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Editor:
Martin Gostwick,
Secretary

Production Editor:
Piers Hemy

Hugh's News

Newsletter of
The Friends of Hugh Miller



Festive greetings for Christmas and the New Year to all our Members



SPECIAL CROMARTY CONFERENCE

"THE OLD RED: HUGH MILLER'S LEGACY"

WHAT is certainly the Friends' most ambitious project yet is planned for next autumn, a legacy conference aimed at geologists and palaeontologists internationally, and all who have a general interest in Hugh Miller, fossils and the natural world.

It will be held in the **Victoria Hall on Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th September 2017**. Its title is **The Old Red: Hugh Miller's Geological Legacy**, as above, and we hope to attract around 100 delegates.

A keynote speaker will be Professor John Long, Strategic Professor in Palaeontology, Flinders University, Adelaide, South Australia, and author of 26 adults' and children's books,

Continued overleaf

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Direct descendant and Friends' patron Stephanie Kulesza crouches inside the Dwarfie Stane on Hoy where her three times great grandfather sheltered some 180 years ago. (see story ps 10 - 11)

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The Old Red: Hugh Miller's Geological Legacy

**Keynote Speaker: Prof John Long
Flinders University, Adelaide**

**Victoria Hall, Cromarty
9 - 10 September 2017**

<http://www.thefriendsofhughmiller.org.uk>

including *The Rise of Fishes*, *The Big Picture Book of Human Civilisation*, and *Dawn of the Deed*.

A second important focus is the preparation of an authoritative new edition of Hugh Miller's great work, *The Old Red Sandstone*, after over a century. Its editors, Professor Ralph O'Connor, and Dr Michael A Taylor, will jointly present a paper on their 10 years of research.

Among some eight speakers, we have a strong line-up ranging from Alan McKirdy, who has promoted the study of environmental geology through such books as his Landscapes in Stone series, to a young Black Isle-based gold prospector, Gavin Berkenheger, whose career choice was directly inspired by Hugh Miller.

Another major item will be the presentation by geologist Roger Jones of a new, important and very large specimen of the fossil fish *Homosteus* (the '*Asterolepis* of Stromness'). Other talks are being lined up on geology as scenery, acanthodians, fossil preservation, Miller's Jurassic, mineral exploration, and geology in Victorian photography.

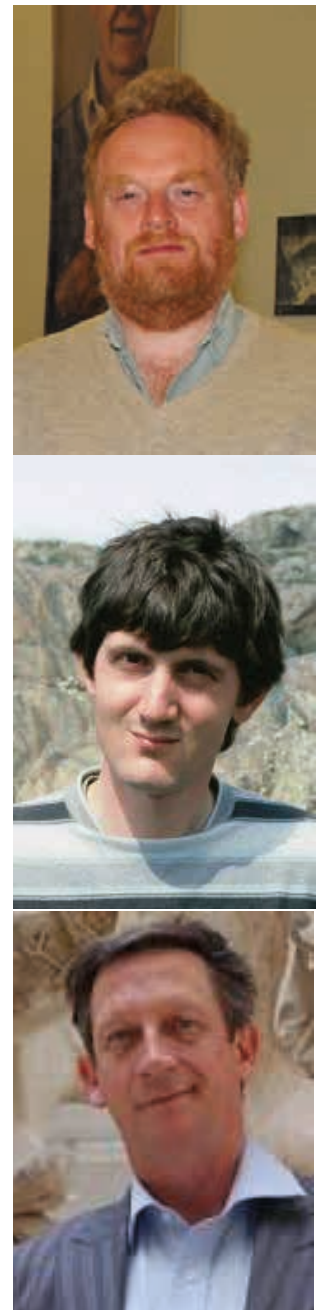
It should be emphasised that the conference is not only about earth science, but is aimed at non-scientists too, such as historians, literary scholars, folklorists, anyone with an interest in Miller and in Victorian literature, science and society. The conference will be followed by a local excursion to Miller's famous Devonian fish bed. And delegates will be offered the opportunity to take part after the conference in a three-day field trip to the north of Scotland, covering Jurassic rocks in the Brora/Helmsdale area visited by Hugh Miller, and fossil fish localities in Caithness, including Achanarras Quarry in Caithness.

The Friends will be inviting the participation of delegates from our four affiliated geological societies, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Highland, and the National Museum of Scotland, as well as the Scottish Geodiversity Forum, Scottish Natural Heritage, Our Dynamic Earth, and the Palaeontological Association, as well as members of universities' earth science faculties. The event is envisaged as an important contribution to Visit Scotland's Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology 2017.

The Friends of Hugh Miller is a small charity (it currently has 120 subscribing members, not including the affiliates), and is applying for supporting grants to appropriate bodies in the fields of natural science.

Readers wishing to make an early booking should visit the Friends' website at www.thefriendsofhughmiller.org.uk

Martin Gostwick, Secretary



From top to bottom:
Dr Mike Taylor
Professor Ralph O'Connor
Professor John Long

MUSEUM GIVEN A BIG MAKEOVER

MILLER HOUSE museum's layout has been significantly reorganised in two of its rooms, in ways that extend its function and consolidate its displays.

The display case in the first exhibition room (ground floor right) has been removed and donated on request to Barry Mill, another National Trust for Scotland property, in County Angus. Barry Mill, near Carnoustie, is a still working watermill, whose corn-grinding demonstrations help make it a popular educational tourist attraction.

A removals team drove up from Edinburgh and dismantled the case on Tuesday 1st November with "remarkable speed and efficiency," said property manager Dr Alix Powers-Jones.

In its place three tables, with four chairs each, supplied from Culloden Battlefield Visitor Centre, have been set out as a facility for small meetings of any and every description for up to 12 people. These will obviously take place when the museum is not open to the public, and out of season.

Dr Powers-Jones commented: "This change fulfils my long-term ambition to make the Miller properties a focus for life-long learning, and for community uses." She has already written to bodies like the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), the National Health Service and several others to make them aware of the new facility's availability. The room retains Hugh Miller's bank desk, bank chest, timeline, interactive screens, and the four wall panels which set out the essential basic information about his lifework. It will thus continue to serve visitors as an introduction to him.

Just the day before the move, NTS conservator Fiona Butterfield, and Inverness Museum conservator Jeannette Pearson, transferred most of the artefacts to the display case in the first floor left room known as the Edinburgh Room, with the help of the manager and senior visitor assistant Zooulla Spirou.

This involved very careful consideration of how best to intersperse the transferred objects with those already there. The result is a much busier case, mounted on two levels, which should also result in visitors' more prolonged perusals.

From the old ground floor case, the superb silver medallion, *The Witness* presentation silver salver, Miller's first journal, *The Village Observer*, and some of Lydia Miller's children's books are among the relics which have been laid alongside an MS of Hugh's folklore masterpiece, *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*, his shepherd's plaid, mason's mallet, Lydia's marriage bible, communion tokens and mourning locket.

Our members must form their own opinions of these changes when they visit, and make them known to the staff. They significantly alter the interpretation which was provided when the museum first opened in 2004, with the aim of extending its educational role, and widen its use, potentially bringing Miller's legacy to new audiences.



Top to bottom:

The removals team dismantle one of the two "aprons" which were attached to the longer sides of the old case. Both provide profound quotations from Miller's writings. This one says "Life itself is a school, and nature always a fresh study," and the other one declares; "War is an evil in all circumstances." The manager hopes to find another suitable space to display them.

Three tables

"Scenes" and Hugh's mallet

The reorganised Edinburgh room case.



WISH LIST TOTALS OVER £6,500

NEW OUTSIDE SIGNAGE TOPS REQUESTS

LEADING next year's desired new additions to the Museum are a complete set of new exterior signs. They head the Museum's wish list for 2017, which has been circulated by the National Trust for Scotland to its Members' Centres and Friends Groups.

The two most familiar signs featuring Hugh Miller's image, outside Miller House and the Birthplace Cottage, are to go because they are rusting and increasingly hard to read, property manager Alix Powers-Jones explained.

She said new signage with the image included would be too expensive. She plans to have a total of five new signs in cast aluminium, in plain black lettering on a white background produced by Leander Architecture Ltd, costing in total £1,403.

She hoped it would be possible in future to have a plaque made of Hugh Miller's image, to place on the wall of Miller House, which would have "a stronger impact."

She said the "new and improved" signage would enhance access, making clear the property's status as a museum, and emphasising that access to the Cottage gardens is free. A name sign for the new Garden Room: Space for Reflection is envisaged.

Two items are sought in the Garden Room - the first, a gate costing £1,000 to be added to the wrought iron fence concealing the oil tank for which the London Members' Centre has already donated £4,000. The second item is to add creatures in wrought iron to the fence, such as butterflies, birds, caterpillars, fish, ammonites, snails and hedgehogs, so that "the fence itself is something lovely to look at, not just a functional concealment." Donations of £150 at a time are suggested for this item.

The second biggest item is a set of four lockable maple-wood storage cupboards, amounting to £1,224 to tackle the property's chronic space shortage. Another proposal is the creation, for £500, of external digital storage to house the "blossoming collection" of images associated with the property.

A £650 reprint of the popular Cromarty Miller Trail leaflet is put forward as the Cromarty Arts Trust supply is now exhausted. A new Cromarty/Hugh Miller postcard is the final item on the list at £500.

The wish list will feature on the agenda of our next AGM on 13th May 2017, so that members can decide whether the Friends would like to contribute towards any of these items. In 2016, we donated £500 towards the "living history" costumes now used for enactments by volunteers at the Birthplace Cottage.



VILLAGE OBSERVER TO BE CLOSELY STUDIED FOR THE FIRST TIME



Village Observer in its new case

A chance visit to the Museum by someone with a special interest is always likely to open up a new field of discovery and research.

So it proved again when Professor Kathryn Gleadle, professor of gender and women's history at Mansfield College, Oxford University, called one day this autumn.

She told staff how thrilled she was to come upon Hugh Miller's first effort at journalism, the *Village Observer* journal he compiled at the age of 17, because she is studying historical teenage writings.

Professor Gleadle said she had not encountered Hugh Miller before

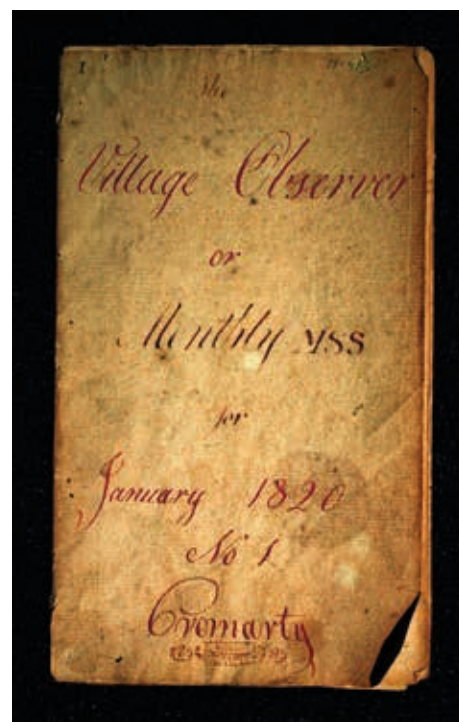
but the story the Museum told about him intrigued her greatly, especially seeing his juvenile magazine. It was only natural for her therefore to be extremely interested in its contents.

However, the fact is this extremely fragile handwritten little effort of some 14 pages has been regarded hitherto as of scant importance given his huge mature output. It is also the case that this is written in sepia ink in his often small, slanting italics, on paper that is yellowing with age, and thus very hard to read.

But supposing there is material of real value giving Miller's early view of the world around him, and his time? The document has never been transcribed to our knowledge, and given this new interest it may be worth the considerable effort of trying to transcribe as much of it as possible.

To that end, NTS conservator Fiona Butterfield has taken close-up images of every page, and our secretary, Martin Gostwick, has volunteered to do his best. Kathryn Gleadle has expressed herself "hugely appreciative" of this initiative, and she and property manager Dr Alix Powers-Jones have both said they "can't wait to see" what the young Miller had to say.

It will take our secretary a certain amount of time to do this alongside the duties of his office, but it may be very well worth it.



The cover of the Village Observer

LANTERN SHINES FOR BOBA'S BOAT

AT the heart of a luminous patchwork, a lantern in a window shines as a beacon to guide the Moray Firth fishermen to safe harbour

This is one of a host of scenes, more than 40 in all, incorporated into 12 story-panels, which dazzled the eye in the Gold and Silver Darlings Story Quilt at its first public showing in Cromarty on 25th September

The quilt was unveiled at a magical ceremony in The Old Brewery, by its designer Lizzie McDougall, in partnership with The Friends of Hugh Miller, to an audience which collectively gasped at its beauty.

The lantern was central, because it lit the way home for the boat which belonged to the late Avoch fisherman and poet Willie Skinner, and it represents the lamps in the homes of countless fisherfolk who once sailed out for the silver darlings up and down the Moray Firth coast

Willie was "boba" (Avoch dialect for grandfather) to harpist Grace Stewart-Skinner, who played a tune she composed especially for him. And his daughter-in-law, Christina Stewart, also lit up the afternoon ceilidh with her singing, starting with Ewan McColl's famous ballad, *The Shoals o' Herrin'*, and three more songs, in between Lizzie telling some of the panels' stories.

Willie Skinner passed away in January of this year. His boat was the ring-netter Primrose, and like the song tells, he was one of thousands who "followed the shoals" from Yarmouth to the Faroes. One of the stories he gave for the quilt was of St Kessock who came all the way from the Holy Land, and filled the Moray Firth with the fish.



The Eagle stone from a Brahan Seer story

The herring-fishing was a key theme in the novels of Neil Gunn, who was born in Dunbeath, Caithness, and where Lizzie picked up many of her tales, with the help of local tale-bearer Christine Gunn. Christine described Lizzie as a "phenomenon" for her ability to quickly absorb stories and turn them into exquisite artforms.

The "golden darlings" were referenced in the panel about the chalice unearthed at the Tarbert Discovery Centre and found to have been adorned with gold work. Tarbert had been a centre of Pictish and early Christian settlement.

Some 170 people altogether were involved in cutting out and stitching fabric on to the 12 panels over a period of a year. Lizzie said these folk would all be "stitched together forever" by their contributions to its art and spirit. The panels are surrounded with gorgeous motifs of stars and ammonite shells in the borders, carried out by "the queen of patchwork," Lizzie's sister-in-law Brenda Sanders.

Among the audience were the Brain family of Dingwall, Kathryn and Gregg Brain with their son, Lachlan, who recently won a prolonged battle with the Home Office in London for the right to remain in Scotland.

Also there was Mairi Hedderwick, author of the Katie Morag series of picture books for children, and several of the Cromarty residents who helped to put together Hugh Miller's story of *The Mermaid*, recounted by Lizzie as the afternoon's finale, among them Lindy Cameron, Gillian Newman, Frieda Gostwick and Alison Seller.

Lizzie has undertaken to bring the quilt to our AGM next year, so our members can see it for real, close up. It will be shown, most appropriately, to highlight the folklore theme of our public meeting, starring singer Heather Yule.

MG



*Clockwise from top left:
Pictish symbols at Tarbert,
Mermaid,
Lizzie points to quilt,
Brain family,
Grace plucks the heart-strings,
The Tarbert chalice,
Boba's lantern.*

IN THE CLOSEST TOUCH WITH MY ANCESTOR

by Stephanie Kulesza

14th September 2016

IT was an extraordinary, incredible coincidence that my husband and I happened to see the prize-winning piece by Antonia Thomas about Orkney's "geology and graffiti," in the previous edition (*Hugh's News No 29, Autumn 2016, ps6-7*), on the very day before we went to Hoy specifically to see the Dwarfie Stone and Hugh's "graffiti"!!!

Having seen the photo of the student inside the stone, I decided to see if my husband Marek could take one of me, so that not only is Hugh remembered but a direct descendant visited and "deciphered the name" even nearly "two centuries hence"!!

Antonia's article was so interesting. I knew about Hugh's carving his name on the stone, but not the detail of the islands' geological riches and the quarrying history.

It was an amazing experience to touch Hugh's name and realise that it's almost two centuries since he carved it and therefore not only was it "two centuries hence" but I told everyone I met who Hugh was - including a couple of geologists - in particular a Canadian who now lives in Australia, who wrote down his name and will hopefully research him.

Luckily the rain was not "pattering overhead" for us, as it was for Hugh, although we left the main island in thick mist, arrived at Hoy in thick mist, drove up the island in thick mist and lo! as we neared the Dwarfie Stone the sun broke through the clouds and the mist lifted. It was only sunny on that bit of Hoy as we returned to the boat through thick mist again!

The Editor adds: Antonia Thomas was limited in space in her competition entry, and so could cite just Hugh's words about his own and others' graffiti, but this is yet another of his astonishingly vivid passages about his travels, worthy of further attention.

It comes in the closing chapter (XV) of *Rambles of a Geologist*, published two years after his death in 1858 as a companion volume to his *The Cruise of the Betsey*, although familiar to those who had read the chapters previously serialised in his articles in *The Witness*.

The chapter opens: "We landed on Hoy, on a rocky stretch of shore, composed of the gray flagstones of the district....A walk of somewhat less than two miles brought me into the depths of a brown shaggy valley, so profoundly solitary, that it does not contain a single human habitation....As the traveller approaches by a path somewhat elevated, in order to avoid the peaty bogs of the bottom,...he sees, amid the heath below, what at first seems a rhomboidal piece of pavement of pale Old Red Sandstone....It is only on approaching



Above: The Dwarfie Stone sits massively solitary in the valley probably dropped there by a glacier during the last ice age. A raised path leads to the stone.

Below: Stephanie emerges from one of the cells.



it that we find it to be an enormous stone, nearly thirty feet in length by almost fifteen feet in breadth, and in some places...more than six feet in thickness. A cave-like excavation, nearly three feet square, and rather more than seven feet in depth, opens on its grey and lichened side. The excavation is widened within, along the opposite walls, into two uncomfortably short beds, very much resembling those of the cabin of a small coasting vessel....A gray, rudely hewn block of sandstone, which, though greatly too ponderous to be moved by any man of the ordinary strength, seems to have served the purpose of a door, lies prostrate beside the opening in front. And such is the famous Dwarfie Stone of Hoy....



Above: "H Miller 1846" is still clearly visible.

Below: The Dwarfie Stane



Suddenly...about noon, a shower broke thick and heavy against the dark sides and gray scalp of the Ward Hill, and came sweeping down the valley. I ... crept for shelter into the larger bed of the cell, which, though rather scant ... I found, by stretching myself diagonally from corner to corner, no very uncomfortable lounging-place for a man of five foot eleven in a thunder-shower....And as I lay wrapped up in my plaid, listening to the rain drops as they pattered thick and heavy a-top, or slanted through the broken hatchway to the vacant bed on the opposite side of the excavation, I called up the wild narrative of Norna* and felt all its poetry....

Shall I dare confess, that I could fain have passed some stormy night all alone in this solitary cell, were it but to enjoy the luxury of listening, amid the darkness, to the dashing rain and the roar of the wind high among the cliffs, or to detect the brushing sound of hasty footsteps in the wild rustle of the heath, or the moan of unhappy spirits in the low roar of the distant sea.

FOOTNOTE

**Dr Mike Taylor notes in his edition of 2003 that the chambers are today attributed to a megalithic tomb, somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 years old. Hugh Miller was aware of them as the product of "a cave-like excavation," but relied on the folklore in Sir Walter Scott's novel The Pirate to explain them, "somewhat incredulously," as "the work ... of an ugly, malignant goblin...the Elfin Trolld." Norna, a spae-wife or witch, was another character in the novel.*

CORRECTION: In a caption in the previous feature, we stated that the name P Folster, which appears above Miller's was "probably" that of a quarrier. We have since been informed that he was in fact a carpenter.

URQUHARTS MEET ACROSS THE AGES AND THE SEAS

By Martin Gostwick

A Canadian retired teacher has crossed the Atlantic to witness where his great great grandfather emigrated on 14th June 1831 from Cromarty aboard the brig *Cleopatra*, as witnessed by Hugh Miller.

Several happy coincidences made it possible for Dale Urquhart to stand with his wife Sue by the Emigration Stone on Cromarty Links on September 14th, 2016, 185 years later, and these chances and the occasion itself add up to a remarkable story.

The Emigration Stone commemorates the voyage to Quebec of the *Cleopatra*, which carried forbears who continue to thrive in Scott County, Ontario. Hugh Miller reported on its embarkation as the local correspondent for the *Inverness Courier*, and his striking description of the scene is carved on the stone.

"The Cleopatra, as she swept past the town of Cromarty, was greeted with three cheers by crowds of the inhabitants, who lined the shore, and the emigrants returned the salute, but, mingled with the dash of the waves and the murmurs of the breeze, their faint huzzas seemed rather sounds of wailing and lamentation, than of a congratulatory farewell."

Dale knows that not only was his ancestor Donald Urquhart a passenger, but two other Urquhart families who he is almost certain were relations, sailed with him, both with young children, a voyage that altogether took four gruelling months. Hugh Miller reported it took three hours even for it to pass out of sight of the Cromarty Firth.

When they eventually landed at Quebec City, they faced another 200-mile journey inland, by boat or horse and cart.

Donald's fellow-passengers were George Urquhart, born 1776, and his wife Christina, born 1779. With them were their two children, a teenage boy George, born 1818, and Jessie, born 1826. Also on board were David and Janette Fraser Urquhart with a two-year-old boy. Janette was pregnant, and her daughter Ellen was born in Scott Township in December of that year. David and Janette would help build the settlement's church.



Above: The *Cleopatra*'s departure

Below left: Dale and Sue with the Emigration Stone

Below right: Dale admires the stone



Donald had a son, Alexander, born the first white male child in Scott County, in 1838. The descendants of these families continue to prosper on the same land to this day.

Dale does not have any record of what caused them to depart their native land. Miller himself in three vivid accounts for the *Courier* ⁽¹⁾ gave the emigrants' most common reasons as the Highland Clearances, or wanting to escape poverty and oppressive landlords and seek a new start in life.

While Dale's forbears left no record of their journey, Professor Janet Fyfe of Cromarty has chronicled ⁽²⁾ what it was like aboard for many emigrants, and some of the hardships would certainly have been experienced by the Urquhart families. Many ships were chronically overcrowded, inadequately provisioned with food and water, and the food was often poor. Hunger would have gnawed at them, and sickness and seasickness been endemic, especially among the young. In the 1830s, ships often sailed without a surgeon or doctor. The tedium of the long weeks at sea stretched most passengers' nerves to the limit.

And now what about those coincidences which brought Dale and Sue into contact with The Friends of Hugh Miller? The couple were spending three weeks in Scotland, continuing a 10-year long research project into Dale's lineage and connections to the other Urquharts who crossed the Atlantic.

Their quest took them into the Highland Archive Centre in Inverness, to parish records and many churchyards in Easter Ross and the Black Isle. They happened to be visiting Kirkmichael Church when they chanced to meet Verity Walker, manager of the restoration project there.

Verity chanced a few days later to be visiting the Hugh Miller Museum with a friend, when I was, again coincidentally, on duty as a volunteer in the Birthplace Cottage, and she mentioned the extraordinary, and exciting event of having met descendants of emigrants who sailed on the *Cleopatra*.

Dale and Sue, who live in Vernon, British Columbia, were fortunately still lodging in Inverness, before a planned departure to tour some sites in Easter Ross, and they arranged to meet with me the next morning. We stood quietly by the great stone, wondering whether the Urquhart forefathers had been among those lamenting leaving behind everything they had known, or cheering at the thought of new opportunities in the unknown land, but not knowing what awaited them on the other side.



Then they spent some two hours in Cromarty Courthouse Museum, copying church documents, and looking into the Clan Urquhart room. Staff member Sue Florence told them her own four times great grandfather, Donald Manson, captained another emigration ship, the barque *Superior*, and was on record as treating his passengers very well.

Between 1830 and 1850, more emigration ships sailed from Cromarty than any other port in Scotland every spring and summer. Professor Fyfe has concluded: "The brightest and best emigrated; the hopeless and/or shiftless poor remained at home."

(1) *A Noble Smuggler and Other Stories*, ed Martin Gostwick, Inverness Courier, 2nd edition 2006 (ISBN 0 9530202 0 7)

(2) *Cromarty's Emigrants and Emigrant Ships*, by Janet Fyfe, Cromarty Courthouse Publication 1998 (ISBN 1 898416346)

CRAWLING CARDS

FROM TIME OUT OF MIND

by Jim Gilchrist*

And then there rose in quick succession scenes of the old Carboniferous forests: long withdrawing lakes, fringed with dense thickets of the green Calamite, tall and straight as the masts of pinnaces, and inhabited by enormous fishes, that glittered through the transparent depths in their enamelled armour of proof; or glades of thickest verdure, where the tree-fern mingled its branch-like fronds with the hirsute arms of the gigantic club-moss ... Hugh Miller, *Sketch-book of Popular Geology*

Who can wait quietly while the mud settles? Tao of Lao Tzu

BOTH quotations come to mind while I'm standing on the rocky shore near Crail harbour, contemplating winter sunshine glimmer off two fossilised *Lepidodendron* stumps, the "gigantic club-moss" of the Carboniferous forests evoked in that pre-cinematic, diorama-like sweep of prose so characteristic of Hugh Miller.

I've known these hefty stumps since childhood holidays in the East Neuk. Much more recent was the realisation that, just a few yards away, the exposed sedimentary bedding is pitted by the tracks of a giant, centipede-like arthropod, all six feet of it, that was rattling about under these trees when the Scottish Lowlands were a complex of swampy lagoons and steaming forests, the remains of which would eventually form our coal seams.

Miller imagined something of the same: "A huge crustacean of uncouth proportion stalks over the weedy bottom, or burrows in the hollows of the bank ..." There again he could almost have been referring to another Fife beastie of that period, *Hibbertopteris*, a two-metre long sea scorpion related to present-day arthropods such as scorpions and horseshoe crabs. Its trackway, found a few years ago in north-east Fife, revealed the crescent-shaped footprints and central tail groove it left while crossing wet sand 330 million years ago.

Also at Crail, as elsewhere around the East Neuk, you find perfectly preserved tidal ripples from those Carboniferous mud flats, just as Miller, as an apprentice stonemason, found himself unearthing when blasting quarry rocks. "The entire surface was ridged and furrowed like a bank of sand that had been left by the tide an hour before," he recalled in *The Old Red Sandstone*.

Such frozen moments ... A friend of mine, the sculptor Tim Chalk, was commissioned to create a sundial around a fossil tree stump much like those at Crail for the garden in Edinburgh's Rutland Square. The elegant result sets the fossil stump against a contemplative bench bearing a spherical equatorial sundial fashioned like a split boulder. The fossil is encircled by sculpted glass-reinforced concrete, inscribed with fallen leaves and that quote from the *Tao of Lao Tzu*: "Who can wait quietly while the mud settles?"

If time, according to Tennyson (a reader of Miller's *Old Red Sandstone*), is a maniac scattering dust, he scat-



ters no end of ancient footprints too. A few years ago, I had the chance to visit some fossil tracksites in Wyoming while driving north through the cowboy state with my wife, headed for Yellowstone. Surrounded by the spectacularly riven scenery of the Bighorn Basin, we jolted gingerly down a dirt road, trying not to lose our hired car's exhaust system and avoiding a basking rattlesnake, to emerge at Red Gulch Dinosaur Tracksite. There, amid a classic "badlands" landscape, a gully floor is criss-crossed with smallish three-toed dinosaur prints, including those thought to be of the small raptor *Ceolophysis*, a type of which also seems



Above: Carboniferous *Lepidodendron* stump in situ near Crail harbour

Page 12: Jim with his *Cheirolepis* find

Below: The fossil stump with Tim Chalk's sundial in the capital



to have stalked the Isle of Skye, back in the mid-Jurassic period, when Scotland and North America were part of a common landmass. The prints are preserved along with the solidified ripples and worm holes of an ancient lagoon, again as if the tide had only just newly ebbed away, rather than 167 million years ago.

In this oil and mineral-rich state, geology is a pre-eminent concern and for many years the state's pre-eminent geologist was the celebrated David Love, who died in 2002. Working with the United States Geological Survey for more than four decades, Love, as writer John McPhee puts it in his fine book *Rising from the Plains*, was a man with "the geologic map of Wyoming in his head". He was, moreover, the son of a ruggedly individualistic Wyoming rancher, John Love, who had been born in Portage, Wisconsin, but educated in Scotland, the nephew of none other than the pioneer environmentalist John Muir. Muir was also someone who had a great regard for Hugh Miller's works, to the extent that he named an Alaskan glacier after him.

And as Miller's books were, according to his protégé Archibald Geikie, "to be found in the remotest log hut of the Far West", it seems likely that they were also present in the remote Wyoming ranchhouse where Love junior grew up.

Owing to the fossil-rich nature of rock formations bearing such memorable names as Chugwater, Bighorn and Sundance (and, yes, Butch and the Kid roamed here), dinosaurs are something of a cottage industry in Wyoming, and the Wyoming Dinosaur Museum at Thermopolis is a dinophile's delight, although the fossil that stuck most in my mind was of a more modest if oddly affecting nature. It was of a small horseshoe crab, *Mesolimulus walchi*, a distant and diminutive Jurassic relative of that giant water

scorpion that once prowled Fife. Unearthed in Bavaria, it was unusual in that it preserved not only the little armoured creature itself but also its tracks, recording clearly how some 150 million years ago it had progressed erratically along the muddy bottom for several metres, becoming increasingly disoriented, before grinding to a very terminal halt, for its body lay, perfectly etched, at the end of its final crawl. Horseshoe crabs survive as "living fossils" to this day, and in Massachusetts I've seen beaches littered with their cast-off, helmet-like shells, like detritus from another age.

It has been suggested that possibly the creature found itself in toxic water, and tried fruitlessly to escape. Time and tide, as they say, wait for no man, but just sometimes they do freeze-frame, to preserve for hundreds of millions of years a last, futile struggle for survival.

*Jim Gilchrist is a freelance journalist, who wrote a lot about Miller for *The Scotsman* newspaper at the time of his Bicentenary in 2002. The above was winner in the third prize of the 2015/16 Miller writing competition, themed as "Testimony of the Rocks."

LET PEACE PREVAIL

by Martin Gostwick

Cromarty children have stood up for world peace to break out in this war-torn world, and they did so in one of the Hugh Miller Museum's gardens. They planted a peace pole there bearing the message "May peace prevail on earth."

Some 20 pupils in Cromarty Primary School classes P5, 6 and 7 processed on 21st September from the school gates to the Museum, where they embedded the 6ft long pole.

They were led by three pipers through the streets, watched by many locals and visitors, to the Garden of Reflection behind the Birthplace Cottage. They were followed by members of the event's organisers, Cromarty Peace Group, bearing aloft their banner.

They were welcomed by property manager Dr Alix Powers-Jones who told them they were "stirring" for a great cause. It was felt they were sure to have had Hugh's approval, since he once wrote: "War is an evil in all circumstances." The pole would in future provide a focus for visitors' reflection.

Peace Group convener Sandy Thomson congratulated the children on being part of an international community embracing almost every country in the world. Around 250,000 peace poles have been planted in an annual event called "Peace One Day."

The Cromarty pole bore the words "May peace



prevail on earth" on each side, in four languages, English, Gaelic, Polish and Japanese, and each were recited in those languages, three times by everyone present. It was especially uplifting to hear Japanese resident Yuriko Ross and P7 pupil Milosz Maslyk speak in their native languages with such enthusiasm.



The pole movement was begun in Japan, in memory of the atom bombs dropped there at the end of World War 2. Polish was chosen to underline the Highland welcome for the many who have settled here from that country.

The children also draped on little flags on the garden fences, the word "peace" written in about languages, including Maori, Afrikaans, Dutch, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Gaelic, Irish Gaelic, German, Greek and French,

A peace bell was rung, and a minute's silence marked for all those slain in war, and then the children bedded in the pole with stones from the beach.

Perhaps the most moving moments in the whole heartwarming ceremony came when the children each read out their own messages about what peace meant to them. They said, in summary, peace is life in all its richness and beauty, in the power of love, and love for each other, in families, and friendships, in birdsong, streams, rainbows, sunsets, waterfalls, quiet forests.

Those messages were put on display in the Birthplace Cottage for the rest of the season.

MG

Pages 14 and 15:

Here is a selection of the moving images from this witness for peace involving Cromarty's children. The whole event lasted less than an hour but is likely to remain long in the memory.



MILLER'S LEGACY TAKES US TO POETRY FESTIVAL

*Beneath the bubble of the atmosphere
The rocks move, shift, settle and seethe
Fossils swim upwards again
Surfacing together in ancient shoals
Exposed by wind and wave and hammer,*

Excerpt from *Romer's Gap* by Justin Sales
1st prize in poetry winner, The Hugh Miller Writing Competition 2015-2016

The legacy of Miller continues to excite and inspire, and it is with great pleasure that The Friends and The Scottish Geodiversity Forum announce that our poetry winners from the first Hugh Miller Writing Competition (2015-2016) are to be involved in the **St. Andrews poetry festival (StAnza)**.

The festival takes place from Wednesday 1st to Saturday 5th March 2017. Over 60 poets will be taking part at StAnza, along with many musicians, visual artists and film makers bringing the historic Fife town alive with poetry, music and art for five days.

The involvement of the Miller competition poets comes about thanks to the continuing work of freelance science writer Lara Reid and competition judge Ruth Robinson of the University of St. Andrews School of Geosciences. "We initially approached the organisers of StAnza in the hope that they might be interested in the poetry the competition had inspired," says Lara. "We were delighted with their enthusiastic response, and learning that the themes of StAnza 2017 are 'On the Road' and 'The Heights of Poetry' well, it was the icing on the cake!"

On the Road showcases poetry inspired by and reflecting on travel and migration, while the second theme *The Heights of Poetry* looks at how poetry engages with Scotland's high places, and at the poetic connections between Scotland's hills and mountains and those elsewhere.

Since an initial meeting in late summer 2016, StAnza organisers Eleanor Livingstone and Annie Rutherford have worked hard to bring all six of our winning poets together for a public reading event at the beginning of March 2017 at the Byre Theatre, St. Andrews. Each poet will be given the chance to read their winning poem, together with some other recent work, and Lara will give a brief introduction to the work of the Friends, the Forum and the aims and future potential of the Hugh Miller Writing Competition.

In addition, the poetry entries will form part of an ongoing digital installation showing at the Byre Theatre Café, which will run for the duration. "The installation will comprise images alongside excerpts from our winning entries, and will promote Miller, Scotland's fantastic geological heritage, and the work of the Friends and the Forum to a wide audience," says Lara.

The University of St. Andrews Geobus, a touring bus that provides educational and inspirational geology workshops to school students across Scotland, will also be involved.

Further, the StAnza organisers have arranged for eminent Scottish author James Robertson, long a supporter of The Friends, to give a talk on Miller's own poetic style and influences. As James says: "I have yet to flesh out all the details of my talk, but it strikes me that even the most ardent of Miller's admirers would not rate his own poetry as being the best of his output! Nevertheless, there

are interesting autobiographical details in some of his verses, and it is clear that he was an avid and wide-ranging reader of poetry. He had a great empathy with Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns, both of whom he admired so much that he wrote extended semi-fictional 'sketches' about them.

"Perhaps, too, we can trace some of the descriptive and imaginative power of his prose-writing to an engagement with the Romantic poets. It is also true, of course, that Miller's own life and writings continue to inspire new poems and prose even in the 21st century."

Further details and tickets for our poets' reading event, James Robertson's talk, and the other events at StAnza 2017 are available here: <http://stanzapoetry.org/>

A DREADFUL DREAM

By Martin Gostwick

This is a story I wrote for the Kirkmichael restoration project's website, before taking part in a story-telling session with project manager Verity Walker in Cromarty public library.

Hugh Miller is in my head all the time, what he did, where he went, how he lived, because I have been working at his Museum in Cromarty in one capacity or another for nearly twenty-five years. In the first year, I read agog his masterwork of folklore, *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*, and the stories imprinted themselves on my imagination for life. Chapter XXIX concerning his life as a stonemason and ornamental sculptor of tombstones is among the most affecting, set where he worked on graves in Kirkmichael kirkyard.

Hugh tells us the chapel was "ruinous," "mouldering," even in the 1820s and 30s, but the belfry was "rich in the true picturesque," and when the east wind blew through it, rendered him "an agreeable music" as he wrought directly beneath it. Before he acquaints the reader with fascinating accounts of the district's traditions, he relates a most disturbing dream of his own, which shows how prey he himself was to superstition. Disguising himself as a "mason's apprentice," he describes how in the latter part of 1822, he was working in the policies of nearby Poyntzfield, and keenly desired to visit the Kirkmichael tombs and chapel. This was entirely consistent with his explorations of all sorts of local historic sites. However, the dream came to him instead because he fell asleep straightaway at the end of his day's work.

In the dream he beheld the kirkyard on "the finest of midsummer evenings;" "the whole western heavens were suffused with the blush of sunset." He saw the tombs "finished after the most exquisite designs, chastely Grecian or ornately Gothic, and myriads of flowering shrubs winded around the urns, and shaded the tablets in every disposition of beauty." On the kirk's western gable there was a huge, fantastically carved gnomon of bronze, "green with the rust of ages." Suddenly the skies became overcast, and a fearful Hugh saw the gnomon "revolving slowly as on an axis," and he "fled the place in deep horror." Only five weeks later, he attended the burial of a relative, whose grave "occupied the identical spot on which the point of the gnomon had rested."



The gravestone is a sad tale in itself, of a mother remembering two sons and two daughters in their twenties all dying within a year of each other.

Printed copy, £5 (inc p & p)
available from the Secretary



Above: Verity Walker introduces a gripping series of tales from Kirkmichael.

Right: She employs Cromarty lad Ben to hold the "gnomon" (sundial) which fatally moved, while she holds the "sun" casting the shadow.



Hugh does not attempt any explanation for the dream, or its possible foretelling of the relatives' death shortly afterwards. I remember that once he spent the night in the vault of the Clan Urquhart chiefs in Cromarty's Old St Regulus churchyard, just to measure its effects on his consciousness, and another time wished he could pass a night in the burial chamber inside the Dwarfie Stane on the Orkney isle of Hoy, so he might hear "the moan of unhappy spirits in the low roar of the distant sea."

Altogether a strange man, you might think; certainly a writer of incomparable gifts. I must revisit the tombstone under the yew tree which the Kirkmichael Trust has identified as the one on which he wrought some two years later.

BECOMING MORE SOCIABLE

The Friends of Hugh Miller is pleased to join the world of social media, with the launch of our own Facebook and Twitter accounts. The purpose as you will see in this edition is, in the first instance, to build support for our big legacy conference in Cromarty next September 9/10th. In the longer term, these "platforms" should work to build a wider following for our organisation and our aims, and thus a bigger audience for Hugh Miller.

This intimation gives me the opportunity to publicly and most heartily thank **Gavin Berkenheger**, a member of our management committee, for voluntarily undertaking this task. He is one of three volunteers without whom The Friends' ever-expanding efforts would not be forthcoming. The other two to thank are **Liz Broumley**, for setting up the conference information on our website, and helping generally to keep the pages up to date, and our Hugh's News production editor **Piers Hemy**, who is responsible for sub-editing the newsletter and for its splendid lay-out.

Martin Gostwick, Secretary



The Friends of Hugh Miller Conference

The Old Red: Hugh Miller's Geological Legacy

9 – 10 September 2017

Victoria Hall, Cromarty, Scotland

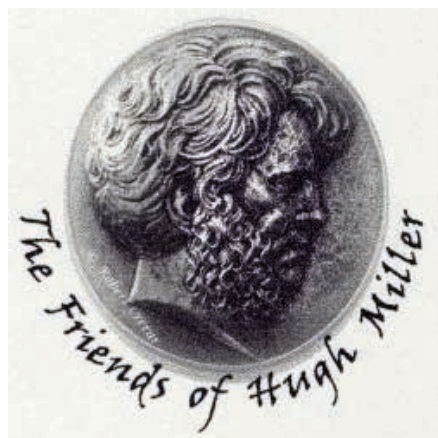
Booking form¹

Title		First Name		Family Name	
Address					
City					
Post Code					
Email					
Phone Number					
Conference Registration Fee					£12
Optional extras (Please enter the cost in the box on the right)					
Lunch Saturday 9 September (2 courses: £13.50)					
3 Course Conference Dinner (with wine) Saturday 9 September (£45) Limited numbers so early booking is advised					
Total					

Completed forms and payment by cheque (made out to The Friends of Hugh Miller) to: The Friends of Hugh Miller, Martin Gostwick Secretary, c/o Russell House, 55 Shore St, Cromarty IV11 8XL

If you are interested in taking part in a follow-on (11-13 September) 3 day excursion to northern Scotland to see Jurassic rocks in the Brora/Helmsdale area and the Old Red Sandstone of Caithness, including fossil fish localities such as the famous Achanarras Quarry – details and cost dependent on demand - please tick the box on the right and we will contact you with more information later.

¹ Please complete one form per conference delegate



MEMBERSHIP FORM

I WISH to become a member of The Friends of Hugh Miller (Registered charity No 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. (SC037351).

Name.....

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.....

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Membership subscription is £15 annually, payable from 1st April, by cash/cheque or bank standing order. A standing order is preferred for administrative convenience, and if you wish to take up that option, please contact the Secretary, details below. A Gift Aid declaration form is also available, which would enable us to reclaim 25p in the £ tax on your subscription.

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MARTIN GOSTWICK
SECRETARY, THE FRIENDS OF HUGH MILLER
c/o RUSSELL HOUSE,
55 SHORE STREET,
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TEL NO: 01381 600301
EMAIL ADDRESS: MGostwick@gmail.com