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In the 1960s, John Grierson was a familiar face to Scottish television viewers. His programme *This Wonderful World* was an early evening show where Grierson presented a personal selection of extracts from documentary films from around the world. Seated at a rather large and formidable desk, Grierson provided a colourful commentary for his viewers on the sights and sounds being screened into their living rooms. Ever the (self) publicist Grierson took the opportunity in February 1962 to screen an extract from his most recent film project, *Heart of Scotland*, directed by the young director Laurence Henson.
The film promoted the industrial potential of the Forth Valley area, with the historic town of Stirling at its centre. History, heritage, and progress intertwine in a film which presents an ambitious and optimistic vision of Stirling’s future. From behind his desk in...
the studios of Scottish Television, Grierson noted this contrast between the historical past and technological future in his introduction to the film:

A couple of years ago the Provosts of Stirlingshire asked me if I would help them with a film of the County. Well that’s where I grew up, under the shadow of Stirling Castle itself and right by the field of Bannockburn, so I couldn’t very well refuse. So I scribbled down some nostalgic memories […] Now it’s finished. It’s called Heart of Scotland and I think it a very good little film indeed […] [the director] has concentrated on a wonderful description of the really modern things in Stirlingshire and particularly on the fantastic shapes of the new Distillation plants at Grangemouth… The way I see it not even in America or Russia do the shapes of the modern World look any more fantastic than they do up here in our local Grangemouth. We too it seems belong to the future.

The film was one of a series of promotional films produced by Films of Scotland in the 1950s and 1960s to present the country as both a tourist destination and an attractive centre of economic investment. Grierson’s work with the Films of Scotland committee provided an echo of an earlier phase of his career when, in 1927, he established a film unit within the Empire Marketing Board.

Figure 3 & 4. Transmission Script for This Wonderful World
Grierson is credited with providing the treatment for the film and *Heart of Scotland* begins with a roll-call of Stirling’s notable historic events and places familiar to Grierson as a young boy growing up in the shadow of Stirling Castle. Throughout Grierson’s career he was keen to nurture and develop young filmmaking talent. In the case of *Heart of Scotland* this almost appears to happen mid-film as the camera switches from Stirling’s historic heritage to its industrial present and technological future, Grierson handing the baton on to a new generation of Scottish filmmakers.

For Grierson the sights and sounds and shapes of industry which feature in the second half of *Heart of Scotland* were a subject for “younger eyes” (H2.P8: 29). In 1968, he made the programme *I Remember, I Remember* for Scottish Television. He concluded this personal reflection on his life as a documentary filmmaker with a clip from the final section of *Heart of Scotland*. Describing the futuristic vision of the Grangemouth refineries Grierson noted:

“I finish with the very newest shapes under my Highland Hills. They are down the river again at Grangemouth. They are the shapes for the younger eyes – the younger eyes of tomorrow – to wonder at. (Grierson 1968; reproduced in *Scotland on the Screen* Programme: 29)

The older hand of Grierson appears to progress through the film alongside the younger eyes of the director and production team. The kinetic beauty of the dance-like labour of the bath makers at Carron Iron Works reflects the affection and attention on the working man which Grierson had established in early documentaries such as *Drifters* in 1929. The beauty of these scenes was reflected in a review of *Heart of Scotland* by the critic Molly Plowright with the headline “Poetry in the Rhythms of Industry.”
The quality of the film made it stand out amongst the other Films of Scotland titles which Plowright described as “pleasant enough in a rather cosy, homespun sort of way.” Its quality was also recognised in the publicity brochures for the "Scotland on the Screen" shows in which it featured, described as:

- a poetic interpretation of Stirlingshire… And at Grangemouth, on the eastern tip of the ‘shire, the strange world of the oil scientist is impressively revealed. A skyline of weird and wonderful shapes brings a vision of the future in a country whose people have learned to persuade the land with their purpose.
Figure 6 & 7. Description of *Heart of Scotland* in *Scotland on the Screen* Programme, 1965

In 1979 Grierson’s friend and biographer Forsyth Hardy compiled a selection of his writings on Scotland in the book *John Grierson’s Scotland*. In an essay from 1949 on
‘Stirling’s Heritage’ reproduced in the book Grierson touches on the continuity between the historical past and industrial future later envisioned in Heart of Scotland noting that “these old places of ours are deeply beautiful and it would be a proper humility to appreciate their quality as we go barging so rationally into the future” (112). In this essay Grierson goes on to berate the town for its dereliction of its historic streets, an aspect of Stirling’s heritage that was not mentioned in Heart of Scotland.

9 In his introduction to John Grierson’s Scotland Hardy notes that Grierson’s affection for Stirling grew after he had left what he was later to call the heart of Scotland. […] The affection was perhaps strongest towards the end of his life when it seemed as if there might be a chair of communications at the University of Stirling which would bring him back. That did not happen; but at least the University now holds all his papers in the Grierson Archive. (Hardy 1979: 9)

10 The fate of the archives of individuals of note is often uncertain with collections being buffeted around on seas of chance, subject to the tides of fashion or disinterest. John Grierson died in 1972 aged 73. It seems appropriate that his papers found a home at the University of Stirling. Their presence at Stirling provided a connection to place that Grierson himself was so keen to preserve, his widow Margaret agreeing to deposit his papers with the university in 1977.

Figure 8 & 9. Cover of the Book John Grierson’s Scotland, Featuring a Scene from Heart of Scotland / Material from the John Grierson Archive

Like most collections of personal papers, the John Grierson Archive offers an incomplete record of the life of its creator. The process of cataloguing often highlights the missing parts in a collection. For archivists it is satisfying when evidence can be
found to explain these gaps. In Grierson’s case, the evidence comes at the end of Forsyth Hardy’s biography (published in 1979) where he notes that:

Apart from his occasional dispatches to me Grierson did not bother to keep what he called his ‘stuff’ and there were many blanks in the record, some created when he had a bonfire of his papers. (1979: 263)

The material which survived Grierson’s bonfire provides a detailed account of his working career and includes his extensive writings on documentary film. Consisting of 130 archive boxes of papers the Grierson Archive created the foundation for the university’s work in the areas of cinema studies and film heritage, leading to the establishment of the first Film and Media Studies Department in Scotland and attracting other collections of papers of Scottish filmmakers to the University Archives.

Writing to mark the opening of the Grierson Archive in 1977, Hardy noted that “as the direct influences [of Grierson] dwindle and disappear, the value of the archive at the University of Stirling will grow.” (1977: 1) Time has proved this statement correct with the archive continuing to be used by successive generations of researchers across a range of academic subject areas who bring the research questions and theoretical frameworks of their time to Grierson’s canonical writings on documentary and cinema.

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ABSTRACTS

An examination of how John Grierson’s contribution to the film *The Heart of Scotland* is reflected in his archive of personal papers, held in the University of Stirling Archives. I consider here also the value, importance, and fragility of personal archives.

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Mots-clés: John Grierson, Stirling, archives, film documentaire, patrimoine cinématographique, passé et avenir, patrimoine industriel

Keywords: John Grierson, Stirling, archives, documentary, film heritage, past and future, industrial legacy

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