

P25 Press Cuttings Relating to Neil M. Gunn

RECORDS' IDENTITY STATEMENT

Reference number:	GB1741/P25
Alternative reference number:	
Title:	Press Cuttings Relating to Neil M. Gunn
Dates of creation:	1933-1975
Level of description:	Fonds
Extent:	8 sheets
Format:	Paper

RECORDS' CONTEXT

Name of creators:

Administrative history:

Neil (Miller) Gunn was born in Dunbeath, a small fishing and crofting community in Caithness, North East Scotland, in 1891. Although he was educated in Galloway, he grew up with a love of the Highlands and Highland culture and, as an adult, he returned to the North East to live and work.

Gunn, the son of a fisherman, was born at a time when the herring fishing industries of Scotland were beginning to die out, and much of Highland culture was in decline, with a falling population and growing unemployment. He saw that Highland culture was also under threat as the old ways were forgotten, and fewer people spoke Gaelic or Scots, so traditional songs and stories were beginning to disappear. Reflecting this trend, Gunn himself spoke only English, although in his writing he used the rhythms and syntax of Gaelic speech to give a sense of the people and communities he depicted.

For a number of years, Gunn worked in London for the Civil Service before joining the Customs and Excise in 1911. Returning to the Highlands, Gunn worked as an Excise Officer until 1937, when increasing financial success allowed him

to become a full-time writer. This writing also extended to journalism and, in the 1930s and early 40s, he wrote articles for publications such as the Scots Magazine. In this he argued that the Highland way of life was worth preserving and should be supported to stop it disappearing altogether, a position which he also expressed politically through his involvement with the SNP.

Gunn is best known, however, for his novels, the first of which, *The Grey Coast* was published in 1926. His early novels reveal a bleak, often harsh, portrait of the communities he knew so well, although through time his fiction shifted to reveal a more hopeful vision of Highland experience. These more positive portraits include *Highland River (1937)*, *The Silver Darlings (1941)* and *Young Art and Old Hector (1942)*, novels which remain his most widely-read work.

In 1956 he published his final book, *The Atom of Delight*, a spiritual autobiography which traced his interest in Zen Buddhism. Gunn died in 1973. He is recognised as one of the major writers of the renaissance of Scottish literature in the early twentieth century and the Dunbeath Heritage Centre in Caithness houses a permanent exhibition of his life and work.

Custodial history:

RECORDS' CONTENT

Description: Newspaper articles, 1933-1975

Appraisal:

Accruals:

RECORDS' CONDITION OF ACCESS AND USE

Access: open

Closed until:

Access conditions: Available in Archive searchroom

Copying: Copying permitted within standard

Finding aids:

ALLIED MATERIALS

Related material:

Publication:

Notes:

Date of catalogue:

August 2011

Ref.	Description	Dates
P25	Press Cuttings Relating to Neil M. Gunn	1933-1975
P25/1	Modern Scottish Literature - Life of Neil M. Gunn, article and copy [2 sheets]	1933
P25/2	John O' Groat Journal - Gunn, Man of letters, comes in out of Cold, article and copy [2 sheets]	26 Sep 1975
P25/3	The Scotsman - Neil Gunn: The Man and his Art, article and copy [2 sheets]	27 Sep 1975
P25/4	John O' Groat Journal - Remembering Neil Gunn, article and copy [2 sheets]	21 Nov 1975