938), and was, without doubt, the most significant event Glasgow had hosted since the International Exhibition in Kelvingrove Park in 1888.

The Exhibition was presented as a microcosm of the British Empire, with over 70 palaces and pavilions, and scores of smaller buildings, occupied by representatives from each of Britain’s member countries, cultures and principal industries. Running from May to October, it attracted over 12 ½ million visitors and cost an estimated £10 millions - small fry by Millennium Dome or Scottish Parliament standards, but no mean sum in 1938, with the Depression a recent memory and the prospects of war an impending reality.
The Music of James Scott Skinner: website launch

You may remember Pat Ballantyne’s earlier articles in the Newsletter on the Lottery-funded project to digitise Historic Collections material associated with the ‘Strathspey King’, James Scott Skinner (Spring/Summer ’02 p8, and Autumn/Winter ’02 p6-7). On 29 September the multi-media website of The Music of James Scott Skinner was launched with panache by Historic Collections in Elphinstone Hall.

A lively programme had encouraged a large turnout of invited guests: representatives from the sponsors, the University of Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Angus Councils, well known faces from the traditional dancing fraternity of the North East and beyond, schoolchildren from Banchory Primary School, Hazlehead Academy and Gilcomston School’s Gaelic Unit, University and DISS staff, and the Friends’ Executive Committee.

Dr Alan Knox, Manager, Historic Collections, opened the proceedings, followed by the Senior Vice-Principal, Professor John Sewel, who spoke of the importance of Scott Skinner - fiddler, dancer, composer and more - who turned the popular dancing of his day into an art form. He stressed the value of making the Library’s manuscripts of Skinner’s work into an accessible mass media format, so contributing to keeping Skinner’s traditions alive and as a resource for schools and individuals everywhere.

Pat Ballantyne, Project Officer, introduced the website itself, with an appeal to the children in the audience to remember throughout that Skinner was a pop idol in his day. Their amusing definitions of this contributed to Pat’s enthusiastic and entertaining presentation, which was as fun for the adults present as for the children.

The website includes not only clips of Skinner himself performing but also a video with the Cults Quintet playing Skinner’s music, together with the local Aurora Scottish Dance and Music Group, the dancers dressed in contemporary costumes and dancing his dances in the style of the day as set out by him. Performing for us at the launch were these same groups - with a chance for the audience to join in - and the Banchory schoolchildren playing a set of Scott Skinner tunes.

A perfect launch for what is a marvellous resource now available in a popular medium to all who have access to the appropriate IT equipment. Do try it for yourself at: www.abdn.ac.uk/scottskinner

Happening just as we went to print, there are no photographs of the occasion in this Newsletter but we hope to have some for our next issue.

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Dominating the site was the 300-foot Tower of Empire - a monument to the Art Deco style, designed by Exhibition architect Thomas Tait (1882–1954). Panoramic viewing galleries offered uninterrupted views of the city and surrounding countryside, said on a clear day to stretch for more than 100 miles. ‘Tait’s Tower’ was to have been a permanent memorial to the exhibition, but was dismantled in 1939 with other exhibition buildings, as it was considered too obvious a landmark for enemy warplanes.

Although this recent deposit from QML (ref. MS 3731) is printed material, and not ‘archival’ in the true sense of the word, it makes a most attractive addition to the Winifred and Maxwell Deans’ papers which we already hold and will be catalogued alongside. Like the album of postcards and photographs in MS 3359, it hints at Winifred’s ‘collecting instinct’ and illuminates a personal side to this distinguished and well-respected scientist.

Both MS 3359 and MS 3731 are available for consultation in Special Libraries and Archives, Monday - Friday, 9.30am - 4.30pm. Images from The Empire Exhibition Scotland and reminiscences from visitors to the event are available on several web sites:


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South Cascade and Tower at night

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The Music of James Scott Skinner: website launch

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South Cascade and Tower at night
Thanks to you …
The Friends have met the cost of acquiring for the Library:

KRAMER, Cheryce, MARTYN, Trea and NEWTON Michael eds.
*Literature and science, 1660-1834*
*Contribution from the Friends:* £500

QML Floor 2 in the History and Philosophy of Science Collection at the shelfmark:
Sc 820.93256 Haw

In this purchase the Friends have helped the University to acquire a very important and indeed fascinating work. It is, as Judith Hawley points out in her introduction, an ‘anthology of facsimile texts of popular literature on science from the founding of the Royal Society in London to William Whewell’s coining of the word “scientist” in 1834’.

The work is in two parts, each of four volumes. Part 1 appeared in the early part of this year and the second part is scheduled to appear in 2004. The individual volume titles are:

**Part 1:**
- Vol. 1: Science and polite culture
- Vol. 2: Sciences of the body and mind
- Vol. 3: Earthly powers
- Vol. 4: Flora

**Part 2:**
- Vol. 5: Fauna
- Vol. 6: Astronomy
- Vol. 7: Natural philosophy
- Vol. 8: Technology

The collection highlights the close links between literature and science. The facsimiles are drawn from the writings of the great and famous such as Robert Hooke, Charles Babbage, Joseph Priestley, Daniel Defoe, Thomas Hobbes, John Wesley etc but they also come from the less well known such as William Charles Wells, Thomas Trotter, Benjamin Martin. What they have in common is the fact that they are for the most part extremely rare texts difficult to find outside the major research libraries. *Literature and Science, 1660-1834* draws them together as a focus on the fascinating and often-denied relationship between literature and the laboratory.

This is a unique and important work and the University is greatly indebted to the Friends for their assistance in making the purchase possible.

*Allan Stewart*
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Reminder … Friends on the Web

http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/friends