



Hugh's News

Magazine of
The Friends of Hugh Miller

Issue No 54
August 2023

Editor:
Lara Reid

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IN MEMORY OF ALIX POWERS-JONES

The FOHM management committee were deeply saddened to hear of the death of Dr. Alix Powers-Jones, long-term property manager of the Miller Museum in Cromarty, on 10th July 2023. She died peacefully following a long-standing illness at Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, with her family by her side.

Alix's enthusiasm and passion for Miller has been the driving force behind the Museum since 2011, and we all enjoyed working and liaising with her on multiple projects over the years. I feel sure that many of our members will remember meeting and talking with Alix. One of our committee members, Jim Mackintosh, remembers a warm and engaging chat with Alix and the late Martin Gostwick one afternoon in the Cromarty Arms, discussing many ideas for expanding on Miller's legacy, and warmly recalls the animation with which Alix spoke on the matters at hand.

Alix built strong relationships with the Friends, local groups and organisations such as the Cromarty Courthouse, adjacent to the Miller Birthplace Cottage and Museum. Personally, I worked closely with Alix to arrange prize-winning tours of the Museum for the Hugh Miller Writing Competition winners over several years. Alix always ensured she delivered the tours herself, and even produced beautiful goodie bags for our winners to take home. I was very touched by her excitement when it came to reading through the winning competition entries each year.

"Alix championed equality and access throughout her career, working with organisations such as Highland House of Memories, The Deaf Heritage Collective, Dementia Scotland and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and connecting them to her work at NTS," said Philip Long, Chief Executive of NTS. *"She was well known for her work with local schools on subjects such as Hugh Miller, Holocaust Memorial and inclusivity. Her passion for connecting with people and engaging them in Scotland's heritage and stories was infectious. She was a fantastic speaker, and all that knew her will remember her love of playing the cello, her fondness of animals, and she was never one to say no to a strawberry tart from the famous Cromarty Bakery!"*

Alix will be greatly missed. We feel sure you will join us in extend our deepest sympathies to Alix's husband, family and friends at this difficult time.

Lara Reid, Editor



Martin Gostwick presenting a Friends cheque to Alix in Spring 2013

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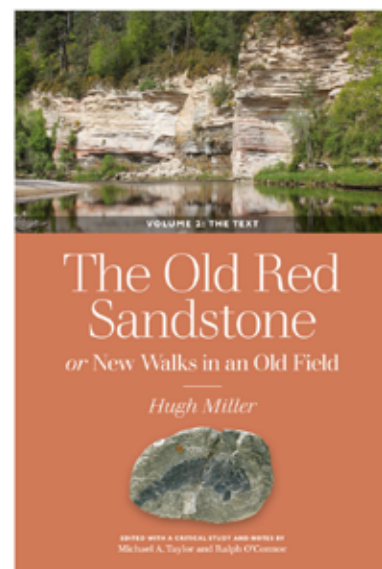
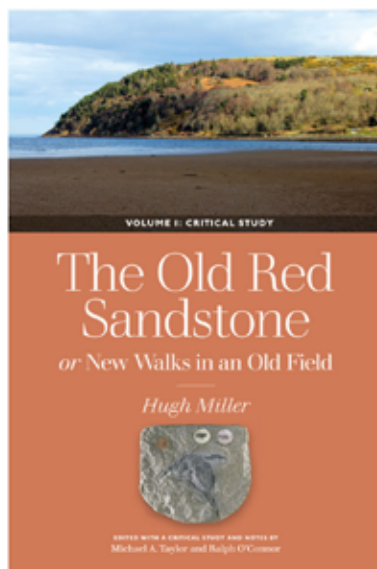


The Old Red Sandstone

or, New Walks in an Old Field

Edited, with a critical study and notes, by
Dr Michael A. Taylor and Professor Ralph O'Connor

Foreword by James Robertson



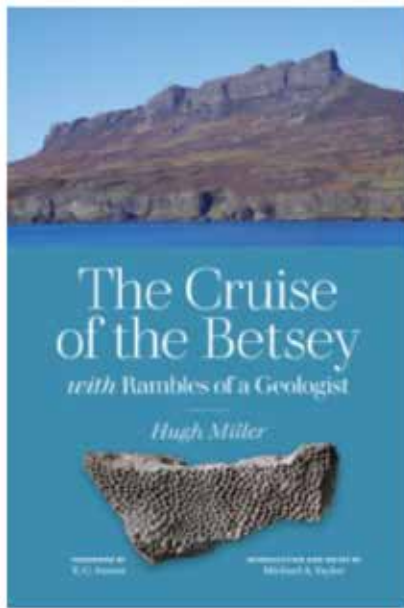
Published by NMSE Ltd – Publishing
624pp in 2 volumes with different
covers (shrink-wrapped together)
paperback. 234 x 156
978 1 910682 25 8

In *Volume 1*, Dr Taylor and Professor O'Connor explore how Miller wrote his book and why it was so important. Includes 62 illustrations and photos. *Volume 2* reprints the original volume in facsimile, with notes and glossary.

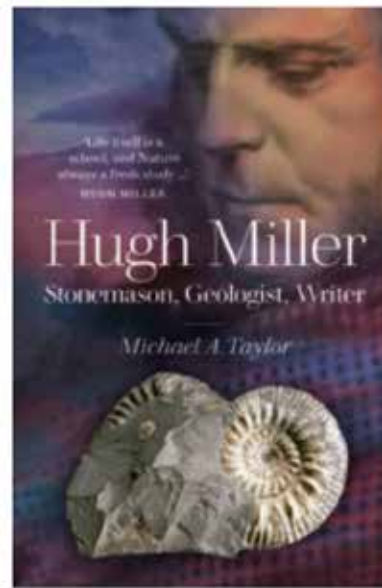
Dr Michael A. Taylor is Research Associate, Department of Natural Sciences, National Museums Scotland, and Visiting Research Fellow, School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester.

Professor Ralph O'Connor is Professor in the Literature and Culture of Britain, Ireland and Iceland, University of Aberdeen.

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'The Old Red Sandstone is still immensely readable and, if it tells us less than we now know about our planet's geology, it tells us much about how we have gained that knowledge, and how science is and can only ever be a part of wider human culture. It tells us, in other words, about ourselves.'

from the introduction by James Robertson

Friends of Hugh Miller can get The Old Red Sandstone at a discounted price. Go to the publisher's website via <https://tinyurl.com/ORS-FOHM> and when you come to pay enter the code FOHM23. This will entitle you to buy the book for £22.00 (rrp is £30.00) plus £5.00 post & packing for UK second-class only - overseas members will get the book for £22.00 plus the appropriate post & packing. Members living in or visiting Edinburgh may choose Click and Collect at check out. The offer is valid only through the publisher's online shop and will expire on 30 November 2023.

Reflections from a writer in residence

By Anna Fleming

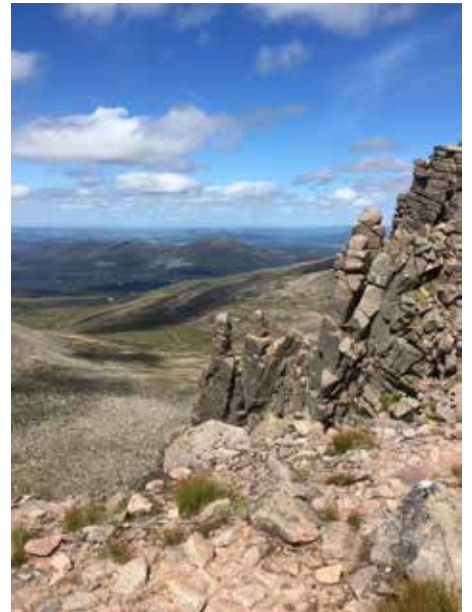
Speaking at the Hugh Miller AGM this week, I was asked what winning the Hugh Miller prize has meant to me. Now, as I pause and reflect on this sunny week in Cromarty, I realise the competition appeared at a critical moment in my development as a writer.

I won the Hugh Miller Writing Competition in 2020, which was three years after I had moved north to Scotland, having finished a PhD and turned my mind to other types of writing. The boundedness of the academic field didn't appeal. I wanted something that would allow my mind to roam, to make connections in a wider sense that better reflected the interconnectedness of life itself. I also wanted to write pieces that would connect in turn with a wider audience. My PhD, titled *'Wordsworth Creativity and Cumbrian Communities'*, was a study of how the people of the Lake District had shaped the Wordsworth's writing and how he had shaped life there. It had taught me how to do a long project, to construct a lengthy piece of work and conduct the day-to-day research that eventually builds up into the finished piece of work. It had taught me how to dive into ideas and histories, to pull open archives and discover the secrets that lie within and share those secrets by following the lines of connection that translate information into meaning. I saw how good research and thoughtful writing creates new pathways of knowledge, gifting people with new ways of seeing and understanding.

After finishing the PhD I didn't want to pursue academia. I had been warned off the career by academics from across universities and disciplines, all reporting how stretched resources are and that an uncomfortable shift is underway, moving the profession into an insecure inhumane business model. Instead, I landed on my feet with another job that fed my thirst for knowledge, understanding and connection.

While working for the Cairngorms National Park, I began a more applied land based research project – not that I would have called it such at the time – I was simply wandering into the big landscape driven by a spirit of curiosity, looking to understand the people and place.

The Cairngorm mountains and their surrounding valleys and forests made an area utterly distinct from the homelands I had previously known: rural mid Wales, Yorkshire and the Lake District. Bounding out after work, I had a real excitement getting to know this place. My interests flowed into the rich web of layering – from placenames to stories, plantlife, birds and beasts as well as contours on the map and my own embodied responses to the landscape. Such curiosity hovers somewhere between ecology, culture and psychogeography. It is that thirst for deep local knowledge like Hugh Miller had for Cromarty, Tim Robinson for Connemara or indeed Nan Shepherd had for the Cairngorms.



Top: Anna Fleming

Above: Cairngorms view

Facing page:

Top: Cromarty fish shed and North Sutor

Middle: The Sutors of Cromarty

Bottom: Cairngorms view

I was reaching for a particular form of nature writing – one that would speak truth to place and experience, while avoiding the old clichés. I wanted to find a way into the landscape, to get under its skin and open up the bewitching layers of life that coexist in any given place and moment. Besides writing, climbing was the other craft I pursued with intensity. This came out of my love of the movement – each climb is a sequence of physical embodied problem solving – as well as the sociability of the sport, which occupies a tribe of passionate enthusiasts. Kathleen Jamie once noted acerbically how the ‘lone enraptured male’ populates the nature writing genre. Climbing is a good tonic to such lonesome musings: the sport is always done socially, in partnerships or with a crew of companions, and thus one experiences the natural world through and with others.

Wandering in the Highlands, writing, climbing and thinking, I grew more and more interested in perception. I was intrigued to find new ways of seeing and being in the landscape. Nan Shepherd constantly experiments with perception in *The Living Mountain*. She writes of altering your body position to see in new ways: *“By so simple a matter, too, as altering the position of one’s head, a different kind of world may be made to appear. Lay the head down, or better still, face away from what you look at, and bend with straddled legs till you see your world upside down. How new it has become!”*



Climbing, I came to see, likewise opened a different lens on the world.



The physicality of rock climbing offers a type of perception that Hugh Miller himself would have known through his own work as a stone mason. Quarrying and splitting the stones on the beach at Cromarty and Eathie, he will have seen the world through the lens of a physical craftsman, using hand, eye and body to work the materials of the earth. I know this, instinctively, almost as a muscle memory, having grown up around another man with a similar physical-material way of relating to the world. My father was not a climber, he was a builder. From stonewalling to setting slates on roofs, digging footings and extending timber-framed Tudor buildings, my father lived the craft, showing how a human body can develop expert material knowledge that offers its own lens and way of being in the world.



Within these material relationships – Miller with his stones and my father with his buildings – there is an intriguing mutuality. Both men went out and physically altered the landscape and in the process of so doing, they came to understand new things about the world, while they were themselves physically altered, since a working body is changed by its work. This way of knowing is distinct from the types of understanding developed in academic institutions, which by comparison can seem rather one-sided and lacking in practical, physical application.

Nan Shepherd writes of mutual change through encounter in *The Living Mountain* where she reflects that *"Place and a mind may interpenetrate till the nature of both is altered."* Robin Wall Kimmerer takes this reciprocity a step further in *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Blending scientific knowledge with indigenous wisdom, she explores emotional relationships between people and world, reaching towards a transformative exchange:

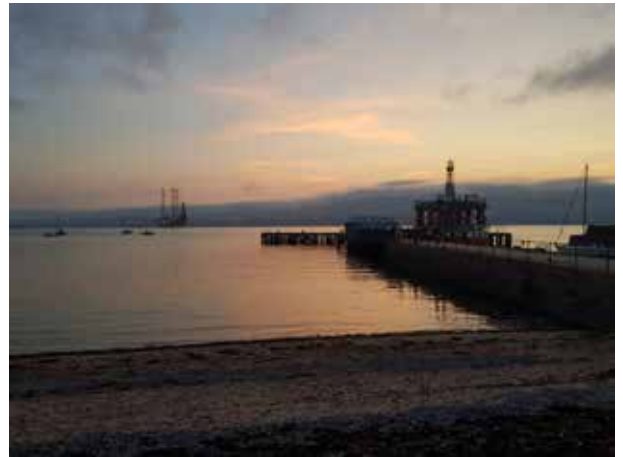
Many of us have a deep professed love for nature. Filled with profound experiences and a sense of belonging. But consider for a moment... what if nature loved you in return? How would that influence your behaviour? How would we all approach the way we treat the land? Our love for nature propels us to protect and celebrate the natural world. But if we believed the earth loved us in return, this moves from a one-way unrequited love – to a sacred bond. You wouldn't harm what gives you love.

Care is the sentiment shining through this statement. Robin Wall Kimmerer writes about taking care of the world, and both my father and Miller, in their careful applications of hand and body, revealed to me the unique insights that can arise through such close attentive contact with world.

Returning to the matter at hand, climbing gave me an intriguingly physical way into understanding the material earth. But how to write about this sensory muscular insight? Climbing writing does not typically sit within the niche of nature writing. Climbing literature is the domain of heroic deeds and misadventures, full of thrills in the pursuit of the sublime conquest. This was not my experience and it was not the insight I sought in writing of the mountains.

The Hugh Miller Writing Competition gave me the stimulus to experiment with something new that would attempt to unite my climbing and writing interests, producing some way of writing about the physical contact and range of perceptions that arise through rock climbing. I wrote an essay on climbing a route called *Savage Slit* in the Cairngorms, describing the physical sensory experience of that climb, while also weaving in the wider story of contact with the landscape, culture ecology and deep earth history that had shaped that particular patch of the Cairngorms. In March 2020 as we sat

out the beginning of the global pandemic, I received some good news. The essay had won first prize in prose. I was surprised and encouraged. This was my first foray into geology: it wouldn't be my last. I took a geology class at the University of Edinburgh and began to learn about all the processes our world goes through, including the epic journey that the British Isles have travelled on across the globe over deep time. Unlike many people in Miller's time, for whom such an understanding of geological time was existentially devastating, by the time I approached the subject, deep earth history was long established. Still, the scale was dizzying. With a thrill, I began to grasp the im-



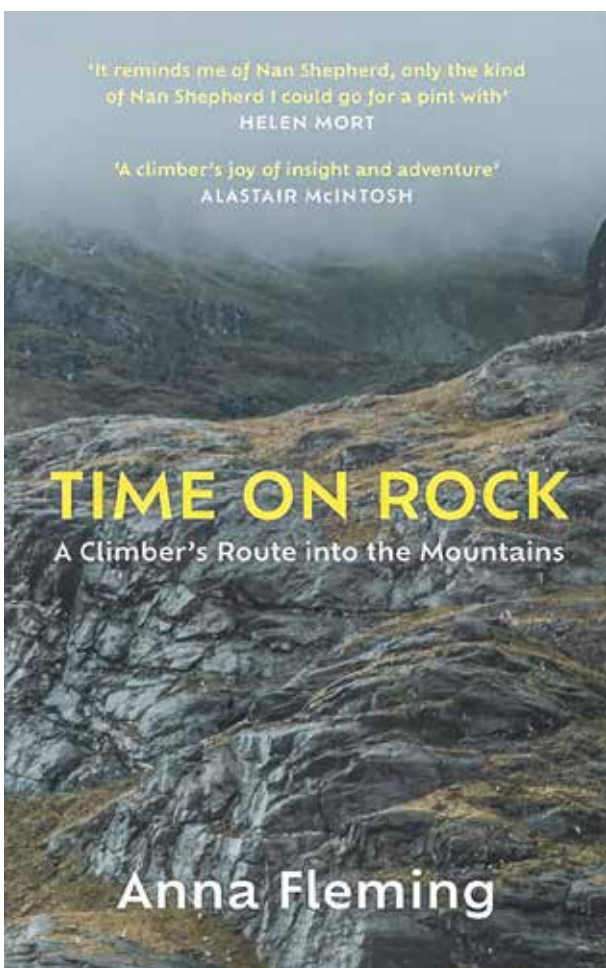
Above:

Three views of the seafront at Cromarty

Facing page:

Fossils from Eathie (top) and Cromarty (middle)

Cover artwork for Anna's book (bottom)



mense stories that lay within the humble rocks that I touched on my climbing pilgrimages across the UK. Writing in earnest, I pulled together a memoir that wove together these strands of intrigue, from the physical movement sequences of climbing to geology, history and nature writing. It was a rich seam. Through the storyline I explored how the lives of people and stones ran together throughout earth history. And the journey continues. *Time On Rock* was published in January 2022 with Canongate, who instantly grasped what the book was doing. They publish Nan Shepherd and offered their full-hearted support for this alternative mountain narrative. Since publication, the journey has been surreal. After two years of intensive writing – moving between rocks, words, memory and imagination to construct the book – I was out on display. From introvert I became extrovert. The book tour took me across the length and breadth of the UK, speaking in Stornoway, London and at Hay Festival. From the pulpit of a church in Edinburgh, I preached the gospel of rock climbing to a congregation of more than 160 people. Reviews were glowing and I was honoured to have the book shortlisted for two prestigious prizes: the Wainwright Prize for Nature Writing and the Boardman-Tasker Award for Mountain Literature.

Like the stone mason splitting rocks on the beach and discovering fossil fish from the bed of an ancient lake, it gives me great pleasure to have split open my own seam of earthly insight, concerning the nature of rocks, climbing and deep earth time. To share this insight with others, only increases the pleasure. I am immensely grateful to the Friends of Hugh Miller for their support through the project. Returning to Cromarty now for a week as the inaugural recipient of the Martin Gostwick Writers residency, there is a blessed sense of coming full circle. After a busy year of travel and talks, I return to this patch of sea and sandstone and catch my breath. I watch seals and porpoises swim within sight of the oil-rigs as I gather my thoughts and begin experimenting with words and ideas once again. Mid-way through the week, *The Guardian* published a list of the top 10 books on nature connection. The list includes the likes of Seamus Heaney, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Mary Oliver and – surprise surprise – *Time on Rock*.

La vita è bella!



**The Friends of Hugh Miller in conjunction
with Aberdeen Geological Society present:
The 5th Nigel H. Trewin Memorial Lecture.**



5th October, 6:30pm.

**Aberdeen University, Meston Building
Lecture Theatre 1.**

Speaker: Dr Clive Rice, University of Aberdeen.

The Cerro Rico de Potosi, Bolivia: The world's largest silver deposit



Photo: Hand cobbing on the Cerro Rico

The fabulous silver deposit known as The Cerro Rico de Potosi was discovered in 1544 and has been mined continuously ever since. It bankrolled the Spanish empire, but at a huge cost to human life. At least 60,000 tons of silver have been produced and much still remains. It is now a World Heritage site and protected from further significant exploitation.

Surprisingly, no modern comprehensive study of this remarkable deposit has been published. This lecture is taken from a recent study by a team of geoscientists, including our speaker for the evening, Dr. Clive Rice, which is now in review. In his lecture, Dr. Rice will focus on the geology of the deposit and highlight a proposed model for its origin.

All FOHM members are warmly welcomed to attend the lecture, either in person or on zoom – a link will be shared via email to those who are interested. Please message us at chair@thefriendsofhughmiller.org.uk if you would like to attend the zoom meeting.

Book review:

'Donald Ross and the Highland Clearances'

by Andrew Ross

Reviewed by Jim C. Mackintosh

'Highland Clearances' - two simple words when placed together still resonate across the world with such powerful, raw emotions and, for many, even persistent, personal connections infused by ancestral influences. Two words which continue to influence the social, political and economic strands of Scotland's identity. Indeed, arguably the narrower interpretation of the Clearances by adding the word Highland, however unintentionally, in itself diminishes the importance of remembering this tragic period of history included so much of Scotland. That said, in reviewing Andrew Ross's book *'Donald Ross and the Highland Clearances'*, it was not my intention to be critical of the book's title - as it rightly refers to the part played by Andrew's ancestor Donald Ross in the Highland Clearances - but merely to provide a hint of wider context.

For this review, I make no apologies in replicating the author's summary of the book which best describes who Donald Ross was. "...[A] highlander, born in Sutherland in 1813. His father was the miller on the Skibo Castle Estate and Donald took over the mill when his father died. He and his family were subsequently evicted, fighting against the eviction in the Supreme Court but losing the case. Donald moved to Glasgow and within two years, as Agent for the Poor, helped over 1,500 people receive poor-relief payments, which were being withheld by local parish boards. In the 1850's Donald became the most outspoken critic of the Highland Clearances and wrote many detailed newspaper articles and pamphlets about mass evictions on Barra, Knoydart and Skye. His most famous publication was *The Massacre of the Rosses*' in which he graphically described the women of Strathcarron being brutally beaten by policemen for refusing to accept eviction notices. Donald supplied over 8,000 books and pamphlets for emigrants on the ill fated *Hercules*. He also raised a lot of money to help poor people in the Hebrides, particularly during the infamous potato famine. However, Donald's efforts were cut short by a scandal that saw him and his family emigrate to Nova Scotia. Donald's inspirational story makes him an unsung hero of the poor."

Perhaps the acceptable risk of being an ancestor of the subject of a book is unintentionally narrowing its initial focus and subsequent revelations, so that it might become a literal version of the popular genealogy television programme *'Who Do You Think You Are?'*. Doing so would limit its appeal to fellow Clan Ross folk and perhaps the wider community of those interested in the Highland Clearances - a subject which, through its extensive library of existing research and commentary, makes it difficult to add new perspectives. Andrew Ross has, however successfully navigated his appeal to both of those readerships with a solidly researched and clearly evidenced account of Donald Ross and his story, both from a personal perspective and through his role in the impacts of the tragedy that played out across the Highlands. In achieving that, he offers a wide appeal to readers and I think he has successfully added to the Clearances Library of Critical Thought.

I was particularly impressed by the depth of Andrew's research and determination to provide balance. Where the tragic details and raw emotions surface most effectively are in the contemporary newspaper accounts that he has tirelessly sought out and referenced. For me, such emotions were given even more impact through the words of the victims and eyewitnesses to the events to which Donald Ross responded. Donald Ross would react with such determination, through charitable efforts or by crafting sharp words with which he would then poke - mostly with success - the establishment in the ribs of its comfortable and (in many ways) blinkered, rigid class-structured existence.



Given this review will appear in a journal inspired by Hugh Miller it would be remiss of me not to mention the references to him in the book. There are four, and primarily from when Miller was the editor of *The Witness*. Of particular note and poignant thought is a description by Miller of a party of refugees which Ross had brought to Edinburgh to highlight the dreadful plight of people in Scotland. They were from the same country, but were so far removed from the world inhabited by the great and good of the capital city – an insensitive publicity stunt or a powerful protest to raise awareness and garner support? Opinion on the impact, as for so much of Ross's endeavours, was divided. Miller commenting in *The Witness* did, even from this distance, evidence the wider public scrutiny of Donald Ross's works.

It was Donald Ross's determined passion, driven by his own experiences of eviction and his energetic pursuit of the injustices dished out by the inflexible profit driven tiers of land ownership, which I've no doubt ruffled too many feathers. It clearly simmered throughout his endeavours to raise awareness of the dreadful outcomes of the skewed policies and thinly disguised self-preserving legislation. By doing so he provided aid where he could, which I sense would ultimately underpin his 'downfall' – sewing doubt in public opinion and amplifying the suggestions through establishment media that he was milking the plight of the victims to perpetuate his own lifestyle and importance. I am undecided on this.

Andrew Ross does however reflect honestly on his ancestor's fall from grace and the subsequent events which found Donald Ross in Nova Scotia. The author rightly highlights the immense amount of good through which Donald Ross's actions most likely saved many lives, which I agree far outweighs the questionable events where he over egged (falsified?) reports of tragic events to pursue further charitable donations to righteous causes. Did he commit fraud? Did he just become overwhelmed by the never ending need for such benevolence, and the establishment's - and in particular the Government's - inability or unwillingness to put in place meaningful solutions. Why should they undermine the structures that retained the norms of their wealth and power? Perhaps Ross became blindsided and exhausted by constantly battling within the power structures that vied for position and influence across Scotland at this time. Perhaps there are elements of all those theories in play, and the author is admirably honest in his thoughts of his ancestor's own part in this tragic series of events and ultimately his perceived fall from grace.

At this point I have to confess a common interest in much of Andrew's research. I have researched my own history and written poetry on the subjects. This includes one poem following a visit to Glencalvie and Croick Kirk, where some of the names of the evicted were scratched on the Kirk window when they took refuge having been unjustifiably thrown out of their homes. I'm convinced if you stand quietly in the kirk yard you can still hear the agonising whispers and tears of these folk, as they described themselves this 'wicked generation' facing an uncertain future.

I am in the final phase of publishing a collection of my poems with the title of *We are Migrant*. From my own perspective and an ancestry which is a broth of French Huguenot, English, and Irish from origins of the Planters migrating to and becoming Donegal crofters mixed with a core of generations of Clan Mackintosh shepherds, I firmly believe that we are all migrant. Humanity has been on the move, either willingly or through displacement, for a multitude of reasons and through enforced migration since Mother Africa headed north and turned right (or was it left?). Reading Andrew's account of Donald Ross's endeavours whilst processing my own thoughts merely highlighted and strengthened my own resolve to complete the work.

One particular episode especially had me nodding furiously in frustrated agreement is where Andrew writes about Donald Ross appealing to the authorities of Inverness and of Glasgow to take in refugees, only to be met with fears and negativity on the impact this would have and how striking this continues to be the case on a global scale. But take a moment to consider the use of the term refugees to describe common folk not migrating across continents or treacherous waters but displaced within their own country. It's a startling thought given this was occurring only 170 years ago and within the Empire's extending reach and its expanding economic and industrial power base – a significant factor in the Clearances occurring.

This was only one episode in a book which overall is well crafted and successfully delivered. The intention of the book is to inform the reader the part played by Donald Ross in the effects of the Highland Clearances, but it cannot for me be ignored how entirely and frustratingly relevant this shift of humanity, its causes and effects continue to be in the world today. So, whether you're coming to this book from a Clan Ross perspective, an interested scholar of the Clearances or from a wider standpoint of social history, then this book will satisfy, inform and entertain all with an interest in this vital part of Scotland's (and indeed humanity's) history.

Massacre of the Rosses

If you ask me where I've been
I'm not embarrassed to tell you
I've been to Strathcarron to listen
for the wailing of the women
and to learn the pain of driven folk.
As then, the wind knows the truth
the rocks hold the cries of despair
and the river still pools the blood.

I would have to tell you I wept there.
I stood on the broken ground with them.
I heard the order 'knock them down'
no quarter given. Uniformed obedience
bludgeoning women defending rights
to life not very much beyond poverty
yet theirs to determine. Innocence
comes at a cost but surely not blood.

We must not forget 'The Massacre', they
who stood in brave unison for survival,
who crossed the imposed line and the law
in all its devalued worth. Shifting words
of uncaring, absent nobility – wielding
with bitter edged tools at the dismantled
death of homelands and with empty souls
watched the ships leave the bays forever.

A bright future for FOHM at our 2023 AGM

Our AGM took place on a breezy, sunny day on Sunday 28th May at the Royal Hotel, Cromarty. We are very grateful to Jenny and staff at the Royal Hotel for their excellent hospitality. Here follows a brief overview of the AGM – full details of any topic discussed are available on request, just ask us by emailing admin@thefriendsof-hughmiller.org.uk

Chair Bob Davidson steps down

Bob Davidson has stepped down as Chair of FOHM after seven years. We want to thank Bob for his capable leadership and friendship as Chair. Bob took over from Nigel Trewin and has seen the Friends through tough times (the passing of our friends Nigel Trewin and Martin Gostwick, and the complex Miller and Race issues) and very good times. Under Bob's leadership, the FOHM have grown in many ways – Bob has guided us towards financial growth, stability and diversity in membership and governance. His fossil field trips are now the stuff of legend! He was an avid supporter of the Hugh Miller writing competition and multiple other outreach events. He was a primary organiser of The Old Red conference: Hugh Miller's Geological Legacy 9-10 September 2017 in Cromarty. The Friends is now well-placed to continue its mission to support the Hugh Miller Museum in Cromarty and Hugh Miller's legacy. We wish to thank Bob sincerely and presented him with a gift to show our appreciation. Bob, we hope you will stay involved with the Friends and remain a good friend to us all.

Bob is succeeded in his role by committee member and editor of *Hugh's News*, Lara Reid.



A new chair for the FOHM

Many members will know Lara Reid's contribution to the FOHM over the past 8 years – following on from her initial involvement with our charity via the Hugh Miller Writing Competition, Lara has been on the committee since 2016. She took over as editor of *Hugh's News* when Martin Gostwick died in summer 2021. She has a plan or two up her sleeve for some interesting events in the next year or two.



Chair / editor / secretary report

By Lara Reid

I am privileged to take the reins here at the Friends, and I hope I can do the role justice. Stepping into such great shoes following two well-respected geologists as Bob Davidson and Nigel Trewin is a little daunting! There may be one or two new members here who do not know me. I am a freelance science writer and editor, and I have been working for Springer Nature and other scientific communication publishers for 12 years. I am, however, a poet at heart! I've always balanced along the boundary lines between the arts and sciences – ever since university where I went to study geology and came out with a degree in Scottish Literature. I think this fascination across disciplines is what first drew me to Hugh Miller, and I hope to explore many of the facets of Miller's wide and varied legacy during my time as chair.

First, I'd like to recap on what has been a positive and productive year for the FOHM. Since our 2022 AGM, we have been busy behind the scenes with several projects culminating. We were delighted to hear – and indeed get a sneak preview – of the release of the short film 'Vestige', directed by Lewis Coates and

the production team at Static Flow Productions. This short, tense and very atmospheric film tells the story of a teenage fossil hunter who is dealing with the grief of losing his father. For me, the film had strong echoes of Victorian gothic and Miller's love of strange 'other-worldly' beings and folklore. While it may not have been quite what the committee expected when we funded part of the venture, we are proud to have done so. The film will soon be available for public viewing – we will let you know when that happens. We are also delighted to say that the FOHM have a newly designed website up and running. This is an ongoing work in progress, and there will be brand new content added in the coming months. I worked on the site myself, editing and rewriting existing content and improving the look of the website so that it now works well on all device types. We have PayPal as an option for monetary donations, and you can also join the FOHM online too. I am very grateful to Garve Scott-Lodge at Plexus Media in Cromarty for his invaluable support in building the new site.

The Friends committee were also left somewhat astonished by the discover of an 18-carat gold Victorian mourning ring bearing the name and dates of none other than our Hugh Miller – on a beach in South Africa! Many members will know the story already, but if you'd like to hear more, you can read the full details to date in *Hugh's News* issue 52. We are in the process of negotiating for the ring to be displayed at the Museum; updates on this will follow.

The FOHM are delighted to announce the inaugural *Martin Gostwick Writer's Residency*, in honour of our late founder and much-missed friend. The residency will support a writer or poet with a strong interest in either Hugh Miller or Scottish geology more widely to spend one week in Cromarty. The residency has been organised in collaboration with the Cromarty Arts Trust and the Hugh Miller Birthplace Cottage and Museum. We are very pleased to announce that our first writer in residence for 2023 will be Anna Fleming, former first prize winner of the Hugh Miller Writing Competition 2020, and author of *Time on Rock* (Canongate, 2022). Anna gave a wonderful, engaging talk at our AGM and provided a fascinating insight into her 'vertical world' of rock climbing. She has written beautiful essay for this issue of *Hugh's News*.

The final Nigel Trewin lecture will take place in October 2023 at the University of Aberdeen, and also over zoom. The speaker will be Prof. Clive Rice.

Museum manager's report:

**Please note: Our AGM took place in May 2023, before Alix Powers-Jones passed away. She was not in attendance at the AGM, and we received the following written report from Debbie Reid, interim manager at the Miller Museum.*

We have moved the main shop into the museum and are working with central retail to bring in new lines for the year ahead to increase revenue. The old shop in the cottage is now a second hand book store for the community to use. We hope to introduce a small food and drink offering with outdoor seating by the cottage.

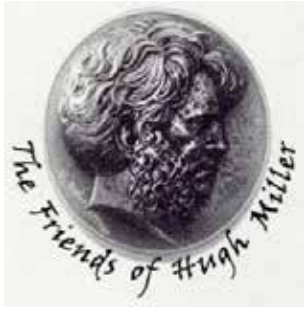
Work has begun on a new walking tour of Cromarty focusing on the town's history and of course the influence of Hugh Miller. We have had visits from the regional curator and conservator who agree the museum could do with a revamp, so we are looking at small changes to interpretation this year with larger scale projects to be fed into next year's budget. A full review and catalogue of the collection and archive will be taking place this year to solidify our current position and how we can use the objects to their best potential moving forward. The cottage harling may need redone next year so we are monitoring the condition of it currently with the NTS building surveyor.

Treasurer's & Membership Secretary's Reports

By Sue Rider-Busby and Stephanie Kulesza

The finances for the FOHM remain in good shape – the pandemic has meant that we have not spent the usual sums of money on public events in the past few years. The financial statement for the year is available to any interested parties, please just ask!

We have a total of 117 members, including 23 direct descendants. Now that we have our wonderful, revamped website, I will also now spread the word amongst the academic institutions and try to encourage more new members to join us.



The Friends of Hugh Miller MEMBERSHIP FORM

I/We wish to become (a) member (s) of the charity, The Friends of Hugh Miller
Please download and complete the forms below then email to the Membership Secretary at:
membership@thefriendsofhughmiller.org.uk

Annual subscription categories and rates, please mark with a cross whichever applies:

Single	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family (1 adult and up to 3 children under 18)	£15*	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Junior (under 18)	£5	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode..... Phone.....

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GIFT AID Declaration for past, present and future donations

Gift Aid is reclaimed by The Friends of Hugh Miller from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

In order for us to claim Gift Aid on your donation you must complete the form and the box below

Title First name or initial(s)..... Surname:.....

Home address (if different from above):

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Signature (optional):.....

I give my consent to The Friends of Hugh Miller to claim gift aid on all donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years

(put an X in the consent box)

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Stephanie Kulesza, Membership Secretary can be reached at:
membership@thefriendsofhughmiller.org.uk or 07879614005

The Friends of Hugh Miller is a registered charity: SC037351