

Centre for History News



Welcome to our Spring 2020 newsletter which features the creativity and hard work of our students and staff over the last six months – as well as their extraordinary response to the challenges of the Covid-19 crisis.

There have been no breaks in classes during the lockdown, with lecturers continuing to teach undergraduate modules through video conference, and students continuing to write assessments and hand them in. While it hasn't been easy for staff or students, it's been amazing to see how so many have adapted so quickly and confidently to the changes.

We remain as determined as ever to helping our students achieve their degrees in the usual timeframe and to supporting those who sadly won't be able to complete this semester.

Our students and staff have been tremendous, reacting pragmatically and patiently to the changing situation in all our lives. We hope this newsletter will bring a little cheer to you, and that you remain well and safe in these difficult times.

Spring 2020

The Centre for History is part of the University of the Highlands and Islands and internationally renowned for our research and teaching in Highland, Scottish and wider world history.

We are normally based in Dornoch, Sutherland, but during the Covid-19 crisis we are proudly operating from spare bedrooms, studies and living rooms across Scotland.

You can find out what we do by following us on Facebook or Twitter [@UHIHistory](#)

Visit our website to find out more about our undergraduate history degrees and online masters courses www.history.uhi.ac.uk

Or email us on history@uhi.ac.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Centre for History

Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean
Ionad Eachdraidh



STUDENT NEWS

Online masters

We teach our taught postgraduate students remotely and all their resources are held online, which means that the Covid-19 crisis has not interrupted the delivery of their courses. But we're very aware that many of our students are living in different countries around the world and that their home experiences may change considerably as the weeks go by. As ever, we aim to be flexible to their needs.

At the start of 2020 we welcomed twelve new MLitt students. All had opted to begin in January rather than the usual September, and we were happy to oblige!

Four of our new postgraduates are based in the United States, four in Scotland, three in England and one in the Isle of Man. The new cohort joined more than fifty postgraduate students taking one or more modules with the Centre for History.

We are currently accepting applications for postgraduate students starting in September 2020. If you're tempted, you can read more about our innovative online postgraduate courses and apply at <http://bit.ly/PostgradHistory>

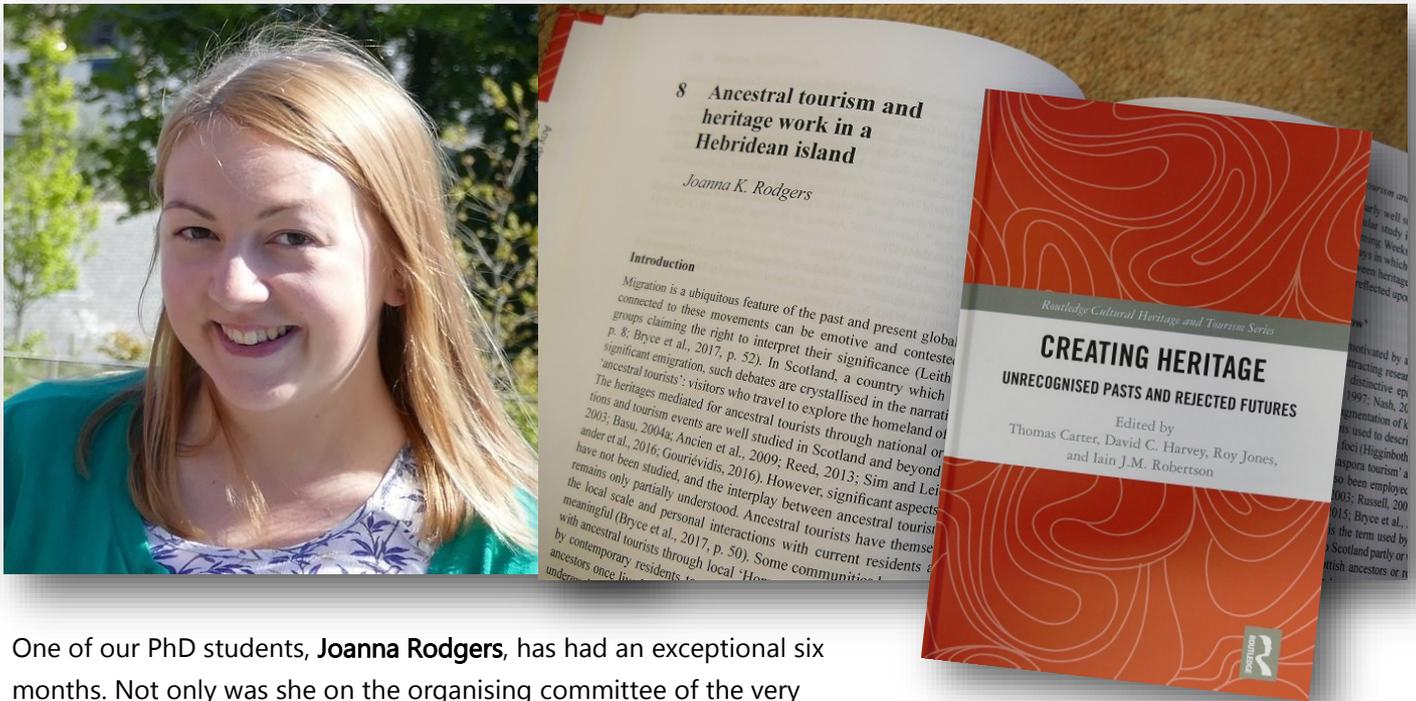
Research matters

We have ten PhD researchers working with us, or just completed, on topics as diverse as the history of salmon in the Highlands to the impact of the NorthCoast 500 on local communities. As the Covid-19 crisis began, some of our research students were working closely with community groups and unfortunately had to suspend research immediately. Others are now busy writing their PhD theses.

Research can be an isolating experience even in normal circumstances and we are doing everything we can to keep in touch with our PhD students by phone and online – including virtual coffee breaks with staff.

PhD Social

We already used online technologies to connect regularly with our research students, and in January we hosted a 'PhD social' at the Centre for History. Students **Alex Dold** and **Liz Forrest** gathered with staff Dr Jim MacPherson, Dr Iain Robertson and Dr David Worthington in our meeting room, while **Jane Thomas** and **Oisín Rushnell** joined us on video conference. Dr Jim MacPherson baked a cake for the occasion, but, of course, not everyone could eat it!



One of our PhD students, **Joanna Rodgers**, has had an exceptional six months. Not only was she on the organising committee of the very successful multi-disciplinary *Ruination and Decay* UHI conference, but she also had an article on her Tíre research published in 'Creating Heritage', a new book co-edited by **Dr Iain Robertson** (pictured below right). It's unusual for a young scholar to be published so early in their career and we're absolutely delighted for her.

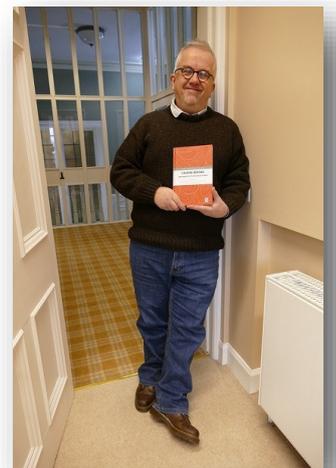
Remembering Eric Richards

There are disappointments for four of our current and former postgraduate students who had hoped to speak at the Eric Richards Memorial Conference in Inverness this May, now postponed because of Covid-19. They include **Linda Ross**, who graduated with a PhD last summer, **Jane Thomas**, who hopes to complete her PhD shortly and **David Taylor**, who was one of the Centre's first PhD students.

The conference aimed to celebrate the life of historian Eric Richards, who died suddenly in 2018 leaving a highly regarded body of work on the Highland Clearances and emigration. He was emeritus professor of History at Flinders University, Australia and a frequent visitor to the Highlands and Islands, where he held a visiting professorship with us in 2015.



Pictured here is **Jaime Bockoven**, one of our MLitt students based in the US, who was planning to present a paper. We hope the conference will be held in happier times and all will be able to take part.



Students helping students

We're very proud of our enterprising undergraduate students, including a small group in Perth who established the UHI Perth Archaeology and History Society (PAHS) last semester. Their first events were in November and included talks on the archaeology of whisky, and the Iron Age in Caithness. But they didn't stop there – within days of the Covid-19 crisis emerging they used the University Webex system to create a live chat space for all students interested in History and Archaeology. Well done PAHS!



UHI Perth College Archaeology & History Society @PAHS_UHI · 7h
 Hey folks! Just a reminder that our society meeting is today! Any students welcome! Dial in on Webex 149456936@uhi.webex.com, 11am-1pm! This week's discussion topic is Weird Archaeology - come along and listen or tell us something yourself! #ThinkUHI #Archaeology @PerthCollegeUHI

STAFF NEWS



Continuity and change

Centre for History staff are continuing to teach and manage nineteen undergraduate history programmes and five masters programmes, as well as supervising more than ten research students. Making the change to remote learning during the Covid-19 crisis was perhaps easier for us than other History departments as we already teach through video conference classes which are supported in turn by an active online element.

Within days of the University announcing the end of face-to-face teaching and the closing of University buildings, our team had created new study tools within the UHI virtual learning environment to enable students to continue engaging with their modules online. Many students have been able to join video conference classes from home, and all classes have been recorded for students to view when they can. Assessments and marking are continuing and no classes have been cancelled.

Thanks to the hard work of our teaching staff, and Programme Leader **Dr Lucy Dean** in particular, the majority of our undergraduate students have continued their degrees without interruption.

New staff

In the last six months our staff numbers have risen to eighteen full time and part time staff.

Dr Nicola Martin joined the Centre in November, and almost immediately gained Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. Dr Martin is a specialist in eighteenth-century British imperialism and military history, with a special interest in war and identity-formation throughout the British Empire. She is module leader on our undergraduate Scottish and American history courses, covering maternity leave.

Dr Linsey Hunter has taught for the Centre on a part time contract since 2013. Since December she has been working for us full time, covering maternity leave. Dr Hunter is a medieval legal specialist and module leader on four undergraduate courses, including her own 'Norman Diaspora' module.

Two new part-time university teachers started working with us in January. **Dr Katie Carpenter** and **Dr Katy Turton** teach on first and second year undergraduate modules, as well as one masters, and have seamlessly adapted to video conference teaching at UHI.



We all enjoyed meeting **Dr Katy Turton** (above left) and **Dr Katie Carpenter** (above right), our new part time university teachers, when they came along to our Away Day in January. They joined a team which already boasts two Iains, two Jims and three Alisons – so our two Katy/ies have fitted in like a dream!

History masterclasses

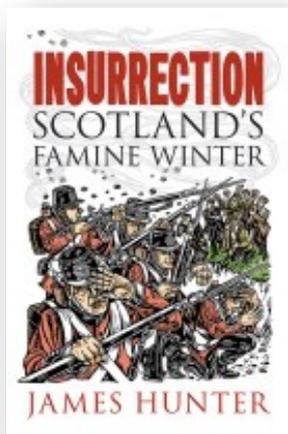
Professor Marjory Harper, senior researcher at the Centre, is a specialist in Scottish diaspora research as well as being Professor of History at the University of Aberdeen. In October we were very lucky to receive the first of two illuminating, helpful and well-received lunchtime workshops for Centre staff, focusing on her academic career, and her reflections on the status of women within the field of history.



Spreading Insurrection...

In the months before Covid-19 our emeritus professor and first director **Professor Jim Hunter** had been extraordinarily busy speaking about his new book 'Insurrection: Scotland's famine winter' at events around the Highlands, including Nairn, Elgin, Fort William, Dingwall, Tobermory and Stornoway. Sadly, his forthcoming events at the Edinburgh Book Festival, John o' Groats Book Festival, Rannoch Historical Society and at Strathnaver Museum have been cancelled.

But you can still read his book, of course!



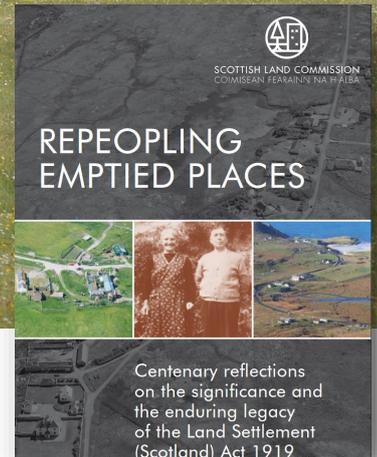
New external examiner

Dr Aly Macdonald from Aberdeen University (above) is our new external examiner, helping to ensure fairness and consistency in the marking of the Centre's exams and other assessments. His first duty (along with fellow external examiner **Dr Annie Tindley**) was at February's exam board where we were hugely grateful for their comments and suggestions. In honour of their visit we unboxed the departmental cake slice and enjoyed some spectacular carrot cake.

Online history talks

Over the next few months we're opening up our archive of UHI Centre for History public talks and offering weekly online lectures from outstanding historians on a range of historical subjects, from the Medieval cult of saints, to empire and Scottish identity. You can view the first in our upcycled **#Historytalks** series at <http://bit.ly/HeddleVideo>. Enjoy!

PUBLICATIONS AND TALKS



James I of Scotland

In February, **Dr Lucy Dean** commemorated the 583rd anniversary of the brutal murder of King James I of Scotland by taking part in an evening of medieval music, historical readings, theatrical performances, poetry and contemporary fiction. Proceeds from the evening went to the Perth Charterhouse Project which aims to focus archaeological and historical research on the city of Perth, revealing the precariousness of life at the heart of the medieval kingdom.

Thirty years in three months!

Since January, **Dr Kathrin Zickermann** has talked on 'Alexander Erskine (1598-1656): Swedish resident, war councillor and peace negotiator' at both Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities, co-authored an article on 'Scottish widows during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648)' in *Northern Studies* with Professor Steve Murdoch and has also written a blog with him — phew! Read the blog at bit.ly/ScottishWarWidows



Land and people

Historians at the Centre for History are developing a reputation for how their historic research is impacting upon land reform in Scotland. Professor Jim Hunter, Dr Iain Robertson and Dr Elizabeth Ritchie have all been central in creating insights and new ways of thinking about the historic relationship between land and people, both within the Highlands and Islands, and elsewhere.

Professor Jim Hunter's 'Repeopling Emptied Places: Centenary reflections on the significance and the enduring legacy of the Land Settlement (Scotland) Act 1919', was commissioned by the Scottish Land Commission to mark the anniversary of the 1919 Act. It's available online and as a pamphlet – you can read it at <http://bit.ly/Repeople>

Sugar and slavery

Dr David Worthington's article on 'Sugar, Slave-Owning, Suriname and the Dutch Imperial Entanglement of the Scottish Highlands before 1707' has been published in volume 44, 2020 of *Dutch Crossing: Journal of the Low Countries Studies*. Since its publication the article has become the journal's fourth-most read article ever! Read it free and online at <http://bit.ly/SugarandSlavery>

Robert Bruce

Our royalty expert, **Dr Lucy Dean**, gave a packed talk in Dunfermline Abbey Church on 'The Funeral of Robert the Bruce: Rituals, Ceremony & Royal Death in Medieval Scotland'. It was not for the squeamish - the king's heart and internal organs were removed and embalmed before he was interred in Dunfermline – but those who attended had a fascinating insight into royal ceremony and medieval



James and Jim MacPhersons!



Laggan Village Hall was packed for a Sunday lunchtime talk in February by **Dr Jim MacPherson**. He spoke to Laggan Heritage Society about his namesake James 'Ossian' Macpherson, as well as about history writing, the power of culture and inspiring change in present-day Badenoch. James 'Ossian' Macpherson was born near Kingussie and lived at Balavil, just 12 miles from Laggan,.

Crime fiction?

Crime writer Margaret Kirk visited us recently and spent some time talking to staff in Dornoch. Her book 'What Lies Buried' had just been published as the second in an ongoing series and features a character called Anna Murray, an academic who's returned to the Highlands to teach at the UHI Centre for history in Dornoch! We're all on tenterhooks as to what Anna might get up to in the next book...

Scottish Polish relations

Dr David Worthington was invited to talk about Scottish migration to Poland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the January opening of an exhibition on perhaps the wealthiest of those migrants, Robert Porteous, at Edinburgh Central Library. The Edinburgh leg was arranged by the Scottish Polish Cultural Association with funding from the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Edinburgh. The exhibition was created by Dr Worthington in collaboration with colleagues at Krosno State College, and the Jagiellonian University, Kraków. Edinburgh was the last stop after Inverness and Aberdeen.

Game of Thrones

Dr Iain MacInnes is making a name for himself as an academic commentator on the 'medieval' TV series *Game of Thrones*. In November he gave a keynote lecture on war and chivalry in *Game of Thrones* at 'No Meio' ('In the Middle: Recreating the Middle Ages in popular culture') in Lisbon, Portugal. Earlier this year his wonderfully titled chapter "All I Ever Wanted Was to Fight for a Lord I Believed in. But the Good Lords are Dead and the Rest are Monsters": Brienne of Tarth, Jaime Lannister, and the chivalric "other" was published in 'Queenship and the Women in Westeros: Female agency in *Game of Thrones* and *A Song of Ice and Fire*' (edited by Zira Eva Rohr and Lisa Benz).

