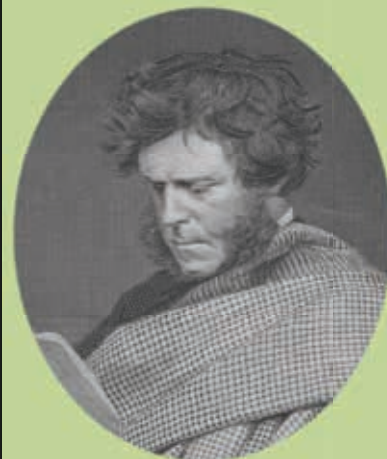


Issue No 20  
Winter 2014

Editor:  
Martin Gostwick,  
Secretary

# Hugh's News

Newsletter of  
The Friends of Hugh Miller



## ***GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES FOR A GREAT NEW YEAR***



### **A VOYAGE OF REDISCOVERY**

MANY have been our walks in the steps of Hugh Miller on land – now we are going to follow in his wake at sea, in what is probably the most inspiring project to have come forward since the 2002 Bicentenary!

The Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) and The Friends of Hugh Miller are jointly sponsoring a replica voyage along Hugh's route in the Cruise of the Betsey, the yacht in which he sailed the Inner Hebrides with Free Church minister, the Rev John Swanson, in the summer of 1844.

*(continued on page 2)*



*The Brixham trawler Leader at sea*

#### **INSIDE:**

Website launch	p 3
Higher Geology "a must"	p 3
Lydia books gift	p 4
Saving Gaelic Chapel	ps 6 - 7
Cottage sketches	p 10
Miller in America	ps 11 - 12
Cromarty Field Trip	p 14
Appeal to Members	p 15

#### **AGM:**

We invite all members to attend the  
**8TH ANNUAL MEETING**  
on Saturday, 3rd May 2014

At Cromarty Centre (Old Brewery),  
between 2.00 and 5.00pm

and

#### **PUBLIC MEETING**

With a talk on The Cromarty Miller knew

By Dr David Alston

Light refreshments will be served

The best way to start describing how this momentous project got under way is to reprint a letter our Management Committee received out of the blue from the Society's education officer, Dr Joyce Gilbert, on 13th November last. It read:

*Dear Friends of Hugh Miller*

*I am the Education Officer at the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and also on the executive committee of the Scottish Geodiversity Forum. I am emailing to let you know about tentative plans we have to follow the route taken by Hugh Miller on the Betsey - this time on a beautiful old Brixham Trawler called Leader - in September 2014. The boat was built in 1892 and sleeps 19 people including four crew. We'd want to have a good intergenerational mix of geologists, geographers, artists, writers, ecologists, storytellers, historians (including a Gaelic speaker) on board - reflecting Hugh Miller's ability to think across disciplines. We are thinking of links with long distance routes on land that are promoted...this would be one by sea, but lots of fascinating places to visit, all underpinned by geology. We might also link to the Year of Homecoming. Other ideas include sessions in communities & schools. Geology, landscape and story would be at the heart of the journey.*

*Look forward to hearing from you!*

*best wishes Joyce*

*Dr Joyce Gilbert, Education Officer, Royal Scottish Geographical Society, Lord John Murray House, 15-19 North Port, Perth PH1 5LU, Scotland, UK.*



*The Leader boasts a proud suite of sail*

You can imagine our excited response, one immediately shared by several of the bodies across Miller's disciplines. Before November was out the Leader had been chartered, and the voyage is booked for 6th-12th September 2014. It will depart from Oban, and is planned to make landfalls at Tobermory, Mull, and on the Small Isles, Eigg and Rum, and, if there is time, Skye.



*The Sgurr of Eigg*

### **COMPETITION TO COME ABOARD!**

A berth has been reserved for a Friends' member, or close relative, eg son or grandson, daughter or granddaughter, who is willing to join us. Minimum age is 16. A bunk berth costs a very reasonable £500 all found, payable to the boat's owners, Trinity Sailing Foundation of Brixham, Devon.

Applicants need to state in up to 500 words why they want to make the voyage. This is not a holiday as such. It is an exploration of the geology, social history and culture of the Inner Hebrides, which Miller saw, and as they are today, and it is an exciting opportunity to promote his name and work to new audiences. Entrants need to be reasonably fit. Sailing on a Victorian-era trawler on the West Coast, with its fast tides, uncertain weathers and tricky landings, can be physically demanding. Send your entry to the Secretary, Martin Gostwick, Russell House, 55 Shore Street, Cromarty IV11 8XL, or by email to MGostwick@gmail.com by 31st March next. If there is more than one entry, the winner will be decided by our Management Committee.

For those unfamiliar with the story, Miller was taking a holiday from editing *The Witness* newspaper. He sailed for between three and four weeks with John Swanson and two crew. The Betsey was Swanson's "floating manse," having been dislodged from his home on Eigg following the Disruption the year before.

The book has justly been called "a treasure of Scottish culture" by Dr M A Taylor, one of our members and editor of the 2003 National Museums of Scotland edition of the work. It is a classic travel book, as well as a work of science expounding his field trips in marvellous prose, and it is social history, encompassing the upheavals in the kirk of that time, and the depredations of the Clearances.

The replica voyage represents an unparalleled opportunity for the Friends and our partners RSGS to broadcast knowledge to new audiences of Miller the writer, intrepid traveller, explorer and natural scientist. We can only marvel, for example, at the sheer physical hardiness of Miller in the field, often hammering and chiselling away well into the night, before returning to the yacht over very rough ground, in the dark. And the Betsey was cramped, leaked and nearly foundered, while the Leader has showers and central heating!

Our chairman, Nigel Trewin, and secretary, Martin Gostwick, are already closely involved in the planning. We will be asking The Friends as a body at the AGM on May 3rd to authorise a contribution towards the costs of the project – which is another important reason for you to be there!



# IT'S LAUNCH OFF !

ALL our members with internet access have already been notified that the new Friends website is up and running. For those who have not yet seen it, the address is <http://www.thefriendsofhughmiller.org.uk> .

Its aim is to win new members and affiliations, attract more visitors to the Museum, and promote our hero generally. We ask that you spread word of the site to colleagues and friends, encouraging them to join the ranks too. We give a very warm welcome to our first two affiliates: Aberdeen and Highland Geological Societies, whose joint field trip to Cromarty is reported, ps 14-15.



# HIGHER GEOLOGY IS A MUST HAVE

ENERGY experts across the board, from fossil fuels to renewables, are all bemoaning the lack of new Scottish talent to develop their industries' future – and the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) has the answer.

The Society is campaigning for the Scottish Government and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to create a new 6th year Higher in Earth Science, and they are being supported by the industries, which are finding it increasingly difficult – and expensive – to recruit from further afield. RSGS's campaign is in response to the threat to remove Geology Higher as a distinct subject from 2015, which we reported in Hugh's News (*Is Geology for Schools on the Rocks*, No 17, Summer 2013). SQA has planned to spread geology into a range of other subjects.

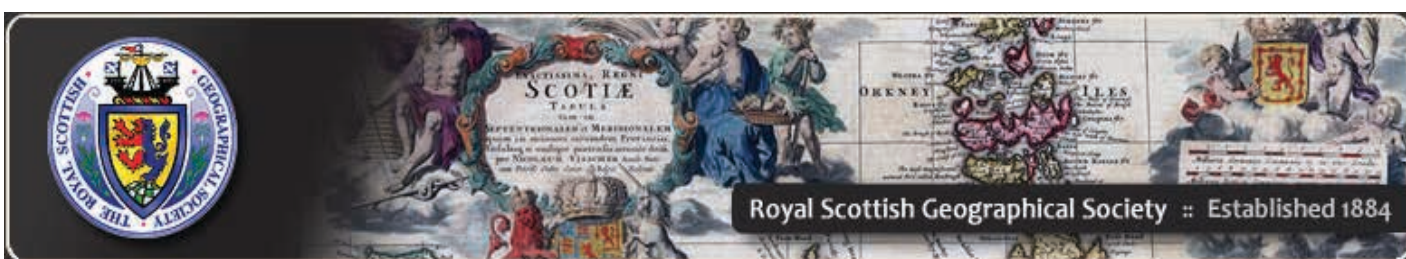
The truth of geology's decline can be pointed to the fact that no one has been trained to teach geology in Scotland since 1985. Schools have struggled to find teachers in other disciplines with the confidence and enthusiasm to take it on.

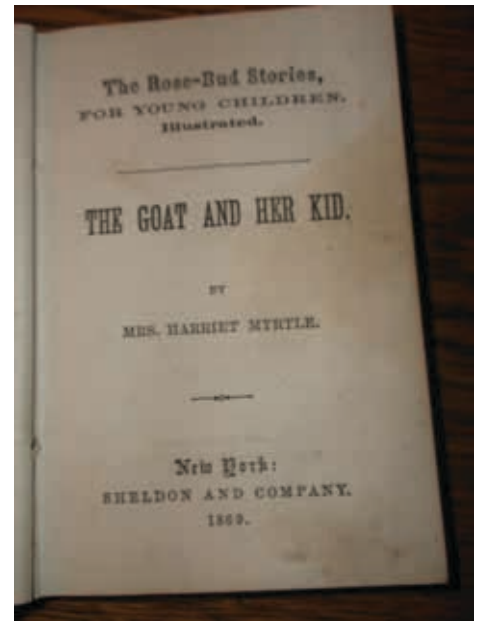
But now there is a rapid increase in pupil take-up; from an all-time low in 2012, there are more than 20 pupils doing Higher Geology in Cromarty Firth academies this year. Ullapool High has this year had 16 students from five Highland schools taking the Higher through open learning, and seven adults. Ullapool Head teacher



Dr Joyce Gilbert

Peter Harrison is applying strong pressure on ministers to recognise the existence of this surge in demand. It was geology students at Perth Academy themselves who kicked off the RSGS campaign last summer by organising a two-day conference, Scotland Rocks, to oppose hiving off geology into other subjects. They were addressed and supported by RSGS president, and well known earth science TV presenter, Professor Iain Stewart. Since then, the Society, together with the University of St Andrews, University of Edinburgh, and Our Dynamic Earth have made detailed submissions to the Government and SQA, on the purpose, content and value of an earth science Higher. The newly formed Scottish Geodiversity Forum, [www.scottishgeodiversityforum.org](http://www.scottishgeodiversityforum.org) is another strong voice for expanded educational provision, seeking to open up geology's opportunities for communities, the economy, conservation and tourism. The task of persuading the education department ministers is proving hard going, mired in continuous, unexplained delays in responding to the representations they are receiving. That's where the Betsey replica voyage comes in. The journey itself is a statement of the subject's importance to Scotland in every way, and along its passage it will be spreading the word to schools, community, national and local media, through various onshore events, meetings and briefings.





## LYDIA STORIES' GIFT

SURPRISES never cease to amaze us, and one of the best recently was the donation by master letter-carver Charles Smith of three pocketbooks for children by Lydia Miller. Charles, responding to our new website by more than doubling his subscription, also marked his appreciation of our work with this splendid gift. He is the sculptor of the ornamental plaques which adorn the back wall of Miller's Yard, one marking its opening in 2008, the other quoting Miller's great advice to the young in *The Old Red Sandstone*, "Learn to make a right use of your eyes."

The three books are among the 12 in Lydia's Rosebud series, in American editions, published by Sheldon & Co, a New York company. They are *Christmas Eve at the Cottage* (1866), *The Goat and her Kid* (1869) and *Little Amy's Birthday* (1872). Lydia's children's books are extremely rare, and virtually unobtainable in Britain. Charles found these titles on the internet in the USA, sourced from sellers in three different States. The Museum at present has four of her children's books, so these represent a considerable addition.

They measure just 11cm x 7cm, and run to about 60 pages, each with vivid illustrations. The works are intended for really young children, of, say, between five and eight, who were probably read to by their parents and grandparents. They are all focussed round a little girl called Mary, and her family, and little friends, and are quite charming. The mother goat's kid frisks madly. The cottage Christmas Eve is a marathon of present-giving, notably many of the toys and playthings being home-made. Little Amy's birthday involves the entire village community of the village. As Elizabeth Sutherland noted in her biography of Lydia, the books do suffer from overdoses of sentimentality and religiosity, but Lydia's delight, and expertise, in describing many facets of the animal and natural worlds comes across very warmly.



Charles Smith with plaques

Here is just one passage from *Winter Pleasures*, a separate story in *The Goat and Her Kid* to impart a flavour of her style: "Every branch and every twig was incrustated over with crystals of white frost; they no longer appeared like common trees; no wood was to be seen; they seemed to have been changed by some fairy in the night into silver, and sprinkled with diamonds. The laurels and other evergreens had all their leaves coloured and fringed round with the same silvery, sparkling frost-work. The ivy-leaves near the window looked the best of all; their dark green color (sic) seemed to make the jewels shine more brightly; and then their pretty forms were shown off by all this ornament."

Lydia's output for the young, some 17 books in total, was all the more remarkable in that much of it followed being widowed, securing posthumous publication of her husband's works, working with Peter Bayne on his autobiography, and suffering a debilitating spinal disease all the while.

- *Lydia, wife of Hugh Miller of Cromarty*, by Elizabeth Sutherland, Tuckwell Press, 2002, see ps 89-93.



# SCRAP METAL ART SUPREME

LAST summer the Museum was honoured to receive a return visit from Helen Denerley, sculptor of the unique scrap metal ammonite in Miller's Yard, for the first time since its installation for the yard's opening in 2008.

Helen was pleased to find its copper and brass pieces weathering splendidly through five years' exposure. Part of copper's appeal is how it responds in subtle changes of colour and patterns to prevailing conditions, and the sheen and variations to be seen in the "chambers" are most rewarding.

The genesis of this artwork, perhaps the single object which most makes the yard truly a "Garden of Wonders," is a story in itself. The yard's landscape architect, Calum Anton, of Fortrose, rescued the project from near-collapse when he took over its on-site management. He then proposed a commission for Helen to sculpt the space's centrepiece.



Calum Anton, saviour and site manager of the Miller's Yard project.

While a few doubts were expressed by some about a sculpture in metal, rather than traditional stone, the champions of the commission were vindicated triumphantly in the final product. Helen, an internationally regarded public spaces sculptor performed feats of effort, just to assemble the materials, involving three separate visits to a Forres scrapyard, and more feats of soldering and beating such as she had never done before, to shape the creature's curving chambers.



Helen Denerley admires the first, and what may be the last, of the sculptures she makes of a dead animal, millions of years extinct.

It played a major part in winning the Highland Architects' best new public open space award for 2010. It has been so much admired, it now appears on the National Trust for Scotland's property postcards, a jigsaw puzzle, a computer cursor mat, and a fridge magnet!

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### BAYNE'S BIOG

*It has occurred to me that the Friends may not be aware that in 2011 Cambridge University Press has published as part of their Cambridge Library Collection ("Books with enduring scholarly value") in two paperback volumes Peter Bayne's 1871 The Life and Letters of Hugh Miller. Forgive me if it is already known at Cromarty, and indeed if the Friends have obtained copies.*

*I have known of the Life for many years, but had never been able to get to see a copy. Our son in Hong Kong knows of my Miller enthusiasm and surprised me by getting the two volumes for me via Amazon. I am well into the first volume. It is valuable especially for the inner thoughts of Miller revealed in many of his letters. This publication is surely a must with regard to the fresh website initiative outlined in Hugh's News No 18.*

*Best wishes,*

*Rev Peter Ridley, Appleby-in-Westmorland, Cumbria*

Editor's note: The Museum does hold copies of Bayne, as do the Friends. They are as Peter indicates extremely rare. His is one of the "print-on-demand" scanned copies of an original 19th Century edition, of the kind reported on in Hugh's News No 19 (*Miller titles' comeback*). They certainly can fill gaps when antiquarian books are otherwise virtually unobtainable. I would wholly concur with Peter's evaluation of Bayne as a particularly worthwhile source of Miller correspondence never published in any other work since. A fresh review on one of our websites will certainly be considered.

## LANDMARK SERIES No 8

## NEW BID TO SAVE



*Craig Fraser points to the plaque commemorating the chapel's foundation by George Ross in 1873.*



*The clearly seen long crack in the west-facing wall presents the serious danger of a collapse.*

A MOST laudable project is in hand to rescue Cromarty's Gaelic Chapel from its rapidly advancing dereliction. Piloting the scheme is Councillor Craig Fraser, who sits for the Black Isle ward on The Highland Council. He is in talks with the Council, Cromarty Estate proprietor John Nightingale, and Cromarty Community Council with a view to setting up a trust to raise the necessary funds.

Craig lives just below the chapel, in a wing of one of the town's historic merchants' houses at the bottom of the lane known as The Paye, which runs past the chapel. He says: "Although I have very little Gaelic, I have felt a strong empathy for Gaelic culture since childhood, when I heard my grandparents, Sandy MacLean and his wife of Kiltarlity, speaking it all the time. When I returned to Cromarty, I just sensed a huge pull towards the chapel straightaway. I am not a religious person, but I find the place has a very spiritual quality.

"It's a tragedy that the building is in ruins, and it shouldn't have been allowed to happen. We're not going to let it go on this way. We will raise the money, we won't let it go," he adds emphatically. His enthusiasm is infectious, and the urgency he feels very understandable, given the deplorable state into which it has sunk.

It is a landmark, standing just behind Hugh Miller's striking monument. It occupies a commanding view over the town, and the surrounding firth. Andrew Wright, the leading Highland architect and heritage consultant, has suggested builder George Ross could have been influenced in his choice of design by the great 18th Century architect Robert Adam, whose style is also associated with Ross's Georgian mansion, Cromarty House, and its handsome Stables block.

The tower is in Cromarty's typical gorgeous pink red sandstone, and features the distinctive slate "cherry-cocking" which is found in several other 18th Century buildings in the town. Most of the building is in dressed Hopeman stone.

All that is left visible of the chapel's truly impressive architecture now is

## MILLER'S FIRST BATTLE

HUGH Miller became embroiled in 1831 in a fierce dispute over the status of the Chapel. He led a campaign to block its minister's application for elevation from "chapel of ease" to parish church status.

Miller was in a good position to do so, as a correspondent for the Inverness Courier, and other Highland journals. His forthright article in the Courier, published 4th May 1831\*, explained that the main objection lay in the preacher, Rev J Finlayson's appointment by the Crown. The parish minister, Rev Alexander Stewart, and the great majority of his Cromarty East Church congregation favoured congregations being able to choose their own ministers, and did not wish to have the Chapel and its preacher imposed upon them against their will. A second key objection: Owners of property and land ("feuars and heritors") would have to pay for the chapel's upkeep and support its minister, against their wishes.

Rev J. Finlayson, had petitioned that either the Chapel should be allotted a parish of its own, carved out of the existing parish, or he should be given a "collegiate charge" (joint ministry) with Rev Stewart. Both options were rejected by the kirk's General Assembly.

More than 20 years later, Miller revealed in his autobiography\* just how big a part he played in the quarrel, and explained more of the social factors involved. Not only did he write for the local papers, but he also composed several of the counter-petitions got up by bodies of the townspeople which he had mentioned in the Courier article. These included the feuars and heritors, the male population in general, the Ladies Society, and the Sabbath School.

He admitted that he seriously riled the Chapel's supporters. One of them, a legal agent, called Hugh in various printed outpourings a "shallow, pretending ninny," "the low underling of a faction," "a fanatic," a "frantic person,"



# THE GAELIC CHAPEL

the tower and the west-facing wall, and both of these are in serious peril. Less than 20 years ago, the east-facing wall was still clearly visible, but is now blighted with ivy from one end to the other. The interior is overgrown with sycamores. It is all a very sad sight, especially when compared with the well-kept cemetery surrounding it.

The Community Council took the first step towards saving the building. In 2004, it commissioned Andrew Wright to report on its conditions and make proposals for consolidation. He produced a closely costed estimate just short of £160,000, with a comprehensive list of repairs, replacements and renewals.

Craig Fraser believes that the stabilisation measures recommended in 2004 would now cost £400,000, given inflation and the further substantial deterioration. He says: "The very least that is needed is to make safe the bell which is still in the tower. We need to waterproof the tower, and make the southern end watertight. We need to get rid of the trees in the interior, and check the ivy growth."

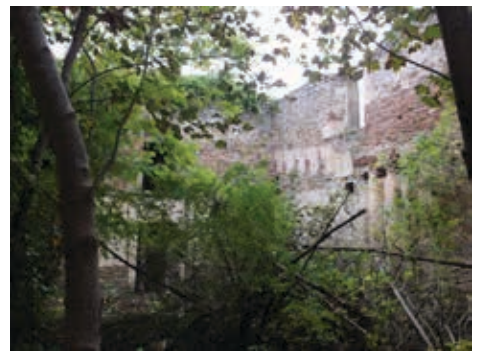
He said once agreement is reached between the parties, the new body would be established with liability accepted for raising the necessary funds. The plan is for a partnership between the Council, the Community Council and the Cromarty Estate, to care for the building, and the proposed trustees are Cllr Fraser, John Nightingale and Calum Davidson.

Cllr Fraser personally has hopes that extend beyond consolidation to the building's restoration and adaption for a return to public use. He has in mind developments giving the church a new role in community life, as a cultural centre, which he believes could cost another £600,000. Among his ideas are the installation of stained glass windows, and a polymer retractable roof. The building would house "living history" events celebrating Gaelic culture, such as would appeal to the Gaelic diaspora worldwide. It could honour the presence of Polish troops at worship there in World War 2. Craig would like to see the entire area round the chapel and monument cleaned up to make it far more attractive to visitors, creating "a wonderfully strong and dynamic space."

However, the first steps are to establish that trust, and then protect the building from any further despoliation.



*The ivy blanket obscures and endangers the east wall.*



*Interior choking with overgrowth.*

## WITH PATRONAGE

and finally, "the most ignoble and despised in the whole range of the human species." Did such barbs hurt or anger him? On the contrary, he "learned, I fear, to experience a rather too keen delight in the anger of an antagonist." These, he said, were "my first attempts in the rough field of controversy." The dispute was "the first faint rumble" in what became the "Ten Years Conflict" over who had the power to appoint ministers which culminated in the Disruption of 1843, and the foundation of the Free Church of Scotland. Miller, as we know, played a leading role in the schism as Editor of *The Witness*. He had cut his teeth in the local row 12 years before.

It is noteworthy that while the East Kirk joined the Free Church, the Chapel remained loyal to the Church of Scotland, part of a small minority to do so in Cromarty and the Highlands as a whole – and as a result got into serious financial difficulties from which it never recovered (see *New bid to save Chapel*, p6)

Miller actually sympathised with the Gaelic congregation. The East Kirk "English" (also termed as "Lowland" and "Saxon") congregation were "the elite," including all Cromarty's "men of property and influence," while the Gaels were "simply poor labourers and weavers," who could claim their souls were just as precious as those of richer folk, and entitled to the same rights.

As his autobiography also relates, he always regretted his own want of Gaelic, the language of all his ancestors on his mother's side.

In another article for the *Courier*, nearly two years before\*, he had highly praised the Rev Finlayson for a "peculiarly impressive" prayer at the foundation stone-laying of the Union Gardeners' Free Lodge in the town.

Miller also wrote in this period deploring the Clearances which had brought the Gaels to Cromarty in search of

# DECLINE UPON DECLINE



*The roof has all but gone in the entrance porch.*

IT has been a tale for the Chapel until now of an inexorable downward path, which broadly mirrors that of Gaelic language and culture as a whole over the last two centuries.

A commission of the Church of Scotland\* in 1889 found that it had already reached a crisis point, only a generation after Miller's time. Quite simply – they could not find a Gaelic-speaking minister, or the funds to support one.

George Ross, laird of Cromarty, who built the church exclusively for Gaelic speakers, at his own expense in 1763, secured an endowment from the government for it of £50 a year. The commission reported that Gaelic alone was preached there until 1829, from which date the minister could also preach in English.

In the years up to 1889, "the use of Gaelic had greatly decreased, the Chapel had remained vacant for a considerable time, and no Gaelic-speaking candidate had presented himself." The Church had no formal title to the building. It had been maintained at their own expense by George Ross and his successors, then by "public subscription."

It had never had a constitution; it had been managed independently of the parish church, and "in several respects had occupied an anomalous position." The endowment had at one time been increased to £150 a year, then reverted to the original £50 about 1870.

A roll taken in 1888 showed 118 adherents only – a small minority of Cromarty's population. There was acrimony among them over its future. The commission concluded that in the event of the Chapel not being required for Gaelic service ... it would not be possible to continue with it."

There is a gap in the record after this. It appears to have struggled on for another 20 years or so, with its £50 annual government maintenance grant, and, presumably, the congregation's collections for their clergyman's stipend. During the First World War, it was used to accommodate troops, and finally declared redundant to worship in 1918.

It had one more brief revival in the Second World War. From 1944 until 1945, soldiers of the Polish pioneer corps camped in huts on Cromarty links and used the redundant Chapel for Sunday mass. They were the last people to worship in the building, before the roof collapsed of its own weight in 1952. As local historian David Alston commented in his town history\*: "It was an unexpected end for a Presbyterian Church."

For the next 50 years it would languish, as it still does, empty and open to the elements, suffering dereliction, until in 2003/4 the first initiatives for rescue were undertaken.

\* *Report of Commission on Cromarty Gaelic Chapel Case*, Church of Scotland, May 29th, 1889.

\* *My Little Town of Cromarty*, by David Alston, Birlinn, 2008, p308

## MILLER'S FIRST BATTLE (CONTINUED)

work, and to wholesale emigration to the New World. Two of his articles for the *Courier*\* hit much the same vein of outrage that he would strike in his more famous editorials in *The Witness*, such as *Sutherland As It Was and Is*\* Crown, government and landowners' control of the kirk's ministry (patronage) was the key issue, but the Established Kirk's rejection of the Chapel's petition left it vulnerable ever after.

\* *A Noble Smuggler and Other Stories*, by Hugh Miller, ed. Martin Gostwick, Inverness Courier Special Publication, 1997; article *Jupiter's Gift*, ps 80-84.

\* *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, by Hugh Miller, ed. James Robertson, B & W Publishing, Edinburgh, 1993, Chapter XXII, ps 455-458.

\* *A Noble Smuggler and Other Stories*, by Hugh Miller, ed. Martin Gostwick, Inverness Courier Special Publication, 1997; article *The Highlander Conquered*, 23rd June 1830. Ps 34-43., and article, *Unpeopled for Centuries*, 22nd June 1831, p44.

\* *Sutherland As It Was and Is*, in *The Witness* 1843, reprinted in *Leading Articles*, Nimmo, Edinburgh 1870.





its as a member of the South London Women Artists group, as well as guiding at Dulwich Art Gallery. Alison Seller is a Cromarty resident, poet and member of the Black Isle Writers' Group. She electrified local audiences recently with readings of the trilogy we reprint here, because they so powerfully evoke the memories of the Gaels who came to the town to live, work and worship, and, in the third poem, she voices the chapel's own lament for its "lost" life in the present.

#### THE GAELIC CHAPEL

A trilogy of poems by Cromarty writer Alison Seller



## "TO SING IS TO PRAY"

EVEN in its dilapidated state today, the Chapel continues to inspire artists with its lofty position, imposing architecture, colourful past and potential future. Olivia Urquhart is an Inverness-shire-born and raised painter. Long resident in the London borough of Peckham, she regularly returns to the Highlands to seek themes for her pictures. Cromarty is one of her favourite spots, where she comes to visit lifelong friends, and always checks out the chapel. She studied at Central St Martins College of Art and Design. She often exhib-

### I. SEINN/SINGING

Far from the islands  
of home we carried  
the lilt of our childhood,  
in hope and in fear.  
Now on a foreign shore,  
blending our voices,  
the psalms of sweet memory  
allow the heart's tears.

Singing the sorrows and  
singing the yearnings.  
Singing the sweetness  
Of love, true and kind.  
Singing the High Street and  
singing the Harbour.  
Singing the Factory  
To help keep the line.

But always the Sabbath  
calls home the weary,  
calls home the wayward  
to show us the way. And  
in the still twilight,  
when heaven lies nearest,  
in chapel we murmur  
the soft, dying day.  
And smile to remember:  
to sing is to pray.

### II. FILLEADH/FLYING

Blown in on a Baltic breeze,  
fibre from the field infused  
with the scent of seas.  
Tows of hemp  
teased and heckled  
split and spun  
worked and woven  
twined and plied  
into sackcloth for sugar  
and rope for ships  
setting sail for the Indies.  
Ocean spume  
On the Seal of Cromarty  
Plying the Atlantic.

Up on the hill, the chapel  
keeps urgent vigil, warming  
the Sabbath bell.

For hands need work  
but souls need saving.  
A little time here  
but a long hereafter  
when Judgement shall heckle.  
Apply yourself well  
to the weave of the Word.  
This world will soon wither.  
Heaven awaits  
the penitent heart  
plying life's passage.

### III DIOCHUIMHNEAC/FORGETTING

Beneath the quilting of ivy  
she dreams.  
Sunlight and salt breeze  
oppress her.  
Wind-whip and frost-scald  
torment her. Still  
she dreams.  
A snatch of psalm;  
a whisper of prayer.

Sometimes, sensing the owl's callous call,  
she wakes to a cold, clear night  
and the consoling eye of the moon.  
Sometimes, a child's laughter  
rolling down the Paye  
flashes a shimmer  
of endless summer.

A bugle summons  
and young men march  
while young men moulder  
beneath her turf.  
Rafters surrender  
falling from grace  
to trace an echo of faith.

She stirs, listening for  
the tolling heartbeat of the bell;  
the quickening footsteps up the hill.  
But finds instead  
her crumbling memory lost  
to a jostling silence of saplings and stars.



# FOSSILS – PAST, PRESENT AND FOREVER

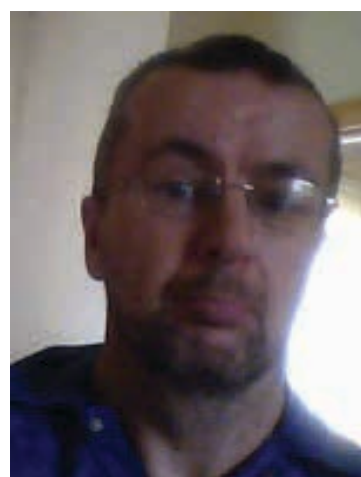


FOUR charming sketches of the Birthplace Cottage kitchen appeared in a blog on the net the other day, and were drawn to our notice by a member.

But the artist, Aidy Eaton, was quite unknown to me, and the blog gave no contact details. I thought they would please our readers, so I left a message on his blog, and a phone call back came within a couple of hours.



Two self-portraits of Aidy, one in paint, the other a head-and-shoulders photo.



Aidy asked: "Were you aware that I teach art at Cromarty Primary School?" No, I was not. What a surprise! You never know whom you might encounter in cyberspace, even if they, unknown to you, work a stone's throw away.

So we set up a meeting at the school, at which he freely gave permission to use the sketches. "Honoured," he said.

He explained these were "dashed off, each done in under 10 minutes," as part of his studies for a bachelor of arts degree. He thanked the Museum staff - "very kind ladies" – who allowed him the use of the room, and the okay to do the drawings.

Aidy lives in Beaulieu, and teaches art at five other Black Isle primary schools as well. He describes himself as a "visual thinker," and in showing me a remarkable "fossil sketchbook," he demonstrated many striking parallels with Miller's ways of seeing and responding to his surroundings.

Aidy said: "We live in rock cycles. We are living fossils who will be mineral deposits in 150 million years time." Man-made objects would become fossils too, from the grandest edifice down to the humble household spanner.

He has been inspired by cave art of aboriginal peoples, and ley lines, as well as 21st century human marks on the land. He showed me a page of landscape represented by modern electrical circuits. "Computers originate in rock," he pointed out.

Above, panning from left to right (as if coming from the parlour), we see the informal, rough-and-ready essence of an old Scottish kitchen, where once Hugh listened to the folk tales he would immortalise in print. Adrian Eaton said he chose "a local tourist attraction" for his practice exercise with interiors, because his own home is "overpopulated with teenagers."



Two pieces from Aidy's Fossil sketchbook; one (above) is of "aboriginal and electrical symbols", while the second (below) is an aboriginal drawing "subverted" with technology.



For bringing out the sparkling mica in schist and feldspar, he deployed girls' nail glitter. On another page a "meccanosaurus" appeared, a mythical Jurassic creature derived from the well-known toy.

I compared Aidy's with Hugh's thinking us-

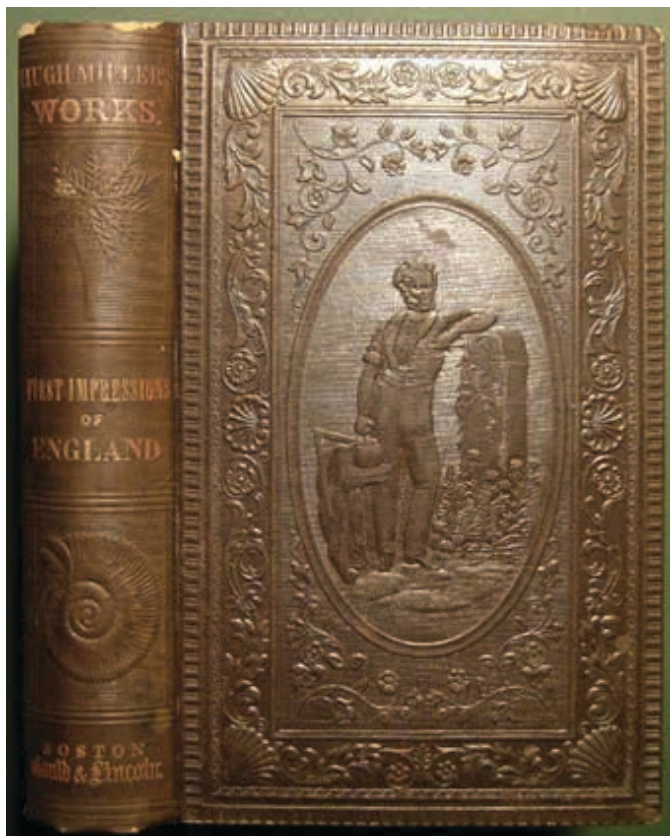


ing some notes by Dr Mike Taylor in his introduction to *The Cruise of the Betsey* (NMS, 2003): "Miller saw human history as being continuous with, rather than separated from, the deep time of geological history. He thoughtfully analysed a vitrified fort near Strathpeffer as he might a geological outcrop. Indeed, Miller took particular note of what might be called living (or at least only recently extinct) cultural fossils on Eigg and Rum, ancient practices which had died out elsewhere." Other such fossils included unique "island shoes."

At the Cromarty primary school, I also learnt that pupils are exploring the shorelines, more or less exactly as Hugh did as a boy with his Uncle Sandy. These are called "coastal classrooms," where they hunt among seaweed and rockpools, finding brittle stars, crabs and sea squirts, and make jewellery out of shells.

They do this as part of the John Muir Award scheme, whose motto is "Explore, Conserve, Share." How fitting that Miller was one of Muir's heroes. Aidy Eaton and I both hope new links can be made for the children with Miller's museum and his world.

## MILLER IN AMERICA



CATALOGUE  
OF  
**CASTS OF FOSSILS**  
FROM THE  
PRINCIPAL MUSEUMS OF EUROPE AND AMERICA  
WITH SHORT DESCRIPTIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS  
BY  
**HENRY A. WARD, A. M., F. G. S.,**  
Professor of Natural Sciences, in the University of Rochester  
\* \* \*  
ROCHESTER, N. Y.  
BENTON AND ANDREWS, PRINTERS  
1866

Member and prolific book collector Phil James of Southampton has sent us some fascinating examples of Miller's image reproduced in some American publications on geology, which serve to illustrate how great his fame became there.

He found the images not only in books by Miller himself, but used, in caricature, extensively in a Catalogue of fossil casts held in the principal museums of Europe and America. The catalogue was compiled by one Henry Ward, a natural sciences professor at Rochester, New York State. It passed through successive editions, beginning in 1866 – less than a decade after Hugh's death.



A Miller likeness was used to give scale to the casts of some very large creatures. Phil discovered these associations on the internet, and included them in a talk he gave to the History of Geology Group at Burlington House in London (headquarters of the Geology Society).

He writes: "Miller's books were sold on both sides of the Atlantic of course and the Americans who read them must have been just as aware of his likeness from the numerous frontispieces as folk in this country. One of the illustrated casts is a Plesiosaur paddle (from the Kimmeridgian in Dorset) and beside it for scale is a figure who to all intense and purposes looks like Hugh Miller, especially the hair and facial expression. Additionally the pose is similar to the well known 'Miller leaning on the carved gravestone' frontispiece illustration.

"It strikes me that the illustrator wanted an appropriate figure to draw and Miller's likeness was probably better known than any other geologist from this country at that time. This is quite an endorsement of Miller bearing in mind his arguably more famous contemporaries - Lyell, Murchison etc."

Best regards Phil James, Southampton

The Editor adds: It is an interesting coincidence that Rochester NY is a fossil rich locality. A palaeontologist based there, Samuel J Ciarra, in 2002 gave the Museum a magnificent Eurypterid fossil, named *Hughmilleria socialis* Sarle. The genus was discovered by the American palaeontologist Clifton J Sarle in 1902/3, in a black shale bed along the Erie Canal, which at that time was being deepened by reexcavation. Sarle chose to honour Miller, whose centenary had taken place the previous year.

63

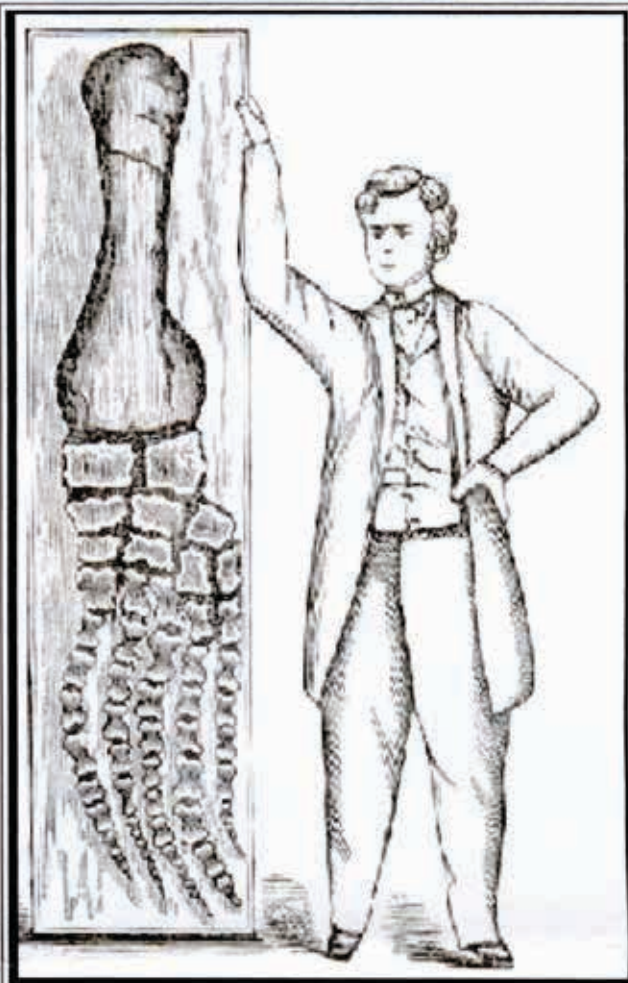
## REPTILIA

No. 231

**Pliosaurus brachydeirus, Owen**

**PADDLE.** This big-headed, short necked, amplicoelean Reptile was more closely lacertilian than the *Ichthyosaurus*. With the exception of the teeth, which are thicker and stronger, of the vertebrae of the neck which like those of the *Ichthyosaurus* are compressed, and of the more massive proportions of the jaws and paddle-bones, the skeleton of the *Pliosaurus* resembles that of the *Plesiosaurus*. Some individuals attained the length of more than forty feet. The huge paddle was found in the Kimmeridgian bed (Upper Oolite) near Dorchester, England and is in the Museum of that city.

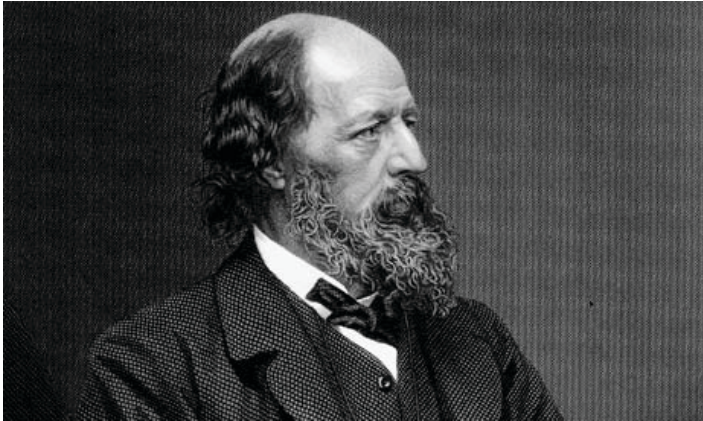
**Size. 7 ft. 2 in. x 1 ft. 9 in. Price \$18.00.**





# MILLER IN MALVERN MYSTERY

An intriguing email came to us from Dr Mike Taylor divulging that he came across an unexpected reference to a Scotsman called Miller – who might, or might not have been our Hugh - in the published correspondence of the Poet Laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson.



*Lord Tennyson.*

West Midlands for his tour of England he does not mention Malvern, though the itinerary is by no means complete."

Miller made that tour in 1845, three years before Tennyson's Malvern visit, and one year before the record of the tour, *First Impressions of England and its People* was published (1847).

Dr Taylor goes on: "The letter does rather imply someone there perhaps for the water cure, so if it was our Hughie, he may have had a health breakdown that is not otherwise recorded. But I don't recall any links with Colquhoun who was an Edinburgh advocate and Secretary to the prisons board - so this could be another Miller such as the doctor James Miller perhaps?"



*Dr James Gully*

It is a mystery which may never be solved. But even without Hugh's presence, there are strong connections to him. James Miller was a close personal friend of his, and one of the doctors who performed the autopsy on him after his death (1856).

Hugh's widow Lydia first attended Dr James Gully's "water-cure" in 1857. In her biography of Lydia, Elizabeth Sutherland records that thousands of the famous took his hydropathic treatments, including Gladstone, Macaulay, Carlyle, and Dickens as well as Tennyson. The effect of whichever of Gully's punishing courses Lydia took was anything but good. Her already delicate nerves could not stand it. Treatments included cold showers and baths, wet-sheet packing and wrapping, and a strict, plain diet.

The poet laureate wrote to a friend named Ludovic Colquhoun from an address, Dr Gully's, Great Malvern, dated Thursday 7th September 1848. Part of it read: "Come, if you have any holidays left to where I am at Dr Gully's and here is too your old friend Miller and other bonny Scots some of whom you know – and I and all will be glad to see you. Moreover you may take a dip or two yourself. I write between bath and bath."

It was signed "Ever yours, A. Tennyson."

Dr Taylor comments: "I don't recall any visit by Hugh Miller to Malvern (as opposed to that by Mrs Miller after he died, of course) and although Hugh was in the



*The water for the famous "cure."*





# CROMARTY FIELD TRIP

A geological excursion led by Bob Davidson and Nigel Trewin for the Aberdeen and Highland geological societies visited Cromarty on 16 -18 August 2013. The party met on the Friday evening, and on Saturday took the ferry to Nigg and examined the beach section. The Old Red Sandstone (ORS) breccias resting on the metamorphic rocks of North Sutor were well exposed, and in the ORS succession a variety of sedimentary structures typical of deposition from rivers and in lakes were seen. One sandstone unit probably represents deposition as a wind-blown dune. A few fragmentary fish, mainly *Osteolepis* scales, were found in carbonate nodules.

Returning to Cromarty the party visited the shore section so loved by Hugh Miller, and searched for nodules with fossil fish. A few examples were found, but good specimens are difficult to find. The party then visited the Hugh Miller Museum and other historic features before assembling at the Royal Hotel for evening meal.

Sunday was spent visiting the shore at Eathie, a favourite haunt of Hugh Miller. Exposures of the ORS were largely inaccessible due to summer vegetation, but a number of fossil fish were found in nodules on the shore. As the tide retreated Jurassic shales were exposed and from eroded fragments on the shore ammonites, belemnites and bivalves were collected. A few showers hit the shore but the weather was generally kind for the weekend, and the party dispersed.

The Highland and Aberdeen geological societies are affiliated to 'The Friends of Hugh Miller'.



*Top right: Bob Davidson speaking to the group on the approaches to the South Sutor.*

*Upper right: A large fish plate found on the North Sutor.*

*Lower right: Two fossils presented on the day to The Friends, on the left a specimen of *Pterichthyodes milleri*, donor Bob Davidson, and an *Osteolepis*, right, gifted by Peter Rowe.*

*Bottom left: Nigel Trewin explaining the geology of the North Sutor.*

*Bottom right: Bob Davidson and Peter Rose examining fossil displays in the Museum.*





# APPEAL TO MEMBERS

Dear Members

You have loyally and generously supported The Friends, most of you for several years, and many of you ever since we were founded in 2006. In the last two years, our funds have reduced considerably, owing mainly to having made several significant donations to the Museum, and to rising costs. We believe services to members have improved in quality, such as the newsletter and the new Friends' website. We have future commitments, including sponsoring a new edition of Miller's *The Old Red Sandstone*, some financial backing for the *Cruise of the Betsey* replica voyage announced in this edition, organising events, and future acquisitions for the Museum.

In a letter of 3rd August to all of you, we explained that to sustain and expand our activities, it has been necessary to raise our annual subscription from £10 to £15 a year, as from 1st April 2014. Many of you have responded, as usual generously, but to date only 36 members have confirmed their updates. More than 75 have not notified me. I am sure many among you have updated, but not told me so yet. I acknowledge this is a chore, but the information is needed to maintain accurate records.

May I therefore appeal to all who have yet to increase their subs to do so before 1st April next, and to let me know. I also ask you to endeavour to make new members among your colleagues and friends. The website is a very useful recruitment tool!

Thank you in anticipation of your continued vital support.

Martin Gostwick, Secretary

January 2014



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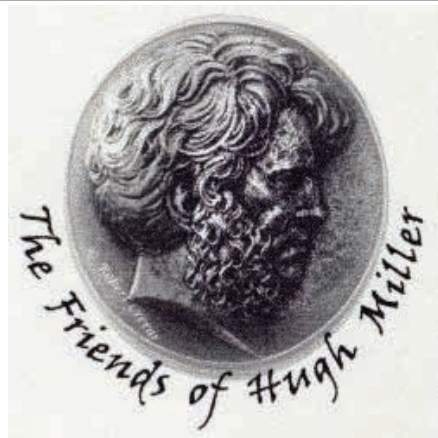
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## MEMBERSHIP FORM

I/WE WISH to become a member of The Friends of Hugh Miller

(Registered charity No SC037351).

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....Postcode.....

Tel No.....

Email address.....

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.

RETURN TO:

MARTIN GOSTWICK

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55 SHORE STREET,

CROMARTY IV11 8XL

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