

The School of *SCOTTISH STUDIES*

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At this noteworthy stage in the life of the School of Scottish Studies when it makes its first corporate venture into print, it is appropriate that something should be said of its origins and purpose. It came into being at Edinburgh University as a result of conversations between Heads of Departments in the Faculty of Arts who, being themselves concerned more or less directly with things Scottish in the exercise of their normal duties, considered that there was a need for an institution which would view Scotland as a whole. Such an institution would, they believed, not only integrate existing studies, of necessity fragmentary and independent, but give them wider relationships and a fuller content by undertaking others which, for lack of any place in the academic curricula and consequently of any body responsible for their pursuit, had been hitherto largely if not entirely neglected by the University.

In a document placed before the Senatus of the University on 10th May 1950, the founding of the School was advocated and the following activities and fields of investigation proposed:

- A. Archæology;
- B. A compilation of information upon which maps of prehistoric and historic Scotland could be based;
- C. The collection of place-names from both documentary and oral sources, and the organisation of a place-name archive;
- D. The collection of oral traditions of all parts of Scotland and the organisation of an equivalent folklore archive for these;
- E. Study of the structure of the European and other affinities of music in Scotland;
- F. The integration of intensified field studies in social anthropology with the rest of the work of the School;
- G. The co-ordination of the study of Scots Law in relation to the other studies in the School.

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This important document was much more than a piece of pious aspiration. It contained not only a considered and authoritative preamble that stressed the academic importance of the scheme, but also a careful study of ways and means for the initial stages of the School and its future development, the fundamental problem of staff and housing receiving particular attention. The Senatus of the University Court gave the project their approval, and the School of Scottish Studies was founded and, with the generous aid of the Carnegie Trust, given a staff and a home.

The home is at Nos. 27 and 28 George Square, two houses which also accommodate in convenient contiguity the Linguistic Survey of Scotland, and the two dictionaries, the Scottish National and that of the Older Scottish Tongue.

The present staff consists of a Secretary-Archivist; Collectors for Folklore, Folk-song and Folk-music, both Celtic and Scots, and Material Culture; workers in Social Anthropology and Place-name Study; and a technical staff consisting of a Manuscript Indexer, Technician, Draughtsman-Illustrator, and Secretary-Typist. The staff is responsible to a Committee composed of specialists in the above fields, presided over by a Convener.

As a result of the collection and investigation conducted hitherto, an almost unsuspected wealth of material has been discovered. The collecting has far outstripped the work of indexing and cataloguing, to say nothing of interpretation. The material is so plentiful and the opportunities for fruitful research so numerous, that more workers both in the field and in the archives are needed. Moreover, with the existence of the School, located though it is in Edinburgh, there is a great opportunity for work in association with the other universities of Scotland. In the minds of the founders this aspect of collaboration with interested departments in other universities was of the greatest importance, and it is a matter of great regret that hitherto so little by way of collaboration has as yet been achieved. It is much to be hoped that, as the School becomes better known, and the importance of its work and aims more widely realised, such co-operation will be forthcoming. It is surely a matter to be welcomed by all scholars, and particularly by Scots scholars wherever they may reside, that Scotland has at long last taken her place between Ireland and Scandinavia in the systematic investigation of north and north-west European culture, a study to which, by her history and geographical position, she can make a unique and most valuable contribution.