

Towards a Scottish Traditional Music Archive

Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh, June 11



A Day Conference

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Traditional Music Archive)

Alistair Bell (National
Library of Scotland)

Steve Byrne (Local Voices)

Fiona Campbell (TMSA)

Stuart Eydmann (Rare
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Fiona Mackenzie (Canna
House Archive)

Karen McAulay (The
Wighton Collection)

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Jazz Archive)

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David Francis, Director of the Traditional Music Forum, welcomed those attending and outlined the purpose of the day: to look at what steps we might take towards the establishment of a Scottish Traditional Music Archive; to hear about Ireland's archive, to get a sense of some of the different projects across Scotland, their challenges and their future development, perhaps within the context of a national archive.

Liam O'Connor (Director, Irish Traditional Music Archive)

I'll outline the shape of his presentation like this: how the archive was formed, where it was, and where it hopes to go in future, without sharing an overly romantic view of the reality.

ITMA is based in a four-storey Georgian building in Merrion Square in Dublin, which houses the largest physical and digital collection of Irish traditional music, song and dance. It arose from a pilot project in 1987 led by Nicolas Carolan, the founding director, and Harry Bradshaw, which aimed to collect phonograph recordings. However, there was a long road to that beginning in 1987, going back to Edward Bunting in the 1790s, George Petrie, and Patrick Weston Joyce in the 19th century.

The idea for an archive was first formally stated and published in 1851, when Irish people were invited to send material to a central repository. Brendán Breathnach, a piper and collector, was involved in several activities that contained the seeds of the archive, not least his post at the Department of Education which gave him free rein to collect Irish traditional music. He agitated for the establishment of a national archive, not least within the Arts Council of Ireland where he worked for a time. By the time he died in 1985 he had convinced enough people in the Arts Council of the desirability of a national traditional music archive, which by then had created a post of Traditional Arts Officer, which helped in 1988 to bring together a constitution, a board and a funding commitment.

The Archive is essentially a charity with a board of trustees, skill-based and made up from many areas of Irish life, and a full range of staff, archivists, librarians, IT, film, artist liaison, finance, HR. The Director's performance is measured against the Archive's published strategy: content, care, and access. The Archive had over 1m views in 2021 and commissioned 166 artists at good rates of pay (the archive spent €210k on artists in that year). Because the Arts Council

is a key funder creative outputs are as important as the technicalities of archiving.

The Archive's job is to collect and preserve historic and contemporary materials of Irish traditional music, song and dance; to organise and describe them; to present and publish that material: recordings, images, manuscripts, film, digital scores. Collecting is done from contemporary living artists as well as retrospectively. (Who's composing the next 'Bucks of Oranmore' or 'Silver Spear'?) There is a philosophy of connecting artists with archive material to underline the importance of an archive for a living tradition.

Fieldwork is done on three levels: passive recording; information stated by the performer; actively seeking contextual information. The archive currently holds 96 TB of digital assets, which presents both opportunities and threats. Digital preservation is a concern and a significant cost. Physical preservation is also important, of course, e.g. cylinders from the late 19th c, so a good building is necessary. The current building is not designed for the weight and volume of material, nor built to protect against the kind of threats which would be disastrous for an archive, flood and fire. So the speed at which material can be digitised and catalogued is important, and the sooner

it is done, the quicker the material can be moved to safe storage. Democratic access through digitisation is a key offer, with a growing user base.

At the moment one of ITMA's biggest strengths is the library catalogue, which is very detailed, and offers a lot of additional information, an important legacy of Nicolas Carolan's spell as Director. Its weaknesses would include the website, which is currently undergoing a refresh. The material accessible through the website represents less than 10% of the total holdings. Copyright and artist rights have to be handled carefully. For example, the Archive would not wish to undermine artists by offering too ready or open access to recordings artists are trying to sell, nor would artists wish some recordings to be generally accessible, although they might be happy that they remain in the archive.

Material continues to come in from private collectors and the Archive has to find ways of processing that quickly. The Archive recently took delivery of nearly 500 reel-to-reel tapes from a collector, which puts a strain on resources at a cost of around €50 per reel to digitise. Looking to AI to help with a first pass of the material.

ITMA works with a number of different institutions, and it may be that that collaborative approach is something that will be necessary for a Scottish archive. It could not function without its public funding, currently just over €1m a year. The building is on a 20-year lease but provided by the Office of Public Works at no cost. A building to house physical material and staff will be an important consideration for a Scottish archive.

Let me finish with a quote from James Joyce: “I am tomorrow, or some future day, what I establish today. I am today what I established yesterday or some previous day” and with an assurance that the staff, chair and board of ITMA are fully behind efforts to establish a traditional music archive in Scotland.

Alistair Bell (Head of Moving Image and Sound Collections, National Library of Scotland)

Scotland's Sounds is an NLS project, begun in 2012, which aims to preserve and co-ordinate access to sound collections in Scotland, taking the 'problem of sound' as a format based problem, possibly neglected compared to film, and widely distributed over a wide variety of organisations in Scotland. A national sound archive had been discussed for many years before 2012, but it was in that year that the decision was made to take action. It started with a survey, then the creation of a vision, followed by key projects including Connecting Scotland's Sounds and Unlocking Our Sound Heritage, a UK-wide initiative for which NLS was the Scottish hub.

Scotland's Sounds' commitments include an annual stakeholders' meeting, a website and social media, and training sessions. The idea has evolved over ten years, so that what has emerged is less of an archive and more of a network. The network approach has enabled stakeholders to discuss their priorities and the work they might want to do together. A Principles and Priorities document was produced in 2019 in

consultation with the network, which set out a 5 year strategy. The Principles are these:

- Sound recordings are fragile, so there has to be an active process of preservation
- Sound is an engaging format in itself
- Collaboration has benefits but is the most achievable thing where funding is scarce

The Priorities are to preserve, to collect, to connect, and to fund. In 2025 there will be a review to see what kind of impact those priorities have had.

Scotland's Sounds has no constitution or formal committee. It is under the auspices of NLS, but informal reflecting the nature of the distribution of sound collections across the country, where sound collections are often only part of the curators' jobs or lives. Their connection with NLS can be quite transient depending on need.

One of the challenges of the project is working on digitising and training and public engagement at the same time. The former is time-consuming to get it to the stage where it is accessible and difficult to do in tandem with making it accessible. Ideally you would follow one with the other, but often the funding requires both to be done at the same time. Since Unlocking Our Sound Heritage

completed in 2021 Scotland's Sounds has had no externally funded projects. There is a small resource available withing NLS much of which is being directed to making fruitful the work of the projects - digitising thousands of recordings over the past five years, for example. The intention is to bring the network back together in the near future to consider next steps. NLS can suggest projects, give advice, e.g. on questions around copyright. Scotland's Sounds is a place where people can refer to if they are thinking about a project that involves sound, or are thinking about donating a collection.

The 'distributed model' is a 21st century model that fits organisations in Scotland concerned with sound and may also fit traditional music. The drawback is that, when it comes to preserving material, people might not have the resources to do that effectively, so there is a balance to be struck between building-based archiving and the distributed model. Collaboration, however, is crucial, and has been crucial to any success that Scotland's Sounds has had. It has had a positive effect on the quality of the work that the network has been able to do.

Good practice in archiving standards is time-consuming and costly. There are backlogs of material that is not currently

available to anyone just now. Collecting and preserving, organising and describing take huge amounts of resources, which leads to challenges around prioritisation. A collection of 10,000 items in a total holding of over 57 million items may not be dealt with as quickly as people might like. On funding I advise aiming big but planning small, to go for what is achievable now, rather than always thinking about a national sound archive as a building and its resource requirements. A clear purpose is required. Are we talking about an archive or a network that pulls together existing collections across Scotland? Will it be doing or funding the archival work itself, or will it be facilitating that work to happen?

Nicolas LeBigre (Teaching Fellow, Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen)

The Elphinstone Institute's archive is a repository for the diverse vernacular expressions, cultural creativity and social memory in the North East of Scotland. It is similar to other traditions or folklore archives in Europe and North America, most often based at universities or museums, and tend to reflect the interests of the disciplines of folklore, ethnology and ethnomusicology. As such they are distinct in history, methodology and purpose from more historical records archives. They're usually made up of manuscripts, photographs, audio and visual recordings and questionnaire responses.

The Elphinstone Archive was founded in 1996 by Valentina Bold and current director, Thomas McKean. It contains roughly 3,500 items, mostly audio and video recordings with photo-sets and manuscripts. The material which comprises folklore and vernacular culture would bring a great deal of contextual information to traditional music, for example. Most of the material is fieldwork conducted by staff and students, although there is donated material, and community engagement outputs. There is no dedicated staff, like many similar

archives, an important consideration when thinking of a national network or sound archive.

The archive is not only interested in Scottish music but the music of people who are coming to Scotland, e.g. the Polish community and Syrian refugees in Aberdeen. The Institute is involved with the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention and there are a number of recordings of interviews with participants talking about the contexts in which their music is made, as well as recordings of the tunes themselves. Craft and calendar customs, and personal experience narratives of new arrivals to North East Scotland are also collected. The Lockdown Lore project is an example of the latter.

Turning to the question of archives and commercial recordings, one thing that it's important to note is that traditions archives aren't always repositories for commercial recordings, but they may be adjacent to such repositories. So, for example, the EI does have a number of commercial recordings but they would be held by the University Library rather than the archive, which tends to hold what would be considered unique items. The recordings would be in a separate catalogue. That said, traditions archives can be the source or

catalyst or even the publisher of commercial recordings. In the case of the EI, recordings of Stanley Robertson and Elizabeth Stewart have been released.

Context is key whether talking about traditional music archives or traditions archives. It would be vital that context was included – where did the recordings originally come from, under what conditions were they recorded, who was recording them and why. It is just as important as the items themselves. In other words a Scottish traditional music archive shouldn't just have recordings of tunes or performances, but should have examples of the wider creative context too. To take the example of Stanley Robertson he wasn't only a wonderful singer but a storyteller too, and if you are going to tell the story of an artist through an archive you can't just tell it through a single genre. You need to look at that wider context that exists around them – when did you start singing, why do you sing and so on? These are the kinds of questions that are asked in the dissertations that are held in the Institute. Thinking about a Scottish traditional music archive the thing that maybe makes most sense is a cross-network catalogue, where people are able to easily access what's in other people's catalogues, and knowing where the

relevant repository is, enabling quick discovery of relevant items. That seems like the most practical thing we might be able to do in the short term. For me the more complicated aspect of having a central base would be the ethical transfer of items, which would require a careful revisiting of permissions.

Another thing that is important is cataloguing. Often cataloguing is done by an individual at the archive who is often far removed from the original context. At the EI we always ask the fieldworkers to catalogue their own materials and to work with their contributors for accuracy. There's also a movement towards community-led cataloguing in the US which aims to address partial accounts made by cataloguers as far back as the 19th century by creating an extra catalogue which gives a perspective on the material by the communities from whom the original material was collected.

The archives at the Elphinstone Institute are open to the general public and accessible by appointment subject to ethical considerations.

Karen McAulay (Honorary Librarian, The Friends of Wighton)

The Wighton Collection is held under the care of the Local History Library in Dundee's main library in the city's Wellgate Centre. I am a librarian and a post-doctoral researcher at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and don't have any paid connection to the city of Dundee. My honorary role is to take a professional interest as a working librarian in the Collection and its curation, and to answer any queries that might require specialist knowledge.

The Collection consists of about 700 music publications left to the city by Andrew Wighton, a merchant and violin restorer who died in 1866. Among Wighton's stipulations was that the collection should be housed in a fire-proof room. Wighton's aim was to collect a copy of every Scottish music publication that existed. He was an assiduous and knowledgeable collector travelling widely to add to his collection.

The collection is self-contained, confined to what he himself amassed. About half of the collection consists of very rare 18th and 19th century Scottish music, but the remainder is equally rare English, Irish and Welsh material along with some ballad

operas. As well as books there is also some archival material - manuscripts, correspondence with other specialists and booksellers - but it must be kept together with the books as an entire collection. It is a closed collection and can only be used in the library under supervision.

Recently we've seen the development of the Wighton Heritage Centre, opened in 2003, which has enhanced the appeal of the collection to today's musicians and scholars. The space is used for informal concerts, adult education classes and exhibitions, with all of these activities promoted by the Friends of Wighton. In pride of place are the locked bookcases containing the Collection itself. The books were microfilmed some years ago to lessen the wear and tear on the original volumes.

Every song and every dance tune has been indexed and saved as a massive spreadsheet, interrogated by the library website as The Wighton Database. However, the local authority stopped hosting the database. Undeterred, a search facility was devised by a Friends committee member so that the spreadsheet could still be explored. This was superseded in 2018 by four lists: the complete catalogue, a list of imprints, a title index, and a short title list. So

the information is still there, but not searchable in quite the same way as originally intended.

In recent years the Wighton Collection has been augmented by donations, notably the Jimmy Shand collection and a number of scores donated by Stuart Eydmann. Shand's collection included historical scores which have been professionally restored and bound, as well as digitised. A few years later Jimmy Shand Jr gave some further scores to the Friends, valuable as the working collection of a famous musician belonging to an era that is often overlooked as neither ancient or modern. Without them a chunk of popular Scottish music history would be missing. In just a few years the music published between 1900 and 1960 will be over a hundred years old and of interest to future generations in ways we can only imagine now.

The Wighton Collection is a priceless resource but it's only fair to point out that it is complemented by other facilities containing some of the same titles, since Andrew Wighton was not the only contemporary collector of this material. The Glen collection, for example, originally bought by Lady Dorothea Stewart-Murray, ended up in the National Library of Scotland. Her own

collection was gifted to Perth where the A.K. Bell Library holds it as the Athole Collection. The universities also hold a number of Scottish music publications and archival materials (unpublished manuscripts). The ancient Scottish universities were each legal deposit libraries until the early 19th century, but they each adopted different policies to the music that might have come their way. The RCS also has some material, particularly more recent publications, which students use as performance resources.

The key to making use of the legacy that we have is knowing how to access it. The Jisc Library Hub lists all the universities' catalogues at once and there's also the Jisc Archives Hub which facilitates exploring all British university archives. Another useful resource is Cecilia, which offers pointers as to where different music material can be sourced. And there is WorldCat, an extraordinary resource which facilitates searching 10,000 libraries worldwide. What you find with any of these systems is that it depends on what has been catalogued in an automated system in the first place. When libraries opt to collaborate on these online union catalogues it depends on their automated catalogues being up to particular library cataloguing standards, because

different library catalogues can't be interrogated simultaneously unless all the information is coded consistently. While I don't know if Dundee City Public Library is part of WorldCat, the holdings of the Wighton Collection certainly won't be because they're not catalogued in the City of Dundee's online library catalogue in the first place.

Haffor Medbøe (Scottish Jazz Archive)

The back story of the Scottish Jazz Archive is that I was approached by some elderly gentlemen back in 2017, who had been working on an Edinburgh jazz archive, which concentrated on jazz in Edinburgh between the 40s and the 60s. They wanted to widen the scope of the archive and look at succession planning. As discussions progressed it became clear that there needed to be a wider outlook on jazz in Scotland – not Scottish jazz per se, but jazz *in* Scotland. With the help of the National Library and Alistair Bell and his team we put together events where we invited the various stakeholders to gauge what they might want from a Scottish jazz archive. A year later we set up the Scottish Jazz Archive as a charitable organisation with a board.

What we have taken as the centre point of our archive is oral histories. We've originated 35 so far, each of about 30 – 45 minutes in length, with the grandees, the pioneers of jazz in Scotland. Before it's too late essentially. We've aimed to do these to broadcast production standards. We're building on this collection as funds and time permit. This is the scaffolding for what we're building around it. We've had a lot of

donations from the public and stakeholders, some amazing collections that people have either digitised themselves or are still in physical form. One of the challenges we have is that we have no physical space, so we are digitising everything and returning to sender. (If the sender doesn't want their material back we try to find a good home for it.)

One of those homes is the National Jazz Archive who, when we first started, asked us what we thought we were doing when there is a perfectly serviceable national archive. We pointed out that there is very little Scottish material in the NJA, which they conceded. We came to an amicable arrangement that we would share anything of mutual interest, and have ended up with one of their board on our board.

We have this huge collection of ephemera – photography, audio, press clippings, written memoirs, appreciations – some of which we've managed to put online fairly quickly, but we're sitting with all this digitised material and in common with many other small archives we are reliant solely on the good will and pro bono work of our trustees, with occasional small bits of funding to bring in a research assistant. What's on the website is the tip of the iceberg, but we're trying to build something that makes organic

sense around the lived experiences of those who made the music. As we go on the oral histories are now focusing on the next generation, those in their fifties and sixties, with the aim to work down to the people in the current scene, which is in a kind of golden period at the moment. What we've found though is that there is a very big disconnect between the younger generation and the older generation, and one of the aims of the archive is to close that gap, to allow the younger generation to realise that they're not inventing everything anew, that they're part of a continuum that goes all the way back to the 1930s.

Our biggest challenge is sustainability. We have talked to universities about their hosting the archive, but the experiences of the Edinburgh archive, which was stored in boxes in Edinburgh Central Library, there is a reticence to hand it over to a large institution. We are helped by Edinburgh University and Napier but remains independent. We are currently making a bid to Heritage Lottery and are still involved in a three-year project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the National Endowment for the Arts in the US where we're putting together an archive of 10,000 recordings, most of which are not

commercially released and which would probably disappear in the next few years. As part of that we're doing a comparative study with the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University, the idea behind which is to use AI to access audio materials in new ways. It has allowed us to look at our cataloguing protocols.

Fiona Campbell (Convener, Traditional Music and Song Association)

I'm going to be talking more about how we initiate activity that will then be archived rather than about us preserving archives as our primary concern.

The TMSA's three main aims are not dissimilar to others mentioned today: preserving, presenting and promoting the musical traditions of Scotland. The Blairgowrie Festival in 1966, inspired by the fleadh movement in Ireland, led to the formation of the TMSA. The organisation has a national aspect to it, supported by local branches. Key activities with archival implications include the annual Event Calendar, re-issuing '101 Scottish Songs' which had been out of print for around 40 years, DVDs of Celtic Connections concerts in support of the book (which complement the books and contain important material such as performances by the late Anne Neilson). We are looking at re-issuing 'The Young Champions' from the early 90s which features many now established performers, and which is currently only available on undigitised cassette. Related to that is the Young Trad tour, which takes on tour the finalists in the annual BBC Radio Scotland

Young Traditional Musician of the Year. The accompanying CDs capture how they were at an early stage of their career, again creating archive material. Past projects include 'The 90s Collection' [Fiona showed some ephemera such as certificates awarded to those chosen for the collection, and entry forms, adjudication sheets from TMSA festival competitions], the book 'Come Gie's Us A Sang', which addresses the previous point about contextualising songs and singers' relationships with them.

So we have stuff but some of it needs to become more accessible in some form or another that is in pace with what the modern world expects; and I think that is the important thing. We forget how recently video recording has become available to the individual, compared to the days when you needed heavy specialised equipment. Nowadays you've got a phone. That digital revolution is great for us in some respects, but also bad in other ways because there are some people being left behind.

The Auchtermuchty Festival no longer runs. Citty Finlayson was one of the key people behind that, and when she passed on there wasn't a lot of energy and motivation left to do it. That's another thing that we have to recognise in archiving, that sometimes

things happen sooner than you expect. People don't collect things at the time that would be best. The other thing is some of the strange bits and pieces that get picked up around events and activities. For example, we have a Scottish Arts Council assessor's report that they did on Auchtermuchty. The assessor was bemused that people would be prepared to sit in the rain to listen or dance!

Another project is work with the Highland Music Trust, an organisation set up by Eric and Helen Allen around the time that Balnain House closed. They are now at an age when they don't have the time and energy to support it and were concerned to find people to take it over. The TMSA stepped up but Covid intervened. The Highland Music Trust got a lot of the music in the old collections digitised and are available in book form or as free downloads. We wanted to make sure that this material continued to be made available.

We also created a trad music map with support from VisitScotland. This is a visitor-focused initiative, but is also useful for people who already live here and might not know much about Scottish traditional music (too many people still). The idea was to give a feel for what might be happening in different parts of the country. It's not

academic but is intended to get people interested and get some basic information across with sound files. The question is: if we can make a resource like this for the public, can we also use it to archive?

So we've got 55 years' worth of stuff, in the national office and in the branches including those that are now defunct. I feel that the TMSA has a responsibility to archive as much as possible and to record. We may not have the capacity or the funding or the staff but will try our best. I also feel that that same responsibility is for Scotland. In the diaspora, where I am from, there is often a sense that things in Scotland are more organised than they really are. If we don't nourish the roots, if we don't preserve the roots we can't necessarily expect the shoots in the diaspora to thrive as well. This issues for us are digitisation, storage, capacity, standards and of course funding, and continuity of funding especially. Be aware that archive material might have travelled beyond Scotland. The Lowe family, for example, took a lot of manuscripts to New Zealand, which are now in the National Library of New Zealand.

We recently received 4 volumes of a book called 'The Vocal Melodies of Scotland' from a woman in Bristol who had inherited it

and didn't know what to do with it. We asked her to send it to us, which is not the first time something like that has happened. I would appreciate it if there was somewhere I could go to to say 'we've got this, who do we talk to, who should keep it?' A central space could be for storage but also the hub of a network, taking advantage of all the collections that are already there, that have got the ability to look after themselves.

Two further points: content and inclusion. What do we include? Does Burns count or music hall material? My view is that we include everything and sort it out later. Do we have to get too hung up about what counts as 'traditional folk'? Finally what do we do about the other traditions that have come into Scotland?

Fiona Mackenzie (Archivist, Canna House)

Where does Gaelic fit into today's discussion?

The Campbell Collection at Canna House consists of 15-1600 sound recordings, 9000 black and white photographs, films, correspondence, research papers, and crucially a comprehensive folklore library as well as music transcriptions made by John Lorne Campbell and his wife, Margaret. The library is used by researchers, broadcasters, publishers, genealogists, Fèisean, historians, and not least local residents. We develop archive-based projects on the island which benefit locals and visitors and field enquiries from all over the world. We're about to undergo a major refurbishment which will see the House become a fully functioning research centre in 2024.

I'm not going to give recommendations on a space for Gaelic song in the event of a Scottish traditional music archive being established, but I would like to give my impressions and aspirations, and an idea of the breadth of what such an archive might comprise as far as Gaelic is concerned. Canna House is as good a place as any to start with. Not only do we have much of the kind of musical material we're talking about

today but as examples we also have the physical formats of those recordings and the stories of the challenges faced by the people who made them in the early part to the middle of the 20th century.

There are challenges, as has been said often today, in the storage, cataloguing, dissemination, and promotion of the material. At Canna House we have examples of material that was formally collected by the Campbells from 1932 to the mid-sixties. Formats include wires, spools, tapes, presto discs, gramophone recordings, cassettes, and even wax cylinders and early Dictaphone machines. The wax cylinders are now held at the National Library which provides the right storage environment which we don't have on Canna. The cassettes comprise family occasions, ceilidhs, radio broadcasts. Canna House was a 'house of song' from 1938 right up until the mid-70s, and most of the sessions were recorded to some extent, providing a cornucopia of live folklore as it happened.

Around 90% of the formal recordings have now been digitised and most are available on Tobar an Dualchais. One of the challenges we face is that John Lorne Campbell re-recorded as many tracks as he could, as many as technology would allow,

and as recording techniques improved. This has led to quite a bit of confusion over the years as some recordings were erased, largely because there was no place and no facility to store existing recordings. Also there was the cost factor of having to re-use wires and cylinders to try and obtain better recordings, particularly during the war years when materials were scarce and difficult to import. This has led to the loss of early Gaelic material from the 1930s in particular, and, of course, we've lost that generation of listeners and performers who could have informed us today with more information than can be gleaned from the recordings alone. What were their lives when they weren't in front of John Lorne Campbell's microphone, their families, maybe the sons they lost in the war, memories of their grandparents who might have had memories of their own grandparents who could have fought at Culloden. Will any new archive continue to carry on that folkloring tradition? Ephemera are important in this respect, especially when they give an idea of the stories behind the recordings and their provenance. A physical archive has to have the facility and the

resources to hold material other than recordings, not an easy curatorial job.

I mentioned recordings of broadcasts taken from the radio, a common practice throughout the Gàidhealtachd and indeed throughout Scotland. Geography might preclude people from travelling to concerts or ceilidhs and listening to the wireless might have been the only way to hear Gaelic music. These broadcasts were largely responsible for how popular Gaelic music of the day was shaped. The BBC was hugely influential in this. There was a very definite style at the time, mostly choral with any solo singing accompanied by florid piano arrangements. It fell to local people and communities to record their own songs and stories with their own local dialect.

Commercially recorded Gaelic song is a relatively new phenomenon. Larger companies like Macmeanmna and Greentrax are relatively new to the scene, and before that we had micro production companies recording in the back bedroom or the byre, sticking a foot-high microphone on the stage at a ceilidh in the village hall. The people doing this work were doing it largely for the

¹ John Lorne Campbell was one of the founders of FIOS, the Folklore Institute of Scotland, the precursor of the School of Scottish Studies

love of it. How do we harvest that and preserve all these tapes hidden away in boxes? The tapes won't survive much longer and we need to take action on this soon.

The BBC has recorded much over the years, mostly at Mods under licence, and the contents of many programmes today are based on those recordings. They're cheap to use and most of the singers are unaware that they are being used, or even that they signed over the right for their voice to be used when they submitted their Mod entry. Access to those thousands of recordings is limited to those working for the BBC. Some are on Tobar an Dualchais but not all by any means. These recordings could form the basis of a comprehensive database and curated collection with public access for all. Apart from Tobar an Dualchais I have never seen any database or list of the BBC's Gaelic recordings.

One advantage of the Gaelic community is that most people do speak to each other. It's a relatively small world and people are likely to know who has what in terms of materials. Whilst folk of the older generation were at their liveliest in the fifties and sixties, they'll still remember who were the prominent stars at the time. But that knowledge will not be around for ever. The

Gaels are nothing if not storytellers extraordinaire and those stories are best told through song. The life of the Gael is a song itself! If Gaelic speakers can't access the voices of their great-grandparents without getting on a boat or a plane spending time and money to travel to the Central Belt will they even want to do so? If they don't have access how likely is it that they will forget without passing on to the next generation? If these resources are not available online are we looking at a network of archive hubs where people can access their own locally relevant materials?

Stuart Eydmann (Rare Tunes)

In 1985 I received a Glenfiddich Award to undertake fieldwork among very elderly musicians I got to know in and around Glasgow, and mainly concertina players whose heyday had been in the first half of the 20th century. It was my first foray into such work, although like many other folkies of that time I'd been taping and using recordings of myself and musical colleagues for years before that without any conscious or academic aspirations. As someone working in architectural heritage I was perhaps predisposed to matters of preservation and protection. That fieldwork, combined with some demanding training from Peter Cooke at the School of Scottish Studies led to my obtaining a higher degree in ethnomusicology in 1994. Looking for parallel examples of this kind of work, I was advised by Dermot McLaughlin, who was to become the Traditional Arts Officer at the Irish Arts Council to contact the Irish Traditional Music Archive being established in Dublin at that time. On one early visit I recall looking at a floor covered in cardboard boxes filled with tapes and other material. Every box had a discrete collection in it and Nicolas Carolan, the Director told me,

'These are the building blocks of the new archive.'

That's something that has stuck with me ever since, this idea that an archive would be a curated collection of collections. Some years later I was talking to a friend and fellow musician, Derek Hoy, also a computing expert, as we walked from Aberlady to Gullane and back with our young families. We agreed that the music of our generation – we grew up in the folk revival – wasn't being properly archived and wasn't being paid due attention. What could we do about it? Derek suggested that perhaps the emerging technology of the internet, could be a way forward. We were soon planning a prototype for an online archive. We were keen to prove a concept as much as anything else. There was nothing else around that was similar.

Having set up our prototype we uploaded our own tapes from home and just let it sit there. It worked and we'd proved our point. Fifteen or more years on I'm the sole curator of the raretunes.org traditional music site. Rare Tunes is billed as a 'Scottish music archive', but it's not really an archive. It's a front end to a database of digitised audio, the original copies of which are held elsewhere. The bulk of the material is from my own extensive collection and covers all forms of

audio media (post cylinder) and all genres of Scottish traditional and related popular music. Rare Tunes data is served from the Internet Archive, where high-resolution files are lodged, or from our own database as Mp3s. As the site has become better known, individuals have offered material for digitisation and inclusion.

The current website is built on WordPress.com and is incredibly inexpensive to run, is highly robust and sustainable. Adding material is simple and efficient, which is just as well as I am the researcher, cataloguer, sound engineer, webmaster, copywriter, data protection officer, copyright clearance officer, outreach team. All tasks that are undertaken adequately if not professionally at my own slow pace.

This system is easily replicated and indeed is one we hoped others might adopt. It's infinitely scalable. So far no one has ever asked... It's also independent and unofficial and that's the key aspect that I want to dwell on today. Analytics show a steady and growing number of visitors – not large, particularly when you compare them to ITMA's one million visitors a year – which is fine. There are no performance targets to meet and value for money doesn't need to be

justified. A pragmatic personal approach is taken to what gets shared and there's a broad definition of 'Scottish' and 'traditional'. The approach to ethics and copyright is certainly looser than in an official archive but hopefully a responsible one. So far there have been no complaints. Preparing for today I wondered whether 'actively managed collection' might be a better term than 'archive' in this case.

There have been several unanticipated developments over the past fifteen years. Back in the 1980s our friend, guitarist and singer, Tony Cuffe moved, supposedly temporarily to Boston, Massachusetts. We helped him and his family pack the things he could not take into the attic of his house which was to be let out until their return. I was surprised at the number of audio tapes, ephemera, and hand-written songbooks that he had. We packed them very carefully, before securing them in a dry and inaccessible spot. Tony and family never returned permanently to Scotland as he died in Boston twenty years ago. Before he passed away, he had been working on a solo CD that he came to know he would never complete, and he asked if I would help bring it to release. Unfortunately, there weren't enough tracks for a whole CD, so I put out the word, mainly in the US, for any appropriate

recordings that might survive in personal collections. We were inundated with material. After selecting the suitable material for the CD, we added the remainder to the Rare Tunes site. Only relatively recently have I been able to retrieve the tapes from that Edinburgh loft. They're still in good condition and I was immediately impressed by what they contained. Around the same time Tony's brother discovered more tapes at his mother's house in Greenock, tapes of him playing in his teens, joining Alba, a very influential folk group of the 70s, playing rehearsing and touring with with Ossian. There were twelve tapes of a tour in Austria, recordings made by Billy Kay for a documentary. Tony worked with 7:84 Theatre Company and there's all the material from that and from a spell with Fir Chlis, the first ever Gaelic theatre company. There's recordings of the rehearsals and the first performances of Billy Jackson's seminal *The Wellpark Suite*. Taken together this is material of national significance and from an important period in our musical history. But you won't find it in any existing archive.

Then when Derek Hoy passed away ten years ago, we became aware of a similar treasure trove of recorded material. From learning in his youth, sessions in Glasgow

with the great Irish champion Jimmy McHugh, recordings of all the early bands he played in, his performances with the Edinburgh Shetland Fiddle Society, with Chorda, Jock Tamson's Bairns (who Tony Cuffe also played with), his many special projects with Billy Kay also, recordings of friends, the Easy Club for instance. Add those to the Tony Cuffe recordings and you have something of super-national significance. So already this is beyond my ability to deal with. So, with the families of the two musicians, given the scale of the recordings, we arranged with the School of Scottish Studies for the digitisation of the material and its long-term storage. In return the families and I will provide contextualisation through the compilation of comprehensive, illustrated indexes. Only we know the stories and background information that will allow us to undertake this. We must do it now, because if we don't do it, it'll never be done. Even Tony and Derek's children, who are all musical, don't know about their fathers' early activities. This underlines the important earlier point made about the jazz archive.

Since this period people have been coming to me unlooked for. One day a young man called Kevin Ritchie came to the door,

the grandson of Jock Ritchie, a fiddle player from Inverkeithing. He had a fiddle under his arm and a bagful of tapes. He said, 'I'm a fiddle player. Mairi Campbell told me I should come and speak to you.' Right away I was able to tell him that there were recordings of his grandfather in the School of Scottish Studies, which he hadn't known about and to help with the preservation and sharing of his own material. Peggy Duesenberry, an American I knew when we were post-grad students together, went back to the States and left a box of cassettes. She was a prolific recorder of older dance band players, and also attended all of Alasdair Fraser's Valley of the Moon fiddle schools in California and documented them all. So, I have a boxful of tapes reacting to the progress of fiddle in the 1980s, another important part of the Scottish tradition. John Junner amassed an enormous collection of records and reel-to-reel tapes, now fortunately in the Aberdeenshire archives. It took a long time to get a home for these, but I worked with John's cousin Molly on this and taught her and her husband how to index the recordings. I was approached by the niece of Eloise Russell Ferguson, the first professional clarsach player and a Gaelic singer. She had recordings, I had information

about her, so we did a swap. I've got those digitised and available on Rare Tunes. Then there are the 78rpm recordings of David Hutchison, an under-appreciated button accordionist from the Traveller community, that I was able to make available to his family, who provided biographical data in return.

In such cases I seem to have adopted the role of mentor and advocate, acting for both the keeper and the collection itself, sometimes acting as a go-between between the owner and an official archive and sometimes just as a friendly, first port of call. I wonder if this might be the germ of a system for some future archive or network where people, or an independent archive, close to the ground operate in this intermediate role, as an outreach, connecting kind of person.

With a personal archive such as mine I can set the programme, and I'm very anxious that Gaelic and Scots should be included in its scope. Someone has recently gifted me boxes and boxes of records from the Gaelfonn label (including recordings of Kenna Campbell singing in the first ever Gaelic folk group). I'm particularly interested in Hugh MacKay of Dornoch, a Mod winner who is associated with Marjorie Kennedy Fraser; and I was approached by Christine

Martin to host her superb recordings of Deanna Graham, which we re-mastered first.

The independent archive therefore has the potential to help fill gaps. I'm very anxious that women who have been airbrushed out of Scottish music history are given a proper place. People like Annie Shand, probably one of the most influential dance-band leaders in the mid 20th century; Florence McBride, one of the first people ever to record Scottish fiddle music commercially. A lot of folkies don't know anything about these people, and the tremendous records they made. They may not be in the current fashion, but they were very important indeed. Among material I have still to work through are recordings of talks from Edinburgh Fiddle Festival including Ian Hardie talking about the Nineties Collection and a conversation with Irish fiddler Tommy Peoples as just two examples. Something that is important to me is recordings of house ceilidhs, which are still going on.

Looking at other archives, there are collections of Scottish vernacular music held abroad, including several in national and university collections in the United States, often without much contextual information. My own research (published on Rare Tunes)

has found that one cylinder recording at Santa Barbera is among the earliest of Scottish fiddle music ever recorded, and it is from Cape Breton (although recorded in California).

What have I learned that is applicable to today's challenge? It has become clear to me that the owners of personal collections want and need from archives – and it's maybe not what formal institutions want and need – is understanding and approachability. Official archives can seem off putting and distant from the culture that they seek to preserve. There's an important need for insider knowledge. The makers of collections don't want to or feel they have to convince gatekeepers who are not necessarily versed in traditional music. Many of those people on tapes are bit players in the wider scheme of things, local musicians but individuals who embody what traditional music is all about. Sometimes I think the national and university agencies find it easier to engage with elites whose significance comes through their fame rather than through ethnomusicological understanding. I'm sure this applies to funders too. In the light of this I wonder if there should be a more effective way of recognising and endorsing significance in music.

It's not just about preservation. People who own and hold collections, particularly at home, often want the music they're entrusted with to be 'out there' and quickly. They are proud yet sad that their forebears' music might be forgotten, and they want to be heard and celebrated. Smaller, unofficial, managed archives can be more agile than official ones and, in terms of cultural preservation, are better options than YouTube or SoundCloud. People who hold collections are often afraid that the material they hand in to an archive will be locked down rather than being heard. Worse still they fear they might lose access to or even have to pay to access material they have donated. Is the official archive an impediment to what we aspire to? They can seem remote, but if we recognise this what can we do about it?

Scale is a problem. Perhaps the official archives fear that there's just too much out there. We need to be realistic about the timescales involved, such as what is involved in processing just one tape. How long then to process an entire national archive? There are, however, plenty of small steps we can do now, and some of those suggested in our scoping document.

Is there a will to progress this in the traditional music community, or at government level? Do I detect a lack of interest among young musicians who want to create rather than dwell on the past? When teaching historical studies at the RSAMD I found young musicians very reluctant to listen to archival material. Perhaps the relationship between our tradition and the past is fractured in a way that that may not have happened in Ireland. Despite these problems might an archive initiative be a means by which we can stitch this fracture together again? Are there gaps nationally? I think there are. The folk revival still needs to be represented. A national archive should embrace musics that are deemed to be 'not authentic'. I recommend Bill Dean Myatt's term 'vernacular' rather than 'traditional' in this regard. We should make sure that urban music is included, and what about the culturally rich communities such as the former mining communities? What about a dedicated folk club archive initiative? The folk club environment encouraged some to tape everything that went on and much of this survives across different archives. But that might be one project that could bring these collections together.

The post-2000 digital legacy where the shoebox has been replaced by the hard drive and the CD-Rom is huge. Who would bring that together? Lori Watson at Edinburgh University is putting together an archive of new traditional compositions that is a promising example of a genre-specific approach.

Personally, I'm now at an age where I need to plan to find a permanent home for my own collection. I've got a vast store still to deal with and look forward to progress in this exciting national challenge.

Steve Byrne (Local Voices)

Today has arisen out of a need. Picking up on some of Stuart's experience, stuff also arrived at a place I used to work, the Scots Music Group, where a fellow called Iain MacLennan left his own collection to SMG as a library and resource for the students. When we moved office in 2014 we found his material and the problem of how to deal with it.

I'm going to concentrate on a recap of a presentation I did during lockdown in late 2020 at an event organised by the Traditional Music Forum called 'What If...'. I'm going to go to an issue that Alistair Bell identified, which is *format*. I'm more concerned at the moment, as a working musician and a collector, about the formats that are actually becoming endangered.

Vinyl is quite a stable format, but there is a lot of music released on vinyl that never made it to digital, so there is an issue there. *Cassette* is quite stable, but again many releases never made it to digital. When the first Malinky album was mastered it was on *DAT (Digital Audio Tape)* which was extensively used in the recording industry in the nineties, and for fieldwork. It's a very unstable format and highly at risk. *CDs* are

fairly stable but you do find that the output from some pressing plants is vulnerable to disc rot. A lot of short run traditional music releases were done on *CD-Rs* (e.g. Sleepytoon and Musical Traditions), which are produced with a dye rather than a pressed glass master, with the treble end in particular being affected. We have to be aware that we are of a generation that grew up with these physical formats which are now redundant for many younger people. As well as the formats we have to be mindful that we need the players to play them back! A lot of rehearsals and so on were recorded on *minidisc* which actually is quite a stable format but it's difficult to get hold of good players, especially ones that enable files to be transferred easily to hard disc. As far as *download* and *streaming* is concerned there is no comprehensive collecting of that being done from a folk perspective.

The Bill Dean Myatt collection is a wonderful resource. Many times I've used the discography of that, which you can get on the National Library website, to track down a song in a local community somewhere.

There is a wide variety of labels which have appeared across several decades. Not all of them are obvious. Claddagh Records in Ireland issued Scottish material and in the

60s many of the major labels, EMI, Pye, Fontana had Scottish catalogues. Not many of them appear to have much of a legacy plan. Peter Shephard of Springthyme has made provision for his catalogue but in the case of some others that's not the case. When Gordon Duncan Distribution in Kilsyth closed their doors last year a lot of their inventory was skipped. Some labels are defunct, some never made it digital, and, as has been alluded to, there are releases by Scottish performers on labels from other countries - the US, Canada, and Denmark. There are legacy collections from major performers, Sheena Wellington for example, who has a huge collection of her own which is mostly lodged in Dundee University archives and with the TMSA.

There's no legal deposit function for audio in the UK unlike print material. That's something that a Scottish Traditional Music Archive could do. ITMA essentially does that for Irish releases. Albums going out of print leads to a loss of access for emerging performers, even if we do suspect that there might be a bit of a fracture there as Stuart suggested. Then there's a whole range of 7 inch singles and EPs of Scottish folk from the revival and from the Gaidhealtachd.

The emergence of the cassette did democratise sound recording in all kinds of ways, particularly in that transformative phase of the revival. It's a format that saw a huge outpouring of both commercial and private recordings, many of which are still in boxes and lofts. They are a significant resource for those of us concerned with the history and progress of Scotland's music and culture during a key but relatively under-researched period.

This is something that is key. There is much recorded material that is of interest to others including off-air recordings, audio letters, master tapes, journal entries etc which is testimony to a substantial though diminishing number of the original creators and users. And again I come back to that word 'need'.

I want to pick up on something that I touched on previously. The attitude of the Irish Arts Council to ITMA, something that I picked up from ITMA's annual report. This is perhaps a provocation to Creative Scotland and government. "Artistic research is an ongoing and important part of artists' creative work. Arts Council supports this through strategic funding investment in archival resources and archival recording of

contemporary practice.” There’s no reason why Scotland couldn’t do the same.

There’s high value placed in the traditional arts on transmission and the acknowledgement of source. The Irish Arts Council’s Director, Maureen Keneally says in the report, “When I pass by the Traditional Music Archive on my way into the office on Merrion Square it’s a source of great pride to know that we can support the important work being undertaken by ITMA. We recognise the Archive as the central resource in the traditional arts for the preservation of the historical and contemporary traditional music, song and dance.” I’m kind of challenging Creative Scotland to come up with something similar because at a policy level this needs to move on.

My thoughts about what an archive could potentially do.

- It might aim to collect primarily commercial recordings from the middle of the 20th century in the first instance. Notwithstanding any issues with copyright and later access there’s an issue there to be addressed in terms of neglected recordings, short releases, defunct labels and all that kind of thing.
- It wouldn’t primarily deal with older fieldwork material or wax cylinder, shellac or reel-to-reel but could signpost to other archives – this idea of networking.
- It could establish a folk/trad discography building on work begun by the Traditional Music Forum.
- It could support labels to develop legacy plans
- It could request copies of all new folk/trad releases in various formats
- It could accept off-air recordings and provide a route for people to donate recordings and collections
- It would identify and safeguard private collections that might become available
- It would engage with other collectors and cataloguers. A lot of this information is out there already. We have Rare Tunes, Nigel Gatherer’s Musical Museum, Mainly Norfolk, Discogs, theballadeers.com and the Internet Archive
- It could develop a preservation and digitisation strategy either in-house or with partners such as the Scottish

Music Centre or the National Library of Scotland

- It needs to engage with government and national and international bodies to establish longer term strategies
- It could mount a campaign to raise public awareness and solicit material
- In the longer term it could include printed material, books, sheet music, folk publications, concert and folk festival ephemera
- It could collate broadcast material such as radio and TV programmes over several decades from the BBC, STV, Grampian, and YouTube curators such as Douglas (Kenny) Hadden and Gibbie Ross.
- It could issue publications and learning resources
- It could provide alternative or complementary work for traditional performers

Key questions might include how it is to be funded; whether it is a building, an agency or a network or all of these; whether it could be a sub-section of an existing body; why should we not have one.

I'll conclude with some notes from today. The number one message is *make stuff*

available, democratise access. There are issues of perceptions v reality. For example, the School of Scottish Studies is primarily a teaching and a research institution based on ethnology and folklore. It's not there to serve the folk music community in the way that people think that it might do. Tobar an Dualchais/ Kist o Riches has perhaps contributed to that perception, but nonetheless we have to think about the perceptions of what it is we expect and the reality of what's there. Which is why I think an archive is necessary.

We're serving a living tradition, a community of artists. We need the contextualisation of oral histories, interviews about practice.

Neglected recordings – I liked Karen's phrase 'neither ancient nor modern'. A lot of what we are dealing with is from the second half of the 20th century

Issues about geographic equality.

The challenge of prioritisation. I think a Scottish traditional music archive could push and focus on particular project-based sets of material where larger institutions are not able to do that.

There needs to be dedicated staff and commitment. You need people who get up in

the morning and go to work to sort out the traditional music archive for Scotland.

It needs to be prepared to evolve. ITMA has changed to a very complex digitisation and preservation strategy.

Add to ephemera online information – Mudcat, Facebook. Living Tradition magazine is about to publish its last edition.

Small steps. The scoping paper already has a to-do list. There's a project by project, collection by collection, maybe even format by format bite-sized approach that we could identify.

Sharing expertise and partnership, thinking a hundred years into the future. It's our responsibility. It's music that is largely based in the territory of Scotland, however we want to define it.

It is a national collection in the making. The 2010 Working Group on Traditional Arts identified a need for archiving and we need to get government and national bodies buying into this. I come back to the €1m that ITMA receives in public funding.

Time is running out! In the last ten days two people I know that were involved in traditional music in different ways have passed away.

The teaching organisations in Scotland are the equivalent of a small university in

terms of the number of students involved. Many people will have recorded teaching sessions they've gone to.

Intangible cultural heritage is starting to come on to the radar of national bodies like Historic Environment Scotland, Museums Galleries Scotland and so on. We're getting into this idea of community-owned history, of localism of place. It's time for the trad music community to take ownership of it and get out there and make it happen. And I'll finish with a reminder of Liam's quote from James Joyce, "I am tomorrow, or some future day, what I establish today."

NEXT ACTION

A directory linking digitised archives together, pulling together information about where material is located.

Job description then a funding application

APPENDIX 1

ZOOM CHAT

Deirdre Ní Chonghaile: One positive argument for ITMA being in Dublin: so many of our national archives are in Dublin, within walking distance of each other in many cases; it makes it easier for archives users to blitz them all together. The partnerships with TG4 & RTÉ demonstrates how location isn't impacting relationships. However, Ireland is more easily traversed than Scotland, so physical access will have greater impact in Scotland, especially for folks in the Highlands and Islands.

ITMA also deserve credit for the high standards in their treatment of the Irish language, provision of service etc. Their capacity in both national languages is another strength. In a Scottish context, there are three national languages to account for.

Gordon Turnbull: Scottish archives are spread widely across Scotland and around the world. How can we get all of the strands - including language and different instrumental traditions - into one place. That would be quite a challenge

Deirdre Ní Chonghaile: The answer, Gordon, may end up being digital; but it will rely on principles of digital scholarship, open access, FAIR etc.

Ewan McVicar: I want to push for a network of citizen archivists supported by a central support but not controlling centre structure. Linked websites. I could say much more.

Gordon Turnbull: Citizens involvement would be good. Deirdre, I think you're right about a digital archive with good inclusive planning at the outset would be the way forward. An accessible centre or venue might also help focus and promote the archive and its work.

Deirdre Ní Chonghaile: With a 'citizen science/involvement' model, the challenge is to maintain a standard across the board, amid differences in local capacities of knowledge, equipment, and decent broadband. Whatever material is destined for a digital life, somewhere

someone is paying for its continued existence. I don't doubt people's willingness to contribute time and archival assets, in physical or digital forms, but the long-term costs - those that are foreseeable for now - need careful consideration. [Thinking aloud here... 😊]

Ewan McVicar: Is the need to 'maintain a standard' essential and basic? That would for a start throw out JM Carpenter's 1930/1 recordings, most of atrocious quality but our earliest field recordings.

Fiona Mackenzie: Scotlands Sounds enabled the tiny Canna Community to develop an unused, bare, waiting room into an Art Gallery, with art produced by island residents, children included, all the art produced inspired by listening to the Canna Sound Archive. It has remained one of the island's most visited and commented on resources. You don't need large scale resources or buildings to have an impact. Moran taing Ally!

Ewan McVicar: And re costs, people like me, Tom Speirs, Bob Pegg, Pete Shepherd etc etc pay our own costs, and on occasion chase our own small funding for elements. I think Scotland's Sounds stakeholders are all institutions. Or organisations.

Deirdre Ní Chonghaile: Ewan, the 'standard' I meant was technical, not artistic. Early recordings being generally challenging from an acoustic point of view, the historical value demands their inclusion in many cases.

Ewan McVicar: Have others here engaged with the journey of efforts re Scotland's Intangible Cultural Heritage? BTW, please see when you can an ongoing archive development project of mine, tracing the families of 1931 JM Carpenter's singers in The Highlands and Moray. At carpenterinthenorth.com Part funding from Tasgadh.

Deirdre Ní Chonghaile: Here's an example of a catalogue I created, referencing original and duplicate recordings across 5 repositories in US, UK, and Ireland https://www.itma.ie/blog/sidney-robertson-cowell#SRC_catalogue

Sally Garden: So wish we would work instead towards a fully inclusive 'Music of Scotland Archive' that embraces all our musical traditions, not just what we believe is 'traditional' (a highly problematic term!). Inclusivity is key to funding and a meaningful future in the public eye. Thanks to speakers and team for a well-run, stimulating event.

Deirdre Ní Chonghaile: The BBC recordings are catalogued. Hardbound copies of the catalogue are held in the British Library. As I recall, the British Library's digital catalogue was

due to include the references in the hardbound volumes (it's many years since I last consulted them in Euston Rd).

Deirdre Ní Chonghaile: Recent encounters in the course of teaching suggested that, where older recordings do not have digital iterations, younger listeners may not have heard them unless they were pirated e.g. on YouTube. They found listening to older recordings a challenging but stimulating experience. Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí.

Fiona Mackenzie: I'm about to release a new album on Greentrax based around the Canna archives. Using the sounds of the archives but placing them into a 'living setting' around the fireside, using only the sounds², musical and the sounds of the house and garden, that would have been heard at the time the original archives were collected. Just an example perhaps of what can be done with the archives we have. For anyone who has any query about the Canna Archives, please email me at fmackenzie@nts.org.uk,

Deirdre Ní Chonghaile: FYI my book "Collecting Music in the Aran Islands: A Century of History and Practice" available here and in your local library (health warning: academic price) <https://uwpres.wisc.edu/books/5119.htm> and the catalogue relating to Chapter 3 is on ITMA: <https://www.itma.ie/blog/sidney-robertson-cowell>

Traditional MUSIC forum

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