



# *Re:Connect*

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ANNUAL REPORT *2023*

HERITAGE  
COLLECTIONS



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# *Re:Connect*

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ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Connecting  people  
with their **past, present, and future** by  
**sharing compelling stories** through our  
**world-class collections.**

# Introduction

“The teams across Heritage Collections are engaged in a huge variety of work, representing six professional sectors within the wider Library, Archive and Museums communities. The primary focus of their work always is connecting our readers and our communities to the complex and rich collections in their care. This first annual report gives a fantastic glimpse at the ways in which our collections have impacted our users and how our staff are ensuring that our present and future University communities stay connected to our past.”

**JEREMY UPTON**

Director, Library & University Collections

**Re:Connect 2023** is the first Annual Report from the University of Edinburgh’s Heritage Collections unit which is responsible for the archives, art collections, rare books, photographs, musical instruments, geological and anatomical collections and all of the related public services.

The twelve stories included in **Re:Connect 2023** give a glimpse of the breadth and depth of activity that our teams are involved in on a day-to-day basis. The University’s history is long, and our collections are significant in size and content. Now at over 70 professionals, para-professionals and pre-professionals, our Heritage Collections team is one of the largest in UK Higher Education. We preserve, provide access to and interpret the heritage of the University; online, in galleries, in reading rooms and in communities. Our spaces are research laboratories for the humanities, where all can collaborate on research, teaching and civic engagement.

We are particularly proud that we are able to offer so many opportunities to students as volunteers, interns and members of staff, and that we have a number of positions which are entry-level, or pre-entry-level, to a career in heritage. This year we had students working directly for us or with our collections on projects ranging from the history of geology to the University’s historic links to fossil fuel, from British Sign Language accessibility to the provenance of our manuscript collections.

The 2022/2023 academic year was an exciting one for our teams, as it felt like the first full year back at pre-pandemic levels of activity – our reading rooms, teaching spaces and galleries were fully open and on any given day an exciting buzz of curiosity and discovery could be witnessed in St Cecilia’s Hall or the Centre for Research Collections. We hope you enjoy the stories within, and will come to encounter our collections in the near future.

**Daryl Green**, Head of Heritage Collections (*Research & Curatorial*)

**Jacky MacBeath**, Head of Heritage Collections (*Access & Engagement*)

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# Collect:

## Spotlight on Hew Locke's *Société de Navigation Transocéanique 1*

Claire Walsh, Art Collections Curator

Had Hew Locke's work, *Société de Navigation Transocéanique 1*, existed a few decades earlier, the University could have become a shareholder of a 20<sup>th</sup> century French transoceanic shipping company upon purchasing the work earlier this year. The medium line, 'acrylic on original share certificates' explains this conceit. Hew began this series of work around the time of the 2007 financial crash, buying share certificates for defunct or bankrupt companies from the past and using these as a canvas to explore histories of money, power, ownership and corporations.

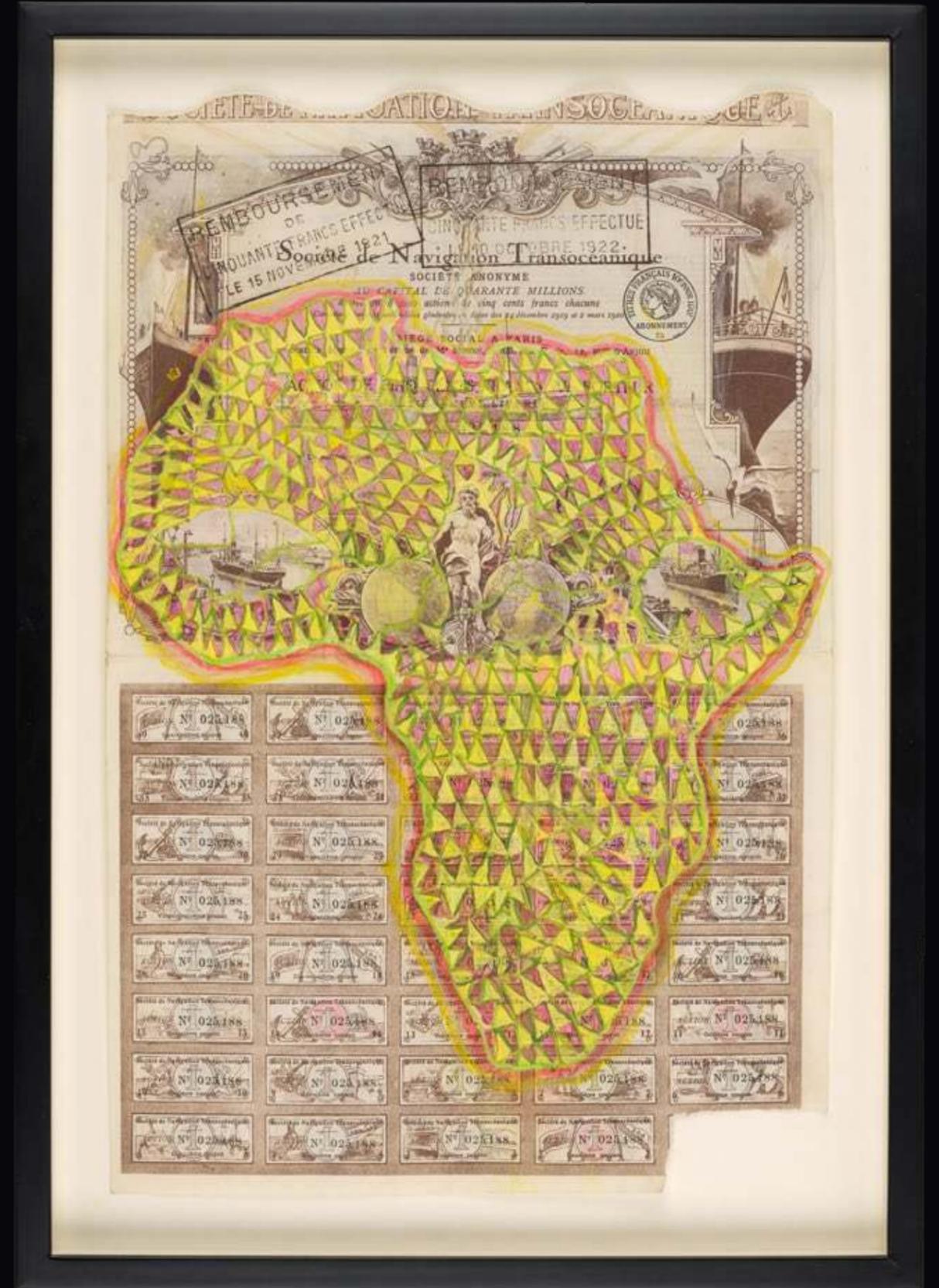
Hew Locke was born in Edinburgh in 1959 to artist parents Leila Chapman and Donald Locke who relocated from Guyana that year for Donald to begin a scholarship degree between the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh College of Art. Donald Locke's artistic legacy and contribution to the art scene in Scotland in the 1960s and 70s has been the subject of renewed attention in recent years and Heritage Collections have also acquired a number of sketches made during his studies (see **Re:Collect 2023** p. 13). The family moved back to Guyana in 1966 just as the country was establishing independence from British rule. Hew has recalled in these early years seeing banknotes and coats of arms being designed as part of efforts to establish a new national identity. A fascination with the ways different cultures fashion their identities through visual symbols has continued throughout his career.

Hew spent his formative years in Georgetown, Guyana before returning to the UK to study at Falmouth School of Art (1988) and the Royal College of Art, London (1994), a city he has lived in ever since. The lasting influence of these experiences can be seen in the three artworks that were acquired recently by Heritage Collections: *Churchill (New Look White)* (2008), *Sovereign 90* (2016) and *Société de Navigation Transocéanique 1* (2014).

Here, Hew reveals a hidden map of violence concealed by the corporate imagery of share certificates. A patterned image of the African continent is painted onto the share certificates of the *Société de Navigation Transocéanique*. This was a navigation company established in 1919 and based out of Paris which operated for around 50 years. Some of the named individuals connected to the company were ex-military, decorated for their involvement in French Military campaigns in Africa, while others had connections to colonial enterprises as well as financial services companies connected to Morocco, Madagascar and Cameroon (all former French colonies).

In all three of these works acquired this year, the artist's 'additions' or 'edits' point to the ways in which colonial legacies continue to haunt and shape our lives in the present.

Countless connections can be drawn between these works and the activities and research being undertaken across the University, especially into the University's own history and links to colonialism and slavery. The works were used almost as soon as they arrived here from London as part of a session led by the Art Collections Assistant Curator for the postgraduate course 'Modern and Contemporary Art of the Black Atlantic' within the School of History of Art directed by Dr Maryam-Ohadi Hamadani. The critical conversations that unfolded around close readings of these works by the students are a testament to the urgency of the questions prompted by Hew's works which ask us to consider more closely the power structures that lay hidden beneath the surfaces of our world.



# A year in figures

**10,642**  
Catalogue entries created

**9,096**  
Page views to Exhibitions.ed.ac.uk

**33**  
Virtual Reading Room appointments

**2,166**  
Hours spent conserving and preserving items

**112 to 17**  
Individual objects loaned  
Exhibiting venues

**1,971**  
Reading room appointments

**324**  
Linear metres of physical appraisals

**6,362**  
Hours spent to improve the context and environment our collections are housed in

**33**  
Conference papers and presentations by staff

**44,854**  
Views to the St Cecilia's Hall YouTube Channel

**1,137**  
Items produced for teaching

**6,179**  
Enquiries received and answered

**2,329**  
University websites appraised

**£434,500**  
Externally funded activity

**210**  
Items digitally preserved

**616**  
New Reader Registrations

**30,752**  
Digital images created of collection items

**1,676**  
Media Hopper views (Art Collection Moving Image channel and LHS Channel)

**33**  
Conference papers and presentations by staff

**2,571**  
Attendees at Heritage Collections events

**69**  
Oral history interviews uploaded

**118**  
Volunteers and student interns

**290**  
Classes taught on-site

**3,864**  
New accessions (incl. digital objects)

**419,693**  
Digital files appraised

**5,974**  
Items produced for the reading room

**13,740**  
Visitors to our public venues



# Advocate: Surfacing Voices from the Lothian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard

Louise Neilson, Project Archivist for LHSA

In April 2022, Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) launched their Wellcome Trust funded project, *Speaking Out*, which involved cataloguing and promoting the Lothian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (LGLS) collection.



Bus advertisement (c. 1997)

LGLS (1974-2009) was an activist-run mental and physical health service for LGBT+ people in the Lothians. It was the UK's first gay helpline and Scotland's first gay charity, and offered a unique listening and befriending service to anyone experiencing issues or difficulties in connection with their sexuality. The collection consists of records created by and collected by LGLS including administrative records, correspondence, call logs, evidence of campaigns and projects, publicity materials, and a large collection of records amassed by the team to help advise callers on a range of legal, social and health issues.

The project was led by Louise Neilson (Project Archivist, LHSA) and supervised by Louise Williams (Archivist, LHSA). Indexing work was also completed by Lauren McKay (Access Officer, LHSA). The balance of providing access and protecting confidentiality was at the heart of this project. Different methods were used depending on the specific characteristics of each record type, and

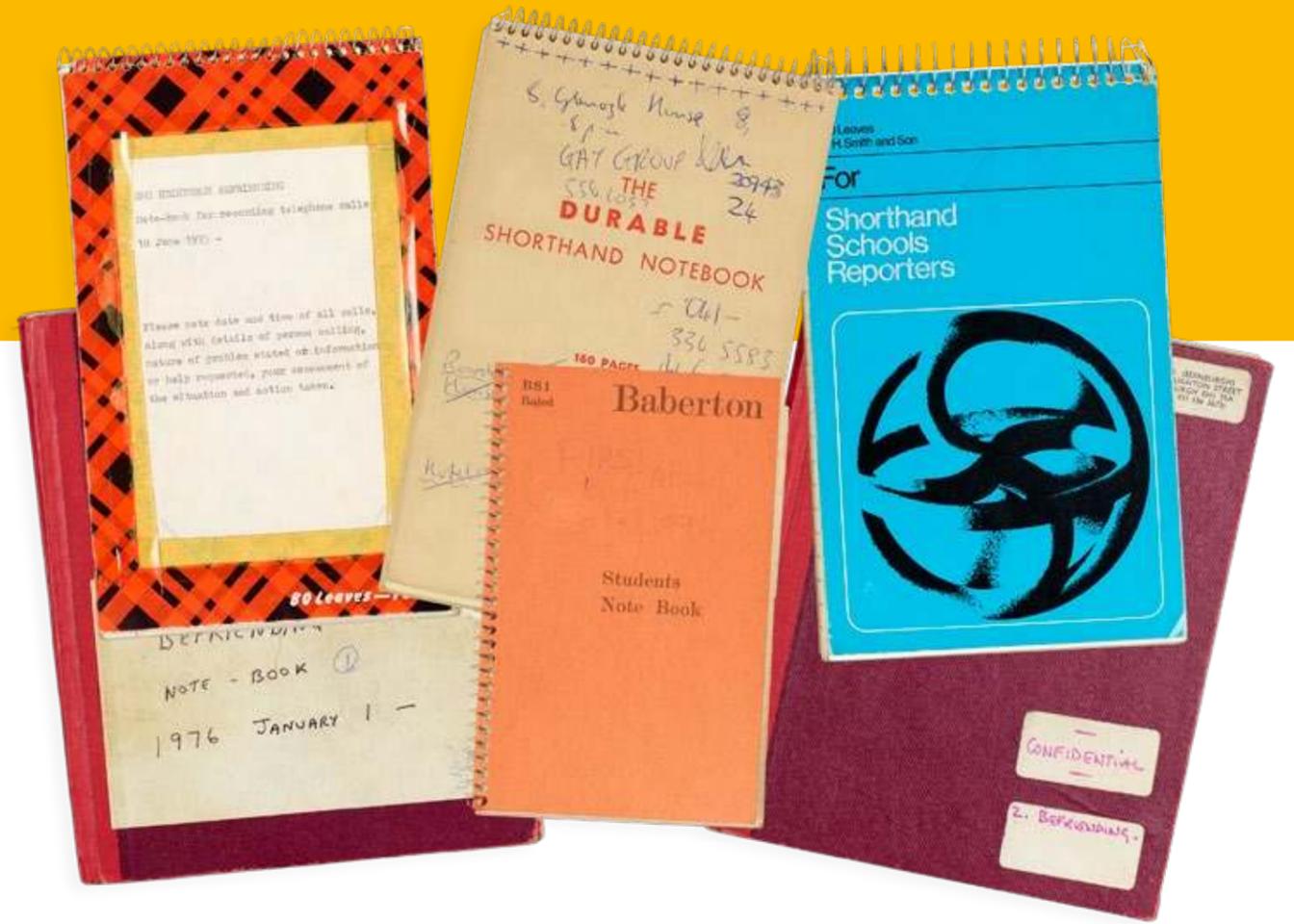
the collection has been opened up through cataloguing, rehousing, and selectively digitising. A combination of item-level cataloguing, trialling new storage methods, transcriptions, and anonymised databases has allowed us to feel confident that this significant collection can be accessed as far as possible while protecting the identities of those who used this confidential service.

Careful consideration of how to reflect outdated and potentially offensive language in this collection has resulted in a cataloguing methodology developed to ensure problematic language is flagged and defined.

In addition to the main cataloguing grant, support from the Scottish Public Engagement Network Wellcome Engagement Award supported a series of community workshops. Co-ordinator Eloise Birtwhistle led outreach events to engage local LGBT+ groups with the history of LGLS, and to help those who took part develop their writing and creative skills. Participants from both LGBT Health and Wellbeing's LGBT Age Project (aged over 50) and LGBT Youth Scotland (ages 13-25) were guided through a series of creative writing and zine making workshops. In each session participants discussed and created new works in response to LGBT+ experiences reflected in the LGLS collection and explored the themes of protest, safe/queer spaces, and queer animals.



LGLS Workshop with community members



The first six call logbooks used by Lothian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard volunteers, containing handwritten summaries of each conversation (1974-1976).

The workshops were designed to be informal and intergenerational and, by bringing together different age groups, we examined the past and the present and imagined the future. Those who took part were not expected to have any previous experience in writing or zine-making, nor were they expected to have consulted archive material. This project is an example of how creative workshops can help demonstrate the power of archives to stimulate discussions on contemporary experiences, and how they can work to break down barriers for community groups accessing archives in institutional settings.

Writing, zines and filmed footage from the workshops have been captured in an online exhibition and displayed alongside the collection items that inspired participants:

From Archives to the Future  
[www.exhibitions.ed.ac.uk/exhibitions/speaking-out](http://www.exhibitions.ed.ac.uk/exhibitions/speaking-out)

### IN THE WORDS OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS:

“From these workshops I've understood more about myself and how history is made or how it is recorded. And it's a ... personal development tool.”

“The creative writing for me has been great ... It's opened my mind and my soul, in a safe space.”

We are particularly proud that Louise's work on the '*Speaking Out*' project was recognised by the Archives and Records Association in August 2023 - Louise was named **ARA Record Keeper of the Year!**

# Study:

## Exploring Human Antiquity in the Charles Lyell Collection

Will Adams (MA Archaeology 2023), Research Intern

**M**y journey to a research focus on Charles Lyell has its serendipitous roots in my pursuit of a career in the heritage sector since the spring of 2022. Through contact with the Centre for Research Collections at the University of Edinburgh, I was referred to Heritage Collections' Student Engagement Officer, Serena Frederick, who was kind enough to meet with me and told me about their upcoming Summer School. It was at this summer school where I first heard of Charles Lyell and the recently acquired collection of his scientific notebooks through a presentation by the Strategic Projects Archivist, Pamela McIntyre.

Around this time, I also had made contact with Dr Gillian McCay, Curator of the Cockburn Geological Museum at the School of GeoSciences and started working as a volunteer with the geological collections. Gillian got me started on cataloguing and researching some of Charles Lyell's specimens and, looking to utilise my archaeology skills, she pointed me particularly to Lyell's flint axe heads.

In the background, Gillian and Pamela were beginning to work together to explore links between the Lyell archive and the specimens. Historical labels attached to the specimens indicated links – and in an effort to scope out more evidence, Pamela approached the School of History, Classics and Archaeology to establish if there were any Lyell related specimens in their collection; there were indeed several in their Vere Gordon Childe Collection.

My dissertation proved to be the golden thread, presenting the opportunity to investigate archaeological specimens that had been catalogued geologically, and attempting to link specimens originally collected together but now separated - both from one another and their original archival records.

Dr Catriona Pickard, Senior Lecturer in Archaeological Science and I agreed on a topic which focussed on the publication history of *Lyell's The Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man* (1863) and his contribution to the development of prehistoric archaeology. We decided that creating object biographies for a select number of flint objects would be beneficial.

Whilst writing my literature review, I was successful in applying for the Lyell Exhibition Research Internship, designed to assist in developing an exhibition in the Main Library Exhibition Gallery for October 2023 - March 2024. The internship allowed me the flexibility to focus on my studies - with a three-week break to complete and submit my dissertation, which was much needed! I found working within Heritage Collections teams facilitated deeper research towards my dissertation, whilst developing my skills in consulting original primary material, object handling, cataloguing, palaeography and transcription. Pamela helped massively in linking me to specialists such as Professors James Secord (Cambridge), Clive Gamble (Southampton) and



Will working on the upcoming Lyell exhibition with Prof. James Secord.

Mark White (Durham). By finding and then transcribing ten unpublished letters to Lyell and investigating three key correspondents, I explored Lyell's role in the human antiquity debate. I was able to conclude that whilst he contributed very little in terms of new research, his standing as a figure of authority in communicating new scientific research to the public was imperative to the acceptance of a human antiquity period. In creating object biographies for six of the archaeological specimens I was able to use the archive to connect them all as belonging to Lyell. I was able to identify two of these specimens as featuring in Lyell's ... *Antiquity of Man*.

I received a first-class mark for my dissertation and I am set to graduate this July with an MA Archaeology. Working with Heritage Collections during my dissertation allowed me to have knowledge of, and focus on, specific objects and sources held within the Sir Charles Lyell Collection which were crucial to my research. The internship has enabled me to work with a variety of materials and to develop my skills in information management and curation. I have particularly enjoyed cataloguing and researching the letters between Lyell and fellow researchers. This experience has also developed an interest in the history of archaeology and geology which I would be interested to pursue in further study. My time as the Lyell Exhibition Research Intern has been extended to continue developing the exhibition up to its release and I look forward to carrying on this fantastic experience within Heritage Collections.



Lyell's flint axe heads

# Engage:

## Heritage Collections and the Prison Communities

**Laura Beattie**, Engagement Officer (Communities)  
**Lesley Bryson**, Project Archivist for RESP  
**Caroline Milligan**, Project Archives Assistant for RESP

In the past year, Heritage Collections' Civic Engagement team developed a partnership with Fife College and the learning centres in Scottish Prisons, under the Civic and Social Responsibility strand of the University's Community Plan 2020-2025. Through this partnership, Heritage Collections staff delivered two pilot learning programmes, 'New Routes' - one at His Majesty's Prison & Young Offenders Institution Polmont and another at His Majesty's Prison Perth. These programmes were co-designed with the Fife College Learning Teams.

As a Young Offender's Institution, HMP & YOI Polmont had different requirements. Many of the young men there are on remand (awaiting their sentence) and may not be there for long. Many also have additional educational needs or who have not progressed beyond primary school education. Therefore, we created an eight-week programme which looked at a range of topics and collections including William Spiers Bruce's voyage to the Antarctic, fossils and fife in Scotland in the Carboniferous period and HIV and AIDS in Edinburgh which meant that learners could join in any week without having attended the previous weeks. It also allowed us to keep their interest by focusing on a range of topics.

Three sessions in this New Routes programme were run by the Regional Ethnology of Scotland Project (RESP) team, with the aim of introducing the participants to oral history by engaging them in conversation about their own experiences and memories using RESP material as a catalyst.

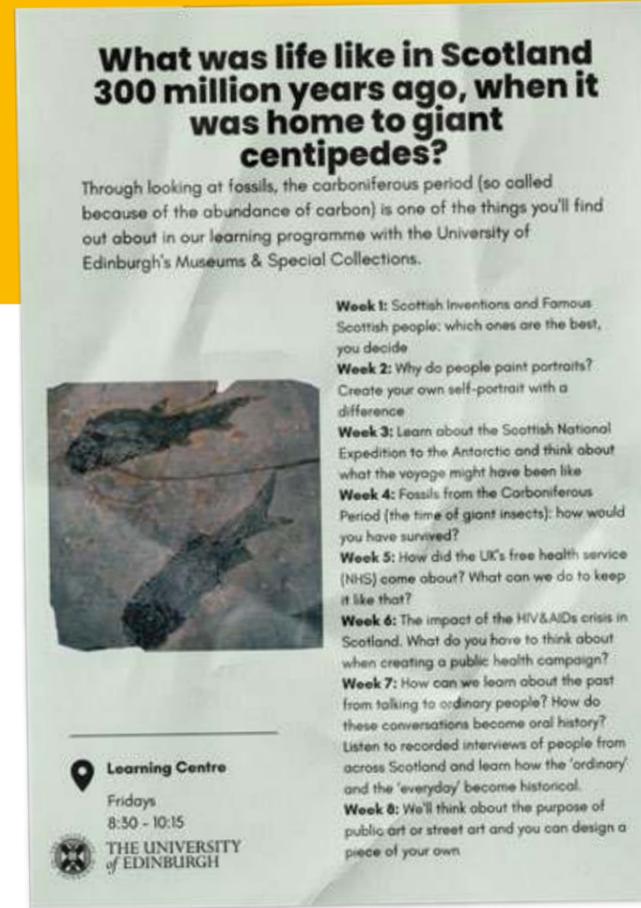
The team selected a series of images which represented very short extracts from the RESP Archive and asked participants to choose images that interested them. We then listened to the selected clips together and afterwards talked with the participants about their own thoughts and memories these recordings evoked.

Key to RESP's principles is the idea that we can learn about our shared cultural lives through talking to each other and providing opportunities for people to tell us stories from their lives: stories which are packed with valuable and unique details that otherwise might not make it into the historical record. Therefore, one of the primary aims of the sessions was to demonstrate that history is not all about politics, economics and famous figures, and to stress the equal importance oral history places on the participants' own life experiences.

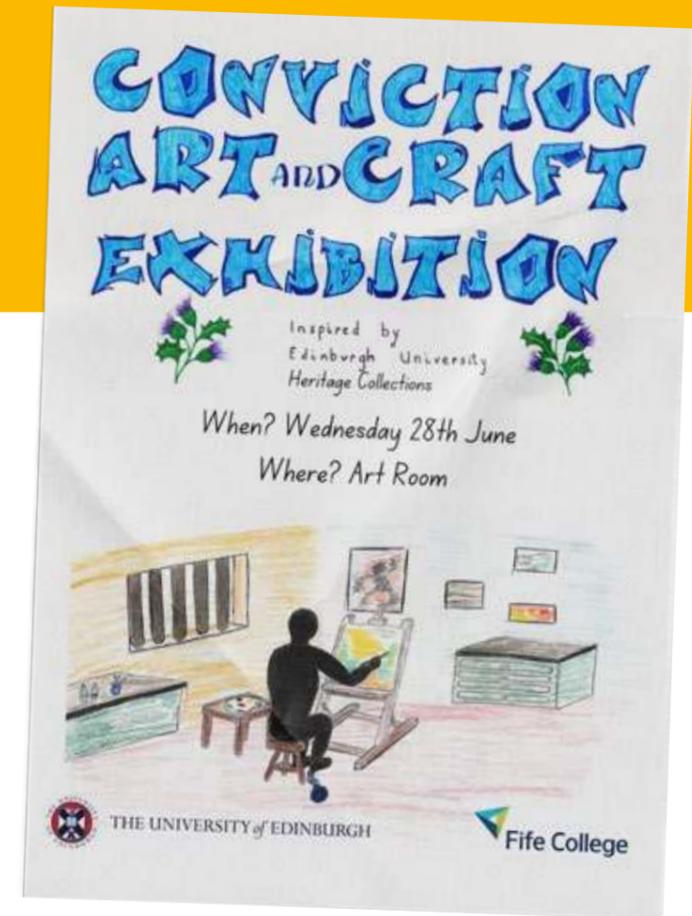
The team in HMP Perth were keen to do an art-based project with the same group of prisoners over a sustained period as they had many keen artists, and prisoners likely to be on longer-term sentences. Together we devised a programme that introduced prisoners to a range of objects from our musical instrument, rare book and art collections and worked with them to create their own pieces to be displayed in an exhibition. This exhibition was first held in the prison and then moved to the Reid Hall exhibition space in the central University campus in September 2023.



HMP Perth



Programme flyer



Exhibition poster

The sessions were very rewarding for the RESP team and particularly relevant because the prison population is one that the University has limited access to engage with and a community which is one of the most invisible and over-looked in terms of engagement.

The RESP team's aim was to give the participants confidence and skills to consider running their own oral history project and an increased awareness of how relevant they and their own life experiences are.

The New Routes programmes in these prisons continues into the 2023/24 academic year, as all involved have been enthusiastic about these programmes' ability to support individuals with barriers to employment and/or education gain the skills and confidence to progress to positive destinations.

**FEEDBACK FROM ONE OF THE LEARNERS:**

"I hope that Laura and more of her colleagues will be able to come back and do more and share more from the University's collections along with their knowledge and enthusiasm. I felt fortunate to have the chance to participate in the programme and I hope to do more in future. Thank you to all the presenters for their hard work, knowledge, inspiration along with their genuine respect and humanity."

# Exhibit:

## Resonating Histories

**Bianca Packham**, Engagement Officer (Exhibitions)

**D**rawing on the Sound Archive of the School of Scottish Studies Archives (**SSSA**), the 2023 summer exhibition *A Carrying Stream* developed around two goals: to widen access to an intangible collection through exhibition, and to create an experience that would take you beyond the Main Library Exhibition Gallery, across Scotland, through the sounds of its people and places. A quote by Hamish Henderson (1919–2002), a Scottish poet, songwriter, and Lecturer and Research Fellow at the SSSA provided a jumping off point for the project:

“Maker, ye maun sing them...  
Tomorrow, songs  
Will flow free again, and new voices  
Be borne on the carrying stream.”

HAMISH HENDERSON

Since the SSSA reopened in 2017 following refurbishment, there has been an increasing demand for creative exploration and reuse of the collection by new generations of artists. With the aim of foregrounding these “new voices”, the exhibition’s curators commissioned three local artists to develop work both incorporating and in response to field recordings from the collection.

Blair Coron, Fraser MacBeath, and Carla Sayer, who had previously worked with the collection, were invited to bring their individual artistic approach, and lived experiences to the project. Their works served as tributaries, converging to form the main current of the exhibition.



*Through the Mill*, Carla Sayer

Carla’s sound work *Through the Mill* introduces women from Dundee, Port Glasgow, Aberdeen and Peebles, spinning and strengthening a delicate, matriarchal thread between generations of women who worked in the mills of Scotland:

“As the maternal great-granddaughter of a mill-worker, I really hope this musical interpretation of their words can forge new connections to help us collectively think about how far we’ve come, bring to light what women went through to improve their pay and conditions, and how far we still have to go.”

CARLA SAYER

From the Isle of Lewis, Fraser explores the relationship between tradition and modernity and attempts to contemporise the archaic view of rural Scotland in his film *Mar gum biodh an teine air do chraiceann* (*As if the fire were on your skin*):

“This archive has been a cornerstone of my work since starting out. It not only inspires themes and helps solidify concepts, but what comes of combining these grainy, raspy, relics of Scotland with modern production practices is so much of what now characterises my work texturally. It’s been so great to work with it more closely, especially in interpreting a theme suited to how I grew up.”



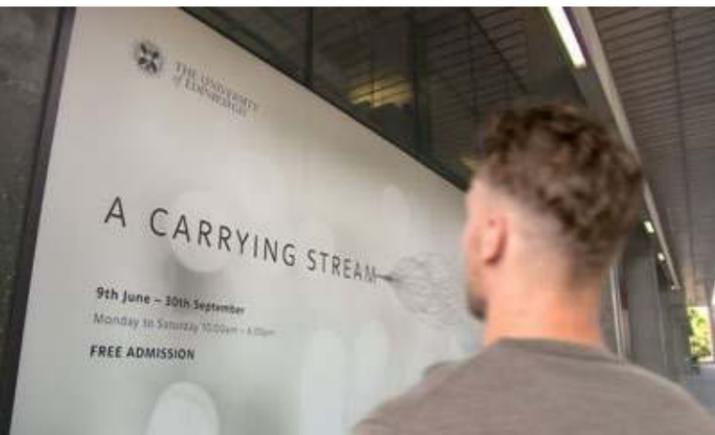
*The Sea Close By*, Blair Coron

Building on Blair’s previous work featuring SSSA material from the Highlands and Islands, his sound installation, *The Sea Close By*, revisits these collections:

“Being asked to work with the many lives found within these recordings again is such a joy, like revisiting dear old friends, inviting me once more into their living rooms for a cup of tea.”

From recollections of childhood, forgotten songs, stories of how the land has changed and formed, local folklore and the intricate moments of people’s lives, the Sound Archive provides a wonderful and vital way to learn of Scotland’s past... which cannot be found in the history books.”

All three commissions join the recordings that inspired them as new acquisitions for the SSSA. The exhibition runs from June 9<sup>th</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> 2023.



Main Library Exhibition Gallery, summer 2023



*Coble* by J. Valentine, 1882  
SSSA Photographic Archives



# Research:

## Returning Value to the Manuscripts of the Islamicate World and South Asia Collection

**E. Lucy Deacon**, World Cultures Curator (Arabic & Persian)

A year ago the Manuscripts of the Islamicate World and South Asia collection did not exist, well, not as it does now. In April 2022, research began into the provenance of what was then called the “*Oriental Collection*”. This comprised over 700 manuscripts in Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Sanskrit, Urdu and other South Asian languages together with Ethiopic, Malay and Tibetan items. Despite the origin of these objects being no further to the east than Edinburgh (just further south), the title “*Oriental*” had acted over time as a catch-all to express the fundamentally “non-Western” nature of these materials.



Deacon and Jake Benson (University of Manchester) at the May 2023 symposium

Overall, the provenance research showed the collection to be the legacy of the colonial period and to evidence the weighty role played by the Scots in the British Empire, the term “acquired” encompassing an array of *more or less* palatable transactions with host populations.

The question became what to do next? How do we take responsibility for that legacy on behalf of the University? There will not be an easy, or single, answer. But it is clear that neither the collection nor its history should remain hidden. Despite certain iconic items being well known to scholars, even academics and students from the relevant subject areas within our own university have been largely unfamiliar with the collection’s wider contents. With much of it uncatalogued, and the existing catalogue nearing a hundred years old, the obvious first step was to modernise finding aids and raise the collection’s visibility.

Working together Lucy Deacon, World Cultures Curator (Arabic and Persian), Aline Brodin, Cataloguing Archivist and Heritage Collections Metadata Lead, Sarah Abouzied, MIWSA Intern, and Heritage Collections Honorary Fellow Andy Grout have set about earnestly developing a new collection-level description on our online catalogue, ArchivesSpace. When we began, the collection page had cataloguing entries for five items; it will have over 400 by the end of summer 2023. The creation of this platform gave us the opportunity to publish the provenance information and, importantly, to rename and reshape the collection.

Due the intertwined nature of its contents, we have kept much of it together as the “*Manuscripts of the Islamicate World and South Asia*” collection. The Tibetan and Ethiopic items have been given new independent collection-level descriptions. We have held manuscript viewing sessions for staff and students from the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (**IMES**), the Schools of Divinity and History,

The provenance research fast revealed that whilst the grouping of these items by their “non-Westerness” was artificial, many do, in fact, have shared histories. Although having been slightly augmented through purchase, the vast majority of the collection came to the University through the donations of collections assembled by Scottish East India Company officials and soldiers. Many were alumni; some acquired dozens, even hundreds of manuscripts during their time in South Asia. The Turkish manuscripts were collected largely by a single missionary, in Astrakhan in the early nineteenth century. A substantial number of the Ethiopic items were acquired during the British Expedition to Abyssinia in 1868.



Sarah Abouzied, MIWSA Intern (right), discussing an al-Qur'an manuscript with a volunteer.

and History of Art within Edinburgh College of Art. Classical Persian Literature, and Critical Readings in IMES have recently incorporated use of the collection into their courses. Islam Through the Arts (**LLC**), Approaching World Objects (**ECA**), African Intellectual History, and Islamic Africa (**HCA**) plan to do so in the coming year. We have welcomed high school students through the Sutton Trust and in May 2023 we hosted a symposium on Islamicate manuscripts, bringing together speakers from across the British Isles, Europe, the Middle East and US. This event was hybrid and attended online by more than 200 people from locations including Turkey, Pakistan, India, Japan and Indonesia.

We have achieved much and whilst continuing to address the collection’s past we begin to contemplate its future...

How will people a hundred years from now see the collection? And how can we best shape it as a resource for them?

# Commission:

## *The School of Pedestrian Culture*

**Olivia Laumenech,**  
Assistant Art Collections Curator

*PBSA (Purpose Built Student Accommodation) - A SoPC x CRC Walk (2023),*  
Lucas Priest (The School of Pedestrian Culture)



Since 2012, the University of Edinburgh's Art Collection's Graduate Show Purchase Prize has been annually awarded to ECA students. A fixed fee is offered to each of the recipients and in return an aspect of their practice or degree show presentation enters the collection. In conversation with the Art Collection curatorial team, each graduating artist decides how they would like their work to be represented within the collection and what they decide the fee amount covers. To date, the work of over 100 graduates has been acquired through the Purchase Prize.

Lucas Priest was one of four ECA graduates to receive the Purchase Prize in 2022. Lucas's practice centres around *The School of Pedestrian Culture (SoPC)*, a participant driven 'walking classroom' that was developed during Priest's time at ECA. Through creating and delivering facilitated walking routes, SoPC aims to challenge the

way participants encounter public places and spaces. The walks foster an environment of exchange and dialogue that can lead to unexpected outcomes or learning, through the use of techniques such as play and psycho-geographic games.

The Art Collection curators worked with Lucas to acquire a walk created around the Fountainbridge area of Edinburgh. A set of instructions, images and the SoPC manifesto entered the collection. In addition to the acquisition, the curators also commissioned Lucas to create a new walk for the collection.

For the commission, Priest focused on student housing and purpose-built student accommodation (**PBSA**). Priest has described the walk as a journey in understanding 'studentification' (the gentrifying processes tied to the increased construction of student housing in University cities) as well as connected campaigns of community resistance to it.

The PBSA walk pivots around two main sites or buildings in the New Town/Bonnington and Leith areas of Edinburgh: Eyre Place and 106-156 Leith Walk (also known as 'The Red Sandstone Building'). These were chosen because they represented examples of community fight against 'studentification' in the city. Priest researched and developed this new site-specific walk over a number of months in 2022, and in February 2023 it was delivered as part of the Travelling Gallery exhibition *'Resistance in Residence'*. This exhibition

formed part of the Masters by Research (**MScR**) Collecting and Curating Practices Guided Research Placement.

As part of the commission, Priest developed printed materials and 'instructions' for a Facilitators' Kit designed to support the future iterations of this walk. These have been acquired, along with associated documentation.

Excitingly, since the delivery as part of the Travelling Gallery Show, the PBSA walk has been accepted into the Architectural Fringe and LeithLate programmes in June and July 2023. Priest facilitated the walk again as part of these two programmes in the city. Priest is also delivering six new walks during a residency with Art Walk Party as part of their Climate Café programme.

# Enquire:

## Connecting Contemporary Communities with Their Historical Past

Daisy Stafford, Research Services Supervisor  
Lily Mellon, Archive & Library Assistant

The diversity of our collections attract interest from researchers across the globe, whilst our remote access services allow them to engage with these collections in meaningful ways, even across significant geographical distances.

In February 2023, we received an enquiry about our John Levy Collection. Levy was a pioneering recorder who travelled widely throughout Asia, capturing the religious, folk, and indigenous music of these cultures. Following Levy's death in 1976, this ethnomusicological collection was donated to the School of Scottish Studies Archive (SSSA). Largely, this was due to the common contacts SSSA shared with Levy, the wider collecting community and the reputation it gained from preserving a rich, diverse sound archive based around traditional practices in Scotland.

The Levy Collection remains of great international importance, containing nearly 700 original field recordings, as well several thousand photographs, about 20 cine films, alongside Levy's corresponding fieldnotes. Several recordings are the sole extant documentation of musical genres/styles which have since disappeared or been radically transformed since they were captured.



Index cards  
John Levy Collection



Our enquirer, Jun-Lin (俊霖), was studying Taoist rituals and ceremonies from Hsinchu, Taiwan as part of his own personal religious practice. He had come across reference to Levy's archive within publications by Michael Saso and staff at SSSA were delighted to facilitate Jun-Lin's requests for more information and sources.

Over the following months, Lily, an Archive and Library Assistant, worked with Jun-Lin to locate and provide access to all relevant material to his Taoist sect. For example, the card index which compliments Levy's recording provided useful insight into the material recorded in Taiwan in 1964 and 1969.

With a greater understanding of what material was available, Lily set up appointments for the enquirer to listen to these recordings remotely from their temple in Hsinchu. These remote Streamer appointments soon became group listening sessions, as the enquirer was joined by members of his religious community who were equally fascinated by the recordings.

The audio recordings, alongside summaries of attached field notes, resulted in a fruitful exchange of information and an increased understanding of the material on both sides. Jun-Lin has confirmed which recordings refer to Taoist rituals, (rather than Buddhist), and provided some translations and significant names to look out for.



Taoist Priest and grandson of Zhuang Chen Dengyun (莊陳登雲) performs Daoist ceremonies at Zhulian Temple (新竹竹蓮寺) in Hsinchu, Taiwan.

*"I am really very grateful to you. The Taoist priests who heard the voices of the predecessors were very moved, and I was also very moved."*

JUN-LIN ZHU

The next step will be a Virtual Reading Room appointment which will allow Lin to remotely view Collections material such as letters from Levy's personal papers via our high quality visualiser. We are excited that this technology enables our enquirer to interact with these items but we also believe that his language skills and knowledge of Taoist practices will aid the long-term discoverability and accessibility of the Levy Collection for future researchers.

Throughout our correspondence, Jun-Lin has explained how historical changes in Taoist rituals, songs and culture have not been documented within Taiwan and how access to these unique recordings would impact him and his religious community. Indeed, the access our user gained can be considered a form of digital repatriation, connecting contemporary religious communities with their historical past.

Family members of contributors which Levy connected with in the 1960s still practice Taoist ritual in Hsinchu today, like the photo Lin provided to us during our conversations. Whilst SSSA was already aware of the cultural and historical significance of these unique recordings, Jun-Lin's request for access to this material has assisted in improving how we in Heritage Collections can understand and care for this collection. As a result, we're incredibly grateful to Jun-Lin for our ongoing conversations and joint detective work.

# Conserve: Striking a Chord

**Jonathan Santa-Maria Bouquet, Senior Conservator**

Ten interesting and historically important guitars, and an equally remarkable ukulele, were recently acquired for the University's collection, including a National Resonator guitar made in 1928, a Fender Telecaster (1956) and Stratocaster (1964), and a c. 1930s Gibson ukulele (for more information about these, see **Re:Collect 2023** p. 15). These are fantastic additions to our already notable guitar collection. However, the work doesn't end with their arrival on our shelves, it's only the beginning of their journey with us.

One of the first steps is through the musical instrument conservation studio at St Cecilia's Hall, where I undertake a detailed conservation assessment of each object to make sure they are in good condition. When dealing with musical instruments, this assessment must take into consideration the functionality of each object, that is, if they can and should be played. Additionally, in the case of these instruments in particular, the assessment also included testing the electronics and wiring to make sure it is safe to use them.

After the first assessment, if necessary, I generate a conservation treatment proposal. For these new (old) guitars, it was determined that all of them needed surface cleaning to be undertaken with smoke sponges, a soft cloth and soft brushes.



Cleaning the electronics, Fender Telecaster (1956)

For the electric guitars, the electronic components were cleaned with a smaller and harder brush and the components lubricated with machine oil. They were both missing one string, so they had to be replaced. This seems like a simple task, any music shop sells electric guitar strings, but these are 60-year-old instruments and strings have changed quite a lot in that time. It was important to find strings made with the right materials and to calculate the tension they generate to make sure it is not so great that it jeopardises the structure of the instruments. Once strung with new strings, and given the fact that maintaining their playability was established as one of the desirable outcomes, the set-up was adjusted. This means the height and length of each string was regulated and adjusted so the instruments can be played to the highest standard.

Similarly, the ukulele was strung with the wrong strings. When it was acquired, the ukulele had all nylon strings, but nylon was not invented when this instrument was made (the first nylon strings for guitars were invented in the mid-1940s). Instead, these were replaced with strings made of animal gut, manufactured using historically informed techniques. The sound of this little instrument with its new strings is much closer to that intended when it was first made, and it also tells the right story when on display.



The cleaning process, Gibson Ukulele (c. 1930s)



The cleaning process, Fender Telecaster (1956)

Lastly, and working in tandem with the curators, the new guitars will be integrated into the displays at St Cecilia's Hall. From a conservation viewpoint, this will involve making bespoke mounts, ensuring the instruments are supported safely, and monitoring the environmental conditions inside the cases so they are within pre-established standards.

There is, *indeed*, more to the preservation of our dynamic collections than meets the eye.



Guitar display  
St Cecilia's Hall

# Connect:

## Creating a Forum for University Histories

**Rachel Hosker**, University Archivist & Research Collections Manager  
**Daryl Green**, Head of Heritage Collections (Research & Curatorial)

Staff from across Heritage Collections have been actively involved in the development and rolling-out of the University’s Race Review, announced formally in June of 2022 by Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mathieson. Our staff are actively working with individual academics and student groups who are focusing on institutional histories as part of their research and activism, they are members of steering committees on **Gender.Ed** and **Race.Ed**, and some of our staff are directly participating in the research and engagement groups that are underpinning this Review.

However, it is our collections that have really started to surface as absolutely crucial to this ongoing introspection. As part of his announcement, Prof. Mathieson commented:

“The University of Edinburgh will benefit from an honest, factual and evidence-based analysis of the lessons we can learn from our past.”



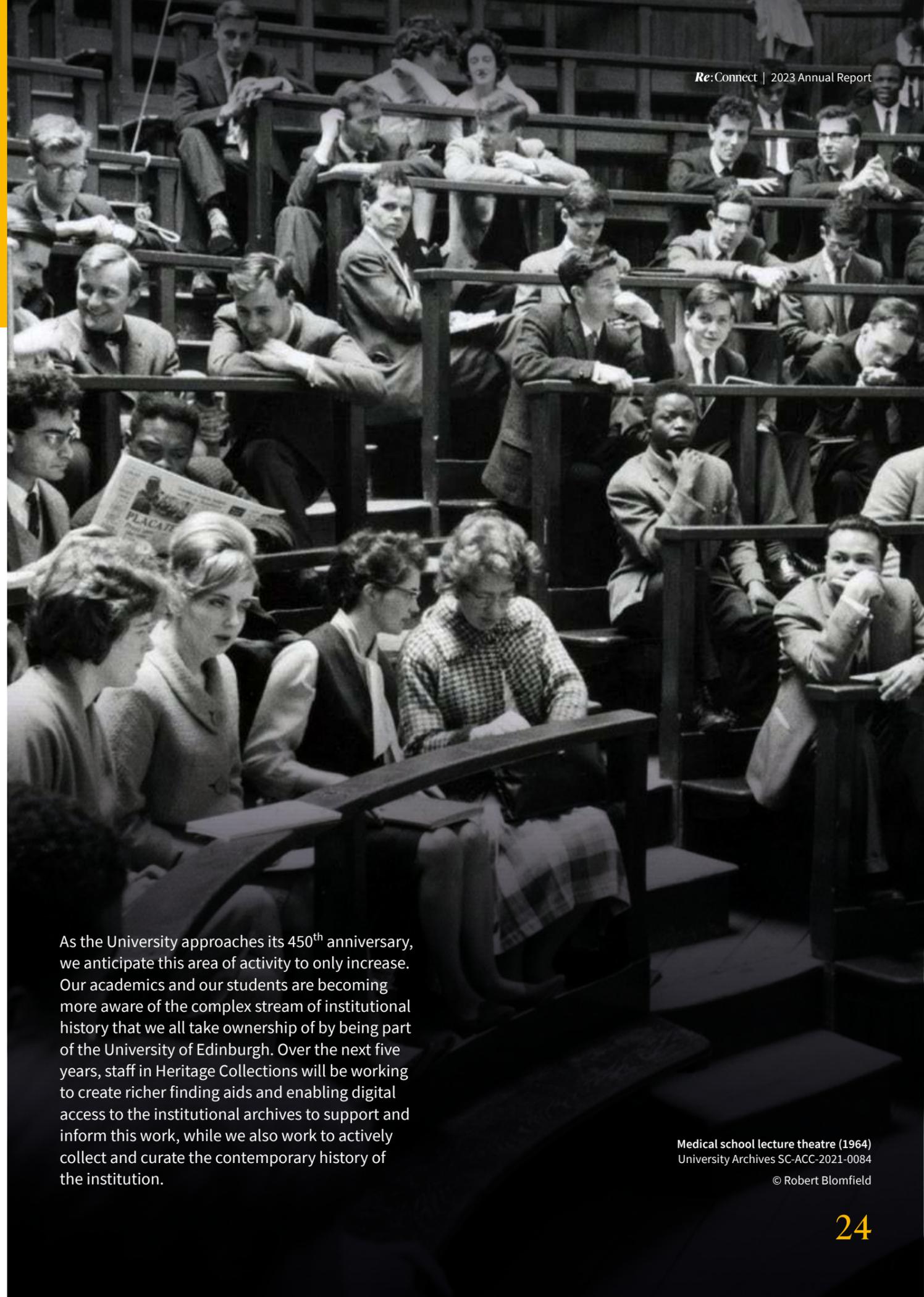
Women MCChB Graduates (1906)

The University’s Archive in particular is the primary source for the evidence of the University’s history, as well as its constituent institutions which have had a history of an independent school or college before joining the University (such Moray House School of Education, or ECA). Because the collections are the nexus point for a great deal of individual research, and because an increase in similar lines of enquiry were being put to our teams, a series of networking and research workshops were developed for the 2022/2023 academic year.

“*University Histories 1*” (December 2022) and “*University Histories 2*” (April 2023) were designed to bring together researchers and students, archivists and curators, as well as representatives from Race.Ed, Gender.Ed, Edinburgh Earth Institute and the University’s Review of Race and History, to present on their research, describe their research methods and to explore common lines of enquiry or data that had been gathered (such as tabulating the University’s financial records for the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Academics from across all three colleges attended this first workshop, which sparked conversations around access to materials, new research projects, and teaching opportunities and potential outputs, whereas the second workshop focused more on engaging with the developing Curriculum Transformation programme and on potential published outputs.



Participants in the *University Histories 2* workshop (April 2023)



As the University approaches its 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we anticipate this area of activity to only increase. Our academics and our students are becoming more aware of the complex stream of institutional history that we all take ownership of by being part of the University of Edinburgh. Over the next five years, staff in Heritage Collections will be working to create richer finding aids and enabling digital access to the institutional archives to support and inform this work, while we also work to actively collect and curate the contemporary history of the institution.

Medical school lecture theatre (1964)  
 University Archives SC-ACC-2021-0084

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## ORGANISATIONS WE SUPPORT

Our team are proud to serve their wider professions of Archivists, Librarians, Curators, Customer Service, Museums and Civic Engagement by being active members of local, national and international organisations, such as:

American Musical Instrument Society  
Archives & Records Association  
Assembly of Reviewers CoreTrustSeal Certification  
The Bibliographical Society  
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals  
Coimbra Group  
Curatorial Leadership in Collections (CLiC)  
Steering group of 'Documenting the HIV/AIDS epidemic: a survey of HIV/AIDS archives in England and Wales'  
Edinburgh Bibliographical Society  
Edinburgh Young Musicians  
Georgian Concert Society  
International Committee of Museums and Collections of Instruments and Music  
International Federation of Library Associations  
London Museum Documentation Network  
Musical Instruments Resource Network  
NHSL Charity Arts Advisory Group  
NHSS RM Forum  
Personalised Care Interprofessional Education Group  
Preserving Complex Digital Objects Group  
Rare Books in Scotland  
Research Libraries UK  
Scotland and Medicine Partnership  
Scotland Rep Group for Education in Museums  
Social Prescribing on Campus (**SPOC**) Global  
University Museums in Scotland  
Una Europa  
UNESCO International Memory of the World Register  
UNESCO UK Memory of the World Register  
The Wallace Collection Ensemble  
Web Archiving and Preservation Working Group of the Digital Preservation Coalition

## HERITAGE COLLECTIONS



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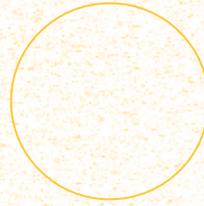
### Centre for Research Collections

Main University Library  
George Square  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9LJ

### St Cecilia's Hall Concert Room & Music Museum

50 Niddry Street  
Edinburgh  
EH1 1LG

Selected photography by Laurence Winram  
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