



Internationally renowned for our research and teaching in  
Highland, Scottish and wider world history

## Newsletter - Autumn 2019



**Student graduations in Inverness. Left to right: Andrew Bowie, Feargus Murray, Fraser Williams, Dr Jim Macpherson, Jay Hannah, Rachael Macdonald, Tracy McNaught, Victoria Whiteford.**

Welcome to our Autumn 2019 newsletter which again celebrates the achievements of our students and the creativity and hard work of our staff. We are especially proud of our graduating students whose success shows that our department is making a big difference to lives across the Highlands and Islands. We're also proud of the number of talks and events our staff and students organise - from local lectures to full-blown conferences – helping our research and teaching to underpin and engage with public understanding of heritage. We hope you enjoy this round-up of our activities over the last six months.

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## STUDENT NEWS

### Bumper BA Hons graduations

Our 2019 graduating student numbers continue to rise across our undergraduate and postgraduate student bodies. This summer we were delighted to see 28 undergraduate students receive single and joint Honours degrees in History. There were four students graduating *BA Hons History and Archaeology*, two graduating *BA Hons History and Politics*, and 22 *BA Hons History*.

**Mark Stirling** was the first of our students to graduate and is the proud holder of a First Class Honours degree in History. Mark told us 'I've really enjoyed studying with the Centre for History... the tutors always went the extra mile for their students.'



### Mighty masters

We are also extremely pleased at the success of our nine postgraduate MLitt students who were awarded masters degrees in the last academic year. The standard was extremely high with more than half the students being awarded distinctions for their work.

We also celebrated a masters by research graduation.

**Melanie Manwaring Mckay** is only our second graduating student to be awarded an MLitt by research. Her thesis examined Charles Fraser Macintosh and his collection of 5,000 rare books, held at Inverness Library.

### PhD success

Two of our PhD students successfully completed their doctoral research this year. **Dr Linda Ross** graduated with a PhD on '*Nuclear fission and social fusion: the impact of the Dounreay Experimental Research Establishment on Caithness, 1953-1996*'.

Linda, from Tain, said "it was a pleasure to do this PhD at UHI's Centre for History, located nine miles from where I grew up. A sense of place runs through everything I do and being able to study the history of

the Highlands and Islands at a university based in the region has meant so much."

Congratulations also to **Mary Souter**, who passed her viva with minor corrections this summer and is looking forward to graduating next year. Dr Jim Macpherson was director of studies for Mary's doctoral thesis '*A Peculiar Diversity: Public Health in Inverness County 1845-1912*, which was co-supervised by Dr Elizabeth Ritchie.



**Dr Linda Ross (left) with supervisor, Dr Jim Macpherson**

### Tiree triumph

Meanwhile, current MLitt student **James Petre** has just published *Tiree and the Dukes of Argyll, 1674-1922*. The book began as an essay for our postgraduate module Contemplating the Clearances, and the leader of that module, Dr Elizabeth Ritchie, also advised on the manuscript.

### Exceptional undergraduate work

BA Hons Scottish History and Theology graduate, **Victoria Whiteford**, has been awarded the James Hunter Dissertation Prize for 2019. Her dissertation "'We are not inclined to surrender historical truth": an analysis of the treatment of Thomas Mulock and his book *The Western Highlands*, within Scottish historiography', was considered exceptional by the examiners. Victoria is now working towards a masters degree at the University of Edinburgh.



**Victoria Whiteford holding her prize-winning dissertation.**

## Student satisfaction guaranteed

In two recent UK higher education student satisfaction surveys our postgraduate students expressed an extraordinary level of satisfaction with the Centre for History. PhD students declared themselves to be 85% satisfied with their learning and teaching experience within the University as a whole, while taught postgraduates said they were 89% satisfied – that's 9% higher than the Scottish average. Students on our MLitt History, MLitt History of the Highlands and Islands, and MLitt History and Archaeology of the Highlands and Islands programmes all gave **100% satisfaction** scores in the recent Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES).

## Postgraduate research day

We welcomed Centre for History postgraduate research students to Dornoch for two days of discussion in June. **Dr Philippa Woodcock** led the event, helping new students to get to know each other in a stimulating and informative environment. The Centre currently supervises nine PhD students.



## SGSAH Discipline+ Catalyst event

The Centre for History also led the first ever Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities Discipline + Catalyst workshop. The SGSAH provides world-leading support for doctoral researchers in Scotland so it was a great pleasure to host a workshop on the themes and challenges facing historians of the Highlands and Islands. 23 attendees, including 14 doctoral researchers from universities around Scotland and cultural and heritage practitioners, discussed public history and engagement in an excellent day in Perth Museum and Archives.

**Right: researchers from seven different universities gathered in Perth for the event.**

## STAFF NEWS

### Public engagement champion

We're delighted that **Dr Elizabeth Ritchie** has been awarded a Senior Lectureship for her work in teaching, research and public engagement at the Centre for History. In public engagement she has been integral to the development of positive relationships with local communities across the Highlands and Islands, working with heritage groups and providing professional historical experience to support local people in developing the skills and confidence to research and present their own history.

Amongst other activities, Dr Ritchie is a board member for **Historylinks Museum** in Dornoch and runs a blog on local history which highlights the work of academics, students and members of the public. It's a fascinating insight into the history of the Dornoch area, and well worth a read at

[https://  
historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/](https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/)



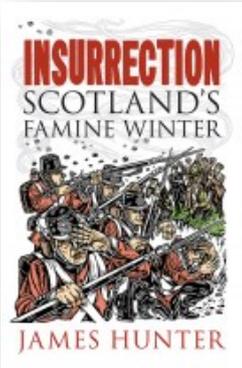
### Staff changes

**Dr Nicola Martin** and **Dr Linsey Hunter**, who already work part-time for the Centre, will be covering two staff maternity leaves and will be based in Dornoch. Meanwhile, **Dr Lucy Dean** will be taking on the role of undergraduate Programme Leader on an interim basis from November onwards.



## PUBLICATIONS AND TALKS

### A call to Insurrection!



The latest book by **James Hunter**, the Centre's first director and current Professor Emeritus of History, deals with hunger, riots and the repercussions of insurrection in the Highlands. Events centre around the failure of the potato crop in autumn 1846. As oatmeal prices soared and a bitter winter set in, towns and villages from Aberdeen to Wick and Thurso rose up in protest. In an era of anger and foodbanks, the story told in 'Insurrection: Scotland's Famine Winter' is dramatic, inspiring – and very timely.

The book was launched with two events in Inverness, both chaired by the Centre's Dr David Worthington. If you missed these, James Hunter will be speaking about the book at festivals and events across the Highlands. Check our website for dates and locations.

### A right royal achievement

**Dr Lucy Dean** was one of a small team of editors who worked on the monumental *Routledge History of Monarchy* published this summer. At 736 pages the 'big red book' draws together current research across the field of royal studies and gives an in-depth understanding of monarchy from many different perspectives, including a chapter by the Centre's **Dr Philippa Woodcock** on early modern monarchy and foreign travel.



### Holyrood lecture

**Dr Lucy Dean** also gave a lunchtime talk to a sell-out crowd at Holyrood Abbey. Her talk 'The Majesty of Medieval Monarchy: Ceremony, Ritual and Spectacle' at Holyrood Abbey and Palace was very well-received.

### Teenage pregnancy 200 years ago

The latest volume of *Northern Scotland* journal includes a free article by **Dr Elizabeth Ritchie** on 'The Township, the Pregnant Girl and the Church: Community Dynamics, Gender and Social Control in Early Nineteenth-century Scotland', a fascinating case study of one small community in south-east Sutherland and how it reacted to a teenage pregnancy and death of a baby.

You can read the chapter at <http://bit.ly/Pregnant-Girl>

### Salmon tales and the hydro

Our PhD student, **Jane Thomas**, gave a talk on the history of early modern salmon barriers and traps in Scottish rivers at an inter-disciplinary research event in Glengarry Heritage Centre in September. The event was organised by the UHI Rivers and Lochs Institute to examine all aspects of river culture and ecology in Glengarry, before and after the Great Glen Hydro Scheme.

### Sugar and slavery in Suriname

**Dr David Worthington** has been researching links between the Highlands and the international slave trade and has uncovered the region's earliest-known overseas slave-owning circle, which had links with the Dutch Empire. His research was published in *Dutch Crossing: The Journal of Low Countries Studies* and was followed by an article on 'Sugar and Slavery' in The Scotsman newspaper.

### Medieval history and Game of Thrones

**Dr Iain MacInnes** has had two articles published. "A somewhat too cruel vengeance was taken for the blood of the slain": Royal Punishment of Rebels, Traitors, and Political Enemies in Medieval Scotland, c. 1100-c.1250' appeared in 'Treason; Medieval and Early Modern Adultery, Betrayal and Shame' (edited by Larissa Tracy, Brill 2019). And 'Brienne of Tarth, Jaime Lannister and the Chivalric Other' appeared in 'Queenship and the Women of Westeros: Female agency and advice in *Game of Thrones* and *A Song of Ice and Fire*' (edited by Zita Rohr and Lisa Benz). Dr MacInnes has been invited to give the keynote lecture at a conference in Portugal this November and will be speaking about his work on Brienne of Tarth.

## PUBLIC HISTORY & LAND

### Working with our national museums

Earlier this year Dr Elizabeth Ritchie and Professor James Hunter contributed to the *Wild and Majestic* exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland. Elizabeth appears in three of the exhibition videos talking about 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Highland social history.



### Runrig and Highland history

The Centre also played a lead role in one of the National Museum's public events during the *Wild and Majestic* exhibition. *Runrig and Highland History* was a unique blend of conversation about music, history and land between Runrig former frontman, Donnie Munro, and our own Dr David Worthington. More than 200 people joined them for a fascinating evening of

thought-provoking and often emotive discussion and music.

**Donnie Munro (left) and Dr David Worthington (right) in conversation in Edinburgh.**



### Land settlement in Scotland

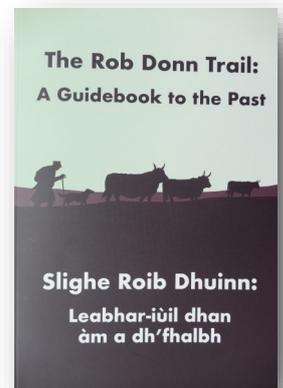
In September, Dr Iain Robertson organised a successful conference on the Isle of Lewis to celebrate the impact and legacy of the 1919 Land Settlement (Scotland) Act. This little-known piece of legislation was part of a global restoration of a sense of balance in social relations around land and its ownership, and led directly to the creation of new crofting townships. It also helped create the conditions for the community buyout movement.

### History of land reform

We've set up a new page dedicated to **Land and People** on our website. It highlights our activities around the study of land reform and features links to the work of Professor James Hunter, whose work has been so influential in creating debate about historical land issues. There's also a short research questionnaire for anyone who would like to contribute to our understanding of the issues. See [www.history.uhi.ac.uk/landandpeople](http://www.history.uhi.ac.uk/landandpeople)

### Rob Donn Mackay

Working closely with Strathnaver Museum and the Mackay Country Trust, **Dr Elizabeth Ritchie** has written two chapters for a new publication to complement the Rob Donn Trail. The Gaelic/English booklet provides a historical background to the work of celebrated Gaelic poet, Rob Donn Mackay, whose 200-year-old poems describe the pre-Clearance landscape and people of north Sutherland so vividly.



### Local historian honoured by UHI

We are very pleased to have played a part in the university awarding an honorary fellowship to Rogart historian, musician, author and crofter, John Macdonald. He was presented with the award at a special ceremony in Thurso. For more than 50 years, John Macdonald has encouraged many people to understand more about their local history and supported community education, academic research, public service and cultural activities - many of the same values we hold ourselves.



**Neil Simco, UHI dean, presents the honorary award to John Macdonald (right).**

## ALUMNI NEWS

MLitt graduate **Graham Hannaford**, from Canberra in Australia, sent us this photo of a happy afternoon spent in Rome with his fellow student **Petra Coman** from Brasov in Romania. They met online in 2012 when they were both studying for the *MLitt History of the Highlands and Islands* and have remained friends ever since. As Graham puts it, making new friends is just "one of the intangible benefits of studying online with a history department that values every student as an individual."



Former PhD student, **Dr David Taylor**, continues to give thrilling lectures around the Highlands, including one to Badenoch Heritage on the notorious James MacPherson, 'The Real 'Black Officer' of Ballachroan' and another to the Gaelic Society of Inverness.

## VISITING STUDENTS & ACADEMICS

**Jaime Bockoven** visited us from Pittsburgh USA with her husband Michael this summer. Jaime is studying on our *MLitt History of the Highlands and Islands* programme and received a travel grant from the Student Development Fund to improve her Gaelic at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. It was lovely to welcome them both to Dornoch.



**Professor Tod Jones** (centre) visited us from Curtin University in Western Australia. He gave a public lecture in Dornoch and joined Dr Iain Robertson (left) and PhD student Joanna Rodgers (right) for an afternoon of research discussions.



**Dr Jonathan Spangler** from Manchester Metropolitan University visited us in October and gave an illuminating talk on the history of Lorraine in north-east France. You can watch his lecture online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cadkIVjDKP4>

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