

The magazine of the National Library of Scotland

Discover

FREE

'BIGGER THAN THE BOOKER'

Douglas Stuart on why praise from Scots
readers means more to him than literary prizes

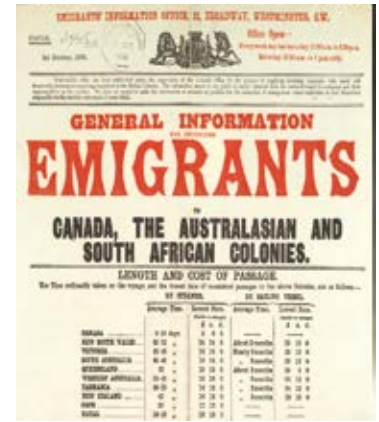
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No.47 Winter 2022

30TH

ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF

TRACING YOUR SCOTTISH ANCESTORS



The bestselling official guide to the National Records of Scotland (NRS), is out now. Available for purchase in paperback or e-book edition from bookshops in store and online.

This step-by-step guide to researching NRS records is invaluable for genealogists, historians and biographers. Discover the latest up-to-date information on tracing Scottish family history using the unique treasure trove of Scotland's national archives.

Images, clockwise from top left: A group of children outside their school, c.1918, *NRS, NSC1/392/2/49*; Government poster providing 'General Information for Intending Emigrants', *NRS, AF51/91/1*; Juvenile prisoner in Greenock Prison, 1872, *NRS, HH12/56/7b*; Scottish soldiers c.1850, *NRS, GD527/1/1/39*. (All of the above images are Crown copyright except for GD527/1/1/39.)

Scots talent in the spotlight

We're showcasing our authors, actors, artists and activists

At the National Library of Scotland, we like to showcase homegrown talent – and you will find plenty of this in this edition of 'Discover'. Our cover story is an interview with Booker Prize winner Douglas Stuart. The 'Shuggie Bain' and 'Young Mungo' author is completely unassuming and favours winning fans in Scottish communities more than any other accolade. If you thought you could not like him any more than you do already, you'll be in for a treat (pages 10–13).

We also go in-depth on one of the people who feature in our 'Pen Names' exhibition, which runs until late April. Internationally renowned comic book artist Vincent Deighan, who uses the pseudonym Frank Quitely, shares a very honest account of the pros and cons of fame – particularly in the comic book and sci-fi sector – and reveals how his assumed name has occasionally gotten him out of a bind (pages 17–19).

Meanwhile, actor and broadcaster Atta Yaqub has been working with us on a project specifically focusing on Scottish Asians in broadcasting.

This fascinating research kick-starts a variety of activities, to be announced soon, to mark the centenary of British broadcasting. You can read more about the 'Ae Fond Kiss' star's experiences in broadcasting and his views on representation (pages 26–27).

This edition's Curator's Favourite is from our Political Collections Curator, Heidi Egginton, who is throwing the spotlight on the diary of renowned Scottish suffragist Helen Fraser.

There are few stories in the political archives belonging to women – and the sad fact that this diary had to be rescued from a recycling centre

in Australia perhaps helps to illustrate why. Uncover the extraordinary story of how this amazing document came to be in our collections and why it is so important (pages 14–16).

Of course, all the books we hold are important, but few can claim to have truly iconic status.

Next year is the 400th anniversary of the creation of the famed 'First Folio' of Shakespeare's plays – a volume which helped to ensure that the Bard's timeless works were preserved for posterity.

Our copy is one of the true treasures of our collections and Helen Vincent, Head of Rare Books, Maps and Music, explores these priceless pages and their historical and cultural significance. She also explains how, without the 'First Folio', the likes of Macbeth's Weird Sisters and Prospero's magical island would have been lost forever (pages 21–25).

We also share all of our latest news and events – including the launch of our Bookbug sessions and the appointment of a Scots Scribe (page 6), plus Tilda Swinton picking up the FIAF award (page 7) – along with information about our rich programme of upcoming talks and events covering a diverse range of topics, such as a very special map, how we talk about knives... and an evocative retelling of the life of Mary Queen of Scots (page 32).

Finally, we are appealing to you all to help us preserve our newspaper collection, which comprises millions of pages of newspapers from all over the country, each offering insight into Scots' day-to-day lives. Read all about it on page 9.

I truly hope you enjoy this issue of 'Discover' as much as I do.

Amina Shah
National Librarian and Chief Executive



Uncover the extraordinary story of how an amazing document came to be in our collections

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Contributors



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Atta Yaqub
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Shane Strachan takes up role as Scots Scribever

Writer and performer Shane Strachan has taken up the prestigious position of the Scots Scribever, hosted by the Library.

This year's residency has been designed to promote North East Scots, or Doric, as it is known locally.

The residency, which began in September, offers Shane (pictured) the opportunity to explore the richness of our Scots language collections and give him the space and time

to produce original work in Doric. He is a published writer, with a doctorate in Creative Writing from the University of Aberdeen, and a highly active creative practitioner in his native Aberdeen, working across disciplines and developing work which explores the stories of the North East and beyond.

He said: "I'm fair trickit tae be this year's Scots Scribever, especially gettin tae promote the Doric o my hame region

Aiberdeenshire tae folk that bide ere and aabody else online.

"Brought up in the fishin toons o Fraserburgh and Peterheid, I've been spikkin Doric aa my life and scribevin in it for 16 years, sae it's an honour tae haud this affa rare position wi the National Library of Scotland across the neist year.

"Sae far, it's been affa rare haking through the Library's manuscripts in Scots and been graan tae spik wi sic knowledgeable staff."



Photo by Neil Hanna

The 12-month Scots Scribever residency is funded by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland.

Stories, smiles and songs as Bookbug arrives

Little readers have been filling the Library with laughter since we hosted our first Bookbug session during the summer.

This is a big deal for us as we have not catered specifically for preschool children in recent years.

The sessions now take place at least once a week at our George IV Bridge building in Edinburgh.

Bookbug is a long-standing Scottish Book Trust initiative which aims to increase exposure to books, support bonding between parents/caregivers and children, and improve preschoolers' literacy and social development skills through reading, songs and rhyme.

To make families with young children feel more at home, we have adapted some areas around our bookshop, café and reading rooms to make them more child-friendly.

We have also branched out into Scots and Gaelic Bookbug sessions. Gaelic sessions take place at least



Photo by Neil Hanna/National Library of Scotland

once a month in partnership with Comann nam Pàrant and we ran a pilot of Scots language sessions with the Scots Language Centre. These went well and we plan to run regular sessions in Scots in 2023.

No language skills are required to

attend the Scots or Gaelic sessions and all Bookbug activity is free.

Bookbug is intended for children up to the age of five but older siblings are welcome too. Spaces are limited, so booking is essential.

Book your place at nls.uk/events



Congratulations to Tilda Swinton on her FIAF award

HONOUR

Tilda Swinton.
Photo by Neil Hanna/
National Library
of Scotland

We are a member of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) – the world’s largest international network of cinemathèques and film archives – and Oscar-winning actor Tilda Swinton was presented with the 2022 FIAF Award at a special ceremony hosted at our Kelvin Hall premises in November.

The honour recognises Swinton’s long-time personal interest in, and dedication to, cinema in all its diversity, but also film history (in particular, the role of women in this) and the work of film archives to save this unique heritage and make it accessible.

Swinton said: “To be recognised by FIAF, a body whose work I admire so much, is a profound honour. The diligence with which they bend our attention to the essential foundation to world culture laid by our cinema legacy is something for which I am sincerely grateful.

“It has long been my view that cinema is our chance – in opening our eyes to a wide, wild screen, it has the capacity to transform our hearts and our minds, our sense of belonging and our capacity to feel compassion for humanity.”

National Librarian Amina Shah said: “We were delighted to host this award ceremony in recognition of Tilda Swinton’s achievements.

“As the home of Scotland’s moving image archive, we place great value in the preservation and promotion of our film and documentary heritage.”

Swinton is one of the most versatile actors working today, as comfortable in the films of visionary filmmakers such as

Derek Jarman (whose artistic legacy she has worked hard to protect) and Apichatpong Weerasethakul, as she is starring in the massive blockbusters of the ‘Avengers’ franchise.

Since her breakthrough performance in the title role in Sally Potter’s ‘Orlando’, her career has been defined by adventurous performances and daring transformations, and her filmography includes a diverse collection of roles across the broad spectrum of cinema.

Swinton’s work extends beyond narrative film to her role as narrator in Mark Cousins’s 14-hour documentary ‘Women Make Film’ and her advocacy in the successful fight to save Derek Jarman’s cottage, where she filmed one of her early collaborations with the filmmaker in 1990.

In 2008 she also collaborated with artist Isaac Julien on the film ‘Derek’, which tells Jarman’s story through extensive use of archive footage. She has publicly supported the work of film archives around the world and helped promote restored films.

She was given the Golden Lion for her body of work by the Venice Film Festival in 2019 and the Academy Museum Visionary Award in 2022. In 2020, ‘The New York Times’ ranked her on its list of the ‘Greatest Actors of the 21st Century’.

Throughout her amazing career, Swinton has received many great accolades, including the Academy Award in 2008 for Best Supporting Actress, the British Academy Film Award in 2008 for Supporting Actress (both for ‘Michael Clayton’) and the European Film Award for European Actress in 2011 (for ‘We Need to Talk About Kevin’).

You can learn more about the FIAF and FIAF award at fiagnet.org

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TOMORROW'S CHIP WRAPPERS?:

The front page (left) of the 'Edinburgh Evening News', a first edition dated Saturday, 1 July 1876. This newspaper is one double-sided broadsheet page rather than the multiple pages used today, and shows the damage our pre-1925 collection has endured.

A paper on the scanner (top right) in our digitisation studio. It has been unstuck from its binding and cleaned and restored; note the quarter fold marks and different colour of the newsprint around the text.

This file (right) shows how fragile and frayed some of our newspapers are.



Read all about it!

How you can help us to save our collection of Scotland's newspapers

Our newspaper collection is in need of vital preservation treatment – and we need your help to fund this work.

Comprising millions of pages dating back to the 1600s, the archive includes well-known Scottish national titles and local papers such as 'The Shetland Journal' and 'Ayr and Wigtownshire Courier'.

This is the only part of the national collections where you will find local articles about Scots' day-to-day lives, stories unlikely to have been repeated beyond the original newspaper.

These stories make our

collection a valuable resource for local and national history.

Louise McCarron, Head of Reader Services, said: "Newspapers are one of our most requested items.

"People use them to research their family history. Authors take inspiration from real-life people and events, and visitors often reminisce over photographs of their town or village changing over time."

But newspapers are not designed to last and are printed on cheap, fragile newsprint paper, which degrades over time. Unlike books, they are intended to be read and discarded.

We have been collecting

newspapers since our foundation in 1925. But our collections date from much earlier than this – we hold the earliest newspaper printed in Scotland, from 1641.

Many of these older newspapers came into our collection already in poor condition. Our climate- and pH-controlled storage can only slow their degradation – it cannot stop it outright.

Lucy Clement, Head of Development, explained: "Our analysis has revealed that without urgent intervention, 65 per cent of our newspapers – and the unique stories they contain – will be lost. Our conservators can carry out urgent

repairs to our most damaged newspapers and prepare them for digitisation, but this is an expensive process. We need donations to save these stories."

Learn more about our newspaper collection at nls.uk/family-history/newspapers/

DONATE

You can donate to our appeal online at nls.uk/support-nls



I'm trying to tell the
story of ordinary people
and people I've loved

Working class hero

Main image by Martyn Pickersgill, cover photo by Sarah Blesener, both courtesy Pan Macmillan

‘Shuggie Bain’ author Douglas Stuart explains why winning fans in Scotland’s housing schemes means more to him than taking home the Booker Prize

His novels are acclaimed yet stark depictions of the mean streets of post-industrial Glasgow – bleak yet beautifully written and unexpectedly tender tales of the power of love amid deprivation, addiction and abuse.

An ever-growing string of plaudits and prizes have rolled in for Douglas Stuart for his debut ‘Shuggie Bain’ and follow-up ‘Young Mungo’, including the prestigious Booker Prize for the former in 2020. He is only the second Scottish writer to win the £50,000 award, after James Kelman in 1994 for ‘How Late It Was, How Late’.

But for proud Glaswegian Stuart, accolades and fawning reviews from the literati pale in comparison to the heartfelt affection and appreciation for his work shown by working-class Scots, especially in his home city.

Being embraced by Glasgow is “the biggest honour to me” – be that via a mural inspired

by ‘Shuggie Bain’ painted on the wall of the famous Barrowland Ballroom in early 2021, invitations to give talks and sign books, or the demand for his novels in local shops and libraries.

“Those are bigger than the Booker, bigger than a review,” Stuart said. “They didn’t tell me [about the mural by the Cobolt Collective of artists] until the day they unveiled it. It was doubly emotional because it was during the pandemic, so I couldn’t go see it. I was stuck at home [in the US, where he has lived for 20 years]. It was weird to see my boy out in the world, in the hometown, and me somewhere else.”

He added: “One of the things that most blew me away and meant the most to me is that a lot of the success of ‘Shuggie Bain’ came through supermarkets – we sold a lot of books in supermarkets.

“It meant I was reaching people who maybe don’t always go to book stores or literary

festivals. That’s what it’s about for me. I’m trying to just tell the story of ordinary people and people I’ve loved.”

Such success, including selling millions of copies of his debut novel, is something Stuart did not expect – “and I don’t think my publishers did either”, he laughed, noting that ‘Shuggie Bain’ was rejected 44 times before making it into print.

Yet “the power of that story between a son and his mother” has gone on to win over millions of readers.

Stuart’s lyrical prose paints a vivid picture of both the titular Shuggie and Mungo. Both books are harrowing yet surprisingly hopeful and, at times, even humorous tales set against a backdrop of a struggling working class battered by Thatcher-era economic policies.

While there are inevitable parallels with his own childhood – Stuart grew up in the same housing schemes as Shuggie and Mungo, experienced the same homophobia and lost

→ his mother to alcoholism – he insists that his writing is fiction, and not fact.

“People like to look at Shuggie’s life and think of it as exactly copy and pasted from mine,” he said. “The truth is the novel couldn’t possibly be memoir. It’s told from so many different perspectives. It’s a joy to allow them to come in and tell you their wee bit of the story.

“I grew up in very similar circumstances to Shuggie, that’s the truth. We didn’t have much but we were a very proud working-class family. Then as the 80s came around and mass unemployment hit Glasgow, we found the community around us on its knees. That’s when addiction started to come into my household.

“My mother suffered with addiction my entire childhood. She transformed utterly as a woman and the city transformed around her. I wanted to write ‘Shuggie Bain’ as a way of capturing that transformation. I use the character of Agnes Bain against the backdrop of Glasgow because they both almost went through similar things. There was the hope in the community, then there was the abandonment – physically, and metaphorically by the Thatcher government.

“I certainly know about



LASTING LEGACY Douglas Stuart’s experiences growing up in Glasgow inspired his debut novel ‘Shuggie Bain’ – and his home city paid tribute to the author with a mural at the Barrowland Ballroom, below, which features Shuggie and a quote from the book. Photo above by Clive Smith, courtesy Pan Macmillan. Below by Leanne McGrath

poverty, addiction, misogyny and homophobia, about the feeling of isolation within a tight-knit community.”

By “generation and the shift in the city”, Stuart was the first in his family to finish high school, then studied textiles in Galashiels and London before moving to New York to pursue what would become a successful career in the fashion industry.

“I wasn’t especially academic,” he said. “My studies were so disrupted by the addiction we had at home, by the bullying I was receiving at school. I missed a lot.

“At 16, after my mother died, I was alone to figure out what my future was. I was orphaned – I never knew my father, he left when I was four and then died when I was about 10.

“Teachers started to push books at me. I grew up in a house where we didn’t really have any books – one copy of ‘Flowers in the Attic’ [by V.C. Andrews].

“I had two teachers – Mr Arthur

and Mr Archibald at Crookston Castle Secondary School [in Pollok, south Glasgow] who gave me a love of reading at 16.”

That love began with the works of Thomas Hardy, Tennessee Williams, Daphne du Maurier and John Donne.

“I didn’t really read Scottish fiction until I was an adult,” admitted Stuart. “That’s a bit of a shame on the education system then. The comfort that reading Scottish fiction brought to me in my 20s and the sense of being able to process things in my own life through the fiction of others was immense.”

It was a “revelation” for Stuart to read about the streets and people he knew, by authors such as Agnes Owens and George Friel, and books written using the language and colloquialisms of his city.

“It comes with a dignity, with a reinforcing of, ‘we are also worthy of this art form,’” he said. “We are worthy of these stories.”

Spurred to tell his people’s stories in their own voices, he began writing his first novel – ‘Shuggie Bain’ took a decade to finish – supported by his “hero”, his art curator husband Michael Cary, who “was critical in just encouraging me and telling me to keep going”.

He was also determined to focus on women, not men.

“Literature tends, in industrial spaces, to focus on the heterosexual male,” Stuart said. “I’d always known Glasgow to be incredibly feminine and for the strength, humanity and humour to come from the women.

“I was glad to be a young queer man, in hindsight, because I was glad to be excluded from the patriarchy. That happened for me when I was about six years old, when the boys just decided, ‘You’re a bit funny, you’re no right’. The idea of what was right was so narrow and suffocating.”



He added: “I’m fascinated by heterosexual power dynamics and that social moment of change. Women, like my mother, had made this contract that they thought they would be all right through life. They would marry, get a house, have a wee holiday and that would be life. But by the time I’m born, that’s starting to come apart. The city is not able to offer the opportunities, the consistency or the stability.

“I’d seen my mother – and I wanted to put this through the character of Agnes Bain – stuck, in a way. She hadn’t pursued an education, her own hobbies or own life. Instead, she’d thrown in with a man who turned out to be a villain, and who turned out to be able to have all the mobility that men seem to have – able to abandon wives and children.

“It was the poor wives and mothers who had to pick everything up and bear the scorn of a community, deal with the poverty and figure out how to make it work.

“That was so hurtful to me, to my mother and women like my mother – hurtful to their children. That’s what brings me to ‘Shuggie Bain’, that pain.”

Pain may haunt the pages of both ‘Shuggie Bain’ and ‘Young Mungo’ but it is love, not anger, that comes across most strongly.

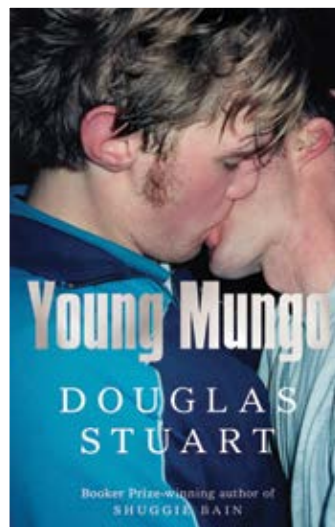
“There’s two things – there’s personal anger and writer’s anger,” Stuart explained. “Grief really extinguished a lot of my [personal] anger.

“I’ve spent most of my life just feeling an enormous amount of love and loss. I wasn’t interested in – and Glaswegians aren’t interested in – pity. We also don’t want false praise.

“What I tried to do was to memorialise not only the struggles of these women and myself and the children, but also the dignity, triumphs, resilience and resourcefulness.



LIFE STORIES Stuart’s novels capture feelings of anger and despair but also the resilience, dignity and love found in working-class communities in Scotland. Photos courtesy Pan Macmillan



“The writer’s anger was a different thing. I don’t think it’s our place to write from a place of anger because that’s too close to moral judgment.

“You should not allow for how you think a reader will interpret it because readers bring all their own layers of judgment. Your job is to create such a vivid portrait of characters that feel as real and close to the truth as you see it.”

He added: “There’s a real risk when you write about lives of poverty that you’re taking people on a poverty safari.

“You’re peddling what is essentially a middle-class art form but using working-class lives as some form of entertainment. That’s a thing that silences working-class voices.

“The truth is people do live in poverty. We do live with addiction. We do love each other. We do triumph. We do have a laugh. We do all these things.

“Writers have to be fearless when capturing that on the page because many people would like to deny us our voices.”

There is no sign of Stuart’s voice being denied. He is working on his third novel “about a family in the Scottish weaving trade and the secrets they keep... but I can’t give too much away”. He is also developing ‘Shuggie Bain’ into a television series.

“I’m working on adapting it now, I’m learning the art of drama,” he said. “I felt there were still many people who might not read ‘Shuggie Bain’ but would get some connection from the story.”

And what advice does he have for fellow Scots with their own stories to tell?

“The best advice is you have to do it,” he said. “We don’t always get ideal conditions. We don’t get a room of one’s own.

“‘Shuggie Bain’ took me 10 years because some weeks I only got 15 minutes, 30 minutes, I had to write on the train.

“Even with ‘Young Mungo’ I had to find those quiet moments while I was busy.

“Many people think they’re going to start the writing project when things are right for them and you cannot wait for that moment. It will never be right. It’ll be noisy, the seat won’t be comfy enough, your kids will be sick. Life gets in the way.” ✨

DOUGLAS STUART’S TOP READS:

THE BOOK THAT MADE HIM FALL IN LOVE WITH READING AS A TEENAGER:

‘Tess of the D’Urbervilles’ by Thomas Hardy

“I hadn’t seen much of the world, I hadn’t travelled ever – I hadn’t even seen the west end [of Glasgow] – and that book took me places cinema couldn’t.”

HIS SCOTTISH CLASSICS:

‘Grace and Miss Partridge’ by George Friel

“This was one of my very first, most beloved Scottish books. It’s about this whole collection of characters up a tenement close. It was amazing just to see these lives that were full of intrigue, mystery, plotting and romance and all up a Glasgow close, normally overlooked by everything.”

‘Gentlemen of the West’ by Agnes Owens

“This is one of my favourite books. By the time I discovered Owens, Alasdair Gray and James Kelman I was well into my 20s. I couldn’t have written ‘Shuggie Bain’ had I not discovered all of these.”

THE SCOTTISH WRITER WHO INFLUENCED HIM:

James Kelman

“He opened a lot of doorways for me in terms of language, characters, what a book needs to deliver to a reader. Does it need to give them hope and a happy ending? I’m forever indebted to Kelman.”



Exploring the diary of **Helen Fraser** (1881–1979)

A woman in a man's world

I've chosen to highlight something that serves as a reminder that many items in the Library's archive collections arrived here by accident rather than by design.

Helen Fraser's diary is a typical, if evocatively written, account of the life of a middle-class woman in her early 20s in Edwardian Glasgow. It is full of descriptions of church services, the books she read and occasional, uneventful family outings to the seaside. Then, in August 1906, everything changed.

"She is a magnificent speaker. I have never heard a finer – she is perfectly logical – she has an absolutely spontaneous and delightful sense of humour... she has done much here in Glasgow in one week for the Cause."

Fraser wrote this after hearing Teresa Billington-Greig deliver a speech on 'the woman's vote question' for the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). This was the wing of the suffrage



Key suffrage organiser. Helen Fraser speaking at Laurencekirk. Photograph courtesy of Aberdeen City Council Libraries and Archives



Devoted campaigner. Promotional postcard of Helen Fraser. Courtesy Parliamentary Archives, STH/DS/4/9/3

movement which had stepped up its campaigns in Scotland and used militant tactics to further its aims.

Billington-Greig was one of its fieriest speakers – one of the first women organisers in the Independent Labour Party and instantly recognisable for the plaits she wore woven around her head like armour.

Fraser is introduced to Billington-Greig and finds herself agreeing to chair the WSPU's next meeting. Unfortunately for readers of her diary, there is a gap of a year before her next entry, in which she describes “the busiest year of my life – ‘suffraging’”, and there the journal ends.

Having never previously dabbled in politics, Fraser would

become a key suffrage organiser in Scotland and the north of England, though she later split from the WSPU over their violent tactics.

When women eventually won the right to be elected as MPs, she was adopted by the Liberal Party as Scotland's first official woman parliamentary candidate, standing unsuccessfully in 1922 and 1923.

Fraser went on to forge a career as a public speaker, delivering lectures for international women's organisations, and emigrated to Australia on the eve of the Second World War.

It is rare to find such a vivid account of the exact moment at which a woman decides to devote their life to a political cause.

It was not until the 1960s that Scottish women's suffrage campaigners started donating their personal papers to the Library's archive collections.

Since then, we have preserved the papers of Lady Tweedsmuir, Conservative and Unionist MP; Margo MacDonald, SNP MP and MSP; and Katharine Elliot, Baroness Elliot of Harwood, who became one of the first women to enter the House of Lords in 1958.

It remains the case that the Library has many more archives of MPs called ‘George’ than it does of Scottish women parliamentarians. Westminster and Holyrood do not represent the only places in which women participate in politics in

their daily lives, of course, and the Library has important collections relating to 20th century women campaigners, writers, artists, and academics involved in activism.

In 2014 alone, women donated hundreds of leaflets, reports and meeting papers to the Library's Scottish Independence Referendum collection.

Yet not one of the unpublished diaries containing first-hand accounts of the 2014 referendum campaigns in our collections is written by a woman or non-binary person.


Why does this matter? Political archives become the raw material for best-selling biographies, documentaries, academic dissertations, newspaper articles and novels. They have the potential to shape the way we think about changes in our society in the past and how we understand political events in the present.

Even when women started to get involved in politics in greater numbers, there have historically been additional barriers to documenting their work.

Just as people needed access to expensive equipment to record their lives on film before the age of the camcorder and smartphone, it took time, money and dedication to put a political life on paper without a publisher or secretary.

All that remains of the personal archive of Peggy Herbison – a





You can listen to the podcast at nls.uk/treasures/podcast/episode-2

To mark the opening this year of the ‘Treasures of the National Library of Scotland’ exhibition, we asked some of Scotland's national treasures to select their favourite items, as part of three special podcast episodes. One of our guests, footballer Leanne Crichton, chose the Women's Suffrage collection and described how Helen Fraser's diary in particular stood out. She said: “It was really wonderful... if it wasn't for women like Helen Fraser the world wouldn't be the place it is today.”

→ long-serving Labour MP, Cabinet Minister and the first woman to serve as Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland – is the contents of a single drawer.

Discovered in a desk in the House of Commons in 2005, the papers were thought to have been in storage since the 1950s and were later given to the Parliamentary Archives.

If most of the written records which have survived in archives and libraries relate to the lives of men, this is often thanks to the efforts of the women who did their filing and kept their papers safe.

Take a look at the Twitter hashtag #ThankYouforTyping and you will find dozens of examples of women's hidden work on books by male authors.

Similarly, it is not unusual to find political women's private diaries and letters in archives belonging to their husbands, fathers, brothers and employers.

Journalism might be the first rough draft of history but archives have a special role to play in capturing lived experiences in people's own words, which may otherwise never enter the historical record.

When Helen Fraser sat down to write about Teresa Billington-Greig in 1906, she was describing something which she could not have known Scots would be able to take for granted in the decades to come – hearing a political speech given by a woman in public.

In her 90s, she made sure this formative early encounter with a female political role model was committed to paper and tape recorder and made a matter of

public record. She retold the story of her first WSPU meeting again and again – in her autobiography, 'A Woman in a Man's World' (1971) and in the interviews she gave to the Women's Library, recordings from which are now freely available on the London School of Economics Library website.

In 1978 she donated a collection of her letters and newspaper clippings about herself to Glasgow's Mitchell Library, saying she wanted the people of the city to "have something" from her.

Yet somehow, a few years ago, Helen Fraser's diary ended up in a recycling centre in Ulladulla, New South Wales.

She had one more stroke of good fortune, however. A staff member at the centre showed the diary to his mother-in-law, Bonita Frank, who recognised its significance.

Having visited our Library, Bonita sent us the diary in 2018 to preserve on behalf of the people of Scotland.

One of the best parts of my job is working with people who are thinking about turning their private papers into a public archive.

Helen Fraser's diary is a reminder of the circuitous routes some things take before they reach the Library – and of the impact small decisions can have on the way political women are remembered. *



I fell in love with Helen and longed to know more

Letter from Bonita Frank, who donated Helen Fraser's diary ↓



Speaking out: Suffragette leaders attending a procession in Edinburgh in October 1909

My son in law works at the recycling centre at Ulladulla. One day an elderly man came in with a suitcase filled with material. Asked if no one in the family wanted to keep it, he said no one was interested.

Passed on to me, fortunately after a little bit of an effort I was able to read the old-fashioned handwriting. Some of the letters were formed quite differently and not easy to read unless one had learned handwriting in a previous generation! Loving history and biographies, I became fascinated by the story I was reading. Fortunately, she had written her name at the front of her journal. From here, serendipitously, I checked Wikipedia – and there she was: a Scottish feminist. Then I found that her book 'A Woman in a Man's World' was deposited in a number of Australian libraries and was able to borrow a copy. The more I learned, the more fascinated I became by this amazing woman.

Reading these manuscripts was like having one episode of a long running story. I was left with too many questions. I'm sure there must have been many more journals.

I wondered what I could do with the material. I felt it didn't belong to me and that I was the means by which it was rescued. That, really, it belonged to the Scottish people even though Helen Fraser had emigrated to Australia. So the next part of the story is this: in 2016 I was on a tour of Scotland, and having already been to Edinburgh Castle on previous occasions, decided simply to explore the Royal Mile, including the National Library. This exposure meant it was the first place I thought of that might be interested. It added to my joy that they were.

I fell in love with Helen and longed to know more, even longing to keep the manuscripts to myself, but they are in much better keeping in Scotland and available to the Scottish people. I feel so sad that no one appeared to appreciate this amazing woman.

Bonita Frank