



UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

Elphinstone Institute

Public Events 2025–2026



ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE
studying culture in context

30th

Anniversary
Year

Welcome, fit like?

Jyne us fur oor 30th-anniversary year wi a muckle range o events celebratin the Nor-East! The Elphinstone Institute wis startit in 1995 tae mark the Varsity o Aiberdeen's five hunner years, an is dedicatit tae researchin, teachin, and celebratin the rich cultures o the Nor-East and Nor o Scotland, wi Ethnology, Folklore, an Ethnomusicology at its hairt.

Dinna miss oot! Come alang and jyne us tae celebrate oor cultures.

Welcome!

Join us during our 30th-anniversary year for a wide-range of events celebrating the North-East! The Elphinstone Institute was founded in 1995 as part of the University of Aberdeen's quincentenary, and is dedicated to researching, teaching, and celebrating the rich cultures of the North-East and North of Scotland through the disciplines of Ethnology, Folklore, and Ethnomusicology.

Don't miss out! Come along and join us to celebrate our cultures.

Booking Events

Listed events are free with no booking required unless otherwise noted. For ticketed events, please book via the Institute's website: www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone. For more information, get in touch by e-mail: elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk or telephone: 01224 272996.

What's on/Fit's on...

Elphinstone Institute Public Events 2025–2026

TO BOOK TICKETED EVENTS E-MAIL: ELPHINSTONE@ABDN.AC.UK OR TELEPHONE: 01224 272996

2ND AND 4TH THURSDAYS OF THE MONTH

Polish-Scottish Song Group

POLISH-SCOTTISH SONG WORKSHOPS

7–9pm | MacRobert Building, MR047

Join the Polish-Scottish Song Group and exchange culture through the traditional songs of Scotland, Poland, and many other countries. All welcome! Contact n.lebigre@abdn.ac.uk for details.

Wymiana kulturowa poprzez tradycyjne utwory ze Szkocji, Polski oraz wielu innych krajów. Wszyscy są bards mile widziani! Zapraszamy! Aby uzyskać informacje, napisz na adres n.lebigre@abdn.ac.uk.



Polish-Scottish Song Group performs at the Tall Ships | Credit: El Archives

1ST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

FIRST FRIDAY FLING STORYTELLING SESSIONS

7–9pm | Various venues

Join the **Grampian Association of Storytellers** (GAS) from September to June for their cosy monthly get together, a safe place to try out a story or simply listen to new and experienced storytellers alike tell a tale in a friendly setting. Check the GAS Facebook page for details.

THURSDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2025

Public Lecture Series

IN CONVERSATION WITH UNIVERSITY RECTOR IONA FYFE

6.30–8pm | MacRobert Building, MR051

Elected as Rector of the University of Aberdeen in 2024, **Iona Fyfe** discusses her career as a folk musician and activist rooted deeply in the singing traditions, culture, and language of the North-East. Iona is a passionate advocate for the Scots language and successfully campaigned for Spotify to add the language to the back end of the platform in 2021.



Iona Fyfe | Credit: Euan Anderson

FRIDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2025

WayWORD Festival

TOULMIN PRIZE EVENT

1–1.45pm | Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 2, Room 224

Free but ticketed | waywordfestival.com

In honour of Aberdeenshire writer David Toulmin (John Reid, 1913–1998), the Toulmin Prize is sponsored by the Reid family and held annually by the Elphinstone Institute. Join us for this appreciation of North-East writing with 2025's winning stories announced and read aloud by North-East Makar, **Sheena Blackhall**.



Sheena Blackhall reads the Toulmin Prize-winning story | Credit: El Archives

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THURSDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2025

Public Lecture Series

THE STONEHAVEN FIREBALLS: A BRIEF HISTORY

6.30–8pm | MacRobert Building, MR051



Martin Sim, fireball swinger | Credit: Martin Sim

Martin Sim, the longtime Fireball swinger, will discuss Stonehaven's coastal Hogmanay custom in a wide-ranging illustrated talk exploring its cloudy origins, what really is inside a Fireball, and the ceremony's impact on the broader community.

TUESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2025

Information Session

MLITT ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORE INFORMATION EVENING (ONLINE)

6.30–7.30pm | Online

Meet staff and students and learn about our **Master's Programme in Ethnology and Folklore**, which can be completed in 12 months or 24 months (full-time/part-time study). Individuals of varying life and educational experiences are welcome. See Institute website for event link.

TUESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2025

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

WHO CARES FOR DEATH? TALES FROM NORWAY

6.30–8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7,
Craig Suite | Free but ticketed

Norwegian storyteller **Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen** shares stories on the inevitable concept of death as it is characterized in Norwegian folktales, legends, and Old Norse poetry and prose. The performance explores the topic with a distinct emphasis on the poetic and the humorous.



Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen | Credit: Sonja Balchi



Staff and students of the Elphinstone Institute | Credit: Brian Stewart

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WEDNESDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2025

Ethnographic Film Series

THE DREAMING BOG (2022), DIR. BY ROBERT AITKEN

6.30–8pm | MacRobert Building, MR051

The Dreaming Bog is an eco-poetic film on Climate Change told through the history and mythology of the peatbogs of Scotland and Finland. It explores human-kind's punishment and preservation on these vulnerable landscapes. Followed by a Q&A with the filmmaker.



Still from *The Dreaming Bog* | Credit: Robert Aitken

THURSDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2025

Workshop

NEEPIE LANTERN HOWKING WORKSHOP

6.30–8.30pm | MacRobert Building, MR047 | £5 (includes neep and refreshments); booking required

Join **Alison Sharman** at this workshop showing you how to create your own traditional neepie lantern for Halloween, just in time for our Neepie Lantern Competition. Neeps, candles, and string will be provided, but please bring a strong dessert spoon and vegetable knife. Parents are responsible for their children (one child per adult, please).

SATURDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2025

Competition

NEEPIE LANTERN COMPETITION DEADLINE

Get your knives and spoons ready and get howking! When you've carved your masterpiece send a pic of your entry to elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk including your full name and postal address. Winners will receive one of our publications and an announcement on social media.



Neepie Lanterns | Credit: El Archives

FRIDAY–SUNDAY, 31 OCT–2 NOV 2025

Festival

2025 FLUTE FLING ABERDEEN

All weekend | Various venues | Ticketed
flutefling.scot

Join **Hamish Napier**, **Kirsten Allstaff**, and others for an inspiring weekend of concerts, workshops, and sessions celebrating the best of traditional flute and whistle music.



2025 Flute Fling | Credit: Robert Aitken

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WEDNESDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2025

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

ORAL STORIES FROM GAELIC TRADITION AND BEYOND

6.30–8pm | Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7, Craig Suite
Free but ticketed

Join us for an evening of tales with award-winning storyteller and writer, **Martin MacIntyre**, who will regale listeners by telling stories of the demigod Cú Chulainn, the warrior-hero Fionn Mac Cumhail, the beautiful princess Gráinne, and more from the Gaelic tradition and beyond.



Martin MacIntyre
Credit: Andrew Cawley

TUESDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2025

Public Lecture Series

ON THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S 2025 APOLOGY TO TRAVELLERS: EXPOSING SCOTLAND'S CULTURAL GENOCIDE

6.30–8pm | King's College Quad, KCG7

This panel is composed of campaigners and survivors **Roseanna** and **Shamus McPhee** and researchers **Ali Watson** and **Bennett Collins**, whose collective efforts resulted in the First Minister's apology in June 2025 for the so-called 'Tinker Experiments'. They will discuss the journey leading up to the historic apology and the steps that need to happen next. The panel will be followed by a reception in James MacKay Hall.



The McPhees at Pitlochry
Credit: Shamus and Roseanna McPhee

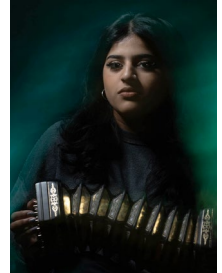
FRIDAY–SUNDAY, 14–16 NOVEMBER 2025

Festival

BUTTON BOXES AND MOOTHIES

All weekend | Various venues | Ticketed

Join us in celebrating the wonderful music of small free-reed instruments – concertinas, button accordions, melodeons, moothies, and Jew's harps – with workshops, concerts, ceilidh, sessions, talks, and more! See **buttonboxes and moothies.com** for details and tickets.



Kisna Panesar playing a concertina | Credit: Alan Donaldson

WEDNESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2025

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

THE CARRYING STREAM: 60 YEARS OF EDUCATION IN THE NORTH

6.30pm start | Online

Education in the North is a radical journal exploring education, culture, and language. To mark its 60th Anniversary this event, hosted by **Cathy Francis** and **Beth Cross**, brings together editors, storytellers, and other contributors including **Jackie Ross**, **Jamie Fairbairn**, **Liisa-Ravna Finbog**, and **Jennifer Markides**. Contact eitn@abdn.ac.uk for booking information.



Various *Education in the North* Journals | Credit: UoA Photography

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FRIDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2025

Tribute

CHARLIE ALLAN TRIBUTE CONCERT

7.30–9pm | Acorn Centre, Inverurie, AB51 3SA

Ticketed



Charlie Allan | Credit: BBC

Longtime friend of the Elphinstone Institute, **Charlie Allan** (1939–2023) of Little Ardo, Methlick, was a renowned farmer, journalist, broadcaster, both ballad singer and maker, and one-time World Caber-Tossing Champion. The evening pays tribute in words and music to the full life of a kenspeckle North-East figure.

WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2025

Ethnographic Film Series

MUSICAL ECHOES OF AL-ANDALUS IN GRANADA (2025), DIR. BY MATTHEW MACHIN-AUTENRIETH AND DARIO RANOCCHIARI

6.30–8pm | MacRobert Building, MR051

In the shadows of the Alhambra palace, reconstructed sounds of Spain's medieval Muslim and Jewish past of al-Andalus reverberate. Past and present collide in the musical fusions of Spanish, European, and North African artists who explore links between flamenco and Arab-Andalusian music. Followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers.

THURSDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2025

David Buchan Lecture

DAVID BUCHAN LECTURE: CONNECTING PEOPLE, CONNECTING CULTURE

6.30–8pm | Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7, Craig Suite
Free but ticketed

Song, weaving, and boatbuilding traditions are used to build cultural confidence in projects around the world. To celebrate our 30th anniversary, this year's speaker will be Institute director **Thomas A. McKean**, who will focus on his work in Scotland, Guatemala, and New York City to show how culture and community are closely intertwined.



Thomas McKean and Pedro Mendoza Mendoza | Credit: Maya Tzutujil



Still from *Musical Echoes* | Credit: Matthew Machin-Autenrieth and Dario Ranocchiari

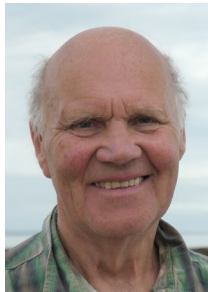
WEDNESDAY, 28 JANUARY 2026

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

AN EVENING OF TALES WEAVING MYTHOLOGY AND ECOLOGY

6.30–8pm | Online | Free but ticketed; donations welcome

Malcolm Green, Northumberland storyteller and naturalist, integrates a more-than-human perspective into his storytelling, creating a tapestry of ecology, myth, and personal experience. Join us for an evening of online stories, and step into a world where rationality and dreaming meet.



Malcolm Green, storyteller
Credit: Pat Renton

MONDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2026

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

INTERCULTURAL TALES: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT STORYTELLING WORKSHOP 1

10am–12pm | MacRobert Building, MR047

Talented North-East storyteller **Jackie Ross** leads this first of three workshops in intercultural storytelling, sharing traditional North-East tales and encouraging refugee and migrant participants to share stories from their own traditions, cultures, and lives.



Refugee Storytelling Workshop | Credit: Alison Sharman

WEDNESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2026

Open Evening

ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE OPEN EVENING

6.30–9pm | MacRobert Building, Elphinstone Institute

Join us for an informal evening at the Elphinstone Institute with staff, students, and friends. Enjoy refreshments, join in with some songs or tunes, and listen to interesting short talks about all of the excellent work that takes place in the Institute and with the wider community.

THURSDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2026

Public Lecture Series | Aberlang

ESSENTIAL SCOTS-POLISH DICTIONARY: BRIDGING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC GAPS

6.30–8pm | Online | Free but ticketed

Produced by Dictionaries of the Scots Language, the Essential Scots-Polish Dictionary app (Słownik podstawowy szkocko-polski) has given Polish migrants access to Scottish culture and language at their fingertips. **Alicja Tokarska**, project translator, speaks on bringing the app to life and how knowledge of both cultures within the team shaped the resource and improved it.

TUESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2026

Information Session

MLITT ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORE INFORMATION EVENING (ONLINE)

6.30–7.30pm | Online

Meet staff and students and learn about our **Master's Programme in Ethnology and Folklore**, which can be completed in 12 months or 24 months (full-time/part-time study). Individuals of varying life and educational experiences are welcome. See Institute website for event link.

What's on/Fit's on...

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WEDNESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2026

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

STORIES AN SANGS FAE A STONEY QUINE AN LOON

6.30–8pm | Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7, Craig Suite
Free but ticketed



Geordie Murison & Phyll McBain | Credit: Geordie Murison & Phyll McBain

Talented storyteller **Phyll McBain** and renowned singer **Geordie Murison** both hail from the Stonehaven area and together they will celebrate Steenhive through its greatest stories and songs.

SATURDAY, 14 MARCH 2026

Competition

TMSA ABERDEEN COMPETITIONS DAY

9–5pm | MacRobert Building

Take part in this annual Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland (TMSA) day of friendly competitions in traditional music, song, and verse. The day is designed to encourage participation in the traditional culture of North-East Scotland in particular.



MONDAY, 16 MARCH 2026

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

INTERCULTURAL TALES: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT STORYTELLING WORKSHOP 2

10am–12pm | MacRobert Building, MR047

Talented North-East storyteller **Jackie Ross** leads the second of three workshops in intercultural storytelling, sharing traditional North-East tales and encouraging refugee and migrant participants to share stories from their own traditions, cultures, and lives.

WEDNESDAY, 25 MARCH 2026

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

ONE THOUSAND AND ONE PERSIAN NIGHTS

6.30–8pm | Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 2, Room 224
Free but ticketed



Hossa Skandary-Macpherson and Leila Nesha Mokadem | Credit: Hossa Skandary-Macpherson

Join us in celebrating Nowruz, the Persian new year, through poetry and story. **Hossa Skandary-Macpherson**, originally from Afghanistan, will share tales that she learned from her mother, a teacher of Persian literature, and **Leila Nesha Mokadem**, originally from Iran, will speak of the Persian new year and its seven symbols. The event will be in English, Dari, and Farsi.

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MONDAY, 13 APRIL 2026

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival

INTERCULTURAL TALES: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT STORYTELLING WORKSHOP 3

10am–12pm | MacRobert Building, MR047

Talented North-East storyteller **Jackie Ross** leads the last of three workshops in intercultural storytelling, sharing traditional North-East tales and encouraging refugee and migrant participants to share stories from their own traditions, cultures, and lives.

TUESDAY, 14 APRIL 2026

Information Session

MLITT ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORE INFORMATION EVENING (ONLINE)

6.30–7.30pm | Online

Meet staff and students and learn about our **Master's Programme in Ethnology and Folklore**, which can be completed in 12 months or 24 months (full-time/part-time study). Individuals of varying life and educational experiences are welcome. See Institute website for event link.

THURSDAY, 16 APRIL 2026

Public Lecture Series

FINDING HOME THROUGH DRY-STEEN DYKIN

6.30–8pm | MacRobert Building, MR051

Dry-steen dyker, **Alexis Zafropoulos**, speaks of coming to Scotland and his journey learning the intangible cultural practice of building walls without mortar. Learning from local dykers and from the land itself, Alexis speaks on the tradition and on developing a sense of belonging in the North-East through practising this ancient and sustainable craft.

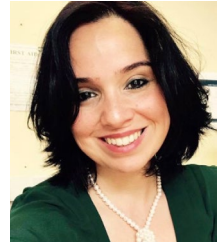
THURSDAY, 21 MAY 2026

Public Lecture Series

FIGHTING FORGETFULNESS: PALESTINIAN FOLKTALES AND MEMORY DEVELOPMENT

6.30–8pm | MacRobert Building, MR051

Farah Aboubakr will explore how Palestinian folktales are tools for cultural resistance where Palestinian female storytellers have played a crucial role in safeguarding Palestinian cultural and national memory.



Farah Aboubakr
Credit: Farah Aboubakr

SATURDAY, 23 MAY 2026

Friends of the Elphinstone Institute

BALLAD BUS

9am–5pm | Meet at MacRobert Car Park
£15/£12 for Friends of EI

Join us on a coach trip round the North-East and learn about the stories and locations connected to the region's celebrated traditional ballads.



Alexis Zafropoulos with an assistant at a dry-steen dyke | Credit: Alexis Zafropoulos

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FRIDAY–SUNDAY, 5–7 JUNE 2026

Academic Conference

THE FOLKLORE SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

All weekend | Various venues | Ticketed

The Elphinstone Institute will host the annual conference of one of the world's oldest learned societies for the study of Folklore. Scholars from around the world will come to the Granite City to discuss their latest research. For booking and programme details see folklore-society.com.



www.folklore-society.com

WEDNESDAY–SUNDAY, 24–28 JUNE 2026

Festival

NORTH ATLANTIC FIDDLE CONVENTION (NAFCo)

All day | Various venues | Ticketed



Celebrate the 25th anniversary of NAFCo with a five-day festival of fiddle and dance traditions from across the North Atlantic. For booking and programme details see northatlanticfiddle.com.

FRIDAY–SUNDAY, 24–26 JULY 2026

Festival

TRADITIONAL SINGING WEEKEND AT CULLERLIE

All weekend | Cullerlie Farm Park | Tickets: Contact 01330 860549

The weekend is a unique celebration, bringing together outstanding traditional singers from Scotland, England, and Ireland. The weekend includes informal concerts featuring the guest singers, unaccompanied singarounds for everyone who wants to join in, workshops, craft demonstrations, and a song-related talk.

JULY 2026 (DATES TBC)

Festival

SEA SANGS AND SATTIE TALES

7.30–9.30pm (TBC) | Buchanhaven Heritage Society (TBC)

Join storytelling and singing enthusiasts and special guests for an evening of tales and music of the sea, all as part of the brilliant **Peterhead Scottish Week**.

JULY/AUGUST 2026 (DATES TBC)

Festival

SCOTTISH CULTURE AND TRADITIONS (SC&T) YOUTH CAMP

All day | University of Aberdeen

A perfect opportunity to get involved in Scottish traditional music. With an amazing selection of Scotland's finest tutors, there are a range of class choices from total beginners to advanced ability in fiddle, guitar, clarsach, chanter/pipes, penny whistle, rhythm, and more!



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WEDNESDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2025	Ethnographic Film Series THE DREAMING BOG (2022), DIR. BY ROBERT AITKEN
THURSDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2025	Workshop NEEPIE LANTERN HOWKING WORKSHOP
SATURDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2025	Competition NEEPIE LANTERN COMPETITION DEADLINE
FRIDAY, 31 OCTOBER–SUNDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2025	Festival 2025 FLUTE FLING ABERDEEN

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**ORAL STORIES FROM GAELIC TRADITION
AND BEYOND**

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16 NOVEMBER 2025**

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**THE CARRYING STREAM: 60 YEARS OF EDUCATION
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**DAVID BUCHAN LECTURE: CONNECTING PEOPLE,
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**AN EVENING OF TALES WEAVING MYTHOLOGY
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MONDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2026

Aberdeen and Beyond Storytelling Festival
**INTERCULTURAL TALES: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT
STORYTELLING WORKSHOP 1**

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ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE OPEN EVENING

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SATURDAY, 23 MAY 2026	Friends of the Elphinstone Institute BALLAD BUS

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TRADITIONAL SINGING WEEKEND AT CULLERLIE

JULY 2026 (DATES TBC)

Festival
SEA SANGS AND SATTIE TALES

JULY/AUGUST 2026 (DATES TBC)

Festival
**SCOTTISH CULTURE AND TRADITIONS
(SC&T) YOUTH CAMP**



Photos clockwise from top left: Alicja Tokarska | Credit: Alicja Tokarska / North Atlantic Fiddle Convention 2018 | Credit: Mary Masson / Ian Russell and Iain Fraser play at the Elphinstone Institute Open Evening | Credit: El Archives / Paddy Buchanan sings at the 2024 Cullerlie Festival | Credit: Gary Ching
An evening outdoor sing-around at Cullerlie | Credit: Gary Ching / Visiting with horses at Cullerlie | Credit: Gary Ching.



ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE
studying culture in context

30th
Anniversary
Year

Many thanks to all our partner organisations.



Consulate General
of the Republic of Poland
in Edinburgh



The Elphinstone Institute,
MacRobert Building, University of Aberdeen,
Aberdeen AB24 5UA

Email: elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk, Tel: 01224 272996
abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone