



# THE PIPER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

NUMBER 46 AUTUMN 2016



**NO SPRING,  
NOR SUMMER BEAUTY  
HATH SUCH GRACE,  
AS I HAVE SEEN IN  
ONE AUTUMNAL FACE**

John Donne

# And now we enter: 'The Indian Summer of the heart . . .' John Greenleaf Whittier

The Festival is over and like a passing tornado leaves only street debris and torn posters. It had a tremendous buzz this year and it was heartening to see the evident pleasure it gave both visitors and townsfolk. We were then allowed to enjoy a late summer and the emptied streets, fortified by sunshine for the winter and the coming darkness. The Friends offer you events to placate the gloom and news to enlighten it.

In this edition of *The Piper* Dr Marshall writes about the University's Directory of Collections: a marvellous, mammoth project that will be a pivot and catalyst for much research and inquiry and has wonderful and fascinating images of material within the collections.

I attended the opening of the Library Exhibition on Godfrey Thomson, the man who tested Scotland and it was a delight to discover this remarkable man and his work. We were also entertained by a string trio who played a piece of music created for the exhibition. Do go and see the unexpected recovery of his archive Papers and their rebirth within the University.

At this point we want to highlight the Gray-Steinbeck Collection which was recently donated to the University Collections and we shall feature this collection in our next issue of *The Piper*. As a precursor to this, however, there will be a talk on this subject at our AGM in November (see events back page).

I had the privilege of staying in Steinbeck's restored house at 425 Eardley Street in Pacific Grove near Monterey in California recently, a scene of a turbulent episode in his life but also where he began to write 'Of Mice and Men.' It was truly, as his then wife Carol said, 'a house lined up like

a freight train' with a curved tent ceiling that had singing birds carved upon it. The Mexican bell was still at the gate. It had no heating to preserve its authenticity and past events and the damp clung avidly around us.

We look forward to seeing you at forthcoming events and at our AGM as well!

## Lady Caplan

President, Friends of Edinburgh University Library

**Below left.** Godfrey Thomson with his son, Hector, from a holiday photograph album, Cornwall, 1930.



# The University of Edinburgh's *Directory of Collections* – the long journey into print

This October will – all things being well – see the appearance of the first substantial publication about the University of Edinburgh's collections for more than 30 years. In 1982 the library published Jean Guild and Alexander Law's *Edinburgh University Library 1580–1980: a collection of historical essays*. This remains a valuable resource, but the changes to the collections since 1982 have been profound and a new book has been needed for some years. The new *Directory of Collections* will be published by Third Millennium, a

publisher who specialise in books about collections, and will be available for sale in the library and other local retail outlets. The approach we have taken is to try to give our students and other researchers an overview of all the main collections across the University's 45 collections sites – whether they are rare books, manuscripts, archives, art or museum objects. Drawing on years of earlier research, and supplemented by new discoveries made by our curatorial teams, the book gives an A-Z listing of all the

From the Van Meer Album  
*Amicorum (c.1614–1630) Brugge van Londen*. The album amicorum is a kind of autograph book collected by early modern students and scholars.





main named collections. Illustrated with high-quality photographs produced by the Library's Digital Imaging Unit, it will be an attractive, easy to use guide to our 60 kilometres of unique heritage collections.

Like many projects of this kind, it has taken some years to get the approach right. The book was first proposed about 10 years ago by John Scally, then Director of University Collections. At that time, it was envisaged as a collection of scholarly essays about the collections written by different members of academic staff, and in 2008–2009 some text was produced and photography commissioned, under the able direction of Fiona Graham (currently editor of *The Piper*). However, it soon transpired that the number of potential contributors would make this a very complicated and time-consuming process – and would also lead to a very expensive academic tome, which would not be of great benefit to our students and local community. We decided to do a re-think.

We came up with the model of the Directory because we realised that we needed a book that explains, clearly and succinctly, what we have in the collections. The Centre for

Research Collections brings together all the main collection formats and is one of only a few places in the UK where you can consult a photograph, a rare book, a manuscript and a museum object all in the same reading room. We also try to give an overview of all the collections through our digital gateway <http://collections.ed.ac.uk/>. However, up to now we have had nothing physical to give people which listed the collections and summarised their contents. The Directory will change that and give people a reference tool that offers 'a way in'.

Many other libraries and museums have produced 'treasures' books, which showcase key items from the collections, accompanied by beautiful illustrations. We looked at many examples of these books while planning the Directory, and decided that we did not want to follow that approach. As much as anything, we felt the market was now

**Opposite:** Eric Liddell's medal from 1924 Olympics.

**Below:** Tipu Sahib's Koran: The collection of more than 700 oriental manuscripts includes some of the greatest treasures of EUL. Or.MS148 belonged to Tipu Sahib, Sultan of Mysore, AD1749-1799, who was killed in the battle to defend his city of Seringapatam.

saturated with books full of glossy photographs of medieval manuscripts and Shakespeare quartos. We wanted to produce a book that was beautiful, but also one that was practical and informative – something that you might give to a new PhD student as well as to an important benefactor. We wanted the Directory to make people realise the distinctive opportunities offered by the University of Edinburgh's collections and to encourage them to come and use them.

In 2010–2011, we started to pull together text which

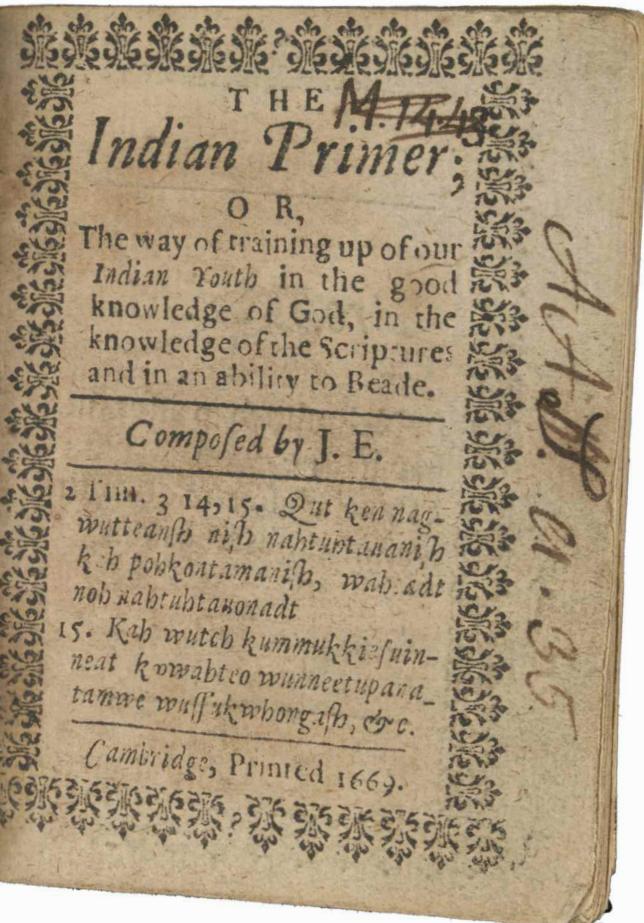
had been used for older guides to the collections and to start identifying collections which needed further research. This quickly led us to realise how much of the existing information we had about the collections was misleading or downright wrong! The different curators rewrote text and produced text for those collections which had not previously been researched. Much of this work was very hands-on, with lots of opening archive boxes and counting books on shelves. We decided to include a section on the 'iconic' individual Special Collections items such as the Celtic



**Below:** Indian Primer.

**Bottom:** Bible Nuremberg, 1483.

**Opposite:** Violin without sides, a member of the Bassano family, London, probably from second half of the 16th century.



Psalter which are known throughout the world – even these famous items needed further research.

While all this was going on, the collections were undergoing a period of major change, particularly through the merger of Edinburgh College of Art and the Roslin Institute with the University of Edinburgh – bringing their rich collections of art and archives into our orbit. If the book had been produced as planned back in 2009, it would have had to have been rewritten almost immediately. Other collections were also arriving through generous donations, including Bob Gray's collection of John Steinbeck, the Heiskell Darwin collection, the Horst Drescher collection (on Henry Mackenzie), the Tessa Ransford collection (Scottish poetry) and selections from the libraries of our own Brenda Moon and Peter Freshwater. All these collections were now given entries in the Directory.

In 2015, the new Chief Information Officer, Gavin McLachlan, agreed to fund the Directory as the first in a series of projects supported as part of his new Innovation

programme. We produced a brief for prospective designers which included the requirement:

This is to be an engaging, accessible and beautiful guide to our collections. It is not a scholarly history of the university's holdings, or an expensive coffee-table book. Nor is it a 'treasures' book, although it will include a 'mini-treasures' feature by treating the 'iconic' items as a discrete collection. It will be an elegant, compact book, easy to use as a reference work and pleasant to dip into.

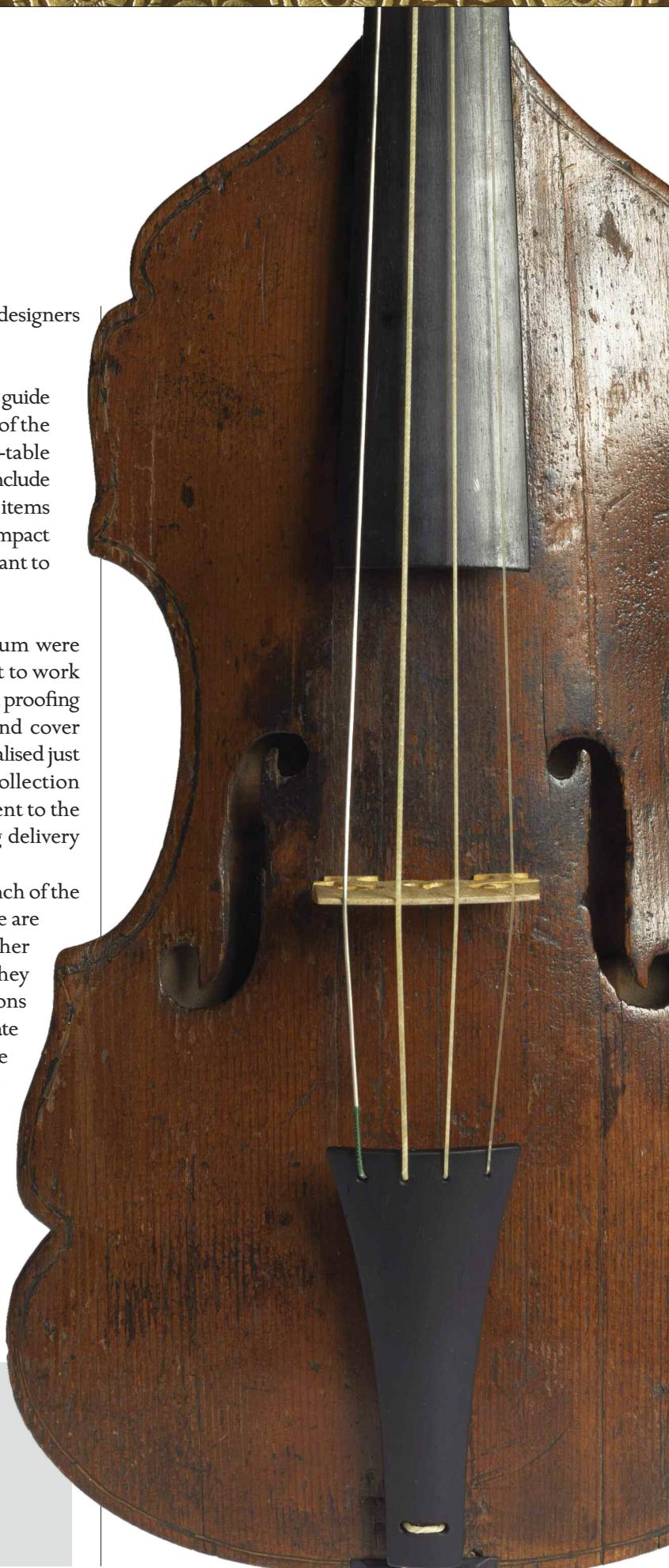
Through a competitive process, Third Millennium were appointed in early 2016, and have proved a delight to work with. They have helped us through the editorial and proofing process, the difficult choices for illustrations and cover design, and were very accommodating when we realised just before signing off the text that one key archive collection had inadvertently been omitted! The book was sent to the printers in August 2016 and we are now awaiting delivery of copies in the autumn.

We will be holding events to celebrate the launch of the new book, so watch this space for more news. We are also hoping that this will be the catalyst for other books about the collections of the University – they definitely merit it. Hopefully some of the collections described in the Directory will surprise and stimulate researchers to new enquiries and thus keep the collections lifecycle going for years to come. The Friends have been key to the growth of the library collections since the 1960s so we very much look forward to your comments and ideas for how we can promote the collections in the future.

**Dr Joseph Marshall**  
Head of Special Collections

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# Godfrey Thomson: The man who tested Scotland's IQ 29 July - 29 Oct

**Below.** Robert Heriot Westwater, *Sir Godfrey Thomson*, 1950 (detail).

**Right.** Scottish Mental Survey test papers, 1932 and 1947.



This summer the Centre for Research Collections Festival exhibition highlights the life and work of Sir Godfrey Thomson (1881–1955), Professor of Education at the University of Edinburgh from 1925 to 1951. Thomson was an important theorist of intelligence and a large-scale producer of IQ tests. He oversaw Scotland's pioneering Mental Surveys, collecting data on the intelligence of every 11 year old child in Scotland in 1932 and again in 1947.

This exhibition tells the story of Thomson's rise from a working-class family to a PhD in physics and then on to an internationally-renowned psychologist, statistician and educator. His 'Room 70' IQ-test factory will be illustrated, along with his mission to obtain the best education for all. Thomson's most influential work, the Scottish Mental Surveys will be displayed on loan from the University of Glasgow.

Godfrey Thomson is someone that people won't have heard of; after visiting the exhibition, they will wonder why not.

## Forthcoming Events

**October:** Tuesday, 25th at 3pm:

Professor Charles C J Withers, Ogilvie Chair of Geography, Geographer Royal for Scotland on Mungo Park (venue: IASH (Institute of Advanced Studies in the Humanities), Hope Park Square)

**November:** Wednesday, 16th at 3pm:

Dr Keith Hughes, School of Literature, Languages and Cultures on Steinbeck and the Steinbeck Collections followed by the AGM (Main Library 5th floor seminar room)

**February:** Wednesday, 15th at 3pm, venue tbc:

Dr Henry Noltie, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh on the Cleghorn Collection of botanical items

## Do come and join us!

For a membership form see our website or contact our Administrator:

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**Website:** <https://friendsofeul.wordpress.com/>

We are also now on Facebook!



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