

The First Sixty Years of the School of Scottish Studies: An Overview

Margaret A Mackay

Margaret A Mackay was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada in 1945, the descendant of emigrants from Sutherland and Inverness-shire. She entered the University of Toronto as a Governor-General's medallist and gained her BA in English Language and Literature (First Class Honours) there in 1967. That year a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship enabled her to undertake a one-year post-graduate Diploma in Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh, where she subsequently carried out research for her PhD as a Canada Council scholarship-holder under the supervision of Professors Angus McIntosh and A J (Jack) Aitken.

She was appointed to the School of Scottish Studies in 1974 as a Research Fellow, working with the late Eric R Cregeen on a Social Science Research Council project relating to Tìre in the 18th and 19th centuries and its emigrant communities in Canada. A decade later she joined the permanent staff as a Lecturer, later Senior Lecturer. She was part of the team which offered the first degrees in Scottish Ethnology in the department in the 1980s and in 1994 she became Director of the School of Scottish Studies, later Director of its Archives following university restructuring, and Director of the European Ethnological Research Centre. She retired in 2010 and is now an Honorary Fellow at the university.

Her teaching, research and publications have embraced both the medieval and modern periods in Scotland and include language history, oral sources for community history, culture transfer and adaptation, social organisation and the ethnology of religious expression. She also has a keen interest in comparative studies in the wider European ethnological context, the place of Scotland at the crossroads of the Celtic and Scandinavian culture areas, and within this the history, role and work of the School of Scottish Studies.

Introduction: The Early Vision

The collecting of material relating to Scotland's oral and material culture, its songs, narratives, customs, beliefs and ways of life, has been carried out for many centuries but it was not until the founding of the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh in 1951 that

the subject became firmly fixed within an institutional framework. Early work was carried out by those with antiquarian interests, later by those inspired by the poetry of the folk and by studies carried out elsewhere in Europe. Individuals with the personal means to travel and collect were at the fore, and the permanent record of such collections normally took the form of publication. In some cases the associated manuscripts came into the possession of public repositories, such as the John Francis Campbell of Islay (1821–1885) papers in the National Library of Scotland. With the development of folklore as a discipline in the nineteenth century came organisations and journals. The Folklore Society (founded 1878) had from the start members in Scotland who carried out collecting work according to its guidance, published in its journal and deposited material in its archives.

The decades immediately prior to the founding of the School of Scottish Studies saw some very positive efforts towards a more systematic framework for the collection, study and dissemination of folklore and folklife materials. The Anthropological and Folklore Society of Scotland had its origins in the Edinburgh and Lothians Branch of the Royal Anthropological Institute, founded in 1922. A decade later the Society was set up, first known as the Scottish Anthropological Society, with “Folklore” added to its title in 1936. It brought together individuals of like mind with interests in comparative cultural study, including Scottish topics, and the capacity to produce a journal. Its *Proceedings* were published between 1934 and 1956. The Society’s membership included academics, museum staff, fellows of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and retired colonial officials, some of whom had published extensively.

It is worth giving some attention here to its activities, as many of its aspirations prefigure the work undertaken when the School of Scottish Studies and associated projects came into being. The editorial in the first volume of the *Proceedings* refers to the recent establishment of a Folk-Museum Committee and to an approach made to the Society by the Director of the Irish Folklore Institute, James Hamilton Delargy (1899–1980), regarding the publication of unpublished material in the Campbell of Islay papers. Professor Delargy, as will be seen, was to play a vital role in the creation of the School of Scottish Studies fifteen years later.

Another supportive international scholar, who was to play a significant part in the early years of the School of Scottish Studies, came into the Scottish picture under the aegis of the Society in the mid-1930s, the Swedish scholar Åke Campbell (1891–1957). The Society created an Institute of Anthropology at the Free Church College in Edinburgh, where instruction for certificate and diploma studies was offered by members and staff of museums in Edinburgh. The same volume announces that Dr Åke Campbell of the University of Uppsala, having been designated an Honorary Lecturer of the Institute, “will deliver some lectures and inaugurate research work in Celtic folk-lore studies according to the Scandinavian method”. His visit is reported in the September 1935 number, when he outlined a plan for active co-operation in anthropological research among all the northern European nations, the outcome of a series of negotiations in which Swedish, Irish and Scottish scholars had participated and which was formalised in Lund in November of that year as the International Association for European Ethnology and Folklore.

In February 1936 there are references to the desirability of a Survey of Scottish Dialects, to co-operation with the European Dialect Atlas project, and to the creation of a “research laboratory” called the “Scottish Archive for Ethnological, Folkloristic and Linguistic Studies” in association with the Institute. Some time after, a lexical questionnaire was distributed by its Language Survey Committee, chaired by John Orr (1885–1966), Professor of French at the University of Edinburgh from 1933 and a specialist in linguistic geography, who was in the 1950s closely associated with the Linguistic Survey of Scotland and with the School of Scottish Studies. It was reported that the University of Uppsala had offered a student internship for training purposes.

The following year saw an opportunity for developing links further, as the Society had offered to host the congress of the new international association in Edinburgh. In spite of some organisational difficulties this took place in July with participation and contributions by notable and rising scholars. At it Professor Sigurd Erixon of the Nordic Museum in Stockholm delivered the Im Thurn Memorial Lecture, instituted in memory of one of the Society’s founding members, on “Nordic Open-Air

Museums and Skansen” and also spoke on “West European Connections and Culture Relations”. Dr Carl Wilhelm von Sydow of Lund University also spoke twice, on “Rites” and on “Popular Prose Traditions and their Classification”, and Dr Åke Campbell, who, like von Sydow and many other Swedish scholars, had strong Irish interests, presented a paper on “The Irish House”. A further instance of such collaboration came in the form of a photographic exhibition.

Irish scholars Gerard Murphy and Sean O Sullivan were also present and Scottish contributions came from J C Catford on Scottish dialects and a proposed Linguistic Atlas of Scotland, and from A J Brock and Dr A MacDonald on Scottish place-names. There was a display of Scottish country dancing and a ceilidh featuring a group of Gaelic-speaking women illustrating the *luadh* (cloth waulking to the accompaniment of song) and *port a beul* (mouth music). The Celtic Congress was also taking place in Edinburgh at the time and this may have offered an opportunity for the inclusion of these elements of Gaelic culture in the conference.

However, this growing momentum was shortly to be halted. With the onset of the Second World War the Society suspended its activities, though the first volume of J G McKay’s edition of John Campbell’s *More West Highland Tales* was published in 1940 under its aegis. Its programme resumed in the 1945–46 session. In 1948 it hosted a Folk Music and Dance Festival with participants from throughout the United Kingdom and from Ireland and beyond, including Åke Campbell. Its lecture series continued, with Kenneth Jackson (1909–1991), Professor of Celtic Languages, History and Antiquities at the University of Edinburgh from 1950 delivering a paper in 1952 on “The Folktale in Gaelic Scotland” which referred to the work of the new School of Scottish Studies. He was also President of the Society for several sessions in the 1950s. In the 1955–56 session the Society was addressed by Stewart F Sanderson, Secretary-Archivist in the School of Scottish Studies (whose paper was published in 1957 in the inaugural volume of *Scottish Studies*) and by Hamish Henderson, then on the School’s staff as well, who played a selection of songs he had recorded on field work.

This volume of its *Proceedings* announced that in the coming session the lecture series would concentrate on Scottish Folk-Life and Anthropology,

but within a few years the Society was wound up. The University of Edinburgh had embraced the subject of anthropology, with former members and office-bearers now in the new department, the School of Scottish Studies had come into being and the Linguistic Surveys of Gaelic and Scots were also well underway. Developments in the museum world were looking toward a permanent folk-life exhibition.

Another body active for a short time in the latter part of this period was the Folklore Institute of Scotland (its acronym FIOS forming the Gaelic word for “knowledge”). John Lorne Campbell of Canna (1906–1996), one of the twentieth century pioneers of Scottish Gaelic folklore collecting and scholarship, was instrumental in its creation in 1947, along with the Rev T M Murchison (1907–1984). They were its President and Chair respectively. James Hamilton Delargy had also encouraged its formation and attended its inaugural meeting. FIOS pressed for the recognition and recording of Scotland’s oral heritage and ceased operation when the School of Scottish Studies came into being and took up this challenge.

Against this background we may now take up the story of the School of Scottish Studies itself. But a preliminary word is in order here. The School of Scottish Studies family in its first sixty years is composed of staff engaged in collecting, researching, lecturing, archiving, indexing, transcribing texts or music, editing its publications and co-ordinating their distribution, supporting its work in vital ways as secretaries, in technical posts relating to sound and visual material, or in the library, and as the servitors who were often the first to welcome visitors to its premises. It includes the multitude of scholars from home and abroad and all who have made use of its collections, the students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels who have gained its degrees, the visiting professors who have brought their expertise to its programmes and the honorary fellows who have been given this designation as a result of their contribution to the deepening of our knowledge of Scotland and its wider contexts. It includes a band of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers. All have their place in this story. But in an overview of six decades such as this it is not possible to name them all and it must be stressed that they are all remembered with gratitude nonetheless.

In 1948 Angus McIntosh (1914–2005) was appointed the first holder of the Forbes Chair of English Language and General Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh. A scholar of medieval English dialectology, he had had experience in the Second World War which was directly relevant to the projects he founded and fostered in the years immediately following. As part of the code-breaking enterprise based at Bletchley Park, he had become convinced of the potential in new technology such as magnetic tape, the portable tape recorder and the computer for linguistic study and research. Additionally, he had experienced there the benefits of individuals working as part of a large team, each contributing a focussed piece of research or collection towards the completion of a larger project. While not uncommon in the world of science, this was a fairly untried concept in the arts and humanities.



Angus McIntosh
(Andrew Swanston)

McIntosh had formed a close friendship with John Lorne Campbell of Canna and his wife, the folklorist Margaret Fay Shaw (1903–2004), in the 1930s, and while a Commonwealth Fellow at Harvard he had accompanied them in 1937 on field work in the Gaelic-speaking communities of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton in Canada. Aware of the inter-relatedness of lore and language, he moved soon after his arrival at the University of Edinburgh to establish the Linguistic Surveys of Scotland (Scots and Gaelic) and shortly after, the School of Scottish Studies. He found in his Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the time, the newly-appointed Sir Edward Victor Appleton (1892–1965), who had won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1947, a receptive supporter. In that confident and forward-looking post-war period Appleton was recruiting a new generation of staff who were bringing fresh experience to old disciplines and seeking to develop new ones, rebuilding scholarly networks and working in new and collaborative ways. He saw the potential in what McIntosh was suggesting and encouraged him with staff appointments and equipment budgets which ensured that the University of Edinburgh could aim for and achieve the highest possible sound quality in its language laboratories, its field recordings and its phonetic analysis. Thus it came about that the first recordings of folklore materials in the School of Scottish Studies Archives were made in the course of dialect surveys undertaken in the late 1940s.

Discussions began at that time with the heads or representatives of a number of interested departments in the University of Edinburgh, including Scottish History, Celtic, Scots Law, Geography, Archaeology, Music, English Literature and Social Anthropology, and a formal committee was established to “draw up a memorandum advocating the establishment within the University of Edinburgh of a School of Scottish Studies”, where an interdisciplinary approach to research on aspects of Scottish life and culture could be fostered. At a meeting on 15 May 1950 the University Court approved in principle the memorandum submitted to it, which suggested seven topics and activities to be undertaken by research staff. These were as follows: field study and analysis of material culture; the compilation of data for maps of prehistoric and later Scotland;

the collection of place-names from oral and documentary sources and the creation of a place-name archive; the collection of oral traditions in all parts of Scotland and the organisation of an equivalent folklore archive for these; the study of Scottish music and its affinities with the musics of other cultures; the integration of anthropological field work with the work of the School and the co-ordination of the study of Scots Law with other studies there.

In order to ensure that the proposed School had “a national as distinct from an Edinburgh flavour” the co-operation of scholars from beyond the university would be encouraged, and a research library of books and journals including comparative materials from relevant cultures was to be built up from the start. Provision was to be made for archive accommodation where all the material collected would be readily available. Funds were sought from the Carnegie Trust to help initiate the new enterprise.

Angus McIntosh received moral and practical support in the creation of the School of Scottish Studies and during its formative period from James Hamilton Delargy, already referred to in connection with folklore activities in Scotland in the 1930s and 1940s. Antrim-born, he had had Scotland in his sights, both literally and metaphorically, from his earliest years. He had witnessed at first hand the wealth of living tradition in the Outer Hebrides during a visit there at the age of eighteen and was convinced that what Ireland had in institutional terms for the recognition and support of its cultural heritage Scotland should have as well. No sooner was the Irish Folklore Commission established (1935) than he was urging the authorities in Scotland to form a similar body, even taking time during his honeymoon to meet with Scottish civil servants, the Carnegie Trust and educational authorities in order to press the issue.

The work of the Scottish Society for Anthropology and Folklore attracted his interest, as we have seen, and he encouraged the collecting undertaken by the Campbells of Canna, attending the first meeting of the Folklore Institute of Scotland, whose President Campbell was. It was through that connection that he and Angus McIntosh came into contact and he invited McIntosh to make a visit to Dublin to see at first hand the organisation and working methods of the Irish Folklore Commission

in 1950. It was in the Commission that Calum Maclean (1915–1960) was trained as a folklore fieldworker and encouraged by Delargy to collect in Scotland under its aegis. He commended Maclean to McIntosh and his committee in the highest possible terms and Maclean came back to Scotland with his blessing. McIntosh and Delargy soon established a strong bond of friendship and mutual support which endured until the latter's death in 1980.

If one of the School's godparents was Ireland the other was Sweden. Delargy was also key to this important connection. In 1924, when a young student, he met the pioneering Swedish folklorist Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878–1952), whose own interest in Irish folklore was deep, and was greatly encouraged by him. With his help he was able to undertake an extensive



James Hamilton Delargy
(courtesy of Cairíona
Miles)

study trip to Scandinavia, Finland and Estonia in 1928, making helpful contacts with scholars there including the ethnologist Åke Campbell, who was to study Irish material culture extensively, and receiving practical instruction in Swedish methods of folklore and material culture collecting, indexing and analysis. He was greatly influenced by von Sydow's theories in a continuing collaboration. All these he put into practice when the Irish Folklore Institute was formed in 1930, and from 1935, when the larger Irish Folklore Commission was established. Von Sydow's library came to the Irish Folklore Commission on his death and the Irish-Swedish axis continues to be a potent one. Delargy urged McIntosh to include Dag Strömbäck, Head of the Dialect and Folklore Archive at Uppsala (from 1948 Professor of Nordic and Comparative Folk Culture Research there)



*Åke Campbell and
Calum Maclean*

and Åke Campbell (Professor from 1952), who by then had visited the Hebrides with Calum Maclean, as advisors for the fledgling School, and both were supportive in a variety of practical ways.

The First Decade: 1951–1960

The vision became reality in 1951. In January of that year Calum Maclean arrived to take up a position as Research Fellow in Oral Traditions, thus becoming the first collector in the School of Scottish Studies. The earlier advisory group, the Committee on Post-Graduate Scottish Studies, gave way to an Executive Committee with a remit to administer and direct the day-to-day activities of the new entity. It was soon served by a Secretary-Archivist, Stewart F Sanderson, a recent graduate of the University of Edinburgh, and was chaired by Deans of the Faculty of Arts, among them Professor John Orr. A small number of representatives from the interested departments were included on a rotating basis, and the Secretary to the University attended its meetings in order to liaise with the university administration. An Advisory Committee on Research was maintained. Premises at 27–28 George Square (later extended to 29) were identified as a potential location for the School, though it was based in premises at Minto House in Chambers Street until 1954. The School of Scottish Studies had come into being.

The recording history of the School received a “kick-start” not only with the early recordings of the Linguistic Surveys of Scotland and the Phonetics Department, but also through the visit to the United Kingdom in 1950–51 of Alan Lomax (1915–2002) from the United States, who was collecting material for the Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music. He was introduced to Scotland by the singer, song-writer and collector Ewan MacColl (1915–1989) and helped by Calum Maclean and by Hamish Henderson, who was to join the School staff some time later, to meet and record tradition-bearers in Scots and Gaelic-speaking parts of the country, from Edinburgh school-children to singers in the north-east and in the Hebrides. He had excellent equipment and along with the recordings made by members of the Linguistic Survey of Scotland and

the Phonetics Department of the University of Edinburgh, these were the foundational items in the School's sound recording collection.

In 1951 The People's Festival in Edinburgh gave a platform to several of the singers and instrumental musicians recorded by Lomax and the others in heartlands of living tradition, the "carrying stream" as Hamish Henderson so tellingly described it, and a very public validation of the work the School of Scottish Studies was undertaking. In that year as well an exhibition was held at the Royal Scottish Museum as a contribution to the Festival of Britain. Entitled "Living Traditions", it presented a showcase of the material culture of Scotland, its craft traditions and vernacular architecture, and included singing by Flora MacNeil of Barra, who had been recorded during the Lomax visit, to illustrate the *luadh* (waulking) tradition.

This early link with the USA is important to remember, for it was instrumental in the folk song revival of the 1950s on both sides of the Atlantic, in which Lomax and Henderson were major figures. And from its earliest days, the School of Scottish Studies attracted and welcomed a steady stream of scholars, students and artists not only from Scotland and elsewhere in the UK but also from North America and from all the continents, many of whom have played a major part in the development of Scottish Studies over the years.

Calum Maclean's training in Ireland, and his fieldwork experience there and in Scotland equipped him well for his remit in the School. Delargy also presented to the School copies of all of Calum's Scottish recordings from the Irish Folklore Commission as a handsel, a gift at the start of a new year or a new undertaking, and a copy of its seminal guide for field collecting, Sean O Sullivan's *Handbook of Irish Folklore*. It is worth noting that he had dedicated his volume to the people of Sweden, where he too had received much guidance, as well as to the people of Ireland. Immediately Calum began intensive work in the field, and he saw Scotland as a whole as his territory. Not only did he record in the Gaelic-speaking Highlands and Islands, but in the Borders and in Shetland also. However, at the start of his career in the School of Scottish Studies he had an experience similar to that from which his mentors Delargy and O Sullivan had benefited years earlier – a period of on-the-spot instruction by Swedish folklorists. And

here the links created in the 1930s but suspended during war-time and the post-war period were re-established, for it was Professor Åke Campbell who guided his Swedish stay.

With the agreement of the University of Edinburgh, Calum spent nine months in Sweden from July 1951 to March 1952 for immersion in intensive study of Swedish folklore and folklife methods. He first worked on a farm, learning the language in the context of rural community life. He attended the International Congress of European and Western Ethnology at Stockholm, and made contact with a range of scholars and with the analytical and theoretical approaches being applied there and elsewhere. He became acquainted with the system of archiving developed in the Dialect and Folklore Archive at Uppsala, which he took back to the School and where it was adopted and adapted for Scottish use. He studied with Professor Dag Strömbäck and others, and worked with archive staff in developing questionnaires and comparative data, returning to Scotland impressed, as his report tells, by the scholarship, courtesy and kindness of those who had trained him there.

The early days were marked by outreach to the regions of Scotland and beyond. Contacts made at the first Viking Congress, held in Shetland in 1950, were followed up and at a conference held in Lewis and Oban in 1953 under the auspices of the British Council and the University of Glasgow, School of Scottish Studies staff were joined by scholars from many countries to focus attention on Scottish folklore and folklife. Alexander Fenton, who would become Director of the School and the first Chair of Scottish Ethnology in 1990, but following National Service had begun his career as Senior Assistant Editor on the *Scottish National Dictionary* before moving into the museum world in 1959, helped prepare early questionnaires, allying words and things according to ethnological principles. The links with lexicography were strong and practical ones once the School was based at 27 George Square, for it was joined there by the Scottish National Dictionary and Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue projects, under David Murison (1913–1997) and A J (Jack) Aitken (1921–1998) respectively, where these were able to derive mutual benefit from the School's library and the sharing of expertise.

Calum Maclean was soon joined by the musicologist Francis Collinson (1898–1984), who had been working closely with John Lorne Campbell of Canna and whose Research Fellowship remit was music, particularly though not exclusively instrumental, and by Audrey Henshall, whose focus was archaeology and who was succeeded by Ian Whitaker. Shortly after, Hamish Henderson (1919–2002) added to the international ethos which has characterised the School from the start.

His experience before and during the Second World War had helped shape in him an inclusive approach to the cultures of Europe and to Scotland's place in their context. He was hired as a field collector in the first instance and subsequently became a Research Fellow, concentrating on travellers (Scots and Gaelic-speaking), agricultural workers in the north-east and others in contexts both rural and urban. The first Social Anthropology Research Fellow was the Canadian Frank Vallee (1918–1999), who was followed by Farnham Rehfisch and by Trefor Owen



Hamish Henderson with Alexander Stewart (Ali Dall) and family (Robert Botsford)

from Wales. Place-name studies were represented first by Winifred Temple and from 1956 to 1969 by W F H (Bill) Nicolaisen. James Ross had a specific Gaelic song remit, which John MacInnes was to take up. Kenneth Goldstein (1927–1995) came from the USA as a Fulbright Scholar to record the balladry of the north-east at the end of the decade. Ill health prevented him from taking up an invitation in the 1990s to be an honoured Visiting Professor of Ethnology in the School.

The School's foundational document made clear the necessity of creating a research library of books and journals including comparative materials from relevant cultures. From its earliest days it became a focus for donations of relevant volumes and indeed gifts of entire collections,



*W F H (Bill) Nicolaisen
on place-name fieldwork*

ensuring a resource both deep and broad for supporting its work, its research visitors and its collections. Its library holdings extend back in time in addition to the acquisitions made since 1951 and include many items from other cultures which are unique in the United Kingdom. As soon as this became possible journal exchanges were established with its own publications, ensuring that similar institutes in other countries built up a comparative Scottish resource.



James Ross with Nan MacKinnon, Vatersay



*Catherine MacInnes dyeing wool with crotal, Loch Carnan, South Uist
(Werner Kissling)*

In similar fashion the sound, photographic and manuscript archives have from 1951 been the recipients of gifts such as the photographs taken in the 1930s in the Outer Hebrides by the German anthropologist Werner Kissling (1895–1988), who also undertook some work commissioned by the School, and by Robert Atkinson in St Kilda and other islands following the evacuation of the population in 1930 but at a time when some St Kildans were still returning in the summers to their homes there. LP and tape collections of great interest have been donated and the artist Keith Henderson (1883–1982) gifted his iconic paintings, a small study and a large depiction, of a Barra waulking to the department.

It is not ideal to run an institute by committee, especially one composed of members who were in the main professors with their own departments to superintend, no matter how supportive their intentions. Again Sweden came to the aid of the School, in this instance through a visit by Professor Åke Campbell. The invitation issued to him by the University of Edinburgh marked the start of a programme – The Northern Scholars Scheme – which still continues, a contribution to the life of the university instigated by the School of Scottish Studies early in its history, to bring scholars from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland (extended to the Baltic countries more recently) to share expertise and promote joint research.

In October and November 1955 Campbell was invited to come to give lectures and also, importantly, to advise on the future organisation and activities of the School of Scottish Studies and the systematic investigation of the folk culture of Scotland. In his Report he made two strong recommendations to the university: that a Director should be appointed and that an academic journal should be established in order to disseminate the research of the School. By 1957 both of these were in place. And just had been the case from the time the School was first mooted, there was interest in the press about its activities.

Basil Megaw (1913–2002) was appointed to the Directorship of the School in that year and the scholarly journal *Scottish Studies*, for which plans were in fact well advanced by the time of Campbell's visit, began to appear. Megaw, an Ulsterman, came to the School from the Isle of Man,



Cartoon from The Scotsman, 21/9/57 (cartoon published by courtesy of Scotsman Publications)

where he had been Director of the Manx Museum. An archaeologist and anthropologist by education and profession, he was a strong advocate of field work, of scholarly collaboration and the dissemination of research findings. He was keen that teaching should figure in the programme of the School, suggesting that “Scottish Ethnology” would be a desirable name for any teaching programme or degree. A photo shows him on field work in Smearisary in the north-west Highlands, leading a combined field project gathering data on oral traditions, land use, buildings and way of life through sound recordings and photographs, undertaken by the School in 1959.

He was also instrumental in organising a series of symposia which enabled scholars from Scotland, elsewhere in the UK and beyond to

interact and which contributed to the contents of early issues of *Scottish Studies*. He gave great encouragement to the creation of the Society for Folk Life Studies in 1961 and its journals *Gwerin* and later *Folk Life*, and to the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group (founded 1972).

The Second Decade: 1961–1970

The first decade of the School's life was one of energetic activity, with field work contributing a wealth of holdings to the sound and photographic archives from across Scotland. The activities of the School



*Basil Megaw on field
work in Smearisary*

were reported in the press and field work responded whenever possible to pressures and threats experienced by Scottish communities. Special attention was paid to Benbecula and South Uist, for example, when the rocket range was proposed. Indeed a campaign to prevent it was supported by School staff.

No one was more devoted to this work than Calum Maclean, but his career was cut short cruelly by cancer, though he did not allow this to deter him from field work, and he died in 1960. By then Stewart Sanderson had left to head up the Folk Life Survey at the University of Leeds, Ian Whitaker had departed for Memorial University of Newfoundland and Francis Collinson had retired. Of the 1950s appointments Henderson, Nicolaisen, MacInnes and Megaw carried on into the 1960s, a period of expansion and consolidation. As throughout the School's story, volunteer supporters played a role, including Robert Kerr, who had been secretary to the Scottish Anthropological and Folklore Society from the 1930s and who did archive-related work for several years in the early 1960s.

Some research staff took up appointments for several years only, such as Anne Ross (1925–2012), working on custom and belief early in the decade, others for slightly longer, including Iain Crawford (Material Culture), there from 1960 to 1969, and Thorkild Knudsen, Danish ethnomusicologist, while others hired then were to contribute to the work of the School for many years: Morag MacLeod, Gaelic Song specialist, Donald Archie MacDonald (1929–1999), who succeeded Maclean, from 1962 to 1994, Alan Bruford (1937–1995) to be Research Archivist from 1965, Ian Fraser to assist Nicolaisen in the Scottish Place Name Survey, Eric Cregeen (1921–1983) in Social Organisation, and Peter Cooke, ethnomusicologist, from 1969. Daphne Hamilton was appointed in 1965 to assist with the editing of *Scottish Studies*.

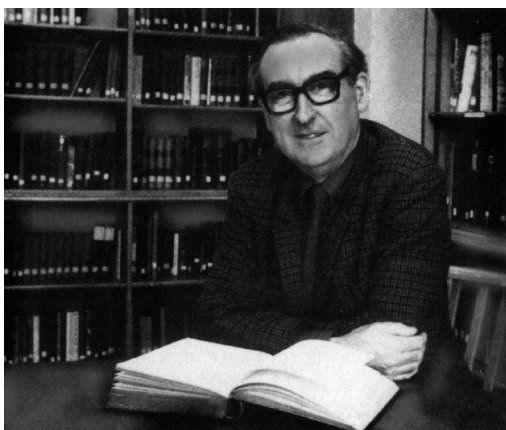
Staff hired as text or music transcribers or in a secretarial role often fulfilled further roles as valued field workers and research assistants, or went on from the School to careers elsewhere. These included James Porter and also Ailie Munro (1918–2002), who worked in the School from 1968 to 1982 and published on the Folk Song Revival. Ian Paterson

(1916–1990), a native of the island of Berneray, was responsible for many recordings between 1966 and 1984, and Mary MacDonald (1911–1999), who assisted in the sound archive from 1961 to 1978, will be referred to again in connection with *Tocher*. Cathie Scott contributed in a massive way from 1968 onwards to the development of the specialist Tale Archive. High technical standards were achieved and maintained in recordings for the sound archive in studio or in the field by Sandy Folkarde and, for thirty-two years, by Fred Kent (1932–1998).

The 1960s saw moves to integrate the School, which was continuing to report to the university administration through Senatus, into the Faculty of Arts, though this was not fully accomplished until later in the decade. Teaching and finance were the issues here. There was an interest in providing undergraduate lectures for existing courses in established degrees and a postgraduate diploma course was also planned. LPs added to *Scottish Studies* as outputs.

School staff have long been instrumental in both the creation and the support of interdisciplinary bodies drawing on the interests and expertise of both professional academics and lay people. The Society for Folk Life Studies (founded 1961) was one of these and in the 1960s and 1970s several more came into being, including the Scottish Society for Northern Studies (1968), the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group (1972) and the Scottish Oral History Group (1978). Staff have also been regular attenders at the conferences of the organisations bringing ethnologists together from many countries such as the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR), the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA), the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), and the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF). They were also foundational members of the network of British and Irish Sound Archives (BISA).

In 1969 Basil Megaw retired as Director of the School, though he continued a close connection with the School as an Honorary Fellow to the end of his life. Professor John MacQueen assumed this role in that year, moving from the Department of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, where he held the Masson Chair of Medieval English and



*John MacQueen in the
School Library*

Scottish Literature, and bringing with him in addition interests in place-names and saints' narratives, and a family background in the south-west of Scotland. In 1972 he was named to a Personal Chair of Scottish Literature and Oral Tradition.

The Third Decade: 1971–1980

When the School celebrated its attainment of adulthood, its 21st anniversary, in 1972 it had begun to move into a range of new activities. A grant from The Gannochy Trust facilitated the purchase of 16mm filming equipment and projects began to be carried out both in a studio based within the department and in the field. Amongst the first was a *luadh* session, recreated in South Uist and involving women who had all participated in the process when younger.

Later an outdoor service of adult baptism in a stream running through the centre of the island was filmed on the island of Tiree. In Shetland, fiddling and dancing in home and in hall were recorded, while singing and storytelling in Scots and in Gaelic formed several important projects, capturing the important performance components of gesture and facial expression as well as the words, melodies and context. Craft

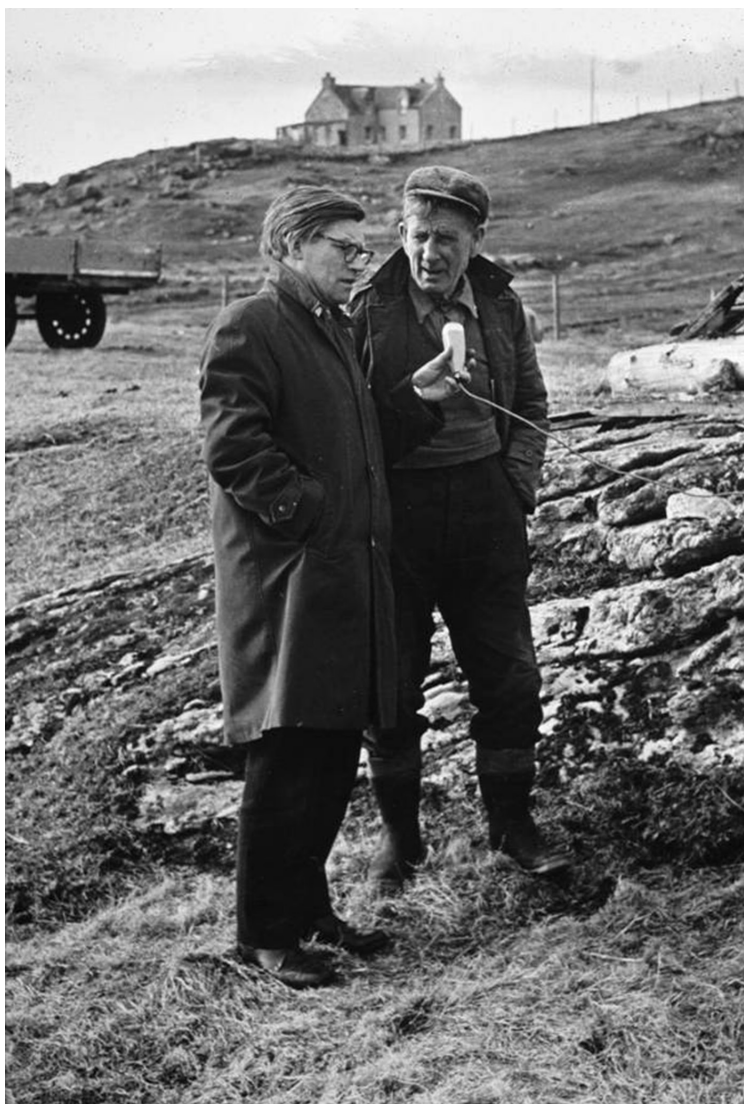
subjects included Shetland kishie-making. In time video format was introduced.

The year 1971 saw the launch of *Tocher*, an innovative archive publication presenting for the first time transcriptions from the sound archive in an accessible format for readers of all ages, supported by translations where required, photographs and notes. It was the inspiration of Mary MacDonald, archive assistant, a native of Islay who had lived as well on the island of Barra and who knew how much it meant in the communities in which material was collected to have ready access to it. She supported editor Alan Bruford in its production for many years.

The *Scottish Tradition* LP series began to be published, first by Tangent Records, and now by Greentrax Recordings Limited, overseen by Peter Cooke, providing another form of welcome access to archive holdings. Each LP was accompanied by a full brochure with extensive notes based on research into the subject featured, be it an individual singer, the instrumental and vocal music of a particular region or a genre of oral tradition, from the bothy ballads of the north-east to the psalm singing of the Hebrides.



South Uist luadh (filmed)



Eric Cregeen recording Lachlan MacNeill, Grimsay

A break-through was made into securing research council funding in the form of grants to Eric Cregeen (1921–1983) for field collecting and archival research on the history and traditions of the island of Tiree in the 18th and 19th centuries by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), later the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). He was also instrumental in the founding of the Scottish Oral History Group in 1978, as the core source of the School's collections, the oral transmission of both inherited tradition and individual experience, came to be recognised as a vital form of evidence for historians and others.

Undergraduate teaching in the form of the School's own courses, at first and second-year level, in Oral Literature and Popular Tradition, was fostered in the 1970s and the supervision of research for postgraduate degrees of M.Litt and PhD. The Postgraduate Diploma in Scottish Studies was to be replaced later by the Master of Science (MSc), of similar 12-month duration, as an appropriate prelude to PhD work.

The Fourth Decade: 1981–1990

It was in this decade that the full Scottish Ethnology degree came into being, using the name first suggested by Basil Megaw two decades earlier.



*Alan Bruford with
postgraduate students*

Two members of staff were appointed with a remit additional to a specialist topic within the discipline, namely Custom and Belief (Margaret Bennett) and Social Organisation (Margaret Mackay), of shaping the four-year programme and ensuring that it had the needed teaching resources. The archive collections were at the heart of the degree, as they have continued to be, a laboratory for the study of ethnology and for the training of new generations of ethnologists and others with the transferable skills required for field work, interviewing, recording, transcribing, indexing, and applying theoretical and analytical approaches in comparative ways in keeping with the subject internationally.

Research projects were introduced from the first year, with students (both school-leavers and mature students) finding a sense of excitement and liberation in the discovery that their family traditions or topics in their own localities were valid sources of evidence for university study, encouraged by their teachers to, as the Swedes put it, “Dig where you stand”. Projects and dissertations were deposited in the archive, adding themes of contemporary import and including work on the ethnic diversity which characterises Scotland in our own time as well as in the past. This has continued year on year. Joint degrees were established with appropriate subjects – Scottish History, Celtic, Archaeology, English Language and English Literature (with their strong Scots Language and Scottish Literature components), Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies – as well as the Single Honours Scottish Ethnology degree.

In order to expedite communication and represent this interdisciplinary outlook a Board of Scottish Studies was created, with Margaret Mackay as its first Chair, to involve membership from across the subjects in the degrees and beyond. It was intimately associated with the “Studying Scotland at Edinburgh” initiative of the 1980s and 1990s, aimed at outreach to those at home and further afield interested in exploring Scottish subjects at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The 1980s saw the start of the publication in eight volumes of the *Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* in association with the University of Aberdeen. This project, editing the songs – over three thousand texts and tunes – collected in the north-east of Scotland in the early years of

the twentieth century by Gavin Greig (1856–1914) and the Reverend James Bruce Duncan (1848–1917), was undertaken initially by Patrick Shuldham-Shaw (1917–1977). He was succeeded in the General Editorship by Emily Lyle, who ensured that the work was brought to completion in 2002 with the assistance of other scholars of Scots song, many of them exponents of the tradition themselves, who were involved with her as editors of the volumes. It provides an immensely rich resource for performance, study and further publications.

Ian MacKenzie (1958–2009) was appointed to the staff of the School in 1985 as photographic technician in succession to Ralph Morton and Leslie Davenport, and was instrumental in stimulating the photographic work of students as the new degrees developed and through his own work and that which he carried out on field work in collaboration with other staff augmented the holdings of the photographic archive in creative ways. This was also a period which saw the School called on to advise on oral history projects sponsored by the Manpower Services Commission and others, and subsequent donations to the sound archive of the fruits of such work.

The end of this decade saw the retirement of John MacQueen as Director of the School of Scottish Studies in 1988 and the appointment of Alexander Fenton (1929–2012) as the first Professor of Scottish Ethnology from 1989 to 1994. His connection with the School of Scottish Studies had been a long one, from the early days of preparing questionnaires and his work on the *Scottish National Dictionary* through a distinguished career in the Museum of Antiquities (subsequently the Museum of Scotland), where he became Director and where he also fostered the development of the Scottish Ethnological/Scottish Life Archive, the Scottish Agricultural Museum and the European Ethnological Research Centre.

The Fifth Decade: 1991–2000

One very pleasing aspect of this decade was the fact that the staff of the School began to include graduates of its own unique Scottish Ethnology degree programme, when Rhona Talbot was appointed to assist in the

sound archive from 1993 to 2001 and Gary West to be a Lecturer in Scottish Ethnology from 1994. Mark Trewin took up a cross appointment between the School and the Faculty of Music in the same year. Following Sandy Fenton's retirement in 1994, Margaret Mackay was appointed Director of the School and she co-ordinated a programme which brought a series of internationally eminent ethnologists and folklorists as Visiting Professors of Ethnology to the department over the next five years. Each brought her or his special area or areas of expertise to the School, contributing as relevant to undergraduate courses in years one and two and teaching an honours course which incorporated theory, methods and material in their own specialism. They were resource persons for students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels as well as for staff and each



Alexander (Sandy) Fenton

made good use of the School's archival holdings for comparative material in their own individual subjects.

Over this period the School welcomed Professor W F H Nicolaisen, who had returned to Scotland and the University of Aberdeen after a sojourn in the USA from 1969, on place-names and folkloristics, Professor Linda Dégh from the University of Indiana, on oral narrative, Professor Bjarne Stoklund from the University of Copenhagen on material culture and social organisation, Professor Nils-Arvid Bringéus of the University of Lund on *bildlore* (the use of visual sources) and the ethnology of religious expression, and Professor Åse Enerstvedt from Norway on childlore and children's culture.

Work was also carried out in 29 George Square to upgrade the analogue tape storage area with rolling metal shelving and heat and humidity controls to meet appropriate British Standards for such holdings. Continuing professional development for archive staff was instituted and formal recognition was gained for the School of Scottish Studies Library as a research resource sitting alongside the School's archival collections and as a constituent part of the University of Edinburgh Library system and the university's collections. Importantly, with both inspiration and practical support from John Smith and other colleagues in the university's computing services division, the PEARL project was launched. With its title an acronym for Providing Ethnological Resources for Research and Learning, PEARL pioneered the provision of original sound items selected from those published from the archive in *Tocher* and thus already in the public domain and enabling the testing of technological approaches which were to assist the development of *Tobar an Dualchais* (The Well of Heritage)/Kist o Riches in the next decade.

The School and in particular its archives, to which he had devoted so many years as Research Archivist, editor of *Tocher*, scholar, teacher and latterly Reader in Scottish Ethnology, made the decision to sponsor an annual lecture in memory and honour of Alan Bruford following his sudden death in 1995. It continues to take place at the Scottish International Storytelling Festival each autumn as a means of outreach for the archives and for scholarship associated with various forms of narrative.

The Sixth Decade: 2001–2011

Two main features dominate the story of the School of Scottish Studies in this decade. One of these is the re-structuring of the University of Edinburgh and the emergence of new patterns of decision-making and governance. A prelude to this came with the merger of Celtic and Scottish Studies into a single subject area, headed by Professor William Gillies of Celtic, with Donald Meek appointed as Professor of Scottish and Gaelic Studies. Margaret Mackay became Director of the School of Scottish Studies Archives. Faculties and departments were abolished and in their stead three Colleges were created, Humanities and Social Science, Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, and Science and Engineering. Within each College, Schools, each with its head, were instituted, with the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures embracing Celtic and Scottish Studies.

The other feature is the development of online provision of archive resources. During this period an exciting new development, building on the PEARL Project of the 1990s and utilising digital technology in new ways, came to fruition after preparatory years and fundraising in the earlier decade. *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches* is a partnership of archive-holders, The School of Scottish Studies, BBC Radio and The National Trust for Scotland (Campbell of Canna Collection) co-ordinated by Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (University of the Highlands and Islands) for ensuring preservation of and access to three major collections of Gaelic and Scots oral tradition.

Martin MacIntyre was responsible for co-ordinating its development and fund-raising, Mairead MacDonald for the direction of the project once launched and special mention should be made of John Shaw, who was appointed to the School in 1996 and who recognised early the potential for community development in a project of this kind. Major funding was provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and other sources, with assistance, both monetary and in kind, from the three archive-holders. Work commenced in 2006 and the website was launched in December 2010, as a timely prelude to the start of the year celebrating

the sixtieth anniversary – the diamond jubilee – of the founding of the School of Scottish Studies in 1951. The digitisation of analogue tapes (and wire recordings in the case of some of the Campbell of Canna material) was allied to an innovative programme of work by community cataloguers, working on archive materials recorded in their own home districts.

John Shaw also directed a further innovative web-based project in this period, enabling electronic access to the extensive Calum Maclean Collection, with a major grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), while a project based on the collections of Alexander Carmichael, the Carmichael Watson Project, supported by The Leverhulme Trust and the AHRC, links the department and Special Collections in the University of Edinburgh Library.

The European Ethnological Research Centre moved from the National Museums of Scotland to Celtic and Scottish Studies in 2006 and staffed by Kenneth Veitch and Mark Mulhern and directed by Gary West, carries out its work of placing Scottish research in a European and wider context through the publication of the magisterial fourteen-volume *Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*, the journal *Review of Scottish Culture (ROSC)*, and its *Flashback* series.

In this decade Neill Martin, Katherine Campbell and Will Lamb were appointed to the teaching and research staff, with remits in Custom and Belief, Instrumental Music and Scots Song, and Oral Narrative and Gaelic Song respectively, and Cathlin Macaulay to responsibilities in the archives. An Artist in Residence scheme was established to allow opportunities for exponents of the expressive arts to engage with students and staff and to explore the riches of the archives for their own purposes.

Amongst the various ways in which the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the School of Scottish Studies is being marked, including this conference, for which we are very grateful to the Islands Book Trust, tested and new forms of outreach figure strongly. These include Artists in Residence and special Archive Trails artists' projects, concerts, exhibitions, talks, lectures, symposia, sound installations, radio and television broadcasts, publications and press articles, a new CD in the Scottish Tradition series, "Songs and Ballads from Perthshire Field Recordings in

the 1950s”, and filmed translations into British Sign Language (BSL) of two tales from the sound archive.

And as in every year since its creation in 1951, students at all levels, artists and other performers, scholars from home and abroad, publishers and broadcasters, all with an interest in Scotland’s people, languages and cultures, continue to find the lasting legacy of the School of Scottish Studies in collections, resources and expertise which are both unique and ever-growing, as dynamic as Scotland itself. The Hindu festival of Diwali as celebrated in Inverness and the Lammas-tide Burryman procession in South Queensferry, new songs by Scottish songmakers as well as tunes heard in years gone by are here – and so the carrying stream flows on.

Notes

Material for this overview was gathered from papers in the School of Scottish Studies Archives, private papers consulted with permission, and interviews with former staff members. Volume XI, page 895, of the signed minutes of the Edinburgh University Senatus Academicus includes the University Court’s approval of the creation of the School of Scottish Studies as outlined in the memorandum printed in an appendix to the same volume at page 195 ff.

Dates are given, where known, for individuals who have passed away. Apart from the holders of chairs, titles have not been provided.

All photographs are from the Archives of the School of Scottish Studies unless otherwise indicated.

Readers will find the following websites useful:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/celtic-scottish-studies>

<http://www.celtscot.ed.ac.uk/calum-maclean>

<http://www.carmichaelwatson.lib.ed.ac.uk>

<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk>

<http://www.kistoriches.co.uk>