



Hugh's News

Magazine of
The Friends of Hugh Miller

Issue No 44
July 2020

Editor:
Martin Gostwick,
Secretary

Production Editor:
Piers Hemy

MUSEUM IN DANGER FROM NTS CRISIS

by Martin Gostwick

Hugh Miller Museum's future is in serious jeopardy as a result of the catastrophic fall in the National Trust for Scotland's income and revenues, caused by the closure of all properties open to the public during the Covid-19 lockdown this year.

As has been widely publicised, the Trust is estimated to lose £28m in income, and over £40m in stock market losses this year, and is planning to make 429 redundancies, as well as mothballing several iconic properties until 2022. Our Museum will remain closed for the rest of this year and is scheduled to reopen for a full season in 2021 - but over that hangs the question of the Trust's very survival, as does the fate of all its other properties.

Friends members will be very disappointed that the Museum's continued operation is once again in doubt, since it only just escaped the Trust's threat of closure ten years ago. The existence of the Middleton Fund endowment which rescued the property in 2010 is undoubtedly the key factor in the property being able to reopen, and our property manager, Dr Alix Powers-Jones, to retain her job amid the wholesale planned redundancies.



(continued on p2)

COMP TAKES FLIGHT

Great news - the Hugh Miller Writing Competition is to continue under new auspices, and the next one marks quite a change of direction. It will be themed on folklore - the area in which Hugh first established his reputation as a master story-teller, see story p 4.



Cromarty's mermaid - as featured in Lizzie McDougall's magic quilt. If Cromarty school pupil Bay Rochford is to be believed, the mermaid is still with us - at least in dreams!

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Community support	p	2
SOS appeal	p	3
ScotGov's stance	p	3
Writing comp takes wing	p	4
Ten winners	ps	5-16
Mucklebackit meets Miller	p	19
Lester Borley tribute	p	20
Anna Gordon's letter	p	22
Grange graves care	p	23

Find us on 



@friendsofmiller

MUSEUM IN DANGER

(continued from p1)

At a Zoom meeting with Friends chairman Bob Davidson MBE on 18th June with NTS fund-raising managers Ali MacLeod and Louise Stirton, Ms MacLeod said The Trust plans, "all things being equal" to open the Hugh Miller Birthplace Cottage and Museum in the Spring of 2021. But the refurbishment project known as Miller Retold, on which the Museum's prospects of greater success depend, has been put on indefinite hold. Mr Davidson was informed that the Middleton endowment which has been earmarked to finance the project is currently valued at around £820,000.

The chairman was also assured that "there is no plan at all just now" to re designate the Middleton Fund for other purposes. A change "would require conversation with the donor, and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)." The pausing of Miller Retold was put down by Ms MacLeod to "very difficult decisions to save costs." The issue of continuance with projects was "more about affordability" than public health regulation. She added: "As the situation (with the virus) evolves, and depending on the success of our appeal and other measures to real-ise income, projects will be 'un-paused' or developed. We cannot give a timeline on this."

Ms MacLeod did say, however, that the Trust would be happy to receive proposals for Miller Retold from The Friends, in order to "keep the momentum going." She confirmed that Culloden development manager Raoul Curtis-Machin, who is leading the project, will attend our AGM planned for 10th October at The Stables, Cromarty.

The Friends will therefore be consulting its whole membership on proposals which have already been drawn up, so that the feedback can be passed on to the Trust for consideration at the AGM.

Mr Davidson informed the Trust's representatives that The Friends are not in a position to support its national appeal, being committed to financing an access railing up to the Old St Regulus Burial Ground, where the infant Eliza Miller is buried, itself a scheme intended to boost footfall at the museum.

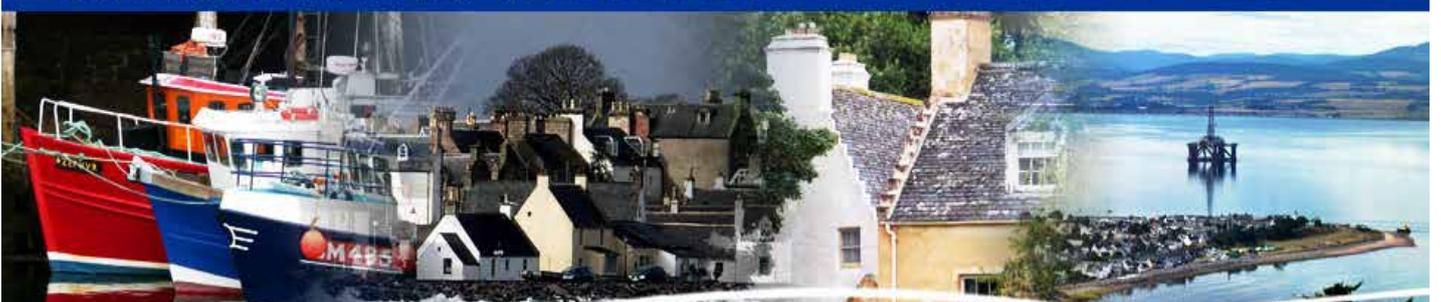
LOCAL RESPONSE TO NATIONAL CRISIS

This article is taken in full from the June 2020 issue of Cromarty Live, the Community Council's newsletter.

The Cromarty Community Development Trust has contacted the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) to offer its support during the crisis facing the conservation charity heralded by the pandemic. Its heritage properties and holiday accommodation have been closed since March to comply with the coronavirus lockdown. As a result, its income is forecast to drop by £28 million this year. The charity also disclosed it had made investment losses of £46 million due to stock market conditions. It is not yet clear how the NTS operation in Cromarty will be affected. But it is being reported that more than 420 NTS staff are at risk of redundancy across Scotland, as emergency plans are developed. The body said it will look to sell off non-heritage land and property, and seek support from the Scottish government and grant-giving bodies.

The CCDT recognises that the NTS has played a crucial role in the life of Cromarty, since it was gifted Hugh Miller's Cottage by Cromarty Town Council in 1938. The charity's stewardship of Hugh Miller's memory in the community has been crucial to the development of the town. The NTS's importance to the local economy has obviously grown greatly since then, as the cottage/museum attracted increasing numbers of visitors. The charity's holiday letting has only served to underline its role as a significant economic driver. The CCDT directors therefore contacted the NTS, to express our concern and support for the charity and its staff at this time of difficulty. We also asked the NTS if there was any way the development trust might be able to help safeguard the charity's operations in Cromarty through continued local control.

CROMARTY LIVE official site of Cromarty & District Community Council



"SAVE OUR SCOTLAND" APPEAL

Calling the effects of the Covid-19 virus "devastating," the National Trust for Scotland's appeal letter to its 365,000 members says: "We have had no visitors; our cafés and shops lie empty; and we've had to cancel all our events and holiday rentals. Our vital conservation work has been put on hold and the majority of our staff are furloughed."

Among "drastic and painful decisions" to cut costs, NTS says: "We did not recruit new seasonal staff, placed 70% of our staff on furlough and cancelled or postponed £9 million worth of conservation and maintenance projects for this year and a further £9 million for next year. "Sadly, this has still not been enough to overcome our losses and last month we were forced to put a considerable number of jobs (over 420) at risk of redundancy."

Chairman Sir Mark Jones concludes: Now there's a risk some of our buildings will need to remain closed to visitors and that we will no longer be able to protect our listed buildings, gardens, battlefields and countryside for future generations." The appeal letter confirms the picture: "Even with these measures, our ability to protect the places and stories which mean so much to us is threatened. To ensure that we can recover from this crisis and actively protect and promote our heritage into 2021, and beyond, we must raise additional funds. We have approached the Scottish government and other funders for support and we are investigating our non-heritage assets and restricted funds to release what we can, but this takes time."

"In order to begin our vital work again, we need to raise £2.5million in donations by the end of August. If every household donated £14 we would reach this target," says Sir Mark.

The Trust has accepted that The Friends of Hugh Miller charity is not in a position to donate as a group, but we are willing to encourage our members to consider a donation, and this can be done now online at nts.org.uk/donate, or text NTSSOS to 70970 to give £5.

SCOTGOV SAYS TRUST VITAL - BUT "REASSESS" CUTS

Hugh's News asked the Scottish Government's culture and tourism Cabinet Secretary, Fiona Hyslop, to comment on the situation facing the NTS, its decisions, and appeals for support.

We received the following reply from Helen Stephenson of the Culture and Historic Environment division in Ms Hyslop's ministry. It deserves careful reading.

23 June 2020

Thank you for your email received on 22 June 2020 regarding the future of the National Trust for Scotland (NTS).

The NTS is an important organisation in Scotland and plays a critical role in the preservation and management of some of our most significant national assets, including one of our six World Heritage Sites. We recognise that the sites in its estate are crucial to local environments, economies and communities across Scotland, particularly in many rural areas. Civil society organisations like the NTS are also essential to the delivery of our Environment Strategy, climate change ambitions and the wellbeing agenda.

Sadly, the COVID-19 outbreak has had a profound effect on the heritage sector in Scotland and we are working hard to support businesses and organisations as they navigate these difficult times. In May, a team from across the Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise was established to work alongside the NTS to explore the support that might be required to ensure it can carry on its valuable work. These discussions are ongoing, but we are committed to working with the Trust to ensure its long-term future.

As you may be aware, we are concerned about the NTS announcement regarding proposed redundancies and were disappointed that the decision was taken ahead of confirmation from the UK Government about the future of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). We have called on the NTS to reassess its position and have been clear that any public support should be focused on minimising job losses and keeping properties and sites open.

Helen Stephenson

CHE : Sponsorship and Funding



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

COMP IS READY TO SPREAD ITS WINGS

by Lara Reid

The Hugh Miller Writing Competition (HMWC) has enjoyed five years of success since it began in 2015. With the third competition almost wrapped up for 2020 I am delighted that the competition has grown in size and stature over this time. The competition name is gaining ground and we continue to actively engage a wider public with both Hugh Miller and his legacy, and the fantastic geological heritage of Scotland.

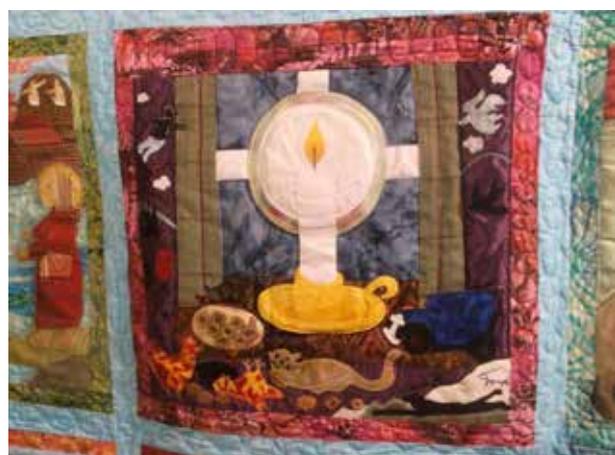
The Scottish Geodiversity Forum and the Friends of Hugh Miller have provided organisational and financial support since 2015, and this has helped drive our success. With the Scottish Geodiversity Forum now dissolved, I would like to outline the competition's future direction.

I propose that the HMW Competition become an independent organisation, run by a small committee (detailed below) as a voluntary (unincorporated) association. The Competition will benefit considerably from having its own committee, bank account, dedicated website and social media presence. A bespoke website will allow the Competition to develop its reputation and reach; an overhaul of the Competition's branding and website content will ensure that the astonishing high quality of entries are not only maintained, but are expanded on in future years. Promoting the work of the winners will become a core component of this new image – it is their beautiful writing that forms the backbone of the Competition, after all.

For the HMW Competition to take this next step we are seeking the support of our much-valued partnership organisations. We would like to invite the FOHM to partner us going forward, along with most of our original partners (and possibly some new ones). We will continue actively engaging with the geoscience community across Scotland, and build on the networks established thus far. We will also be taking a much more active role in promoting our partners, for example linking to the Friends website from our own, and actively sharing content through social media and events.

On a personal note to FOHM; we will take Miller's name and all that he stood for as the pivot around which our Competition will run. This means we will actively seek to explore themes outwith the strict geology framework we have worked with so far. For 2021-22, our theme will be Folklore.

The dissolution of the Forum provides an ideal moment for the Hugh Miller Writing Competition to spread its wings and become an independent entity. It is an exciting opportunity, and I hope you'll join us, as outlined above, in this new venture.



The legend of 'Boba's Lantern', the Avoch fishermen's watchlight; this is one of the panels in Lizzie McDougall's magic folklore quilt.

Proposed HMWC committee:

Chair / Treasurer: Lara Reid (competition organiser (2015-20))

Social media / website content: Elsa Panciroli

Webmaster / designer: Matt Humpage

Education and outreach: Janie Verburg

Admin support: Alex Woodcock



FRIENDS "GO FOR IT" BIG TIME

by Martin Gostwick

We have wasted no time in congratulating the new independent HMWC set up, wishing it all success, and confirming our continued support.

The Friends of Hugh Miller, as co-sponsors of the competition since its launch in 2015, have immediately pledged that we will be ready as in the past to contribute with publicity, hospitality, prizes, and funds for projects such as publications and events. We welcome that Miller's name and all that he stood for will continue to be the "pivot" of the competition, and the decision to explore themes outwith the previous strict geological framework; we are particularly pleased that the theme for the next competition will be folklore, given that Hugh was a master story-teller.

We also welcome the launch of a dedicated website and social media presence, and the use of it to promote our Friends website and those of other partners. This should ensure the Competition can develop its reputation and reach as envisaged. The sparkling anthology, *Conversations in Stone*, drawn principally from the prize-winners of the first two competitions, is available to order from our website, £9.50 inc p & p).

Here follows the 10 other winning entries to the third competition, set out in random order.

Adult prose non-fiction first prize

MOVING WITH GRANITE:

a climb into space and time on the Cairngorm plateau

Anna Fleming

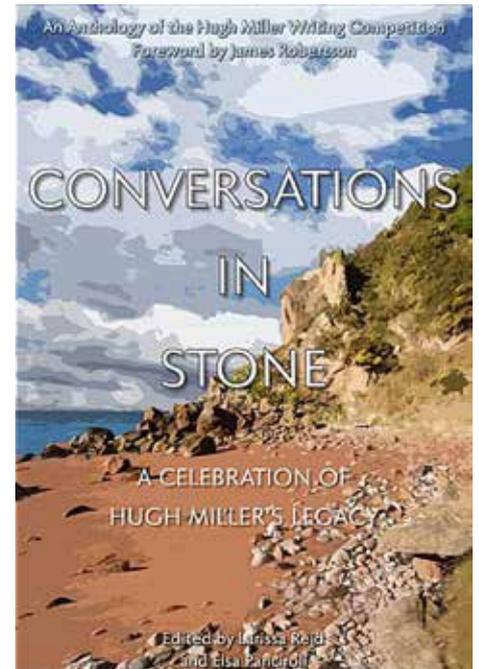
On a grassy ledge high inside the corrie bowl, we pause, breathless. Below, the Great Slab rumples its way down into the basin. A luminous pink plate perfectly angled to catch the sun: this feature is visible for miles on clear summer days. Yet up here the slab is just one fractured rock among many.

We had slogged up from the ski-centre, following paths through heather and burns, picking our way between boulders and trudging up steep slopes, feet sliding on moss, grass and scree. We passed the lochan inside the corrie, which glittered and waved a deep enticing turquoise. Sweet floral notes hung in the air. We carried on, aiming for a certain line.

Over the past few years, I have roamed the Cairngorms, charging up summits, teetering across boulder fields, sliding in snow, peering into lochs. The landscape fascinates me. The hills roll and undulate –rising up, stretching out, falling away –the scale can be unfathomable. The massif is unlike any other in Britain. And the climate is harsh. Conditions change in the blink of an eye. A pleasant morning disappears in a howling blizzard. The Cairngorms are a hard place to grasp.

Different disciplines have their own ways of questioning landscapes. Archaeologists dig through layers of history. Ecologists survey life: identifying species, assessing distribution and noting change. Geologists plumb the mineral matter of the universe. Climbing is my discipline. I climb to feel the landscape. Rock sharpens the senses. With hand, eye, mind and body thoroughly engaged, I briefly touch a distinctive essence of place.

In my quest to know the intricate, weathered and harsh world of the Cairngorms, I was drawn to one particular line. At the edge of the plateau, in a buttress that towers over Coire an Lochan, two rock faces are severed by a deep cut. The cleft is clear and dark; the line is striking. Savage Slit runs clean into the granite like a knife cut in butter.



Savage Slit is a prized winter climbing route. When the ice sets in, mountaineers travel across the UK to tackle this test piece. Cocooned from the cold in gloves and thick layers, the winter climbers carve out their routes, stabbing axes and crampons into the frozen veneer. I prefer to work with friction. I like gripping rock, observing its character and contours, feeling its blemishes through thin rubber soles. After flaking the rope and loading my harness with metal gear, the route begins. A jumble of broken rock and ramps lead up to the slit. I clamber quickly through the clutter. I want to feel my body inside the granite.

Granite is the substance of the Cairngorms. Beneath all of the surface matter –the plants, gravel and wind-scoured soils – lies the bedrock. It was formed some 427 million years ago from batholiths of molten rock that cooled slowly underground. My hands clasp ancient crystals. Grey quartz, pink and white feldspar and flakes of black biotite mica. The surface is smooth and grainy. The rock grips This granite was fired into existence by the Caledonian orogeny. Continents collided, the Iapetus Ocean closed and rock was folded, crumpled, cooked and uplifted. From the upheaval, an immense mountain chain rose. Cairngorm granite formed beneath peaks of Himalayan scale. Over millions of years, wind, water and ice eroded away these giants, although remnants can still be found, stretching from Norway, through Scotland into Ireland, Greenland and America.

Reaching the foot of the slit, I discover the opening is surprisingly wide. From below, I had thought I would climb inside the dark column. But the slit is a loose sock: it will not hug my body. Instead, I look out to the rock face.

The face is jointed in a pattern of horizontal and vertical breaks like masonry. The gaps provide plenty of pockets for my hands and feet, but each block is rounded. There are no sharp edges to hang off. Nothing to pinch. I place my right hand onto a sloping edge; find another curved lip for my right foot and step up, pulling my palm into the granite. My hand holds; my toes stay on. Confidence grows: I push against the stone, trusting friction.

Balancing on ledges, I navigate two rock faces, sometimes bridging across them, legs stretched over the slit. The climbing is smooth, the route is clear, my gear is spaced but I feel well protected. This was not how I had imagined Savage Slit. I had expected drama and tension: to meet a great challenge and feel my nerves singing with the mountain exposure. Instead, I feel comfortable. Like a warm river on a hot afternoon, the rock welcomes my body.

Some people assume climbing is all about adrenaline. That climbers get on the rock to feel the rush. For me, climbing has little to do with adrenaline. I get a rush when things go wrong. Climbing demands intense concentration and precise movement; adrenaline makes me shake. On the rock, there is no space for anything other than the world beneath my fingertips. I am alert, receptive and responsive. My hands speak to stone. Everything else disappears.

Ahead, the flow is broken. The slit is plugged by a huge chockstone. Ice and water must have worked at the stone, slowly fracturing and loosening the roots, until the connection between block and rock-face was severed. Instead of crashing down to the corrie below, the block slumped into the slit where it wedged fast.

I consider my approach. To climb over will require some strenuous hauling. When Richard Frere climbed Savage Slit in July 1946, he headed inside the slit here. For Frere, an early climber on the first ascent of the route, squirming inside the grimy darkness was safer than tackling the exposed face. Seventy years later, climbing has changed. I tackle the chockstone direct, reaching my arms to the back of the block and plunging my feet into cracks before walking up the stone as I haul my body up and over. My muscles fire up, my heart thumps, and I stand on top of the stone beaming. Then I peer down into the slit. My stomach flips. The slit runs deep into the mountain, stretching back and back. Like a crevasse, the cleft plummets down into a terrible yawning interior. Far below, in the murky depths of the cleft lies scattered debris. A water bottle. A harness. A shoe.

Granite tells stories. The lost objects trapped inside the slit say that modern climbers have been here (and some encountered unexpected difficulties). Ivory scratches on the grey-pink rock announce the passage of crampons. Loch Avon and the Lairig Ghru tell stories of a different scale. These landscape features

bear witness to the incredible force of ice. The deep troughs show the brute force with which glaciers ate into the plateau. Wet ice sliding over the bedrock ground granite into blocks and gravel that were then transported and deposited elsewhere. Across the glens lies scattered mounds, moraines and erratic boulders. Ice moves mountains.

High on the plateau, the granite tors tell another story. The great weathered stone sculptures on Beinn Mheadhoin, Ben Avon and Bynack Mor suggest that the ice never moved there. The tors would have been mangled. Instead, perhaps, an immense motionless ice field capped the plateau.

What is the story of Savage Slit? Was the space opened in recent glacial times by water, frost and ice? Or is the gap older? Does it date back to the first cooling of the granite many eras before, when the rock hardened, shrank and cracked?

Shaking out my hot muscles, I look up and out across the strath. From micro-rock-focus, vision shifts to take in an epic panorama of lochs, mountains, tiny towns, turbines and sky. For a moment, I feel dizzy. I am as miniscule as the pink granite gravel set loose and blowing across the plateau, slowly shrinking into sand that will eventually make its way back down into the earth again.

I'm not a geologist, I'm a climber, but climbing, like geology, is full of movement. In grappling with hard matter, mind and body are challenged. Stretched. Changed. Climbing provides a route into the hidden complexities of our dynamic planet. Moving with the Cairngorms, I touch on vast and ancient matter: mountain building and erosion; fire and ice; the global rock cycle. On Savage Slit, I briefly grasp an immense depth of time. Granite opens worlds beyond reckoning.

Adult poetry highly commended

THE 'OLD MAN' TEETERS

Stuart Graham

Pangea has her breakdown
As Laurentia departs. Unconcerned
The Plesiosaurs dance from Eigg to Muck,
Dodging the shark infested waters
Where the three toed treads
Point their way to Skye.

McLeod's Table is set for the show,
Whilst Quirang to Storr
The Trotternish teeters,
His high point looking down
On the Bodach, the
"Old Man", who dances
His rotational glide,
lowering his book forged in stone,
his two dozen leaves of lava,
outpourings of Beinn Edra's wisdom.

He Skudiburghs down on Kilmaluag
As below Valtos gathers the dinosaurs
under the helm of his kilt
And fastens tight with
sparkling broach of zeolite.

Adult poetry highly commended

A STONE'S THROW FROM EASDALE

Carol Shea

Crossing the Atlantic Bridge, its south side awash
with fairy foxglove, the call is strong. A lifetime ago
a minibus re-fuelled opposite the Tigh
an Truish. You ate plastic toasties, drank warm lager.
Then, you sought to read the rocks; indigo foliated slates twinkling
with millennia of micrometric mica. Weeks of mapping, skimming
plotting; a bucket of stones, a dusty rock hammer your spoils.
Discarded, one by one, as you grew, moved, changed,
lost, contracted. Just one remains. In your hand, it tells the
human stories of people and place. Formed in
Palaeozoic pressures; split by erupting fault lines,
raging subterranean currents; torn along fragile
grinding tectonic plates; scree wind lashed into silicate
and clay – until Rodinia ruptured. Rains raised Ancient Iapetus;
shores re-shaped by volatile cycles: collisions; divisions; melting;
freezing and melding. Morph in claymation. Formed, re-formed, bent
but not quite broken.

In '45, the Campbells, Netherlorn men, came. Not for princes
or crowns, but rock cleavage and silver pounds.
Castles consolidated with borrowed brides and ransom spoils.
They paid for honest toil, modernised and mechanised.
500 men quarried, split, napped; wedged in watery clefts
on denuded crags, creaking joints engorged as they hewed out
five million princess and duchess-cut tiles, roofing castles
and cathedrals in worlds old and new, building communities.
Spoil filled causeways melded island to island.

One stormy night, its defences breached, core sucked, dreams
submerged, livelihoods cleared by nature's rage, returns declined,
meagre livings scraped. A few endured. Heart still beats to a new tempo.

Now coaches cross the old stone bridge daily. Disgorged tourists
savour tasty fare, buy postcards not petrol, try on the kilt,
giggle in Highland Arts. Plinkety-plink pipes and fiddles
tweed, tartan tat, tablet, warm shortbread and impotent art.
They bounce in fast boats to exhilarating whirlpools, cheer
World Stone Skimming Championships, wheel possessions
in colourful barrows from the tiny quayside.



A bowl of seafood, glass of Chablis, white-washed
holiday lets at your back, you caress the stone one last time
then skim it back into its inky womb.

Under 18s Prose first prize**LUING**

Kate Knight

'Life itself is school and nature is always a fresh study' -Hugh Miller

Waves of the small stormy channel crash against the side of the tiny ferry boat travelling across to Luing. A mist of sea spray hits me stinging my skin as the salty spray flies forcefully off the tips of waves. The wind whips violently through my hair, making it swirl around my head in a messy cloud. The back of my throat burns as I breathe in lungfuls of salty air. The air is filled with the sound of frantic barking from the boisterous dog standing at the bow of the boat. The ferry boat slides in beside a tiny concrete pier. The pier is encrusted with salt crystals and seaweed has fastened itself to the edges, growing out in great clumps like ivy growing in gaps between the crumbling bricks of long forgotten houses. By the pier, the rocks are pitch black mottled with chocolate brown. Shallow pools of crystal clear water have collected in the indents in the rocks. I start splashing around in these beautiful pools, glad I wore my wellies, but there doesn't seem to be anything to find except a thin coat of slippery slime on the rocks. Suddenly something catches my eye inside one particularly large pool. A tiny vibrant green spiral shaped seashell and a crab scuttling sideways across the edges of the pool, desperate not to be noticed. Like the shell, the crab is a fluorescent green and as large as my hand. I wonder why they are so green? The steep winding road climbs up the hill passing a field containing two horses. The horses munch their grass contentedly as I pass, seeming not to notice me. One has a beautiful sleek chestnut coat and the other is grey, white dappled with black. I wish I could stroke them but there is a sturdy barbed wire fence and a maze of thorns in my way. Finally, I come to a small gravel track leading off the main road. The small track tapers away into a dirt path, slowly becoming more and more boggy until my feet are sinking so far into the mud, I can barely walk. Jumping from tuft of grass to tuft of grass they are like islands amidst a swirling sea of mud. Eventually the path disappears all together and I emerge in a field of chestnut cows, baying and tossing their massive heads. Keeping my distance, I walk around the edge of the field, careful to avoid the numerous cowpats and piles of sheep's droppings. Bare indents of tractor wheels form a track leading out of the field and into the heather covered hills, blooming in soft pinks and purples. However, the track is less beautiful, so muddy it could almost be mistaken for a war zone. I trudge up a steep, nearby hill to avoid it. Suddenly a gaping crevice opens up before me. I stumble. Chunks of slate and moss sliding out from under me. I have found one of the long-abandoned slate mines which scar the landscape slicing through the hills! Massive chunks of slate still remain; some scattered everywhere and some sitting in neat piles cemented together by tufts of moss. Scrambling down the hill I find a gentle slope, which I skid down and walk through the mine. Massive uneven walls of solid rock tower above me blocking out the sun.

(continued on p10)

(continued from p9)

The slow trickle of water seeping from the walls makes it eerie yet beautiful in a strange way. As I emerge the sun blinds me, high up in the sky as it is. How time flies? After trudging through the hills as the sun begins to sink, I reach a small village of neat white-washed houses with slate tiled roofs. The village smells fresh and salty with piles of sparkling seashells scattered outside every door. As I walk through the village the smell of seafood drifts lazily through the air, up my nose and down my throat. I can almost taste the salty muscles and freshly caught shrimps. As the sun touches the horizon, I reach the beach. The gigantic seaside slate mines tower over me on one side and the water cuts me off on the other. I walk along a narrow ledge, at least 5 feet above the beach and as soon as I get a chance, I jump off the ledge landing on the rocky beach below. Not a grain of sand in sight. Massive slabs of solid dependable rock jut out from the beach as if a giant has haphazardly chucked them over his shoulder. They have landed at an angle burying themselves deep into the ground. White marble lines snake across the biggest rocks in a loose pattern. I have never seen rocks like these before. Matt black smudges into a pale grey; pale grey merges into a honey brown. They truly are beautiful. Some smaller rocks glitter strangely in the dying light of the sun. Curious, I pick one up. Little chunks of rusty metal are littered throughout like chocolate chips in a cookie. I wonder what sort of metal it is and how on earth it ended up so deep inside these rocks? I wonder if I can dig it out of the rocks? Maybe I will pocket one and try later, but for now I will sit and watch the sun's last rays. The slow trickle of water seeping from the walls makes it eerie yet beautiful in a strange way. As I emerge the sun blinds me, high up in the sky as it is. How time flies? After trudging through the hills as the sun begins to sink, I reach a small village of neat white-washed houses with slate tiled roofs. The village smells fresh and salty with piles of sparkling seashells scattered outside every door. As I walk through the village the smell of seafood drifts lazily through the air, up my nose and down my throat. I can almost taste the salty muscles and freshly caught shrimps. As the sun touches the horizon, I reach the beach. The gigantic seaside slate mines tower over me on one side and the water cuts me off on the other. I walk along a narrow ledge, at least 5 feet above the beach and as soon as I get a chance, I jump off the ledge landing on the rocky beach below. Not a grain of sand in sight. Massive slabs of solid dependable rock jut out from the beach as if a giant has haphazardly chucked them over his shoulder. They have landed at an angle burying themselves deep into the ground. White marble lines snake across the biggest rocks in a loose pattern. I have never seen rocks like these before. Matt black smudges into a pale grey; pale grey merges into a honey brown. They truly are beautiful. Some smaller rocks glitter strangely in the dying light of the sun. Curious, I pick one up. Little chunks of rusty metal are littered throughout like chocolate chips in a cookie. I wonder what sort of metal it is and how on earth it ended up so deep inside these rocks? I wonder if I can dig it out of the rocks? Maybe I will pocket one and try later, but for now I will sit and watch the sun's last rays burst over the horizon casting the beach in a pale golden shadow. Luing.

Under 18s poetry 3rd prize**CAIRNGORMS**

Penny Capewell

The moon was high, and shining bright,
A traveller was lost in the night,
The snow around him, a blanket of white,
The traveller looks round in fright.

A silent shadow on the ground,
The traveller looks all around,
But the night is quiet; there is no sound,
The traveller knows not what he has found.

The moon was high, and shining bright,
A traveller was lost in the night,
The snow around him, a blanket of white,
The traveller looks round in fright.

All of a sudden; through the snow,
There appeared an old black crow,
As it flew it spoke slow,
"Tell me what I need to know."

The moon was high, and shining bright,
A traveller was lost in the night,
The snow around him, a blanket of white,
The traveller looks round in fright.

In his pocket a soft smooth stone,
Inside that, an animal of bone,
All of this creature remains unknown,
The traveller wonders whether to let it go.

The moon was high, and shining bright,
A traveller was lost in the night,
The snow around him, a blanket of white,
The traveller looks round in fright.

"Give the stone" seems to whisper the dawn,
"Or your life will be withdrawn,"
But in his pocket it is gone,
His chance of escape seems to be none.

The moon was high, and shining bright,
A traveller was lost in the night,
The snow around him, a blanket of white,
The traveller looks round in fright.

Under 18's poetry highly commended

THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY

Mia Chisholm

A beautiful place
The cool wind whooshes right past you
blows the past away
You are a new person now
You are allowed to forget who you were the day before
become the person you have dreamed to be
Leave your sadness behind
Let the happiness flow into you
Just stare into the open space
breathe in the cool air
remember you can be whoever you want to be
Stop
Think
Realise
How many storms the rocks have been through
they are still standing
you can face the same number of tough times
keep standing
storms don't last forever
neither will your tough times
you just need to
Forgive
Forget
Create

Under 18s prose third prize

THE ISLE OF STAFFA

Daisy Stewart Henderson

Born from the earth on a darkened day, clouds of sulphur blanketed a silver horizon. Sculpted by fire, with all her imperfect edges silk rubbing against nature's maternal kindness, she set the ocean alight. Ebony black, spawn of molten lava succumbing to an icy sea, the island was born of beautiful conflict. With a burning touch which left the recipient cold, she spoke in the melancholy keys of an organ, with a body forged from its pipes. Mysteries inside, soft songs of things they could almost understand, her truth was deep buried.

Birds flew, rested in her arms. The currents flowed warm, reminding her on winter's bitterest nights with a soft embrace that the world was harsh, but not cruel.

Years leapt with the dolphins, the tranquillity of warmer waters leaving their glistening fins pointed to the south. The winds outgrew their playful dances around the island, wrestling with winter, until they carried only cold. A gown of mottled grey cloud cloaked her unwillingly, leaving her tripping over lightning and rain.

The warmth of the earth grew ever more distant, a hint of anger in her waiting magma. The flow of life lessened, veins severed. From darkened lava, drying blood, she formed lungs.

Lost at sea, with stars which at times seemed afraid of the moon, she waited. Strange beauty, entrancingly austere. An arrow fired to the depths, gannets hunt around her shores. The ocean's secrets rush over their icy eyes, her dying heat pulsating in the water. Shipwrecked, she waits for the call of her kin. Across the earth, volcanic sisters rise. Bathed in tropical sun, white sands disguise their rugged form. Why must solitude sting more when it's all you've ever known?

Singing with a howling gale she finds hope in a minor key. The fire of youth dims, she faces it with dignity, not childish rage. Years wasted mourning the things she never had. She never felt the peace of warmth. She watches the birds fly in from the north. Puffins with faces painted like porcelain dolls of a fading era land in great numbers. Grass sprouts from her troubled soils, slowly growing green. A new generation of dolphins plays, drawn back by the winds of change.

Within her, crystal waters lap at pillars, the notes of an ancient song. A cathedral of the earth, strange solace hums in her hollow heart. Ring across the oceans as they tumble and find their way. The truth rings in an eerie tone, unexpected, entrancing awe. Can the beat of her heart echo across a turbulent sea, leaving it calm like a sheet of glass?

Peace is easily shattered. But the birds fly on gentle wings. And we should too. Listen in silence which enthralls you with its emptiness. Hear her echoes. Hear her truth.



Under 18's prose 3rd prize

SMOO CAVE: 'A NATURAL WILDERNESS'

Rebekah Macpherson

Dark shadows danced and flickered on the rocks, casting their eerie silhouettes on the roof of the cave. Shots of light darted across the damp ceiling before dripping onto the pebbles lining the floor of the cave. Pools of murky water lay still and silent; their glass-like surfaces frozen to the rocks. Only the occasional droplet of water disrupted the silence, making perfect rings on the pool surfaces, and echoes that resounded for what felt like hours. Dark crevasses hid in the shadows, not revealing themselves for fear of the light. Home to whatever unknown horrors might lie waiting in the gloom. Stalagmites and stalactites hung and the ominous and foreboding atmosphere.

Might it have been any other stranger to wander into the cave, they would have been deterred by the dark and despondent appearance. Yet you and I would find its mystic walls inviting and intriguing. We would venture far into the depths of silence, never scared, never hesitant. Perhaps the naivety and audacity of youth is what pushed us forward. Carefree children, diving in where others would not dare.

If we strayed far enough in from the mouth of the cave, we would find a waterfall dashing down the rocks; the white spray of the water soaking our clothes and forcing us to laugh. The deep lagoons of pitch-black water swelling below our feet like an endless abyss. The roar of the fall as deafening as an ocean, and yet the silent spirit of the cave was not drowned out. The fall seemed to come from nowhere. However long and hard we looked we could not see a start to it. I am sure if we were to see it now, there would only be a small stream of water, hardly as majestic as we once thought it was.

The monsters deep in hiding did not frighten us; they were part of the cave, and for you and I we could not imagine the cave without them; not just the cave; our cave.

I remember we used to play around the little stream at the mouth of the cave. Just far enough to be in daylight, but close enough as to see the interior. From there, the immense hollow structure looked unnatural, and almost fantastical. Occasionally on our visits we would walk further from the cave, until completely out of view. There we would find ourselves on a remote and sandy beach. One filled with the calls of gulls, and footprints of the oystercatchers embedded in the wet sand. Whenever one was to take to the air, streaks of black, white and orange added to the murky grey sky. There we would run and play in the sand, our shrieks of laughter the only noise apart grew, their presence adding to the birds and the sea. A complete natural wilderness.



From above, or from the side where the cave was hidden from sight, it was hard to imagine how it existed there at all. When at last the land was worn and tired of us, as we were of it, we would wave a fond farewell to the cave and return to normality. The choking calls of the herring gulls, the roar of the sea and the deafening silence of the cave still ringing in our ears. Only in the knowledge, and hope that we would return some day.



And finally ... two set in Cromarty

Under 18's prose highly commended

THE MERMAID'S STONE

Bay Rochford

Iris and her little brother Magnus loved to explore the beaches in Cromarty. Having so much to see right outside their door was something they cherished. Every day after school the children would run home, grab a snack and sprint down to the shore. They would collect lots of interesting things and fill their pockets to the point they were about to burst. Then head home, empty them onto the kitchen table and show their parents their "treasure".

One day they were on the beach by the Royal Hotel and Magnus spotted a peculiar shaped stone, it had many swirls and stripes and was perfectly smooth. It glowed a soft blue colour. He stuffed it into his pocket, it was oddly light, and he could barely feel it at all. When they returned to their house, he showed the family his stone, they were all enchanted by his find and its beauty.

"You should take it to the Hugh Miller's Museum and ask an expert about it." said their mum. So that's what they did, after school the next day they skipped along to the museum. They showed the stone to a lady at the counter, "That is a rare gem called a moonstone, they are very expensive, and you should keep it very safe."

Magnus and Iris went home as happy as can be and celebrated with cake and lemonade. But that night when the children were sound asleep in their bedroom, they started to hear a strange song. It was a soft gentle voice but somewhat haunting and eerie. They saw a cave by the shore, and two emerald green eyes, like little gemstones in the deep blackness of the cave. When they wake up they ignore their dream, but when the dream comes back again, and again they become suspicious of the moonstone, the children head down to the beach and throw the stone back into the sea, finally released from the spell. Or so they thought..

That night they had the nightmare again and heard a screeching voice, "HOW DARE YOU THROW AWAY THE STONE! RETURN THE STONE TO THE CAVE OR YOU WILL BE PUNISHED! Magnus woke up shaking after the dream and crawled into his sister's bed for comfort. Then he saw it, the moonstone was sitting on his bedside table. He woke Iris up and showed her the stone. They tried to think a way out of this, but they only had one choice; do as the voice says. As soon as the morning came Iris and Magnus headed in their wellies and jackets, Magnus with the stone in his pocket, as they took it to the cave.

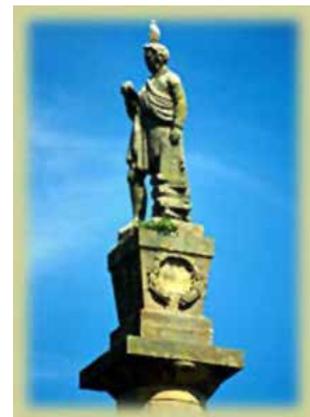
Iris quickly realized that they had no idea where to go, but then Magnus heard the voice whispering in the distance. They followed the voice over crooked rocks and swampy grass until the voice was shouting in their faces. But there was nobody there. The voice stopped abruptly and a mystical song started. As it did, Magnus (with the stone in his pocket) subconsciously started walking to the water. Iris dived into the icy cold water. There was a pale-green, gilled creature before them, it had a long scaly tail, webbed hands with sharp claws and emerald green eyes like gemstones. A mermaid. Iris was desperate for air, but she couldn't leave her brother. She struggled through the water and unzipped the pocket holding the stone. She grabbed the treasure and threw it in the direction of the mermaid. She then pulled her little brother out of the water and quickly inhaled the fresh air. Magnus coughed and spluttered a bit, but they were unharmed. The children agreed to never ever go treasure hunting again, just in case the mermaid came again.

Under 18's poetry highly commended

HUGH MILLER LIMERICK

Charlie Torley

Hugh Miller was a geologist and writer,
 He was also a great fossil hunter.
 He never gave up,
 No matter his luck,
 And was the best man from Cromarty ever.



LILLEMOR JERNQVIST - THE INSPIRED VISITOR - RETIRES

The Friends of Hugh Miller records its thanks to Ms Lillemor Jernqvist for her many great services over several years to our management committee. She has been forced to retire because "my health is treating my body very badly."

Lillemor was initially inspired to become a Friends member by her chance visit to our Museum with her partner Derek Lancaster-Gaye soon after Miller House opened. She responded particularly to the portrait of Hugh's wife Lydia in the Parlour, and to the flowers on a windowsill in the top floor placed in memory of their first-born daughter Eliza who died in infancy.

In consequence, they visited Eliza's grave in the Old St Regulus Burial Ground, and subsequently funded the relettering of the headstone by an expert conservationist. The Friends are now seeking to have an access railing installed leading up the steep slope to the graveyard, after she and Derek, and former property manager Frieda Gostwick raised the difficulties of climbing it for the infirm.



Lillemor Jernqvist

Lillemor later took up an invitation to contribute to the memorial plaques to 100 famous Scots women commissioned by the Scottish Parliament by naming Lydia, the "young woman in love" portrayed in Miller House. She subsequently attended the opening at Holyrood of a permanent digital exhibition to which she contributed a filmed personal account.

On the management committee, she served as a valuable adviser on the importance of the Miller family to Hugh's story, and the recognition of that will inform the planning of the proposed Miller Retold refurbishment of the exhibitions.

She tells us she will continue to follow the fortunes of the museum and The Friends, and to continue visiting Cromarty when her health permits.



"I WANT SILLER MR MILLER, I ONLY WANT SILLER!"

by Martin Gostwick

A fantastical tale has landed in our midst of a young balladeer who beards Hugh Miller in the editor's office of *The Witness* to cadge a loan in order to pursue his career. He succeeds.

Our source was a legendary Scottish musical artist, Ewan McVicar, who happens to be a Cromarty neighbour and greatly admires Miller (see introduction on next page).

Ewan tells me: "I found this tale while rummaging around my book collection. I live in a library as you probably do, and wondered why I had this book when I came across the story. I was fascinated by someone selling songs on the hoof and thought you might be interested."

The book is *Rural Rhymes and Sketches in East Lothian* written by someone glorying in the name Samuel Mucklebackit. He is another late Victorian author writing in Scots, much like William Alexander and his *Johnny Gibb of Gashetneuk*, which we featured in *Hugh's News No 42*, (March 2020).

Inquiries soon revealed, through an invaluable archive called the John Gray Centre run by East Lothian Council, that Mucklebackit was a pseudonym for James Lumsden (1839-1909) a farmer who became a prolific versifier in the Scots leid, initially in local papers, much like William Alexander in Fife.

His rural rhymes and reminiscences appeared in the *Haddington Courier* between 1860 and 1865 when in his early to mid-20s. The encounter with Hugh in the *Witness* office, if it happened, occurred in his 1853, when he was 14. The collection was published in 1885.

Like so many Victorian Scots writers, Hugh Miller included, Lumsden loved the poetry in the mither tongue of Burns and Robert Fergusson. The Cromarty man would have well understood him since they both spoke in a broad Scots brogue.

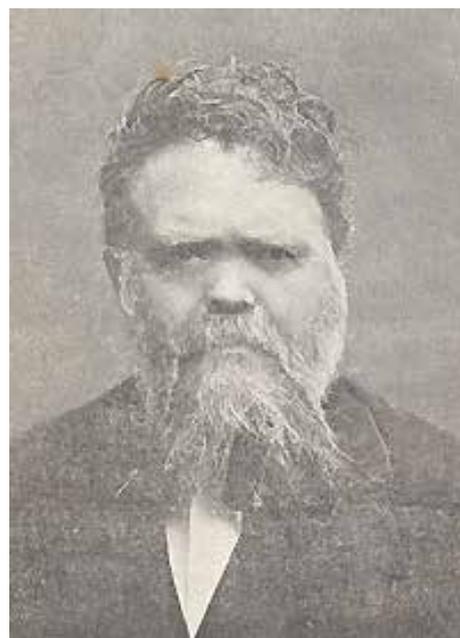
Is the story complete fiction, or is there some truth in it? A critic observes in the John Gray archive that "one of the puzzles of Mucklebackit/Lumsden is unravelling reality from fancy."

A reading tells you that Lumsden certainly knew of Miller's life story and contemporary accounts of his character, including Hugh's own. But he could hardly have assimilated all he relates at such an immature age. The extent of his knowledge shown in the tale suggests subsequent studies carried out in support of his tales.

The story has just enough factual detail to make it seem plausible, but some aspects stretch credulity to bursting point. Sam was surely at nine stone, and 14-years-old, too heavy and too grown up to be taken on Miller's knee or have his head stroked, and it must be extremely doubtful that his singing, however melodiously, a rousing ditty about Bannockburn would have sent the editor to sleep in mid-morning.

The boy had already run away to sea the year before, so he could have been contemplating a second just as bold adventure in order to sing, collect and sell songs all over Scotland. Miller himself had been a wild youth, but within the bounds of Cromarty, and would he not have at least questioned the lad on the wisdom of such an enterprise and his parents' knowledge of it?

His ambushing of Miller in his office gives Hugh a mighty fright, but after explaining himself, Samuel goes away with more siller than he asked for - shillings rather than pennies. Was Miller so moved by the singing, as he claims, or driven to such generosity by an understandable desire to be rid of him?



James Lumsden

The line at the end about measuring the lad's head is laughable. Elsewhere Miller makes fun of the then prevalent cult of phrenology.

Ewan describes the whole thing as "highly dubious," but thinks Mucklebackit "actually went to see him, and just embellished the tale enormously." He adds: "I hope he wasn't as bombastic to talk to as he is in print."

INTRODUCING EWAN

Hugh's News is fortunate to have gained a new and distinguished correspondent in Ewan McVicar. Our contact began quite fortuitously with a two-line email from him via our Friends website regarding the said Samuel Mucklebackit and has swiftly led to the promise of more material that is sure to interest and intrigue our readers.

So here is some background on the man for those not already familiar with his formidable achievements. The first thing to say is that he is a renowned musical artist, and at least partly lives in Cromarty arising from his admiration for Miller, and Hugh's mentor, Roderick Murchison.

*Not the least of his contributions to our local community has been to initiate and edit a guide from the pupils' viewpoint for Cromarty Courthouse Museum, *Our Town, Our Cromarty, Our Guide*. He also made a song with Cromarty Primary pupils about work on Kirkmichael Church as seen by Walter the Heron.*

He has collaborated over the years with young students in a couple of hundred schools, libraries and museums all across Scotland

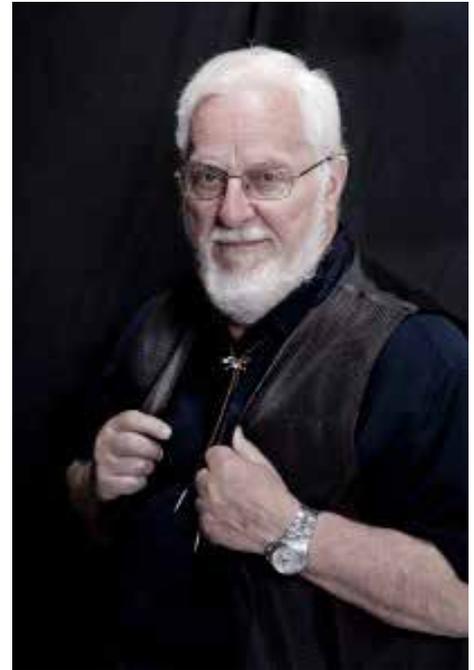
One of our members, freelance journalist Jim Gilchrist, has described him as "a tireless traditional singer, activist, songwriter, author, storyteller and publisher." Ewan has been inducted into the Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame, and in 2015 was given the Hamish Henderson Award for Services to Traditional Music.

*Born in Inverness, he grew up in the Highlands and did most of his schooling in Dingwall before, minstrel-like, roaming the world. Ewan's part in the Scottish folksong movement stretches back to its 1960s revival in Glasgow, and he has a book about their legendary performers, *One Singer, One Song*. Some readers may remember the long-running *Singing Kettle* TV shows, for which he wrote some 20 fun songs; *Shift and Spin* about mill work has been recorded by many women singers.*

He discovered the Black Isle's great geologists quite accidentally on a working trip to Russia. He was in the Urals city of Perm when he was repeatedly asked about "your famous Scotsman" Sir Roderick Murchison because "all our schoolchildren know his name." He had named a geological period, the Permian, after their region.

On his return home, he learnt that Murchison lived in Tarradale House, near Muir of Ord, and that Hugh Miller had been his protege. This led him to attend the Hugh Miller Bicentenary Conference in Cromarty in 2002, and eventually to return to live in the Highlands. In 2006, he organised in cooperation with Fortrose Academy, a Black Isle visit from Perm School. The following year another Perm students' group made a tour, which included Hugh Miller Museum.

Ewan is offering Hugh's News more on the Perm connection, and, most promisingly, a review of the Highland meenisters who were fine geologists in their day, such as Rev Joass of Edderton and Rev Gordon of Birnie.



Ewan McVicar

MUCKLEBACKIT MEETS MILLER - THE "MIGHTY SCANDINAVIAN!"

The Editor writes: Here follows the text of Mucklebackit's tale. It is preceded by an account of himself standing, at age 12, "five feet six inches in my stockings and weighing over nine stones imperial." He had run away to sea, and suffered a serious spine injury when he "tripped upon the capstan - the vast human ox (the drunken captain) coming down atop of me." This may explain the pseudonym 'Mucklebackit', meaning big back. He visits Miller two years later, aged 14, in the Spring of 1853.

I went home, as I said, to put my grand scheme into execution. With an old blade of what might have been a razor in the middle ages, I set to work upon my own and my father's books, to get paper whereon to inscribe my heroic themes. A few dozen fly-leaves were quickly detached, and, along with some old copy books, made, I thought, a respectable bundle. My plan was to fill these with original songs, written to old popular airs, descriptive of Scottish battles; and then, like an ancient minstrel, set forth to sing and sell them over the length and breadth of Scotland. This I kept a secret from everyone; and the winter passed away, and the time drew near which I had fixed upon for my second adventurous essay from the paternal roof.

It was a bonny spring morning in the latter end of March. I slipped my cable from Scaurden the night previous, as the old 'wag-at-the-wa' (1) chimed to Hecate (2) her awesome hour of spells. I took with me, to be my companion in my wayward raids, a little coarse grey-haired, gruesome, and cunning Scotch terrier dog, of doubtful breed, which I had baptised, in an orthodox manner, some days before - 'Second Sight.' My stock-in-trade - those immortal ballads, bound with a saddle girth, I carried under my arm. I possessed, when I started, exactly £0 0s 0d. We trotted (Second Sight and I) up the High Street of Edinburgh, about nine in the morning, to the Witness newspaper office, to have an interview with the celebrated editor, Hugh Miller. I had never seen him before; but from what I had read, I thought I would recognise him at a glance if he came before me. I did not go into the office and ask for the 'editor.' I knew better. I waited at a close head till he passed, on his way from his house at Portobello. At a few minutes before ten he was visible; he was like no other man, and thereby I knew him - the mighty Scandinavian! I crept out, and kept close to Miller behind. I was right; he went in, passed through the office into his sanctum sanctorum, and had the door bolted before he saw me. He started back, then, took on a ferocious look, clutched at something in his breast pocket, and shouted - "Who? How?" Had it not been for the invaluable Second Sight, in that supreme moment, I believe in my heart he would have struck me to his feet a dead man. For down in Miller - may I remind you - reposing, but not altogether buried, under strata of a gentler external nature, dwelt the lingering savage and superstitious elements of his mixed Celtic and Scandinavian origin. Hugh Miller was a visionary, and I am convinced he, at first, actually took me for a visitant from the lower regions, as I so unexpectedly stood before him. Second Sight alone saved me. (That obscure, canine image was worth his weight in refined gold!) He barked, leaped, and throttled the old mason, while I cried - "Siller (3), Mr Miller! it's siller; I only want siller!" Thereby he perceived that I was only human; for he at once drew his hand from his breast, and said mildly "How much do you ask?" and sat down on his seat much relieved. I told him all; gave him a sketch of my life - my plans for the future, prospects, and present needs. Told him I was going to sing my way over Scotland for the purpose of visiting the scenes of old battles, and places famous in history and literature; that I intended, in the first place, to cross the sea, and open proceedings at Burntisland; that I wanted siller to pay for the boat, and no more; and that I had come to him because I had read all his great books, and loved him for his own and our common country's sake. I said my father did not know, but that if he gave me siller I would write him - and he knew Sam too well to be much put about concerning me. He listened with great attention, I saw; for he sat as one transfixed, and stared over at me with such a thin smile on his face - like moonlight on an ancient monument of gravity, done in old red sand stone! After I had done he suddenly rose from his chair, strode over to me, caught

me by the arm, and again sat down. He stared at me again for another minute or so. At the end, and all at once, as if he had just received the order from some outside Fate at his elbow, he lifted me up on to his great knee. Again, that long, anxious, wondering stare, without one word. I spoke first, at last - I couldn't help it - the silence was so oppressive. I said "Hugh, if you are going to lend me siller, mind it is only a lend; for I will bring it back when I return; and if you like, just now, I will sing you my 'Battle of Bannockburn' for your kindness." He stroked me on the head with his mason's mallet of a fist, like a mother, and nodded compliance. In a beautiful, low voice, then, I began, and soothed his cares asleep with my melodious idyll. It was a sight sublime - the old sage and the young singer crossing each other on the way to the eternal end, and binding with harmony the recollection forever of the happy hour. Second Sight enjoyed it to the full, seemingly, for he sat on his hurdies, and looked Patience herself (save winking) all the time. After the song, "Old Red" handed me down gently, and took from his pocket a tape line and measured my head. Then he gave me more than I wanted in shape of shillings; and after telling me to have an eye on my road for "specimens," I departed.

1 *wag-at-the-wa - pendulum clock*

2 *Hecate - goddess of magic and witchcraft*

3 *siller - money*

A Tribute

LESTER BORLEY (1931-2019)

We could not let the passing of Lester Borley CBE late last year go without paying due honour to this giant of Scottish conservation, and an especially good friend to Hugh Miller.

He spent 20 years at the top of our nation's heritage industry, first as chief executive of the Scottish Tourist Board (predecessor of VisitScotland) from January 1970, then as the director of the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) from 1983 to 1992.



Lester Borley (left) outside the Witness offices with former Scotsman editor Magnus Linklater

During his tenure as head of NTS he oversaw the extensive acquisition of new properties, such as Fyvie Caste, Ben Lomond, and the Isle of Staffa, and industrial enterprises such as Robert Smail's Printing Works and Barry Mill in Angus, and the gardens at Arduaine and Geilston.

He also, most importantly, acted with the Nightingale family as a prime mover in the Cromarty conservation movement, helping to found the Cromarty Arts Trust in 1987, under whose auspices the restoration of The Stables and The Old Brewery were completed.

Under the Arts Trust banner, Lester was in the forefront, together with the National Museum of Scotland (NMS), of the nationwide celebrations of Hugh Miller's Bicentenary in 2002, most notably organising three conferences in

2002, 2001, and 2002 in Edinburgh and Cromarty, and editing two books on the proceedings (1)

Scholars covered every field of Miller's work, ranging from geology to social history, folklore, journalism and religious upheavals, to discourses on details, such as Miller's most famous fossil, and his microscope, as well as a focus on his wife, Lydia.

The conferences undoubtedly produced broader public awareness of Miller's importance in Scottish culture, and paved the way to the opening of Miller House as a museum two years later.

Lester was also the main protagonist in advancing the outdoor interpretation of Miller's achievements in science, for example writing the texts for the panels at the foot of the South Sutor, the top of the path to Eathie Beach, and the restored salmon bothy there, as well as the Hugh Miller Cromarty Trail leaflet.

He played a vital part in spurring on the formation of The Friends of Hugh Miller in 2006, and serving as one of our first Patrons from 2006 to 2010. He was a constant source of ideas, encouragement and most helpful advice. He continued his membership with us until his death.

He sought with Friends support, sadly unsuccessfully, the enhancement of displays about Miller in the National Museum of Scotland, but the contentious caption to Amelia Paton's statue was subsequently amended.

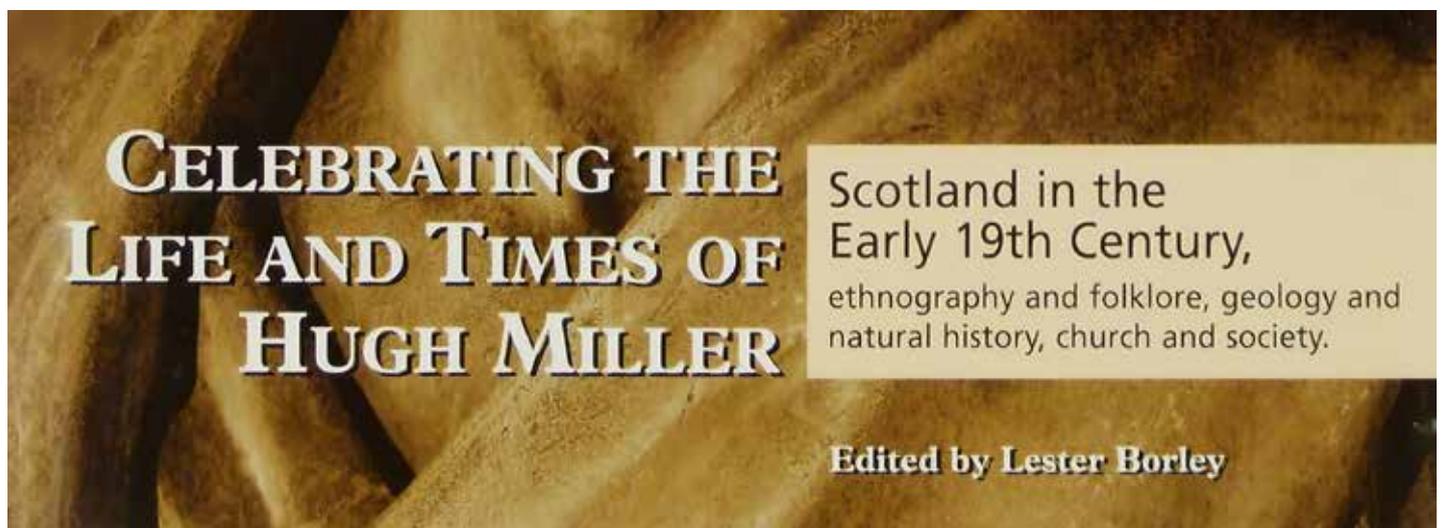
I will ever remember Lester's unexpected phone calls, always to pursue a new line of thought, or suggested development of our work. He made things happen.

Martin Gostwick

1. *Celebrating the Life and Times of Hugh Miller*, ed. Lester Borley is still available at the Museum, from the Arts Trust and ourselves (online).



The Hugh Miller Trail panel in the restored Eathie salmon bothy.



Letter to the Editor**“BEHAVE, OR YOU WILL ANSWER TO THE GURKHAS”**

In response to our story about the Middleton family in our last edition, we received the following delightful letter from three times great grand-daughter, Anna Gordon, who provided the picture of her mother, Mrs Bright Gordon and her Aunt Merry on the occasion of Bright's investiture with an MBE in 1887. She here amusingly describes the ceremony, and tells of her many recent walks round Edinburgh during the lockdown, especially the Grange Cemetery where her Miller ancestors are buried. Her outings bring to mind the energy of her famous ancestor!

Dear Martin

Hugh's News No 43 May 2020

Thank you, and the production editor Piers Hemy for the article about the Middleton family.

When my late mother and her sister Merry were together they often burst into spontaneous song, 'Out into the Garden Maud,' or something similar.



Anna Gordon (left) pictured with her mother Bright Gordon, and sister Louisa Heard at the investiture

The day my sister Louisa and I accompanied my mother to Buckingham Palace was very memorable. My mother had hired a Mercedes car with a driver...At the Palace there were real soldiers inside the armoury. My mother was taken to an ante room while my sister and I took our seats in the ballroom. There was lovely military music playing from the balcony. There were Gurkha soldiers at the front of the room. It was intimated that if we did not behave we would have them to answer to! My mother was invested with an MBE from Her Majesty the Queen. After the ceremony we went back to the naval club where we staying and Aunt Merry and Uncle Henry joined us for lunch. A school friend of mine Belinda Wright who had hand-picked potatoes at Rose-farm also joined us for lunch.

During the present lockdown due to the Coronavirus I have been walking around Edinburgh, quite frequently around the Grange Cemetery, where Hugh and Lydia Miller are buried, and one is not bothered by joggers and cyclists. There are also many other famous people buried there, whom you can find out all about from a Grange Association booklet, free to pick up beside the large boards at each entrance.

I have also walked down to Princes Street gardens. The colours of the flowers have been dazzling. I have been up to the Castle Esplanade. I have been up to Holyrood Park and the Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill nature reserve. I am fortunate that Edinburgh has so many green spaces, and pleased it is slowly coming back to life.

Anna Gordon

Footnote: The Grange Association brochure, Some Notable Burials, lists three monuments dedicated to members of the Miller family. To the left, that of his youngest son, Hugh Jnr (1850-1896), to the right a Celtic cross commemorating his eldest son, Lt Col William Miller (1842-1893); his youngest daughter Elizabeth (Bessie) (1845-1919), and Bessie's son Norman Nicolson Mackay (1886-1916). At the base is Captain William Henry Miller (1887-1916), William Miller's son.

Beneath Hugh's monument is a small stone commemorating his wife Lydia, and the Rev Callum Miller Mackay (1879-1945), son of Bessie, therefore Hugh and Lydia's grandson.

GREATER CARE NEEDED ROUND FAMILY GRAVES

The Friends wrote to the Grange Association regarding concern over shrubbery encroaching on the Miller graves in the Grange Cemetery which was noted by a group visiting them during the tour of Miller's Edinburgh in the summer of 2018.

We received a most courteous reply from the association's vice-chair and liaison officer Jenny Dawe, with this photo taken in late June.

She writes: "From this you will see that the grave has probably got less encroaching shrubbery than it did in 2018. However, the tree with overhanging branches also has larger overhanging branches which are starting to obscure the view of an information board the Grange Association has erected a few yards from the grave.

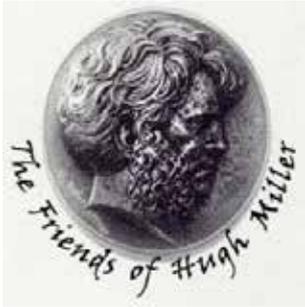
"We intend asking the City of Edinburgh Council, who are responsible for gardening and landscape up-keep of the cemetery, to prune back the branches." The Friends will be adding its voice to the association's request, asking that the Miller monuments be kept free and clear of foliage.

Jenny added as an aside: "I was in the cemetery a few days ago and met a stonemason and his son removing a stone for inscription and the father commented on Hugh Miller as a fellow stonemason."



A printed copy of this edition of Hugh's News is available, price £2.50, from the Secretary

The Grange graves



The Friends of Hugh Miller MEMBERSHIP FORM

I/We wish to become member/s of the charity The Friends of Hugh Miller
Download and complete the forms below then send to the Secretary.

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"/>
Couple	£30*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family (2 adults and up to 3 children under 18)	£30*	<input type="checkbox"/>
Junior (under 18)	£5	<input type="checkbox"/>	* or more if so desired		

Name(s).....

Address.....

.....

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

Email address.....

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):

Postcode:..... Date:.....

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.

Please return this form, with your cheque payable to "The Friends of Hugh Miller", to:
Martin Gostwick, Secretary, The Friends of Hugh Miller,
c/o Russell House, 55 Shore Street, Cromarty IV11 8XL

The Friends of Hugh Miller is a registered charity: SC037351