

Exhibition featuring the Italian community in Scotland opens tomorrow



National Records of Scotland are to exhibit for the first time a whole archive about the Italians in Scotland never seen before now. The documents include a census of the Italians living in Scotland in the 1930s which may be the only set of its kind in existence.

The 'Censimento', ordered by Mussolini's government 1933-1940 details 1,400 households and reveals a picture of specialist shopkeepers and skilled craftspeople living and working across Scotland who maintained strong connections to Italy. The fragile census returns have been painstakingly restored by the conservation department of National Records of Scotland and digitally imaged for future public access.

The free exhibition teams the newly-restored documents with personal keepsakes loaned by Scots Italian families in Scotland, and literally puts the Scots Italians of the 1930s on the map through specially created graphics produced by the National Library of Scotland. Historical photographs from the era are complemented by a documentary project featuring contemporary Scots Italians and the landscape of Scotland by Lorenzo Colantoni and Riccardo Venturi.



Lorenzo Colantoni commented: "Travelling from the crowd of the Fringe, to the absolute silence of Orkney, and then back through the Highlands and the West Coast, we have found an incredible variety of stories, with such a deep and constant connection with Italy and the Italian culture that most people

would not expect. This is one of the reasons why we are extremely happy with our project, and with the chance offered by the event to present it in Edinburgh for the first time.”

The exhibition is the culmination of a collaborative project between the Italian Government and National Records of Scotland to conserve the special registers for public access and was created in partnership with the Consulate General of Italy in Scotland.



Invaluable support from the Italian Cultural Institute in Edinburgh, the Italo-Scottish Research Cluster at Edinburgh University, the National Library of Scotland and the Transnationalizing Modern Languages Project has made this exhibition possible.

The exhibition at General Register House, 2 Princes Street, Edinburgh EH1 3YY, runs from 3 December 2015 until 29 January 2016 (closed 25th & 28th December, 1st & 4th January) August, Monday – Friday, 9.00 – 4.30.

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, said:

“This exhibition is a great opportunity for people to learn more about some of the close ties between Scotland and Italy. The story of the Scots Italians is one of amazing continuity and vitality, and their contribution to the life of Scotland is to be celebrated.”

Italian Ambassador, H.E. Pasquale Terracciano, said:

“I am extremely grateful to the National Records of Scotland for the great job they have done in restoring the Italian archives and making them available to the public in the photo exhibition “A Family Portrait”. Their stories, the dreams they had as well as their achievements here in Scotland, their

significant contribution to the well-being of the nation and its culture make us all too aware of how crucial it is to keep an open-minded approach to migration nowadays.”

Tim Ellis, Keeper of the Records of Scotland and Registrar General, said:

“I am delighted that National Records of Scotland has been able to offer our conservation expertise to the Italian Government to restore this unique and fascinating set of records that tells the story of Scots Italians between the wars. Through this enjoyable exhibition about that community in its formative decades, we are presenting that story in the country where they and their descendants made a home.”