

Intangible Cultural Heritage *in* Scotland Newsletter

www.ichscotlandwiki.org



Not quite the iced buns we planned for in a taste of Scottish High Tea!

On 7 December we had planned a novel event to launch the first public screening of our new YouTube films. These short films have been created in order to explain Intangible Cultural Heritage, what can be recorded on the ICH in Scotland Wiki and the different types of ICH that exist in Scotland. It was just bad luck that the volume of snow we experienced in Edinburgh leading up to this event meant that we had to cancel the screening. The theme was to be light-hearted celebration of a Scottish traditional 'High Tea' by inviting our guests to sample a taste of indulgent treats piled high on tiered cake stands...too good to miss just like our films!



We would rather have served the real thing!

http://www.ichscotlandwiki.org/index.php?title=Scottish_High_Tea

ICH films go live - visit <http://www.youtube.com/ichscotland>

Our key event message was the promotion of our six short films as an additional tool in the dissemination of our message about what 'living culture' is and what information can be entered onto the wiki. With these films now being readily accessible online it is hoped the public will connect with what ICH is and the relevance it has to their community and individual activities. The films offer a description of some well known examples of living culture in order to help break down the barriers new wiki users may face in recognising their practices as living culture and the value we place upon them as a nation. The films emphasise how quick and easy entering information is and encourage more members of the public to participate. The six short films available to view online now are:

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| 1. Social Practices | 4. Introduction to ICH <i>in</i> Scotland |
| 2. Performing Arts | 5. Oral tradition and expression |
| 3. Nature and the Universe | 6. Traditional craftsmanship |

Politics and ICH— Linda Gunn presents a paper in Bern

The Swiss Ethnological Society (based at the Institut d'ethnologie de l'Université de Neuchâtel) held its annual colloquium at the University of Bern (11-13 November). The event was prompted by the fact that a team at the Institut d'ethnologie of the University of Neuchâtel are currently conducting an ethnographic study of the administration of the 2003 Convention in Switzerland.

A three-day panel was organized this year on the administration of the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage paradigm in order to explore diversity in the application of the Convention around the world and recognizing, as the Convention does, that its application will 'depend on the laws and cultural contexts of the different member states'.

Linda Gunn presented a paper called ICH in a Stateless Nation: the ICH in Scotland Project. This paper detailed the cultural political situation in Scotland pre and post-Devolution Scotland and explained notions of Scottish identity over the past thirty years related to a desire for Constitutional change. She argued that the Edinburgh Napier University research team's interpretation of the Convention and its implementation of an inventory of ICH *in* Scotland (as opposed to one recording only *Scottish* ICH) reflected these factors or what could be called a 'cultural climate' which is exemplified also in Scottish Government campaigns such as 'One Scotland Many Cultures' designed to reduce racism and encourage integration.

As those now familiar with the project in Scotland will be aware, a key premise of the Edinburgh Napier researchers' interpretation of



Bern November 2010

the Convention and of UNESCO's ideals, is 'inclusion'. This colloquium presented an ideal opportunity to stress this and, as was evident the resulting papers stimulated much discussion and provided a valuable comparative perspective of how the Convention was being approached in parts of the world.

The word 'approached' is deliberately used above. While 122 states have ratified the Convention and a considerable amount of time and effort has been spent forming committees, holding discussions with internal State departments, national cultural institutions and various 'experts' and sending delegates to UNESCO meetings around the world, but this does not necessarily result in any actual implementation.

One of the key points of the ICH in Scotland inventory to date has been its accessibility resulting from its being published online and allowing anyone living in Scotland to make entries themselves.

Politics and ICH— Linda Gunn presents a paper in Bern cont'd

Linda Gunn had anticipated that this aspect of the Scottish project would meet with some criticism from the Colloquium's mainly anthropologist participants and, as expected, some expressed reservations about allowing bearers of culture decision-making responsibility in relation to selecting and recording the practices and beliefs they value

and consider as contributing to their identities. Contributors working specifically on the international application of the Convention and others were enthusiastic about this aspect of the ICH in Scotland project and that Scotland was not only unique in its interpretation of the convention but in actually implementing it.

Oral traditions – University of Edinburgh



Dr Inga Åkesson from Stockholm demonstrating Oral traditions from Sweden



Temperance Flute Walk
Photograph by William Buchan, Tazali, St. Combs

In November Linda Gunn was invited to speak at a three day colloquium on Oral Culture held at the University of Edinburgh.

The colloquium, 'Oral Culture – The Difference It Makes', was organised by Drs Emily Lyle and Katherine Campbell (Director of Research) of the department of Celtic and Scottish Studies. The presentation featured a film of the Masons' Walk which takes place annually in Rosehearty in the north-east of Scotland and Linda was pleased, and relieved, to report that the ICH in Scotland inventory already includes similar examples of ICH from the same area (see [http://ichscotlandwiki.org/index.php?title=Temperance Flute Walk](http://ichscotlandwiki.org/index.php?title=Temperance+Flute+Walk))

Linda explained the concept of UNESCO's 2003 Convention and, though not an expert in Oral Culture, showed how through online ICH inventories like Scotland's, such culture can be made more accessible providing a resource for researchers and making information available to anyone with access to a computer, including practitioners in other parts of the world.

Oral traditions – University of Edinburgh cont'd

Linda told the audience that, alongside a description and photograph of a practice, weblinks to recordings can be included on online inventory (wiki) pages and demonstrated this by linking live to a YouTube video of the Papa Stour Sword Dance which involves each performer reciting the traditional lines for the character they play.

The ICH in Scotland project both provoked and fed into much debate which continued in a roundtable discussion after presentations. Dr Inga Åkesson, an Ethnomusicologist at the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research in Stockholm, had raised concerns in her paper as to the detrimental effects on ICH of 'recording'.

This focussed on the effect of commercialisation related to the 'folk' revival in Sweden which has seen recording artists perform traditional songs for concert audiences, or a commercial 'market'. Inga raised the issue that both such live performances and audio recordings may 'fix' oral styles and deliveries in listeners' minds leading them to believe that what they are hearing is traditional and authentic.

Linda suggested that an online inventory like the ICH *in* Scotland wiki, allows purists to make alternative recordings available to audiences, that is of tradition bearers in the community performing for non-commercial purposes. She also reminded colleagues that each individual performer (as Inga had pointed out in her paper) incorporates their own unique additions or stylings when performing privately or in the domestic setting. Whether anthropologists like it or not, traditions change and the ICH in Scotland wiki has the capacity to accommodate both the 'original' and the change.



Assorted contributors demonstrating that they can do more than write a thesis!

ICH marketing materials distributed across Scotland



Libraries, community centres and museums in Scotland will now be in receipt of their ICH pack of a poster and step by step guide. We hope these posters will be displayed on public notice boards and will engage the public to input new examples of living culture into the ICH wiki.

We are looking forward to receiving an increase of traffic on the wiki as we welcome new entries from around Scotland.

Holyrood boost for ICH project

Scottish National Party MSP Bill Wilson lent his support to the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) project in a parliamentary speech.

Mr Wilson said: *“The link between the heritage of our built environment and our living culture is perfectly illustrated by Paisley’s sma’ shot cottages complex—although I do not have time now to explain the history of the weavers, their struggle for fair pay and their sma’ shot thread. Not only does the beautifully restored site offer the people of Renfrewshire the opportunity to see how their ancestors lived, it adds a tangible element to sma’ shot day, an annual event that is listed on the excellent intangible cultural heritage project’s website—yes, I am aware of the apparent paradox here, with a tangible element to an event that is listed on the intangible cultural heritage website. Many of the living cultural events that are listed on the website—events that bind communities and give people a sense of identity—are linked to our built heritage.”*

Professor Alison McCleery, Principal Investigator on the ICH project, said: “The cross-party support we’ve had from the Scottish Parliament confirms that this project represents excellence with impact. It will strengthen Scotland’s knowledge of its living culture, its community cohesion and respect for the different cultural traditions found here.”

Scottish Government Response to the Traditional Arts Working Group Report

The report under **recommendation 1** states that the Scottish Government continue to support the creation of a national inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage practices...

Further comments from Fiona Hyslop

‘The Scottish Government has been pleased to contribute to the introduction of the inventory and I look forward to seeing it develop as more people become involved’.

Fiona Hyslop also said ‘I raised the intangible cultural heritage directly with John Penrose, the new UK Minister for Tourism and Heritage in a recent meeting. I have now written to him on the importance of safeguarding our intangible cultural heritage and the work currently being undertaken at (Edinburgh) Napier University’

The ICH project team are delighted the project is receiving Scottish Government recognition and that the project’s aims are being recognised as making a valuable contribution to the Nation by placing value in recording the variety of living culture practised in Scotland.

Full report available

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