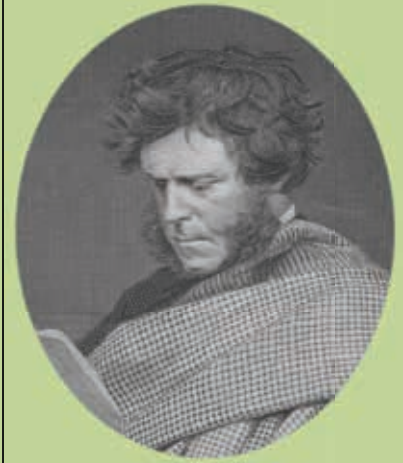


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Editor:
Martin Gostwick,
Secretary

Hugh's News

Newsletter of
The Friends of Hugh Miller



OUR BANNER



BEHOLD the proposed banner which is going to launch our new website in the near future.

The site has the working title of "Hugh Who?" because it is aimed at arousing the curiosity of all those out there who may never have heard of Hugh Miller, as well as his faithful enthusiasts.

Please let us have your comments, favourable or critical. Joint webmasters Liz Broumley and Martin Gostwick are currently writing and assembling all the contents. The material will be presented in a visually pleasing and easily accessible format.

Rapid progress is also being made with raising our subscription from £10 to £15 a year, thanks to the prompt response of members to the letter of request. As we went to press, 20 members had notified us of raising their subs, two doubling theirs, and one more than double. Most moving was the phone call from one elderly, infirm lady, who told us:

"Don't waste your time and the Friends' money writing me a silly thankyou letter."

Other members who have not yet responded, please do so earlier rather than later. It is true there is plenty of time between now and 1st April 2014, but if you delay, you might forget! Thank you in anticipation.

MILLER TITLES' COMEBACK

A REMARKABLE discovery has been made – that almost all Hugh Miller's books are once again available to buy, many of them for the first time in over a century.

This renewed availability should be a cause of elation for many enthusiasts, but has also to be greeted with considerable caution.

INSIDE:

Staff stalwarts portrayed p 3

Cromarty Bay history ps 4 - 6

Thief's Row Dig ps 7 - 8

The books do not exist as such. They are copies of old editions obtained mainly from public and university libraries, which are then scanned and held on a database. They only materialise in print once they are ordered, and they can only be ordered online. They are known as Print on Demand books (PoDs).

Many of the firms involved are not publishers in any usually accepted sense, and their ownership is, in many cases,

obscure. Copies are offered through large warehouse companies like Amazon and the Book Depository, with prices ranging mostly from £15 to £20 in paperback, and £30 plus in hardback.

A trawling of the internet ascertained that these firms all set up in business some time during and after 2007, making copies available to order of hundreds of thousands of old, long out of print books, claimed also to be out of copyright. They are aiming at niche markets of specialist interests.

The companies involved simply file for an ISBN number for a given book, and then put it on the market. They often use stock photography for their front covers, which can lead to many titles having the same basic, and often irrelevant, or meaningless cover design, and this applies to a lot of the Millers on offer. It is off-putting to say the least.

As just one example, the trawl revealed no less than three covers for *Testimony of the Rocks*, each issued by a different PoD enterprise. One shows a mountain, another, rather incongruously, a wheatfield. Images of piled-up antiquarian volumes occur again and again.

One book, entitled *The Life of Hugh Miller: A Sketch for Working Men* is attributed in one case to Miller himself, in another to Anon. It does not appear at all in his bibliography. Neither does another attributed title, *Sutherland and the Sutherlanders*. This, at 22 pages, may simply be Miller's famous essay *Sutherland As It Was and Is* (1843) taken out of *Leading Articles* and offered separately. There is no way of knowing what the contents of this publication actually are without ordering it, and the same goes for all the others, because these "exact duplicate" providers do not give any contact information, ie no address, no telephone number, and no website other than the warehouse point of sale.

The reason we have only now become aware of all this, is that the firms involved do not waste any money on advertising and otherwise publicising their wares, in any other venue than through the warehouses on the internet. You discover what is out there accidentally, as I did, when the availability online of *First Impressions of England and Its People* first came to the museum property manager's notice. We reviewed this in our last issue (*Hugh's News No 18*). It was admittedly a perfectly good copy, but of which edition was not stated, while the front cover showed an unnamed church with no apparent connection to any of the text.

The trawl also uncovered a litany of complaints from buyers of duplicated works. The "publishers" issue careful disclaimers with every title, warning of possible flaws. Complainers write of really poor quality scanning, producing pages with type running off the edges, illegible type, missing pages, and missing illustrations.

Duplicates of this kind can have little value, especially in relation to Hugh Miller, whose works went through dozens of editions of varying quality over some 70 years. They need modern scholarship to interpret, update and, in some instances, correct the information given by the author, as can readily be seen in Dr Mike Taylor's voluminous notes to the NMS edition of *The Cruise of the Betsey* in 2003.

Miller's most celebrated work, *The Old Red Sandstone*, appeared in some seven editions between 1841 and 1857, each with its own Note or Foreword amending the edition before. More than 20 editions and reprints were published in the United States, from the 4th edition onwards. To republish such a work requires the same or an even bigger scale of research, much of it new, than was involved in the *Betsey* edition. This immense task of scholarship is currently being undertaken by our members, Dr Mike Taylor and Dr Ralph O'Connor.

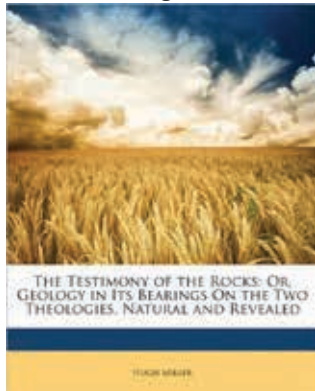
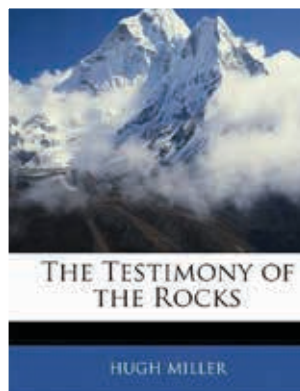
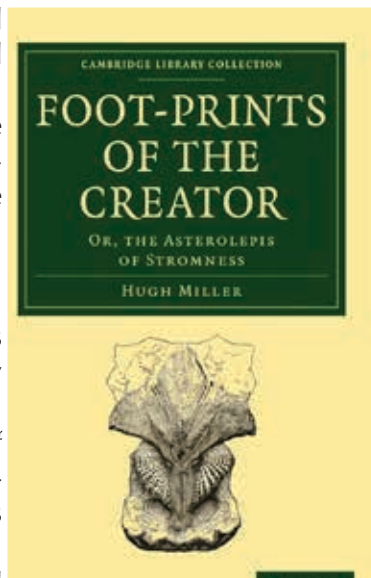
Books should be made, edited and produced from front cover to back, not churned off a database with any old cover. Our strong recommendation to members is to buy, or borrow from libraries, original Miller editions. Second hand editions can be obtained at no greater cost than these "virtual" offerings. We should also await, and support,

the appearance of authoritative new editions.

However, for those who feel they must have a copy of one of his books in any guise, I here list (in their short forms) all those, including biographies, and critical studies, which I found in the Book Depository's listings.

The Life and Letters of Hugh Miller, by Peter Bayne. *Hugh Miller : A Critical Study* by William Mackay Mackenzie. *Hugh Miller* by W Keith Leask. *Life of Hugh Miller* by Jean L Watson. *Labour and Triumph* by Thomas N Brown. *The Centenary of Hugh Miller*.

(continued on page 3)



STAFF PROFILES

We present pen-and-picture portraits of some of the Museum's stalwart staff.

SHEILA MACDONALD

She remembers being a very avid reader from early childhood, and recalls to this day reading Hugh Miller in the early 1950s at her family home in Cullicudden by the light of Tilley lamps. She stayed there from the age of 7 until her 13th birthday.

After long spells in England and abroad, she returned to live on the Black Isle in Cromarty in 2004. "I never forgot those childhood days, and vowed I would come back some day," she says with a smile of satisfaction.

She is in her third year as a seasonal assistant, a job which suits her very well as someone fascinated by local history. She is treasurer of Cromarty History Society.



ALASTAIR POWERS-JONES

The son of the property manager, Dr Alix Powers-Jones, Alastair is entering his second year as a student of biological sciences at Napier University in Edinburgh. He is enjoying his summer spell as a senior assistant, and hopes he may one day find employment in the heritage industry with the National Trust for Scotland.



CAROLINE MACDONALD

Caroline is proud of being "a born and bred Crom who has never left the place." She was a dux at Cromarty Primary school. Later, she was crowned the town's gala queen. When she left school, she joined the Nigg offshore platform yard in the accountants' offices just as it was getting started. They made her the "Brown belle" at Nigg. "I remember the champagne being served on the docks when the first rig went out."



Top right: Sheila MacDonald

Above: Alastair Powers-Jones

Right: Caroline MacDonald with volunteer Kayleigh Burnside, her grand-daughter.

(continued from page 2)

Essays. Leading Articles. My Schools and Schoolmasters. Tales and Sketches. Sketchbook of Popular Geology. Edinburgh and Its Neighbourhood. The Old Red Sandstone. The Headship of Christ. The Two Records. Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland. The Cruise of the Betsey. Footprints of the Creator. The Testimony of the Rocks. It is also possible through various addresses to read several Miller works online for free, or a small charge, and this will be the subject of further inquiry.

LANDMARK SERIES No 7

CROMARTY BAY – STORIES

Martin Gostwick

THIS beautiful stretch of coast has borne witness to ever-changing scenes over many centuries, and if you look carefully you can see fascinating evidences of its past in deep time, in Hugh Miller's day and since.

My guide for a tour of its hidden, or part-hidden record of geology and human endeavour was the ever-genial Cromarty Courthouse Museum curator, Paul Monk, who happens also to be an enthusiastic geologist well versed in the Miller story.

We started with maps, firstly the still current geological survey map of the area⁽¹⁾ which bears the name, among others, of H. Miller. He was Miller's own son, Hugh Junior. He mapped the "solid" landscape of Ross and Cromarty and Sutherland between 1885 and 1888, first published 1889. It was during this time that he also worked on turning his father's birthplace cottage into the museum we know today.

Paul and I speculated on how his appointment came about. Had the then first head of HM Geological Survey, Archibald Geikie, who in youth had been a protégé of the father, chosen the son for the job because of the family connection, or had the son applied for it and won it in open competition? I subsequently ascertained from Dr Mike Taylor that Hugh Jnr requested the assignment to this district following his transfer from working in the north of England. Whatever the circumstances, it was great to see that surviving link still in use by natural scientists today.

We looked next at the role of the raised beach which runs the length of the bay as a decades' long source of Old Red Sandstone quarry stone, from the days when houses, farms, churches and just about every other sort of edifice were built of nothing else. Several quarries are believed to have been worked in the cliffsides, all of which, save one, have completely disappeared, either because of overgrowth, or the laying of a railway line early in the 20th Century.

Paul has studied the 1764 Cromarty Estate map carefully, and believes it shows outlines of a quarry "harbour," with two basins, from where stone was shipped to building sites, among which might have been Fort George and Cromarty Harbour. The existence of two semi-circular lines of stone, only visible at low tide, seems to bear him out. They could not, he asserted, have been formed by nature in so well-defined a form. To back him up, he indicated



within the second, or northernmost, basin, a line of dressed stone blocks which had not been shipped out, for any number of possible reasons. There are also some wooden stumps of unknown purpose immersed in the sand. As further evidence for a quarry, he showed a section of beach covered with discarded shards of Old Red lying amidst glacial litter, and behind it, remnants of what was probably a waste tip, buried in the sandbank. The woodland

Top right: Geologist Paul Monk with discarded blocks of dressed stone.

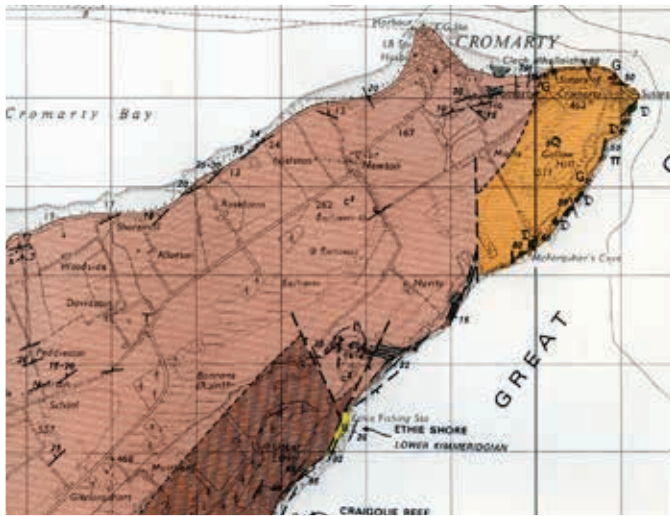
Middle right: Augen gneiss glacial litter. Augen is German for "eyes" which can be perceived in the stone

Bottom right: Folklore: Udale Bay, site of the salmon-fisher's tragedy - Image courtesy Andrew Dowsett

Bottom left: Morial's Den, truant haunt



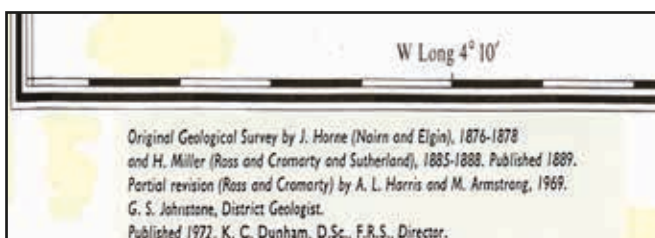
IN STONE AND LORE



inshore is known as Quarry Wood. We talked about a great glacier which bore down from around Loch Glas-carnoch to the Moray Firth, leaving the debris which makes for such richly coloured shorelines as this one, and beside which lie some surviving much eroded Old Red outcrops. It is fascinating to see in one small section of beach, the actions of nature across hundreds of millions of years, and human activity amongst them.

This quarry is not thought to be one of those where Miller began work as a jobbing mason for an uncle in the early 1820s. Sadly, nothing remains to be seen of these, but, fortunately, there are remnants of his work elsewhere. He said the masons' gang soon left the Cromarty Bay quarries, "as they proved more than usually difficult in the working at this time." But he was in them for long enough to make time to cross the short, if rough-walking distance, to Eathie Beach where he famously "laid open my first-found ammonite." Paul Monk did point to the cliffside where he believes one of Miller's quarries may have been situated, where the raised beach recedes from the shore in a distinctive curve about two hundred metres across, but there are no tell-tale remains to show for it. Miller's account of journeyman masonry in the early 19th Century in his autobiography⁽²⁾ is a classic record of a lost age.

Cromarty Bay is also pregnant with the folklore which Miller described with such relish in his epic work, *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*. Just outside the town's limits lies Morial's Den⁽³⁾, today as then "a secluded, solitary place, the sides sprinkled over with the sea-hip, the sloe, and the bramble," but now even more solitary, for no longer is it the scene of "truant-playing during the day, and of witch and fairy meetings during the night." He recounted how an old devoted Bible reader banished from Morial's Den "a beautiful sylph-looking female" when he told her the book offered no salvation to the likes of her. Two miles further southwest, hangs the tale of the shipmaster who saw a falling star, or meteor, repeatedly descending on a cottage, each time arrested from striking the building by the crowing of a cock. He bought the cock to see if its absence would change things. On a return voyage a month later he found the cottage burned to the ground. This sorry tale was apparently woven round the subsequent gruesome discovery nearby of a woman's doubled-up skeleton.



Top left: The "solid" map of the area - Crown copyright
Top right: The "post-glacial" map showing raised beach, stacks and caves - Crown copyright

Above left: H Miller Jnr name appears as first mapper of the district - Crown copyright
Above right: Crescent-shaped remnants of what may have been a quarry harbour.

Near Shore Mill, two more extremely devout Bible readers, John and Margaret Williamson, known as Johnie and Meggie of the Shore, furnished Miller with more edifying tales⁽⁴⁾. Johnie was the miller of his time, who in drought-ridden seasons would spend all day reading the Good Book on a grassy knoll above his cottage. His widow, Meggie, lived extremely impoverished, yet always hospitable. She was so religious, she once spent three days in jail in Tain for snatching what she regarded as a profane proclamation out of a minister's hand in the middle of a service. Their graves lie in Cromarty East Churchyard. A later mill building, and its wheel and a grindstone are still visible from the road, as is the knoll where Johnie read the Good Book all day.

Yet another drama Miller related concerned The Salmon Fisher of Udoll (now Udale), below Poyntzfield,⁽⁵⁾ in which a well-doing fisherman, Allan Thomson, loses his sweetheart to the grave, following violent clashes with rivals, a lost fortune and the girl's fatal illness. At the lowest tides, remnants of salmon traps can still be found in Udale Bay, very probably laid by poor Allan Thomson in the 1760s. A fishing enterprise of far more recent date has left its marks. Cromarty entrepreneur Robbie Davie's rusting cages for his 1980s oyster and trout farms can still be observed just north of Shore Mill – for some an eyesore, but for Paul Monk, a splendid marine nature reserve sheltering spider crab and sea urchins. Robbie tells all gripingly in locally published reminiscences⁽⁶⁾.

No account of life in the bay could omit the contributions by generations of Middletons at Rosefarm to the Miller story, especially in support of their ancestors' museum just down the road – and as hardy spirits who, like many other denizens of the parish, made a habit of swimming regularly off the beach in all seasons.

1. Sheet 74, Institute of Geological Sciences' Geological Survey, 1973

2. *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, p 152 (B & W, Edinburgh, 1993).

3. *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*, Chapter V, pss 69-72, (B & W, Edinburgh 1994).,

4. - ditto - , Chapter XXVI, ps 362-368.

5. *Tales and Sketches*, pps 118 – 147, (Nimmo, Edinburgh, 1863)

6. *Cromarty – Living by the Sea*, ps 67-72 (Cromarty, 2007)

My thanks go to Paul and Brenda Monk for their hospitality, guided tour and assistance with this article.

Top right: Robbie Davie's fish cages, eyesore or nature reserve?

Upper right: A suspected quarry waste tip

Centre right: Johnie o' the Shore's bible knoll

Lower right: Possible site of Miller's first quarry

Bottom right: Old Red Sandstone outcrop

Below: Mill stone and mill wheel



THIEF'S ROW – A MEDIEVAL DIG

ARCHAEOLOGISTS and local volunteers have begun to raise from the earth some of the old Cromarty which lay to the east of the present town.

An exhibition of their work was shown in the vestry of the East Kirk, and quoted there is Hugh Miller's vivid description of what Cromarty in the 1700s looked like.

The dig went by the grand designation of The Cromarty Medieval Burgh Community Archaeology Project, and it ran between July 27 to August 10. It unearthed the foundation stones and postholes of several houses, and a road running between them, which at some point went by the startling name of Thief's Row. Historians in the team have not as yet been able to trace the source of such an unfortunate name, but they have identified that some perfectly respectable citizens dwelt there, among them three weavers, two butchers, a mason or wright, and three widows. It had previously been known as Common Way. Buildings there were only finally demolished in the late 19th Century. Artefacts recovered included buttons, coins of several reigns, musket-balls, buckles, nails, bones and building materials. It is hoped this dig can be followed up with another project, funding permitting.

At the East Kirk vestry, visitors could meanwhile enjoy Miller's account of the eastern town in the early 17th Century: "An irregular line of houses thrust forward their gables on either side, like two parties of ill-trained cavalry drawn up for the charge; - some jugged forward, others slunk backward, some slanted sideways, as if meditating a retreat; others, as if more decided, seemed in the act of turning round. They varied in size and character, from the little sod-covered cottage, with round moor stones sticking out of its mud walls...to the tall narrow house of three storeys, with its court and gateway. Between every two buildings there intervened a deep narrow close, bounded by the back of one tenement and the front of another, and terminating in a little oblong garden, fringed with a deep border of nettles, and bearing in the centre plots of cabbage and parsnips." ⁽¹⁾



Above: Illustrator Mike Taylor's dramatic depiction of medieval Cromarty.

Below: Part of the exhibition in the East Kirk

Bottom left: The dig in progress.





Above left: Seen here, in the furthest container, imported pantiles from northern Europe, Ballachulish slate, and assorted nails, latches and other household implements. In the nearer box, butchery bones, and shards of pottery. The bones are a reminder that everyone kept a horse, cow, or pig in those days.

Above right: Coastal erosion through winter storms revealed startling evidence of old walls.

Remnants of these building types and layouts can still be seen in Cromarty today. And many gardens and the new allotment bear witness to a continuing fondness for growing vegetables in abundance.

We can further enlighten our readers with another Miller passage on the period: "Of Elspat Hood it is said that in her recollection, which embraced the latter part of the sixteenth century, the Clach Malacha...was surrounded by corn fields and clumps of wood."⁽²⁾

The Clach Malacha, or Clach Mhallaichte on today's maps, is the outermost boulder in the bay, exposed only at the lowest tides. Elspat Hood, who died reputedly aged 120 in 1701, is buried in the old St Regulus churchyard above what was the medieval town. She was Miller's great great grandmother. Two of Thief's Row's residents were named Charles Hood (unemployed butcher) and Alexander Hood (weaver). Could they have been relatives of Elspat?

1. *Scenes and Legends*, Chapter VI, ps 73-4 (B & W, Edinburgh 1993)

2. Ditto, Chapter III, p 28



CORRECTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS EDITION

Sue and Roger Busby and Susan Gemmill were inadvertently omitted from the attendance list at the 7th AGM on 18th May.

Caroline Macdonald's surname was incorrectly given as McPhee.

Apologies for these errors.