With this issue of News comes your papers for the AGM on Thursday 25 May – the Minutes of the 2005 AGM and the Agenda for the 2006 meeting; the Treasurer’s Report will be circulated at the meeting. We do hope you will be able to join us and stay for Dr Jane Geddes’ talk on her adventures last Summer on the trail of the Tarim Library in the Yemen.

Perk: Remember, that as Friends you are entitled to 10% off George Washington Wilson items from Queen Mother Library CopyShop.

FRIENDS’ ACTIVITIES

Date for your Diary
The remote library of Tarim in Yemen, filled with ancient manuscripts, has been the seat of Islamic studies for centuries. The road through the harshest desert is newly built, revealing a society of slaves, bandits, and splendid architecture. Three ladies went there, seeking adventure ... and perhaps books.
For a preview on the project in English see: http://www.manuscript-yemen.org/index_4.htm but it won’t be as much fun as hearing Jane Geddes relate her experiences!

Special Autumn Date
Those of you who heard our President, Jack Webster, when he first took up his position with the Friends in 2001, or if you have heard him at one of the countless other times he has addressed gatherings of all kinds in Aberdeen, will know what a delightful speaker he is. We feel privileged that he hopes to make time in his busy schedule to address us again at our Autumn meeting. His topic is likely to be one of the many fascinating people he has met in his own full and interesting life.

More details in the next News sheet.
On the 17th November around twenty-five members and guests of the Friends met in the Seminar Room of the Queen Mother Library to hear a talk by Dr Mary Pryor, Honorary Teaching Fellow in the Department of History of Art, making a welcome return visit to address the Friends.

Continuing on the theme of the history of the University’s art collection, Mary enthralled the gathering by her illustrated talk. She and Dr John Morrison have researched the so-called ‘Black Paintings’, currently hanging at the back of the Elphinstone Hall. They have been given this name on account of the surface grime acquired over many years and only partially removed by the copious application of spittle by Marischal Museum staff after their transfer there from King’s Chapel.

The five paintings were first noted in University records in 1889 and were believed to have arrived in Aberdeen in 1823, when they were displayed in the Common Hall, now transformed into part of the Conference Centre; a subsequent move took them to the Chapel. There is a consensus that they were painted in the 17th century.

The history and intended use of the five paintings have been a matter of speculation. Mary’s talk centred on the investigations leading to a plausible explanation of their production and use in the 17th century. She outlined the political situation of the period, focussing on the return from exile of the young Charles II to Scotland in 1650 and his association with the Covenanters. They gave him protection, seeking through him to establish Presbyterianism in both England and Scotland, and inducing him, albeit unwillingly, to sign the Covenant.

The paintings depict five Old Testament scenes – Jephthah and his Daughter, David and Goliath, David and Abigail, The Judgement of Solomon and Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Each has a king as a central figure and could be interpreted as having a recurrent theme with an application to Charles, containing a warning, a projection of a favourable outcome if promises were kept, but disaster if a vow was broken; the vow inferred being the commitment of Charles to the Covenant.

Clues to the production of the paintings were provided by the discovery of templates of four of the scenes in the form of a woodcut or engravings by continental artists dating from the late 16th or early 17th centuries, and it was concluded that these images had been used by apprentice artists in Scotland as models for the paintings.

It is known that Charles II stayed for periods at Gowrie House in Perth until 1651, and Mary proposed that the paintings might have been hung there to reinforce the Covenanters’ message to him.

Together with Dr John Morrison, also of the History of Art Department, Mary Pryor has uncovered much of the history and significance of the ‘Black Paintings’, linking them to a possible use in the political intrigues involving Charles II and the Covenanters.

On behalf of the Friends Graham Hunter thanked her for coming again to give us such an excellent and interesting talk.

The meeting concluded with the customary light refreshments.

Derek Ogston
Executive Committee, Friends of Aberdeen University Library

[Friends will note how indebted we are to the University’s History of Art Department for stimulating speakers at our meetings. Many thanks indeed.]
In March the University was delighted and privileged that Colin was able to spend two evenings with us, in connection with his book, the concluding volume in the Quincentennial Studies in the History of the University of Aberdeen series.

Colin McLaren was, of course, Archivist and latterly Librarian for the University until his early retirement in 1999. While at Aberdeen he produced an impressive array of publications relating to the history of the University, including, of course, the very readable *Crown and Gown 1495-1995: an illustrated history of the University of Aberdeen*, written in conjunction with Dr Jennifer J Carter in 1994.

Colin dedicates his new volume to: ‘… colleagues, past and present, who have cared for the special collections, manuscripts and archives of the University of Aberdeen’. The two evening occasions in March showed in just what high esteem Colin is held by former colleagues and friends in Aberdeen and the North-East. Both venues had impressive turnouts and all those there were wanting a few minutes to talk to Colin once the formal part of the evenings and the many questions were finished.

Colin’s latest volume illuminates the daily life for students at the Universities of Aberdeen between 1600 and 1860. In his talk to the University community generally, *Tablemates: Students and Civility in the 17th century*, Colin concentrated on some of the rules and regulations of the early 1600s, the ‘Statuta’ which affected every aspect of students’ lives, from entry until graduation – their behaviour and how they were to relax, to eat and drink, how they were to behave in and outside the classrooms. All were constrained by a series of administrative procedures and we heard why the University authorities attempted thus to regulate the student body. Colin concluded with a reading from John Rowe’s *Rules of the Table*, of 1657. How things have changed, we thought! As expected, Colin brought the period to life with his dry wit.

For the Friends the following evening, in *Aberdeen Students 1600-1860: another appendix*, we were treated to a lively analysis and biography of four Aberdeen graduates. Together, their lives spanned the whole period and they all appear in *The Dictionary of National Biography*. In isolating these four Colin was able to show us their background, of family, trade or profession and location, set in the context of other students; their age, course, immediate employment after graduating, and the career and life which was to warrant their entry in the DNB. It was a rich exemplar of the sources for student biography and enlivened again in Colin’s inimitable style.

Colin’s talks were both drawn from his new publication and encouraged many of the audience on each occasion to follow up the topics for themselves by purchasing the book (details below).

The journal *Scottish Economic and Social History* has commented that, ‘Aberdeen University is certainly one of the best-served universities as regards published histories’ and Colin’s input has been a major contribution to this over many decades, culminating in his latest work.

It was good to see Colin and Margaret again – haste ye back!

*Margaret Coutts was, of course, Head of Reader Services in the Library from 1987, later combining this post with that of Associate Librarian, before leaving us for the post of Librarian at the University of Kent, in Canterbury, in 1994. She is now Librarian of the prestigious Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds. Many of the Friends will, I’m sure, remember her, as well as Colin.*
Update on the new Library Building plans

Friends will have been glad to see recent reports in the press about the plans for our new library, as below:

“‘Flagship library project to match academic ambitions’ leads next phase of University’s infrastructure investment. The University of Aberdeen has announced its commitment to a new flagship library to be built on campus to consolidate the University’s position as a leader among world universities. The University Court agreed last week to proceed with plans for a £55.5M ($96.4M) facility.” see http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mediareleases/release.php?id=530 for the full report.

This means that we shall at last be able to house under one roof our historic collections from King’s, comprising more than a quarter of a million ancient and priceless books and manuscripts collected over five centuries from the foundations of the University in 1495, AND the current working collections in Queen Mother Library.

Professor C Duncan Rice, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University, sees the library project as “…Part of a vision to match the quality of our people and the richness of our history and heritage with an outstanding intellectual and cultural facility, the benefits of which will stretch far beyond our University community”.

The new library will be located adjacent to the existing Queen Mother Library on the King’s campus. The QML will be demolished as soon as planning permission is achieved, while the remainder of the building continues in use.

Following discussions with the Vice-Principal, senior Estates and Financial Planning staff, a workable plan for relocating the single storey wing’s staff and stock has been achieved. This requires stock moves, which we hope to accomplish this summer, over several floors within QML and the creation of new Seminar, Staff and Sick Rooms; some small loss of study space will be inevitable. It is essential that all these works be completed during the summer vacation in order to minimise the impact of noise on our users.

Now that the announcement of the name of our appointed architects, Schmidt Hammer Lassen from Denmark, has been made (see some samples of their work at http://www.shl.dk/) library staff are looking forward to liaising with them as they finalise plans for our new library. We are aware of some of their impressive portfolio of outstanding public buildings, including the Royal Danish Library, and hope that ours will be not only what we require - a fully functional building that will enable us to continue to support teaching, learning, research and to integrate our disparate collections, but what we desire - a place that is truly iconic which will enable us to house our all our treasures in 21st century surroundings and to provide enhanced services for the local community. The final design of the new library building is expected in early autumn.

Wendy Pirie
Acting University Librarian

Celebrating …

To celebrate the University’s commitment to support a new Library Project, costing £55.5M, a public lecture was given in March in the Linklater Rooms. The aim was also to raise awareness of the exceptional importance of the undertaking and the challenges to be met.

The speaker was Gerard Beasley, currently Director of Columbia University’s Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, the most distinguished library of its kind in the US. He also has impressive credentials from his previous posts in Britain and Canada.

In his lecture, entitled, ‘Activating the Archive’, Gerard Beasley argued that in an online age the future of libraries lies in their special collections and archives. He discussed the importance of keeping archives alive, their value and role to both academics and contemporary culture, and explained the challenges of preserving, maintaining and using rare documents in the context of new technologies.

Throughout he stressed the importance of aiming to preserve not the archive per se but the relationship between the material body of each archive and the person wishing to explore it.
Thus in ‘Activating the archive’ we must be aware of the needs of users, not simply the needs of the archive itself. The better preservation is looked after, he argued, the better we can develop programmes which provide access. Preservation means access; to exist archives must be brought out or no one will care about them and they will disappear. Thus we must preserve the relationship between the archive and society. Activating the archive is about harnessing new digital technologies to provide enhanced access - enhanced visual and intellectual access to digital surrogates.

A large audience was stimulated to a lively question session following the lecture – from whether manuscripts and artefacts should be returned to their place of origin, the reasons for digitising collections rather than allowing them to have the scarcity value of print availability only, to views on providing access in our own new building. He also emphasised that students must be reminded that using search engines is search only, not ‘research’.

It was an absorbing lecture to start the Library Project campaign.

Re-organisation of Library and Computing Services

Aenea Reid, Manager of the User Services Division within the old Directorate, wrote in the November news bulletin Directions of the decision to separate the University’s Library and Computing Services, converged in 1996 as The Directorate of Information Systems and Services (DISS). In an abbreviated version of her article, below, she also updates us on present progress.

Following the DISS Review and the early retirement of its Director, Graham Pryor, it was recommended that the management of Library and Computing services be separated. The Directorate would be split up and a new Librarian and a new Director of Information Technology appointed to lead the de-converged services.

A number of reasons were behind the decision to re-organise. These included the changes brought about by the restructuring of the University into Colleges, the proposals to build a new University Library, which will require particularly strong and visionary leadership within the Library, the difficulty of finding someone with the appropriate experience and calibre to take on the overarching role of Director of Information Systems and Services, and weaknesses identified in the then structures and operation of DISS. In light of all this, it was felt that the needs of the University would be met more effectively by separate Library and IT organisations, led, respectively, by a new University Librarian and a new Director of Information Technology, each able to focus on their core business.

The Library and Historic Collections divisions of DISS form the core of the new Library service. Components of the services previously delivered by the User Services and Management Services divisions will be re-allocated to Library or IT Services, as appropriate. The two services will continue to collaborate closely, however, particularly delivering integrated Help Desk services and delivering and supporting electronic information resources.

The re-organisation is being led by the University Secretary, Steve Cannon, and the Vice-Principal (Library & Information Services), Professor Chris Gane, previously Chair of the Library Users’ Committee.

The new Director of Information Technology has now been appointed. Paul Haley, who was previously Head of IS (Information Systems) Operations with the British Library, took up his position on 1 May. The process of appointing a new Librarian, who will report to the Vice-Principal (Library & Information Services), is underway.

There will be no immediate change in the delivery of services. Once the new organisational structures are in place, services will be reviewed and adjustments made to improve delivery and meet core, strategic needs.

Aenea Reid
a.reid@abdn.ac.uk
At the end of June last year, after nine busy years as Director of Information Systems and Services, Graham Pryor took early retirement from the University. In the same issue of Directions, Aenea Reid, Manager, User Services Division, looked back on Graham’s time with the Directorate, and wished him well for the future.

Graham joined us from the oil sector, having worked there in various roles in library, IT, and information and records management. His post at the University was a new one, created in 1996 after the merger of library and computing services.

From the outset, Graham was a firm believer in the close relationship between information and information systems and took on the task of integration with enthusiasm and vision. Under his leadership, we were able to transform the compartmentalised and under-resourced information services of the mid nineties into the integrated and comprehensive services provided by DISS since.

Supported by IT colleagues, the Library surged into the new age of electronic information. The engagement and collaboration with academic staff, seen by Graham as core to the Directorate’s strategy, enabled the evolution of value-added services, such as the support and development of learning technology, web design and development, and information skills teaching.

From the business sector, Graham brought improvements to our management practices, encouraging cross-divisional collaboration and internal communication, and actively supported staff development and external liaison. One consequence of this was the award of Investors in People status to the Directorate in 2005.

Graham had the foresight to support innovative developments before their value was recognised by others. This included early development of the University web service and digitisation of historic collections. The proposal for the redevelopment of the University Library was made way back in the Directorate’s Strategic Plan for 1997-2002 and Graham continued to champion the need for this as different initiatives, including an unsuccessful bid for Lottery funds, came and went. That this idea has now matured into plans for an exciting new building owes much to his early vision.

Graham was a regular contributor to Directions. He relished debate on controversial issues and, as is clearly evident from the subjects of his articles, was up to speed on the hot topics of the day. These included our acceptance as a member of The Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL), VAT on online publications, and Open access - transforming research publication.

The new century has brought significant changes both to the University and to the world in which it has to compete. It was also time for change in the management of information services and Graham decided it was time for him, too, to make a change.

Graham is now manager of the pioneering Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) project Source-to-Output Repositories, based at Edinburgh University. The project addresses the area of interactions between output repositories of research publications and source repositories of primary research data. Options for managing Information Repositories and the broader area of Open Access to research data were just two of the more recent initiatives that Graham introduced to the University of Aberdeen, in advance of the emerging new conditions of public funding for research.

Thank you, Graham
Inspiration for Aberdeen Musical Society
200 years later: S. Cecilia’s Day Concert

Friends may be interested to know of, and in fact some of you may have attended, a most enjoyable evening concert in November in King’s College Chapel, made possible by items left to the Library two centuries before.

The Aberdeen Musical Society was the centre of musical life in Aberdeen from its foundation in 1748 until fading out in 1805. In its day its members included many of the most eminent citizens of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, including many senior members of both Universities. Among its founders were Dr John Gregory, of the dynasty of surgeons and medical Professors, and, of course, a generous donor to the Library.

When the Society closed it left some of its music and instruments and Cosmo Alexander’s painting of S. Cecilia, which had adorned its concert room, in the keeping of the Librarian of Marischal College, “until such time as the Society should be revived.”

After a summer of research in Historic Collections and elsewhere, the Society was revived for a S. Cecilia’s Day concert last November, a chance to hear music known to have been in the repertory of the Society - played in the programme order of an authentic 18th century concert - and also to see Alexander’s S. Cecilia painting, on exhibition during the evening. A special programme booklet included a history of the Society and an essay on music from 18th century Aberdeen in the Library’s collections.

The first was for the Jewish Festival of Purim in March, the annual carnival-like celebration commemorating the rescue of the Jews from extermination in Persia. Members of the Jewish community from Glasgow, Edinburgh and London were amongst the 200 people attending.

A highlight of the event was a guided tour of the University’s collection of Hebraica, over 1,000 items of rare books and manuscripts relating to Jewish history and religion. Two scrolls from the Book of Esther in the collection have particular relevance to the Festival of Purim and the Rabbi of Edinburgh made a special reading from them.

Rare books were also on show for the official launch of the University’s Centre for the Novel, with a lecture by Professor John Sutherland, author, academic, newspaper columnist and Chair of the Man Booker Prize last year.

The Centre aims to promote the study of novels, novelists and associated traditions in English fiction, including Scottish, Irish and American works. Special Libraries has a vast collection of early fiction which is considered among the finest in the world. Between 1710 and 1836 Aberdeen was a copyright library and so acquired, by law, a copy of every work published in Britain, and many of the earlier works are still in their original bindings. The books are complemented by a unique manuscript archive and an extensive range of supportive material – medical literature, political pamphlets and complete runs of many 18th and 19th century periodicals.

The Centre hopes to merge historical collections with a more practical approach to the novel, through conferences, visiting fellowships, teaching and research.

In his address Professor Sutherland said, “Since its inception in the late 17th and 18th centuries, the novel in English has become the main literary form in our culture. A key aim of the Centre for the Novel is to attract scholars and postgraduates to work on the University’s vast collection of early fiction, which is among the best in the world.”
Thanks to you we have been able to support two areas, one specifically exploiting our special collections.

In the Autumn Historic Collections were given first refusal on the rare printed book detailed below. Dr Iain Beavan, Head of Special Collections, was most keen that the Library should acquire it because of its local and historical significance. On your behalf the Friends contributed £1,500 to its purchase.

The Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies, as revised and proposed to the use of the Protestant Episcopal Church, at a convention of the said Church in the States of New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and South-Carolina.


Total cost: £3,550 raised from:

Historic Collections: £2,000
Friends of Aberdeen University Library: £1,500
In 1786, the Philadelphia printers (Hall & Sellers) were granted permission to publish a Book of Common Prayer for the use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the northeastern states of the United States of America. A convention had been set up to modify the Book of Common Prayer, ‘to render the Liturgy consistent with the American revolution and the constitutions of the respective states’.

Three years later, in 1789, the London bookseller and publisher John Debrett was commissioned to reprint the edition, in a limited printing of 50 copies. These were not for public sale, but for consideration and assessment by the English bishops, who were concerned over aspects of its perceived liberal doctrine and deviations from the orthodoxy of the Church of England.

The English bishops, who, it is said, were much discomforted by the text, had thus had to come to terms with a prayer book which omitted references - and prayers - to British institutions (eg Parliament), ignored instructions for prayers of thanksgiving to be said on 5 November for the ‘happy deliverance of King James I’, and altered (and simplified) the otherwise prescribed calendar. Celebration of the translation of St Martin, on 4 July, was replaced by the more politically and constitutionally realistic reference to the blessings of religious and civil liberty. Indeed, the Protestant Episcopal Church compiled a form of prayer and thanksgiving to be said each year on that date.

In 1784 in Aberdeen the American Samuel Seabury was consecrated bishop of Connecticut and thus first bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America. Those present at his consecration included Robert Kilgour, bishop of Aberdeen in the Scottish Episcopal Church, and John Skinner, who soon afterwards held the same post. (There is a commemorative plaque in Marischal College quadrangle to recognise the consecration of Samuel Seabury in a house in Long Acre, once near the College.) Seabury himself was of course (inevitably) involved in the debates over the wording and content of a Book of Common Prayer suitable for use in America, and, through persistence and diplomacy, apparently achieved agreement from all sides in 1790.

Historic Collections is privileged to hold on deposit many of the older records of the Aberdeen Diocese of the Scottish Episcopal Church, along with its very substantial library of c.5,500 printed items, dating from the 1520s through to the 1850s. A strong thread of Episcopalanism has persisted in the north-east of Scotland, there are early links between the bishops of Aberdeen and Seabury (with the connections detailed in St Andrew’s Episcopal Cathedral on King Street), and substantial holdings of liturgical texts and prayer books in the Diocesan Library. Historic Collections also holds a number of other American Episcopal prayer books from the early years, and so the acquisition of this London printing of an American Book of Common Prayer seemed both desirable and natural. Professor Peter Davidson, of the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy, and currently writing a history of the University Library, was also particularly keen that we add the work to our collection if at all possible.

Historic Collections could not have bought the work without financial help from the Friends of Aberdeen University Library, and that assistance is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

Dr Iain Beavan
Head - Special Libraries and Archives
Historic Collections
i.beavan@abdn.ac.uk

http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/historic/
Thanks to you …

Postcards of Treasures from the Library’s Collections

Contribution of up to £1,000 from the Friends

Professor Peter Davidson made a request for sponsorship of 6 new postcards depicting items from Special Libraries. These will be 6” x 4”, in colour, and the Friends’ involvement will be noted on the back of each. They will be produced by the Library’s Reprographic Unit.

John I Mitchell donation - Correction

Some of you may have wondered, on reading in the last Friends’ News of John Mitchell’s very kind gesture, whether this was the John Mitchell you thought you remembered from your own university days here, but were perhaps a trifle perplexed by the retirement date we gave …

John graduated with an MA Hons in 1966 and retired from teaching English, first in Cornwall and then in High Wycombe, in 1997. He now lives in Penn, High Wycombe.

Apologies, John.

Reminder … Friends on the Web

Friends Web site

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

Friends of Aberdeen University Library

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QML, Taylor and the Medical Library

Monday - Saturday 9.00 am - 10.00 pm
(all close at 8.00 pm on Fridays)
Sunday 11.00 am - 10.00 pm (QML)
1.00 pm - 10.00 pm (Taylor and Medical)

Special Libraries
Monday - Friday 9.30 am - 4.30 pm

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