



Hugh's News

Magazine of
The Friends of Hugh Miller

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Hugh Miller heads to the Moon on Artemis II!

By James Ryan, NTS visitor guide at the Miller Museum in Cromarty

Easily the biggest and most pleasant surprise of the year - the Hugh Miller Birthplace Cottage and Museum have announced that they are sending Hugh Miller to the moon! Hugh's name has been registered to be added to an SD card which will be onboard the Artemis II mission when it orbits the moon in 2026.



On a technicality this means Hugh Miller has travelled further, and reached the moon before Robert Burns has, whose work has only reached as far as the International Space Station in 2010. You can register your own name for free by visiting NASA's website:

NASA Artemis II Send Your Name to Space
<https://www3.nasa.gov/send-your-name-with-artemis/>

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Notes from our 2025 AGM

Held online, on Zoom, 17th September 2025, 7pm

Thank you to all members who joined us for our AGM on Zoom this year. Here follows a brief overview of themes covered at the meeting – full AGM minutes will be available on our website, or via email by request to:

(admin@thefriendsofhughmiller.org.uk)

Committee seats: All continue in current positions.

Lara Reid announced that she will be stepping down as chair of the Friends of Hugh Miller in spring 2026. By that date, Lara will have been chair for 3 years, and feels it would be pertinent to let someone else take the reins. Bob Davidson thanked Lara for her service over the last three years.

Chair and Editor's report (Lara Reid)

In terms of our work since May 2024:

Many of you will recall our rather beautiful afternoon at the Library of Mistakes in Edinburgh for our AGM in May 2024. We were delighted to welcome long-term Friend Professor Ralph O'Connor from Aberdeen University, who gave a spellbinding talk about Hugh Miller, scientific communication and folklore. We were also joined by Gill Shaw, who brought us beautiful new poetry inspired by the Black Isle landscapes and Miller himself – both Gill and Cait O'Neill McCullugh, whose poems were also read at the event, are amazing poets local to the Black Isle. I'd encourage anyone with an interest in poetry to look them up; both have books for sale!

In November and December 2024, we were delighted to learn of a rather unusual artist-in-residence project at the Museum in Cromarty. Maria MacLennan, forensic art specialist and senior lecturer in jewellery and silversmithing at Edinburgh College of Art, spent time at the Museum working to generate new digital portraits and 3D sculptures of Hugh Miller and Lydia Miller. The story (together with her remarkable artworks) is covered in Hugh's News issue 58 (March 2025), and visitors to the Museum can see her 3D bust of Miller and her vibrant portraits on display at the Museum.

The Sennachie Festival

After the success of our AGM event in 2024, it was our hope that we would continue to celebrate the theme of Miller and folklore into 2025. Throughout the autumn of 2024 and early 2025, we spent considerable time as a committee planning and preparing our AGM and Sennachie Storytelling Festival, which was due to take place in Cromarty in May 2025. I should like to note special thanks to committee member

Jim Mackintosh, who put an immense amount of hard work and time into organising a weekend of music, poetry and storytelling – his incredible networking skills and friendships across the arts meant he was able to bring together a fantastic line-up for the weekend.

Unfortunately, the event did not come to fruition as we'd hoped. After local promotion and efforts made on social media, we came to a few weeks before the events were due to take place, and we had sold only a handful of tickets. We are sure that members were as disappointed by this decision as we were as a committee. While we were willing to 'take a loss' in terms of hosting the event, it would simply not have been ethical to continue with our plans – our main aim in creating the festival was to reach new audiences and potential new members. We wouldn't have achieved our goals, and for a small charity, this wasn't an acceptable way of spending money. Thankfully, due to the good will built up by the committee with the Cromarty Arts Trust over the years, plus the kindness and understanding of all performers due to attend, we had minimal financial losses at the time that we decided to cancel.

We recognise that members may have questions regarding this decision; you can email us at any time.

Also, I should like to apologise for the relative quiet on the Hugh's News front this year – ongoing health issues have meant I have not been able to work as consistently as I would normally. Thankfully, I am beginning to improve now.

Copies of the 2024-25 accounts are available on request.

Update on the Mourning Ring (Stephanie Kulesza)

The Hugh Miller mourning ring that was found on a beach in South Africa is finally on display at the Hugh Miller Birthplace Museum – it is beautifully displayed next to the Mourning Brooch with a display nearby telling the story of the discovery. I hope you will be able to visit the museum and see it sometime. The story even made it into the national press in March with coverage in several newspapers and on the radio. Our grateful thanks go to Cornel Swart - the detectorist who found it - the wonderful South African Battlefield Archaeologist, Willem Hutton who, finally, managed to get official export permission from the South African Government. Finally, to my Friend Sylvia Kenny who very kindly took the ring back and forth to South Africa!

AGM 2026 (Lara Reid)

For our AGM 2026, we plan to return to Cromarty for an in-person meeting in late spring 2026 – date to be confirmed. We hope to tie in with the Scottish Geology Trust's celebrations for the tricentenary of James Hutton's birth (May/June 2026), and will work closely with the Museum in Cromarty and the National Trust for Scotland to bring members together for a special event in Cromarty.

Eliza's headstone cleaned and cared for

By Karolina Allan, conservator

This summer, I was contacted by Stephanie Kulesza, direct descendant of Hugh Miller, representing herself and the Friends of Hugh Miller. Mrs Kulesza raised concerns about the long-term preservation of the headstone of Elizabeth Logan, daughter of Lydia and Hugh Miller, located in the graveyard of St. Regulus Church in Cromarty.

Elizabeth Logan died in 1839 at only 17 months. This headstone was carved by Hugh Miller himself, which makes it even more historically significant. The stone underwent previous cleaning and consolidation in 2015, during which cracks and cavities were filled with mortar repairs.

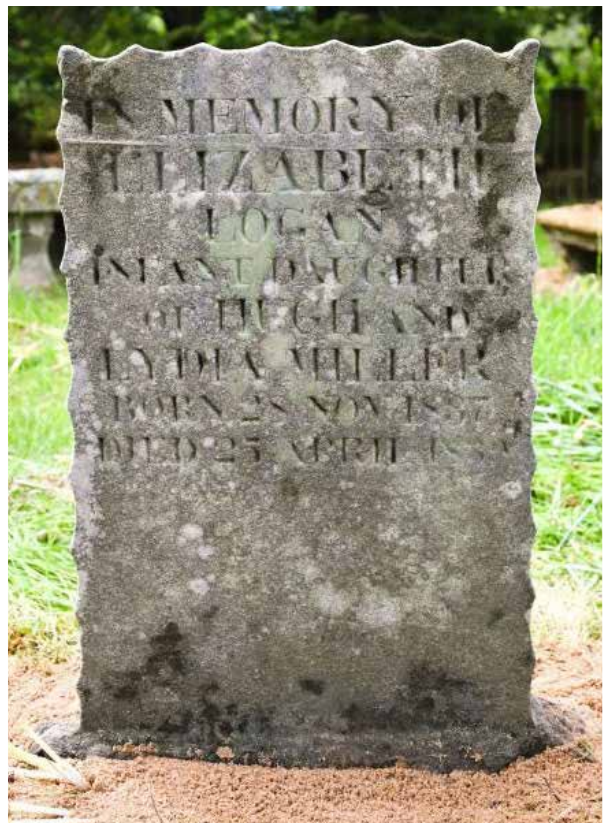
I visited the site on 27th of May 2025, to clean and assess the headstone, specifically to evaluate its deterioration over the ten-year period from 2015 to 2025.

The inscription of the headstone says: " IN MEMORY OF ELIZABETH LOGAN INFANT DAUGHTER OF HUGH AND LYDIA MILLER BORN 28 NOV 1837 DIED 25 APRIL 1839.

The headstone was cleaned using water, soft nylon brushes and wooden tamping brush. It was noted to be slightly leaning and was subsequently straightened by packing the gap at the rear and replenishing the surrounding soil. Photographs were taken before, during, and after cleaning. While a comparison with 2015 photographs was attempted, differing light, weather conditions, camera equipment, and the stone's wet state after cleaning in 2025 made a direct, clear comparison more challenging.

The stone's condition shows minimal change since 2015. Surface wear is evident in places, primarily along the edges, similar to observations ten years prior. The lettering is legible after cleaning, though the dates remain less distinct. No new cavities or cracks were identified. However, the 2015 repairs appear to be thinning along the edges and will require re-doing after the next cleaning.

Based on these observations, the headstone appears to be in stable condition, exhibiting some expected deterioration due to its age and outdoor exposure. Given its stable condition, the recommendation is to retain the stone in its present location and continue monitoring its condition. For more detailed monitoring and recording of the stone's surface, photogrammetry or 3D scanning could be considered. A copy of the stone could also be produced from such detailed surface records.



Before (top) and after (bottom) cleaning. Pictures after cleaning were taken in rainy weather when the headstone was still wet. Most compared pictures are taken in different light conditions, which makes them difficult to compare.

Celebrating a fantastic season at the Museum!

By James Ryan, NTS

Fossil Walks:

Started in June of 2024, Fossil Walks have become a staple at the museum and prove to be our most popular offering. This visitor experience, truly unique to the Inverness and Black Isle area, involves taking participants onto Cromarty beach (The same one where Hugh Miller found his most famous Devonian fishes) to look for the remains of prehistoric animals that lived in Scotland over 385 million years ago. Working to promote sustainability, every fossil discovered has remained at the museum on public display for a month before being returned to the beach. Highlights include a 3D piece of placoderm armour plating, a rare plant stem, and even an intact complete *Dipterus* lungfish (which we have chosen to keep at the museum).

In keeping with Hugh Miller's passion to make science accessible, we have been working with palaeontologists Bob Davidson and Sidney Johnston who have been conducting research into the Cromarty fossils: Every fossil found on our walks is photographed, catalogued, and data is sent to Bob and Sidney to use for their own research. Additionally, the month the fossils are on display gives them the opportunity to reserve anything if they want a closer look at them. By teaming up with Bob and Sidney, it has allowed our fossil walks to become a fully-fledged citizen science workshop and participants can take part in active ongoing scientific research. So far as of writing in 2025 we've found 201 fossils!

Summer Science Club:

This summer saw the launch of our brand-new kid's club (aimed at ages 7-9) all about science. Sessions covered topics including volcanoes, dinosaur footprints, squid and ammonites, and earthquakes. Each session featured a variety of science experiments and activities – including baking soda and coke-mentos volcanoes, fossil handling, and even water bottle rocket launches. Over the school holidays we had seven summer club sessions with four of them being fully booked almost as quickly as we started advertising them. We have another special science club session happening over the school October holidays all about fossil fuels on Friday 24th October at 10:00am.

Other community engagement:

Out with our normal offering at the museum, we have been offering community outreach at several events including the 2024 Black Isle Gathering. In early 2025, I provided a special talk at the Highland Cinema in Fort William. Twenty-four attendees came to the talk – not bad considering there was a yellow/amber weather warning for rainstorm. We also beat Bannockburn's talk the week before us by ten people meaning Hugh Miller is officially more popular than Robert the Bruce!



In Cromarty we offered a special *"Creative with Cave-art"* kids' workshop over the Easter Holidays 2025 where we demonstrated how early humans turned rock into paint and encouraged children to paint ice age scenes with them. We also teamed up with the Cromarty Cinema to have a selection of handling fossils on display outside the cinema for their screening of *"Jurassic World: Rebirth"* this summer.

Our most successful community engagement event however was when we participated in the Cromarty Primary School's 150th birthday fair in late August 2025. James and museum volunteer Colin braved the wind and were at the fair with handling fossils for people to hold and polished stones and books for sale. We also provided two science experiments for attendees to enjoy: A coke-mentos volcano and a water bottle rocket launch, both of which were well attended and based on the screams of delight from the children, very much enjoyed!

Schools:

We have been working on bringing back school workshops at the museum. I have been working on developing school workshops based on fossils and geology and has already led a couple of test runs with some local schools. Property manager Debbie has likewise been working on a small school tour for the birthplace cottage. We now own a fossil handling box and have been working on school classroom workshops which we can do at their schools for classes too large to visit the property. Our aim is for next year to have a fully-fledged rejuvenated educational offering for primary schools

Exhibitions:

Since 2024 we have put on four temporary exhibitions covering Hugh Miller and the fossils he collected. In early 2024 to celebrate Miller House museum's 20th anniversary, Debbie created *"Telling Miller's Tale"* – an exhibition which investigated how the story of Hugh Miller has been shared; from museums, to storybooks, to even operas. For the 2024 Geology Festival, we acquired a donation of fossils from Dingwall Museum and put them on display in our exhibition called *"The Dingwall Collection"*. Rather than simply displaying them we used them as an opportunity to explain why museums collect certain objects and how we go about obtaining and looking after them; offering a peek behind the National Trust for Scotland's collection curtain.

Previous page captions (top to bottom):

*Fossil walk on the beach at Cromarty
Fossil found by Runa Madsen
Fossil found by Tina Read
Summer Science Club!*

This page captions (top to bottom):

*Telling Miller's Tale
James showing a fossil from The Dingwall Collection
School visit to the beach at Cromarty
From here to there: an exhibition*

Next page captions (top to bottom):

*From here to there: an exhibition
From here to there: an exhibition
Christine "Kiki" Bordean*



Our 2025 season opened with perhaps our first ever art exhibition – in collaboration with the Carrick Artists Collective (based in The Smiddy art gallery at Culzean Castle), *"From There to Here"* featured a variety of artwork based on the natural landscapes and geology of the Carrick area of Scotland which Hugh Miller explored in the late 1840s. From paintings to pottery, silversmith jewellery and glasswork, Hugh Miller's first art gallery exhibition was a smash success, and we hope to offer similar exhibits in the future.



Our current exhibition is *"Stories in Stone: Fossils and their folklore"*. James and museum volunteer Brodie have put together an exhibit that takes visitors along the boundary between fact and folklore and explores the legendary explanations for fossils before the invention of Geology – from snakestone ammonites to woolly rhino dragon teeth! Stories in Stone is running until Sunday 12th October.

New Museum acquisitions:

No doubt you will have seen and read about our amazing gold mourning ring that is now on display inside the museum's Edinburgh Years room, nor no doubt you will have heard about the amazing work by artist Dr. Maria MacLennan who forensically reconstructed the face of both Hugh Miller and his wife Lydia in stunning detail, but we have some more exciting museum acquisitions. In May 2025, James travelled to the Isle of Wight to look for dinosaur fossils for the museum. Teaming up with a member of the Wight Coast Fossils group, they scoured the famous Compton Bay for an entire morning and found only tiny fragments of bone. However, the good people at Wight Coast Fossils generously donated to the museum three dinosaur fossils: Two weathered pieces of an Iguanodont, and a tail vertebra of a long-necked Brachiosaur. These three fossils alone have brought in many visitors who have come to see these amazing finds and they also allow us to get young audiences really engaged with the geology and fossils we have at the museum.



Museum fossil analysis:

At the start of the 2025 season, we also welcomed Christine "Kiki" Bordean, PhD student at the University of Aberdeen, who came to look at our cave bear tooth. Kiki has been researching cave bears as part of her doctorate and was able to confirm that our handling collection fossil was a cave bear's right-hand side upper cheek molar tooth. Kiki also alerted us to a brilliant (and free) 3D modelling app known as "Kiri engine". Using this piece of software, we have begun to create 3D digital models of our behind-the-scenes fossils which are not on display and can allow us to create interactive models of fossils visitors aren't able to touch. We have already begun displaying these 3D models in our Stories in Stone exhibit and hope to offer more with our permanent collection as well.



Hugh Miller — from my collection

By Phil James

I have been a collector of Hugh Miller's books for about 35 years, plus portraits and other Miller material. I also have a reasonable collection of Lydia Miller's children's books, published under her pseudonym Harriet Myrtle, plus a few as Mrs Miller. I have been a member of The Friends since 2008, and previously had a small article published in issue 20 of *Hugh's News*, Winter 2014 titled "*Miller in America*". I have been a collector and preparator of fossils since I was a child, then developed an interest in the history of geology in the 1980's when I started putting together a collection of geological antiquarian books, maps, and portraits. From this, a special interest in Hugh Miller grew, and recently I thought I would like to share some more of my collection through *Hugh's News*, starting with a rather splendid portrait I acquired last year.

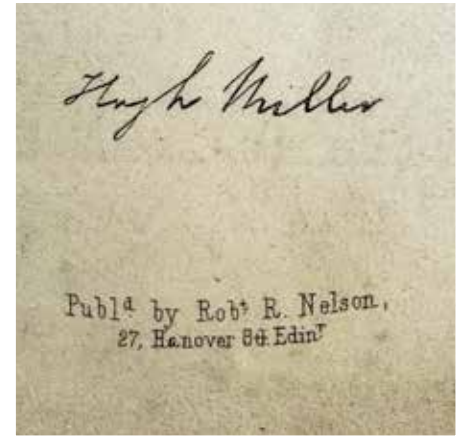
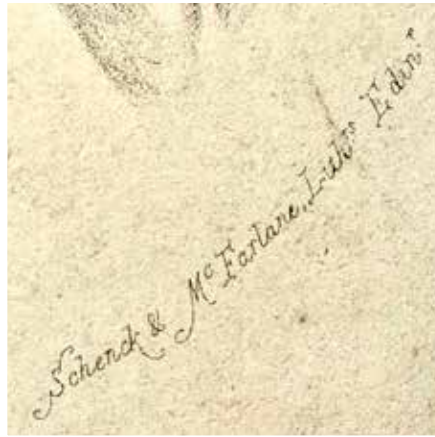
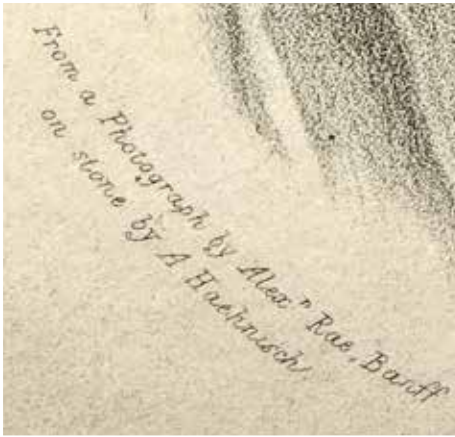
There are quite a number of portraits of Miller. The National Portrait Gallery in London has five according to their website; various different types, a photographic Carbon Print, three photographic albumen cartes-de-visite (CDV - Visiting Card), and an engraved mezzotint. As you would expect, the National Galleries of Scotland has a significantly

larger collection of Miller material and lists 55 "Artworks", the majority of which are photographic portraits. A Google search for Miller portraits includes others.

One of the CDV's in the London collection is by Alexander Rae (see third item - <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp52843/hugh-miller?search=sas&sText=Hugh+milller>). The date given is the mid-1850s, although as it is a photographic portrait it must clearly have been taken before Miller's death on 24th December 1856. The CDV shows Miller with his head tilted to his right and he is wearing a heavy wool jacket and waistcoat, white shirt, and a bow tie. My Lithograph portrait is "*From a Photograph by Alex'r Rae*", the same as this CDV. I have found another, rather more basic wood-engraved version produced in 1909, drawn by a T. D. Scott and engraved by the famous Dalziel Brothers. In my own collection, I have a copy of W. M. Mackenzie's "*Selections from the Writings of Hugh Miller*" 1908. The frontispiece is a reproduction of the portrait I have, albeit much smaller, and a reduced quality, and apart from Hugh Miller's facsimile signature, lacks all the publication detail. It is this version that I have seen published elsewhere.

I came across my splendid lithograph portrait on eBay in July last year, and purchased it for just £25, including postage and packing! And the seller, based in Bathgate, Scotland, had packaged it beau-





tifully. When I opened it, I was blown away by the size and quality of the Lithograph. The paper size is 16.75 inches by 11.5 inches (42.5 x 29cm), and the printed area 13 inches by 9 inches (33 x 23cm). Miller's head alone is 4.75 x 4 inches (12 x 10cm) including his bushy hair and beard!

Typical of lithographs from that era, the quality and fineness of detail is astounding, almost photographic. Compared to the CDV/original photograph, Miller's hair is bushier, and the image shows more of his jacket and waistcoat. Below his jacket on his right-hand side, it states "From a Photograph by Alex^r Rae, Banff on stone by A Haehnisch", and on his left side "Schenck & MacFarlane, Lith^{rs} Edin^g".

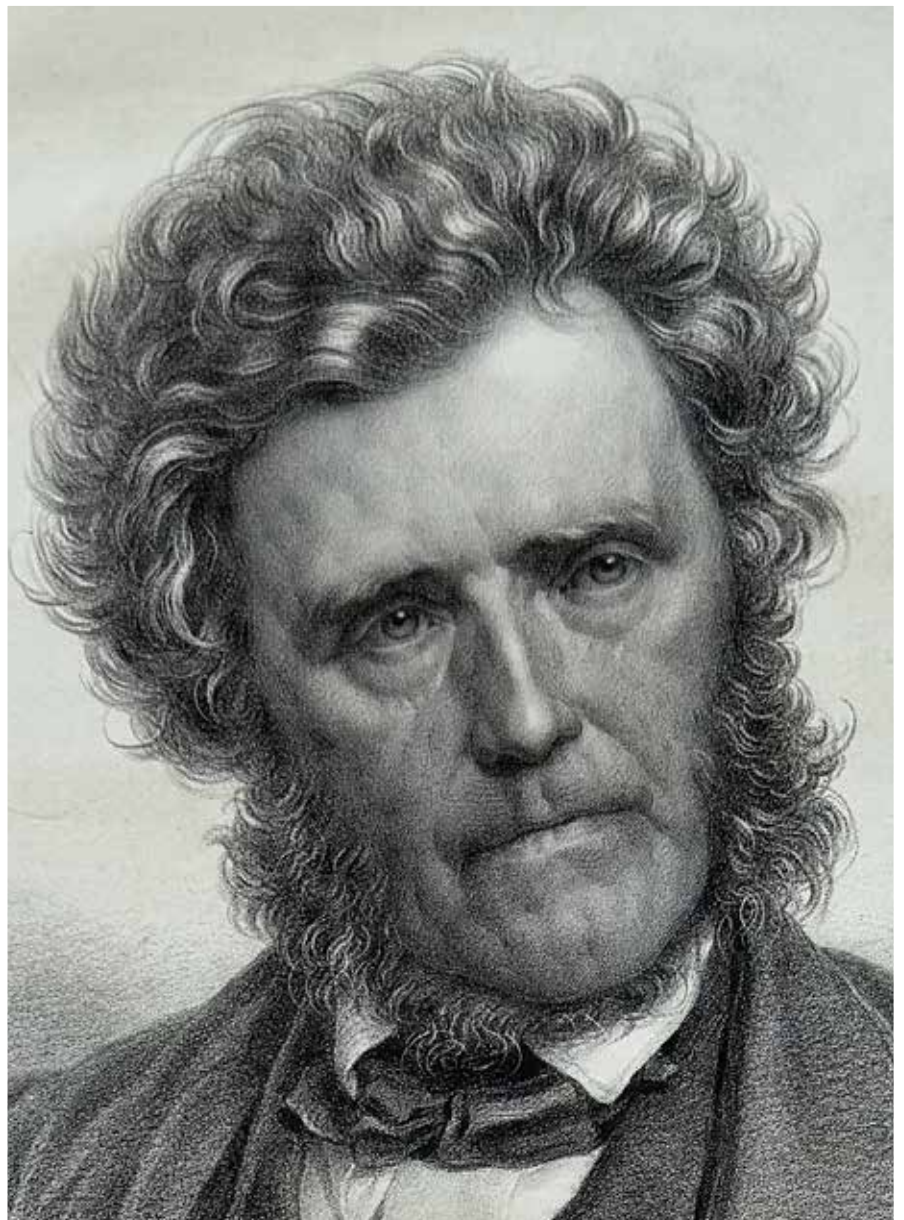
Below the portrait is Miller's facsimile signature, and below that "Publ^d by Rob^t R. Nelson, 27 Hanover St. Edin^g"

I cannot narrow down which Alexander Rae the photographer was, but the Scottish Stereophotographers website lists an Alexander Rae, active from 1853. Nor have I been able to trace the artist A. Haehnisch.

The lithographic printer/publisher firm Schenck & MacFarlane was set up in 1850; the partnership was dissolved in 1859, but MacFarlane continued to trade under this name until 1871.

Finally, the publisher Robert Renton Nelson was in business independently between 1840 - 1846, and 1853-1876. He operated from 27 Hanover St between 1853 and 1867.

So, whilst I cannot be certain of the exact date of this lithograph, I suspect it was published not so long after Miller's death, perhaps a leap of faith on my part, but it could well have been commissioned to celebrate Miller's life. If anyone has any further information on the lithograph, or comments, please contact me on philip.r.james55@gmail.com. Thank you.



Enquiries from our website

By Stephanie Kulesza

As membership secretary I receive many emails which come to us via the Friends of Hugh Miller website, and I have had some really interesting queries from all over the world in recent months. Here are a few – do keep your questions coming in to us! We love investigating and researching your enquiries.

New Zealand – someone trying to trace the heritage of her father whose middle name was Miller and who said he'd been to Cromarty to visit the Miller who was the Miller in his name. Sadly, so far, I haven't been able to work out if or how he is related due to lack of information - but I haven't given up yet!

USA - a member of the Free Church of Scotland Continuing here in the USA. He told me that there are 8 congregations here in the US, 1 in Canada, and 1 now in Mexico. He was introduced to Hugh Miller by one of their elders when he mentioned to him that a couple close to our congregation lost their nephew to suicide. He thought that it might be helpful to read the sermons surrounding Hugh Miller's death and that is why he reached out to the friends of Hugh Miller. This led me down several rabbit holes and research into back copies of The Witness. Sadly I didn't find any sermons for him but I found a wonderfully detailed description of Hugh Miller's funeral and notices of his death from all over England, Scotland and even Dublin, showing how famous he had been at the time of his death. I also contacted Dr. Michael Taylor who wrote the biography of Hugh Miller and he was kind enough to suggest several possible avenues of further research.

USA – a lady whose daughter is in High School in USA and is writing a paper on Hugh Miller and needed some information about books to read about Hugh. She is in an English Literature class where she needed to choose an author to complete a research project. She has always loved Science, and geology, so Hugh Miller was a great choice for her. I asked her to send me the finished paper!

New Zealand – a direct descendent of Hugh Miller's daughter Bessie got in touch and I ended up meeting her and her extended family in Cromarty in May and they all visited the Museum.

Finally - A query nearer to home from a gentleman on the Black Isle. His question was as follows: Charles Bannerman, the previous owner of Miller House, discovered during repairs to upper floor in 1989, a fragment of carved stone, bearing the initials MM and the date 1760. Is it still there? is anything more known about it? He referred to an item in the Inverness Courier 6 October 1989

I got in touch with the Museum for him but sadly they haven't discovered anything.

STORY IN STONE.— Cromarty artist Charles Bannerman is trying to trace the origin of a fragment of carved stone, bearing the initials MM and the date 1760, discovered during repairs to the upper floor of his three-storey house, in the town's Church Street. The house stands next door to the thatched cottage birthplace of Hugh Miller, geologist and writer, and was built during the 1790s by Hugh Miller's father, a schooner captain, who was drowned at sea in 1807 when Hugh was five. When Hugh married, he and his wife Lydia moved into the big house next door, which is still known as Miller House. The discovery of what appeared at first to be half a marriage stone, was made by workmen when they discovered a wall. Mr Bannerman is hoping to investigate the stone further when the repairs to his house have been completed.

Hugh Miller ventures into media!

BBC Radio Scotland's Out of Doors

We are delighted to say that Hugh Miller made an appearance in BBC Radio Scotland's Out of Doors programme, broadcast on Saturday 23rd August 2025. BBC journalist Helen Needham walked and talked with our own Bob Davidson, Sidney Johnston and Stephanie Kulesza, along Cromarty's foreshore, to learn about Miller, his fossil explorations, and his wider legacy. Unfortunately, the programme is not currently available on BBC Sounds, but we will alert members if it is to be repeated at any point in future.

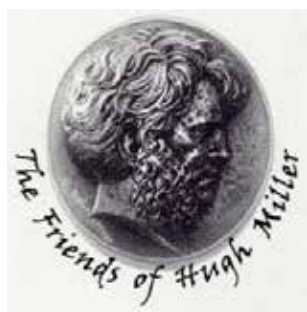
STV's What's On Scotland

The Miller Birthplace Cottage and Museum was celebrated by STV's 'What's On Scotland' programme on Friday 26th September 2025. James Ryan, NTS visitor guide at the Museum, provided a fantastic, enthusiastic summary of the Museum and local fossil walks, encouraging folk to visit. The Museum are hosting a celebration weekend for Miller's birthday this October, details below.

Hugh Miller's Big Birthday Weekend:

Friday 10th October 2025 marks Hugh's 223rd birthday, and over that weekend the team at the museum are preparing to celebrate with a big birthday party. Alongside fossil walks, kids' crafts, and fossil handling we are pleased to welcome living historian Andrew Newton who will be offering living history activities inside the cottage over the weekend inviting guests to experience life during the Victorian period. We are also pleased to welcome back to Cromarty storyteller Lizzie McDougall who will be telling folklore stories inside the cottage on the Sunday afternoon. We are still planning this exciting birthday weekend, so keep up to date by following us on Facebook or keeping an eye on the National Trust for Scotland website. The Big Birthday Weekend is Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th October – 11:00 to 15:30 and all activities bar fossil walks are included with entry into the museum (fossil walks at 9:30 on the Saturday and 10:00 on the Sunday).





The Friends of Hugh Miller MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Please download and complete the forms below then email to the Membership Secretary at:
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Annual subscription categories and rates, please mark with a cross whichever applies:

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Stephanie Kulesza, Membership Secretary can be reached at:

membership@thefriendsofhughmiller.org.uk or 07879614005

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