

# Contributors' Biographies

**Dr Pat Ballantyne** is an Honorary Research Fellow of the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, who lives in the Netherlands. She is an author, scholar, dancer and dance teacher. Pat's book *Scottish Dance Beyond 1805: Reaction and Regulation* focuses on Scottish dance history and the influences that have contributed to the current state of traditional music and dance in Scotland. She has performed and taught Scottish dance and played in a cèilidh band, for many years in Scotland, Europe and Canada. Her qualifications include BMus, MAHons History of Art and Celtic Studies, and a PhD in Ethnology (Scottish Dance and its Music), all from the University of Aberdeen. [Pat Ballantyne – Scottish Dance](#).

**Dr Valentina Bold FSA Scot** is an Honorary Fellow of the University of Edinburgh, and edits *Review of Scottish Culture*. She is Heritage Manager for Scottish Women's Institutes and also edits a book series, *Studies in the History and Culture of Scotland* for Peter Lang. Previously, Valentina worked at the Universities of Stirling, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. Her books include *James Hogg: A Bard of Nature's Making*; *The Kinmont Willie Sword and Other Tales of Mettle*; *Robert Burns' Merry Muses of Caledonia*; *Smeddum, A Lewis Grassie Gibbon Anthology and Kitchen Conversations: A Women's History of Winchburgh*. <https://valentinabold.org>.

**Joel Conn** is a civil litigation partner in the long-established Glasgow firm, Mitchells Robertson. His practice includes property litigation, professional negligence, and debt and asset recovery (in which he is accredited as a specialist by the Law Society of Scotland). Having become interested in urban legends during his 20s, he found his way to membership of the Folklore Society and the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. His particular interests are in contemporary folklore and folk-life related to law and regulation, as well as modern Jewish culture and practice. He is a fiercely proud Glaswegian but also unathletic. Thus, he has never climbed the Duke of Wellington to adorn him with a cone.

**Dr Murray Cook, FSA Scot, MCIFA** is an archaeologist currently employed in Stirling Council where he also advises Clackmannanshire, North Lanarkshire and Falkirk Councils. He has worked across Scotland since 1996. Over sixty publications include a series of popular books on Stirling's history and archaeology. He runs an independent research and training organisation 'Rampart Scotland' as well as a volunteer research group 'Stirling Archaeology'. Both organisations work with volunteers to explore Scotland's amazing past. To find out more about Murray's work follow [Stirling Archaeology | Substack](#).

**Jennifer Morag Henderson** is a writer from the Scottish Highlands. Her first book *Josephine Tey: A Life* was a 'Book of the Year' in the *Observer*, *Independent* and *Telegraph*, acclaimed in the *Wall Street Journal*, *TLS* and *Literary Review*. Her second *Daughters of the North: Jean Gordon and Mary, Queen of Scots* was longlisted for the Highland Book Prize. Her shorter writing, both fiction and non-fiction, as well as poetry and plays, is widely published. *Jofrid Gunn* (Shearsman, 2025) is a biography in poetry, exploring ideas around presenting lives, telling the story of a woman who came from the Faroe Islands in the 16th century to marry into Clan Gunn.

**Dr Neill Martin** is Senior Lecturer and Head of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. He studied at the universities of Stirling, Dalhousie, McGill and Edinburgh. His undergraduate and Masters degrees were in English and Music, later developing an interest in ethnology and folklore before completing his PhD in the field of ritual and language in Celtic-language societies. His publications extend across festive culture, oral poetry, ballads and traditional belief. He has been Director of EERC since 2020.

**Andrew McEwan** is Stirling born and bred. He is hugely interested in the history and heritage of Stirling and has talked and led walks on many occasions. Deacon of the Incorporation of Hammermen of Stirling, one of the Seven Incorporated Trades of the town, he is also a member of the Guildry of Stirling. When the Walking of the Marches was revived in 2014

he was at the very first meeting and has been involved ever since. He is the Chair of Walking the Marches, and served as Captain of the Birlawmen from 2014 to 2024.

**Dr Stephen Miller** has a broad range of research interests including the folklore, folk song, and folk dance of the Isle of Man; also, the Scottish folklorists the Rev. Walter Gregor (1825–97) and W.G. Black (1857–1932). A further area of research is the institutional history of the Folk-Lore Society. Previously posts have included working at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Vienna. Recent publications include *Ghosts, Bugganes & Fairy Pigs: Karl Roeder's Manx Notes & Queries* (Culture Vannin, 2022 3rd edn) and *The Notes and Queries Folklore Column, 1849–1947: Subject Indexes* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021), WWW site: [www.chiollaghbooks.com](http://www.chiollaghbooks.com). He was awarded the Reih Bleeaney Vanannan in 2020 for contributions to Manx culture.

**Gavin Parsons** has taught on the [BA \(Hons\) Gaelic and Development](#) and [MSc Material Culture and Gàidhealtachd History](#) courses at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. His main interests are in rural development, sustainable development, social history and migration. He researches in particular links and comparisons between the Highlands of Scotland and Norway. He recently spent a sabbatical year studying the Highland galley from song and poetry, comparing them to traditional Norwegian ships. His MPhil dissertation considers what will keep crofters crofting, compared to small farm-

ers in Norway. He is involved in small-scale agriculture practically, as a crofter and as a township clerk.

**Petra Johana Poncarová** (Charles University, Prague) focuses on modern literature in Scottish Gaelic. Her monograph *Derick Thomson and the Gaelic Revival* was published in 2024 (Edinburgh University Press), and her edition of Derick Thomson's Gaelic prose, *An Staran*, came out in 2025 (Acair). As a Marie Curie Fellow at the University of Glasgow (2023–2025), she carried out a research project on Erskine's Scottish periodicals ([erskine.glasgow.ac.uk](http://erskine.glasgow.ac.uk)). She serves as secretary of the International Association for the Study of Scottish Literatures and as executive editor of the academic journal *Litteraria Pragensia*.

**Dr Duncan Sneddon** is Lecturer in Celtic at the University of Edinburgh. His publications and research focus on Medieval Gaelic religious literature, Saints' cults in medieval Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, Gaelic folklore and heroic ballads, "Celticism" in fantasy, sci-fi and weird fiction, and modern Gaelic literature. From 2018 – 2019 Duncan was a Teaching Fellow in Gaelic at the University of Aberdeen and, from 2019 – 20, Gaelic Language Development Officer for the Church of Scotland. From 2021–22 he was a Research Assistant at the University of Edinburgh for Harvard University's project, The Fionn Folklore Database, led by Prof. Natasha Sumner. He took up his present post in 2022.

**Arun Sood** is Lecturer in Global Literatures at the University of Exeter. He is currently Project Lead on the AHRC Catalyst project, [\*Plants, Plantations, and the Anglophone Caribbean: Exploring Indigenous and African-descendent knowledge through text, archive, and orality\*](#). Arun's books include [\*Robert Burns and the United States of America: Poetry, Print, and Memory, c. 1786-1886\*](#); [\*New Skin For The Old Ceremony: A Kirtan\*](#) and [\*Searching Erskine\*](#). His essays and reviews have appeared *The Guardian*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*. As a practicing artist working across sound and moving image, he has exhibited at Exeter Phoenix, The Box, and The National Gallery of Scotland. His most recent exhibition works with BFI archival footage to explore the migrations stories of displaced Ugandan Asians to Heathfield, Devon, in 1971.

**Jennifer Strachan MA (Hons), PCIfA**, from South Ayrshire, is an archaeologist, currently working in the commercial archaeology sector. She graduated in 2024 from the University of Glasgow with a First Class Honours degree in Archaeology. In her spare time, Jennifer loves assisting Dr Murray Cook in his community excavations and archaeological field school through Rampart Scotland.