

SCOTLAND AT THE SMITHSONIAN: BEYOND THE CULTURAL CRINGE?

Deirdre MacMahon

Three kitchies o the warld hae met
The meal an ale we'll nae forget
We hope the sun'll niver set
On friendships made in Washington
Aroon the warld it's gweed tae myne
Yer culture's fit ye sudna tyme
The future's bigged on Auld Lang Syne
Oor thanks tae the Smithsonian.

(from 'Salute tae the Smithsonian' by Sheena Blackhall)

'Getting past the Cringe' was the title of a talk Susan Stewart, First Scottish Officer at the British Embassy in Washington, gave at a seminar on 'Cultural Tourism' in Glasgow.¹ 'Tartan Day' (since 1997), the ever-popular Highland Games and many Celtic festivals are only the tip of the iceberg of a huge reservoir of goodwill towards Scotland in the US. Recent efforts to market Scotland abroad have targeted these American events, but have also included a major series of promotional events in Sweden² and in Catalonia.³ The

Deirdre MacMahon works as an arts organiser and consultant all over Scotland. Originally from Ireland, she has lived in Edinburgh since 1980. Her trip to Washington DC was partly funded by a bursary from the Scottish Arts Council National Lottery Professional Development Fund.

¹ Susan Stewart, 'Getting past the Cringe', paper given at the 'Cultural Tourism: Selling Scotland's Culture Abroad' seminar at the University of Glasgow, 3 February 2003.

² 'Presiding Officer to Represent Parliament at 'Scotland in Sweden'', *Scottish Parliament, Parliamentary Press Release, 16 October 2002.*

Scottish Affairs

Venice Biennale 2003 heralded its first independent Scottish contribution,⁴ focusing on contemporary visual art. Are we getting beyond the Scottish cultural cringe? This article attempts to answer the question by concentrating on Scotland's presence at the Smithsonian Festival of Folklife which highlighted the traditional arts and ran on the National Mall, Washington DC, from 25 to 29 June and 2 to 6 July 2003.⁵

THE PATH TO THE SMITHSONIAN

Several years before Scotland's Parliament reconvened after that long hiatus, I met Dr Nancy Groce at Celtic Connections in Glasgow. Both of us were flitting between the city and Edinburgh by bus in the wee small hours and we found we had lots to talk about. An interest in traditional music was our starting point but, as time went on, our conversations dipped into many other topics related to cultural identity. We did not always agree – we still don't – but the connection we made then led me to Washington's Mall last summer to see 'Scotland at the Smithsonian' in action. For me it was an essential last step to round off this unusual journey. As one of Nancy's sounding boards for her early, tentative ideas, and later, as a researcher and member of the advisory committee when the plans took more shape, it was really important for me to see how it all worked in the end. Because the impetus for this event came from outside Scotland, I wondered how true it would be to the real traditional folk world and, indeed, if we really knew what that 'folklife' is in the first place. I found some answers there, and plenty more questions.

My overriding impression was that our artists, craftspeople, musicians, storytellers and ordinary folk are among the best you will find anywhere. There were many specialists I feel we sorely missed on this occasion, but I

³ See Cameron Simpson, 'Catalonia pays welcome homage to a Scots invasion', *The Herald*, 22 September 2003.

⁴ See Jennifer Johnston, 'Venice exhibition will put Scots artists on world stage', *Sunday Herald*, 12 January 2003.

⁵ See Stacey Shackford and Elizabeth McMeekin, 'Chapter, verse and sporrans on Scots heading stateside', *Sunday Herald*, 22 June 2003; Martin Williams, 'Thousands flock to US tartan tour', *The Herald*, 27 June 2003; also, from a more peripheral perspective, Hans J. Marter, 'Artists get ready for US culture festival', *The Shetland News*, 31 May 2003.

Scotland at the Smithsonian: Beyond the Cultural Cringe?

hope we can put that right the next time Scotland presents its folklife to the world. A consensus is emerging at a political level that Scotland must follow the lead this festival has given by embracing its traditional artists as some of the finest cultural ambassadors money can buy. For many of the artists represented in Washington DC last year their work is already well-established in an international marketplace, and yet up to now support for their endeavours has been hard to identify within Scotland itself. Dr Nancy Groce put it this way:

There's this great middle ground of absolutely solid people working well within their tradition, modifying it to be viable and making it an economic resource for the twenty-first century and they seem to be getting very little assistance, if I might say so from an outsider's view. This sort of festival can focus attention on those people, who are really the ones who are going to keep the tradition alive long after the people who do jazz, go into hip-hop or whatever else is trendy ... they're the ones who are going to make Scotland unique.

TARTAN TAT VS. CULTURAL TOURISM

I doubt if anyone at VisitScotland has ever stopped to ask why the Edinburgh Military Tattoo packs the punters in night after night during the Festival each summer. I imagine they, like many others, marvel that it sells out each year even before it starts. While its success can be a source of frustration for those of us who struggle to present a positive image of Scotland's varied and diverse cultures, in Edinburgh in August we do not need to get too upset about it. The Tattoo is not the only Scottish cultural experience our visitors will encounter, even during a short stay in the capital. Compare this cultural context with a scaled-down image of that very event – castle, piper, dramatic landscape – and you have a good idea of how Scotland is being sold to well-heeled Americans as a perfect holiday destination. Is this the Scotland we want to portray? Do any of us recognise this as a true representation of our country? Is it something we can feel proud of? And, most importantly, is it likely to sell out, in the same way the Tattoo sells out year after year?

The short answer to these questions is no. For starters, even well-heeled Americans cannot afford the luxury treatment in Scotland's top hotels. Like the rest of us the majority of them will be trailing about from three star hotel to B+B in a small rented car, if they are lucky. The trip will still cost them a

Scottish Affairs

fortune, thanks to an unfavourable rate of exchange and comparatively high petrol prices. Not a perfect recipe for the older, relatively affluent traveller, is it? And if that is the case, then who exactly from the United States or Canada will go to the trouble and expense of visiting Scotland for their holidays?

The answer is simple. Enthusiasts. Cultural tourists. People who often know more about the folk music and culture of Scotland than many Scots. These are the people who travelled across America to spend four days or more of their holidays soaking in the music and the stories, the panto, the curling, weaving and sporrán-making at 'The Smithsonian Festival of Folklife' last summer. A strong network of folk music, dance and Gaelic language activists across North America feeds an ever-growing appetite for summer camps, festival workshops and fèisean. These people, like Margaret Lepley from Boston, will go to any lengths to keep in touch with fellow learners and teachers. 'I wouldn't generally come to downtown Washington DC at this time of year and haven't been to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival before,' she told me. Margaret followed a website link from Alasdair Fraser's site, which she checks sporadically: 'I was waiting anxiously for the actual schedule to appear'. Keeping in touch with Scottish traditional music and dance is very important to her, and she has a long association with Alasdair's summer school, 'Valley of the Moon', which takes place in California each August. These connections were enough to convince Margaret to take a break in DC during the Folklife Festival. 'I was attracted to a great gathering of friends,' she said, 'but soon discovered the Malians and Appalachians too'. Future plans may include a trip to Edinburgh's Fiddle Festival in November or Glasgow's Celtic Connections in January.

Members of the Gaelic Society of America/An Comunn Gàidhealach whom I spoke to on The Mall consider cultural tourism to be a major factor in attracting Americans to Scotland and expressed dismay that they had not been 'in the loop' with regard to festival planning. One example that was mentioned by Nick Freer was the very popular prize for prose at the society's annual Mòd competition – the lucky winner gets a week-long summer school at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic College on Skye. Nick would have welcomed a chance to highlight the Mòd as a first point of contact in the US. Local speakers, teachers and learners of the language regularly go to enormous lengths to be wherever native Gaelic singers, poets and speakers will be in attendance, usually at small fèisean in the States or Canada. There was a real feeling among the DC Gaels that we should be tapping into this

Scotland at the Smithsonian: Beyond the Cultural Cringe?

great reservoir of interest and goodwill, and disappointment that there had been no opportunity to make festival visitors aware of their existence Stateside.

While almost everyone I interviewed and spoke to less formally cited cultural tourism as the big way forward, people had not, by and large, thought deeply about what they envisaged this to be. One suggestion that came up was small, tailor-made tours to places of historical and cultural interest co-ordinated with the support of organisations like the Elphinstone Institute in Aberdeen or the Wighton Centre in Dundee. Research I have conducted in the recent past tells me that festivals in rural Scotland tend to reach their capacity within their first three years and then stop publicising in many cases. Fèisean nan Gàidheal has been pushing for the support that will enable it to meet the demand for summer schools and fèisean across the country for some time. While at present their events concentrate on children and young people, most workers in the field are aware that the potential for similar adult events which would attract an international audience remains largely untapped. Cultural tourism, Frank McAveety contends, is an area where ‘we must look to our European partners for inspiration and expertise.’⁶ A closer look at other European countries will show us that the remedy is actually within the grasp of ordinary communities, as long as they have the right professional support. The main thing that is holding cultural tourism back in rural Scotland is infrastructure. You only had to be on Washington’s Mall last summer to see what we can do when the support structures are in place.

SCOTLAND THE REAL

To be given this opportunity to celebrate what we are in the garden of the White House – it’s a pretty brilliant thing.
Dougie MacLean

It was our final sweltering day on the Mall, two weeks of non-stop Scottish folk culture down the line, and there was an aura of relaxed chaos around the tents. By any standards you care to mention, ‘Scotland at the Smithsonian’

⁶ Frank McAveety MSP, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, at the British Council colloquium ‘Connecting Scotland and the World’, Edinburgh, 19 August 2003.

Scottish Affairs

had been a big success and performers, craftspeople, storytellers and all were feeling good about themselves, as well they might. One million visitors had come to the festival and discovered at least several things they had not known before about our country. The Smithsonian Folkways compilation CD 'Scotland the Real' was already a sell-out.

Everyone who took part in the festival gave their absolute best. It took some time for many to recognise the role that had been thrust on them – acting as Scotland's ambassadors – but they quickly warmed to the theme. Chief among them were our musicians, many of whom are used to travelling the world to make their living. From Billy Jackson and the Battlefield Band to relative newcomers Fiddlers' Bid and Karine Polwart – to name just a few – the musicians kept the party going for two solid weeks without missing a beat.

Fiona Ritchie, America's best-known producer and presenter of Scottish radio music programmes, enthused:

We're showing Scotland off really well. People are interested, intrigued, I think surprised – definitely surprised by the range and the depth of what's on show, both in the craft areas and on the music stages. You want to take people beyond the stereotypes, you want to take them right through all those myths and take them down a road that allows them to encounter something of the real Scotland. I think that's been happening.

There's no doubt that there are elements missing from the programme – crafts, folkways and musicians – which would have enriched the overall contribution tremendously. You are always going to feel an incredible opportunity like this could have been developed even further. But we should be proud of what's on show here, and resolved to use this as a springboard to more authentic, relevant representations of Scotland in the US in future.

Still, one psychological cloud persisted right to the very end. The way in which VisitScotland chose to contribute to the event left most of the participants cold and very disappointed. While no-one disputed the obstacles the U.S. National Parks Service placed in the way of selling or marketing on the Mall, all felt somehow abandoned by our national tourist board – who nevertheless spent hundreds of thousands of pounds marketing their own 'branded' image of Scotland to a select clientèle downtown.

Scotland at the Smithsonian: Beyond the Cultural Cringe?

Using the banner 'VisitScotland at the Smithsonian', the tourist board managed to parachute in and out of the US capital without once meeting up with the festival participants formally. Their tartan bus containing 300,000 (very popular) tartan fans for general distribution was operated by hired workers, and never during the festival did we see a VisitScotland representative accompanying those workers on the Mall. One festival tent housed AncestralScotland, which was popular with visitors, but everyone I interviewed in Washington and later in Edinburgh considered that the tourist board had missed a huge opportunity which might never come their way again.

Dougie MacLean, a musician of international standing with more than twenty years' touring in the States behind him, was one of many who felt this loss deeply. We talked about previous experiences he and many of Scotland's top folk musicians have had over the years, where they knew themselves to be in a perfect position to 'sell' Scotland to an American audience, through their passion for the music. Despite many valiant efforts, on no occasion that we know of has any of our great performers managed to engage in even the most basic dialogue about how tourism and folk culture could join forces to promote Scotland in North America.

In this context it is worrying to hear that the 'Scottish Folk Festival on Tour', a showcase of Scottish traditional music which has travelled Germany and its neighbouring environs every spring for the past two decades or so, looks as if it will cease operating as of 2004. In the view of Paddy Bort, this illustrates another missed opportunity – past, present and future – to 'piggyback' on the love for Scottish/Celtic music and to target a ready-made audience. Several Irish music tours across Europe will continue to promote our Celtic neighbours to connoisseurs of the traditional arts. Now is hardly a good time to scale down successful projects like the Scottish Folk Festival on Tour. Our traditional music is known and loved across the world; we must harness the reservoir of goodwill it generates and applaud the folk artists who do so much to promote Scotland abroad.

Concerns about how Scotland has been, and continues to be, portrayed across the Atlantic were widespread among the Scottish participants in Washington DC last summer. Some of our institutions were sensitive to the need for a new approach. The Scottish Arts Council made a big effort to work with artists and musicians representing our country and that effort was widely appreciated. Counteracting years of mistrust among traditional musicians,

Scottish Affairs

SAC officials did more to nurture a sense of cultural identity on Washington's Mall last summer than a million strategy papers will ever do. Culture Minister Frank McAveety later described the Executive and Scottish Arts Council collaboration on the Smithsonian Festival as 'exemplary in forging new ways of working.'⁷ Although the Scottish Arts Council and Executive team joined the Smithsonian Festival for just a few days, their strategy was so well-planned and focused that they achieved more in two days than VisitScotland could pull off in a month of Sundays.

A month of Sundays is just about how long the 'VisitScotland at the Smithsonian' programme lasted. Contrary to what you might imagine, this programme never crossed over with the Folklife Festival. As well as the tartan bus, its cargo of fans and an intensive tourism marketing campaign in the DC area, it comprised a series of lectures advertised in local DC media and through the Smithsonian Resident Associates, who run this lecture series each year. The series, although clearly another Smithsonian programme, is not connected to the Festival of Folklife, and I was told that its organisers do not normally consult or collaborate with festival curators at any level. The lecture programme included contributions from writer Ian Rankin and broadcaster Fiona Ritchie, receptions to celebrate the opening of the James McNeill Whistler exhibition in the Freer Gallery on the Mall, talks on John Muir, Boswell, Scott, Stevenson, and many more besides. It looked interesting, if a little dry and middle-class for most tastes. Let's face it, there are only so many people in any city who will go to a lecture series. The big problem I had with these events, however, was that they were marketed as something related to the Festival of Folklife, but had no overlap with its curatorial process.

One exception was the exhibition of Scottish contemporary crafts in the Smithsonian Arts and Industries Building, which did cross over with one or two Folklife Festival contributors. It seems that there were faults on both sides here, but the main point is that, by allowing this disjointed collection of events to represent Scotland in the US capital, we lost a major opportunity to work together and to harmonise agendas. One obvious link could have been with Tartan Day celebrations in the DC area. If a similar series of talks had been designed to lead from Tartan Day on 6 April to the Festival of Folklife

⁷ Ibid.

Scotland at the Smithsonian: Beyond the Cultural Cringe?

in June, Scotland's combined cultural and tourism resources would have built up a momentum that few local residents could have missed.

'I would have loved to have seen more VisitScotland personnel being around here and catching what was going on,' said Sheena Wellington. 'It would be good for them to know us, it would be good for us to know them.' In her view, VisitScotland see 'traditional' as a museum piece but, she contended, 'this festival is a celebration of a living culture that Scotland should be immensely proud of. Why can't we be a Scotland that celebrates? Why does it have to be either the cutting edge or the traditional? Why can't it be all of this and more?'

CONTEMPORARY CULTURE, TRADITIONAL SKILLS

Scotland at the Smithsonian Festival of Folklife was an interesting phenomenon. The suggestion of a Scottish programme for 2003 came hot on the heels of devolution, after the state of Ohio had pulled out of its planned participation. Ethno-musicologist Dr Nancy Groce had recently curated a very successful Smithsonian programme concentrating on the Folklife of New York. She also has a big personal interest in Scottish traditional music and is well-known to many of our regular transatlantic ambassadors who spend at least half of every year outside Scotland. At a time when the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport was still taking shape, Nancy was busy plotting and planning something that would grow to become one of Scotland's most significant cultural events abroad. As part of her consultative network, I found the process difficult. In the absence of a clear cultural policy, we were defining one 'on the hoof'. Many long nights were spent in discussion and friendly argument; many sacred cows tumbled in the face of conflicting allegiances.

The big losses for me were predominantly to do with language and culture. I believe that one of the greatest strengths of Scottish culture is its richness of language and literature which stretches back to the sixteenth century in English and much farther still in Gaelic and Scots.⁸ Without poets and writers, I think the programme that the Smithsonian brought together missed

⁸ A point emphasised by the literary scholar Alan Riach at the Glasgow University seminar on 'Cultural Tourism: Selling Scotland's Culture Abroad', 3 February 2003.

Scottish Affairs

an essential point of reference linking traditional and contemporary Scottish culture. Every folklorist and Gael that I spoke to agreed that the Gaelic contribution to the festival was sparse. No-one could possibly fault the Gaelic contributions – whether from Ishbel MacAskill and Christine Primrose, or from Domhnall Martin and Iain MacAuley, each and every Gael portrayed a vibrant Hebridean way of life and lore at the festival. Yet it was possible to attend storytelling and narrative sessions about the Outer Hebrides without being aware that Gaelic is a modern everyday language – for all these people their first language. In this context alone, the loss of Dr Margaret Bennett from the programme, due to illness, was incalculable; equally, the absence of Sheila Stewart was keenly felt by many. The traveller tradition was powerfully represented by Stanley Robertson, but how much richer it could have been had Stanley and Sheila been there together.

Others were disappointed that our Cape Breton cousins were missing from the programme. Much of the strength of the music and language scene in Scotland today has come through our rekindling of Cape Breton links, particularly in events like the annual Ceòlas summer school in South Uist. The renewed interest in Scottish dance – particularly stepping – has brought lots of young blood into the traditional scene. This was not well-reflected in the programme; nor was the fèis movement, which is at the heart of Gaelic language, music and cultural development in Scotland today. If we talk about Scottish folklife without reference to the traveller community or to Gaelic, we present the folk revival, now nearly half a century old, as if it came from nowhere. It did not. The roots of Scottish folklife are deep and strong and are safeguarded by the languages of Scotland.

Nancy Groce was determined throughout to keep a contemporary edge to the festival programme. Some felt that the finished product veered too far towards the everyday and played down the more indigenous aspects of our traditions. For Fin Moore, the exhibits in general struck a balance between contemporary and traditional: 'If [traditional culture] doesn't move forward, it's going to die. It becomes very sterile. I think you need to be open-minded to the progression that you can make but still looking back at what was done before ...' The sporran maker appealed to him a lot. While it is clear that Marcus Eagleton can and does make beautiful traditional leather sporrans, there were also some pretty wild exhibits on his stand. 'I'm just looking across, I see a lovely pink one there,' he noticed happily. While Fin sees himself as a contemporary Scottish musician and pipe maker, learning a trade

Scotland at the Smithsonian: Beyond the Cultural Cringe?

and learning the music from his father in the traditional way is immensely valuable to him: 'Because I learned from Dad, it's been an amazing process – to learn a craft from someone who's an expert. There are things he can tell me that took him five years to find out, yet he can tell me in a sentence.'

It was not quite so easy for the Dovecot Tapestry Studio to fit in to the scheme of things. Douglas Grierson felt there was not enough representation of modern Scotland. 'In terms of the programme as it is,' he thought, 'the Dovecot is a bit out-on-a-limb'. He and David Cochrane made a beautiful tapestry from an Alan Davie design which was cut off the loom by Susan Stewart, First Scottish Officer at the British Embassy, on 5 July. Though a very modern design, it was made in a time-honoured manner by two traditionally apprenticed master weavers.

Such small tensions flag up the need for discussion and debate about the place of craftworkers and traditional artists in how Scotland sees itself and, even more importantly, how it presents itself to the outside world. Contrary to the opinion of some commentators,⁹ there need be no antagonism between cutting-edge contemporaneity and traditional arts.

'It is vital to develop a coherent vision of what Scotland is saying to the rest of the world,' Frank McAveety emphasised.¹⁰ Tourism has a vital role to play in projecting a meaningful image of our country, an image that respects our cultural diversity in all its shapes, forms and languages. Nancy Groce was very aware of most of these issues, although she might miss a point or two when it comes to contemporary arts:

A lot of the debate needs to go on within Scotland. It seems to me that Scotland is at a very interesting point in its history. It's a dichotomy. You have those people who are largely interested in tourism I think – who feel that America can only accept a very limited stereotype of what Scotland is and that it needs to be branded and marketed as just Highlands and sheep and sheep and Highlands and the occasional piper on a lone wall piping to sheep. On the other hand a lot of money and excitement in

⁹ See Phil Miller, 'What a show we can put on: why do we persist in promoting our traditions overseas instead of our cutting-edge modern art?', *The Herald*, 14 June 2003.

¹⁰ Frank McAveety at the British Council colloquium, 19 August 2003.

Scottish Affairs

Scotland right now seems to be with avant-garde arts. We specifically didn't go after that. So this great middle ground of a really revived traditional culture – both the music and the craft that's taking place – seems to me to be out in the wilderness. It seems like those people who are into the avant-garde in Scotland just want to disassociate themselves from the shortbread tin people, and the shortbread people want to downplay the really avant-garde stuff. So in the middle you're throwing out the baby with the bathwater. The other stuff ['avant-garde arts'] is great, but it's not unique to Scotland. We can go anywhere in America and find that.

Yes, there are some tensions (which in themselves can be creative). But a glance at the celebrated inaugural Scottish contribution to the fiftieth Venice Biennale shows that installations by Clare Barclay, Simon Starling and Jim Lambie were certainly not artworks which one might find 'anyplace in America'. 'Zenomap', the title of the Scottish exhibition, pointed back to a uniquely Scottish-Italian expedition to the New World under Henry Sinclair way back in the fourteenth century – hardly a rootless theme to create work from.

TIME TO THINK BIG

The Smithsonian Festival of Folklife definitely offered Scottish folk activists and artists a unique chance to work together in celebration of their culture over a dedicated period. It straddled that great American holiday of 4 July when everyone comes out to Washington's Mall to celebrate Independence Day. In 2003 the sense of excitement and patriotism was tangible amidst the inevitable tight security. On another sweltering evening I visited friends in town and watched the party on network television before we went outside to see the fireworks. What a surprise to see Ireland's Chieftains kick off the celebrations outside the Capitol, just yards away from our Scottish tents. Paddy Moloney took the stage with several Appalachian stars and my heart sank – while our own Battlefield Band, Dougie MacLean and many more fantastic performers were standing on Memorial Bridge trying to catch the atmosphere. Here was a fabulous chance to be part of a networked national event and no-one felt empowered to make the crucial call and let the Chieftains know that their Celtic cousins were in town. That is all it would have taken to bring our Scottish musicians and dancers to a network audience

Scotland at the Smithsonian: Beyond the Cultural Cringe?

on the most important night of the year in the United States. Although the network television event was not planned in synergy with the Folklife Festival, a platform for the rich tapestry of Scots and Irish cultural links would have made perfect sense on that night. To me this was a classic example of the missed opportunities that littered the path from Scotland to the Smithsonian. Probably our greatest sin was to think small; even the musicians I mentioned this to immediately said that the Chieftains are big in America and they would hate to steal their limelight. But it should never be a case of 'us' or 'them'; there is plenty of room for everyone, and those far-travelled and well-loved Irish artists would have been the first to welcome Scots performers to share the spotlight. The time has come to move onto centre stage. We need to think big, we need to build cultural leadership structures and, most of all, we need to get past this awful self-deprecating tendency – the cultural cringe – that is in danger of becoming ingrained. It is unnecessary and it sells us down the river, time and time again.

'It has become an *idée fixe* of many Scottish intellectuals,' David McCrone, Angela Morris and Richard Kiely have argued, 'that Scotland suffers from a deformation of its culture; that it has sold out its political birthright for a mess of cultural pottage.'¹¹ If Americans want to wear tartan and be whisky connoisseurs, why on earth should we discourage them? Sheena Wellington was sad to note that Scotland seems to sneer at its diaspora while Ireland embraces it and uses it to incredible advantage. Having grown up in the latter and adopted the former country as homeland, I think the issue is a bit more complex. Ireland post-independence needed its American diaspora so badly that it could not just delegate the task to the tourism sector – it was an issue of national importance. The days of the Kennedy presidency strengthened cultural ties between the two countries, and now Irish artists, contemporary and traditional, are as likely to grow to maturity in the States as in Ireland. That is about belonging, and Scotland is just beginning to recognise the importance of this concept.

After the Smithsonian event, Susan Stewart is clearly optimistic:

The Scottish cultural cringe, where we are embarrassed about our heritage such as tartan, is receding. In the past we have been embarrassed

¹¹ David McCrone, Angela Morris and Richard Kiely, *Scotland the Brand: The Making of Scottish Heritage*, Edinburgh: Polygon, 1995, p.5.

Scottish Affairs

by the shortbread-tin and Brigadoon associations, an age when these things were not considered cool. I think we have got over that. In tartan, we have an icon of international recognition. Modern Scotland is secure enough in its contemporary strengths, achievements and merits to assume icons of the past. If someone talks to me about penicillin, I talk to them about Dolly the sheep. If someone talks to me about Sir Walter Scott, I mention A. L. Kennedy or Ali Smith.¹²

A strong and inclusive cultural identity is an essential part of the confidence that brings economic success. The Smithsonian Folklife Festival 2003 has begun the debate that will get us there and, when all is said and done, I am proud to have been part of it.

Sheena Wellington summed it up perfectly:

This has been a great honour for Scotland, a wonderful opportunity for us to show some of the best of our culture. Not everybody is here that I would have wanted – we could have sent double the number and still not have had everybody. I hope we will build on it. I hope we'll build on the relationships, the friendships.

INTERVIEWEES

Sheena Blackhall, participant Washington DC 27 June 2003

Eberhard 'Paddy' Bort, Institute of Governance, University of Edinburgh

Edinburgh 30 July 2003

Nick Freer, Gaelic Society of America/An Communn Gàidhealach and St Andrew's Society of America Alexandria, Virginia 12 July 2003

Douglas Grierson, festival participant

Washington DC 2 July 2003

Dr Nancy Groce, festival curator Washington DC 6 July 2003

Margaret Lepley, visitor Washington DC 28 June 2003

Fin Moore, festival participant Washington DC 2 July 2003

¹² Quoted in Ben McConville, 'Tartan is suddenly cool again as Scots build on transatlantic link', *The Scotsman*, 23 September 2003.

Scotland at the Smithsonian: Beyond the Cultural Cringe?

Dougie MacLean, festival participant

Washington DC 6 July 2003

Fiona Ritchie, participant and advisor to the festival

Washington DC 28 June 2003

Sheena Wellington, participant and advisor to the festival

Washington DC 4 July 2003

The following also gave generously of their time and have contributed significantly to the paper, although they are not quoted directly:

Dr Ed Miller, participant and advisor to the festival

Washington DC 3 July 2003

Hamish Moore, festival participant Washington DC 2 July 2003

Lana Pattinson, VisitScotland (telephone interview)

Edinburgh 6 August 2003

Dr Chrisella Ross, festival participant

Washington DC 3 July 2003

Dr Ian Russell, participant and advisor to the festival

Washington DC 29 June 2003

Lawrence Tulloch, festival participant

Washington DC 29 June 2003