

Simon Fraser University

c e n t r e f o r s c o t t i s h s
t u d i e s

The Newsletter of the Centre for Scottish Studies at Simon Fraser University
Volume 1, Number 6, Fall 2007

Upcoming Lectures at Harbour Centre

Place & Family in Celtic Mythology

October 17, 7 pm

Fletcher Challenge Theatre

An exploration of the themes and sources of Scottish and Irish Gaelic mythology.

Edinburgh: A Brief History

November 2, 7 pm

Labatt Hall (Room 1700)

A broad look at the history of Scotland's most famous city in anticipation of Ian Duncan's forthcoming lecture.

“A Rage for Works of Fancy”: Edinburgh in the Age of Scott

November 15, 7 pm

Fletcher Challenge Theatre

This year's St. Andrews and Caledonian Society Lecture.

The Rise and Fall of the Gaelic Empire

November 28, 7 pm

Fletcher Challenge Theatre

A broad look at the shape of Gaelic culture and history during the Middle Ages.

Scottish Studies at SFU Popular, but in Danger

Despite on-going concerns about demographic shifts, easy employment opportunities and other factors that have an impact upon enrolment in post-secondary education, the courses at Simon Fraser with Scottish themes remain popular. Credit courses such as the English Department's North Sea Literatures or the Humanities Department's Medieval Scotland are consistently over-enrolled.

Neither is this interest limited to the classroom. Several students this semester have joined our local Gaelic Choir and the student Celtic Dance society will be offering ceilidh dancing lessons for any who will show up on Tuesday nights. Impressively, such a strong interest in the Gaelic language has so grown among students that they have formed their own Gaelic society: *an Comunn Gàidhlig SFU*. Current membership stands at just over 35, but will no doubt grow as *an Comunn* gains further notice through its activities. This is all in addition to the ongoing interest in the SFU Pipe Band, which remains a pillar to this groundswell of interest.

Scottish, Irish and more broadly Celtic topics have been gaining interest over a number of years globally. Gaelic websites have exploded in number from barely a handful five years ago, and one can find Gaelic classes in almost any town in North America. Attendance at Highland Games continues to increase and a number of universities across Canada and the United States have established centres or departments with a clear Scottish focus.

Celebrations for the 250th anniversary of Robert Burns' birth in 2009 will occur all across North America, and nowhere more concentratedly than at the newly established Burns' Centre in Glasgow.

Conferences in his honour will take place across the globe. The University of Otago in New Zealand has just recently appointed a Chair in Scottish Studies and other such programs are gaining strength across the globe.

Unfortunately, as with any explosion of interest or numbers, the greater the explosion, the more difficult it is to follow its developments. Many students are ignorant of the opportunities afforded by the extensive Scottish community of the greater Vancouver area and of the Centre's offerings. This latter ignorance is a direct result of the Centre's limited ability to offer courses. With no money to support a permanent Scottish Studies professor, the Centre has been forced to rely on offerings that coincide opportunistically with the offerings of its cooperating departments.

With our current limited funding, the Centre can only limp along offering a few courses each semester. This fall has seen one of Simon Fraser University's largest enrolling cohorts. Student interest will only continue to grow. It remains to be seen if support from the University, which depends directly on our support from the local community, will be able to keep pace. And as we have so often stressed in this newsletter and other forums, the future of the Centre is largely in the hands of people of Scottish descent in British Columbia. Our long-term viability is dependent on the success of our endowment campaign.

How you can support the Centre for Scottish Studies

Annual Gifts

Support the Centre's programs and activities with an annual gift to help pay for programming including special lectures and events. Or support an annual scholarship with a minimum gift of \$1,000 a year for three years.

Endowed Gifts

Consider creating a named endowment fund:

- Scholarships and Bursaries (minimum \$20,000)
- Annual Lecture Series (minimum \$50,000)
- Endow the Centre (\$500,000)
- Visiting Chair (\$1 million)
- Permanent Chair (\$2 million)

Planned Gifts

Make a bequest in your will or designate the Centre for Scottish Studies as the beneficiary of an insurance policy. All the funds paid out in premiums can be receipted for tax purposes.

For more information on making a gift to the Centre for Scottish Studies please contact:

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From the Director

Now that our Coordinator Harry McGrath has returned to Scotland to rattle the sporrans in search of coins for the Centre, his work at SFU has been taken up by James Acken, a scholar of the language, music and history of Scotland. James is teaching several courses on Scottish themes over the next year in the Department of Humanities, is keen to start instruction in Gaelic, and is organizing a public lecture series at SFU's Harbour Centre campus. He is also working with Leith Davis, who after August 2008 will be the Centre's Director, in organizing our annual St. Andrew's and Caledonian Society lecture (see page 3).

I should note as well that John Pierce, the Dean of SFU's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, has ended his term. John was a strong supporter of the Centre and of the idea of establishing a faculty position in Scottish Studies and we will miss him. The new Dean of the FASS is Prof. Lesley Cormack who comes to us from the Department of History and Classics at the University of Alberta.

–Dr. Stephen Duguid

Classes on offer at the Centre

The Centre for Scottish Studies is offering an array of excellent courses through the Humanities and English Departments and will continue through next semester as well. Here are a few examples of what is being offered.

Leith Davis of the English Department is teaching a graduate course entitled “Postcolonial Perspectives on Eighteenth- Century Scottish Culture.” In 1707, the Scottish Parliament voted to unite Scotland with England in the new nation of Great Britain. “That’s ane end of ane auld sang,” pronounced the Earl of Seafield. Classic critical approaches to Scottish literature have suggested that post-Union Scottish writers reacted to the Union in two ways: they either adopted English standards or they “turned to a regional vernacular poetry in a spirit of sociological condescension, patriotic feeling, or antiquarian revival” (David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture*, 21). In an attempt to rethink the binary thinking that has characterized criticism of Scottish literature until relatively recently, this course brings eighteenth-century Scottish texts into dialogue with postcolonial texts, bearing in mind that Scots acted both as objects and subjects of empire. Much of the discussion of the course will be focused on the issues of orality and print in eighteenth-century Scottish culture, as students examine speeches, songs, ballads and forgeries alongside more canonical material.

James Acken is offering several undergraduate courses in Humanities with both Scottish and Gaelic foci. “Great Cities: Edinburgh” draws a single cohesive narrative across Edinburgh’s history. Reading such diverse texts as John Barbour’s fourteenth century poem, *The Brus*, Scott’s *The Heart of Midlothian* and *Trainspotting*, students investigate the changing role of Scotland’s most iconic city in the imagination of the Scots. “Mythology in Context: Celtic Mythology” addresses what defines a culture as Celtic by looking at the literatures of Scotland, Ireland and Wales, while “Medieval Studies: The Rise and Fall of the Gaelic World” looks at the whole cultural history of the Gael and seeks to draw a complete and comprehensive narrative for its often marginalized history. These courses provide the basic structure and material for the three lectures given on October 17th (Celtic Mythology), November 2nd (Edinburgh) and November 28th (Medieval Gaelic History). See page 1 for details of time and place. James will be offering two, 200-level courses next semester on the History of Medieval Scotland (Humanities 240) and Celtic and Germanic culture during the Classical period (Humanities 216).

St. Andrews & Caledonian Society Lecture

Thursday, November 15 at 7 pm

Reception to follow

Mark your calendars for a trip back into Edinburgh’s past and the world of Walter Scott, as Professor Ian Duncan will be speaking on “A Rage for Works of Fancy”: Edinburgh in the Age of Scott for this year’s St. Andrew’s and Caledonian Society lecture. Originally a native of the UK, Professor Duncan is currently Chair of the Department of English at the University of California Berkeley.

He is author of *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens and Scott’s Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh*, and co-editor (with Leith Davis and Janet Sorensen) of *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*. In addition, he has edited Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy*, Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Lost World* and John Buchan’s *The Island of Sheep* for Oxford World Classics, and James Hogg’s *Winter Evening Tales* for Edinburgh University Press.

Author’s abstract

“A Rage for Works of Fancy”: Edinburgh in the Age of Scott

Writing in the *Edinburgh Magazine* in 1819, a reviewer commented on the great change that had taken place “within these few years in the general taste and literature of Scotland”: In a strange reversal of “the usual progress of the human mind,” the “grave and metaphysical propensities of our countrymen” had succumbed to a “rage for works of fancy.” Novels, poems and tales by Scottish authors, focusing on Scottish history and Scottish national character, dominated the international literary market following the publication of Walter Scott’s *Waverley* in 1814. The reviewer points to a larger historical context for this rage for Scottish fiction — the displacement of the curricular genres of the so-called Scottish Enlightenment (moral philosophy, the human sciences) by the commercial genres of periodicals and fiction in the Edinburgh publishing boom after 1800.

Beginning with the question, What happened to the Scottish Enlightenment?, my talk will explore the remarkable flowering of imaginative literature that made Edinburgh a rival to London in the first third of the nineteenth century.

Our Centre's Origins

In response to several enquiries, many of them from Scotland and some from within the Scottish Parliament, I asked the man who provided the initial impetus, Ron Sutherland (right), to review the story of how SFU came to have one of the few Scottish Study Centres outside of Scotland. Ron had this to say, "I wrote to the SFU Board of Governors on February 25th, 1998, pointing out that as a mature student at SFU I had studied the history of medieval and modern England, France, Germany and Italy. I had also studied China, the Middle East, and Africa from ancient times to the present. I was not able however, to study any aspect or any period of the history of Scotland despite the 'Scottishness' of the university's image, which seemed like a contradiction.

"The Chairman of the Board of Governors referred my letter to the Administration, and there was an exchange of correspondence for a few months. However, I was taking a course on the history of medieval Florence at the time, and had mentioned my on-going efforts to my professor Lawrin Armstrong and gave him a copy of my initial letter. I later learned he had passed on a copy of the letter to Professor Stephen Duguid. When we returned from an extended holiday in Scotland in late June, there was a letter from Stephen saying he was most interested, and suggesting we meet. We met, and basically decided Steve would look after the academic side and I would attend to the public side, and started to compile a list of people who supported the concept of a Centre for Scottish Studies. I hosted a dinner at my home in July for Prof. Ronald Sunter, Chair of Scottish Studies, University of Guelph who was vacationing in BC, and together with our local committee we learned about their teaching, structure and financing for Scottish Studies at Guelph. In November 1998, Ron MacLeod, ex head of Pacific Fisheries, who had been actively involved with me forming a committee of two from the start, joined me to meet with John Fraser, ex-speaker of the House of Commons, who was enthusiastically supportive of the proposal and became a member of our organizing committee.

"On January 14th, 1999, our committee had a meeting with President Jack Blaney, Vice-President David Gagan, and Vice-President David Mitchell, to present our case for a Centre of Scottish Studies. We had by this time a list of over 250 people from the general public who supported the concept of a Centre. It was a positive meeting. Within two weeks we had a meeting with John Pierce, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, when it was confirmed that the creation of the Centre within the Department of Humanities had been approved."

Thanks to Ron's good work, we now have a Centre to be proud of, one of only two in Canada. The original teaching remit of the Centre has expanded considerably to include projects in oral history and archiving aimed at preserving the memory of the Scots-Canadian community in British Columbia, and a number of initiatives intended to tie our Centre to developments in contemporary Scotland. Centres similar to ours exist in Wellington, New Zealand and Queensland, Australia.

Proud yes, but extremely fragile. The three SFU faculty members who have done much of the teaching face heavy demands from their departments to focus on what are seen as 'core' subjects. Harry McGrath has worked valiantly to find the missing donors who will make the Centre secure, and our Steering Committee has worked hard to raise funds locally—and we've had some successes, but not enough to embed the Centre firmly within the University. We need your ongoing support and we need to find the individual, group or organization that will give this Centre the substance it needs to become a core academic unit within Simon Fraser University.

centre for scottish studies

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