

## *Around the Archives*

# University of Stirling Archives

*Karl Magee*

In 2010 the University of Stirling Library underwent a major refurbishment which greatly improved the provision for, and profile of, the University Archives. The redesign of the building transformed the library into a bright, modern environment, the first major improvement of the building since it opened in 1971. A new Archives and Special Collections area was created which allows our historical collections to be fully accessible to researchers for the first time. These collections have grown and developed over the years to provide a rich resource for teaching and research and the new facilities have resulted in a number of major new accessions in recent years.

The University of Stirling opened its doors to its first intake of students on the morning of Monday 18 September 1967. The 164 undergraduates and thirty-one postgraduates were welcomed into the brand-new Pathfoot building where all lectures took place and the library was temporarily located. On the evening of 18 September, staff and students celebrated the opening of the university with a dinner-dance and firework display.

The following morning students met the academic staff in more formal surroundings at registration, and lectures began at 8.30 am on Wednesday 20 September. For the university's first group of undergraduates the most popular subjects were Sociology, Psychology and English, with only a small proportion of students choosing to specialise in science subjects. Today, the University of Stirling is home to over eleven thousand students studying a wide variety of subjects, with over one hundred nationalities represented on campus.

The site of the new university on the Airthrey Estate, a picturesque setting close to the town of Bridge of Allan, was a major factor in the government decision made in 1964 to locate a new Scottish university in Stirling. The challenge of creating a brand-new institution is recorded in the early minutes, reports and planning documents of the university, which form part of its extensive archive. Prior to the construction of the Pathfoot Building in 1967, onsite accommodation was limited and the minutes of the meetings of the various planning committees are recorded as taking place in a variety of locations such as hotels in Bridge of Allan and Stirling. The early records of the university trace how the physical construction of the campus progressed alongside the development of the academic programme, with the university library moving to its current location in 1971. A huge photographic archive records how the site was transformed from a country estate, landscaped

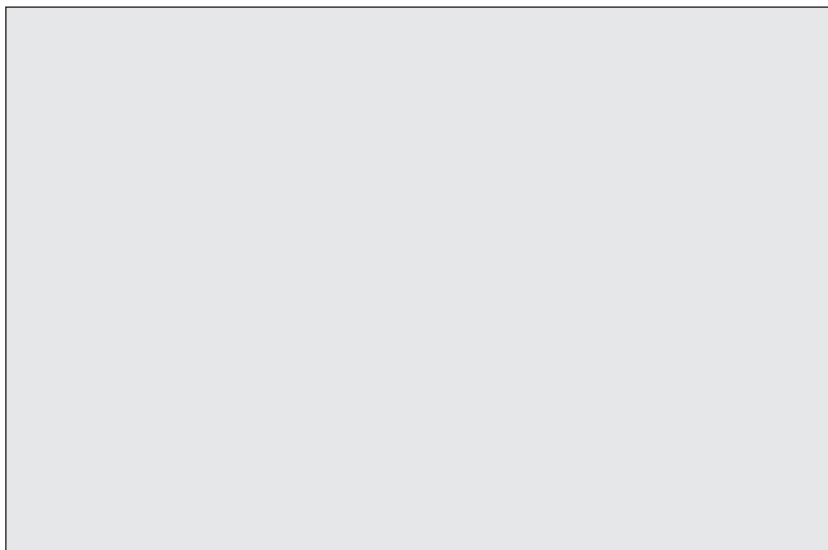


Plate 1 The University of Stirling Library which opened in 1971.

in the nineteenth century, to a modern, late twentieth-century campus university.

As well as the official history of the university, which is contained in the minutes of the University Court and the papers of the various administrative and academic boards and committees that were established over the years, the unofficial story of life on campus has been preserved in the donations of material from former staff and students. Student newspapers and yearbooks, photographs and memorabilia provide a record of the royal visits, student protests, film shoots and rock concerts that all form part of the colourful history of the university. A valuable new addition to the university's archive is currently being created by the Stirling University Retired Staff Association who are carrying out an oral history project, interviewing retired members of staff who joined the university in its early years.

When the university library opened in 1967 its shelves were empty. Unlike other new universities that developed out of existing educational institutions, it did not inherit book collections. Instead, the library was dependent for the growth of both its teaching stock and special collections on the generous donation of material to the university. One of the first of these accessions was a collection of documents relating to Napoleon Bonaparte given to the university in 1969 by Burt Eddy Taylor, an American supporter of the new institution. The material was purchased by his family in 1929 from a rare-book dealer in New York and includes the British signal code-book for Saint Helena relating to the period when Napoleon was imprisoned on the island following his final

defeat at Waterloo in 1815.<sup>1</sup> The code-book belonged to the Governor of the Island, Colonel Mark Wilkes, and the special interest of this volume lies in the colourful signals it includes relating to the captivity of the fallen French Emperor. The inside of the back cover illustrates those to be made in case of ‘alarms’: these include a blue flag, meaning ‘General Bonaparte Missing by Day’ and a large beacon to be lit should he have gone missing at night. The signals were to be made by all thirty-five posts on the island. The urgency reflected a genuine fear that Bonaparte might somehow be rescued from Saint Helena by dedicated supporters.

A generous donation from Basil William Sholto Mackenzie, second Baron Amulree, included another historical curiosity – a set of shoe buckles said to belong to Bonnie Prince Charlie. The shoe buckles (with their detailed note of provenance which travelled with them through the auction houses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) are part of a larger collection of material relating to the Jacobites, including eighteenth-century manuscripts, books, pamphlets and portraits, along with Lord Amulree’s own historical research and writings.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1970s the university acquired two outstanding collections of early left-wing political material. In 1978 William Tait, son of the Scottish socialist pioneer Thomas Tait, donated a large collection of pamphlets, newspapers, books and archives (many relating to his father’s political activities) to the university library. William Watson, who was a welder on Clydeside, collected left-wing books, pamphlets and newspapers all his life, from the aftermath of the First World War up to the 1960s. The library purchased his collection in 1970.

These two collections comprise three thousand pamphlets, 340 newspapers titles and over two thousand books. The archival material includes the minute and letter books, correspondence and literature of a number of small left-wing political parties covering the period 1883–1943 including the Socialist Labour Party, the British Section of the International Socialist Labour Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Revolutionary Communist Party.<sup>3</sup> This material provides a fascinating glimpse into the day-to-day activities of the East of Scotland branches of these small political groups and includes material relating to propaganda, party membership, elections and finances. The activities of these Edinburgh-based groups provide an interesting contrast with the better-documented left-wing history of Glasgow. Correspondence with other left-wing parties outside the UK, including groups in the US and Australia, highlights the international nature of this form of political activity. The minutes of nineteenth-century groups such as the Edinburgh-based Scottish Land and Labour League show the important role propaganda

<sup>1</sup> MS 11. Note: All archival references refer to material held in the University of Stirling Archives and Special Collections.

<sup>2</sup> MS 93.

<sup>3</sup> MS 41.

played in their development and record the visits of important speakers such as William Morris. The collections provide a spectrum of left-wing opinion on major events of the first half of the twentieth century including ‘Red Clydeside’, the Russian Revolution, the General Strike of 1926 and the Second World War. The international aspect of the material is evident in the influence of the American socialist Daniel de Leon and the collections include one of the largest single holdings of early twentieth-century American left-wing literature in the UK.

Stirling’s collections of political archives have been enhanced in recent years by the Scottish Political Archives project. Based in the university’s History and Politics department, the project collects material relating to modern Scottish politicians and organisations, with a particular emphasis on the devolution referendums of 1979 and 1997, and the forthcoming 2014 independence referendum. The election ephemera collected by the project provides a colourful record of the various campaigns fought in Scotland since the 1970s, while the personal papers of local politicians provide a more detailed account of political life and activity. This material is being supplemented with an oral history project which is interviewing politicians and activists involved in the devolution campaigns of 1979 and 1997.<sup>4</sup>

The University of Stirling was one of the first universities to develop a film studies programme in the 1970s and its Archive has acquired a number of large film-related collections over the years to support this area of research. The University Archives hold the papers of John Grierson (1898–1972), one of Stirling’s most famous sons, who has been described as ‘the father of the documentary film’. His papers were donated to the university by his wife Margaret shortly after his death and the collection has grown over the years as other related material has been donated by friends and colleagues. The notebooks, letters, scripts, articles, reports, press cuttings and photographs which make up the Grierson Archive provide a treasure trove of information about the history of cinema and in particular one local man’s part in its growth and development.

In 1929 Grierson made the film *Drifters*, a documentary about herring fishing. The film had a huge impact and created a template for documentary which many others followed. The collection includes Grierson’s scripts for the film, including a copy where the ink has run across the page as a result of it getting wet – it is tempting to think that this may be the copy of the script he took with him on the fishing boats where he filmed the dramatic footage of the fishermen at work in the North Sea.<sup>5</sup> Following the success of *Drifters*, Grierson moved to the General Post Office in 1933 where he set up a film unit which produced a string of acclaimed documentaries including *Night Mail*, which followed the post train from London to Scotland.

For many people Grierson is perhaps best known as the presenter of *This*

<sup>4</sup> <http://scottishpoliticalarchive.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>5</sup> G 2/1/8.

*Wonderful World*, a television programme which brought the best of the world's documentary films into Scottish sitting rooms in the 1950s and 1960s. The Grierson Archive includes the scripts and accompanying documentation for over 350 episodes of the programme. As a film copy of only one episode of *This Wonderful World* survives (the tapes of the broadcasts, like many others made in the 1950s and 1960s, being wiped or destroyed), these scripts provide a unique record of the programme.<sup>6</sup>

Grierson was responsible for launching the careers of a generation of young British film-makers who flourished under his watchful eye, and the archive has grown over the years as many of his colleagues added items to the collection. Two substantial donations of material were the papers of his biographer Forsyth Hardy and Norman McLaren, an award-winning film-maker who benefited from Grierson's support and encouragement. Forsyth Hardy (1910–94) was a film critic, author and administrator responsible for the production and promotion of films in Scotland. He was a key figure in the establishment of the Edinburgh International Film Festival and wrote a history of the festival, *Slightly Mad and Full of Dangers*, in 1992. Hardy's career as a writer and critic is well documented in his papers, as is his work developing a home-grown film industry with the Films of Scotland Committee. The collection also includes material relating to the Edinburgh International Film Festival and other Scottish film festivals including articles written by Hardy, transcripts of radio broadcasts by Hardy, festival programmes, correspondence and press cuttings.

Stirling-born Norman McLaren (1914–87) was an award-winning experimental film-maker and animator. He began making films in the 1930s while a student at the Glasgow School of Art and went on to develop his film-making techniques at the National Film Board of Canada, winning an Academy Award for his short film *Neighbours* in 1953. His collection has grown over the years through the generous donation of items by his family in Scotland, and friends and colleagues in Canada. The collection includes over four hundred letters he wrote to his parents in Stirling over a thirty-year period, beginning in 1936. The letters were written on a regular, sometimes weekly, basis and include information on the development of his career, accounts of his travels and discussions of his work, alongside family business and personal information. McLaren travelled widely and visited some interesting places at very interesting times. He was a visitor to Moscow as a tourist in 1935 and his postcards home show how impressed he was with the city and its people.<sup>7</sup> In 1936 he travelled to Spain as a cameraman during the Civil War to shoot footage for a documentary film supporting the Republican cause. A letter home to his parents in December 1936 provides a remarkable eyewitness account of the destruction caused by German bombing raids in Madrid.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> G 8/1–36.

<sup>7</sup> GAA 31/C/1/Postcards/12.

<sup>8</sup> GAA 31/C/1/1936/3.

McLaren's letters home also provide a detailed account of an unexpectedly adventurous visit to China in 1949 when he became caught up in the upheavals caused by the Communist Revolution. Stranded in the Chinese interior for six months, his letters home provide a gripping account of his efforts to leave the country. Despite the conflict he witnessed and the virtual imprisonment he suffered, McLaren appears to have enjoyed his time in China and gained a great respect for its people. Reflecting on his experiences in a letter to his parents, he wrote:

Chinese civilisation in many ways is superior to our recent western civilisation. I am sorry in many ways to be leaving it. It is not in its plumbing or mechanical gadgets that China is superior, but in its simple human attitudes.<sup>9</sup>

In 2001, the university's film-related collections were further enhanced by the deposit of the papers of Lindsay Anderson (1923–94), one of the most important British film directors of the twentieth century. He is perhaps best known as the director of *If...*, the 1969 tale of schoolboy rebellion starring Malcolm McDowell, which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. Born in India to Scottish parents, he was proud of his Scottish ancestry (although he never lived in Scotland and rarely visited the country). When it came to deciding on a home for his archive Stirling, with its strong film-related holdings and highly rated film studies department, proved an attractive location.

Anderson's archive provides a unique record of the working career and private life of one of the most distinctive voices of British cinema. The collection includes scripts, production notes, correspondence, promotional material and photographs relating to all of Anderson's films and forty of his theatre productions. There are also files relating to proposed film projects that were never made (including a planned sequel to *If...*); working papers dealing with invitations to film festivals, requests for interviews, disputes with the British Film Institute and management of the Royal Court Theatre; and correspondence with actors, writers and directors.

The collection also includes a large amount of personal material collected and kept by Anderson. This includes his diaries (kept irregularly between 1941 and 1992); photographs of family and friends, and his visits to various countries; and memorabilia collected by Anderson during his schooldays, military service and adult life. The collection also includes several thousand of Anderson's personal library of books (mainly relating to film and theatre), many of which are annotated with the director's distinctive red pen. Of particular interest are Anderson's comments in the margins on authors and critics' views of his films. His copy of Alexander Walker's book, *Hollywood England: The British Film Industry in the Sixties*, provides a perfect example of these annotations. Summing up his account of British cinema in the 1960s, Walker writes:

<sup>9</sup> GAA 31/C/1/1950/6.

Where in the period under review does one look for the British equivalent of Bergman, or Forman, or Rohmer, or Antonioni, or Truffaut or even Godard? The answer is, nowhere.<sup>10</sup>

In response, an exasperated Anderson took out his red pen, underlined the passage and wrote ‘Thanks!’ in the margin, this short annotation a perfect illustration of the kind of film-maker Anderson considered himself to be and the frustration he felt with those who did not recognise him as the equal of European contemporaries.

An unusual postscript to Anderson’s film-making career is included in the Archive in the form of a copy of a film made by the director which has never been released. In 1985 Wham! became the first western pop group to play in China and Anderson was invited to direct a documentary of the tour. The director, then in his sixties, and the young pop stars seemed an unlikely combination. Anderson travelled to China with the band but his portrayal of the tour did not meet with their approval: he had not produced the expected pop promo, instead his film featured too much of China and not enough of Wham! He was removed from the project and a new version of the film was cut at great expense and released with the title *Foreign Skies*. Anderson produced his own version of the film from footage taken before his removal entitled *If You Were There...*, a copy of which is included in the collection.

In 2010 the University Library underwent a major refurbishment which greatly improved the provision for, and profile of the University Archives. The redesign of the building transformed the library into a bright modern environment, the first major improvement of the building since it opened in 1971. A new Archives and Special Collections area was created which allows our historical collections to be fully accessible to researchers for the first time. The area includes a twelve-seat reading room for the consultation of material from the collections, a new exhibition space, and improved storage facilities which will contribute towards the continued preservation of the collections. A recent redesign of the library webpages, and the addition of content to our online archives catalogue, has further enhanced access.<sup>11</sup> Since opening in August 2010, the new Archives and Special Collections area has welcomed researchers from all over the UK and visitors from as far afield as USA, Canada, France, Sweden, Germany, India, Japan and Australia. The new facilities have also raised the profile of our collections within the university through class visits to the reading room and exhibitions of material from our holdings.

Our new facilities have been of great benefit in attracting a number of major new collections to the university in recent years. In 2010 the Musicians’ Union signed an agreement with the University to place its archives on deposit in Stirling. Characterised today by its ‘Keep Music Live’ slogan (which was

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Walker, *Hollywood England – the British Film Industry in the Sixties* (London, 1974), 462.

<sup>11</sup> <http://libguides.stir.ac.uk/archives>.

first coined in the 1960s), the Musicians' Union today represents over thirty thousand musicians working in all sectors of the music business. The records of the Union and its predecessors provide a detailed account of the various challenges (both political and technological) that have faced performing musicians over the last century. The Musicians' Union Archive consists of the records of the Central and District offices of the union and over sixty Branches (covering Scotland, Wales, North West, North East England, the Midlands and London). It also includes material relating to the organisations that merged in 1921 to form the union (the Amalgamated Musicians' Union and the National Orchestral Union of Professional Musicians) dating back to 1879.

Material relating to the organisation, administration and activities of the union includes accounts, annual and monthly reports, concert programmes, conference papers, correspondence files, directories, election papers, proceedings and findings of industrial court cases, membership material, minute books, Organisers' Reports, performers' rates, photographs, press cuttings, strike material and papers relating to campaigns led and supported by the union. The collection provides over a century of social, cultural, economic, technological and political history captured in many forms ranging from Victorian minute books to photographs from the 1960s. The significance of the collection goes well beyond its original function as the records of a trade union, documenting a whole history of cultural and technological change.

The Musicians' Union Archive provides a unique perspective on the cultural history of Britain over the last 130 years through the experiences and struggles of the musicians and performers who entertained a nation. A wide range of cultural developments, political campaigns and historical events are reflected in the Archive including: the sinking of the Titanic; the impact of the 'talkies' on cinema orchestras; the struggle of women musicians for recognition; the 'dance hall' craze of the 1930s; disputes with the BBC; the arrival of 'rock and roll'; and the 'Keep Music Live' and 'Rock Against Racism' campaigns. The records of Districts and Branches, from Aberdeen to Exeter, show how major events impacted at a local level and provide detailed information on local issues and events. The broad coverage and detail of the union's membership records also provide a hitherto untapped resource for genealogists and local historians.

Stirling has been designated Scotland's University for Sporting Excellence with state-of-the-art sporting facilities and an internationally recognised centre of academic study in its School of Sport. In 2011, the University Archives acquired a major sporting collection of international importance, namely the archives of Commonwealth Games Scotland, the lead body for Commonwealth sport in Scotland. This collection documents over eighty years of international sporting competition, beginning with the minutes of the Scottish National Sports Federation in 1931 and memorabilia from the 1938 British Empire Games held in Sydney, Australia. As well as correspondence, reports, photographs and memorabilia relating to the participation of Scottish teams at all subsequent Commonwealth Games, the collection also includes material from other major international sporting events and Olympic Games.



In addition, the minutes and correspondence files record how Commonwealth Games Scotland works with other sporting bodies.

The collection also includes the records relating to the organisation of the 1970 and 1986 Commonwealth Games, which were both held in Edinburgh. The planning and administration of the Edinburgh Games were managed by Organising Committees whose extensive records are present. Every aspect of the operation of the games from management of local volunteers to international negotiations with participating nations are detailed in the committee minutes, correspondence files and reports. Posters, programmes and other promotional material provide a pictorial record of events, along with memorabilia (including official team clothing) and an extensive photographic archive. The collection will grow in the coming years as we work with Commonwealth Games Scotland (whose offices are located in the University's Gannochy Sports Centre) to collect and preserve material relating to the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

Our new Archives and Special Collections area has also allowed us to become the home for the historical records of NHS Forth Valley, providing public access for the first time to material of great historical and genealogical interest, and filling a large gap in the provision of hospital archives in Scotland. The records which have been transferred to the university consist primarily of material from two hospitals: Stirling District Asylum and the Royal Scottish National Institution. Opened in 1869, Stirling District Asylum (later known as Bellsdyke Hospital) was part of the network of District Asylums established in the nineteenth century which provided care for the mentally ill in Scotland. An almost complete run of admission registers and case books provides a detailed record of the care and treatment of patients up to 1918. For the first time, researchers can trace the movement of patients between Stirling Asylum and other Scottish hospitals. Indeed the early entries of the first admission register for the hospital show how patients who came from Stirling were sent back to their new local asylum from institutions across Scotland including asylums in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Montrose.<sup>12</sup>

The fifty volumes of male and female case notes covering the period 1869–1918 include a wealth of additional information in the enclosures, which are pinned, fastened or interleaved throughout the volumes. The case notes contained in the case books record the initial personal and medical information collected at the time of admission and go on to provide regular updates on the treatment and condition of patients during their stay in the asylum. The enclosures, which are being carefully removed and catalogued, provide further medical and personal information relating to the patients. Detailed accounts of the condition and behaviour of patients prior to admission are recorded in official correspondence from doctors, parish councils and other asylums from which patients have been transferred. Extracts from the medical certificates which were completed prior to admission are also sometimes

<sup>12</sup> SD 1/1.

included. Occasionally the incidents that triggered admission to the asylum were reported in the local press and newspaper cuttings of such events were often placed alongside the case notes. Evidence of the care and treatment of the patients can be seen in the various hospital forms and records which are present including temperature charts, eye-test forms and additional loose case notes.

Alongside these official records, the case books also include the personal correspondence of the patients themselves, an additional layer of evidence which brings their stories alive. The letters written by patients were intended for family and friends but these handwritten messages never left the hospital, instead being added by the hospital authorities to the case notes as evidence of the patient's state of mind. Indeed some of these letters provide vivid first-hand accounts of the delusions and hallucinations suffered by patients. Many write of being kidnapped and held against their will, or ask for help to escape their incarceration. Other letters, however, are more measured and considered, apologising to parents or spouses for their recent behaviour and asking loved ones to come and visit. It is heartening to note that not all patient correspondence was confined within the walls of the asylum. The enclosures also include the occasional letter written by a recovered patient to the doctors in the asylum thanking them for their treatment and providing an account of life since their return home.

Established in 1862, the Royal Scottish National Institution was the foremost institution providing custodial care for mentally impaired children in Scotland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It gained an international reputation for its enlightened approach to care and treatment, attracting patients from England and across the British Empire. The extensive archives of the institution that survive provide a comprehensive record of the management and operation of the hospital. Of particular note is the large collection of over three thousand application forms for admission to the institution. These documents provide a wealth of information about children from all across Scotland who required treatment and care; the lives of their parents and families; and the figures in their local communities who supported their applications. The stories of these children are recorded in the case notes and other hospital records which document their treatment and care. Unsuccessful applications were also retained by the institution resulting in an archive that provides a wider historical picture of the mental health of children across Scotland. The records of the Royal Scottish National Institution provide a valuable new resource for the study of the history of medicine and society in Scotland. It is also a hitherto untapped genealogical resource for families all across Scotland and further afield, its records containing the stories of forgotten or hidden members of families who relatives today are keen to (re)discover. The importance of the collection has been recognised by the UK National Committee of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme, with the archives of the Royal Scottish National Institution being added to the UK Memory of the World Register in 2012.

The story of archives at the University of Stirling is one of slow and steady growth and development with a recent expansion of collections and services as a result of the major refurbishment of the library in 2010. Our collecting policy reflects the university's main areas of teaching and research, and it has developed to include new areas of interest such as sport. It also provides a clear distinction between the types of material collected by the university and those preserved by Stirling Council Archives (such as school and church records). The collections built by the University Archives contain a rich variety of material providing many research possibilities. The empty library storeroom built in 1967 has been replaced with an environmentally controlled archives store which holds many treasures including Napoleonic memorabilia, political pamphlets, film scripts and asylum records.