

# Centre for History News



As we reach our 16th birthday the Centre is slowly and definitively 'coming of age'. We have just welcomed three new skilled staff members to the team, bringing us to 19 individuals altogether (our highest ever).

Our taught student numbers are also healthy. Last year, we taught 890 undergraduate and 198 postgraduate student 'heads' over all our modules (this is equivalent to 181 full-time students, taking only history modules).

We are constantly looking to communicate the excitement and importance of history and to equip our students with the skills and confidence they need for the workplace and further study. The pandemic has shown how beneficial our ability to adapt to new circumstances has been for students (our graduates were more successful in 2021 than they have ever been) and we are already applying the same energy to the new university-wide curriculum review.

It's been an inclusive and student-focused process and I'm excited to see what emerges.

Professor David Worthington

## Autumn 2021

**The Centre for History has been part of the University of the Highlands and Islands since 2005 and is internationally renowned for our research and teaching in Highland, Scottish and wider world history.**

We have been based in the cathedral town of Dornoch in Sutherland for the last 16 years, most recently at Burghfield House where our offices (pictured above) look out over the town.

Our news changes fast and you can find out more by following us on Facebook or Twitter **@UHIHistory**

Go to our website [www.history.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.history.uhi.ac.uk) to discover more about our undergraduate and online masters courses.

Or just email us on [history@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:history@uhi.ac.uk).

We look forward to hearing from you!



University of the  
Highlands and Islands  
Centre for History

Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd  
agus nan Eilean  
Ionad Eachdraidh

# STUDENT NEWS



## Hats off to all our graduates!

Despite the pandemic, our Class of 2021 had the best set of results we've ever seen at the Centre. Our BA Hons graduates included three firsts, nineteen 2.1s and five 2.2s. There were no fails and no thirds. Pictured top left is **Taylor Springthorpe** with her upper second BA Hons degree.

Meanwhile, thirteen of our postgraduate students were awarded MLitt degrees, seven of them with Distinction. This was a fantastic result after a difficult year and we're extraordinarily proud of them all.

## Curriculum review

The humanities subjects at UHI are taking part in a curriculum review which aims to reduce duplication of module content across subjects and to increase the quality of the student experience. Most of our history modules already have excellent class numbers (several modules have over 50 students) but we want to make sure that there are strong, vibrant student communities in all our classes.

Our undergraduate programme leader, **Dr Lucy Dean**, is currently working on ways to widen the scope of some modules and to add depth to others. It will be a gradual process with few changes expected in the immediate future.

## Outstanding student work

This year's Jim Hunter dissertation prize has been awarded to one of our Orkney College UHI history students, **Ben Delaney** (pictured above centre). Ben's first class undergraduate dissertation 'Material cultural analysis of book and manuscript illustrations: do they represent evidence of continuity, modernity, or a blend of both in the knowledge of Renaissance era Europeans?' was praised for its 'rare level of comfort with theoretical and conceptual matters'.

## History is for life

One of our longest-standing students has just been awarded an MLitt History of the Highlands and Islands. **Tracy Kennedy** (pictured top right) started her undergraduate Scottish History degree with us in 2010/11. After graduating from that she decided to study for a masters with us too. During this time, she worked as a humanities lecturer at Inverness College UHI and brought up a family.

Tracy says 'I hope to continue my research into paupers, poverty and poorhouses in northern Scotland. By supporting me to complete my undergraduate degree, then my MLitt, the Centre for History have changed my life and I will be forever grateful to them.'

# POSTGRADUATE NEWS



Image: net and coble fishing by Duhamel du Monceau.

## Environmental history of salmon

Congratulations to **Jane Thomas**, who has passed her PhD viva with flying colours. Jane's thesis 'From Monasteries to Monopolisers: the salmon fishing industry of the inner Moray Firth region, 1500-1800' explores how the industry moved from a monastic and lordly ownership to domination by distant entrepreneurs over a period of 400 years. Jane was supervised by Professor David Worthington with involvement of UHI's Archaeology and Rivers and Lochs Institutes. Distinguished environmental historian, **Professor Richard Hoffmann** of York University, Canada, was external examiner, and the internal examiner was our own **Dr Kathrin Zickermann**.

## Atomic history

Highlife Highland has created two online exhibitions using the doctoral research of one of our former PhD students. The online exhibitions [Atomic Housing](#) and [Atomic Recreation](#) are packed full of great images and information from **Dr Linda Ross's** thesis 'Nuclear fission and social fusion': the impact of the Dounreay Experimental Research Establishment on Caithness.'

## From PhD to Pairc Trust

UHI's first history PhD student, **Dr Bob Chambers**, recently launched his new book at the Faclan book festival. '[A Long and Tangled Saga](#)' tells how the tiny crofting communities of Pairc in Lewis overcame their lack of experience to buy the estate on which they live. Dr Chambers, who studied at the Centre for History and was supervised by **Professor Jim Hunter**, **Professor Marjory Harper** and **Professor David Worthington**, has gone on to become a leading authority in Hebridean land settlement history.

## Teaching history in BC

Our former MLitt student, **Theresa Mackay**, has been awarded a Graduate Teaching Fellowship in Scottish Studies at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. Theresa will be teaching a new undergraduate course she has written called 'Flavours of the Past: Scottish Food History'. Theresa was one of our first MLitt graduates in Highlands and Islands history and is currently studying for a PhD.

# STAFF NEWS



Dr Iain Robertson (left) and Dr Elizabeth Ritchie (right) examine pottery shards from an Arnol blackhouse.

## A pram in the clachan

A period of maternity leave for **Dr Elizabeth Ritchie** coincided with an unexpected lockdown on a Lewis croft. Dr Ritchie used her practical acquaintance with rural motherhood to consider the gender roles of croft work in the past. Her article [A Pram in the Clachan](#) for the British Agricultural History Society's 'Rural History Today', blends historical research with her own lived experience in a very powerful way.

**Dr Iain Robertson** recently met up with Dr Ritchie (and daughter) on Lewis and examined the former coastal township which predated Arnol.

## Travels with a curious cleric

**Professor David Worthington** gave his inaugural professorial lecture on the travels of the Rev. James Fraser (aka the #CuriousCleric) and what his writings reveal about the people of the Highlands in pre-Culloden times. Professor Worthington's lecture was enthusiastically received by a large online audience, one of whom described it as 'superb...interesting, engaging, funny, brilliantly delivered.' If you missed the live lecture you can watch a recording online at [Re-presenting Rev. James Fraser \(1634-1709\): The Scottish Highlands and Europe in the century before Culloden](#).

## Fireworks and frontiers

**Dr Philippa Woodcock** has published a chapter in a new De Gruyter book '[Fluctuating Alliances: Art, Politics, and Diplomacy in the Modern Era](#)'. Dr Woodcock's article, 'L'Ambition de l'Espagnol: Fireworks and Frontiers in Early Bourbon Paris', explores the relationships between firework festivals and political power in early modern France.

## 'Can't rate her highly enough'

**Dr Linsey Hunter** has been singled out for special praise during the recent Highlands and Islands Student Association (HISA) awards. While all our lecturers received nominations, Dr Hunter's students were particularly loyal, nominating her in three separate categories and citing her enthusiasm for her subject, and her encouragement and support for her students.

## Welcome aboard!

We're delighted to welcome **Dr Louisa Taylor** as our new history lecturer, and **Dr Rachel Davis** and **Dr Tom Turpie** as our two new teaching assistants, who along with our two assistant tutors (PhD students **Alex Dold** and **Julian Grant**) will be taking some of the undergraduate classes this semester.



## EXCELLENCE IN HISTORY

The four orders of chivalry at the entrance to Linlithgow Palace. Image Creative Commons.

### An exceptional conference

The Centre for History hosted the very successful tenth annual [Kings and Queens Conference](#) on behalf of the [Royal Studies Network](#) at the end of June. Originally planned as a face-to-face event in Perth College UHI (bringing together network members from around the world to enjoy the fair city) it became increasingly obvious as the pandemic progressed that the conference would have to move online. This was an enormous task as, normally, the international event attracts over two hundred delegates with several parallel sessions taking place at the same time!

The conference organisers, our own **Dr Lucy Dean** and **Dr Amy Hayes** (now with the Open University), worked closely with heritage partners **Historic Environment Scotland** and **Culture Perth and Kinross**, and the University's LIS team to create the most interactive, engaging and three-dimensional experience they could offer.

Over the four-day conference there were more than a hundred delegates and ninety contributors taking part in a range of different formats, including: live panels with multiple speakers; pre-recorded 'fringe' panels followed by live discussion; and online poster sessions - many simultaneously.

In place of the planned field trip to Linlithgow Palace, Historic Environment Scotland created entertaining video and audio presentations of the ruined royal residence, walking the audience through life at court and the choral music of the time.

A key aim was to make sure that there was a social aspect to what is normally a very lively and gregarious event. People joined the conference from the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Russia and from every country in Europe, and the schedules were arranged to encourage people from different time zones to hang out together at coffee times and over lunch.

Many people shared their thoughts, ideas and pet photos through the conference hashtags (#KQ10 and #KQ10pets) with over 600 live tweets taking place over the four days.

Fourteen of our Centre for History students volunteered as helpers and, after training, were invaluable giving online technical advice to speakers and delegates, leading the live tweeting, and taking part in sessions. One volunteer remarked 'It was great to be able to help both the university and my supervisor, who I couldn't do without. I could give something back in just a tiny way and meet other academics from across the world at the same time. Perfect!'

The conference was a triumph for the **University's LIS team**. From calmly dealing with the technical complexity of running simultaneous sessions over Webex and other media, to providing help and advice to our team of student volunteers, **Leanne Macleod** and **Roray Stewart** were exemplary, and this hugely successful conference simply could not have taken place without them.

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



## Spirit of the Highlands

Our students and graduates continue to contribute stories and carry out voluntary work for [the Spirit of the Highlands](#), the story-collecting, art and public-facing first phase of the Inverness Castle Project.

One of our history graduates, **Gavin Wilkie** (pictured above centre) is currently working as a guide on Castle Hill in Inverness and including in his tour the historical text which graces the castle hoardings – elements of which were kindly provided a year ago by our staff and students!

## Knowledge exchange in Harris

**Dr Iain Robertson** was in Lewis recently to research the Iolaire disaster and to meet with **Neil MacDonald** of the [West Harris Trust](#). Neil's grandfather took part in the Scarista land raid in the 1920s, an action which helped create the conditions for the community buyout movement a century later. In early 2020, Iain and Neil travelled to the archives in Edinburgh to examine documents about the Harris land raids, and during the pandemic, Iain wrote a panel about the raid for the West Harris Trust, which he saw for the first time during his visit. 'It was a rare privilege' said Dr Robertson 'to hear Neil's family memories of the raid while reading the archival evidence with him.'

## Spread a little understanding...

Our series of monthly online public talks and research seminars, [History Talks Live](#), continues to bring together academics and individuals who share an interest in history and heritage. In September, broadcaster and museum curator, [Jo Loosemore](#), explored the ethical issues of curating an exhibition to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mayflower sailing to America, while in October, [Professor Elizabeth Ewan](#) took us to the alehouses of sixteenth-century Inverness and described the colourful lives of the female brewsters and alewives who worked there. Follow the links above to see these and forthcoming talks.

## History for small museums

We've mentioned before that **Dr Jim MacPherson** has been lending his writing and historical expertise to the re-design of the [Clan Macpherson Museum](#) in Kingussie. The museum opened its new exhibition rooms in late summer, and you can enjoy the results of his labours in this [online tour](#).

The Centre for History excels at helping and inspiring local groups 'to change the ways in which their history is presented and to imagine alternative futures'. If you have a project you would like us to help with, please contact us for a chat.