Margaret Fay Shaw was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1903. Born of a well-off manufacturing family, she was orphaned at an early age and was subsequently raised by aunts and older siblings. From toddlerhood she was fascinated by the family piano and taught herself to play by ear by the age of 6. Despite the tutoring of several excellent music teachers, they eventually had to wash their hands of her and tell her that there was nothing they could teach her. She knew it instinctively. She was a ‘difficult teenager’ and so at the age of 17 she was sent to school in Helensburgh by her aunts, to see if ‘it would sort her out’ and it whilst there that she heard folksong collector Marjory Kennedy Fraser sing a Gaelic song, albeit in a manner far removed from its original form. She determined there and then to one day, find the song ‘in its pristine form’.

Shaw went on to study classical piano in New York, London and Paris, studying principally under Nadia Boulanger, with a view to a career as a concert pianist.
Her plans were destroyed when she developed rheumatoid arthritis and she had to give up any idea of performing professionally. After a period of depression, she decided to return to Scotland and track down these folksongs which intrigued her so.

Margaret Fay Shaw went on to become one of the 20th centuries most prolific and important folklorists and together with her husband, John Lorne Campbell, they amassed what is one of the world’s, if not the most important Celtic Folklore collections. A collection comprising, an extensive sound archive of over 1500 folksongs and stories dating from the 1930’s, a stunning collection of 6000 black and white photographs of a disappearing way of Hebridean life, more than 200 manually transcribed Gaelic songs (songs which had hitherto never been written down), one of the world’s most impressive Folklore libraries, and 1000’s of unique and extremely valuable manuscripts and papers, correspondence and artefacts. These are now all housed in Canna House on the Isle of Canna in the Inner Hebrides.

The Campbells purchased the island in 1938 and lived there till their deaths in 1996 (John) and 2004 (Margaret). Canna House became a House of Song, fun and Art and the visitors book is testament to the extensive and eclectic group of friends which the Campbells possessed- Compton Mackenzie, Gavin Maxwell, Vivien Mackie, Ronald Stevenson, just a few of their close friends.
Margaret’s study of folksong was so highly regarded that she had a paper “Gaelic Folksongs of South Uist”, included in Bela Bartok’s “Studia Memoriae Belae Bartok Sacra” 1959
Contrasts

In 1956, she presented a paper entitled “Contrasts” on the BBC’s “Women’s Hour” (Appendix 2). This paper presented a contrasting view of her musical lives, that of her classical studies and that of her life collecting Hebridean folksongs. In 2016, I had an abstract accepted to present a paper at the Celtic Studies of North America Annual Conference this year at St Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, Canada. I decided to re-present Margaret's paper but enhance it with her photographs and film, John’s sound recordings of the songs she discusses, and my own voice. Her paper would have been unheard in 60 years and the conference delegates would be a whole new generation of academics to be introduced to the incredible legacy left by Margaret and John.

![St Fx University, Antigonish, NS](image)

I hoped that by re-introducing Margaret’s work, I could begin to perhaps dispel the myth that folk culture is a ‘2nd cousin’ of classical culture, in some way of less worth. That a classical musician should somehow not concern themselves with folk song.

I also believed that it was extremely important to tell Margaret’s story, in her own words. Not those words of my own, but telling Margaret’s story in her own words. I was merely to enhance those words and turn them into a performance in their own right.

A major factor in the decision to go to Nova Scotia was that John and Margaret travelled extensively in Nova Scotia in the 30’s and 40’s collecting songs which would have otherwise disappeared and I wanted to remind the Nova Scotia communities of this. A major element of my job as the archivist for the Canna Collections for the National Trust for Scotland is to deliver a programme of advocacy for the collections and their potential for future academic study as well as cultural study.

I also hope to undertake a course of PhD study which will involve creating new musical repertoire, during the next few years, as I work in Canna House and the collections will be central to this. Creating the New from the Old.
Follow Up
Now that a network of academic and creative contacts has been begun, we will continue to explore future potential collaborations and opportunities. With both Universities, as well as Harvard (I will hopefully be returning there in Boston to present a paper at the Celtic Colloquium there). Also with the heritage centres where I presented in Cape Breton and within the archives at the Universities. It would appear that I have struck on a particularly effective way of getting information across to audiences, whilst delivering an entertaining and musically attractive performance. People are intrigued by the complete contrast of Margaret’s lives and find that entertaining, whilst they are also learning something of a world of which they know little.
I will also be working on creative a video of the presentation, with music files and will record this for dissemination on Youtube and Vimeo etc.

Finance

The original grant application was to take 3 weeks to cover the University presentation, a tour of Nova Scotia and an extension to present also in Boston at Harvard.

The reduction in funding resulted in an amended timetable, reducing the time taken to 2 weeks. However by judicious use of available funds and hospitality provided by National Trust patrons in Boston, I was still able to achieve a full and very beneficial itinerary.

Publicity

The trip was widely publicised on social media and my own website as well as the National Trust for Scotland’s site. Whilst in Canada and Boston, I also undertook several media interviews, TV and radio, both local and national.

Details of Report

This report details the activities undertaken during the trip to Nova Scotia and Boston in May 2016.

Thanks
I would like to thank several people who helped me to achieve this life changing project.
Firstly to the Finzi Trust for the scholarship which helped me to fund this trip and for the support in the organisation of the trip. Without this generous help, I would not have been able to undertake the project.
To the National Trust for Scotland in giving me the time necessary to undertake the project.
To the NTS US Foundation Patrons for their support in the Boston leg of the trip.
To St Fx and Cape Breton University for their enthusiasm, their sharing of resources and for their help in arranging publicity etc.
And lastly but by no means least, to Margaret and John Campbell for giving me the inspiration in the first place.
Monday 2nd May

The journey to Nova Scotia began with the ferry to the mainland, driving to Inverness, overnight, then by train to Glasgow. Flights were organised for me by an independent Travel Counsellor but were relatively simple, there now being a direct route to Nova Scotia from Glasgow. My husband accompanied me as I required a driver for the trip.

Tuesday 3rd May/Wednesday 4th May
Westjet flight 31 to Toronto via Halifax and hire car picked up. We spent the first night in Halifax and visited Pier 21 where many of the Hebridean immigrants first landed in Nova Scotia in the 18th and 19th centuries.

We drove on to Antigonish (about 4 hours) and into St Fx University where the conference was to be held. We stayed in Governor's Hall, University accommodation.
Thursday 5\textsuperscript{th} May

First sessions of the conference. I attended the papers in the morning and then spent the afternoon with the Head Librarian, exploring the Library and its resources. I wanted to establish a solid network of contacts whilst at the University. Both John and Margaret Campbell were awarded honorary doctorates from the University.

Friday 6\textsuperscript{th} May

Friday morning I spent with the archivist and the ex-President of the University, discussing future potential for collaboration.
I presented my paper in the afternoon and it was extremely well received. People were genuinely moved by Margaret’s story and I spent the following 2 hours answering questions form the delegates at the end of the session. Delegates in particular, found the combination of ‘true’ words, film and the live voice, particularly affecting and moving.

Professor Dan MacGinnis of the University sought me out afterwards to speak about letters he had from John Lorne Campbell. His family were MacArthurs and came from Rum and Canna.

Catriona Parsons, song tradition bearer from South Uist was also there and enjoyed my presentation. At the end of the session I handed over a bottle of whisky to Michael Linklater the Head of Celtic Studies at St FX.
The evening session culminated in a traditional ceilidh which I was invited to perform at.

Saturday 7th May

I sent the morning again with the University archivist and spent almost two hours looking through John Lorne Campbell’s correspondence with the university. Fascinating.

In the afternoon, I did a song presentation, to a capacity audience, at the Antigonish Heritage Museum located in the old railway station.
The presentation went down well again and a number of the conference delegates, including Professor Rob Dunbar, came along instead of attending the conference. Once more, the combination of song, both on the ‘wire’ and sung live, with film and photographs was extremely effective. One woman drove all the way from Halifax just to come to the presentation and hear the presentation. It transpired that she was the widow of the last University president who knew the Campbells.

Sunday 8th May

After the final plenary session of the conference we headed for Glenbard Cemetery and the grave of John Maclean, the Tiree Bard. He was the composer of several of Gaelic Culture’s finest bardic songs, composed both in Scotland and in Nova Scotia. It only took another forty minutes for the drive west to Pictou and the McCullough House for my next presentation. It was well received again and recorded by a local media station.

We drove back to Antigonish along the coast stopping at Arisaign so named by the immigrants of that area, in
Morar, Lochaber, Beautiful views across the Gulf of St Lawrence (or more technically the Northumberland Strait).

Monday 9th May

We drove to Port Hawkesbury over the Canso Causeway and finally onto Cape Breton Island. Headed to Little Narrows ferry for the shortest crossing ever – all over two minutes. Ferry is pulled by a steel hawser.
Tuesday 10\textsuperscript{th} May

Visited the Highland Village on Iona where I undertook a song presentation to the Interpretation staff there and told them about the Canna Collections and why I was in Nova Scotia.

That same evening, I also delivered the song presentation to another capacity audience at the “An Drochaid” Heritage Centre in Mabou. The audience once again delighted and moved by seeing the pictures and films, and sound archive, together with the live voice and Margaret’s words.
Wednesday 11th May

Drove to Sydney, another 3 hour drive. Went straight to Cape Breton University where I met first with the Head Archivist then the whole Celtic Studies team, who gave us a behind the scenes tour of the archives and Library.

My presentation to Audience staff and the public received a standing ovation and people again loved the combination of words, pictures, sound archive and live song. The comment most heard was “it came alive for me”.

After the presentation it was back into Sydney to the local radio station where I did a live piece with a local CBC broadcaster on the Drivetime show.

In the evening I made a presentation to the local community, based in a large residential care home. It was lovely to see how many of the old folk there,
perhaps lost in their own worlds, responded to the song in particular. Something which the staff even commented upon.

**Thursday 12\textsuperscript{th} May**

This morning we visited Sister Margaret McDonnell, a remarkable ‘legend’ of 95 years.

Three hours of listening to her conversing with her was an uplifting experience. She was a close friend and Gaelic mentor of John Lorne Campbell and Margaret and it was a privilege to meet her.

In the afternoon, we drive to Baddeck, close to the Gaelic College, to prepare for a meeting there in the morning.
Friday 13\textsuperscript{th} May

In the morning we drove to Port Hood and had brunch with one of Nova Scotia’s best known traditional musicians and dancers, Mary Janet Macdonald. We discussed several possible creative collaborations. We then drove back to Halifax and stayed overnight there at the airport. In the evening I put the final touches to my presentation for Harvard in Boston.

Saturday 14\textsuperscript{th} May

We arrive in Boston in the early afternoon and a limo picks us up and drives us to the Chilton Club in the centre of Boston. The Club was founded in 1910 as a “Ladies” club and was named after the first woman to step off the Mayflower. It is a bit like stepping back in time. The Boston NTS Patrons were most hospitable to us and I was most grateful to them for putting us up in the City.

We dropped our bags off and then into a taxi to the WGBH radio station for my next interview on the “Celtic Sojourn” show. This is a major network station in Boston and has a wide reach of audience.
Sunday 15th May

Presented to the Boston NTS Patrons this afternoon and had a stunning reaction. People present were in tears and saying “Why did nobody tell us? We didn’t know this story”. Tense discussions about the future of the Archives and what is needed to secure its future. A very worthwhile afternoon spent.

Hopefully something positive will come of it for Canna House.

Monday 16th May

Was due to attend a dinner this evening with some of Boston’s most influential people this evening, but had to change plans very suddenly when I received a phone call from my sister to say that my Mum was gravely ill and that I should get home early. I managed to get my travel agent to change my flights and flew home 48 hours early.
Tuesday 17\textsuperscript{th} May

Arrived Glasgow midmorning and got the train back to Inverness and went straight to see my Mum and prepare for the inevitable. A sad end to a long trip which was far from being a holiday but an extremely busy and exhilarating trip, with lots of potential for future projects and collaborations
Appendix 1

North America Itinerary 2016 Fiona J Mackenzie - Finzi Trust

Saturday April 30th
Canna to Dingwall - Ferry and road.

Monday 2nd May
Train Dingwall to Glasgow 1045 am
Holiday Inn – Glasgow airport £59.34 Paid

Tuesday 3rd May
0930 WestJet flight WS31 Glasgow to Halifax
Pick up hire car- fee £350 paid. Deposit $500 required
Accommodation Cambridge Suites, Halifax Downtown, 1583 Brunswick Street
B3J 3P5 £70/$129

Wednesday 4th May
St FX University, Antigonish
Accommodation University Suites Governors Hall $103 per night x 5 nights

Thursday 5th May
Antigonish - CSANA Conference
Meet with Harvard staff

Friday 6th May
Antigonish - CSANA
4.45 pm PM-Paper presentation “Coimeas/Contrast”

Saturday 7th May
Antigonish CSANA
Presentation “Brigh an orain “Brigh an Órain, A Meaning in Every Song”
Antigonish Heritage Museum – 2pm 20 Main St, Antigonish, NS B2G 2E9
Conference dinner 7pm Gabrieau’s Bistro- paid

Sunday 8th May
Antigonish - CSANA (Meet with Academic Staff)
1400 - Presentation McCulloch House Museum & Genealogy Centre. Michelle Davey.
Monday 9th May
Drive to Cape Breton.
Meet with staff at Highland Village, Iona.
Accommodation at Iona Heights Motel. £51 (93.60)

Tuesday 10th May
Presentation at An Drochaid Cultural Centre, Mabou. Brigh an Orain
Accommodation – Margie and Stanley Beaton. mberiskay@gmail.com and home phone is 902-945-2790 and mobile 902-280-0047 Margie Beaton

Wednesday 11th May
Meeting academic staff (1100) and Presentation (1330) at Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University, Sydney - Catherine Arsenau
Brigh an Òrain, Na Caimbeulaich - The Campbells. A Meaning in Every Song"
Tea, presentation and song at Harbourstone Care Home, 1730 Barbara Morrison.84 Kenwood Dr, Sydney, NS B1S 3V7.
Interview with CBC Radio
Accommodation at Cambridge Suites, Sydney, 380 Esplanade. £68 ($125)

Thursday 12th May
Meeting with Sister Margaret at 1000
Accommodation - Dunlop Inn, 552 Chebucto St, Baddeck, £54 ($99)

Friday 13th May
Drive to Halifax and stay overnight. Accommodation Quality Inn, Airport, Booking number: 8030722966843 £65 ($103) breakfast inc Queen room (Hotel.com)

Saturday 14th May
1250 flight (WestJet WS 3712) from Halifax to Boston (arrive 1328) Pick up TBC. Stay at Chilton Club, 287 Dartmouth Street
Interview WGBH, 1 Guest Street, Boston, MA 02135. 3.30-6pm Brian O Donovan. Kirstin Bridier 617-227-7500

Sunday 15th May
Presentation for NTS Patrons Helen Sayles

Monday 16th May
1630 flight (WestJet WS 3713) from Boston to Halifax (arrive 1915)
2245 flight (WestJet WS 30) from Halifax to Glasgow (arrive 0805 on 18\textsuperscript{th} May)

**Tuesday 17\textsuperscript{th} May**

Glasgow - Dingwall Train 1125 - Glasgow Central
1523 – Inverness Train (SCOTRAIL) Reserved - no seat allocated
That was O MO Dhûthaich or Oh My Country, the first song in Margaret Fay Shaw’s seminal collection of Gaelic Song “Folksongs and Folklore of South Music, published in 1954.

Hailing from Pittsburgh of a well off steel manufacturing family,, Margaret Fay Shaw came to Scotland first as a gauche schoolgirl,
to study in Helensburgh having been orphaned at an early age. Here is where she first heard Scots Gaelic song being sung albeit in a manner far removed from its original form, by the Victorian song collector Marjory Kennedy Fraser—(interestingly enough, it is generally suggested that Margaret heard Kennedy Fraser singing Gaelic songs but singing them in English—this diary of Margaret’s on the night of the first hearing of Gaelic, plainly shows this is not strictly the case)

She then returned to Scotland as a young woman in the mid 1920’s
and went onto be one of the most important collectors of Gaelic Song in Scotland and also here in Nova Scotia. She was classically trained and as such, brought much to folksong collecting which was unique and inspirational both as a collector in her own right and also in her partnership with John Lorne Campbell.

In April 1956, Margaret broadcast this paper entitled “Contrast-Other People’s Lives” on Woman’s Hour on the BBC. This tells of her contrasting musical life, that of her classical training and then in the Outer Hebrides. This broadcast has not been heard
since then and I wanted to let audiences hear Margaret’s own words about her life- not me or anyone else, telling ABOUT her but using her own words to tell her story.

Here I will enhance Margaret’s words with Johns original sound archive recordings, Margaret’s own stunning black and white photography and film and my own voice, to tell the story of her musical life. Please remember that everything you see and hear today is taken from the Canna Archives and of course join in!

CONTRASTS

“The life of a music student in New York was mine in the 1920’s. I lived in a brown stone house on Madison Avenue in the centre of Manhattan.
Every room of that house harboured the would be artist-pianist, violinist, cellist, singer, dancer painter and dramatic student. We musicians filled the building with a din from morning till night.. The silent ones were the dancers, stubbornly practising their high kicks, splits and taps. The ones who suffered most were the dramatic students who had to learn their lines oblivious of sound. I practised the piano many hours a day—so intent on my own efforts that I never heard my colleagues. It was a wonderful life for the young—full of dreams of great achievement.

New York was a kind city to the to those who couldn’t afford to pay the high fees, if their ability deserved free lessons. Every night we were listening to music, or taking part in making it—
or going to concerts in Carnegie Hall, to me the finest concert hall anywhere. We would stand if we couldn’t get a seat in the top gallery- which we called peanut heaven. It’s the best place to hear orchestral music. The three great symphony orchestras gave their series of winter concerts here- the Boston, Philadelphia and new York’s own Philharmonic.

One winter I had a part time job as an usher for the philharmonic Society so that I could hear as many of their concerts as possible... Toscanini was then conducting and I had charge of the 2nd tier boxes. I would open the doors for the
occupants with a key— and I would try to leave the little windows of these doors open so that I could hear the full volume— and pray the inmates wouldn’t feel the draught!

My greatest joy were the piano recitals and it was a time of giants. Paderewski, Rachmaninoff, Godowski, Gabrilowitsch, Schnabel, Hoffman— it thrills me to name them now…. But there were so many more and it was all ours to hear and remember.

Besides my piano I had one love which was then a relaxation. Folksongs— whether Irish, Greek, French, or Russian, any volume I could find in the Public Music Library, I would bring home to study and enjoy.

With my little knowledge of Scotland, I knew of Gaelic songs and the Kennedy Fraser collection as among them. But there was another, to me the most valuable of all— Miss Frances
Tolmie’s collection of songs from Skye, Eigg and Uist—unaccompanied and with their original words.

This book was an inspiration... it came at a time when I had to make a hard decision. I couldn’t continue my lessons as a pianist... it could never be my profession...

In the Autumn of 1929 I sailed for South Uist, with the ambition to learn Gaelic and note down unpublished songs. My musical training— I hoped—would prove its worth there. I took with me a Gaelic dictionary, a grammar, martin martin’s “Tour of the Hebrides” a little Irish harp,
a pitch pipe and plenty of music paper...

SLIDE FILM SOUTH UIST and LOCHBOISDALE

I chose South Uist after I had cycled and walked the length of the outer isles. It attracted me like a magnet and it still does after all these years

I have some Scots blood but it doesn’t predominate. I am a true mongrel of the west countries.
Most of my people have been in America for nearly 200 years, some much longer. I have never felt a kinship with Gaeldom, only love, real love.

I was wonderfully fortunate to be taken into a house which was- and is today- the very home of all that is best in Gaelic life and tradition.

SING Se’ m’aghan fhin thu x 3 se m’aghan donn

Nuair a bhios buarach ar crodh na duthcha bidh buarach ura air m’aghan donn

Nuair a bhios buarach air crodh na tire, bidh buarach shioda air maghan donn
From the moment of my arrival I began to learn. First it was to do without. Plumbing was the hardest- and I was a poor hand at trimming an oil lamp. There were no green vegetables or fruit in winter which I thought so essential.

My clothes were the wrong sort, my shoes that looked so smart always leaked. To go anywhere meant walking and usually a long way. Or else we travelled in a sail boat and often on a rough sea. But I grew to love that boat and the sails in her.
I never knew such wind. It whitened the window panes with salt from the Atlantic 4 miles away. It blew the burning peats out of the fireplace onto the floor.

At first the noise of the gales made me nervous as a cat- but I became used to them.

I had never seen men and women so such hard physical work – and I certainly had never lived with people who had so little of material things.
I am speaking of the days before wireless, electricity, Swedish houses with all the modern conveniences. It wasn’t long before my harp began to deteriorate in the damp weather. I would waken at night to the sounds of strings snapping. But for myself, I never felt better—nor was I ever so happy.

When my new friends understood that I wanted to learn their language and save their songs they took endless trouble to help me. I must have been a bore and a trial but they were patient. Later I was told by the people from the South how difficult it must be for me, a stranger without Highland blood, to be
accepted- and how the Uist folk wouldn’t welcome an outsider taking down their songs. I was glad I hadn’t been told this before I arrived. If they felt this way they were much too polite to show it. I knew only kindness from the first day. And that glen was a lasting home.

I wasn’t capable of taking down much that I heard because of the difficulty with the language. Three members of that little community died while I was there and they took with them a priceless store of songs and tales.
The songs were more beautiful than I had ever imagined. Everyone sang— it was their accompaniment to life. It was as well I hadn’t a piano— nor means of hearing any music but the song. They are often complicated and modal— different scales to our classical music— they certainly are foreign to the piano. My ears had to become accustomed to them and I was better to keep my head clear for concentrating on them alone.

Here is a lullaby, Tàladh Choinnich Òig, the Lullaby for Young Kenneth, sung by Miss Peigi Macrae, which I recorded at her own fireside. Kenneth was born in 1569. He was the son of Colin MacKenzie of Kintail and this lullaby is said to have been composed by his nurse who was a Macrae. Miss Macrae’s people originally came from Kintail.

PLAY AUDIO –TALADH CHOINNICH OIG

SING- TALADH
A translation of that verse- Great Mackenzie of Brahan, son of the hero who would not endure contempt, you would buy wine for your horses and shoe their feet with horseshoes of gold.

More than a year later I returned to New York for a short stay. I took with me the first little collection of tunes- also a cinematograph film of agricultural life on a Uist croft, that I had made. It was at the height of the American depression- a terrible and hopeless time for my countrymen. I showed this film of men and women working on the land, carrying seaweed from the shore in creels on their backs, ploughing with the cas chrom- a kind of foot plough- reaping the oats with a sickle. My audience was most interested. One anxious business man asked “Tell me- these people are they happy as they look, smiling and laughing- is it real?” Yes, I replied- it is real. They are happy
The tunes I showed to a well-known composer. He was amazed. "Why these are beautiful—what themes for symphonies?" Themes they are—of the symphony of the life of these splendid people.

continued to live on South Uist for some years until I married—one who shares the same interests.
We live on the island of Canna- and on a clear day I can see Uist from the hill behind my house.

Though I am busy with household chores, the garden and the life of the farm,

I still note down songs. But now it is much easier, for I have a recording machine-

and there isn’t the fiendish task of putting the tune on paper direct from the singer.
When I want relaxation, I put on a record of Rachmaninoff’s Variations on a theme of Paganini played by the great master himself with the Philadelphia Orchestra- and I am back in Carnegie Hall....

**AUDIO AN GILLE DONN**

**VIDEO AT CANNA HOUSE AND SING TO FINISH**

*S mise tha fo mhi ghean an gille donn*

Òigear nan sùil miogach

A dh’fhàg mi ‘inntinn trom

*Smise tha gu galach bho thoiseach an earraich*
Thug mi gaol a mhaireas do mharache nan tonn

Mo cheist air an armunn làmh stiùireadh a bhata

Dheamhainn cadal samhach leat air bàrr nan tonn

Dh’fhalbh thu air an t-slighe gun dùil ri thu th callee dha

Òigear a clann lain a dh’fhàg m’ inntinn trom