

The Unknown Naomi Mitchison

The speaker at our February meeting was Dr Moira Burgess. Born in Campbeltown, now living in Glasgow, she is a graduate of this university with a Ph.D. on supernatural and mythical elements in the works of Naomi Mitchison, the subject of her talk. Dr Burgess has herself already a

considerable number of publications to her name, and is now engaged on an huge project to produce a seven-volume edition of Mitchison's essays and journalism.

Her enthusiasm for her subject was infectious and revived an interest in Mitchison in the slightly larger than usual audience.



Abstract:

Naomi Mitchison (1897-1999) published about 90 books in her lifetime. Many are now being reissued by the publisher Kennedy & Boyd in their Naomi Mitchison Library (see their website www.kennedyandboyd.co.uk) and the series will introduce works by Mitchison hitherto overlooked or completely unknown.

First, two typescripts of an unpublished book have been found in the Mitchison archive in the National Library of Scotland: an early version, *Cousin James*, and a heavily revised, still rough copy, *Hide and Seek*. It is a history of Mitchison's mother's family, but the *Hide and Seek* version refers back frequently to Mitchison's own life, effectively a further instalment of her memoirs.

Second is an edition of Mitchison's essays and journalism: material published in newspapers and periodicals, but never reprinted since its first appearance. Since she wrote about all aspects of her life, this too complements her published memoirs, as well as illuminating social history from the 1920s to the 1980s. Each thematic volume will contain around a hundred pieces, together with explanatory notes and glossary, illustrations and an index.

The seven volumes planned are:

- 1: *Early Years*;
- 2: *Carradale* (published November 2009 by Kennedy & Boyd);
- 3: *Scotland*;
- 4: *Africa*;

- 5: *Travel writing*;
- 6: *Literature and book reviews*;
- 7: *Miscellaneous* (pieces impossible to fit into the thematic volumes, or which have turned up too late for their proper volume). This volume will include a cumulated index for the whole series.

Mitchison's writing in these pieces, as in her books, is individual, outspoken, humorous and unfailingly readable, and the series, like the memoir *Hide and Seek*, will, it is hoped, increase awareness of this great Scottish writer.

Moira Burgess

PROFILES



8. Betty Knott-Sharpe

Betty Knott-Sharpe came to Glasgow University in 1953 as a 'humble' Assistant in the Humanity Department, as it was then called, i.e. Latin. Her speciality was the history and development of the Latin language. This led to her appointment as lecturer then senior lecturer in Humanity and Comparative Philology. Her interests broadened to include Vulgar, Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Latin. She has spent much of

the last forty years translating and commenting on various Erasmus works with side excursions into Medieval liturgical texts, emblems, legal and even botanical Latin! Not surprisingly, most of this has only been achieved since early retirement in 1985 which fortunately required her to spend long happy hours consulting Latin and Greek texts in wonderful Special Collections. It is for this reason she is pleased to be a member of the FGUL committee.



Note from the Editor *Priscilla Barlow*

While the economy may be shrinking, we are happy to record that the Newsletter is expanding. Continuing our policy of including articles as well as reporting the Friends' activities, we now unveil our first 6 page issue. We hope you find it an entertaining

and informative read. We believe that a 'Letter to the Editor' column would be an additional attractive feature; so please e-mail your comments/suggestions for articles to psbarlow@talktalk.net OR write c/o The Clerk to the Friends, University

of Glasgow Library, Hillhead Street. We have had a good year with attendance at talks by John Cairney and Moira Burgess being larger than usual. Remember that your guests are welcome to the talks. Enjoy summer.

The Glasgow Incunabula Project

The University Library's holdings of 15th-century printed books are the finest in Scotland - around 1,000 volumes (compared with ca. 600 incunabula at the National Library of Scotland, ca. 230 incunabula at Aberdeen University Library and ca. 500 at Edinburgh University Library). This forms the basis of the Glasgow Incunabula Project, which was begun in January this year, and is

founded on work done over a period of many years by Jack Baldwin, a former Keeper of Special Collections. We have invited Jack to return to the Library as an honorary researcher in incunabula to work closely with my colleague Julie Gardham.

The aims of the project are two-fold:

1. To create a web-based catalogue of all Glasgow University's 15th century imprints, providing the fullest detail on their copy-specific elements - previous ownership information, early manuscript annotations, bindings, decoration (e.g. illuminated initials). This catalogue will also be extensively illustrated, with full indexes, and be preceded by a lengthy introduction.
2. To thoroughly revise and correct the now largely superseded descriptions in the on-line Library catalogue, which were made in the 19th or early 20th century.

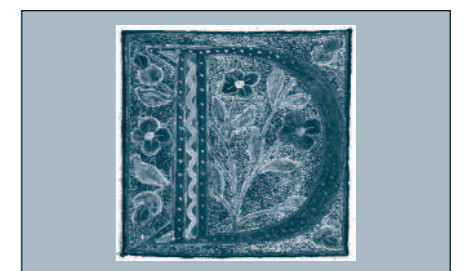
At the time of writing, research has been completed on some 150 incunabula, and already there are important findings, particularly with regard to earlier owners. For example, the Glasgow copy of

Angelo Poliziano, *Opera* (Venice, 1498) belonged to the humanist scholar Paschasius Berselius of Liège, a correspondent of Erasmus; a copy of Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta*, (Venice, 1471) was once owned by François Bonivard, 16th-century Swiss patriot and hero of Byron's poem *The Prisoner of Chillon*.

The project is in its initial stages and there is much still to do; it is estimated that it will take around three to four years to complete. We are much indebted to Jack Baldwin both for his commitment to the project and for his generosity in devoting so much of his time to it.

Please note: it is possible already to view hundreds of images from our incunabula on flickr by typing in the words Glasgow and incunabula.

David Weston:
Keeper of the Special Collections



News from the Library *Helen Durndell: Head Librarian*

The Library is approaching the conclusion of another busy academic year. In April 2010 there was an increase of +7% over April 2009 in visits to the library. Average seat occupancy throughout the year is 67%, but during the peak exam time it was hard to find any empty seats.

The Library has been shortlisted in the Times Higher Education Leadership & Management Awards, in the 'Library Team' category – winner to be announced on Thursday 17th June. Our entry (abridged version below) highlighted various aspects of library services:-

Digital Environment

Embedding services into networked social spaces via blogs, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. A specific example is our 'Library on Demand' service which has short, frequently updated videos on YouTube covering everything from finding books to detailed search tips for databases.

Special Collections and Archives are simultaneously digitising and pushing content out to new and existing users through social networking sites such as Flickr and the Library blog.

Library Space

The upper floors of the library have been redeveloped with the traditional scholar in mind. Further down the building there are the most recent developments, notably a complete reshaping of the Library's Study Hall into a hugely successful group study area with a café and a variety of group study spaces, including pods and booths with LCD screens.

Having the space is not enough – students need and demand access to that space. The building is open from 0715-0200 daily.

Open Access and Research Management

Library staff are currently working closely with the University's Research



Office, IT Services and Academic Departments to develop the institutional repository, Enlighten, as a key system for supporting research management. One area for development is linking publications with research funding, to demonstrate to funders which publications have resulted, and that these publications are openly available.

The Backing of our Students

The Library consistently performs well in national student surveys. In the recent The Student Experience Poll, the Library was ranked second highest in the UK. In the 2009 National Student Survey the Library was highest placed in Scotland.

I'll let you know whether we win!

Theses Milestone *Moira Sinclair*

There are now more than 1000 theses in the Glasgow Theses Service (<http://theses.gla.ac.uk>), of which over 869 have freely available full text. This is a great achievement, and much of the credit must go to Marie Cairney and the E Theses team based in Bibliographic Services, who deal with the deposit of theses on a daily basis as well as the associated queries from students and supervisors. You may be interested to know that the download statistics for our theses are very high - the most popular thesis has been downloaded more

than 37,000 times! Our five most popular theses are:

Bedigan, Kirsten M. (2008) *Boeotian Kabeiric Ware: the Significance of the Ceramic Offerings at the Theban Kabeirion in Boeotia.*

Al-Ahmadi, Fatheya Mahmood (2008) *The Development of Scientific Thinking with Senior School Physics Students.*

Abuelmaatti, Ali (2008) *RF Techniques for IEEE 802.15.4 Circuit Design and Device Modelling.*

Rae, Norman G. D. (2007) *Reinventing Geopolitical Codes in the Post-Cold War World with Special Reference to International Terrorism.*

McCulloch, Euan (2008) *Experimental and Finite Element Modelling of Ultrasonic Cutting of Food.*

As well as the theses being deposited by current students we are also adding older theses that have been digitised via the ETHOS Service (<http://ethos.bl.uk>).

An Extra Interesting Date for your Diary

David Weston, Keeper of Special Collections at the University, will give an illustrated talk to the Old Glasgow Club on **TREASURES OF GLASGOW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY** on Thursday 10th March 2011 at Adelaide's, 209 Bath Street, Glasgow at 7.30pm. The club meets there monthly and visitors welcome. www.oldglasgowclub.org.uk

James McNeill Whistler: The Etchings. A Catalogue Raisonné

Professor Margaret F. MacDonald: History of Art

The collections in the Library include an extraordinarily comprehensive and wide-ranging variety of material relating to Whistler, (1834-1903).

Influenced by his 1903 University Honorary Doctorate, Whistler's sister-in-law and executrix Rosalind Birnie Philip, donated art works and memorabilia to the University in 1935. In 1955 she donated letters, documents and publications. In 1958 she added a huge bequest including the contents of Whistler's studio which contained major paintings, unfinished sketches, paint-boxes, a dining table, Whistler's largest 'cartoon' of fighting Peacocks and his smallest sketch-books.

Over the years many exhibitions and publications have been based on this wealth of material, including the catalogue raisonnés of Whistler's oil paintings (1980), watercolours, pastels and drawings (1995), exhibitions including the 2003 centenary celebrations, and major on-line resources including the Whistler Correspondence, (at <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>) incorporating some 9000 documents.

With all this material as foundation, the Whistler Etchings Project was established in 2004, funded mainly by the AHRC, with generous

sponsorship from other Foundations and art dealers. A catalogue raisonné of Whistler's 500 etchings, drypoints and mezzotints will be published on-line in September 2011. The website at:

<http://etchings.arts.gla.ac.uk/> is already available and includes an exhibition, based on a 'work in progress show' in the Hunterian and Lady Lever Art Gallery in Liverpool in 2009.

The project benefits from close cooperation between many prestigious collections including the Hunterian, the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington DC, and Art Institute of Chicago. Our team includes art historians, a computer consultant, print historian, and ground staff. First we decide if a work is by Whistler or not! Then we record all possible information on each of some 9700 impressions of 500 etchings. The number of impressions can vary from few to 50. We distinguish different 'states' of etchings, as Whistler corrected and developed his subject. Then we write about the



history, exhibitions, sales, technique, subject and composition- telling the full story of each etching. 500,000 words so far, and very glad that the product will be on-line, and fully illustrated, showing the intricate details of etchings in a way that is impossible by any other means (except having the actual print and a microscope, in a well-lit print room!)

We have to establish the identity of sitters e.g. 'Finette', can can dancer; Miss Grimley, a seamstress; Whistler's son Charlie; 'Fusco' a male model. We also try to identify views, sometimes visiting sites. (There was competition amongst the team to check Venice and Brussels....) Other sources include old photographs, post office directories and (a wonderful resource!) Google; the site of an etching of bird cages, identified as a shop on the Pimlico Road London, was dated by a playbill for *The Amber Heart* starring Ellen Terry. Such discoveries illuminate works which still stir and excite me after studying Whistler's work for 40 years!

