

# discover

Collections, Research,  
News and Events at the  
National Library of Scotland

ISSUE 2  
SUMMER 2006

# nls



**Bright Spark,  
dark city**  
Muriel Spark  
remembered

**'I caught a shark and  
stopped a mutiny'**  
Hidden heroines of the  
John Murray Archive

**Getting to grips  
with blogs**  
The manuscripts of  
the future ?

## Flights of the imagination

Turning the page on Audubon's Scottish legacy



## Foreword



It is a pleasure to welcome you to the second issue of *Discover NLS*. The articles in this issue demonstrate the immense variety of our collections, and describe the exciting challenges we face in continuing to acquire an even greater variety of material in the digital age. In a tribute article Eric Dickson describes the relationship between one of the best known modern writers, the late Dame Muriel Spark, and her native Edinburgh. The Library owns her vast personal archive, which developed after her decision in the 1940s to keep all kinds of documentary evidence relating to her career. It is interesting to speculate whether, if taking the same decision in 2006, she would have been contemplating the production of a web-log. In our professional practice article, Gill Hamilton and Eric Jurtzenka describe this new publishing phenomenon and its implications for the preservation of contemporary thought. The theme of digital preservation is continued in Simon Bains' interview with Najla Semple, Executive Secretary of the Digital Preservation Coalition, which explores the issues surrounding the acquisition and preservation of electronic resources.

The John Murray Archive, which arrived in the Library in March, is one of the most significant collections we have ever acquired, and will provide scope for exploration for years to come. In this issue Ruth Boreham introduces us to some of the many women she has encountered in the Archive. The theme of discovery is continued in Kevin Halliwell's description of the Library's Sanskrit collections, recently brought to light in support of a major international conference. In our main article, Graham Hogg describes the impact John James Audubon had on Edinburgh when he first visited the city in 1826, and the major role which members of Edinburgh society played in the production of his magnificent *Birds of America*. Audubon's adventures in Edinburgh are the theme of our colourful and fascinating summer exhibition, *Birds of a Feather*, which runs until October.

*Cate Newton*

Cate Newton  
Director of Collection Development

## Contributors in this Issue



**Ruth Boreham** is Assistant John Murray Archive Curator. She joined the manuscripts division of the Library in 2004 as an evening invigilator, before starting work on the Archive. Previous to working at the Library, Ruth worked in a number of research roles, most recently as a freelance researcher for various television programmes and authors.

**Eric Dickson** works in the Legal Deposit team, where he claims Scottish and British materials, including works by Dame Muriel Spark, for NLS collections. Since 2003 he has been Secretary of the Muriel Spark Society and has written numerous articles and reviews of Spark's work.



**Gill Hamilton** is Systems Librarian in the Digital Library team. She works to ensure the smoothing running and development of several of the Library's key information systems. Her professional interests include systems integration, data manipulation and transformation and representing the UK on the IFLA IT section. In her spare time, Gill enjoys cycling and tending vegetables on her allotment.

**Dr Graham Hogg** is a Senior Curator in the Rare Book Collections Division, where he has worked for the last 13 years. He currently has responsibility for special projects within the division and was the lead curator for this summer's exhibition on John James Audubon. He describes himself as an armchair ornithologist of the kind despised by Audubon, rather than an active birdwatcher.



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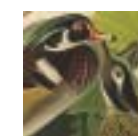
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### FEATURES



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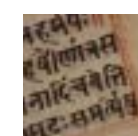
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### Cover Image:

Dr Graham Hogg with a volume of *Birds of America*, on display at the Library's current exhibition *Birds of a feather*.

Image: Richard Scott/Deadline



### ↓ A word on shelfmarks

Shelfmarks are references which identify the location of specific collection items (usually a series of numbers and letters e.g. MS.1007; 5.144(2); RB.s.788). You can use an item's shelfmark to search for it in our online catalogues, to order it up in our reading rooms, and as part of any reference to that specific NLS copy.



## Landmark digital project and visitor centre confirmed

NLS has earned major funding to establish a Trusted Digital Repository (TDR) for Scotland. The Scottish Executive has announced funding of up to £1.8 million for the two-year project, which will investigate how Scotland's heritage can best be preserved in digital form. The money will be allocated to procuring high-capacity digital storage technology, software and the recruitment of a small, dedicated project team.

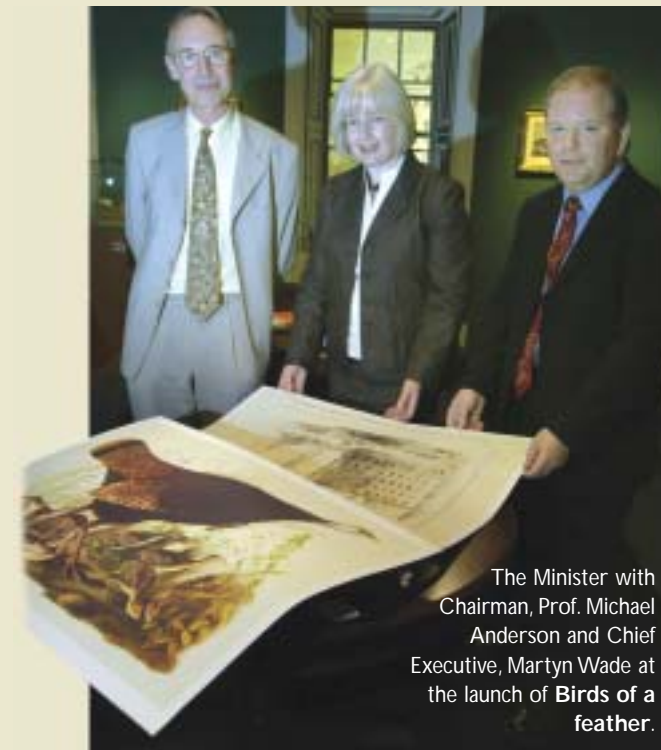
The launch of the TDR represents the next significant phase of the Library's vision to build a national digital library of Scotland that extends the same level of professional care to collecting, preserving and providing digital material as it does printed matter. The repository will store, preserve and provide access to a wide variety of digital resources, including NLS digitised collections, legal deposit publications in digital form and other material of cultural significance to Scotland.

Commenting on the news, ICT Manager, David Dinham said, 'We are very pleased that the Scottish Executive has provided funding for this important project. NLS will be implementing

innovative, cutting-edge technology and working with partners around the world to develop a system focused on the needs of users. It will certainly be an exciting challenge for everyone involved!'

Equally welcome was the announcement by the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Patricia Ferguson MSP (at the launch of the Library's summer exhibition, *Birds of a Feather*) that up to £450,000 would be made available to complete extensive renovations to the Library's flagship building on George IV Bridge. The funds will be used to develop the front hall area of the building, paving the way for ambitious plans to transform this area into a fully-functioning visitor centre by autumn 2007. This work will be carried out in tandem with the Library's plans to create engaging, interactive facilities and spaces for the interpretation of the John Murray Archive, which arrived earlier this year.

Turn to page 10 to read more about the issues surrounding collecting and preserving digital content.



The Minister with Chairman, Prof. Michael Anderson and Chief Executive, Martyn Wade at the launch of *Birds of a feather*.

## Traquair's artwork manuscript goes online

A seminal illuminated manuscript for the Arts and Crafts movement, is now available online, replete with a commentary from art historian Elizabeth Cumming. Phoebe Anna Traquair made her exquisite manuscript of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' in Edinburgh between 1892 and 1897 for her brother, William Richardson Moss, a Lancashire cotton manufacturer.

Traquair's talents included embroidery and enamel-work, leather book-cover tooling and mural decoration as well as manuscript illumination. She was heavily influenced by the 'Book of Kells' and 14th-century European art, but also drew inspiration from William Blake and the Pre-Raphaelites.

The passionate sonnets themselves were written in secret by the poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and tell of the two-year courtship leading up to her marriage to Robert Browning in 1846. Although first published in 1850 they are still much loved today. To view the manuscript online visit [www.nls.uk/traquair](http://www.nls.uk/traquair)



Sonnet 24 from Phoebe Anna Traquair's illuminated copy of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'Sonnets from the Portuguese', 1892-1897

Shelfmark: MS.8127, folio 25

## Research tool for Scottish newspaper sleuths

A guide to the indexes of Scottish newspapers is now available online. The guide lists details of 180 indexed titles, dating from the *Dumfries Mercury* of 1721, with details of where the papers can be found. Printed, electronic and online indexes are all included and it is searchable by title of newspaper and keyword.

This project has been developed by Newsplan Scotland in collaboration with the Scottish library community who have contributed details of their local holdings. The guide should be an essential tool for anyone researching or interested in newspapers over the ages. View it online at [www.nls.uk/newspapers](http://www.nls.uk/newspapers).

## Neglected writer's papers gathered for Scotland

The papers of the writer Robin Jenkins, one of Scotland's most significant novelists of the post-war era, have arrived at NLS. Robin Jenkins (1912-2005) was a prolific writer who published 29 novels in his lifetime. The papers include drafts of some of his best-known works, such as *The Cone-Gatherers* (1955), which was based on his experiences as a forestry worker during the Second World War. Among the papers are a number of unpublished novels, which sadly gathered dust in his desk drawer at a time when sales of his work made it difficult to find a publisher. Thanks to the generosity of Robin Jenkins's daughter, who has donated the papers to NLS, these have now found a secure home where they will give researchers a more comprehensive picture of his work.



## America's printed history acquired

A definitive resource for researching 17th and 18th century America has been acquired. Early American Imprints 1639-1800, comprises some 39,000 digital titles of early American publishing across its 2.3 million digital pages. Virtually every work of early American publishing is represented, with the exception of newspapers. Based on the renowned *American Bibliography* by Charles Evans, Early American Imprints covers books, broadsides, laws, maps, songs, speeches and much more.

The resource should interest researchers of early Colonial North America and the early American Republic, while researchers of Scottish emigration and influence in North America will benefit from thousands of entries relating to Scotland and the Scots.

For more details on how to access Early American Imprints and register for remote access, please visit

[www.nls/catalogues/online/er/eai.html](http://www.nls/catalogues/online/er/eai.html)





# Flights of the imagination

Rare Books Curator **Dr Graham Hogg** recounts how John James Audubon, one of history's great wildlife artists, found inspiration and encouragement among Enlightenment Edinburgh's high-flyers.



On 25 October 1826 a stranger of striking appearance arrived in Edinburgh. With piercing brown eyes, shoulder-length curling hair, handsome aquiline features, unusual clothing and a thick French accent, John James Audubon certainly stood out from the crowd. Despite suffering from a heavy cold and having undergone a gruelling two-day coach journey from Manchester, the American visitor was excited to get his first glimpse of the 'splendid city' by gaslight. Audubon's favourable first impressions of Edinburgh were confirmed in the daylight. The city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the Mound (now the Royal Scottish Academy) being

built and some of the leading lights in the worlds of literature and science residing in Scotland's capital. The journey to Edinburgh was just the latest episode in his incident-packed and often precarious life.

He was born in 1785, the illegitimate son of a French sea captain turned plantation owner in Santo Domingo (known today as Haiti). When civil war broke out in Santo Domingo he was sent back to France, where the young Jean Jacques Audubon enjoyed a carefree existence, exploring the local countryside. He developed a keen love of nature and became an expert shot. When he turned 18 he was sent to the USA to manage an estate his father owned near Philadelphia, in order to avoid conscription into the French army.

Above from left to right:  
Louisiana Heron  
American White Pelican

Below:  
'Bird of Washington'  
(bald eagle)

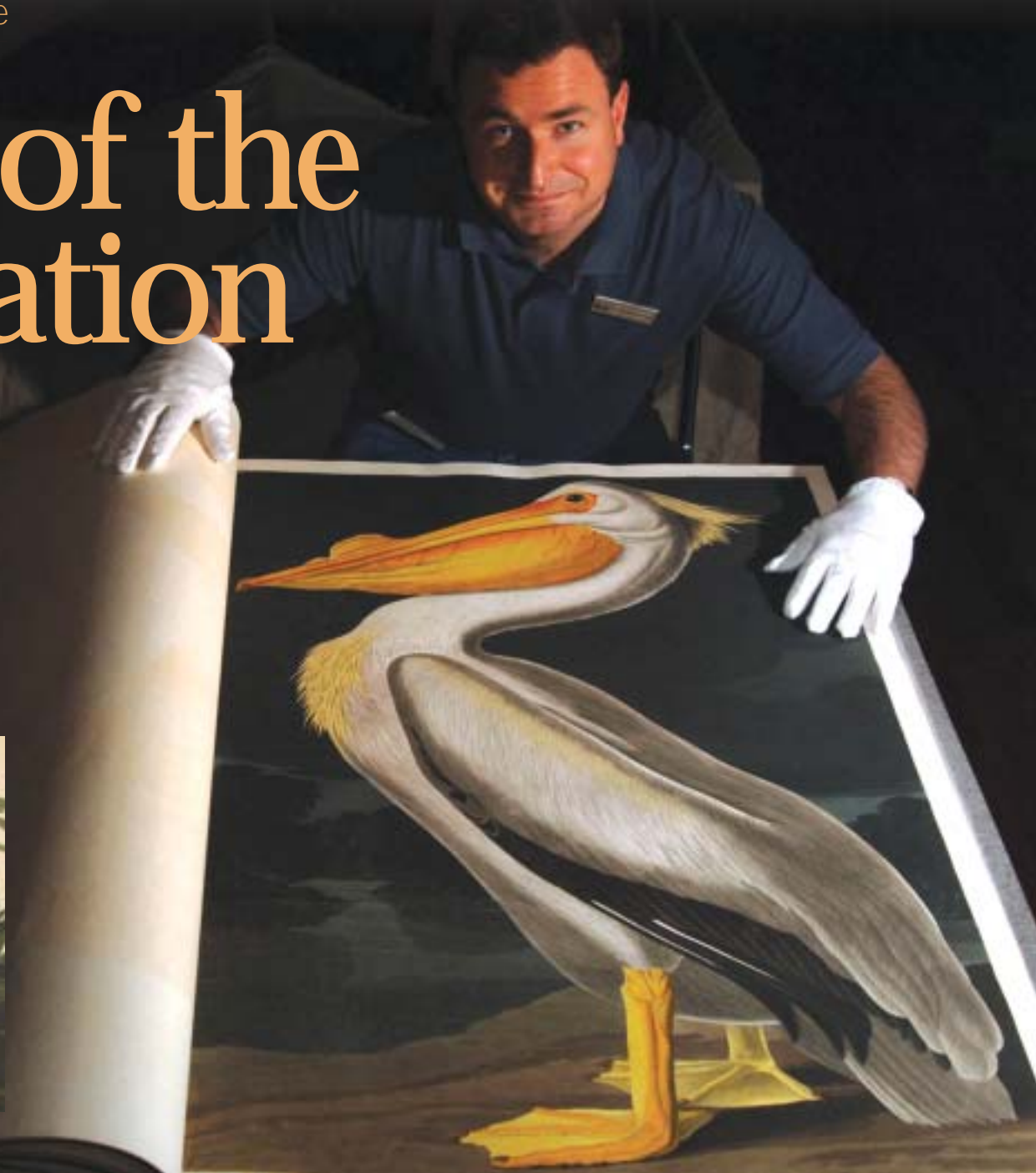


Image: Richard Scott/Deadline



Renamed John James Audubon, the young man had little interest in managing his father's American property. He fell in love with Lucy Bakewell, the daughter of a neighbouring English family, who would become his wife and steadfast companion during the difficult years ahead. His other passion was for drawing and painting the local wildlife, in particular the different species of American birds. He gradually developed and improved his technique for painting birds, which involved taking the freshly-shot specimens and mounting them on a board with gridlines on it, so that he could get an accurate life-size drawing of the birds and capture the colours of their plumage before they faded. Audubon was thus able to depict birds in vivid and natural poses in contrast to the static, often inaccurate, illustrations of birds in most bird books of the time.

In 1807 Audubon moved to Kentucky, then on the American frontier, running trading stores while devoting his spare time to collecting bird specimens. Three years later he met by chance the Paisley-born poet and ornithologist Alexander Wilson, who was working on the first comprehensive illustrated book of American birds. Audubon was impressed with what Wilson had achieved, but he believed that he was capable of something better. After being declared bankrupt in 1819, he finally resolved to get his own bird paintings published. Unfortunately his attempts to get his work published in his adopted country met with either hostility or indifference, so he decided to travel to Britain in 1826 to try his luck here.

The odds seemed to be against Audubon; he knew nothing about publishing and knew virtually no one in Britain. What he did have, however,

was his portfolio of some 250 wonderful paintings, his charisma, and an unshakeable belief in his own ability. After a pleasant but fruitless stay in Liverpool, Audubon decided to visit Edinburgh, before going on to his main destination, London.

Edinburgh proved to have a greater impact on him than he could possibly have imagined. Within a few days he was writing to his son Victor that the city was, 'The most beautiful, picturesque, and romantic city probably in the world, I am delighted with every portion of it.' However, he was not so delighted with the lack of attention he was receiving from the 'great and good' of Edinburgh, many of whom had not responded to the letters of introduction he had brought. Audubon was a man of many moods, who could quickly sink into depression if he felt ignored. Only a day after praising the city to his son he was ready to pack his bags and head for London. Salvation appeared in the form of the artist and engraver William Home Lizars, who was persuaded to go and look at Audubon's paintings. Audubon's journal records the reaction of Lizars as he slowly opened his portfolio and showed him a painting:

**'Mr Lizars, quite surprised, exclaimed, "My God, I never saw anything like this before!"'**

Lizars was so astonished by the quality of Audubon's work that he immediately agreed to tell all his acquaintances in Edinburgh society about these amazing life-size depictions of American birds. Lizars was as good as his word. The following day Audubon received a visit from Professor Robert Jameson, curator of the University's natural history museum, whose collections later formed the basis of the Royal Museum of Scotland. Thanks to Jameson's praise of his talents, Audubon was accepted into scientific circles and was later invited to give natural history papers to the Wernerian Natural History Society and the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Audubon would become a member of both bodies, no mean achievement for someone who had received little formal education. Others would follow in Jameson's footsteps over the next few weeks, important men like naturalist William Jardine and David Brewster, the eminent optical scientist, remembered chiefly as the inventor of the kaleidoscope. Audubon had made his breakthrough into Edinburgh society. →



In November 1826 Lizars decided to start producing copies of Audubon's paintings. He would engrave the outlines of the paintings onto copper plates which would then be printed off and hand-coloured by a team of colourists. This was a huge undertaking, as Audubon was determined that *Birds of America* would be done to the highest possible standards with no compromise on cost. In order to accommodate the life-size depictions of the bigger birds, the largest commercially available size of paper, double elephant folio (100 x 75 cm), was used. Over the next few months Audubon's plans for completing *Birds of America* took shape. The plates would be issued in batches of five to subscribers, each priced at two guineas. He would have to find sufficient subscribers to finance the production costs – not an easy task, as the overall cost of his book would be beyond the means of all but the very rich. Moreover, it would take several years for the plates to be completed, in which time many subscribers would lose interest or die and new ones would have to be found.

Audubon still had time to lead a busy social life. His journal for the year 1826 has survived for posterity, and his entries provide a vivid account of Edinburgh society. He found himself being regularly invited to dinner parties, where his exotic appearance and background made him the centre of attention and tickled his considerable vanity. He did not, however, want people to find out too much about his illegitimate birth in the Caribbean, so he played the part of the 'American woodsman', as he styled himself, to perfection. He was able to regale his eager audiences with tales of his many adventures in the untamed American frontier states.

By December of 1826 Audubon could write to his wife, 'My situation in Edinburgh borders almost on the miraculous'. He had been able to display his paintings in the recently-opened Royal Institution building in Edinburgh, attracting further interest in his work and extra funds. He went on to comment that, 'I cannot yet say whether I will ultimately succeed but at present all bears a better prospect than I ever expected to see.'

**He was prospering 'under the eyes of the most discerning people in the world - I mean Edinburgh - if my book takes here it cannot fail anywhere.'**



Above:  
Roseate spoonbill

In addition to Lizars and Robert Jameson, these discerning people included the anatomist Robert Knox, then at the height of his fame and success (it would be two years before the Burke and Hare scandal blighted his career). Audubon was invited to one of his dissections where he witnessed a bravura performance by the elegantly-clad Knox, who as well as being a ground-breaking scientist was also a consummate showman.

Audubon was also attracted to a more unconventional branch of science, or rather the pseudo-science of phrenology, which was then very much in vogue thanks to the efforts of the Edinburgh lawyer George Combe. Phrenologists believed that by examining the shape of a head or skull, one could discover the development of the particular cerebral 'organs' responsible for different intellectual aptitudes and character traits. Combe was fascinated by Audubon's appearance, he not only measured his skull, he also had a face mask of Audubon made for the collection of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society.



Right:  
Wood summer ducks

Another man of distinction who befriended Audubon was Basil Hall, a retired naval captain, explorer and amateur scientist, who used his connections in society to help Audubon. He supplied him with letters of introduction for the latter's impending visit to London and provided him with the introduction to the one person in Edinburgh Audubon had really wished to see. On 22 January 1826 Audubon finally met Sir Walter Scott. The most famous living Scot had become something of a recluse, plagued with financial and health problems, but he still made a great impression on the awestruck Audubon. At their second meeting Scott was shown his bird paintings. Scott later noted in his journal that Audubon's paintings were 'of the first order' but thought that Audubon's 'extreme correctness' in rendering the birds as lifelike as possible 'rather gives a stiffness to the drawings'.

In April of 1827 Audubon finally left Edinburgh for London, where he hoped to find subscribers to his work. Later that year he received shattering news from Lizars, whose colourists had gone on strike, thus stopping the production of the plates. Audubon had to act quickly and he found a firm of engravers in London, Robert Havell and his son, Robert Havell Jnr, who did the rest of the plates. Audubon's connection with Edinburgh was, however, far from over. He was very fond of the city, much preferring it to London. In 1830, on his second visit to Britain, he found an ideal collaborator in Edinburgh to work on his *Ornithological Biography*, the book to accompany the plates of *Birds of America*. William MacGillivray was a gifted natural historian and ornithologist who had worked as an assistant to Robert Jameson. He had the necessary expertise to turn Audubon's observations into a standard text on the bird life of America.

Audubon made four visits to Britain between 1826 and 1839; from 1830 onwards his visits entailed several weeks' intensive work with MacGillivray on the five volumes of *Ornithological Biography*. *Birds of America* was completed in 1838, the final work consisting of four volumes of 435 plates, containing life-size illustrations of 489 species. Between 175 and 200 complete sets were produced, some of which were later broken up and the individual plates sold off. Over the years, complete sets have rapidly increased in value to the extent that in 2000 a copy was sold for a staggering \$8.8 million at auction.

Most of the sets are now in the USA, but fortunately three complete sets are owned by public institutions in Scotland: Renfrewshire Council Education and Leisure Services in Paisley (who have kindly loaned us their copy for our exhibition, **Birds of a Feather: Audubon's adventures in Edinburgh**), the Mitchell Library in Glasgow and Glasgow University, one of the few original subscribers to have held on to their copy. Audubon himself barely covered his costs, but he knew that to complete the work was a great achievement in itself. He had indeed succeeded against all the odds and under the eyes of the most discerning people in the world.

After his final visit to Britain Audubon settled in New York. By now he had become a celebrity in his adopted country, meeting President Jackson in the White House and receiving praise from leading figures in American society. Audubon subsequently produced a smaller octavo-sized version of *Birds of America*, which proved to be a great success and for the first time in his life gave him some financial security. He then started another ambitious project on the quadrupeds of North America, but his sons had to complete this work as by 1846 he was suffering from senile dementia and failing eyesight. He died, aged 66, in 1851. His fame as an ornithologist and champion of wildlife in the USA was enhanced in 1905 when the National Association of Audubon Societies was founded to form a national network of conservation organisations dedicated to protecting American birdlife and the environment. **nls**

#### Discover more

*Audubon and his Scottish Associates*, John Chalmers, NMS Publishing 2003

*The Audubon Reader*, Richard Rhodes, Alfred A Knopf, 2006

*William MacGillivray: Creatures of Air, Land and Sea*, Robert Ralph, Merrell Publishers, 1999

*Medical Teaching in Edinburgh During the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Matthew H Kaufman, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, 2003

*Edinburgh Phrenological Society: A History*, Matthew H Kaufman, William Ramsay Henderson Trust, 2005



Poet **Pauline Prior Pitt** reflects on winning the Callum Macdonald Memorial Award, and on the creative process that encouraged a published poet to produce and publish the hand-made, small-run pamphlet, *North Uist Sea Poems*, which earned her the prize.

# The cadence of the waves



**'Waves behaving themselves as usual just rolling in, doing their thing but the pebbles scattered high and low show they have been up to something.'**

I live on the island of North Uist and between October 2004 and January 2005 visited the shore near my house, which inspired me to record the sea's changing activity in a series of daily verses. The poems are dated small impressions. On 11 January a violent storm devastated the island and instead of a gentle slope of dunes, my usual way down to the shore had become a twenty-foot drop. This seemed an appropriate time to pause and bind the poems together.

Because of the effect the storm had on people's lives, I wanted something more than just another book and so decided to produce a piece of art work. It is small, square, and hand stitched in sand coloured threads with one blue thread. Each page has fine lines at the bottom, like the fine lines left in the sand as the sea goes out. At the time I had no idea that I was creating a pamphlet.

Then in May 2005, a book review in the Herald alerted me to the Scottish Pamphlet Poetry website. Tessa Ransford's article about pamphlets being a more feminine way of publishing appealed to me. I wrote to her and included a copy of the sea poems. Tessa was most gracious in her reply and suggested that I might like to sell my pamphlet via [www.scottish-pamphlet-poetry.com](http://www.scottish-pamphlet-poetry.com). In December I went to the Pamphlet Poetry Party at NLS in Edinburgh.

Attending this event made me realise just how many people are involved in publishing high quality pamphlets. I felt pleased to be part of this flourishing scene. Although my first four poetry collections are in book form, **there is something very special about pamphlets. They are more gentle, soft covered slim volumes for slipping into pockets.**

They are immediate. You can just gather a small collection together, make all your own decisions and have all the fun. It is a very creative way of publishing.

It's not difficult to express what winning the 2006 Callum Macdonald Memorial Award means to me. It is a great honour. I'm thrilled. I'm very pleased for my poetry to be so highly regarded. Winning has made me feel slightly different about myself. **nls**

Pauline Prior Pitt has written five collections of poetry published by Spike Press.

Visit [www.pauline-prior-pitt.com](http://www.pauline-prior-pitt.com) to find out more.

The Callum Macdonald Memorial Award rewards the best Scottish talent engaged with writing, designing and publishing poetry pamphlets. The award is administered annually by NLS and supported by the Michael Marks Charitable Trust. All entries are assimilated into the Library's permanent collection.


To apply for 2007 or find out more, visit [www.nls.uk/news/awards/index.html#callum](http://www.nls.uk/news/awards/index.html#callum)



Above left: Verse 10 of *North Uist Sea Poems*, October 20th.


Above: Visitors enjoying browsing pamphlets at this year's Callum Macdonald Memorial Award.

www.wigtownbookfestival.com  
Wigtown, Dumfries & Galloway, DG8 9JH  
01988 403222



**Scottish Book Town Festival**  
22nd. September to 1st. October 2006

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ALLAN LITTLE  
LOUIS DE BERNIERES  
BOB FLOWERDEW  
MAGNUS MAGNUSSON  
RICHARD HOLLOWAY  
JACKIE KAY



## Competitions

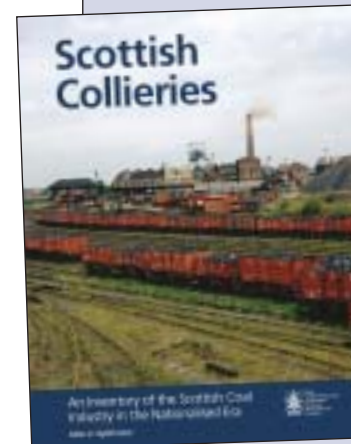
### I want to make that book mine!

Thanks to our kindly colleagues at the Royal Commission on the Ancient Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), we're delighted to offer readers copies of Dr Miles K Oglethorpe's book, *Scottish Collieries: An*

*Inventory Of The Scottish Coal Industry In The Nationalised Era.*

Copies will go to the first three people who can answer this question:

**Which Scottish colliery employed the largest number of miners at any one time since World War Two?**



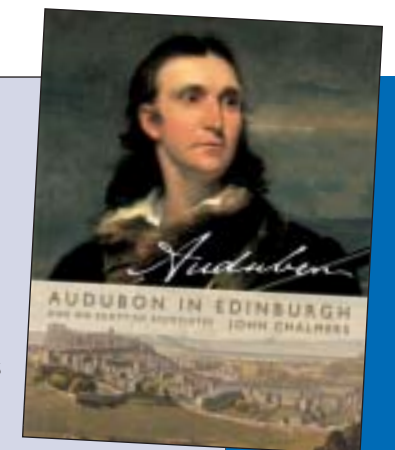
### Calling all tomorrow's Audubons...

We're also delighted to offer readers three copies of John Chalmers'

*Audubon in Edinburgh and his Scottish Associates*, courtesy of NMS Publishing.

Copies will be winging their way to the three people who send us the best short cartoon, (no more than four panels) inspired by the exhibition.

By way of an extra incentive, the best overall entry will also be printed in the next issue of *Discover NLS*.



### Answers and entries to:

Competitions  
Discover NLS  
Marketing Services  
National Library of Scotland  
George IV Bridge  
Edinburgh  
EH1 1EW

Or by e-mail to:  
[discover@nls.uk](mailto:discover@nls.uk)  
(please put **competition** in the subject field)



# Total recall: beating the Betamax syndrome

Within a decade of electronics giant Sony launching their ill-fated Betamax<sup>1</sup> video format in 1975 it was rendered obsolete by JVC's rival home-video technology VHS, itself becoming rapidly eclipsed by DVD today. Alongside the increasing growth of more and more formats for recording our cultural memory comes the risk of losing those formats – and with it all their contents.

Digital Library Manager **Simon Bains** speaks to **Najla Semple**, Executive Secretary of the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC), about the pressing need to safeguard digital collections and avoid falling foul of the 'Betamax syndrome'.



## SB: What does digital preservation mean?

**NS:** Digital preservation is simply the practice of ensuring our digital information can be retrieved and accessed in perpetuity, regardless of the pace of technological change. The rush to 'go digital' is such that huge amounts of data are being accumulated with not much thought given as to its longevity, long-term management or even day-to-day management. There are significant challenges associated with ensuring access to and preservation of these materials for the future. Electronic resources, regardless of whether they are created from paper-based material initially through digitisation or are 'born digital' (websites, databases etc.) are threatened by technological obsolescence and physical deterioration.

## SB: Can you give me some examples?

**NS:** There are a few high profile examples that illustrate the problem perfectly. One of them is the 1975/76 Viking moon-landing data: the data NASA lost was expensive and vital<sup>2</sup>. Another example is the Newham Archive, an archaeological data archive that was transferred onto floppy disks. The data on these disks was very hard to retrieve due to numerous obsolete file formats that couldn't be read, and more importantly, no accompanying documentation, so that when some of the data was eventually retrieved no one could tell what it related to.

The digital archive was eventually recovered at a great cost but it proves that data is worthless if it makes no sense. At a personal level, anyone could be affected as we increasingly rely on digital technologies, such as digital cameras.

**'Anyone today can view the world's earliest photographic albums<sup>3</sup> from over 150 years ago, but there's a very real danger that the next generation will not be able to look at our own digital photos, just 20 years from now.'**

## SB: What exactly is the Digital Preservation Coalition, and how and why did it begin?

**NS:** It started back in 2001, with 10 library, archive and publishing organisations who decided that there needed to be a concerted effort to ramp-up digital preservation, to raise awareness of the problems and come up with some solutions. Since then it has grown to accommodate thirty members and is certainly the only organisation of its kind in the UK. I should also stress that the DPC is a public organisation without commercial interests. →

## → SB: Why do we need the DPC? Doesn't everyone back up their data?

**NS:** Organisations may back their disks up but that's not going to guarantee readability in the future. Digital preservation is an ongoing activity that needs to start very early on when creating digital data. It's important that awareness is raised throughout organisations, at all levels, that digital data is very fragile.

## SB: Are we entering a 'digital dark age' or do you think the future looks more positive?

**NS:** I think that it's important to stress that this is a really new field. There is a lot of scare-mongering going on. If there is an imminent problem, someone will probably come up with something to prevent data being lost. Whether or not it's as methodical and academic as we want it to be remains to be seen. I'm not pessimistic and I think much of the data we create isn't worth keeping anyway. But we don't know what historians in the future will want to research. At this stage we are in a dark age of sorts, because we can't really predict where the solution lies.

## SB: What should libraries and archives be doing?

**NS:** Libraries and archives really need to analyse the kind of information that they are taking in and apply some of the traditional practices and patterns used for paper collections and not be frightened of the fact that it is digital. National libraries have a problem because sometimes they have no say over what they receive, but those building digital libraries could specify which format to accept material in. There isn't a 'one-size-fits-all' solution, so organisations shouldn't just wait for someone else to do it. Preservation should be built in as a part of the whole collection process.

## SB: Given how complicated much of this sounds, is it going to be very expensive?

**NS:** The important thing to bear in mind is that it is more cost-effective to manage digital materials from the start, preferably at the creation of the resource. Good preservation planning and investment at the beginning can save costly data recovery exercises later on. This is especially important for a national library such as NLS that acquires unique collections that cannot afford to be lost.



While it is a little early to make accurate predictions, it needn't be any more expensive than traditional preservation. Digital data is much cheaper to store and easier to retrieve – you don't have to send someone down to the stacks to fetch a book and you can make multiple copies. Specialist skills will need to be developed of course. It's about re-focusing your budgets and seeing where your priorities lie.

Staff scanning printed items with high-end equipment is just one small part of the digital collecting process.

## SB: How does the DPC help?

**NS:** As a central resource, we facilitate and disseminate information, listing available projects for example. We organise specialist forum meeting days for professionals involved with digital preservation from a growing range of sectors to meet and discuss the issues. The DPC supports the digital preservation training programme, a week-long course covering all aspects of digital preservation – one of a handful of comprehensive courses in the UK<sup>4</sup>. We sponsor an award every two years to acknowledge development in the field. We also have a step-by-step digital preservation handbook on the website. **nls**

### Discover more

To learn more about the work of the Digital Preservation Coalition or how to become a member, visit [www.dpconline.org](http://www.dpconline.org)

#### References

- <sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betamax>
- <sup>2</sup> [www.dpconline.org/docs/reports/uknamindthegap.pdf](http://www.dpconline.org/docs/reports/uknamindthegap.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> The Edinburgh Calotype Club, held at NLS and available online at: [www.nls.uk/pencilsflight/index.html](http://www.nls.uk/pencilsflight/index.html)
- <sup>4</sup> [www.ulcc.ac.uk/dptp/](http://www.ulcc.ac.uk/dptp/)



# Events

## September

### Thursday 14 September 7pm The RSPB in Scotland

A whistle-stop tour of the origins and work of Europe's largest conservation charity in Scotland; the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).



### Wednesday 13 September 6.30pm The Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN Audubon's Scottish Links

John Chalmers, author of *Audubon in Edinburgh and his Scottish Associates*, recounts the Scottish experiences of the great American woodsman and wildlife artist.

## October

### Friday 6 October 7pm Birds of Scotland: A Photographer's View

Scottish Wildlife Photographer of the Year Laurie Campbell shares his passion for wildlife and the rich variety of species and habitats that exist in Scotland.

### Saturday 14 October 2-4 pm The Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN The Big Draw

Follow in the footsteps of Audubon and join in with our Big Draw event for an afternoon of drawing, colouring and other fun activities, ideally suited to families with young children.

### Birds of America: Home to roost in Glasgow

One volume of *Birds of America* will be on display in the Mitchell Library (Level 2) until 14 October with a different stunning original illustration on view each week. There will also be an opportunity for visitors to browse through a selection of some 40 images from this fabulous book in digital or in print format. The book was generously donated by Robert Jeffrey, a wealthy cotton merchant and bibliophile with a broad collection of illustrated works.



### Learning point Spies wanted!

Fresh recruits are required for our spy schools in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, as part of our involvement with the public libraries' summer reading challenge: The Reading Mission. Children will learn how to send secret coded messages, try memory improvement techniques as practised by real spies and learn about wartime propaganda methods.

#### In Aberdeen

**Tuesday 25 July**  
Airyhall Library,  
Springfield Road  
10.30-11.30am  
Cove Library,  
Loirston Avenue  
2.30-3.30pm

**Wednesday 26 July**  
Bridge of Don Library,  
Scotstown Road  
10.30-11.30am

For a full mission briefing, report to  
[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/libraries/events](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/libraries/events)

For more information about the free service on offer to schools, colleges and community groups, contact the Education and Outreach Officer on **0131 623 3841**.



# Lunch Time Talks

## September

### Thursday 7 September 1pm Birds of a feather: Audubon's Adventures in Edinburgh

Exhibition curator Dr Graham Hogg details the significant impact that Regency Edinburgh had on Audubon, drawing on extracts from his few surviving journals.

## October

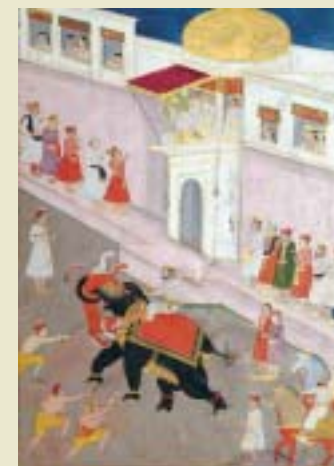
### Thursday 5 October 1pm Crawford English Ballads

Rare Books Curator Keith Skakle delves into the fascinating annals of this collection, revealing execution, political satire and more.

## November

### Thursday 2 November 1pm South Asian Collections at NLS

Foreign Collections Curator Dr Kevin Halliwell outlines some of the Library's South Asian material, and explains how the material came to be here, with a display of some interesting and unusual items.



## December

### Thursday 7 December at 1pm The Play's the Thing: Early Editions of Shakespeare's Plays

Rare Books Curator Helen Vincent provides a close encounter with some of the earliest surviving copies of Shakespeare's plays from NLS holdings, including the First Folio, a copy of which recently sold for £2.8 million at auction.

*In the interests of protecting the historic materials on display during these talks, we politely remind visitors that food and drink may only be consumed in the Readers' Canteen, on the ground floor of the George IV Bridge building.*

# Displays

## August

### Scotland's Renaissance Man: 500 Years of George Buchanan

See page 14 for details.

## September

### Visitors' Books

A selection of visitors' books from the Library's Manuscript Collection will be on display in September.



While some visitors' books are simply lists of names and dates, others are full of human interest as travellers seize the opportunity to expand and record their experiences often with humour, imagination and wisdom. Highlights will include the visitors' book used when the Scott Monument first opened in 1846, the Glenquoich Visitors' Book from Edward Ellice of Invergarry's Highland shooting lodge, and the Sligachan Hotel Visitors' Book from Skye.

## October

### Benjamin Franklin

A selection of material in tribute to Benjamin Franklin, the great US statesman, scientist, philosopher, inventor and widely regarded as 'the father of electricity'. This display of recent acquisitions and older material by or about Franklin commemorates the tricentenary of his birth in 1706.

## Exhibition

### Birds of a feather: Audubon's Adventures in Edinburgh Until 15 October

The Library's summer exhibition explores the role Scotland played in helping one of the world's most valuable and remarkable books come to fruition and in transforming John James Audubon from a self-styled 'American woodsman' into one of the history's greatest naturalists and wildlife artists.

All events and exhibitions are free and open to everyone. Space at events are often limited. Please phone the Events Line in advance to book a place on **0131 623 3845** or e-mail [events@nls.uk](mailto:events@nls.uk).

Opening hours:  
Monday – Saturday 10am – 5pm  
Sunday 2pm – 5pm

**All activities are held in our George IV Bridge building unless otherwise stated.**



## Scotland's Renaissance Man: 500 Years of George Buchanan

This summer the Library celebrates the quincentenary of one of Scotland's most eminent – and controversial – humanist thinkers. Rare Books Curator **Helen Vincent** outlines the significant contribution George Buchanan made to Scottish history and political thought, and his connection to one of the Library's most important early Keepers.

**R**enaissance scholar George Buchanan (1506-1582) was born 500 years ago and earned fame across Europe for his writings, which span the range of humanist interests in culture, religion and politics. As a neo-Latin poet, he translated classical dramas and penned plays and poems of his own on secular and religious themes. His best-known poetry is a Latin verse translation of the Psalms, written while he was imprisoned by the Inquisition in Portugal, and still read by educated Scots in the 19th century. His political writings include a dialogue on Scottish kingship, *De Iure Regni apud Scotos*, which argued, radically for the time, that the people had the right to depose a bad ruler.

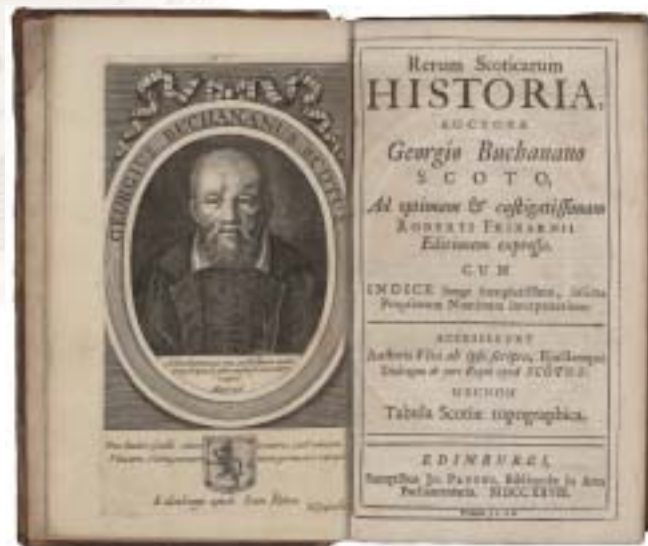
In Scotland, where Buchanan put this last idea into practice when he was a key player in the deposition of Mary Queen of Scots, he has always been a more controversial figure. His Latin *History of Scotland*, written to 'purge (Scottish history) of sum Inglis Iyis and Scottis vanite', was still provoking violent arguments in Scotland over 100 years after it was written.

This controversy was fuelled in no small part by the edition of Buchanan's works produced in 1715 by Thomas Ruddiman (1674-1757), Keeper of the Advocates Library from 1730 to 1752 and the foremost Scottish Latin scholar of his day. Ruddiman (whose portrait still adorns one of the Library's main meeting rooms, formerly the office of the National Librarian) praised Buchanan's Latin writings, but abhorred his political ideas. In the age of the Jacobite risings, Buchanan's

arguments were as relevant to Scottish politics as they had been in his own lifetime, and a bitter 'pamphlet war' took place between Ruddiman and those who wanted to vindicate Buchanan. Many of NLS' Buchanan-related manuscripts relate to Ruddiman's interest in Buchanan, his edition, and the debates it caused.

NLS marks Buchanan's quincentenary with a display throughout August which reflects both sides of Buchanan's reputation - European esteem and Scottish controversy. We are also pleased to host 'George Buchanan: An Apollo of the North', a talk by leading Buchanan expert, Robert Crawford, Professor of Modern Scottish Literature at the University of St Andrews, on 28 August.

Two other libraries join us in celebrating Buchanan's influence this summer. The library of St Andrew's University, (where Buchanan became principal of St Leonard's College in 1566) will mount an exhibition of Buchanan's works until the end of August. Meanwhile, the Special Collections Department of Glasgow University Library have launched a virtual exhibition on their website at <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/index.html>.



Portrait of George Buchanan from Robert Freebairn's edition of *Rerum Scotticarum Historia*, Edinburgh 1727.

Shelfmark: Nha.V117)

## New edition of Scotland's first atlas

**I**n 1654 the first ever atlas of Scotland was produced in Amsterdam by the famous Blaeu publishing firm.

The story behind the publication of Volume Five of *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum sive Atlas Novus* is a fascinating one.

The Atlas is based upon the survey of Scotland, which Timothy Pont made in the last two decades of the 16th century. Yet Pont was long dead by the time this volume of the Blaeu Atlas Novus was produced; had it not been for Sir John Scot of Scotstarvit and Willem and Joan Blaeu in Amsterdam it would never have existed.

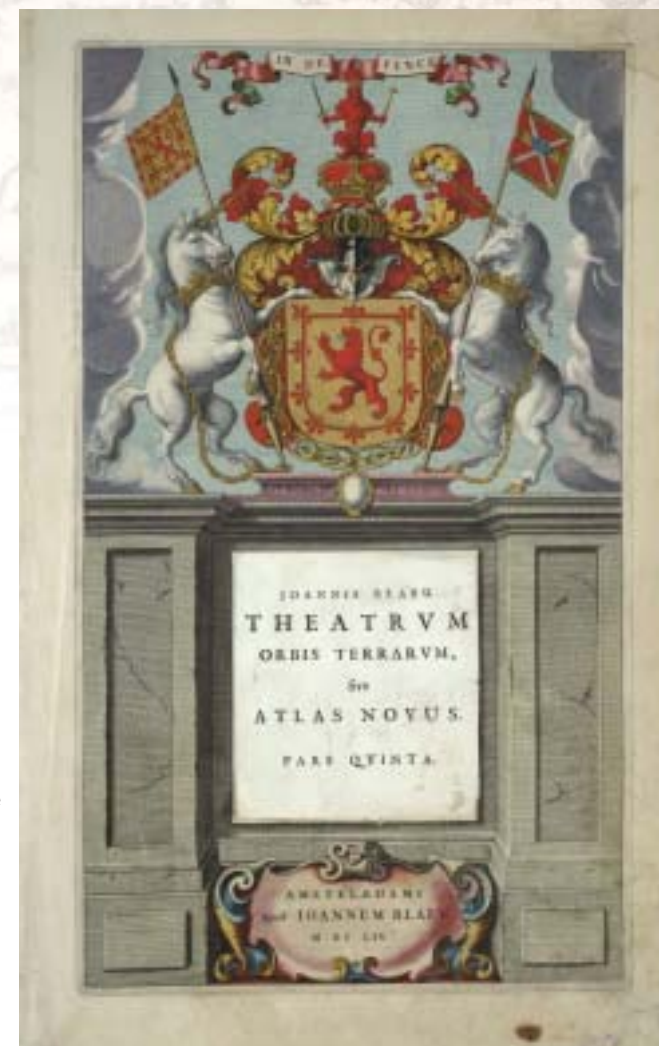
NLS owns an original copy, housed in the Map Library at Causewayside, and now a new edition is being published by Birlinn in association with the Library.

This special edition contains facsimiles of all the 49 Scottish maps and an English translation of the original text by IC Cunningham, former Keeper of Manuscripts, Maps and Music at NLS.

An introductory essay by Professor Charles Withers of the University of Edinburgh sets the atlas in context and explains much of the background to the publication. Additional content includes letters and texts never previously published.

Right: The title page of Blaeu's Atlas.

Below: Image taken from the Evia et Escia cartouche.



**Blaeu Atlas  
Special Offer**

Discover NLS readers can take advantage of a special introductory offer. To be added to the subscription list for a numbered copy of the limited edition at only £80, a discount of 20% of the retail price, simply send your details to:

Blaeu Atlas Special Offer  
Birlinn Books  
West Newington House  
10 Newington Road  
Edinburgh  
EH9 1QS  
or email [info@birlinn.co.uk](mailto:info@birlinn.co.uk)



As the world mourns the passing of one of Scotland's greatest literary talents, **Eric Dickson**, Secretary of the Muriel Spark Society, reflects on Dame Muriel's relationship with Edinburgh; the city that spawned her and her best-remembered novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

# Bright dark city

Dame Muriel Spark (1918-2006)

**D**uality is something writers have done well in Edinburgh. Since Deacon Brodie's double life, James Hogg's *Justified Sinner* has wandered the Canongate, and Robert Louis Stevenson should have had Dr Jekyll residing not in London but in the New Town, with Mr Hyde prone in the shadows of an Old Town close. The young Scottish dandy, John Gray, later Father Gray, is said to have been the model for Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

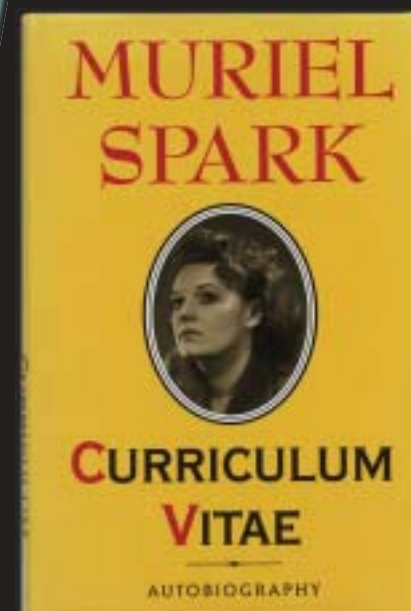
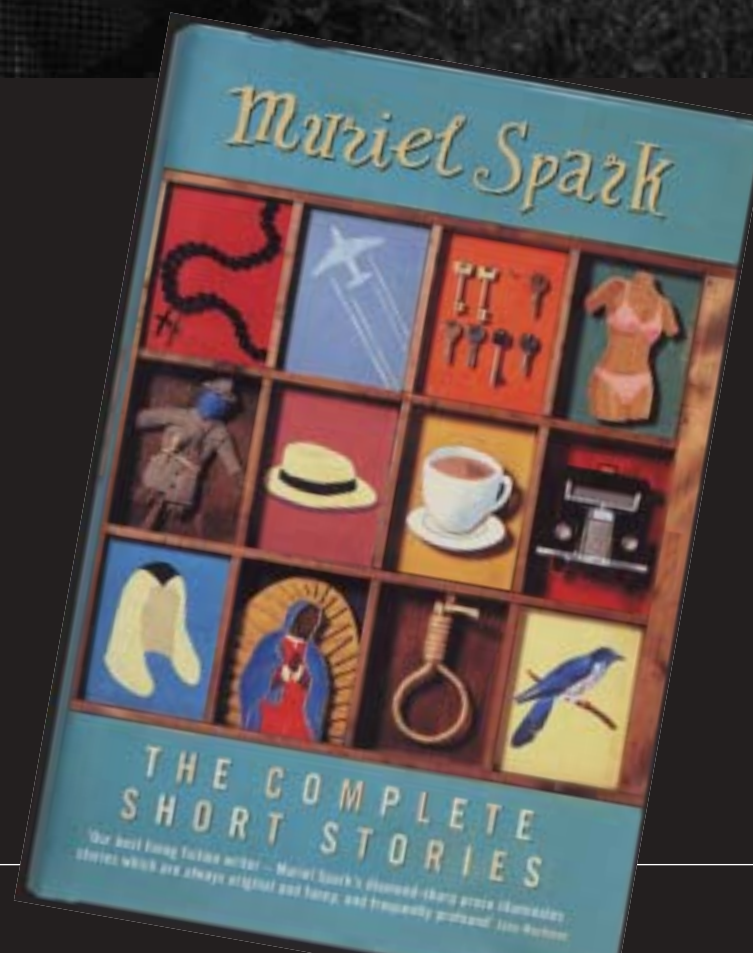
Muriel Spark added to this mythology with her only Edinburgh-based novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. Miss Brodie repels as much as she attracts; her colourful clothes, travel and love of art are beguiling to her pupils; indeed Spark called her 'an Edinburgh Festival all in herself'. Yet Miss Brodie's fascist sympathies and the dangerous sublimations and consequent manipulations of her personal life lead to her downfall. Spark's novel is as much a classic as those of Hogg, Stevenson and Wilde, and Miss Brodie is an Edinburgh myth just as much as the *Justified Sinner* or Dr Jekyll.

Muriel Spark left Edinburgh at the age of 19, and apart from brief visits most often to collect awards and honorary degrees, she would never return. Yet the city had a profound and enduring effect on her, one that can be seen in all of her work, whether set in Africa, London, New York or Italy. Duality aside, it is perhaps the austerity

# Spark,

of Edinburgh which affected her the most. Her complaint about the film of Brodie was 'the colours were too bright'. Spark's fiction bursts with life and mordant humour, but all of it carries a moral punch. She deals with breakdown, corruption, decrepitude and death but always with the most engaging and compelling style, itself a type of duality.

Spark covered all the great subjects and questions of life and literature, in her own unique way. The existence of God, good and evil, how to live, why we suffer – all of these areas are covered in 24 novels, short stories, poems and essays. The brevity and moral charge of the Border Ballads (short folk tales in verse, from the 16th century, often with a moral punch) and the strict Presbyterianism of Edinburgh would influence this, despite her conversion to Catholicism in 1954. →



Spark's precocity first emerged in Edinburgh. When one reads her autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae*, one can see the future world-class writer beginning to form. Muriel was the poet and dreamer of James Gillespie's School for Girls – 'the school on the links'. She won poetry competitions, and was published and anthologised when still a child. Despite the fame of her novels, Spark would always regard herself foremost as a poet, and it is appropriate that her literary career began at the tender age of twelve in 1929 with a poem. Spark was intrigued and sometimes amused by the gestures and repeated phrases of the visitors to her Bruntsfield home, and she would listen and watch people with more than just childhood fascination.

Perhaps the person who fascinated young Muriel Camberg most was the teacher who taught her between the impressionable years of 11-12, her class mistress, Miss Christina Kay. Miss Kay was a single woman (she probably lost her fiancé in the First World War) who devoted her life to her pupils and to her love of art and travel. She loved Italy and Renaissance art, and enthralled her pupils with stories of her travels and interests. She was also a thoroughly honourable woman, who Spark admitted would have given Jean Brodie short shrift. However, like Brodie, Kay spoke in dazzling non-sequiturs, and used repeated phrases, most famously, 'la crème de la crème'. Kay predicted Spark's future literary success, and her inspiration would lead to Spark having her greatest international literary breakthrough. Miss Kay would never know of this. She died in 1951, a full ten years before the character she inspired was published in the *New Yorker*.

Muriel Spark did not attend university; she was living proof that one did not require a degree to be scholarly. Her brother Philip read chemistry, but family finances did not stretch to sending her too. Instead, and tellingly, Spark completed a précis-writing course at Heriot-Watt College, as it was then. Here the focus was on concision, an attribute she would transfigure into art in her prose. Using irony, ellipsis and allusiveness, she would render her profound subject area with great economy, a very Scots thrift, and would later confirm, 'I am not Mrs Tolstoy'.





Spark read voraciously, as the accounts from booksellers in her Archive here in the National Library of Scotland confirm. In the 1950s, she produced works on Wordsworth, the Brontës, Cardinal Newman and Mary Shelley. She later remarked without any bumptiousness that the rather earnest young women who had attended university could perhaps write a scholarly piece on John Donne, 'but then so could I'. Later, the universities of Edinburgh, Oxford and Heriot-Watt would all award Spark honorary degrees.

After her return from Africa during the war, Spark lived in London and later New York. In the 1960s, she moved to Rome and later to Tuscany, her final resting place. Yet her connection with Edinburgh would remain constant. In 1992 the Library acquired the beginnings of her massive personal archive, one of the largest and most important literary archives in the world, which NLS has continued to acquire over the years. In an act of generosity, Spark recently gifted the brass plaque that was used to promote her mother's piano teaching business. In recent years Spark has been donating the many foreign language editions of her works to NLS. If you would like to read *Les Belles Années de Mademoiselle Brodie* or even *Die Blütezeit der Miss Jean Brodie*, you know where to come.

In 2001, another connection with Edinburgh would be formed. Christine Lloyd founded The Muriel Spark Society in the most appropriate of cities. The Society encourages the appreciation and enjoyment of Spark's oeuvre through lectures, discussions and meetings. Spark herself gave the Society her blessing and support; she became a life member from the start. Some of Spark's school friends would become honorary life members too. Despite the very saddest of news this year, the Society will go on with its work. Later this year (9 November) cutting edge novelist and Spark admirer Toby Litt will speak at NLS on the impact she had on his work. The Society's present chair, Gail Wylie, gained another recent coup when Margaret Atwood agreed to address the members of the Society this October. Atwood is the first recipient of the Scottish Arts Council's International Muriel Spark Fellowship. That Spark is held in high esteem by many contemporary writers is attested by the standing of those providing the introductions to the current crop of her novel re-issues by Penguin: William Boyd, John Lanchester and Candia McWilliam. When Ali Smith publishes her anthology of her most loved writing, *The Reader*, this September it is no surprise that Spark will feature prominently.



I was intrigued when I learned that the distinguished feminist publishing house Virago would publish Spark's novel *Symposium* (1990) later this year. This is welcome news, but it perhaps worth noting that Spark had been successfully publishing her work for more than two decades before Virago was established in 1973. The words of Fleur Talbot, the heroine of *Loitering with Intent* come to mind: 'How wonderful to be a woman and an artist in the middle of the twentieth century!'

Wonderful too for Spark and for us, that she remained so at the beginning of the twenty-first. **nls**

#### Discover more

##### The Muriel Spark archive

The Muriel Spark archive is unique among the National Library of Scotland's collections of papers of Scottish writers. No other author so deliberately and carefully preserved a record of their life.

The earliest papers date from the 1940s, when Muriel Spark made a decision to keep all kinds of documentary evidence. The early sparse records of wartime poverty that chart the struggles of an unknown author are joined by scores of diaries, numerous accounts and cheque books, and tens of thousands of letters, growing in number as her fame has risen.

Visit [www.nls.uk/murielspark/archive\\_summary.html](http://www.nls.uk/murielspark/archive_summary.html) for a detailed summary of the major accessions to the archive. For more information on the archive, please e-mail [manuscripts@nls.uk](mailto:manuscripts@nls.uk) or call 0131 623 3876.

##### The Muriel Spark Society

The Edinburgh-based Muriel Spark Society organises a varied programme of events, including talks by eminent speakers, and an annual lunch in January or February to commemorate Dame Muriel's birthday. Visit [www.murielsparksociety.org](http://www.murielsparksociety.org) for more information.

Come aboard with our expert curators as they trawl our collections for fascinating but little-known treasures.

## Passages from India

When Dr Kevin Halliwell, Curator of US & Commonwealth Collections, was asked to find Sanskrit material in support of a major international conference, he uncovered some colourful, unique material from our collections, some with an interesting Scottish association.



Sanskrit, the classical language of India, is not a subject NLS actively collects (we do collect South Asian material written in English, and foreign language material in many European languages) but since our collections date back to the foundation of the Advocates Library in the late 17th century, we can always expect to unearth some fascinating material.

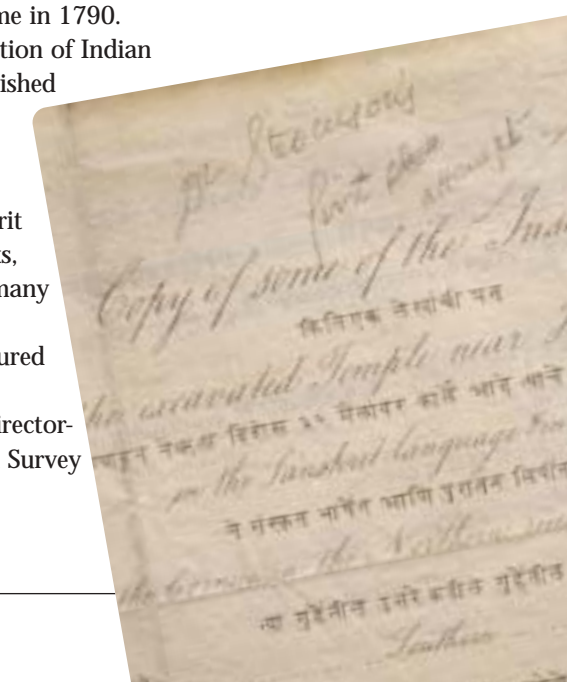
We have had the right to claim British and Irish publications since 1710, so it was no surprise to find that we had a substantial collection of works on Sanskrit. It was a surprise, however, to discover how many Scottish scholars produced pioneering works on the language. Whether missionaries, civil servants or soldiers, many Scots spent time in India, and many had linguistic interests. The first important Western dissertation on Sanskrit learning was produced by the Fife historian Alexander Dow (d.1779) and published in 1768. Glasgow-born John Muir (1810-1882), a prolific Sanskrit scholar, founded the chair of Sanskrit at Edinburgh University. James Robert Ballantyne (1813-1864) published a Sanskrit grammar in 1862, and we found a printed sheet of paper bearing copies of inscriptions by the Scot John Stevenson (1798-1858), with the remark added in pencil: 'Dr Stevenson's first attempt'.

Another Scot, Alexander Hamilton (1762-1824), studied in Edinburgh and Paris, where he was taken hostage during the Napoleonic wars. His knowledge of Sanskrit was said to have played a big role in his release, following pleas from fellow scholars that he was the only man on the Continent with a thorough knowledge of the language. Hamilton ended up publishing a catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts for Paris' Imperial Library in 1807. Many of these volumes came to the Advocates at an early date and show the breadth of their interests. We also unearthed a rare and early Latin text on Sanskrit by the missionary Fra Paolino da San Bartolomeo, published in Rome in 1790.

The India Papers, a collection of Indian government publications published from about 1850 to 1960, produced a number of surprising items, including detailed descriptions of Sanskrit texts and inscriptions, and lists, catalogues and reports from many official searches for Sanskrit manuscripts. Again Scots featured prominently, for example John Burgess (1832-1916), Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India.

Above: A selection of Sanskrit manuscripts.

Below: 'Dr Stevenson's first attempt' at Sanskrit grammar.







→ Finding Sanskrit manuscript material required a little more detective work. It is known that a number of 'Oriental' (i.e. non-Western) manuscripts had been acquired by the Advocates Library over the years, but very little information about them was ever published or even recorded. Some eight or nine of these oriental manuscripts proved to be Sanskrit. How these manuscripts came to be in the Library is difficult to discover, but it is thought that many were presented by Scots returning from India in the 18th century. Mostly beautifully written and occasionally illustrated, some in attractive Western bindings, they contain many of the standard Sanskrit epics and commentaries. One is an illustrated astrological scroll produced for a man born in 1788. Three of the items are 'palm-leaf manuscripts', written on specially prepared and shaped strips from palm leaf fronds. And one copy of the *Bhagavadgita*, in an Indian binding, had a note attached stating: 'taken at Kurrae Oct 25, 1858, by the Malwa Field Force'.

**It had come to the Library from the family of the Chaplain to the 93rd Highland Brigade, who acquired it by force, during military action.**

Scotland has a long tradition of Sanskrit scholarship, maintained today by institutions such as Edinburgh University, whose School of Asian Studies hosts one of the few Sanskrit departments in the UK. Our public display and talk was organised to complement the 13th

World Sanskrit Conference, organised by the University and the International Association of Sanskrit Studies, which took place in July.

Having found and organised this material, we were surprised and delighted to welcome an enthusiastic audience of nearly 200 of the world's leading Sanskrit scholars. Our collections have already benefited from this renewed enthusiasm for these hitherto little-known items, with the donation of a number of works, including some contemporary Sanskrit poetry.

Catering for these scholars has once again given us occasion to unearth hidden treasures from our collections and to learn more about their amazing range and fascinating history. **nls**

A palm-leaf manuscript

#### Discover more

All printed publications, including the India Papers, can be found in the Library's main online catalogue. These and the Sanskrit manuscripts are described on the Library's website and in a leaflet about the South Asian Collections.

#### About Sanskrit

Sanskrit is one of the world's oldest languages, known to date back to the 5th century BC. Sanskrit means literally 'the refined language' and has its roots in ancient Indian religion, literature, philosophy and science. It is considered to be of great importance for the study of religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Sanskrit is still in use today, albeit largely for ceremonial and religious functions. Sanskrit literature continues a rich tradition of poetry and narrative, as well as scientific, technical, philosophical and religious texts.

## Digital collections on your desktop

The following major digital resources are now available to readers online and off-site:\*

**Early American Imprints** containing some 2.3 million digital pages, represents virtually every work of early American publishing from the 17th and 18th centuries.

**The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography** details the lives of over 50,000 individuals who shaped the history of the British Isles from the earliest times.

**The Environmental Issues & Policy Index** provides citations from over 1000 titles in the field of environmental science.

**The International Bibliography and Directory of Periodicals** provide extensive coverage of language, linguistics, literature and folklore.

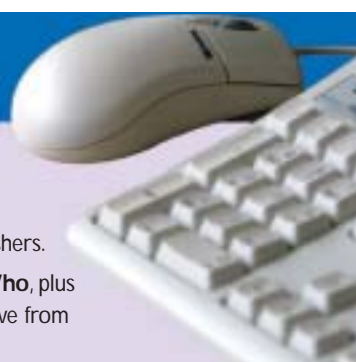
**Early English Books Online** provides full-text access to over 100,000 books printed between 1473 and 1700.

**Xrefplus** offers over one million entries and 5,000 images from high-quality reference books of some of the world's leading publishers.

The current edition of **Who's Who**, plus the entire **Who Was Who** archive from 1897 onwards.

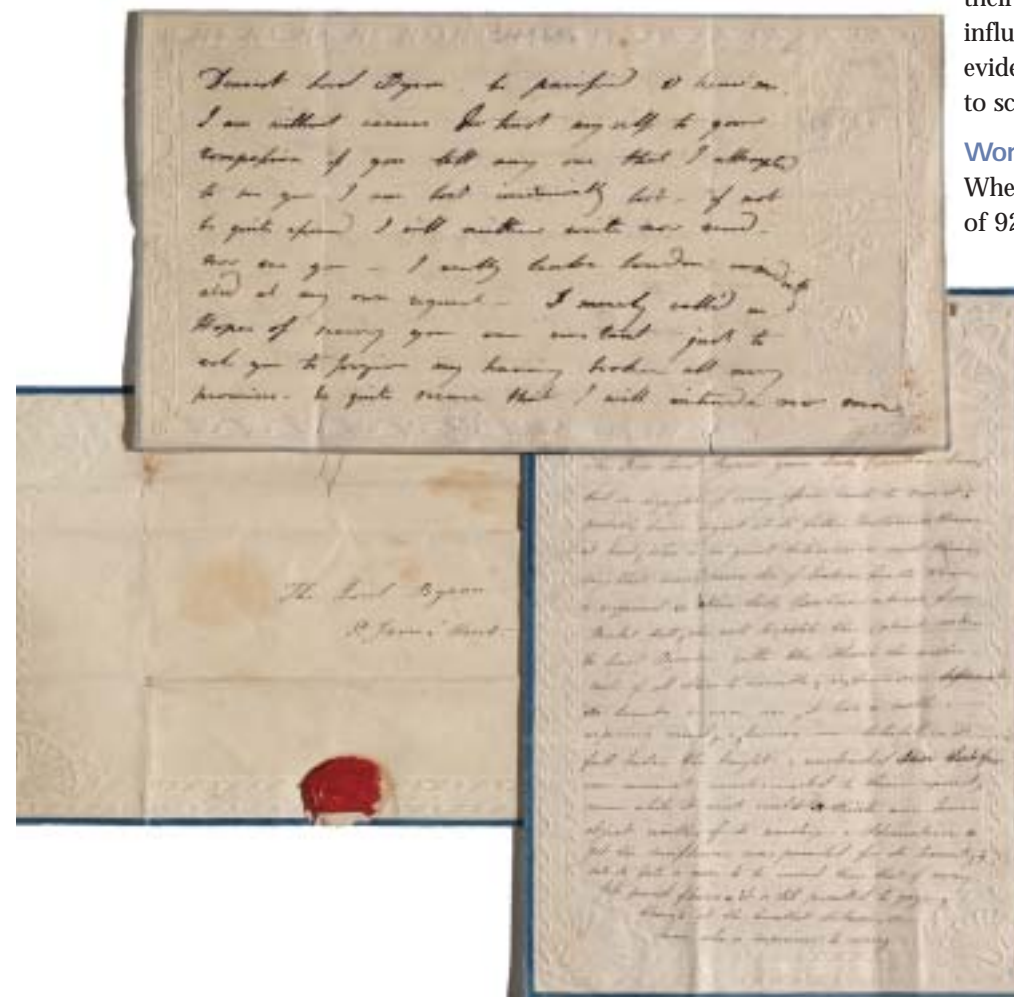
To learn more about registering for remote access to any of these resources, please visit [www.nls.uk/catalogues/online/er/index.html](http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/online/er/index.html) or register in person at the Library's enquiry desks.

\* Readers who register for remote access will be able to use these resources from almost anywhere in Scotland with an internet connection: Please contact Paul Cunnea for more information [p.cunnea@nls.uk](mailto:p.cunnea@nls.uk) or call 0131 623 4761



# 'I caught a shark and stopped a mutiny'

John Murray Archive Assistant Curator, **Ruth Boreham**, explains why, in the golden era of the John Murray publishing firm, a woman's work was never dull.



Queen Victoria represented the paradigm of womanhood in the 19th century. She was deeply in love with her husband Prince Albert and relied on him both emotionally and practically. She was constantly attached to her family, and bore nine children in their 21 years of marriage. The monarch established the ideal figure of the Victorian mother and wife, and was often called the 'Mother of the Nation' and the 'Mother of the Empire'. This image of the devoted, home-loving woman was prevalent in the fiction, press and politics of the time, but is this the only experience women had? A look through the papers and letters of the John Murray Archive suggests otherwise. Throughout the 150,000 items are letters from women writing to John Murray as their publisher, or approaching him about a book they have written – not as wives of famous and important men (although they are represented as well) but as important figures in their own right, active in most spheres of influence. Within the Archive we find much evidence in particular of women's contribution to science, politics, exploration and literature.

#### Women as scientists

When Mary Somerville died in 1872 at the age of 92, obituaries called her 'Queen of Science'.

Although not credited with any new discoveries, Somerville wrote popular treatises that helped to popularise the growing field of science. A Scottish self-educated woman who also raised a family, she became the breadwinner of her household when her second husband, naval man William Somerville, retired due to ill health. Somerville corresponded with the leading scientific men of the day, such as Charles Babbage, John Herschel, Michael Faraday and David Brewster. She did likewise with her publisher John Murray; sending manuscripts but also letters discussing her personal life, her writings and passing on gossip about mutual acquaintances. In March 1857 she writes to Murray: →





→ 'I have just heard news that has surprised us not a little. Sir David Brewster - 76 years old - was married a few days ago to Miss Parnell, aged 26 a grocer's daughter. Sir David and his daughter have been living at Cannes, which he left a few days before the wedding without saying a word to his daughter of his engagement, but left her with the Duchess Dow. of Argyle (sic) who had to tell her of it.'

Mary Somerville continued to write books until her death – the last book published during her lifetime was *On Molecular and Microscopic Science*, in 1869. Even after its publication, she continued to work, saying to Murray in January 1872, her 92nd year:

'It is curious that I am so much at home on mathematical subjects as ever I was and as I have . . . (some excellent works) I spend four or five hours every morning in studying them.'

#### Women as explorers

Isabella Bird, daughter of a clergyman born in 1831, was a very sickly child. The doctor recommended she went travelling; her trip to North America in 1854 was only the first of many. Over the next 50 years, Isabella went to America, Australia, New Zealand, the Sandwich Islands, Hawaii, Japan, China, the Malay Peninsula, Egypt, India, the Persian Gulf, Kurdistan, Tibet, Canada and Korea. She visited places no European woman – indeed, often no European at all – had visited, and thrived on the adventure of it all. She wrote long letters to her sister Henrietta, then living on the Isle of Mull; one letter in the JMA is 116 sides long. Her letters detail the wonderful sights and sounds she

was experiencing, though no doubt raised a few eyebrows back home:

'One might just as well live in a menagerie. I wondered on arriving to find three plates set for dinner knowing that there was no one here, and as soon as I sat down the magnificent turbaned Sikh butler brought in one large ape and the Malay servant brought in another and a *saphis* brought in a great retriever and tied it to my chair and the apes had their chutney and pineapple and eggs and bananas handed to them on Mintons china and the small ape sat on the table and constantly helped himself from my plate.'

Bird also took a number of photographs, many of which are in the Archive, and show the breathtaking scenery and wonderful people she met.

#### Women as campaigners

The letters of some of the Archive's correspondents can often strike an emotional chord. One such example is that of Caroline Norton, author and law reform campaigner. It was largely due to her that the Infants' Custody Act was introduced in 1839, which gave women some (albeit limited) rights to the access of their young children – until then they had been denied custody. Caroline experienced this herself. When her marriage to MP and barrister George Norton effectively ended in 1835 she was refused access to their house and her children were sent away to Yorkshire. Caroline, already an established poet before marriage, published a pamphlet titled, *Observations on the natural claim of the mother to the custody of her infant children: as affected by the common law rights of the father* (1837).

Three further pamphlets, helped to gain support for the Act, which gave mothers custody of children under the age of seven (unless she had

Left:  
Mary Somerville

Below:  
One of many photographs  
Isabella Bird Bishop took  
of her travels in the East.



been found guilty of adultery in court) and established the rights of non-custodial parents to access their children. Sadly the Act was of no help to Caroline; it only applied to England and Wales and Norton promptly removed his children to Scotland. The matter was only resolved in 1842 following the death of her youngest son, after which the two remaining sons spent half of the year with their mother in London.

The letters to Murray date from this period of campaigning. One talks of an attack which had been made on Caroline in the press:

'It is so easy to crush a woman, especially one whose reputation has been already slandered, that I do not think his triumph is very great, in having created a prejudice by inventing a gross falsehood; attributing to me that which I never wrote, and then abusing me in very foul and gross language as the author.'

She also feels that people who judge her try to 'invent an imaginary Mrs Norton something between a barn actress and a Mary Wollstonecraft and to hunt her down with unceasing perseverance.'

The Archive also contains a manuscript copy and proof of *A Voice from the Factories: in Serious Verse*, where Caroline focused her poetical talents on the plight of working-class children, perhaps in response to her own difficulties.

Many other women deserve a mention. There is the naturalist and author Sarah Lee, (nee Bowdich, nee Wallis) who according to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 'caught a shark and helped to put down a mutiny', en route to joining her husband in Africa. In a letter to Murray in 1829, Sarah Lee outlined a book proposal that would encompass, 'not only a geographical but an historical description of the whole continent of Africa.' A substantial task, but one she felt more than capable of: 'is (my) proposal beyond a woman's strength? – no!'

Literature is also represented with letters from or about Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte, Maria Edgeworth, Mrs Gaskell and lesser known authors such as Catherine Hutton, who wrote memorably:

'I had always wished, not daring to hope, that I might be something like Miss Austen; and, having finished her works, I took to my own, to see if I could find any resemblance... I am not like Miss Austen; but I am like myself: there is originality in the work.'

The Byron women are also well represented; for example Caroline Lamb, who coined the phrase 'mad, bad, and dangerous to know' about the poet. Also Mary Shelley, who informs Byron of the birth of his illegitimate daughter by her stepsister and her own marriage to Shelley, in one letter which concludes:

'Another incident has also occurred which will surprise you, perhaps; it is a little piece of egotism in me to mention it but it allows me to sign myself . . . Mary W Shelley'

And not forgetting the wives, daughters and sisters of the Murray men. There is a wonderful letter reminiscent of Jane Austen from Anne Elliot, the future wife of John Murray II, in response to his offer of marriage:

'You must be sensible that in an engagement of such moment a much longer acquaintance is necessary . . . so as to know perfectly each other's temper and disposition, for the qualities required in so close a union must be very different from that of an acquaintance – suffice it to say that from which I have seen, I have every reason to think myself fortunate in the acquisition of your acquaintance.'

As the JMA becomes fully catalogued, the lives and work of many more fascinating women will be uncovered, allowing us to tell their stories, and show that not all women in the 19th century stayed at home to look after the children. **nls**



Above:  
Isabella Bird Bishop.

#### Discover more

The John Murray Archive is one of the world's most significant literary and cultural archives from the past 250 years.

Manuscripts and letters preserved by London-based John Murray publishers were written by many of the most influential figures from the 18th and 19th centuries. Murray authors included celebrated writers, scientists, politicians, economists and thinkers of the time.

To learn more about the Archive, or to arrange an appointment to consult material within it, please contact [manuscripts@nls.uk](mailto:manuscripts@nls.uk) or call 0131 623 3876. [www.nls.uk/jma](http://www.nls.uk/jma)

To find out how to support NLS develop the John Murray Archive into an inspiring cultural experience, please contact the the Development Department at [development@nls.uk](mailto:development@nls.uk) or call +44 (0)131 623 3731.

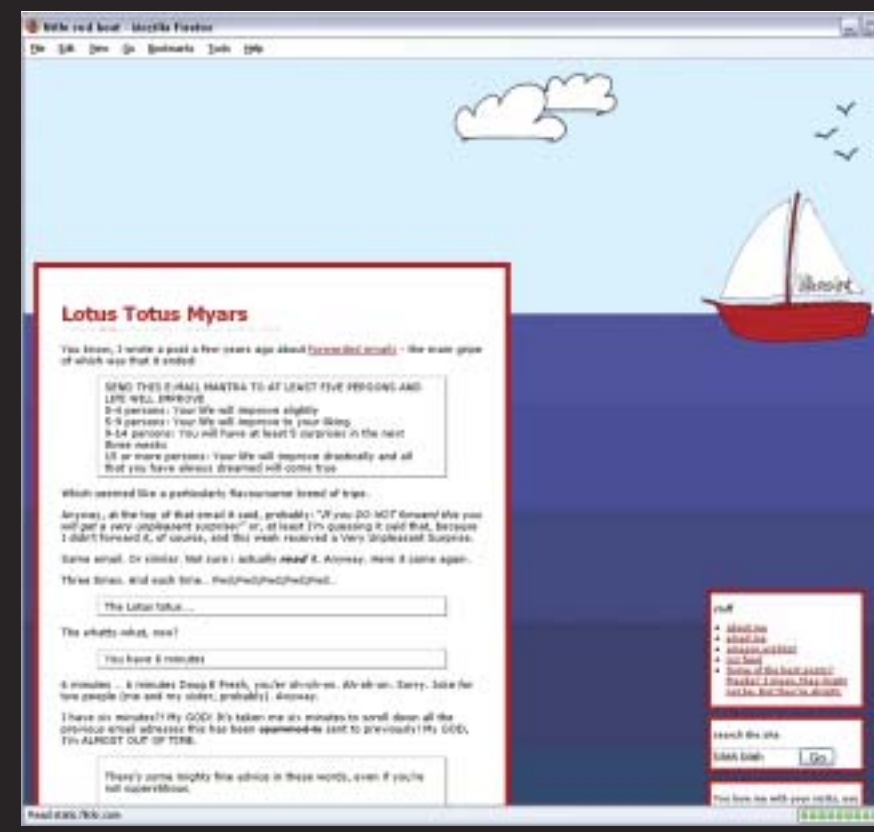


# Getting to grips with blogs: the manuscripts of the future?

Systems Librarian **Gill Hamilton** and Systems Developer **Eric Jurtzenka** guide us through one of the latest – and arguably most significant – electronic communication phenomena and their interest for libraries and researchers.

From Samuel Peyps to Anne Frank, diaries and diarists have played an important role in helping us make sense of the past, for as long as we have had a written narrative tradition. Diaries of all types have been invaluable research tools for centuries, so it is perhaps no surprise that the information revolution in general – and the Internet in particular – heralds an exciting and significant new phase for this type of communication: the blog.

Blogs are simply web-based electronic diaries (web-logs) where you can make regular – or not so regular – entries (or posts). The beauty of blogs however is that, unlike their paper equivalents, they enable the addition of pictures, links to other blogs or web pages and the insertion of video and audio clips. Starting and running a basic blog is simple and no technical expertise is necessary. All that is required is access to an internet-ready computer and a desire or need to communicate. And a blog needn't cost anything to run, as there are numerous companies offering free blogging services such as Blogger (owned by Google), WordPress and Typepad.



### Discover more

- Tools**
- Blogger [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)
  - WordPress <http://wordpress.com/>
  - Typepad [www.typepad.com/](http://www.typepad.com/)
- References**
- Blog definition <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>
  - Little Red Boat [www.littleredboat.co.uk/](http://www.littleredboat.co.uk/)
  - Comment is free <http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/>
  - Gordon's blog <http://webservices/blogs/gordon/>
  - UK Web Archive [www.webarchive.org.uk](http://www.webarchive.org.uk)
  - Woolamaloo Gazette archive [www.webarchive.org.uk/tep/13439.html](http://www.webarchive.org.uk/tep/13439.html)
  - Accelerando archive [www.webarchive.org.uk/tep/11483.html](http://www.webarchive.org.uk/tep/11483.html)

Blogs cover every subject and topic imaginable. They can be personal, perhaps used to express a train of thoughts as in Little Red Boat, or to record family life or a trip abroad. They can be professionally related, corporate or educational such as Musselburgh Grammar School's award nominated *mgsOnline* or media-based, like The Guardian newspaper's Comment is free.

One of the unexpected outcomes of blogging and the blogosphere (the universe of all blogs) is that it has developed into an interesting and dynamic social space. This has come about through the ability for others to comment on blog entries, link from one another, indicate favourite blogs (commonly known as blog rolls) and add topic and subject descriptions to blog entries. This has led to a collaborative publishing environment where blog readers and authors can interact with each other, commenting, discussing and developing thoughts and ideas. Such free communication is something that is less easy to achieve with traditional publishing methods. Consequently, in common with other forms of electronic publishing, the practice of collecting and recording blogs for libraries and their users is being explored. Only time will tell of their significance to future researchers, the media and social historians.

As part of the Library's policy for collecting digital materials published in or about Scotland a collaborative project, the UK Web Archive, has been established. The project will explore the issues surrounding the collection of websites and test how these can be recorded and preserved, so that they continue to be accessible in the future. Several Scottish blogs have been archived by the project, including the satirical newspaper Woolamaloo Gazette and Charles Stross's Accelerando.

Indeed, NLS has even dipped its toe in the water regarding the internal use of blogs. *Gordon's blog* was recently established to enable Gordon Hunt, the Library's Director of Customer Services, to post entries about Library developments, his views on the profession and feedback on external meetings he attends with peers in the sector. All Library staff can read his blog and comment on his posts. Commenting on his blog, Gordon said, 'I see it as a useful, informal way of sharing my thoughts with staff, informing them about my activities and, I hope, gathering their opinions and views.' **nls**

In the next issue we will explore and de-mystify the wonderful world of wikis.



## Political treasure restored for Spanish Civil War display

A remarkable treasure of political and historical significance is being repaired in preparation for a display, marking the 70th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War.

Dan Gray (Manuscripts Curator) and Chris Taylor (Foreign Collections Curator) have earmarked for restoration a copy of *The Spanish People's Fight for Liberty*, a Spanish Embassy publication from 1937, signed by significant British Labour Party politicians – the majority of whom would later comprise Clement Attlee's 1945 Government. Alongside Attlee's signature are those of Emanuel Shinwell, Nye Bevan, Herbert Morrison, Arthur Greenwood, George Lansbury, Ellen Wilkinson, Hugh Dalton and William Wedgwood Benn. The publication will be on display, alongside related NLS collection items, in the barrel-vaults of the George IV Bridge building throughout November.

The Library will also be hosting a symposium in commemoration of the War, organised by professors Andrew Ginger (University of Stirling) and Nigel Dennis (University of St Andrews) on Friday 17 November. Contact [events@nls.uk](mailto:events@nls.uk) for more information or to book a place.



## Discover for yourself

Anyone can subscribe to *Discover NLS*, free of charge. Simply drop us a line with your full address details to: [discover@nls.uk](mailto:discover@nls.uk) (please put 'subscribe' in the subject line) or write to:

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If your organisation would like to stock multiple copies of the magazine, please get in touch with us at the same address.

## John Murray's latest scribe sets to work

Poet Ken Cockburn has been appointed as the first John Murray Archive Writer-in-Residence, in partnership with Edinburgh UNESCO City of World Literature. Ken has been exploring people's creative response to the Archive through workshops with groups ranging from school children to Scotland's minority ethnic communities. A poet whose own work has often been shaped by intimate personal experience of the literature of the past, Ken will be revealing how the Archive has inspired new writing in a special session at the Wigtown Book Festival on 24 September.

## Wigtown: Scottish Book Town 22 September – 1 October 2006

The Scottish Book Town Festival rolls into Wigtown, our National Book Town. The festival is a 10-day celebration of the written word, which brings a mass migration of bibliophiles every year to this small hamlet, normally home to just 900 people.

This year's Festival features over seventy events, including talks, films, plays and concerts. The line-up of speakers includes Louis de Bernieres, Richard Holloway, Willy Russell, Libby Purves, Bob Flowerdew, Jackie Kay, Magnus Magnusson, Stephanie Calman and Allan Little. Music highlights include Aberfeldy and The Wherries, while the festival cinema runs *Educating Rita*, *Shirley Valentine* and *Akenfield*.

Wigtown, in Galloway, is within easy reach of some of Scotland's finest scenery, gardens, and hotels. Between events, you can explore Scotland's widest street or browse the town's cavernous bookshops.

**For updates on events or to order your copy of the programme, please phone 01988 40 3222, or visit [www.wigtownbookfestival.com](http://www.wigtownbookfestival.com).**

## Advertising in Discover NLS

We hope readers appreciate the investment we have made in our new publication. In order to continually develop *Discover NLS*, we would be interested to hear from an individual or small Scottish agency capable of generating and managing advertising revenue on a quarterly basis. Applicants should be committed, service-orientated, mature and able to demonstrate an interest in and knowledge of library or cultural issues. To express an interest or learn more, please write to or email the Editor, Julian Stone at [j.stone@nls.uk](mailto:j.stone@nls.uk) in the first instance.

## 'Illustrious' Sherlock Holmes manuscript arrives

The original manuscript of a Sherlock Holmes story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has been donated to the Library. *'The Adventure of the Illustrious Client'* was the first story in the final Holmes compilation, *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, published in 1927.

Bequeathed by Conan Doyle's late daughter, Dame Jean, the manuscript joins the Library's collection of Conan Doyle material, comprising around 60 letters and another short story manuscript, *'The Haunted Grange of Gresthorpe'*, which was only published in 2001.

Set in 1902, the *'Illustrious Client'* has all the classic ingredients: Violet de Merville, a beautiful, rich, English rose falls for rich, handsome continental rotter, Baron Gruner, who it transpires murdered his first wife, among others. As well as dissuading the damsel from a fatal marriage, Holmes even solves the case thanks to a library: Dr Watson's visits to the London Library to learn about Chinese porcelain provide a crucial clue.

*In the next issue, world-renowned Conan Doyle scholar, Owen Dudley Edwards provides an in-depth analysis of what the manuscript tells us about the great writer's work.*

## Recognition for chartership programme

The Library's chartership programme has been upheld as an example of best practice by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, who have published details of our programme online at [www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk). NLS has 15 staff invested in the programme, since its initiation in 2002, with five people achieving chartered status so far. The programme, coordinated by Foreign Collections Curator Chris Taylor, comprises internal seminars with expert staff, project work and external visits. The candidates are mentored over the course of two years by colleagues. The most recent person to obtain chartered status is Gavin Johnstone (pictured nearest right), Assistant Team Leader in the Library's Serials Unit.



## Winning partnership on track

Staff from NLS and Edinburgh University Library put in an impressive performance at the JogScotland Cooperative Challenge run in Edinburgh's Inverleith Park last month, coming fourth in a tournament of 53 teams. Special recognition goes to NLS Reprographics Supervisor George Morrison, who came twelfth in the five kilometre dash, from a field of some 800 runners.



## Scotbis takes a stand for business

The Scottish Business Information Service (Scotbis) enjoyed a successful presence at this year's NewStartScotland exhibition. The exhibition, held annually in March, is aimed at supporting small businesses and attracted over 120 exhibitors, ranging from the Bank of Scotland to the Patent Office. Business Information Services Manager, John Coll, shared his expertise (alongside fellow presenters including business gurus Tim Waterstone and Chris Gorman OBE) with a free seminar on *Business information on the web: key resources for researching your market*. Scotbis staff fielded over 300 enquiries from businesses across the country, ranging from topics as broad as chauffeur driven cars to the training market for the floristry trade.

Scotbis have also recently acquired the complete set of US consumer reports from the market research company Mintel, believed to be the first UK library open to the public to do so. The resources offer businesses unique and detailed information on US consumer habits, covering everything from the top five reasons why Americans purchase soup to how much they spend on car rentals and should be a boon for companies targeting the US: Scotland's number one export market. Contact [enquiries@scotbis.com](mailto:enquiries@scotbis.com) or call 0131 623 3816 for more information.



## Readers' Letters

Discover NLS welcomes your comments, questions and views, please address all correspondence to:

Julian Stone  
Readers' Letters  
Discover NLS  
National Library of Scotland  
George IV Bridge  
Edinburgh  
EH1 1EW  
or e-mail: [discover@nls.uk](mailto:discover@nls.uk)



### Simon Bains replies...

Sir,

I agree entirely that it is not sensible, nor is it possible, to attempt to catalogue the Internet. There were attempts to do so in the early days, but whilst this might continue to be feasible for specialist areas, the resource requirements, as you correctly observe, are high. It was not our intention to suggest this was our role. Rather, that important distinctions can be drawn between libraries and search engines, and that librarians can use information retrieval and evaluation skills to assist their users make most effective use of the Internet. It is important that libraries accept that information enquiries will often start with search engines, and consider how to reach users in these new information spaces. But it is also important that they help users understand that not all knowledge, whether in print or digital form, is accessible via Google. Finally, I would argue that the library should be the 'treasure house' of knowledge, irrespective of format, and that NLS has a responsibility to collect and preserve digital material, just as it collects books, journals, newspapers and maps. We must not rely on Google to safeguard the digital information it makes so accessible.



Turn to page 10 to read more about digital preservation matters.

Sir,

I read with great interest your article 'The role of libraries in the digital age'. It is true that Libraries can provide an invaluable point of access to subscription-only services available on the Internet – typically peer-reviewed and edited journals. However, I was slightly worried by the disparaging remarks about Google and the suggestion that the library itself – with its comparatively limited resources – may be able to play some significant role in organising online information. I find this to be a common delusion of librarians which simply does not stand up in practice. It is possible that you may be able to offer a catalogue of useful web links in connection with a particular exhibition or theme, but even this will be labour intensive work in need of constant updating. At the same time, I think libraries are in danger of losing sight of their role as a treasure house of human knowledge over the centuries. It is impossible for every book published or manuscript written to be digitised. At the same time it is another common and dangerous delusion to imagine that present-day online and digitised knowledge is better than and supersedes everything that has gone before. The key issue is provenance, as your article goes on to say, and although Google is an invaluable starting point – with which libraries can never directly compete – it is no substitute for checking the original source, printed or otherwise, and that is the responsibility of the individual researcher. 'Old' knowledge can also be new when it is read for the first time.

Crispin Bates

## Are we accessible enough?

NLS is reviewing how accessible and user-friendly our services are for people with disabilities. We're looking at disability in its widest sense – for example it could be problems with sight, hearing or speech, long-term illness, mental health or mobility. It's not just about access to or within our buildings, but our web services, publications and outreach programmes too.

If disability of any kind affects your life we would welcome your feedback on our services, and any suggestions for

improvement. Your involvement will help inform our future plans, and we'd like to make any adjustments we can.

If you'd like to share your views please contact Lauren Forbes at:

National Library of Scotland  
Causewayside Building  
33 Salisbury Place  
Edinburgh EH9 1SL  
E-mail: [l.forbes@nls.uk](mailto:l.forbes@nls.uk)  
or phone: 0131 623 3941

The Library serves an increasingly wide variety of customers. Each issue we speak to an individual involved with NLS and find out what it means to them.

## Laura Hird

Laura Hird appeared at NLS as one of the first writers to take part in The Bridge Readings, a new series launched in July showcasing contemporary writers, see page 12 for details.



Photo: Gordon Wright

**Q. Do you remember when you first became aware of the National Library of Scotland?**

**A:** I used the National Library in my teens to get information from *Spotlight* and other screen journals. I suppose I must have got my first reader's card then. I also used it to find actors' agents details who I wanted to contact about a screenplay I wrote when I was young. I didn't know how you went about getting a screenplay produced and wrote to the agents whose actors I wanted to involve.

**Q. Have you done any of your writing in the reading room?**

**A:** No, but I always wanted to since hearing that Alasdair Gray wrote some of *1982 Janine* in there. Perhaps I'll create a character who writes part of a novel in the reading room as a homage to Alasdair Gray, who I see is September's writer for the Bridge Readings.

**Q. Have you done any research in NLS that has informed or formed the basis of your work?**

**A:** I have used it to do research for a number of articles I've written over the years. I've also used the map library to get copies of maps of specific places in Edinburgh from years ago.

**Q. Can you see yourself setting any future work in, or around, NLS?**

**A:** I would like to make more of such an excellent resource. For instance, I wasn't aware of NLS' online resources until recently but I will certainly look into them. Whether or not I set any fiction around the social realist building on George IV Bridge remains to be seen. I'm sure

that I could at least have a character walking past its facade at some point.

**Q. Do you ever come to any of the Library's free exhibitions or events?**

**A:** Not for several years but I'm sure to over the coming months, particularly as I'm reading from and talking about my work as part of the Bridge Readings in August.

**Q. What do you think of the John Murray Archive coming to NLS?**

**A:** It's very exciting and fantastic that everyone can now benefit from it. I'm looking forward to seeing how the collection will be presented. **nls**

### Discover more

Hird was born and lives in Edinburgh and is the author of *Nail and Other Stories* (1999) and *Born Free* (1999). She has also contributed to *Children of Albion Rovers* (1997) and *Rovers Return* (1998). Her new title, *Hope and Other Urban Tales*, will be published by Canongate in Autumn this year.

Visit [www.laurahird.com](http://www.laurahird.com) for more information.



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