



Hugh's News

Magazine of
The Friends of Hugh Miller

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RENEWED APPEAL

THE SEASON OF GOODWILL

by The Editor

We wish all our readers the very best of times in the festive season and for the future.

We are also taking advantage of the season to renew our appeal to all our Friends members and admirers of Hugh Miller to give as generously as they can to our "Eliza's Path Appeal." We most sincerely

and warmly thank all those who have contributed so much since we launched the project in the summer. This includes several donors who are not members. We hope especially that the many members who have yet to contribute, will now do so.

Please use the donation facility (credit/debit card, PayPal) at the foot of the Eliza's Path Appeal page on our website. Thank you.



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THIRD HUGH MILLER WRITING COMPETITION NOW OPEN

by Lara Reid

We chose the anniversary of Hugh Miller's birth on October 10th to launch our latest competition. We are proud to run Scotland's only geology-based writing competition.

The third competition is now open for prose and poetry entries. This year, we are inviting prose and poetry entries inspired by one or more of the 51 Best Places to See Scotland's Geology. Full details about the 51 Best Places can

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WHAT'S INSIDE:

We feature three articles of exceptional interest. Elsa Panciroli discovers a fossil named for Miller in South Africa, 'Miller's Little One' (ps 12-13). David Alston tells how Miller's boyhood best friend, Finlay, became overseer of a slave plantation (ps14-17), and Martin Gostwick describes a remarkable clergyman, Rev Joseph Townsend, co-founder of English geology (ps 21-23).

Also in this edition: Monument cleared up, ps4-5; Trewin Lecture, ps6-7; Looking to the Future, p8, Bookshop opened p9; Committee Profiles, ps 10-11; Book Reviews, ps 18-20.

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RENEWED ELIZA'S PATH APPEAL

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We need another £1000 to meet our target for individual donations. The Friends has already committed up to £4000 from its own funds, and we have two funding applications outstanding.

Eliza, Hugh and Lydia Miller's first born, only lived to see one Christmas, dying of fever aged just 17 months. Her headstone, carved by Hugh himself in his last task as a stonemason, gives a special poignancy to this tranquil, centuries-old burial ground.



Eliza's headstone in the sun

A handrail can hardly perhaps be considered the most obvious or outstanding subject for an appeal, but we think it is essential to help signpost the now rather obscured graveyard's existence, and especially to help the elderly and infirm to make it up the steep path to pay their respects to the dead girl and others who lie there. It will be of high quality, and will be not just a much needed amenity, but an additional visual attraction to what is now an unmarked, barely noticeable entrance and pathway. It is our ambition to have this railing installed and the path given a special reopening by the summer of 2020, and we look forward to many more members dipping into their pockets to help us reach our target.

WRITING COMPETITION LAUNCHED

(continued from p1)

be found here: www.scottishgeology.com/best-places

The list guides visitors to locations chosen by the Forum's earth science affiliates as the most favourable to see different elements of our country's geological story, to help people of all ages fully appreciate the formation of Scotland's beautiful landscapes.

The competition will encourage both a renewed interest in Miller's work, and contribute to a growing catalogue of new writings inspired by him. While Miller himself visited many of the 51 locations on the list, entries are most certainly not limited to his haunts alone. We aim also to highlight the role that geology plays in our daily lives and foster greater public awareness and appreciation of geoheritage.

As always, we are grateful to all our partners for the competition, who have yet again offered a fantastic range of prizes to entice entries. From a weekend for two in Cromarty, complete with local fossil hunting expedition and tour of the Miller Birthplace Cottage and Museum, to family passes for Dynamic Earth and fossils from Mr. Wood's Fossil shop in Edinburgh, we are so pleased to have the ongoing support of so many organisations.

We are also delighted to announce a successful funding application to the Cromarty-based Middleton Trust. The £440 grant will enable our small team to work on encouraging young people under the age of 25 to enter the competition. Some of the funds will be spent on prizes, and we will also be running some workshops in schools and local youth clubs on the Black Isle and other locations in the Highlands in the coming months. The funding is invaluable to our project, run as it is by a team of enthusiastic volunteers.



Janie Verburg & Alex Woodcock

Angus Miller, chair of the Scottish Geodiversity Forum, says: "Scotland's geology is amazing. Hugh Miller knew this, and he was adept at sharing its wonders with the general public. We hope that Miller's writing, and the 51 Best Places, will inspire modern writers to enter the competition and share stories of Scotland's geology with new audiences."

Writer Robert Macfarlane (*Underland, The Lost Words*) has given his support to the competition, and adds; "Hugh Miller is one of the writers who gave me 'deep-time spectacles'; his remarkable prose helped me, as it has helped so many people, to see back into earth history, and read our planet's ancient past from its present surface. He was, really, a visionary, and it is wonderful to see him still celebrated today."

The competition is open to all ages and is free to enter. It is being organised with the help of a range of partners in the fields of geology and education, with a closing date of **15th March 2020**.

it would be brilliant if you could encourage any under-25s that you know to enter. Scotland's geoheritage is part of their future.

What better encouragement could there be than this recommendation from a previous poetry first prize winner **Alex Woodcock @beakheads**

"Can't recommend this highly enough - great people and great prizes! In fact the real prize is becoming part of a fantastic community of writers, palaeontologists, poets, geologists, fossil-hunters...if you're into rocks and words this is your comp, give it a go!"

Winners will be announced in Edinburgh in June 2020.

THE HUGH MILLER WRITING COMPETITION 2019-2020

Invites entries inspired by one or more of the

**51 Best
Places**
to see Scotland's Geology

Prose and poetry entries from all ages are welcome. It's free to enter. The competition launches on the 10th of October 2019. The closing date for entries is midnight on the 15th of March 2020.

For more details, visit:
www.scottishgeology.com

MILLER'S MONUMENT RESCUED FROM SERIOUS NEGLECT

by Martin Gostwick

A NOBLE act by Cromarty's local Highland Councillor, Craig Fraser, has been the clearing, at some personal risk, of all the unsightly undergrowth surrounding the base of Hugh Miller's Monument. It has thus been restored as the town's most outstanding landmark, for residents and visitors alike.

Cllr Fraser's action has been praised by the local Community Council, and as you might expect, by The Friends of Hugh Miller. Highland Council has pledged to carry out works which will guarantee the monument's ongoing maintenance.

Craig explained how he came to carry out his laudable rescue act. "I directed a couple of tourists to the Hugh



Cllr Craig Fraser

Miller Monument, and I was extremely embarrassed by its overall condition. The surrounding ground behind the railings was so covered with all the brambles, ivy and weeds in front of it, you could hardly see his name on the inscription at the base. Considering the man is a legend and icon of Cromarty - in fact worldwide - he and his legacy deserve more respect."

He struggled to gain access inside the railings, so he fetched a ladder and climbed over them - at the risk of impaling himself - and proceeded to rip out the ivy and all the other undergrowth with his own hands.

He then wrote to Highland Council's environmental management staff about the need for solutions. Acting manager Andrew Puls replied that he "absolutely agreed that a gate needs to be installed within the existing cast iron railings to enable access for maintenance." He added that "it appears to be a very odd oversight that one is not already in place."

Mr Puls noted that this would need a Listed Building Consent, and it should be a very simple operation to cut out a small section of the railings and insert a gate. He also agreed that the top of the monument should be cleared of vegetation, along with remedial repointing where needed, such as "should be sufficient for at least 10 years."

At the base, Mr Puls proposed a geotextile surface covered with a good layer of gravel chippings which should remove the need for any routine maintenance, other than for occasional checks. He concluded that "the works are all relatively straightforward and not expensive - I imagine the biggest single expense will be the hire of the cherry picker (hoist) - but will ensure the long term preservation and condition of the monument with minimal ongoing maintenance or costs."



The base - cleared



It has been very easy to take the presence of the Hugh Miller Monument for granted, so solid and lasting is its appearance towering over the "wee toun," almost perpetually topped by a pigeon resting on his head, and it is understandable that the local authority with so many other more pressing concerns should have taken its eye off the ball.

However, we need to remember the effort it took to build it in the first place, its rarity, if not uniqueness, and to appreciate the quality of both the statue and the Doric column supporting it, as well as its associations with the great man.

It was funded, as the inscription at the base points out, by public subscription, and it took nearly three years to raise the £300 needed for the works. The gripping story is very well told in one of Dr Mike Taylor's articles in the special edition of the *Geological Curator*, Vol 13, No 7 (p433).

The base is constructed with Old Red Sandstone from the same quarry at which Miller began work as a jobbing stonemason, while the column above comes from a former local quarry at Davidston. Alexander Handyside Ritchie's statue has been applauded then and since for its remarkable likeness, its "quiet dignity," and "calm force."

Hugh's intense expression, the thick head of hair, the great whiskers, the plaid over his shoulder, the pile of books under one hand, with the other examining a fossil, and the outline of his most famous fossil fish, *Pterichthyodes milleri*, beneath his feet, are all unmistakable marks of the man.

As Mike Taylor recounts, the appeal for the monument was initiated within two weeks of his death, but the fund-raising was difficult. It had to compete with the public appeal for around £1,000 to buy his fossil collection for the nation from his family, and came in the midst of an international bank crash and the Indian Mutiny crisis of 1857.

The foundation stone was laid on 24th November 1858, attended by 500 to 600 people, and completed in July of the following year, 160 years ago, I find it particularly touching that the fund-raising was led by Cromarty's Provost, Robert Ross, who had given Miller his start in banking in 1834, and who was the father of Harriet Ross Taylor, whose recollections we have been serialising in *Hugh's News*.

And a further poignant note is that Provost Ross at the foundation stone ceremony "took Miller's young son Hugh by the hand." The boy who would succeed his father as a geologist had just turned 9 years old.

**We still have some copies of the Geological Curator available to order online from our website.*

CHARLES LYELL'S NOTEBOOKS SAVED

We are delighted to congratulate Edinburgh University in saving for the nation nearly 300 Notebooks of the great pioneering Scottish geologist Charles Lyell (1798-1875), raising about £1 million to do so.

The thrilling purchase will make a fundamentally important archive freely available to the public. The university's supporters pledged in excess of £600,000, and the UK's National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) has agreed to contribute the remaining funds.

The works, which are currently in private ownership, were subject to a government export bar in a bid to keep them in the UK, which has proved successful as a result of hundreds of donations, great and small.

Lyell, who died in 1875 aged 77, mentored Darwin after the latter returned from his five-year voyage on the *Beagle* in 1836, and is credited with providing the framework that helped Darwin develop his evolutionary theories. The 294 notebooks contain copies of correspondence between the two scientists.

He was a prime influence on Hugh Miller's early development as a geologist, and that of many others.

Although written in the Victorian era, the works also shed light on current concerns, including climate change and threats to species diversity. They also explore the meanings of so-called deep time – the concept of geological time first described by the Scottish geologist James Hutton in the 18th century.



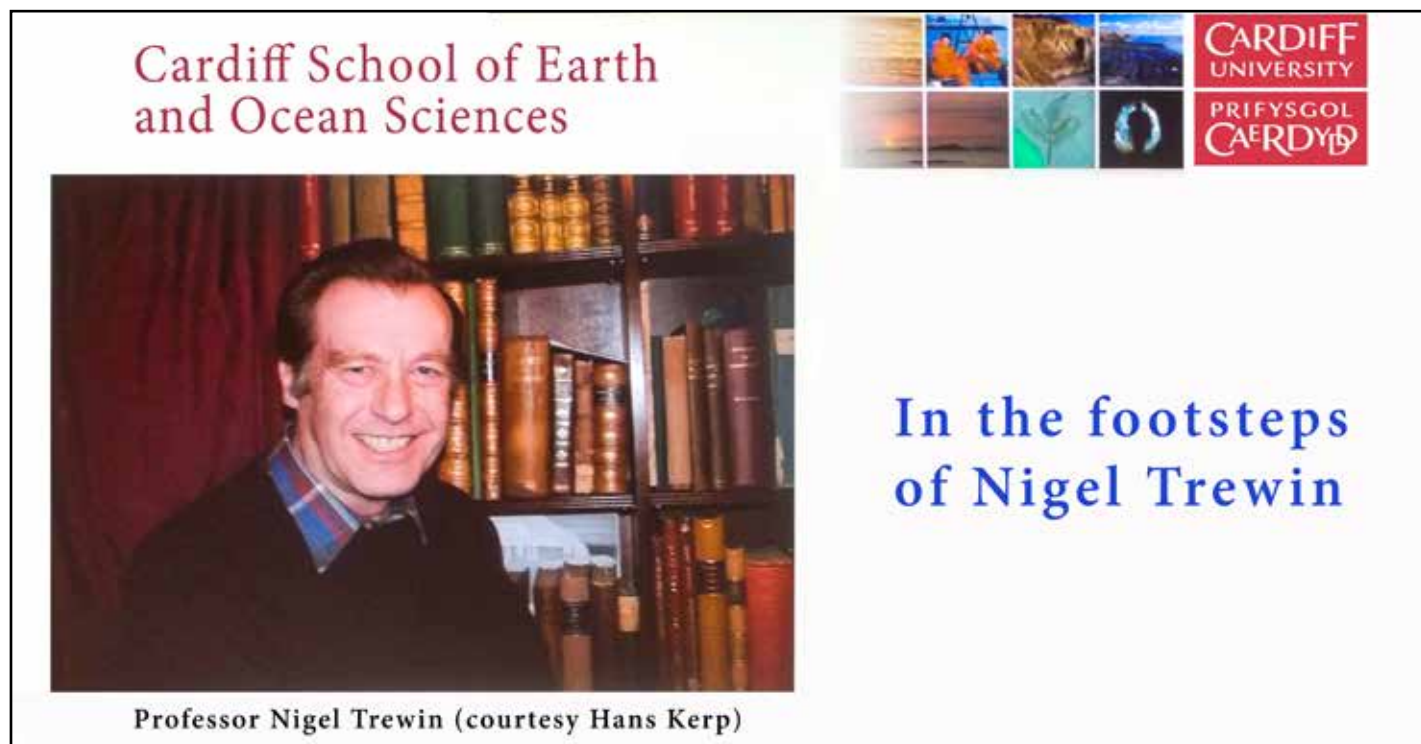
The monument close-up



The monument (photo by Nigel Trewin)

A LECTURE TO REMEMBER

by Martin Gostwick



About 100 members of the Aberdeen Geological Society (AGS) and The Friends of Hugh Miller on 2nd October attended the Inaugural Nigel Trewin Memorial lecture given by Professor Dianne Edwards of Cardiff University, and the event was acclaimed “a roaring success” by common consent.

It was such a success first and foremost, because of Professor Edwards’ outstanding address *In the Steps of Nigel Trewin*, and second because the attendance at a packed Aberdeen University’s Fraser Noble Lecture Theatre bettered even the organisers’ best hopes.

Professor Edwards said although she had had three books by Hugh Miller on her shelves for 50 odd years, he had not been all that interested in plants, but from *Testimony of the Rocks* she showed an illustration of a Devonian fossil, now known as *Zosterophyllum*, but likened to a sea grass by Miller.

She as a palaeobotanist had concentrated her researches on the famed Rhynie chert of Aberdeenshire alongside her colleague Nigel Trewin, who had largely driven the studies aimed at reconstructing its entire terrestrial ecosystem. She recalled Nigel joking that the number of his academic papers had just about exceeded his catches of salmon.



Left: Professor Dianne Edwards

Right: Block of Rhynie chert



The first publications on the chert took place between 1917 and 1921, since when it had become famed universally in science for the unmatched quality of its plant remains, “the best cell for cell preservation” in the world, and is today one of Scotland’s most important Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

She observed that the chert was not only exceptionally rich in the early Devonian plants of 407 mya, but it also contained “the most complete ecosystem” of freshwater and terrestrial animal life, bacteria, algæ, lichen and fungi.

The audience were startled by the record range she showed of early insects, centipedes, crustaceans, spiders, nematode worms, coprolites. In one spider had been found the earliest sex organ in the fossil record. Plants such as early types of club mosses beginning to develop root systems and indirect evidence of plants defending themselves from attack by animals were among the phenomena demonstrated.

Professor Edwards said the most comparable landscape to that of the Rhynie chert today was to be found in Yellowstone National Park, and she greatly amused us with accounts of a research team using improvised items of clothing and fishing equipment at a (Medusa) hot spring there.

She paid tribute to Nigel Trewin drawing from a poem by Gerallt Jones, referencing “a good man,” who had made “an indelible mark” on his science and on all who knew and worked with him.

Thanking her for her presentation, AGS president Bob Stewart praised Dianne for bringing us new insights into the sheer diversity of living organisms in that period, and how they bear on life today.

BEAUTIES OF ROCK EXPLORED

Highland Geological Society began their 2019/20 winter season of talks with a multifaceted tour, “Adventures in the Beauty of Rocks” by Professor Gordon Walkden, Professor Emeritus of Geology at Aberdeen University.

He discussed how stone is interpreted through its colour, texture, composition and structure, and how it has served at the interface between science and art. “Polish it up, and you begin to get a story,” he said.

He described how the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce stimulated the search for British marbles from 1800 on with prizes of up to 100 guineas and medals, after the Napoleonic Wars stopped the import of Italian marble. He narrated the extraordinary stories of these marbles’ discovery, particularly striking being the quarrying of Assynt marble, which involved building 16 miles of road across the wilds to Ullapool for shipping right round Scotland, down to Gateshead.



Inverness Cathedral



He showed many examples of surviving Victorian era buildings made with granites from the North East of Scotland in London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness, as well as many examples of gorgeous statuary marble.

Professor Walkden emphasised the importance of properly recording what granites and marbles are in these buildings before their compositions get lost.

Pulpit in Inverness Cathedral, designed by the cathedral’s architect Alexander Ross, and executed by D. and A. Davidson. 1869. Caen stone, with supporting columns of Abriachan granite.

Great membership opportunities

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

by the Editor

You are probably aware that we, like society at large, have an ageing membership, and this makes it all the more important that we seek to engage with and gain the participation of more young people.

We introduced a Junior membership category for **under 18s** costing only £5 a year three years ago; now we have **created two categories for families**, and with the festive season upon us, we remind you that this year we have also instituted **Gift Membership**. Why not make a present of The Friends of Hugh Miller to a loved one or friend?

The family categories offer membership covering either one or two adults, and up to three children. Thus a single parent can join with **up to three children** for just £15, and two parents can enrol **up to three children** for £30, the same fee which applies to couples.

What does being one of The Friends of Hugh Miller give you? It is a cultural enrichment to make contact with Miller himself, his unique personality and lovely prose, and via our organisation, a route to all the excitements to be had from natural science, including your own exploration and creative writing about it. And your subscriptions give us the means to continue our activities in promoting Hugh's legacy, and public involvement in all his interests, from geology, to folklore, social history and journalism.

For young people, we invite you to become "*ECOWARRIORS*" in Hugh Miller's name, to join in discovering the earth's history, as part of the way to ensuring its future. And we join with our partners in encouraging you, who hold the future in your hands, to write about your experiences of the natural world, and send your pieces in to the Miller writing competition!

To encourage all you parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc we here introduce you to two families who have just enrolled - Alex Gostwick, his wife Bara, and son Toby of Modbury, Devon, and Aimee Stewart with her daughter, Mimi, of Munlochy, Black Isle.



Alex Gostwick with son Toby



Aimee and Mimi enjoy a ride round the town on a Cromarty Community Care tricycle



FRIENDS' BOOKSHOP LAUNCHED

We are pleased to introduce a new publications page on our website, under the heading BOOKSHOP. We offers a number of most interesting titles, including the writing competition anthology *Conversation in Stone*, Miller's autobiography and his reports for the Inverness Courier, *A Noble Smuggler and Other Stories*, Lydia Miller's only novel for adults, and two novels by her daughter Harriet Miller Davidson, as well as the children's novel, *Jamie's Adventures in Time*.

Also available are fossil prints first published by English geology's co-founder Rev Joseph Townsend, price £12 each. All the items on this web page can be ordered and paid for online. Contact the Secretary, mgostwick@gmail.com with any queries. They can be dispatched to the customer immediately on payment of the cover prices (plus p & p).

LIST OF TITLES

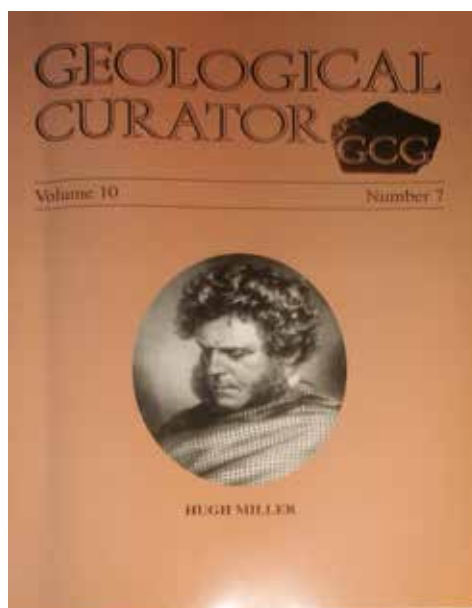
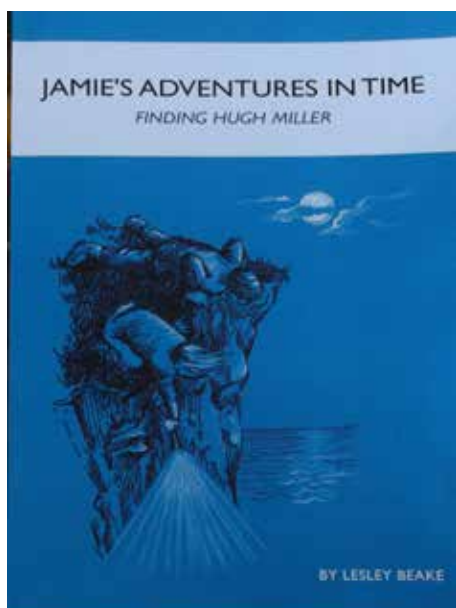
Conversations in Stone, Ed L. Reid & E. Pancioli (Scottish Geodiversity Forum, publisher, Biddles Books Ltd printers, 2019, £7.99. (ISBN 9 781292 804719). £7.99 Nature-writing at its very best by prize-winners in the Hugh Miller Writing Competitions.

Geological Curator. Vol 10, Number 7, Hugh Miller. Publication of the Geological Curators' Group (GCG), August 2017, £8.99 plus £2.50 p&p. A Herculean work of scholarship by Dr Michael Taylor and others on Miller's fossil collections, his Cromarty monument, and the Calotype photograph showing Miller posing as a stonemason. Indispensible to Miller studies.

My Schools and Schoolmasters, by Hugh Miller (ed. James Roberston). Black & White Publishing, Edinburgh, reprinted 2002 (ISBN 1-873631-18-9). £5.99. A few copies remain of the autobiography, a classic of mid 19th century Scottish literature.

Lydia, Wife of Hugh Miller of Cromarty, by Elizabeth Sutherland. Tuckwell Press (ISBN 1-86232-221-X) £9.99. The first and only biography of Lydia Mackenzie Falconer Fraser, with an introduction by her biographer, Elizabeth Sutherland.

Passages in the Life of an English Heiress, by Lydia Miller (For the Right Reasons, ISBN 978-1-905787-95-1). £4.99. Believed to be the only novel ever written around the 1843 Disruption in the Church of Scotland, it fea-



tures an orphaned teenage heroine who is heir to large estates on both sides of the Border. With an introduction by Elizabeth Sutherland,

A Noble Smuggler and Other Stories, by Hugh Miller (ed. Martin Gostwick). Inverness Courier (ISBN 0-9530202-0-7) £6.99. Miller's reports as Cromarty correspondent for the Courier in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Highly entertaining mirror of those times, including the Clearances, superstition, electoral reform, smuggling, shipwrecks, and pageants.

Jamie's Adventures in Time : Finding Hugh Miller, by Lesley Beake. For The Right Reasons (ISBN 978-1-905787-61-6) £4.99. Troubled boy Jamie Alexander discovers in Cromarty another rebel child from the past. Children's novel.

Sir Gilbert's Children by Harriet Miller Davidson. Reprint by For The Right Reasons (ISBN 978-1-905787-66-1). £4.50. A short fictionalised portrayal of the author's life as a teenager in a somewhat aggrandised Miller family home in Portobello. Originally published in 1884.

Man of Genius by Harriet Miller Davidson. For the Right Reasons (ISBN 978-1-905787-64-7). £7.99. The story of an alcoholic minister's fall and redemption. Originally published in 1872. A brave novel for its time but heavy with Victorian moralising.

Management Committee Profiles

TWO MORE PROFILES

We continue our introductions to our eight members, with two more of our exceptional team, Lara Reid and Jim Mackintosh, both poets. Their contributions emphasise that the team's role is as much about promoting cultural enrichment in its broadest terms as running our organisation.

Larissa Reid

Larissa (Lara for short to all her colleagues and friends) spent her childhood reading books and searching for fossils on the beach at St Andrews, in Fife. She went to Aberdeen University in 1996 to study geology and somehow came out with a degree in English and Scottish Literature four years later. After ten years as an English teacher, Lara has returned to her interest in natural sciences and spent the past five years working as a freelance science writer and editor.

Lara works voluntarily for the Scottish Geodiversity Forum – the idea for the Hugh Miller Writing Competition stemmed from a conversation between Lara and Angus Miller, the Forum's chair, in the car on the way back from the Isle of Arran in September 2015. She came into contact with the Friends at a café in the National Museum of Scotland, We have to be very thankful that Lara has a habit of taking ideas and running with them like this, because it has resulted in her organising the first two Hugh Miller Writing Competitions, with the third now under way.

These involve an immense amount of almost single-handed work, from gathering up all the entries and forwarding them to the judges, to amassing the prizes, and setting up prize-giving ceremonies and public readings for the winners. The readings have included events at the StAnza Poetry Festival in St Andrews, the Poetry Library in Edinburgh, the Dippy Exhibition at Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow, and at the Old Brewery in Cromarty. This all culminated in the triumph earlier this year of publishing *Conversations in Stone*, the anthology drawn from the first two competitions which she jointly edited with palaeontologist Elsa



Lara Reid

Pancioli. In working on these superb projects round Hugh Miller's legacy, she has developed a network of fruitful personal connections with well-known writers such as Robert MacFarlane, James Robertson, Ralph O'Connor, poet Jim Mackintosh and nature-writer and broadcaster Kenny Taylor

She has been an active member of the Edinburgh-based writers' group, Twisted:: Colon and became encouraged enough to start writing poetry herself in 2016. She published her first collection, titled *In February* last year, an astonishing weaving of images and thoughts inspired by landscape. Most recently she contributed to an anthology, *The Darg*, honouring the legendary Scottish folklorist Hamish Henderson. Lara juggles all these activities with looking after her family at their home in Burntisland, Fife.

Jim Mackintosh

Jim Mackintosh, poet, burst on to the Millerian scene with a prize-winning entry to the 2015/16 writing competition, *Old is Tomorrow*; he seemed to become instantly immersed in Miller's work and his world, "His footprints apparent today in the unravelling/ of our tomorrows."

A Perthshire man to the marrow of his bones, he has also become enamoured of the Cromarty man, describing himself as a "word fossiller" among The Friends. In 2017, he was elected on to the committee because of his enthusiasm and extensive knowledge of the Scottish literary scene.

Jim is naturally heavily involved with the very active Scottish poetry circle. He says "poetry in collaboration is my core," and puts this into practice, for example working with schools on composing "Soutar bairn rhymes" named in honour of the city's great early 20th century poet William Soutar, who wrote much in his beloved broad Scots.

He served as poet in residence to St Johnstone FC, the local football club, until May this year, the first and so far only person ever to hold such a post in the UK. He has promoted storytelling around the game for the older fans suffering memory loss, on the theme of "Mind the Time...". He also edits poetry around Scottish women's football.



Jim Mackintosh

Jim works tirelessly to extend public enjoyment of the natural world in the Tay countryside, for example prominently supporting the Corbenic Poetry Path, and is the Poet in Residence for the newly created Cateran Ecomuseum which lays out geological and human history in east Perthshire.



Corbenic Poetry Path

His greatest dedication is for the fiery Perthshire radical Hamish Henderson, folklorist, songwriter, and poet, whose centenary has just been celebrated at the annual Hamish Matters Festival which he helps organise. Jim was instrumental in ensuring the Scottish Parliament debated a Motion marking Hamish's Centenary, and edited *The Darg*, an anthology of new poetry inspired by Hamish launched at Edinburgh Book Festival in front of a sellout audience.

There is no way Jim Mackintosh can easily be summed up. The cliché "larger than life" would fit him well for his abundant humour and unstoppable energy. He is the author of six published volumes of poetry, the Editor of three others and will surely be nudging forward several creative collaborations even as you read this.

FINDING MILLER'S "LITTLE ONE"

By Elsa Panciroli

When you fall in love with historical figures, it's like a crush; your heart thrums a little faster when you encounter their name. So it was when I found myself pressed breathlessly against the glass display case in the fossil gallery of the University of the Witwatersrand. This was my first encounter with *Milleretta*.

The bones of 'Miller's little one' look like a muddy bundle of sticks. The blob of a head at one end, its round eye-socket peering out at me, was the main giveaway that this had been an animal once. It was mounted on the wall alongside other examples of South Africa's rich fossil heritage. The name had initially caught my eye, but it was the caption beneath that grabbed my full attention: 'named after the geologist Hugh Miller'. Could it be *our* Hugh? After excited enquiries with my academic host in Johannesburg, it appeared this fossil was indeed the namesake of Cromarty's favourite son.

Milleretta was superficially lizard-like, about half a metre in length. It belongs to Sauropsida, the group that includes reptiles, but is not a reptile in the strict sense. It is instead a parareptile; close to reptiles, but not quite one. It lived approximately 252 Mya in the Late Permian, around the same time as some of the 'Elgin Reptiles' were traversing our Scottish sand-dunes. Unlike them, *Milleretta* lived on the shores of a lake, lush with horsetails and *Glossopteris*, probably feasting on insects with a set of pin-sharp teeth.

But how did this crumpled-up fossil from southern Africa end up bearing the name of a Highland stonemason writer? The answer lies in the heritage of one of South Africa's greatest palaeontologists: Scottish-born doctor, Robert Broom (1866–1951).

On the 30th November 1866, in a modest house in Paisley, John and Agnes Broom had a baby boy. Robert was their third child, and a sickly one. He suffered from bronchitis and infections – he hardly seemed destined for global adventure. But he would grow up to become one of the most important palaeontologists of the 20th Century. At six years old, Robert Broom was sent to live with his grandmother in Millport. It was there that he met John Leavach, a veteran of the Peninsular and American wars. This 83 year old was a great influence on young Broom, gifting him a microscope and the techniques to use it.

It was to Leavach, and a family friend named Peter Cameron - an expert in Hymenoptera – that Broom attributed his lifelong love of nature and science. His cousin, an engineer stationed in China, encouraged him further by sending home boxes of pickled snakes and human skulls. Robert became interested in fossils at fifteen, when he came across Peterhill Limestone Quarry. There he uncovered a huge number of fossil shells and corals to add to his collection.

Despite sporadic schooling, Broom was a sharp and inquisitive person. He studied to become an obstetrician at the University of Glasgow, where his strong, solitary personality occasionally caused problems with tutors. But he graduated with a prize in his final examination, and immediately set off to practice first in Australia, then South Africa in 1897. He became Professor of Zoology and Geology at Victoria College in Stellenbosch, and later Keeper of Vertebrate Paleontology at the South African Museum in Cape Town.



Milleretta, in collections of University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Elsa Panciroli.

In 1938, Broom described the first fossil of *Milleretta*:

'Among the many treasures that have been recently collected by Mr. S. H. Rubidge... is a little skull that he found near his home... This interesting new type of reptile I propose to call Millerina rubidgei after the famous Scots geologist Hugh Miller...' (Broom, 1938)

This fossil was renamed by Broom in 1947 when he discovered *Millerina* had already been claimed for a type of fly*. Later, more specimens were found, and along with the likes of *Millerosaurus*, *Milleropsis* and *Broomia*, they form

the taxonomic family Millerettidae. Palaeontologists are still trying to figure out exactly where they all slot into the tree of life. Researchers at Witwatersrand and Oxford are about to embark on a new study to answer this question - they will share their findings with the Friends of Hugh Miller in the next few years.

Broom had a propensity for naming fossils after famous Scots. Other examples include: *Clelandina*, named after John Cleland, professor of anatomy at the University of Glasgow; *Burnetia*, after James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, Edinburgh judge and linguist; *Newtonella* (= *Pristerodon*) named after Edwin Newton, who described many of the fossil 'reptiles' from Elgin; *Euchambersia*, after Robert Chambers, author of the pre-Darwinian *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*; and we can't forget *Leavachia* (= *Procynosuchus*) named after his childhood inspiration John Leavach. Although Broom didn't specify that it was Hugh Miller *senior* he was referring to with *Milleretta*, it is most likely.

It seems natural that Broom admired Miller, not only for his science and acknowledgment of a similar trajectory from humble beginnings, but also for his ethical and spiritual convictions. Like Miller, Broom spoke up for the poor and working class. He disliked the 'gentry', having observed their unpleasant treatment of working people of the country villages he loved. He felt more relaxed among those of 'humble circumstances', and believed 'first-hand knowledge was... one's greatest asset in the fight against the haughty and at the same time a fine and true diversion, a veritable gateway to freedom.' (Findley)

Also like Miller, Broom was deeply interested in the supernatural. He once said spirits had helped him make his key discoveries. It's hard to say how serious he was being, but as he believed divine forces directed evolution, it seems plausible he meant it literally. Broom retained the Victorian preoccupation for combining spiritual belief with science. He saw evolution as progressing towards the superhuman, and was obsessed with the existence of the soul. This is not unusual in the context of the late 19th/early 20th century zeitgeist, but is thankfully less common among scientists – and the public – today.

It was a delicious taste of home encountering Miller at the other end of the world. Broom later became famous for his work on early human fossils and our African origins. It was his Scottish origins however, that were a lifelong influence, leading him to spread Hugh's name far afield. I wonder what Miller would have thought of it?

*named for David Miller, an entomologist from New Zealand.

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Robert Broom AMNH



A reconstruction of *Milleretta*

ALEXANDER FINLAY: 'A GENTLE-SPIRITED BOY'

by David Alston

Introduction: Hugh Miller's best boyhood mate grew up to be the overseer of a Jamaican slave plantation! When the Scottish nation is beginning to face up to its forbears' role in slavery, we introduce this gripping story by Cromarty's leading local historian.

I fell in love with you, and carried you off at first pounce

Hugh Miller on his friendship with Alexander Finlay, 1836

*New scenes may arise on my sight,
The world and its follies be new,
But never such scenes of delight
Shall I witness secluded from you.*

Alexander Finlay on his friendship with Hugh Miller, 1819.

Alexander Finlay (c.1802–c.1852) – who Hugh Miller habitually addressed simply as 'Finlay' – was the son of Alexander Finlay (1778–1836) of Glencorse (south of Edinburgh) and later of Castlemains (parish of Douglas, Lanark).ⁱ Finlay's father married twice: first about 1810 to Justina Camilla Wynne (1785–1814), whose portrait was painted by Henry Raeburn around the year of their marriage; and in 1825 to Lucy Ann Jones (1794–56), only child of James Jones, a Jamaican slave-owner and merchant who had returned to live in Great Baddow, Essex.ⁱⁱ There is no record of any earlier marriage and, given Finlay's age, it is possible that he was an illegitimate child. This would explain why he was sent away to school in Cromarty, where he lodged with the family of a Donald Fraser, at the corner (now a gap site) of present day Bank Street and Allan Square.

Many years later Hugh Miller recalled how the two boys met and the closeness of their friendship:

Do you remember how I stole you from John [Swanson]? You were acquainted with him ere you knew me, and used to spend almost all your play-hours with him on the Links, or in his little garden. But I fell in love with you, and carried you off at the first pounce. And John was left lamenting! I brought you to the woods, and the wild sea-shore, and the deep, dark caves of the Sutors, and taught you how to steal turnips and peas; and succeeded (though I could never get you improved into a robber of orchards though you had no serious objection to the fruit when once stolen) in making you nearly as accomplished a vagabond as my self. Are not you grateful? The boy, Wordsworth says, is father to the man. If so, your boy-father was a warm hearted bonnie laddie, worthy of all due honor from you in your present filial relation; but as for mine, I can't respect the rascal, let the commandment run as it please. Don't you remember how he used to lead you into every kind of mischief, and make you play truant three days out of four? A perfect Caliban, too:

*"I'll show thee the best springs, I'll pluck thee berries,
And I, with my long nails, will dig thee pig-nuts." ⁱⁱⁱ*

On the assumption that they were about the same age, Finlay would have been born about 1802. He and Miller were close friends until Finlay's departure for Edinburgh in the winter of 1819 and Miller's description of their escapades, immediately after they met, suggests that Finlay arrived in the town when both were in their teens. Perhaps this was after the death of Finlay's step-mother, Justina, in 1814 – or after the death of his natural mother, of whom nothing is known..

When Miller went to Edinburgh in 1824 he assumed that Finlay would be a student at the university or working in the legal profession and hoped they might meet by chance – 'I have looked a thousand times after the college students and smart lawyers clerks' – but they did not. Either by that time or soon afterwards Finlay was 'sent out to Jamaica where he took up a post as book keeper on a plantation, where he rose to an overseer'. He then became an attorney – the Scottish equivalent would be a factor – acting for the owners of a number of estates and by 1836 he described himself as the proprietor of Twickenham Park plantation. The Finlay family already had property in Jamaica. James Finlay (c.1734–1816) of Bogside, near Glasgow – who was the father of Alexander Finlay of Glencorse and so grandfather of Miller's friend Finlay – was said to have been 'long resident in Jamaica' and his father's brother, David, died in Jamaica in 1826. Further opportunities may have been opened to Finlay by his father's second marriage in 1825 to Lucy Ann Jones, since her father, James Jones, was the owner of Twickenham Park and Jones's will, drawn up in the year of their



Henry Raeburn's portrait of Justina, Camilla Wynne (Mrs Alexander Finlay of Glencorse), painted about 1810. Raeburn painted her on his grandest scale, accompanied by a dog, the symbol of marital fidelity. (National Galleries of Scotland)

marriage, left the plantation to Lucy Ann.

Finlay wrote to Miller in 1836, seventeen years after they had last seen each other, and Miller, overjoyed, replied in sincere and affectionate terms. Miller recalled how, shortly before he left Cromarty, Finlay had written his name with a charred stick on the wall of the cave they frequented and Miller admitted that he had returned 'twenty and twenty times' to renew the writing. Finlay had made contact because he had discovered a review of Miller's *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland* in an edition of *Chambers Journal* from the previous year (1835) and had also read Miller's 'Sandy Wright and the Poor Lost Lad'. He had revelled in the tale, based on an incident in the life of Miller's grandfather. In the actions of Sandy Wright, who had rescued a destitute orphaned boy lost in a snow storm on his way to Edinburgh, Finlay saw 'the benevolent heart of my ain Hugh Miller'. He also confessed that there was some of the tale which was like the story of his own life. Presumably Finlay identified with the 'poor lost lad'. That lad was the son 'of a dissipated young man of good family' who had married 'a low-born but industrious and virtuous young woman . . . deserving of a better husband'. They had had a child and the mother had brought the boy up until her early death. The boy then had to make his own way to Edinburgh, rescued on the way by Sandy Wright, where he made contact with his father's relations and subsequently prospered. Like 'the poor lost lad', Finlay had made his own way to Edinburgh. But his comment suggests more than this. Perhaps he too felt alone and abandoned.

Finlay's father's first marriage, in 1810, had been into an 'unconventional and eclectically European family'. His wife, Justina Camilla, was the daughter of the partly Welsh, partly Venetian Richard (Riccardo Gulielmo Casparo Melchior Balthazaro) Wynne and his French wife, Agathe Camille de Royer.^{iv} With her four sisters she

had been brought up 'in the spectacular milieu of the wealthy and privileged' after her parents had 'adopted a roving, epicurean lifestyle, settling down in various European resorts . . . with a large retinue of cooks, maids, grooms, dancing master, tutor, secretary, horses and dogs'. They 'whiled away the hours gambling, play-acting, attending the opera, and entertaining each other in castles and mansions'.^v Their lives are recorded in the forty-one manuscript volumes of the diaries of Justina's sisters, mostly written by Elizabeth 'Betsey' Wynne (1778–1857). They include some remarkable scenes, such as a party in Venice on 14 September 1789 hosted by their father:

. . . the girls' nurse, Mary, was dressed as a man, while Richard himself and the older girls' tutor, M'sieu Jaegle, were dressed as women, and a groom named Charles "dressed up as a girl." The kitchen maid "dressed up as a man," and so did the cook. The cook it seems took every opportunity of getting into breeches and stockings. "She has very fine legs."^{vi}

Richard's older sister, Giustiniana Wynne, had had a very public affair with a Venetian aristocrat but it was the revelation that Richard's mother, Anna Gazzini, had been a courtesan in Venice that had damaged the family's reputation, leading Betsey to conclude that she and her sisters must 'maintain spotless reputations'.^{vii}

After their marriage Alexander Finlay senior and Justina may have lived at Castlemains but they also had a house in York Place, Edinburgh, close to Henry Raeburn's studio – where both Justina and her younger sister, Harriet, had their portraits painted. Sister Harriet was married to James Hamilton, an Edinburgh advocate who bought the estate of Kames on the island of Bute; the older sister Betsey married a Royal Navy officer, Thomas Fremantle (1765–1819), a close associate of Nelson; and a third sister, Eugenia, had married Robert Campbell of Skipness in Argyll.^{viii} It was in the romantic setting of the ruined castle of Skipness that Justina and Alexander Finlay had been married. All this was a world away from young Finlay's life in Cromarty – just as the 'poor lost lad' in Miller's story was distanced from the life of his relations in Edinburgh. Later, and probably because

Miller knew of Finlay's well-to-do and sophisticated relations, he found it difficult to seek out Finlay in 1824, despite the closeness of their earlier friendship. He hoped instead for a chance encounter. In any event, Finlay may well have been in Jamaica by this time.

When slaves in the British Empire were freed in 1834, Finlay's father Alexander, as heir to his brother David, unsuccessfully claimed compensation of £1,717 18s 4d for 94 of the 336 enslaved people on Ardoch plantation in Jamaica. He also lost out on the compensation for the 240 enslaved people on Twickenham Park, which was to have passed to his second wife. It was received instead by the creditors of her father, James Jones. At this time Alexander Finlay senior gave his addresses as Newton Hall, Haddington – the home of relations on his mother's side of the family – and as Pebble Hill, near Godstone in Surrey. In 1833 he had written from the Scottish address to the Duke of Wellington urging adequate compensation for slave owners. Alexander Finlay senior died in Cheltenham in September 1836 but it was not until 1839 that Finlay returned to Britain.^{ix} He left Jamaica on 1st June and travelled by way of Cuba (where he contracted yellow fever), Charleston, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore and New York, from where he sailed for England on 1st August. He travelled on the SS *British Queen*, then the largest passenger ship in the world on the return leg of her maiden voyage, arrived in the Isle of Man on 15th August and reached London on 16th August. Here he had a meeting with his father's friend, the Duke of Wellington, and then travelled north, meeting Miller in Cromary later in the year, before returning to Jamaica.^x

In *Chambers Journal* of 11th July 1840 the following note appeared, giving an account of Finlay's management of his estate after the full emancipation of slaves in 1838 – since 1834 they had been bound to their former owners but paid a wage. The 'friend residing in Scotland' who provided the 'interesting anecdote' was probably Hugh Miller and, if so, this is a record of one of their last conversations.

Alexander Finlay, a native of Edinburgh, was, at an early period of life, sent out to Jamaica, and . . . is now [an] attorney, having the charge of several estates. If I may judge from the good feeling and good sense which appear in his conversation, he must have been a favourite with the negroes, and acquired a thorough knowledge of their character and habits. The average produce one estate put under his charge . . . was, during the last twenty years of slavery, sixty-seven hogsheads of sugar, and the expense of management some hundreds of pounds per annum. As soon as the term of apprenticeship commenced, he, then the attorney for owners at home, on whose confidence he could rely, paid off all the European officers, and gave the charge of the negroes and the labour to negroes whom he thought qualified for the duty, not by their education, for they could neither read nor write, but by their character and habits. (They kept accounts by tallies, or, as used to call them, nick-sticks.) The produce rose to ninety seven hogsheads, and is now one hundred and five, and the expenses of management do not exceed 501. per annum, chiefly gratuities to the black men, who do the duty of book-keepers and overseers. This is the account given to me by Mr. Finlay. He is a plain man, without any affectation. I have confidence in all he says, and it is confirmed by the overflowing gratitude of his employers—ladies who are surprised to find themselves so rich. The greatest of his difficulties, when he set about the work, was the violence of opinion against him amongst the white public.

Finlay's employers, who were 'surprised to find themselves so rich', were his father's sisters in Cheltenham.

After emancipation Finlay was listed in the Jamaica Almanacs of 1838 and 1840 as owner of Twickenham Park, and as a magistrate and ensign in the Militia in 1839. He was a member of the House of Assembly of Jamaica in 1849. Hugh Miller's biographer, Peter Bayne, adds the information that Finlay 'had been engaged to a young lady who perished at sea, and [he] remained single for her sake' and that Finlay died three years after having been elected to the House of Representatives in Jamaica.^{xi}



Henry Raeburn's portrait of Frances Harriet Wynne (Mrs James Hamilton of Kames) painted before June 1811. (National Galleries of Scotland)



Twickenham Park plantation near Spanish Town, Jamaica from James Robertson, 'A map of the county of Middlesex, in the island of Jamaica', London, 1804. (National Library of Scotland)

Twickenham Park plantation in Jamaica has yet another Cromarty connection, which Miller and Finlay must have been aware of when they were reunited in 1839. In March 1817 Margaret Graham, from Drynie on the Black Isle, had married the physician general of Jamaica, Michael Benignus Clare, at Twickenham Park plantation – the home of her brother-in-law Francis Graham. By 1832 the couple had come to live in Cromarty, leasing Cromarty House until Michael died there in 1832. Margaret then bought the house in Church Street then known as McGlashan's Lodge, changing its name to Clare Lodge. We know it as Bellevue.

Endnotes

i In September 1839 Finlay met with the Duke of Wellington, who 'mentioned his being intimate with my father' (Peter Bayne, *Life and Letters of Hugh Miller*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1871), ii, 194). It was Alexander Finlay of Glencorse with whom Wellington corresponded. Wellington noted (Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, *Political Correspondence, 1833/34* (HMSO, 1975), 342) that the father of Mrs Finlay (Lucy Ann Jones) had been Secretary of Jamaica: this was James Jones (d.1837) who was Secretary in 1793.

ii Justina's portrait is held by the National Galleries of Scotland, image available at <<https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/5313/justina-camilla-wynne-mrs-alexander-finlay-glencorse-1785-1814-about-1810>>. For James Jones see <<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146651099>>.

iii Hugh Miller to Alexander Finlay, 15 October 1836 reprinted in Michael Shortland (ed), *Hugh Miller's Memoir* (Edinburgh, 1995).

iv Elaine Chalus, 'Becoming an Englishwoman: Gender, Politeness, and Identity in the Age of Revolutions' in Elaine Chalus & Paul Gauci (eds), *Revisiting The Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford, 2019), 222–40. The description of Alexander Finlay is by his sister-in-law Elizabeth Wynne, in her diary for 1811.

v Joan Druett, *She Captains: Heroines and Hellions of the Sea* (New York, 2001), 162.

vi Druett, *She Captains*, 163.

vii Chalus, 'Becoming an Englishwoman'.

viii Anne Freemantle (ed), *The Wynne Diaries: The Adventures of Two Sisters in Napoleonic Europe* (Oxford, 1982).

ix *The Scotsman*, 1 October 1836.

x Peter Bayne, *Life and Letters of Hugh Miller* 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1871), ii, 194 reproducing Finlay's letter of 4 September 1839, written from Stratford-upon-Avon.

xi Bayne, *Life and Letters of Hugh Miller*, ii, 198.



BOOK REVIEWS

A GIFTWORTHY QUARTET: ON ROCKS, MASONRY AND THE BLACK ISLE'S CATHEDRAL

by Martin Gostwick

Hutton's Arse, Second edition

by Malcolm Rider and Peter Harrison (Dunedin Press 2019, ISBN 9781780460932) £19.99.

This is really well-explained popular science. Its title saucily references James Hutton, the father of Scottish geology, and his exploring almost entirely on horseback. Its new front cover features touching statues of heroes Ben Peach and John Horne.

The sub-title summarises "3 billion years of extraordinary geology in Scotland's northern Highlands," with chapters on the Torridonian Sandstone, the Moine Thrust, the Devonian Lake Orcadie, the volcano province, the ice age, and forbidding Cape Wrath and its continent-creating Lewisian Gneiss. It closes with some intriguing thoughts on our planet Earth, and on the Highlands' future for its people.

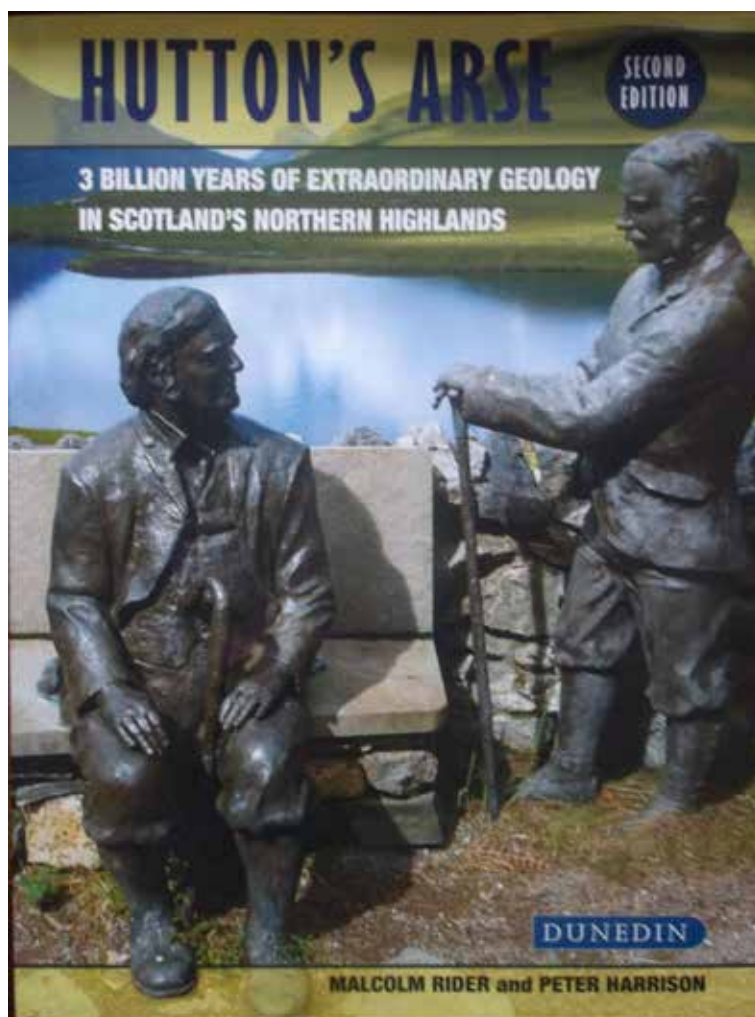
It is yes, entirely about rocks, but it does also delve into the characters of the scientists who did, and are still doing the field work. As its authors observe: It "blunders into the many colours of emotion, ambition, jealousy, and the arrogance of clever people."

These qualities come into the foreground with the story of the bitter Highland Controversy, where Peach, Horne and other scientists overmastered the mistaken theories of the mighty Sir Roderick Murchison, and unlocked the mysteries of the Moine Thrust. Hopefully it will point more visitors to Knockan Crag interpretation centre (and those statues).

The authors are to be commended for giving Hugh Miller his full worth in *The Fish-Graves of Achanarras*, the favourite hunting ground of our late chairman Nigel Trewin. Miller "is .. here for his lovely prose, which will be used to convey his contagious enjoyment and enthusiasm for science and for life."

Miller is noted for the accuracy of his observations, such as: "The different degrees of entiredness in which the geologist finds his organic remains depend much less on their age than on the nature of the rock in which they occur."

The Cromarty man opens the book, with his famous advice to "make a right use of your eyes," and commends readers to share with him "the wonders of geology (which) exercise every faculty of the mind - reason, memory imagination."

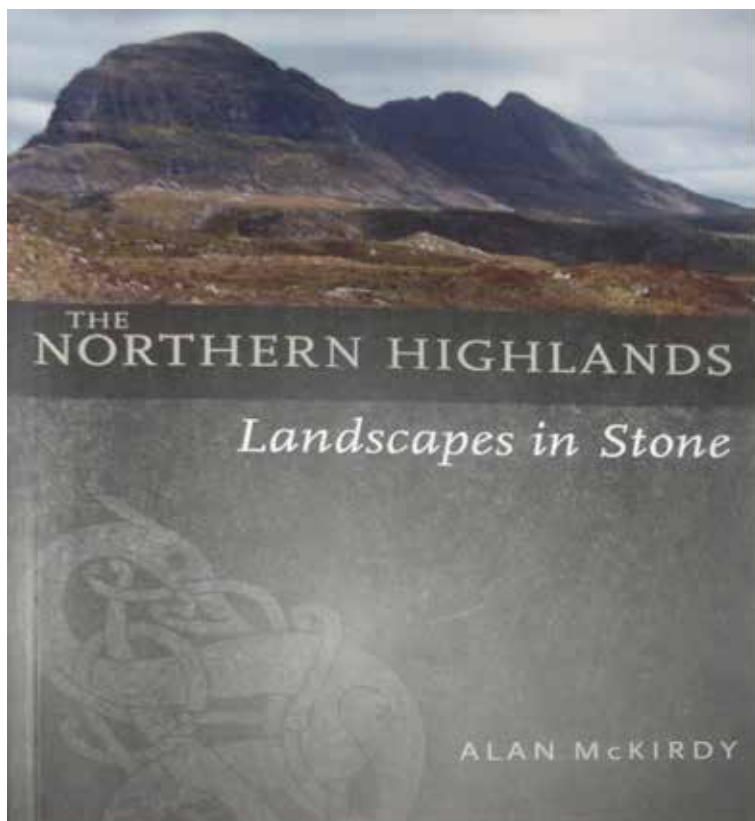


Authors Malcolm Rider, hydrocarbon consultant, and Peter Harrison, geoscience educator and North West Highlands Geopark tour leader, are to be congratulated on this brilliantly illustrated new edition, following up its first in 2005 (and several reprints since), and for some “lovely prose” of their own.

The Northern Highlands; Landscapes in Stone

by Alan McKirdy (Birlinn & Co, ISBN 978-1-78027- 608- 1) £6.99

This is the latest in Birlinn's excellent series on the geology of Scotland, and it can be most heartily commended to all who are gripped by our fabulous landscapes, and wish to acquire a clearer understanding of their tumultuous evolution. First class photography is also most illuminating.



It starts with a timeline, tracing from the forming of some of the oldest rocks in the world, the Lewisian Gneiss in the west around 3,000 million years ago (mya), in the Archaean era, when Scotland possibly lay close to the South Pole. It progresses through all the ages up to the Anthropocene of the last 10,000 years, when *Homo sapiens* started to fundamentally alter the ecosystem by farming and felling the forests.

A geological map of the region today clearly shows the Lewisian gneisses spreading from Cape Wrath to the Kyle of Lochalsh, together with the overlying Torridonian sandstones which make up such iconic mountains as Suilven. The mountain-building Moine schists, punctuated by granites, occupy the central area, and the huge stretch of the Devonian era Old Red Sandstone (ORS) lies along the east coast.

McKirdy makes sense of the bewildering and very complex processes of continents separating and later colliding. The ORS gets a chapter to itself, with an exposition of vast freshwater Lake Orcadie, and it is gratifying that the author gives full credit to Hugh Miller, and following him, the late Nigel Trewin, for finding, identifying and describing the fossil fishes

preserved in its sediments.

Miller gets a page including his calotype portrait as a stonemason, and his most famous *Pterichthyodes milleri* fossil (even including its image in the paving of our Museum's Garden of Wonders). The Museum itself is praised as a “must see” destination. Nigel's “wit and boundless enthusiasm” is noted along with his finds in the Old Red Achanarras quarry in Caithness, and many publications.

Scotland's progress from south of the Equator to 35 degrees north comes next, and the Jurassic “interlude” and its offshore development which gave rise to North Sea oil. The Ice Ages which changed the landscapes of northern Scotland forever, and whose effects are so marked in many localities today, complete the story, concluding with a handy list of places to visit.

King of Dust, Adventures in Forgotten Sculpture

by Alex Woodcock (Little Toller Books, ISBN 978-1-908213-69-3, hardback, £16, plus £3.60 p & p).

We have the pleasure (and privilege) of counting the author among our new members; Alex is a scholarly stonemason who you might say is in Miller's mould, and who took first prize for poetry in the second Hugh Miller writing competition.

He sums up at the very start: "Longevity, beauty, order: stone has it all." He describes his path from academic study of medieval architecture, to becoming an artisan stonemason working at Exeter Cathedral for many years, and on to visiting churches all over the South West of England to admire the craft of his forebears. He offers discovery of the most exuberant and exquisite sculptures achieved particularly in the Romanesque style of the 11th and 12th Centuries.

It can be counted as an awe-inspiring travelogue taking one round otherwise forgotten art, including some quite magnificent baptismal fonts and arches above lintels (tympana). He ruminates on the quality of the stone involved, and the possible identities of carvers who undertook such masterful chiselwork.

While the focus is on churches far from Scotland, the carvers' work has universal appeal, and "speaks for them across the centuries," and thus they are still with us as a living presence.

Highland Cathedral: The Rise and Fall of the Great Kirk of Ross

by Elizabeth Sutherland, illustrations by Rachel Bevan Baker (Black Isle Books, ISBN 978-1-5272-4250-0) £11.99.

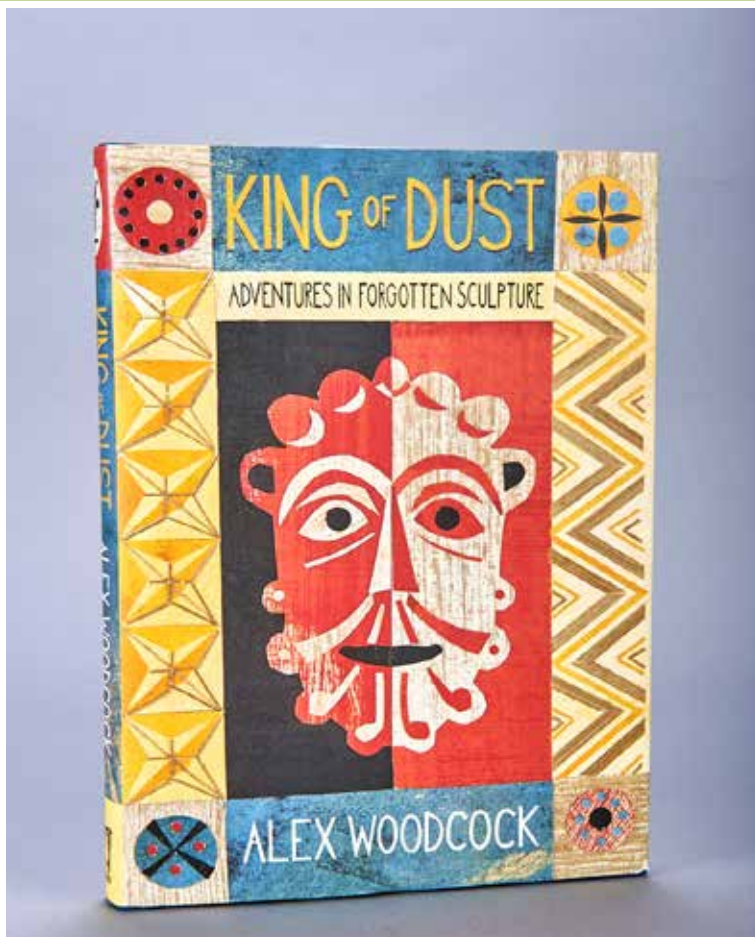
An absorbing, very pleasing and witty account of 770-odd years old Fortrose Cathedral, related here by a young orphan boy, Finn.

Friends will best know Elizabeth Sutherland through her fine biography of Hugh Miller's wife, Lydia Fraser, the only authoritative biography of her ever written. She has also published numerous Highland histories, and historical novels.

This is an altogether different kind of book, a glossy delight, in which real history is conveyed by fictional Finn. The cathedral's many vicissitudes are recounted, mostly with wry humour, especially designed, with its delightful artwork, to appeal to the younger reader, but is a great read for everyone, and would make an excellent gift.

It begins with the "sowing" of the cathedral, with the aim of giving all living thereabouts "a peep at heaven," and passes through the ages of the Crusades, the Black Death, its 15th Century heyday, the glories of the renaissance King James IV, the Reformation and prolonged religious upheavals.

It recounts the grisly fate of the Brahan Seer and the fate of Clan Mackenzie chiefs, the looting of the church's slates and stones, and its descent into ruin, right up to now when it is hoped to open the chapter house to visitors.



One of Rachel Bevan Baker's charming pictures. This is "Market day": Note the canons practising at archery.

MEET THE "COLOSSUS OF ROADS"

by Martin Gostwick



Joseph Townsend

Rev Joseph Townsend (1739 - 1816) had just finished dining in June 1799 with a surveyor, a certain William Smith*, on the dining table at his home in Bath, Somerset, when they, together with another clergyman, wrote down the proofs of Smith's new theory, stratigraphy. It was a defining moment in the history of geology.

Commoner Smith's discovery of this key branch of earth science caused him eventually to earn the honorary title "Father of English geology," despite many put-downs in life because he was not born a "gentleman." Townsend's role helping to record the local strata and their fossils earned him recognition as a co-founder.

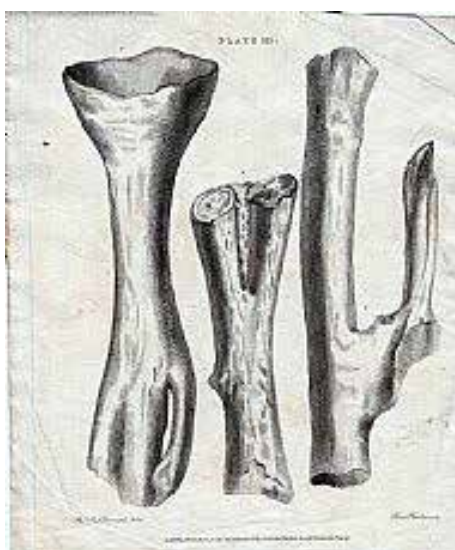
Townsend was by any reckoning a most remarkable man. He lived to the age of 77, a good span for the time. He started geologising at the age of six, and we introduce him here as one of Hugh Miller's forerunners because a member of The Friends has just kindly donated a set of prints illustrating many fossils in his collection, at the time one of the biggest in the country.

They are a series of 15 plates, dated 1812, believed to have been illustrations for the first volume of his book written late in life, *The Character of Moses as an Historian, Recording Events from the Creation to the Deluge*, published in 1813. It bore one of

those enormously lengthy sub-titles typical of learned treatises of that period, but which does give some idea of the epic nature of Townsend's travels and researches.

Here it is: '*Geological and Mineralogical researches during a period of more than fifty years in England, Scotland, Ireland, Switzerland, Holland, France, Flanders, and Spain; wherein the effects of the deluge are traced and the veracity of the Mosaic account is established*'.

Thus is clearly explained the underlying purpose of the work, to reaffirm Moses' Bible story of Noah's Flood, or Deluge. Townsend was a creationist who disagreed with Smith's adherence to Hutton's new theory of the earth's great age, thereby articulating the profound divisions between religion and science which would predominate for the some 60 years, and are still around today.





William Smith (1769-1839), famed for producing the first national-scale geological map of England and Wales, will be familiar to many readers.

Townsend was a well-to-do reverend, the rector of the lucrative parish of Pewsey, Wiltshire, a living procured for him by his father. He was also a physician who spent his whole life diligently attending to the sick of his parish. He concocted a cure for syphilis, "Townsend's Mixture," which continued in use for decades.

His expertise as a doctor was said to have complemented his skill as a geologist. James Hutton too was a physician, and there have been many others; think of Gideon Mantell in Sussex, who commented that both undertakings depended for success on acute powers of observation.

Townsend was also an economist, who held views on social policy which are still highly controversial. He was said to have been a precursor for the champion of mass population control, Thomas Malthus. He resolutely opposed all forms of state aid for the poor, calling for the jobless to be consigned to the work-house.

He actually wrote: "It is only hunger which can spur and goad them (the poor) on to labour," and observed "hunger is not only a ... silent, unrelenting pressure, but, as the most natural motive to industry, it calls forth the most powerful exertions."

If this seems like treating people like dogs, then his apologists have pointed out that he did also strongly advocate a form of

health insurance, which was eventually adopted by a Liberal government after the First World War. He thought of himself as a "Well-wisher of Mankind."

However, he committed an outrageous perversion of justice in one notorious episode. Wiltshire Council has a page on "community history," which describes how he "unmasked" the murderer of a local farmer. "Playing upon the superstition that the corpse of a murdered man will always know its assailant, he had the body brought into the church the following Sunday. Each person was required to place their hand upon the dead man's face and declare their innocence! A man (who) was afraid to take the test ... was subsequently charged with the crime and hanged in 1799."

He was given the grand nickname "Colossus of Roads," because he had a job as a commissioner for collecting tolls, and organising their upkeep, and because he was a real giant of a man physically.

Joseph Townsend stood at least 6ft 6ins tall. He had a high forehead and a lantern jaw. He was said to have pos-



essed a rich, deep voice by which he could hold his parishioners spellbound with his sermons. In his youth, he toured the country for a few years as a Methodist pulpit orator speaking to huge crowds in his roaring voice, using wild gesticulations with his long arms to whip them to a frenzy, although apparently this did not save him from occasionally being pelted by mobs with stones, dung and rotten eggs.

This man almost defies characterisation. He unquestionably deserves his place among the founders of earth science, and deserves to be remembered on that account.

We are offering for sale the donated fossil prints, some of which are shown here, in order to raise funds. The prints were offered to us in their current condition; we think they were printers' proofs rather than prints taken from a copy of Townsend's book (a practice we do not condone). They came without any indication of what the fossils are, the text on the prints relates to author and printer. The scans are slightly darker than the originals. There is some foxing and some folding on some of the prints, which can be seen in the images. Although they are not labelled, we expect some readers will recognise them, and several have great æsthetic value. To order, please visit our website. They are priced at £12 each including p & p.

A selection of the scans are shown on the preceding two pages.

THE WITNESS GOES ONLINE

We thank Dr Mike Taylor for informing us that Hugh Miller's newspaper, *The Witness*, has now been partially digitised by The British Newspaper Archive (BNA).

Every one of the twice weekly papers can now be read in some of its years. The years covered so far are: 1840-41, 1846-47, 1852, 1855-56, 1858, 1860 and 1862.

Unfortunately this does not yet include the Disruption year of 1843, but it does cover Hugh's first year in the Editor's chair, 1840-41, and the year of his death, 1856. The paper continued in publication until 1864.

Undoubtedly the availability of the whole paper from beginning to end will represent a tremendously valuable research resource, not only for Hugh Miller's writing, but for the whole mid 19th Century, with its imperial wars, religious strife, and the revolutions in industry and agriculture.

You can access the BNA's blog through the following link:

https://blog.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/2019/07/15/15-july-2019-new-titles/?utm_source=fmp&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=new-titles&utm_content=UK+New+Titles_180719&utm_term=89390.

A direct link to webpages with coverage of *The Witness* is:

<https://bit.ly/38l2v8H>

A month's subscription to the BNA will set you back £12.95, and a year costs £79.95.

For now, the easiest way to access some of Miller's most famous articles remains the volume of *Leading Articles* edited by his son-in-law Rev John Davidson, and a selection in *Hugh Miller Outrage and Order*, by George Rosie (Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh 1981).





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