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Editor:  
Martin Gostwick,  
Secretary

# Hugh's News

Newsletter of  
The Friends of Hugh Miller



## MILLERS ON MARS

### THE MILLER FAMILY'S AMAZING LINK WITH PLANET MARS

#### **Special feature: Contributors**

**Henry McKenzie Johnston, Martin Gostwick,  
Dr Mike Taylor, Dr Lyall Anderson, and Nick Hide.**

Henry McKenzie Johnston writes:



*Harriet – aged c37, with daughter Harriet, dressed as a boy, left, and son John, right, taken in Adelaide in 1876. This and the studio picture taken in Bonn in 1860, are the only images of her to survive.*

WHAT is the extraordinary connection between the Miller family and the “red planet,” Mars?

The United States’ space agency NASA’s vehicle, the rover Curiosity, which recently successfully landed on the planet, will soon be travelling to investigate its first site, which has been named Glenelg, where three types of Martian rock appear to meet. This alone would be enough to interest Hugh Miller the geologist, familiar as he was with the iron oxide in his own area, which is prevalent on the planet’s surface.

But Glenelg, the Wester Ross district renowned for its scenery, its Iron Age brochs and the ferry to Kylerhea on the Isle of Skye, is also the name of a suburb of Adelaide, the capital of South Australia, where Hugh’s daughter Harriet, and her husband, Free Church minister, the Rev John Davidson lived after John was translated to Chalmers Church there in 1870.

It was here that the photo (left) of Harriet and two of her children, John and Harriet (dressed apparently as a boy) was taken.



*Planet Mars is named the “red planet” because of the dramatic red iron oxide on its surface. It is the fourth from the sun, the seventh largest in the universe, and named after the Roman god of war.*

#### **ALSO INSIDE**

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A keen Adelaide historical researcher, Mr John Bishop, recently sent a copy of it to our Chairman, Professor Nigel Trewin. Mr Bishop discovered it in an antique shop with a pencil note on the front apparently identifying it as the wife of Professor John Davidson "nee Hugh Miller". We were at first puzzled at what seemed to be two boys when we knew that Harriet had only one son. But then I remembered that my late wife Marian had had a copy of it which she had sent to Professor Margaret Allen of Adelaide University to use in an article she was writing about Harriet. I believe Marian had found her copy, dated 1877 and naming the two children as John and Harriet, in a photograph album which once belonged to John Davidson's sister, Maggie Beveridge.



*Bealach Ratagan, on the way to Glenelg, looking back to a scene of heroic grandeur. © Sarah Charlesworth*

John Bishop had given the photo he found in the antique shop to Adelaide library, who were able to inform me that it was taken by a John Hood, miniature painter and photographer, who set up business in Glenelg, Adelaide in 1876. As we knew that Harriet in Glenelg only learned in June 1876 of her mother's unexpected death in Scotland in March of that year, it seemed fairly safe to conclude that she had the photo (in which she appears to be in half mourning) taken shortly after this, and had taken a copy with her when visiting Scotland the following year with the two children.



*Hugh Miller wrote of the Coalheugh Well watercourse: "We may see every pebble and stalk... enveloped by a ferruginous coagulum, resembling burnt sienna, that has probably been disengaged from the dark red sandstone below, which is known to owe its colour to the oxide of iron" (The Old Red Sandstone, 1841, p. 182).*

Martin Gostwick writes:

It is curious as to why Harriet had her daughter pictured in a boy's outfit? It was certainly a fashion in Victorian and Edwardian times to dress little boys in girls' attire (especially if the proud mothers admired their lads' curly locks), and in this case the fashion appears to have been applied in reverse. Harriet was aged three and a half at the time (she lived into her eighties). John was 12, but died aged only 55.

And why, most importantly, has NASA chosen the name Glenelg? We have the answers in an article by a NASA blogger, Jeffrey Marlow, in an article on the space agency's website, *Glenelg: From the Scottish Highlands to Mars* (August 23, 2012).

The first answer is: The Scottish Diaspora. Scottish emigrants from the Glenelg peninsula in Wester Ross not only took the name to Adelaide, Southern Australia; it travelled with others from the same district to Maryland in the United States, and a third group gave its name to a geological unit near Yellowknife, North West Territories, Canada.



A NASA science team member, Dawn Sumner, noted: "Yellowknife is the name we chose for this map quad, and the features in the quad are named after features associated with Yellowknife."

The second answer relates to Glenelg being a palindrome, a word spelt the same way forward and back, since Curiosity plans to travel forward to the Glenelg site, and back the same way to Mount Sharp. "You know, just a little mission architecture humour," commented Marlow.

And lastly, landscape. The Scottish Highlands' Glenelg glories in a stark, almost otherworldly grandeur, and harbours great myths and legends of the giant Finn MacCuill, of water horses, and warrior queens – such tales as enthralled folklorist Hugh Miller. Marlow saw it providing "a fitting analogy for a Martian destination, a place whose dramatic landscapes have inspired centuries of speculative tales."

He added: "Curiosity is ready to pen its own story on the dusty, windswept plains of Glenelg, Mars."

## THE MILLERS' MISSING PAPERS

### THE ADELAIDE CONNECTION - AN APPEAL FOR INFORMATION

Dr Michael Taylor and Dr Lyall Anderson write:

WE have been considering the fate of Hugh Miller's manuscripts as part of a wider study of his collections. Absurdly few MSS survive, given his literary output; some are in the National Library of Scotland, and his letter-book for the years to 1840 survives in New College Library (University of Edinburgh).

Seemingly, the bulk of Miller's papers went to Australia with, or were sent to, his daughter Harriet (1839-1883; herself a significant early Australian writer) and her husband the Rev. John Davidson (1834-1881) on his 'call' to become minister at Chalmers Church, Adelaide; he later became a founding professor at the University of Adelaide.

They apparently intended a biography, presumably to replace the badly flawed *Life and Letters of Hugh Miller* (1871) written by Peter Bayne under the supervision of Harriet's mother Lydia. Those papers included, for instance, an extensive correspondence with Robert Dick of Thurso, the geologist and naturalist, the loss of which Smiles complained in his 1878 biography of Dick. In the event, the Davidsons died early, as above, and their three daughters came back to the UK, while their only son worked up country as a surveyor.

Those papers were soon noted as missing, in W. K. Leask's *Hugh Miller* (1896) and again in 1902 in *The Centenary of Hugh Miller* being an account of the celebration held at Cromarty on 22nd August, 1902 (Glasgow University Press) and press reports of the event.

A few papers turned up in the hands of an Adelaide dealer and were mostly sold in 1960 to the National Library of Scotland (but most NLS Miller MSS are in fact on deposit from the National Trust for Scotland's Hugh Miller's Cottage and Museum at Cromarty). A very few more are in the University of Adelaide library. But the bulk of Miller's papers remains missing. We would be interested to know of any evidence as to these Australian papers' fate, or indeed any references in contemporary publications or MSS to Miller's manuscripts other than those noted above.



Harriet Miller Davidson – aged c21, from a rare group photograph of Hugh and Lydia Miller's four children, taken on a holiday in Germany in 1860.

# THE DAVIDSON CONNECTIONS

Nick Hide, of the Clan Davidson Association, writes:



Harriet's novel, *Man of Genius*, about kirk ministers wrestling with the demon drink, is available to order, £7.99, inc P & P, from the Friends. She wrote it in Adelaide, where it was originally published in 1872.

It is interesting to note that located inside the Scots Church in Adelaide, there is a large brass memorial plaque which commemorates Professor John Davidson and Harriet, his wife, daughter of Hugh Miller of Cromarty. The Adelaide congregation in 1883 clearly felt it was important to emphasise her ancestry and origins.



A section of the Scots Church memorial to the Rev John and Harriet.

I have a personal interest in the history of Cromarty, since my Davidson ancestors first appear in the Cromarty Old Parish Records, the sasines and the charters, and other recently discovered records which have survived virtually untouched since the 1650s. Much later, Hugh Miller refers to members of this same family in his written works. Hence my interest in the Hugh Miller story.

A few years ago, whilst visiting the Hugh Miller Museum for the first time, I purchased a copy of the book *Lydia, Wife of Hugh Miller of Cromarty* by Elizabeth Sutherland. This fine biography included much detailed genealogical information about the ancestry of the Miller/Fraser families and their descendants, which has kept me busy following up a number of links during the last five years. One of the links included the marriage of Harriet Miller [daughter of Hugh Miller & Lydia Fraser] to John Davidson. This Davidson reference caught my eye as I am also a researcher for the Clan Davidson Association.

The purpose of this note is to share my enthusiasm for the Hugh Miller Museum, and to acknowledge the network of supporters and contributors. I have found myself in contact with church historians in Burntisland, Fife from where John Davidson came, and archivists in Adelaide, Australia where John and Harriet Davidson later lived and died, as well as many other contacts spread around the world. One only had to mention the Hugh Miller name and suddenly doors have been opened.

In Cromarty, David Alston's published works [*My Little Town of Cromarty*] as well the Town House Records have been invaluable. More recently, I have had the opportunity to meet the Museum's benefactor Henry McKenzie Johnston in London, who has kindly allowed me unlimited access to his files. Henry, and his late wife Marian, a descendant of the Miller

family, completed extraordinarily detailed research over many years; long before the days of on line databases. Gradually, the network of families linked to Hugh Miller, his wife Lydia Fraser, and their descendants has begun to make far more sense.



The Scots Church, Adelaide



This long distance researcher will be always very grateful to the Museum for keeping alive the story of Hugh Miller and his family.

## SCIENCE FESTIVAL TRIUMPH

# SEEING IS BELIEVING

HUGH MILLER returned to the forefront of national and international attention at the British Science Association's annual festival, held this year in Aberdeen on its university campus.



*The new Aberdeen University library, popularly known locally as the "ice cube." © Bill Harrison*

Manager Dr Alix Powers-Jones organised for the Museum and Birthplace Cottage to set up a stand in the foyer of the brand new £50 million pound university library, right next to the festival box office.

Somewhere between 100 and 200 festival-goers are estimated to have visited, they ranged from scientists, to trainee teachers, pensioners, festival lecturers and staff, and many members of the public, from several continents.

It is the first time that the Museum has taken an exhibition on the road in its history, and Dr Powers-Jones deserves full credit.

She said: "I had attended a couple of Science Festivals before, and when I heard it was coming to Aberdeen this year, it seemed too good an opportunity to miss."

She arranged with the Trust (NTS) for a panel showing a montage of arresting shots of the Museum and the man, and his message. She wrote the texts for a range of interpretation cards illustrating the scale and diversity of the great man's talents, and spray-mounted them on to another panel herself.

She also set up, with Trust assistance, a giant plasma screen showing a series of "optical illusions," together with other visual and verbal puzzles. There were considerable logistics involved in the set up, involving transporting a carload of display material from Cromarty to Aberdeen and back, via a rendezvous with NTS education officer Sandra Morrison to pick up and return NTS kit from Castle Fraser.

The exhibition was given the title *Seeing is Believing*.

Alix has taken up Miller's advice to young people, "Make a Right Use of Your Eyes" (in his introduction to his autobiography, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*) as a key theme in all her projects to promote his legacy and encourage new generations to deploy his skills.



*Happy trio, volunteer helpers Sheila Caldwell-Johnston, direct descendant Stephanie Kulesza, and Dr Alix*

At the Museum we have perhaps previously placed more emphasis on Miller's own career of brilliant close observation as a natural scientist, and journalist, as an example to follow.



Professor Nigel Trewin presents Dr Alix with the "priceless acquisition," a copy of *The Cruise of the Betsey* inscribed by Lydia Miller.

The very best of guidance was on hand in the person of Professor Nigel Trewin, recently retired as head of Aberdeen University's geology faculty, bringing with him an outstanding specimen of Miller's famous "winged" fish, *Pterichthyodes milleri*, and a model of the same.



Puzzling it out

Professor Trewin – who also happens to be our Chairman - demonstrated how to examine the form of this beast, and assess its role as a bottom feeder in the great Orcadian Basin of 300 to 400 million years ago. His explanations begot expressions of fascination and awe.



Rapt visitors

A large team of volunteers also manned the stall and inter-acted with visitors, including Dutch intern Elisa de Waal, new volunteers Bruce and Alison Armour, direct descendant Stephanie Kulesza, her friend Sheila Caldwell-Johnston, and Martin Gostwick.

Alix was directly following Hugh Miller in seizing an opportunity. The British Science



Nigel's flying fish



Association is a shortened name for the distinguished body it recently directly succeeded, the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), founded in 1831.



*Fossils on display*

Hugh, newly appointed editor of *The Witness* newspaper, published his researches into the Old Red Sandstone in its columns, just in time for the Association's annual meeting in Glasgow in 1840. News of his spectacular finds, and some of the specimens had already been circulating among the greatest earth scientists of the day, and included in official reports to the meeting.

Miller's hour had come. His discoveries caused a sensation, as did his descriptions of them. Louis Agassiz named the "winged fish" *Pterichthyodes* after him. Sir Roderick Murchison praised a style "so poetical as to throw plain geologists like myself into the shade." Oxford's great William Buckland said he would "give his left hand to possess such powers of description."

Ten years later, Miller was himself officiating as one of the Association's secretaries at its meeting in Edinburgh, while his books of geology, such as *The Old Red Sandstone* and *Footprints of the Creator* were selling in edition after edition.

This was also the direct link to the past which Dr Powers-Jones and her team brought to Aberdeen. They were asked: "Is the Trust going to do more of this sort of thing?" The answer from Cromarty may well be yes.

## *Blessed with an intern*

The Museum staff have benefitted much from the bright contributions this season of a Dutch student, Elisa de Waal. Elisa, 22, hails from a small town, Egmond aan den Hoef, in the north of the Netherlands, and she is studying a four-year course in leisure management at InHolland University.

She loves the country and the people of Scotland, and after a holiday here last year, asked the National Trust for Scotland if there were any opportunities to advance her studies with them. Thus she found herself at one of its smallest (and best!) properties, the Hugh Miller Museum, for five months until December.

She was the manager's "invaluable" helper over the two days of the Science Festival exhibition (see above), and at other events such as the Doors Open Day, also in September, with reception, guiding and archive work. And just to show the Dutch maritime prowess is as good as any Scots, she has swum the Cromarty-Nigg firth crossing for charity!



*Elis de Waal*

Landmark Series No 4

## *Wallace Monument: Hall of Heroes*

Martin Gostwick writes:

It is not that well known that Hugh Miller is among 16 great men honoured as all-time Scottish heroes in the magnificent Wallace Monument.

Not until the summer of this year did I finally stop buzzing past the monument by road or rail, and make a visit. Though I knew Miller was inside, I was thrilled indeed to catch sight of his bust in the second-floor hall.

Be warned, to reach it, you have to climb 135 steep steps inside a narrow, cold stone spiral staircase without a handrail – not for the fainthearted, but well worth the effort.

A plaque commemorates the bust as the gift of a Robert Halliday Gunning in 1888, and stands beside no less a figure than King Robert the Bruce. Of course, Miller was then at the height of his fame, his books selling in multiple editions.

Miller shares the limelight with other greats more familiar to most Scots, like the Bruce, Robert Burns, David Livingstone, Adam Smith, James Watt, Sir Walter Scott, Allan Ramsay, John Knox, and William Gladstone.

There are others less well known today, such as the historian Thomas Carlyle, Thomas Chalmers, the Free Church leader and mentor to Miller, Reformation-era scholar George Buchanan, the physicist Sir David Brewster, and even the inventor of gas lighting, William Murdoch.



*The monument standing proud on Abbey Craig, just outside Stirling. © Andrew Smith*



*The Hall of Heroes, eerily floodlit.*



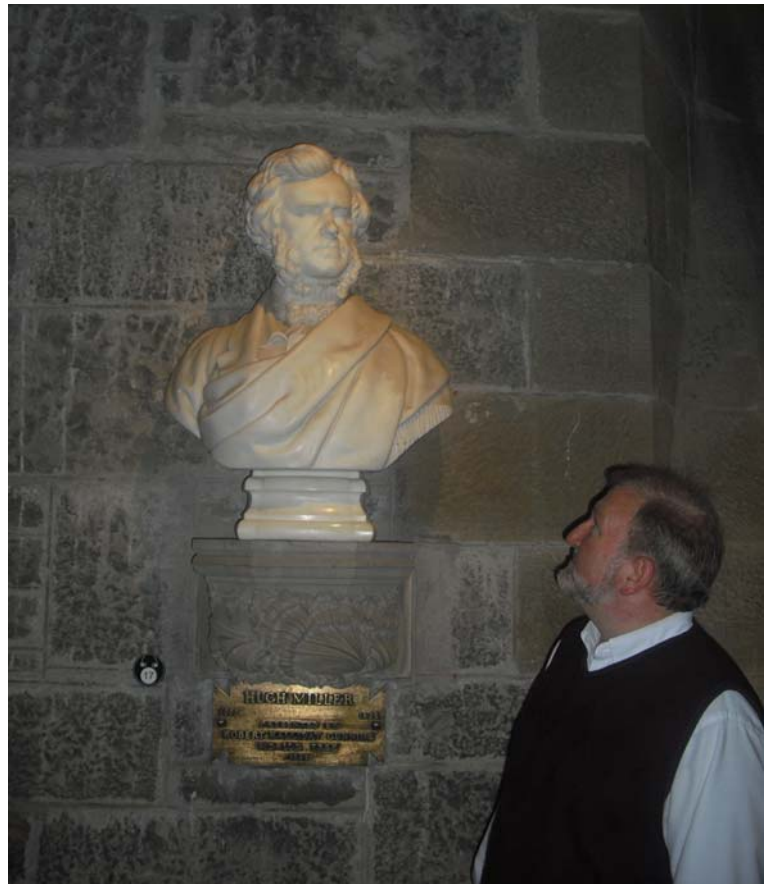
As the official guidebook explains, the idea of the late 19th Century proponents of the monument was “to take the idea of the hero well beyond traditional notions of brave freedom fighters,” although the entire edifice was built to the glory of Scotland’s greatest freedom fighter.

There are no women,” as we might expect at this date,” says the guidebook, rather lamely. There were surely many other contenders overlooked too, but those chosen seem to have been championed by individual donors.

Much is made at the monument, as you would expect, of Blind Harry, Wallace’s posthumous biographer, on whom the young Hugh also waxed fervently in his autobiography: “I was intoxicated with the narratives of the blind minstrel – with his fierce breathings of hot, intolerant patriotism, and his stories of astonishing prowess; and, glorying in being a Scot, and the countryman of Wallace and the Graham, I longed for a war with the Southron, that the wrongs and sufferings of these noble heroes might be avenged.”

The Wallace Monument was built, says the guidebook, to celebrate Scotland’s ancient independence, and to assert Scotland’s status “as an equal partner with England, within the Union.” Thus the stunning 67-metre tower was constructed, over some eight years, entirely funded by contributions from the public.

The National Trust for Scotland’s Bannockburn battle memorial site is close by, and there are big plans to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the Bruce’s victory there in 2014. A trip to both sites, and Historic Scotland’s superbly restored Stirling Castle, is thus strongly recommended.



Professor Philip Wilson admires the bust on a visit in 2009.

## ***DISTINGUISHED VISITOR***

Professor Philip Wilson, one of our members, in June journeyed all the way from the USA, where he teaches the history of science and medicine at Pennsylvania State University’s Hershey College of Medicine, to make a second tour of the Museum, and renew contact with the Friends.

He donated three original volumes to the Museum’s library. Two of these were Volumes 1 and 2 of the *Catalogue des Archives de Louis Agassiz*. Agassiz, the Swiss-born naturalist, and later founder of the science faculty at Harvard University, was the pre-eminent expert on fossil fishes of his day, and hailed Miller’s discoveries at the British Association for the Advancement of Science’s Glasgow meeting, as described above.

The third volume was a biography, *Louis Agassiz: His Life and Correspondence*, written by his daughter, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz.

Professor Wilson is a great admirer of Agassiz’s contemporary – and sometimes rival, Arnold Guyot, also born in Neuchatel, Switzerland. Guyot was world-famed for his pioneering measurement of glacial motion, and determination of the origin and disposition of erratic boulders. He was a founder of geosciences at Princeton University.

Philip and our secretary, Martin Gostwick, spent several happy hours reviewing Guyot's heroic endeavours in the glaciers of North America and Europe, both in scientific endeavour and physical endurance, as well as discussing how both he and Agassiz sought to refute Darwin's theories of natural selection.

As we went to press, Prof Wilson was about to publish a biography of Guyot, *Glaciers, God and Geography*.



Philip Wilson presents Dr Powers-Jones with the biography of Louis Agassiz by his daughter, in the parlour of Miller House.

As scholar-in-residence, 2006-2007, he became closely involved with establishing a museum in Erasmus Darwin House in the grounds of Lichfield Cathedral, Staffs, a museum which he says bears many parallels with ours, in their presentation of natural sciences, and both having beautiful gardens.

Erasmus was Charles Darwin's grandfather, and was among the scientists who paved the way for theories of transmutation illuminated by his grandson.

Prof Wilson hopes to make further visits to Cromarty, and if possible, contribute to the Miller Museum's development in any practical way.



## OBITUARY

### *Stan Wood, of "Mr Wood's Fossils"*

Mr Wood, who has died of cancer aged 72, was a quite brilliant fossil-hunter, who leaves behind a discovery which is going to occupy palaeontologists for decades to come.

Three years ago, after a 20-year search, he found, in a shale seam of the Whiteadder Water, near Chirnside, Berwickshire, hundreds of fossils which throw light on life forms previously unknown in the evolution of the earth.

The finds relate to a period called the Romer Gap (named after an American palaeontologist of that name), dating between 345 and 360 million years ago. They indicate the hitherto undetected existence of a wide variety of amphibians, plants, fish and invertebrates during that time.

The haul has been described as "astonishing" by no less a figure than Sir David Attenborough, while Nick Fraser, keeper of natural sciences at National Museums Scotland said: "This is a real eureka moment in palaeontology". A consortium has been formed to raise £3 million to fund further research at this and other sites in Berwickshire and elsewhere in the Borders.



A gleeful Stan shows off the fossil shark he found at Bearsden, near Glasgow – apparently while walking his dog!



Stan Wood, after spells in the Merchant Navy and insurance, found his real metier in searching out fossils, and the first to win international attention, was "Lizzie the Lizard" or *Westlothiana lizziae* (now on display in the "Beginnings" Gallery of the National Museum). He came upon Lizzie in 1984 in an old limestone quarry at Bathgate, West Lothian. Another startling specimen was the white shark at Bearsden, dating 325 mya.

Stan Wood shared with Hugh Miller the distinction of being the only two palaeontologists to have display cases exclusively devoted to their finds in the old Royal Scottish Museum before it was reorganised.

He was a strong admirer of Hugh Miller, seeing him as a predecessor, a largely self-taught pioneer like himself, as he told a transfixed audience at the first of three conferences to mark Miller's 2002 Bicentenary.

I will always remember his mischievous delight recalling how he "brought out the Bearsden shark from under the noses" of far more academically qualified earth scientists, as well as his rough-and-ready manner, and fondness for a pint and a roll-up.

He especially enjoyed revisiting old sites previously worked by collectors and detecting fossils where others had drawn a blank. He thought nothing of working hours waist-deep in water, carrying colossal loads about in rucksacks.

Stan Wood was an idiosyncratic character, who some criticised for his commercial practices, but there was no doubting his integrity as a field-worker of extraordinary instinctive "feel" for rock types and dogged perseverance.

Stan set up the renowned shop, Mr Wood's Fossils, in Edinburgh's Grassmarket in 1987, which continues to flourish. From this shop, the National Trust for Scotland purchased some of the fossils you can see and handle at the "hands-on" table in Room 6 in Miller House.

## *Hugh Miller on fisherfolk*

**Mike Taylor\* reports on what Sara Stevenson, David Alston and Mike have been reading**

One great advantage of the internet is the increasing number of old books and journals that have been scanned and put on the net, some even accessible for free. One of the most valuable websites of this kind is [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) and amongst its many treasures is an unpromising-sounding piece by Hugh Miller from 1844, a review entitled *Report by the Commissioners for the British Fisheries of their Proceedings, 1842*.

Printed in pursuance of the Acts 48<sup>th</sup> Geo. III, c.110, s.7, and 55<sup>th</sup> Geo. III, c. 94, s.4 in the first volume of the *North British*



*Review*, pages 326 to 365\*. The *North British Review* was one of those weighty review quarterlies of the time. It was founded by Scottish evangelicals to give their views an airing, and no doubt Miller

had been asked to rally round and submit something.

The essay turns out to be, not a review of some boring Parliamentary report, but a completely off-topic but fascinating essay on Miller's own perceptions of the fisherfolk of Scotland, especially but not only of Cromarty, and how their way of life had marked them physically and morally. It is one of those Millerian pieces which I for one had never got round to reading, though it is listed in Michael Shortland's bibliography of 1996, until Sara Stevenson pointed it out to me.

Sara, formerly the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's chief curator of photography, was partly interested in Miller's portrayal of the fisherfolk, as set beside the photos which D. O. Hill and R. Adamson took of the Newhaven fisherfolk, and because of the famous Hill/Adamson calotype portraits of Miller himself.

Formally the essay is anonymous but the authorship of such things was fairly thinly disguised, and at least one reference book gives its authorship as Miller's. But there can hardly be any doubt about the authorship of this one – it contains so many references to Millerian themes such as the evils of the bothy system, the spectre ships of the Maolbuie (the moor on the Black Isle hogback), and so on, right down to the reference to the sea-pen and its ancient fossil equivalent the graptolite.

Sara, Cromarty historian David Alston and I have been discussing this little find, which is important for local history. Miller has moved on from his earlier 1820s *Letters on the Herring Fishery*, and his portrait of the East Coast fisherfolk, while sympathetic, is now noticeably more critical.

This perhaps reflects his increasing maturity (rather than his being now a safe distance away from Cromarty in his new Edinburgh base, given that he came back regularly to Cromarty). He is particularly interesting on the effects of the herring fishing trade on fisher families by comparison with landward families. Its all-demanding nature made for a great emphasis on marriage and family life, as the women and children played an integral role in supporting their menfolk's work. But fishing could be a trap, not just because it was a risky trade where it was hard to make a consistent living, and where both men and gear could be lost at once.

School took second fiddle to the needs of the fishing, while further education was not well valued – mathematics, for instance, was valued by deep-water sailors for navigation but irrelevant to such coasting fishermen. But it is startling to find Miller asserting, on the Cromarty draper's evidence, that the local fisherfolk had smaller heads than other Easter Ross folk – presumably on the then theory of use and disuse of physical features (though, as always with Miller, one wonders if he is having his little joke). Well recommended!

\* Go to [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org), enter "North British Review" in the search box and then look for volume 1 for 1844 in the results.

\* Dr Taylor is the recently retired principal curator of vertebrate palaeontology at National Museums Scotland, and author of the biography *Hugh Miller, Stonemason, Geologist, Writer*.

\* We hope to print Miller's essay, or extracts from it, in a future edition.

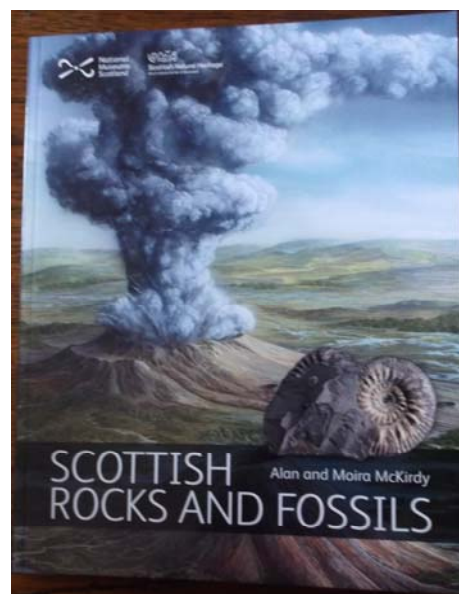
#### BOOK REVIEWS – IDEAL CHRISTMAS READS

### *A Race through Time*

**Scottish Rocks and Fossils, Alan and Moira McKirdy**

**National Museums Scotland, £5.99. ISBN: 978.1.905267.29.3**

This is an excellent, indeed inspiring route for the young (and indeed adult beginners) into the wonders of our planet's multi-billion year story.





It starts with a timeline, set out like a circuit track, from 4600mya to our human appearance only in the last few thousand years. The three basic types of rock, and how they are formed, are explained. Beautiful minerals and crystals are shown in their glory. The fossil record from the earliest plant life to the products of the ice age are reviewed. We learn the origins of coal, oil and gas, and the sources for human use of metals and stone. Scotland's long journey from way south of the Equator to collision with England is traced. The outstanding contributions of individual geologists helps illuminate the story, starting with James Hutton, and continuing with Hugh Miller, Sir James Hall and Louis Agassiz.

Miller fans will be delighted to see him and his famous "flying fish" highlighted, as is Stan Wood's "Lizzie the Lizard." Craig Ellery's illustrations are enthrallingly vivid. It's all in 40 pages, with facts and activities and the fossil-collecting code to follow up,

## *Beds of dried grass*

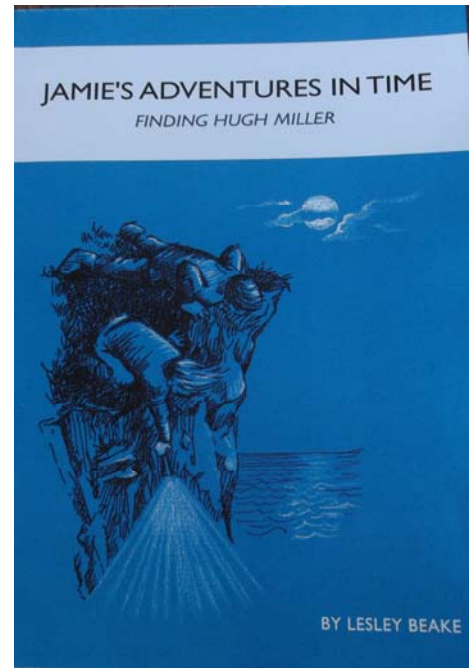
**Jamie's Adventures in Time, Lesley Beake**

**For the Right Reasons, £4.99. ISBN 978.1.905787.61.6.**

A folk tale for the 21st Century is this memorable adventure of troubled young teenage boy Jamie Alexander gaining hope and purpose in life through finding Hugh Miller.

Lesley Beake has conjured a convincing, and at times hair-raising account of Jamie's summer in Cromarty, from serious illness through to the life-saving exploit of rescuing his grandfather from a fall off a cliff. Jamie's helpmate, the "ghost girl" Alice, as readers have described her, is indeed as satisfyingly mysterious and unworldly as Jamie and "Gramps" are real.

This young people's book was extensively publicised in our previous edition, but we make no apologies for reviewing it a second time, because it's a cracking story, and deserves more takers than it's had so far. All proceeds through the Friends accrue to the charity.



## *Giants, Fairies, Wind Witches, et al*

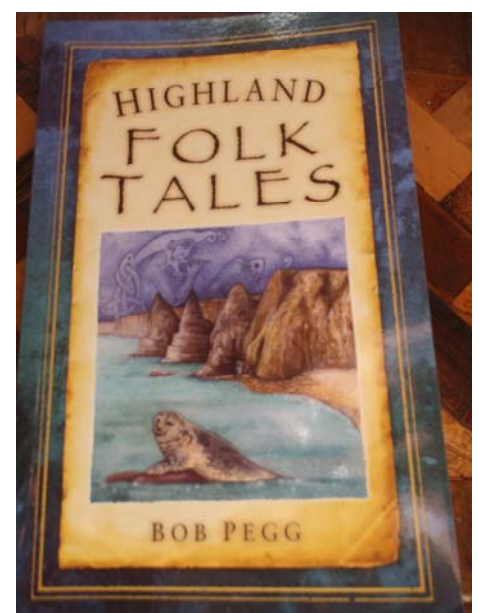
**Highland Folk Tales, Bob Pegg**

**The History Press, £9.99. ISBN: 978.0.7524.06090.1**

Bob Pegg's oral story-telling arts translate superbly well to the printed page in this collection of some 40 tales, situated variously from Rothiemurchus, Inverness-shire, to the Viking-ruled northern isles.

Re-telling many of these in the same oral style in which he voices them, you can almost "hear" them as you read, and your imagination travels with those whose superstitions, visions and revelations enlivened many a fireside ceilidh during long winter nights. There are many spine-chilling tales of ghostly apparitions, like the Lady of Balconie, gory revenges, some comic reliefs, a few moral fables (*How the Sea Became Salt*), and one or two with happy endings, (*The Three Advices*, *John Reid and the Mermaid*).

A whole chapter revives Hugh Miller's fabulous folklore, *Miller's World of Wonders*, which includes such perennial favourites as



the mermaid tale above, and the story of Sandy Wood and how he tried to reach God before his neighbour. Hugh is also the source in other chapters for the ghastly ladies of Balconie and Ardvreck, and a version of the Finn MacCool adventures of Knockfarril. With Hugh, Bob attempts to rewrite "with some trepidation" the originals from *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*, back into "something like fireside versions." His anxiety was well-founded, because he has lost the "rich literary style" which gave Miller's originals some of their effect, but he has succeeded in making them shorter, and their intricacies easier to follow.

A perfect distraction from the games console and the net for your children and grandchildren are these tales from another time and another world.

## Garlands Galore

**A Noble Smuggler And Other Stories, Hugh Miller, ed. Martin Gostwick.  
Inverness Courier, £8.99. ISBN 0.9530202.0.7**

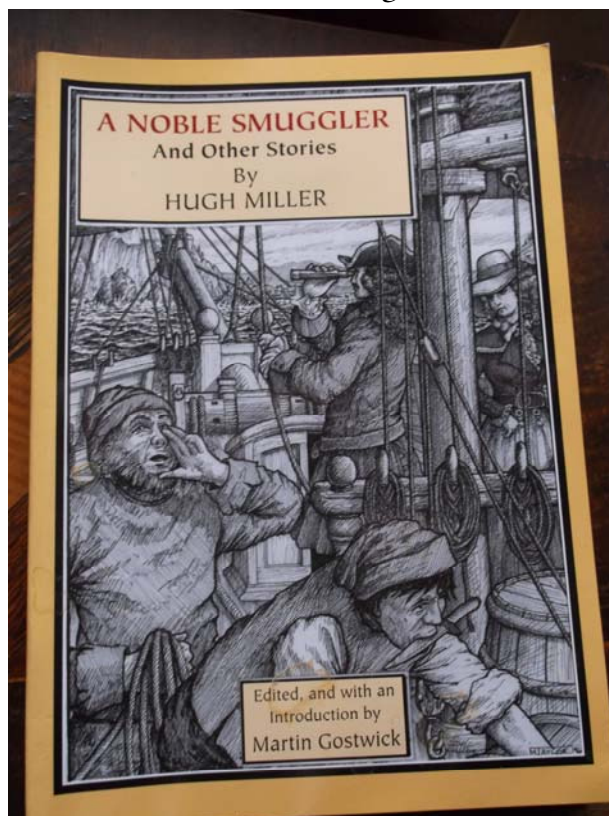
This book has been in print since I edited and published it in 1997, but it's timeless, because it has some of the most telling examples of Miller's early journalism, as Cromarty Correspondent for the Inverness Courier. I cannot review my own book, so I will reprint from it this brief dispatch on one of the immensely colourful Friendly Society parades which made a big buzz in the town in the 1830s.

The book can be obtained directly through me (half proceeds to The Friends), or from the Museum shop, The Emporium, Cromarty, and Waterstone's, Inverness.

### GARLANDS GALORE

*21st July 1830*

*On the 13th current, the Union Gardeners' Lodge of Cromarty held their annual meeting there, and walked through the town in procession, accompanied by an excellent band of music. A body of a hundred and twenty well-dressed men, walking in procession, was a pleasing spectacle, but the effect of the pageant was greatly heightened by the garlands of flowers, and a profusion of evergreen arches. The society was instituted only about three years ago, and such has been its success, that a lodge, which will be one of the finest houses in the town of Cromarty,\* is already building for the accommodation of members.*



*It is pleasing to see Friendly Societies on the increase in this quarter, as they not only give relief to the poor man when in distress, but afford him a fit subject for the exercise of those social and mental faculties, which the majority of mechanical professionals seldom call into action. These useful institutions do more in disseminating knowledge among the working classes in Cromarty than if a hundred copies of Mr Cobbett's\* "twopenny trash" were circulated twice weekly.*

\*The lodge is today's Cromarty Arms Inn

\*William Cobbett was the author of radical works such as "Rural Rides."



# "THE CHARM OF THE EGG"

## The Hallowe'en Bride

*Here follows a part-extract, most suitable for Hallowe'en season, from one of Miller's immortal folk tales.*

THERE belonged to the north of Scotland two Hallowe'en rites, and one of these, an elegant and beautiful charm, is not yet entirely out of repute.

An ale-glass is filled with pure water, and into the water is dropped the white of an egg. The female whose future fortunes are to be disclosed (for the charm seems appropriated exclusively by the better sex) lays her hand on the glass's mouth, and holds it there for about the space of a minute. In that time the heavier parts of the white settle to the bottom, while the lighter shoot up into the water, from which they are distinguished by their opacity into a variety of fantastic shapes, resembling towers and domes, towns, fleets, and forests or, to speak more correctly, into forms not very unlike those icicles which one sees during a severe frost at the edge of a waterfall. A resemblance is next traced, which is termed reading the glass, between the images displayed in it and some objects of either art or nature; and these are regarded as constituting a hieroglyphic of the person's future fortunes. Thus, the ramparts of a fortress surmounted by streamers, a plain covered with armies, or the tents of an encampment, show that the female whose hand covered the glass is to be united to a soldier, and that her life is to be spent in camps and garrisons. A fleet of ships, a church or pulpit, a half-finished building, a field stripped into furrows, a garden, a forest – all these, and fifty other scenes afford symbols equally unequivocal.



*Cromarty lass Katie Mackay giving a public reading of "The Charm of the Egg" at the opening of Miller House in April 2004. Some of the "hieroglyphics," such as the ship, can be seen on her gown.*



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# FRIENDS OF HUGH MILLER MEMBERSHIP APPEAL

Having read this newsletter, will Members now please consider some of the following actions:

- Increasing your subscription contribution.
- Making a donation.
- Inviting family or friends to join, with the following message from us:

We have pleasure in inviting you to consider subscribing to the charity, named The Friends of Hugh Miller. The Friends' annual subscription has been set at £10 per person. Subscribers receive a Membership Card, a copy of the constitution, a periodical newsletter and an annual report. We look forward to welcoming you as a Member of the Friends.

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

I WISH to become a member of the charity, The Friends of Hugh Miller (SC 037351), in order to support its work in making Miller's life and work better known, and in particular to assist in the development of the Hugh Miller Museum and Birthplace Cottage in Church Street, Cromarty.

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