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UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

Elphinstone Institute

Public Events 2023–2024

ELPHINSTONE



INSTITUTE

studying culture in context

Welcome, fit like?

We're proud to present the Elphinstone Institute's muckle public events for 2023–2024. Fit is the Elphinstone Institute? It wis startit in 1995 tae mark five hunner years since Aiberdeen Varsity wis foondit, an is dedicatit tae researchin, teachin, and celebratin the rich culture o the North-East an North o Scotland, eesin Ethnology, Folklore, an Ethnomusicology tae dee't.

Jyne us in celebratin culture!

Welcome!

We're proud to present the Elphinstone Institute's extensive public events for 2023–2024. What is the Elphinstone Institute? Founded in 1995 in honour of the University of Aberdeen's quincenentary, we're dedicated to the triple task of researching, teaching, and celebrating the rich culture of the North-East and North of Scotland, all through the disciplines of Ethnology, Folklore, and Ethnomusicology.

Come along and join us in celebrating culture!

Booking Events

Please book ticketed events by e-mail: elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk or telephone: 01224 272996

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

2ND AND 4TH THURSDAYS OF THE MONTH

Workshop

POLISH-SCOTTISH SONG GROUP

Time: 7 to 9pm | Location: MacRobert Building 055

Join the Polish-Scottish Song Group and exchange culture through the traditional songs of Scotland, Poland, and many other countries. All welcome! From 28 September to 13 June.

Wymiana kulturowa poprzez tradycyjne utwory ze Szkocji, Polski oraz wielu innych krajów. Wszyscy są bardzo mile widziani! Zapraszamy!
Od 28 września do 13 czerwca.

SUNDAY, 27 AUGUST 2023

Festival

ABERDEEN MELA: ONE WORLD DAY

Time: 12 to 7pm | Location: Queen's Links, Beach Boulevard

Led by **Aberdeen Multicultural Centre**, this one-day festival celebrates cultural diversity in the North-East of Scotland. It attracts around 14,000 people each year and features food, music, and dance as well as children's activities. We're delighted to be part of the steering group that shapes this event. See: www.melaaberdeen.org.uk

SATURDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2023

Friends of the Elphinstone Institute

BALLAD BUS

Time: 9 to 5pm | Location: Meet at MacRobert Car Park | £15/£13 for Friends of Elphinstone Inst.



The Ballad Bus, Harlaw Monument | Credit: Elphinstone Institute Archives

Join us on a coach trip round the North-East to explore the song, stories, and locations behind some of the area's most celebrated ballads.



Aberdeen Mela One World Day | Credit: Aberdeen Multicultural Centre

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

FRIDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2023

WayWORD Festival

TOULMIN PRIZE EVENT

Time: 12 to 1pm | Location: King's Pavilion | Free but ticketed

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 2023's winning stories announced and read aloud by North-East Makar, **Sheena Blackhall**.



Sheena Blackhall | Credit: Rory Raitt

SATURDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2023

Workshop

SCOTTISH FOLK DAY

Time: 10am to 6pm | Location: MacRobert Building, University of Aberdeen | Price: Sliding Scale

To mark a new nationwide day of traditional music under the banner of the Traditional Music Forum, we're teaming up with the Dee and Don Ceilidh Collective and Scottish Culture and Traditions to host an exciting day of traditional music, song workshops, and performances with some of Scotland's leading folk musicians: **Hayley Keenan, Charlie McKerron, Eryn Rae, Ron Jappy, Jenn Butterworth, and Grace Banks**. See: www.deedonceilidhcollective.com/events

SATURDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER–SUNDAY, 1 OCTOBER

Workshop

ABERDEEN FOLK ORCHESTRA: KÖTERANA WORKSHOP/ PERFORMANCE

Time: 9.30am start Saturday/Sunday; 6.30pm Sunday concert | Location: MacRobert Building MR614 | Price: £50 for workshops; concert free

Join the Aberdeen Folk Orchestra for a weekend of workshops exploring Institute alumnus **Iain Fraser's** piece 'Kōterana'. Kōterana, the Māori word for Scotland, charts the remarkable story of 800 Highlanders who followed Revd Norman McLeod on a journey of no return from Scotland to New Zealand in the 1800s. Led by multi-talented musician **Ronnie Gibson**, the workshops will culminate in an evening concert.

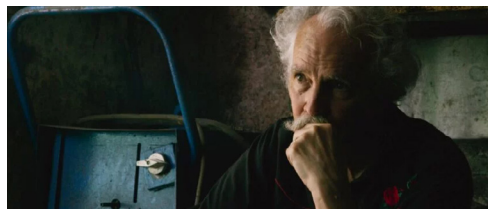
THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2023

Ethnographic Film Series

HENRY GLASSIE: FIELD WORK (2019), DIR. BY PAT COLLINS

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: MacRobert Building MR051

Inspired by and featuring the folklorist **Henry Glassie**, *Field Work* is an immersive and meditative film set among the rituals and rhythms of working artists in Brazil, Turkey, North Carolina, and Ireland. Glassie's deep, abiding love for these artists resonates throughout the film. The Brazilian sculptor, Edival Rosas, describes his practice as one where body and spirit are integrated, where in Glassie's words the creative act brings 'a momentary fulfilment of what it is to be human'.



Still from *Field Work* | Credit: Pat Collins

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FRIDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

FIRST FRIDAY FLING – THEME: BEING HUMAN

Time: 7 to 9pm | Location: St Peter's Heritage Centre, Peterculter

On the first Friday of the month, **Grampian Association of Storytellers (GAS)** meet to share stories and poems in a fun, friendly, and welcoming space. Participants will find this a safe space to try out storytelling or just to listen to stories, all with a nice cup of tea or coffee and a wee biscuit at half time.

WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

THE VOICE SHALL ALWAYS REMAIN

Zahra Afsah and Khloud Erekousi

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 2, Seminar Room 224 | Free but ticketed



Storyteller Zahra Afsah | Credit: Hosein Eyalati

Iranian storyteller **Zahra Afsah** and Syrian storyteller **Khloud Erekousi** use the traditional technique of *pardeh-khani* (narration through curtains) to interweave an ancient Persian tale with modern day stories, exploring how the key to freedom for many Iranian women lies in their own voices and talents.

THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2023

Public Lecture Series

'I AM BECAUSE WE ARE': MEDIATING BETWEEN AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN CULTURAL MINDSETS

Ibidun Daramola

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: MacRobert Building MR051



Ibidun Daramola | Credit: Tito Daramola

This talk, presenting lived experiences between British and African contexts, will explore ways of enabling intercultural communication to create understanding. It will draw on principles that facilitate and empower multiple cultural interactions, enabling healthy, cordial coexistence. **Revd Dr Ibidun Daramola** is a Church of Scotland minister who works as a cultural mediator in Scotland for councils and other organisations.

FRIDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

BENNACHIE SPEAKS

Mairi McKeown and Ailsa Dixon

Time: 7.30 to 8.30pm | Location: Aberdeen Arts Centre, 33 King St, Aberdeen

Musician **Mairi McKeown** and storyteller **Ailsa Dixon** weave legend and history with freshly composed music to explore the past, present, and future of Bennachie: from rock formations, 900-year-old love triangles, and the impact of climate change on its slopes. Through song and story, the mountain speaks.

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

TUESDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

THE PROMISE

Anna Conomos and Rebecca Vučetić

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7, Meeting Room 1 | Free but ticketed

Inspired by interviews conducted with refugees, 'The Promise', presented by storyteller **Anna Conomos** and musician **Rebecca Vučetić**, centres on two best friends, one Greek, one Turkish, and the promise that unites them forever. This powerful performance is based around Greek tales, songs, and music from Asia Minor.



Anna Conomos | Credit: Perform Story

WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2023

Workshop

NEEPIE LANTERN HOWKING WORKSHOP

Alison Sharman

Time: 6.30 to 8.30pm | Location: Dunbar Street Hall, AB24 3UJ | £5 (includes neep and refreshments), booking required



2022 Winning Neepie Lantern by Alistair Clark | Credit: Alistair Clark

Join **Alison Sharman** for a neep howking workshop to create your own traditional neepie lantern for Halloween, just in time for our Neepie Lantern Competition. Neeps, candles, and string will be provided. Please bring a strong dessert spoon for howking. Parents are responsible for their children (one per adult, please).

FRIDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

THE THREE APPRENTICES

Phyll McBain, David Pullar, Cara Roberts

Time: 7 to 9pm | Location: St Peter's Heritage Centre, Peterculter

Join **Phyll McBain**, **David Pullar**, and **Cara Roberts** as they share story magic with you. All three are Apprentice Storytellers with the Scottish Storytelling Centre, and all are bringing new voice to the North-East from the North-East.

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The Williamson family, 1979 | Credit: John McKay, *Glasgow Herald*

WEDNESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2023

Prize Deadline

NEEPIE LANTERN COMPETITION

Get your knives and spoons (yes spoons!) ready, and get hawking (or join our workshop on 25 October – see above). When you've carved your masterpiece send a pic of your entry to elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk including your full name and postal address. The first-place winner and the runners-up will receive an Elphinstone Institute publication and a public announcement on social media.

THURSDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2023

Ethnographic Film Series

THE SHARED LIGHT (2021) AND SELECTED FILMS, FOLLOWED BY Q&A WITH FILMMAKERS, DIR. BY BIBO KEELEY AND BRIAN KEELEY

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: MacRobert Building MR051



Still from *BREATHE* | Credit: Bibo Keeley and Brian Keeley

The work of Aberdeen-based artists and filmmakers **Bibo Keeley** and **Brian Keeley** is inextricably linked with their lives. Much is informed by their experiences of Brian's critical illness and heart transplant in 2013 and its continuing impact. Their work is multi-faceted, multi-layered, and multi-disciplinary, and the artist duo explore trauma, emotion, and the subconscious mind, interweaving autobiographical themes with universal issues, acknowledging the importance of compassion.

MONDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

STORIES FROM THE GELLY

Linda Williamson

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7, Meeting Room 1 | Free but ticketed

Storytelling and animated film come together to bring the tales of Scotland's Travelling People to life. The *Two Ravens*, produced by Christine Martin and animator John McGeoch, is a story of black magic, love, and the deep belief in goodness personified by the folk hero Jack, adapted from the telling of Duncan Williamson (1928–2007).

Linda Williamson will complement the film telling stories from Duncan's legacy and from their years under canvas with their two children, living in the traditional gelly camp.

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

FRIDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

FIRST FRIDAY FLING – THEME: BEING HUMAN AND BEYOND

Time: 7 to 9pm | Location: St Peter's Heritage Centre, Peterculter

On the first Friday of the month, **Grampian Association of Storytellers (GAS)** meet to share stories and poems in a fun, friendly, and welcoming space. Participants will find this a safe space to try out storytelling or just to listen to stories, all with a nice cup of tea or coffee and a wee biscuit at half time.

TUESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

NAIJA-TALES: TELL IT LIKE A NIGERIAN

Lola Dabiri

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7, Meeting Room 1 | Free but ticketed

How did dogs come to live with humans and how many skyscrapers can one count on the Lagos skyline? The Nigerian saying, 'Naija no dey carry last' (Nigerians never finish last), is at the heart of **Lola Dabiri's** storytelling. This evening of tales will begin by going all the way back to the traditional tales of Lola's ancestors before moving on to stories that reflect the beating hearts of Nigerians around the world today.



Lola Dabiri | Credit: Rory Raitt

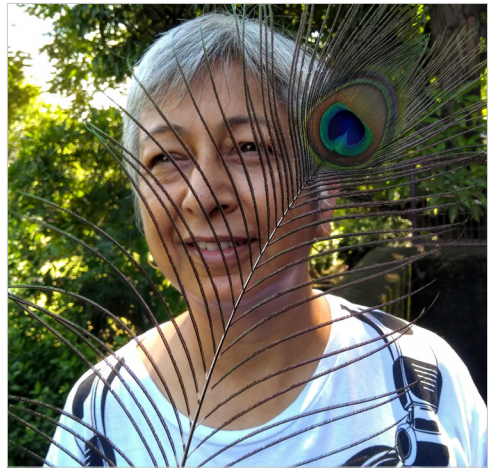
THURSDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2023

Public Lecture Series

DAVID BUCHAN LECTURE – WHEN HUMANS, ANIMALS, AND PLANTS TALK TO EACH OTHER

Prof. Sadhana Naithani

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 7, Meeting Room 1 | Free but ticketed



Prof. Sadhana Naithani | Credit: Sudheer Gupta

We live in a world of deep environmental and ecological crises. As we struggle to understand how to heal the damaged earth, we realise that we know its residents, geographic landscapes, and wide oceans more through stories than experience. The age-old tales, proverbs, and songs encapsulated as folklore have not only entertained humanity, but have provided a way of relating with nature. **Can folklore provide a way of creating a healthier planet?** This lecture shows how folklore deals with nature, animals, and natural phenomena. Folklore's imaginative resolutions to contemporary crises are surprisingly in tandem with science and demonstrate why folklore is an integral subject of interdisciplinary study.

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FRIDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

BALLADS AND STORIES

Time: 7 to 9pm | Location: St Peter's Heritage Centre, Peterculter

In partnership with **Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland (TMSA)**, GAS is delighted to be hosting an evening of stories and ballads. Join us around the fireplace, so to speak, and share in an evening of entertainment without radio, television, and social media.

SATURDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

A USER'S GUIDE TO STORIES AND HERITAGE

Time: 2 to 4.30pm | Location: St Peter's Heritage Centre, Peterculter | Price: £10

Led by **Nicola Wright**, this workshop is a wonderful opportunity to dip your toes into creating stories around a heritage theme. If you're a storyteller interested in heritage or you work or volunteer locally, this is a great opportunity to have a go.

SUNDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

TOILET TALES

Time: 7 to 9pm | Location: Dunbar Street Hall, AB24 3UJ | Pay what you can

Join storytellers **Jackie Ross** and **Nicola Wright** in celebrating World Toilet Day with GAS, all to raise money for the charity Toilet Twinning, which helps thousands of people across the world get access to clean water and sanitation. This is an evening of stories, quizzes, and fascinating historical facts about the necessary thing we all need to do – go to the loo.

TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2023

Scottish Storytelling Festival

THREADS OF GOLD: ANCIENT BULGARIAN TALES OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY

Nana Tomova

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 2, Seminar Room 224 | Free but ticketed

Born by the Black Sea and the Old Mountain, **Nana Tomova** is a Traditional Oral Storyteller who carries in her bones old Bulgarian stories: ...A maid made gold by the river of magic for her gifts to the serpents and the snakes of the dark. A river of red birthed by the blade which sought the apple of gold. Whilst the dragoness wept for the earth and the rivers. Their blood shed to make a hero, their tears wept to soothe the earth...



Nana Tomova | Credit: Ollie Denney

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

TUESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2023

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

TALES FROM THE NORTH-EAST AND BEYOND

Phyll McBain and Guests

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fl. 2, Seminar Room 224 | Free but ticketed

Talented and hilarious storyteller **Phyll McBain** will lead this exuberant evening of storytelling. Her Doric tales will explore anecdotes from her own life and the story of how she became a storyteller. Phyll will then invite **up-and-coming tellers** from around the North-East, who will share tales of real life and traditional tales with a modern twist.

THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY 2024

Public Lecture Series

A DEAF HISTORY OF ABERDEEN

Len Mellis and Gerry Malley

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: MacRobert Building MR051

Local Deaf historians **Len Mellis** and **Gerry Malley** will discuss the rich and complex history of Deaf people in the North-East over the centuries, ranging from Aberdeen-born George Dalgarno – who in the 1600s came up with a version of sign language for education – to the experiences of those who attended Aberdeen's Deaf schools and institutions. The talk will be delivered in British Sign Language and will be fully interpreted in English throughout. All very welcome.



Len Mellis and Gerry Malley | Credit: Len Mellis

THURSDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2024

Ethnographic Film Series

DANCES OF GOA (2018), FOLLOWED BY Q&A WITH FILMMAKER, DIR. BY NALINI ELVINO DE SOUSA

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: MacRobert Building MR051



Still from *Dances of Goa* | Credit: Nalini Elvino De Sousa

Travelling through the villages of **Goa, India**, a team of youngsters unveil the rich culture of Goa through dance. It's a journey that explores the basic lifestyle, rituals, beliefs, customs, and costumes of the Goan village that should not be forgotten.

THURSDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2024

Public Lecture Series

STANLEY ROBERTSON IN THE ELPHINSTONE INSTITUTE ARCHIVES

Lauren Hossack

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: MacRobert Building MR051

Funded by Aberdeen City Council, the 'Remembering Stanley' project at the Elphinstone Institute Archives focused on the records of Stanley Robertson, Traveller storyteller, singer, author, and piper. **Lauren Hossack** will discuss her role as lead cataloguer on the project and will bring the audience on a tour of her work and the rich recordings with which she has worked.

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FRIDAY–SUNDAY, 1–3 MARCH 2024

Festival

ALEX GREEN WHISTLE FESTIVAL

Time: TBC | Location: Lemon Tree and other venues
Price: TBC

Furthering the legacy of **Alex Green** (1930–2017) as a creator, teacher, and master of the North-East tin whistle style, this festival celebrates the tin whistle as a traditional instrument, showcasing and offering multi-level workshops and offering an exciting programme of performances. We're delighted to partner with Aberdeen Performing Arts to deliver this event. Please check our website and social media channels for further information.

THURSDAY, 7 MARCH 2024

Ethnographic Film Series

DÙTHCHAS | HOME (2022), DIR. BY KIRSTY MACDONALD AND ANDY MACKINNON

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: MacRobert Building MR051

For many of us there are two places we can call home – where we were born and where we now live. This film is about the yearning for their birth home felt by those who have left the **Isle of Berneray** in the Outer Hebrides, and the remembrance of the ever-living past for those who have stayed or returned, when the home in their heart is also where they live.



Still from *Dùthchas* | Credit: Kirsty MacDonald and Andy MacKinnon

THURSDAY, 21 MARCH 2024

Public Lecture Series

THE CRUDEN BAY BRAM STOKER KNEW

Mike Shepherd

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: MacRobert Building MR051

In the late nineteenth century, when Bram Stoker was a visitor to Cruden Bay, minister **Adam Drummond** produced eleven superbly written stories in Doric about its residents. Local historian **Mike Shepherd** will discuss his new book exploring the stories, the town residents, and how all of this intriguingly connects to Stoker's *Dracula*.



Slains Castle | Credit: Mike Shepherd

THURSDAY, 16 MAY 2024

Public Lecture Series

THE GRANITE MEN: 1730–1914

Jim Fiddes

Time: 6.30 to 8pm | Location: MacRobert Building MR051

Jim Fiddes will tell the story of the granite industry in Aberdeen and the North-East from the earliest real quarry at Loanhead in Rosemount in 1730, through the development of quarrying, building, and the granite yards where the granite was cut and polished. Jim's story concludes around the outbreak of the First World War.

Events Listing...

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SUNDAY, 27 AUGUST 2023	Festival ABERDEEN MELA: ONE WORLD DAY
SATURDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2023	Friends of the Elphinstone Institute BALLAD BUS
FRIDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2023	WayWORD Festival TOULMIN PRIZE EVENT
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THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2023	Ethnographic Film Series HENRY GLASSIE: FIELD WORK (2019), DIR. BY PAT COLLINS
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Photos clockwise from top left: Jim Fiddes | Credit: Kerry Fiddes / Aberdeen Bestiary cropped image MS24 | Credit: UoA Museums and Special Collections, licensed under CC4.0 / Lauren Hossack in the Elphinstone Inst Archives | Credit: Nicolas Le Bigre / Polish-Scottish Song Group | Credit: Nicolas Le Bigre / Phyll McBain | Credit: Mary Murray

Many thanks to all our partner organisations.



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