



THE PIPER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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THE SCHOOL OF SCOTTISH STUDIES ARCHIVES AT 70



Ailidh Dall Stiùbhart (Blind Alec Stewart) with Hamish Henderson, Sutherland, 1958. Photo by Sandy Paton (SSSA HH2/15)

Keats: *Hyperion*: A Fragment 1820

‘O aching time! O moments big as years!’

We celebrate anniversaries to remember something special that has endured: a success, a relationship, a founding moment. At this point in time such activities are curtailed, for celebration usually needs a specific day and a specific place within its community. Now we have to celebrate in a virtual world, the moment distant and transient even if recorded, yet the marking of time is somehow even of more value in these days when minutes are hours and yet weeks seem to go by in an unrealised blink of an eye.

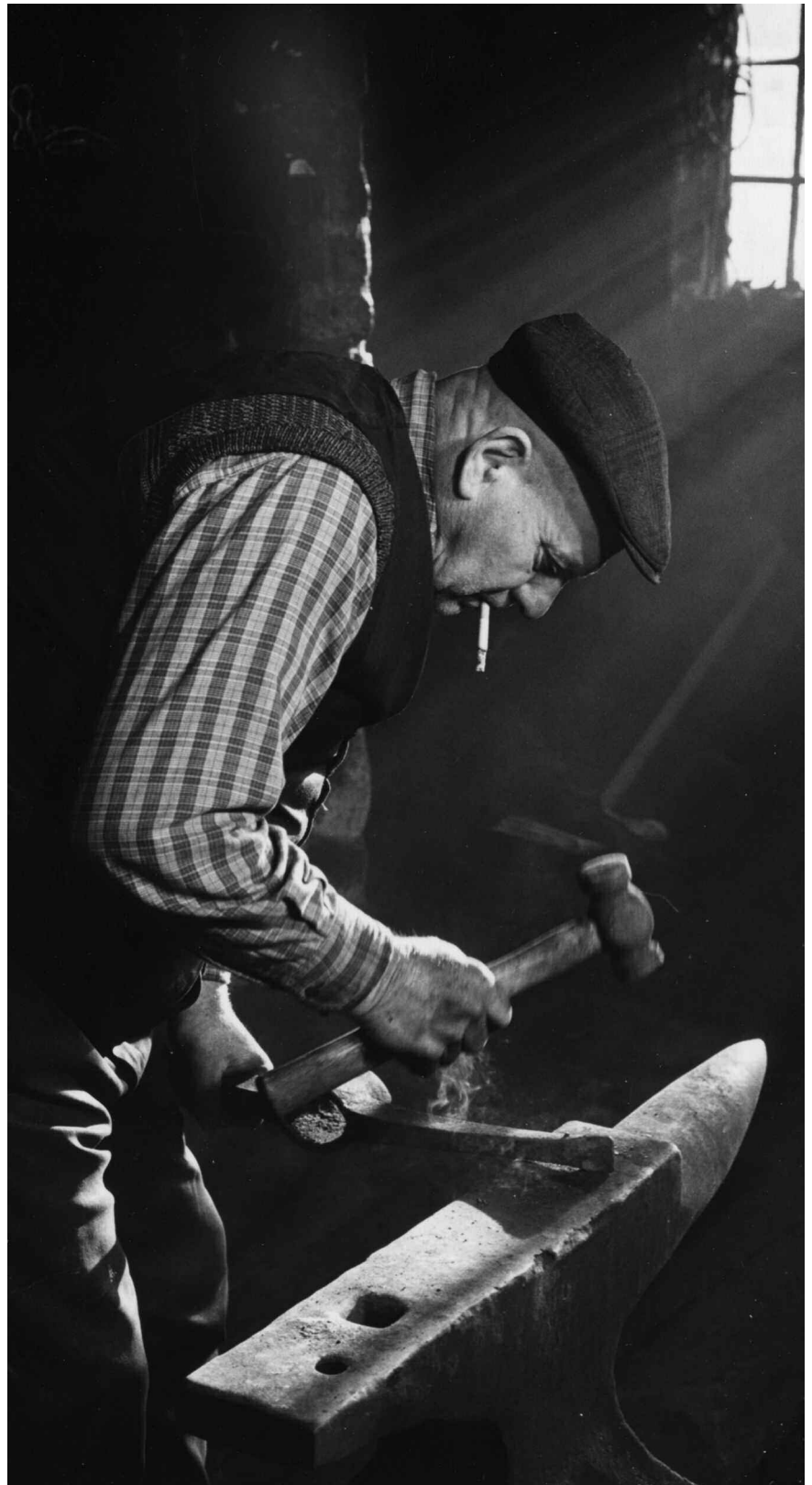
The School of Scottish Studies has nurtured archives for 70 years from the decision of 15th May 1950 to its recent refurbishment, and celebrates its anniversary this year. It contains many aspects of Scottish cultural identity: music, stories, plays, films, visual arts all gleaned from not only home territory but a wider diaspora and has become a template for the collection of oral history and interdisciplinary research creating a unique space for looking at national identity in changing times.

We are pleased to have Dr Margaret Mackay on the Friends Committee. It enriches our awareness of what the Scottish archives in the CRC can achieve.

The Piper is still here to show you the role of the Friends is continuing. Our next event will be online – so come and join us! (20th April: Wilson Poon, see details on page 8).

One day we will be back in our home in the Library and have the delight of sharing that special space together. Keep safe and survive these strange times until then.

Lady Caplan,
President, Friends of Edinburgh
University Library



Right. Kit Sked, Blacksmith, Cousland Smithy, Dalkeith, 1987. Photo by Ian MacKenzie (SSSA BV111 7 g1 8781)

The School of Scottish Studies Archives at 70

The School of Scottish Studies was established by a decision of the University of Edinburgh Court on 15 May 1950 as a focus for interdisciplinary research on aspects of life and the oral and material culture of Scotland. At its heart, to support, conserve and make accessible the work of collecting, studying, teaching and publishing were the creation of archives (sound, photographic and manuscript) and a specialist research library.

Its inspiration and models came from within and beyond Scotland, and were taken forward by Angus McIntosh, appointed to the University in 1948 as the first Forbes Professor of English Language and General Linguistics. Interest had been shown in the 1930s by the Scottish Anthropological and Folklore Society in the creation folklore archives and linguistic surveys, but planning was cut short by the Second World War and taken up in other ways after its end. However, a strong



Jeannie Gibson,
Ardtun, Mull 1989.
Photo by
Ian MacKenzie
(SSSA PA 10 267 07)

Below. Cloth Waulking,
lochdar, South Uist, 1970.
Photo by R W Morton,
(SSSA BV111 3 7678)

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link between the two periods was provided by Robert Kerr, who had been Secretary of the Society. As a volunteer in his retirement from the Royal Museum of Scotland in the 1950s and early 60s, it was he who made, on cards, the first Central Index to the School's holdings.

Also influential was the work of the pioneer collectors of Gaelic oral tradition John Lorne Campbell of Canna and his wife Margaret Fay Shaw, and the Folklore Institute of Scotland (FIOS) which he founded in the 1940s, emulating an institution which Ireland had established. Through his friendship with them, McIntosh was introduced to James Hamilton Delargy, head of the Irish Folklore Commission, and its working methods. He was a stalwart support to the School, and in turn commended the practices of the Swedish folklorists and ethnologists who had been his mentors. The School was to adopt and adapt the Uppsala archival system for its collections.

In the post-war period the University of Edinburgh was embracing new disciplines and invigorating established ones. McIntosh's wartime work at Bletchley Park had shown him the potential for the humanities of team-work and the new technologies. The Principal at

the time, Sir Edward Victor Appleton, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, was alert to the value of these and supported relevant appointments and purchases. Thus it was that the School acquired portable tape-recorders from the start, enabling recording in the homes and locations of its interviewees throughout Scotland. Its technical staff created such items as the repeating loop, a boon to transcribers as well as to linguists and dialectologists, including colleagues in the Linguistic Survey of Scotland (Scots and Gaelic), which worked in parallel to the School. The archives continued to be in the forefront of technical developments into the current digital age.

The School's first full-time collector, Calum Maclean, brother of the Gaelic poet Sorley Maclean, was trained in fieldwork techniques by the Irish Folklore Commission. He recorded from the Borders to Shetland as well as in the Hebrides and the Highlands. Soon he was joined by Stewart Sanderson as Secretary-Archivist, musicologist Francis Collinson, song collector Hamish Henderson, archaeologist Audrey Henshall, anthropologist Ian Whitaker and WFH (Bill) Nicolaisen, onomastician. A host of others have followed since. Songs and narratives in Gaelic and Scots,

Below. Mrs John Gillies (Annie),
St Kilda, 1938. Photo by Robert
Atkinson (SSSA S319)

After the St Kilda population
was evacuated to the mainland
in 1930, some families returned
for summer visits and stayed in
their old homes.

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instrumental music, customs and beliefs, work and crafts, material culture and place-names were quickly represented in the Archives and topics such as social organisation came to be included in response to

disciplinary developments in folkloristics and ethnology.

From 1957 the School's journal *Scottish Studies* published the fruits of field collecting and provided the

Below. Hugh Hagan interviewing John Connaghan, Ferguson's Shipyard, Port Glasgow, 1991. Photo by Ian MacKenzie (SSSA IM Coll).

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basis for journal exchanges with a range of institutions, which brought a wealth of international comparative ethnographic and folkloristic material into the library. Gifts of books, recordings and images predating the School's foundation, including photographs by Werner Kissling and Robert Atkinson (<https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/view/all/who/Robert+Atkinson>) and the John Levy Archive of Eastern Music, have augmented its holdings over the years. In 1960, three LPs were produced, with accompanying booklets, of songs, tales and instrumental music. From 1971, the series *Scottish Tradition* began to appear, in LP, cassette and CD formats, first with the Tangent and Topic labels, continuing to the present day with Greentrax Recordings, again with full accompanying booklets. 1971 also saw the start of *Tocher*, an archive publication with transcriptions, translations and supporting information for the interested public and widely used in schools.

The introduction by the School of undergraduate teaching and postgraduate supervision in the Faculty of Arts in the 1970s, and the creation of full single and joint honours degrees in Scottish Ethnology in the 1980s, continuing now in the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures, with research and fieldwork integral to

their programmes, provided a new source of archive holdings, many with a focus on recent and contemporary Scotland, from Goth Culture to Diwali in Inverness. The School was instrumental in the development of the oral history movement in Scotland from the 1970s as well and staff helped to train many who became active in this area.

An initial pilot project named PEARL (Preparing an Ethnological Archive for Research and Learning), enabled the Archives to move into the digital age in the 1990s. Along with the National Trust for Scotland's Campbell of Canna Archive and that of BBC Radio nan Gàidheal, and with the partnership of the University of Edinburgh and the University of the Highlands and Islands, *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches* was created. In this online resource of more than 43,000 recorded items, almost 36,000 or 80% are from the School of Scottish Studies Archives. A consortium of funders, UK and European, enabled teams of digitisers in Edinburgh and South Uist to work with indexers, cataloguers and copyright checkers in many locations throughout Scotland, with results that have been lauded as pioneering world-wide (www.tobarandualchais.co.uk).

From its beginnings, the School of Scottish Studies Archives have been drawn upon by singers and instrumental musicians, authors, playwrights and creative artists, broadcasters in all media, and teachers, researchers and scholars in many subjects and from many countries. Most recently, material relating to the sea has formed the basis of a film entitled *Iorram/Boat-Song*, by Alastair Cole, premiered at the Glasgow Film Festival in February 2021. Throughout 2021, BBC Radio nan Gàidheal is re-broadcasting a series of fifty Archives-based programmes, *Sruth an Eòlais*, made for the 50th anniversary twenty years ago, and adding a further twenty for the 70th.

Carefully curated over the decades by archive staff, academics, technical experts, transcribers, indexers, subject specialists and volunteer helpers, and now under the auspices of the Centre for Research Collections (CRC), the School of Scottish Studies Archives have stewarded the voices and images of people born in the 19th century and ever since. It is thanks to the vision, dedication and interest of countless people that these are still to be heard and seen, clearly and strongly, in the 21st.

Dr Margaret A Mackay

School of Scottish Studies Archives:

www.ed.ac.uk/is/sssa

Twitter account: [www.twitter.com/EU_SSSA](https://twitter.com/EU_SSSA)

Winners!

Edinburgh takes home THE Awards Outstanding Library Team Trophy

Our University of Edinburgh uCreate Makerspace team has won the Outstanding Library Team award at the Times Higher Education Awards 2020.

The THE Awards – widely referred to as the ‘Oscars of higher education’ – is a huge celebration, with over a thousand people having logged in to catch this year’s winners. Hundreds of entries from individuals, teams and institutions were received, from all corners of the country. Huge congratulations are due to our uCreate Makerspace team, who have earned such an incredible achievement and taken home the trophy for outstanding work in library and information-services departments.

The uCreate Makerspace is a site where student societies, student entrepreneurs, and teaching staff can all visit and make use of 3-D printers, various electronic components and an ever-expanding array of new and transformative technologies, including virtual and augmented reality.

uCreate is located in the Main Library – at the heart of our main campus – enabling all our students to visit conveniently; a distinction from other university makerspaces, which are typically housed in science and engineering facilities. Particularly noteworthy, uCreate has also helped jump-start careers in new technologies, such as the group of students who went into business

to create affordable 3-D printed prosthetic arms. We have also witnessed archaeological replicas, astrophysics maps and biological models illustrating everything from insects to human organs.

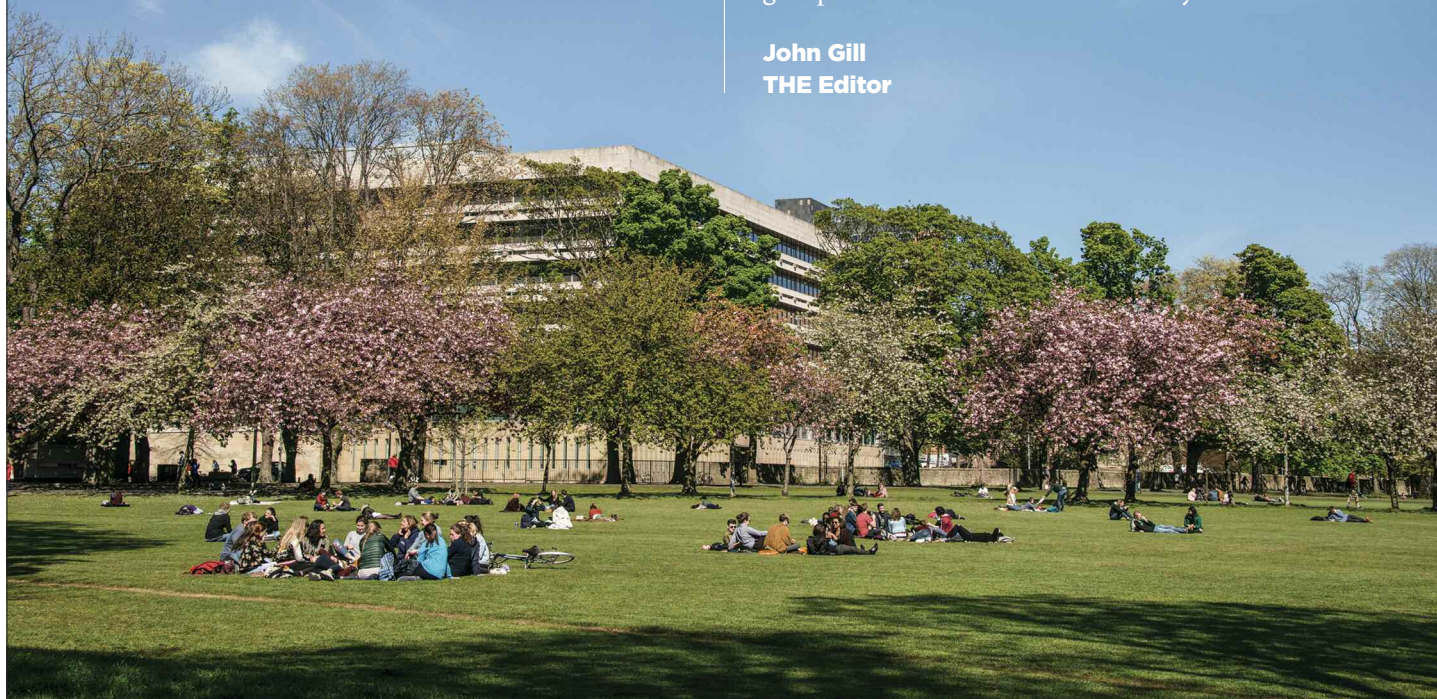
This THE Awards entry window opened just as the Covid lockdown commenced, and focused on activity during the 2018-19 academic year. Judges praised, ‘the systematic planning from initial vision, the comprehensive one-year pilot service and, ultimately, the successful and much-expanded roll-out. There is clear evidence of an improvement in teaching and learning.’

In an extraordinary year, the opportunity to sit down with the THE Awards judges – remotely, of course – and immerse oneself in the stories behind our shortlisted entries was more rewarding than ever.

Because these awards recognise achievements in the 2018–19 academic year, we are dealing with the world as it was pre-pandemic, but the brilliance of our researchers, the exceptional teaching and the extraordinary ingenuity shown by administrative staff, all on display in this year’s shortlists, will be critical for both universities and the country in the period ahead.

In some ways, picking out examples of individual achievement seems at odds with the collective effort that has been so vital during the difficult months this year, but the THE Awards have been celebrating the UK sector in this way for 16 years, so a pandemic wasn’t going to stop us. Congratulations to an inspirational group of winners, and indeed to everyone shortlisted.

John Gill
THE Editor





Royal court musicians, Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul, South Korea, 1967. Photo: John Levy (SSSA Levy K129)

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Events 2021

Until further notice all events will be online and details as to how to connect will be sent nearer the time of each event.

Tuesday 20th April:

Wilson Poon on MS39

Tuesday 15th June:

Annabel Williams, IASH Fellow, on the Arthur Koestler Archive

Tuesday 14th September:

Daryl Green on a subject related to the CRC

November:

AGM date and speaker to be confirmed.



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