

INTRODUCTION TO NEW SERIES

With this issue, Volume I of a New Series, *Northern Scotland* makes a fresh start. Launched in 1972 by the Centre for Scottish Studies in the University of Aberdeen, *Northern Scotland* has been published by Aberdeen University ever since. Now this has changed. Ownership of the title has been transferred to a company limited by guarantee, Northern Scotland Journal Ltd, trading as Northern Scotland, and – starting with this issue – the periodical will be published annually by Edinburgh University Press.

Northern Scotland Journal Ltd is, in essence, a joint venture by the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen and the UHI Centre for History. Based in Dornoch, Sutherland, the Centre for History is part of the UHI Millennium Institute, the prospective University of the Highlands and Islands. One of us, James Hunter, is director of the Centre for History; the other, Marjory Harper, Reader in History at Aberdeen, is presently seconded to the Centre on a part-time basis. Between us, then, we represent both Aberdeen University and UHI. In the closely collaborative way that *Northern Scotland* has been reconstituted, we discern tangible proof that our two institutions are committed to endeavouring jointly to promote the study of history and related subjects in the part of Scotland where they are located.

In their preface to the first issue of *Northern Scotland*, our distinguished predecessors, Malcolm Gray and Donald Withrington, both of whom we were privileged to know, stated: ‘*Northern Scotland* will concentrate on that area of the Scottish mainland which lies to the north and west of a line drawn roughly from Montrose to Fort William, together with the Western and Northern Isles’. In order to include all the localities associated with UHI and its partner colleges, we have advanced this frontier just a little – to take in all of Perthshire together with Argyll and Bute. But we need make no modification to *Northern Scotland*’s aims as outlined by Malcolm and Don: ‘The journal will deal primarily with those living in the region in both the remote and the recent past; but it will also look outward at times to other areas and to other countries, and to those wider reflections of the north of Scotland created by those who have settled in other societies but have not entirely lost there the marks of their origins’. That last point is particularly appropriate in the context of this issue which consists mainly of articles that began life as papers delivered at a successful three-day international conference at Eden Court Theatre, Inverness, in October last year – this conference, ‘Scotland’s Global Impact: How one small country

Northern Scotland 1, 2010, 1–2

DOI: 10.3366/E030652781000002X

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changed the world', having been one of the signature events of Scotland's Year of Homecoming. And if the content of the conference was in accord with *Northern Scotland's* mission as defined in 1972, so was the manner in which 'Scotland's Global Impact' brought together specialists and non-specialists, historians and non-historians. *Northern Scotland* was intended by its founders to deal with the life of its region in all its aspects – 'treating such issues as the economy, religious organisation, education, language and literature, folklore, population movements and social structure'. Hence the welcome extended by Malcolm Gray and Donald Withrington to 'archaeologists, geographers, economists [and] sociologists' as well as to 'historians in the traditional and conventional sense'. While being very much historians in the traditional sense ourselves, we too are anxious to make clear that *Northern Scotland* is not, and should never become, the preserve of a single discipline.

Much has changed in the northern half of Scotland since 1972. Developments such as offshore oil and its associated onshore activities have transformed economies – and a great deal more besides – across our area, most notably in Shetland, in Aberdeen and in Aberdeen's ever more extensive hinterland. Other factors too have been at work. In the Highlands and Islands, where in 1972 depopulation had been continuous for more than a century, far more people have of late been moving in than moving out – with the result that the region's total population is up by more than 20 per cent while the population of some localities, such as Skye, has grown by 50 per cent or more. But the extent – the welcome extent in our view – to which people from elsewhere have been setting up home in the north of Scotland has in no way diminished, indeed has arguably served to stimulate, public interest in the history of our area. A key aspect of the *Northern Scotland* mission as defined originally lay in its editors' wish to forge links between academic historians and the local history community – a community which was flourishing in the north of Scotland in 1972 and which is today in an even healthier condition. Everywhere one looks from Unst to Kintyre, or from Peterhead to Barra, there continues to be growing interest – reflected in a proliferation of societies and groups of every kind – in local history, in family history, in heritage. While *Northern Scotland*, in its new guise, aspires to be a quality academic journal, with a widely-drawn editorial board which will insist rightly on the maintenance of the sort of standards that can only come through peer review and other editorial controls of that sort, both of us are every bit as committed as were Malcolm Gray and Don Withrington to what they called 'scholarly local history'. Ideally, we should like *Northern Scotland* to serve the interests of the wider north of Scotland public as much as – indeed more than – it serves the interests of those of us obliged by our academic roles to write with at least one eye to the next Research Excellence Framework exercise. We hope and believe this is an attainable objective.

Marjory Harper and James Hunter