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News Release

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Walter Scott's northern odyssey revisited in literary initiative

Scholars are exploring the links between the iconic novelist Walter Scott and the Northern Isles.

2014 is the bicentenary of Scott's visit to Orkney, Shetland and Fair Isle with the celebrated lighthouse engineer Robert Stevenson.

The visit was documented by Walter Scott in a diary with tales of sailors, dancers, witches, sea monsters and an ancient Pict.

An animated film of extracts of the diary has been produced as part of Writing the North – a collaboration between the University of Edinburgh, the Shetland Museum and Archives and the Orkney Library Archives.

The full diary was never published in Scott's lifetime, but was published in J. G. Lockhart's Life of Sir Walter Scott.

The film forms part of an exhibition at the Shetland Museum and Archives which tells the story of Northern Isles literature through books, sound recordings, manuscripts and illustrations.

The exhibition showcases a year-long project that has brought together literature scholars, museum professionals, creative writers and schools to recognise and promote the literature of Scotland's Islands.

The displays guide visitors through four themes: myths and legends, visitors to the islands, working lives and the sounds of Orkney and Shetland.

Findings from the project will be presented in a series of talks at the Shetland Museum and Archives, in Lerwick on Saturday, May 10. The event will launch a book of new poems by Orkney and Shetland writers in response to the history of Northern Isles writing.

Professor Penny Fielding, of the University of Edinburgh's School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, said: "The islands of Orkney and Shetland have a vibrant community of poets and novelists. Writing the North brings past and present writing together which we hope will inspire even more new writing."

Ranked among the top universities in the world

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For further information, please contact: Joanne Morrison, Press and PR Office, tel +44 131 651 4266 email joanne.morrison@ed.ac.uk

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