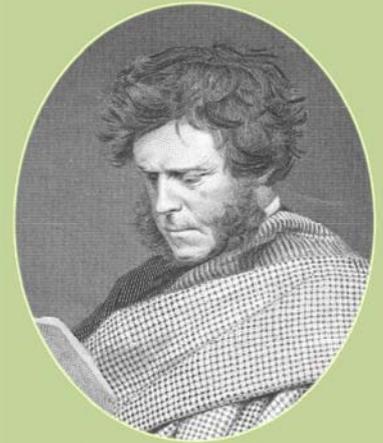


Issue No 7
Autumn 2009

Editor:
Martin Gostwick,
Secretary

Hugh's News

Newsletter of
The Friends of Hugh Miller



A STRONG APPEAL

FUNDING FOR A MANAGER/CUSTODIAN POST

The Hugh Miller Museum faces a struggle for its very survival. As I am sure you are aware, this Museum was one of 11 National Trust for Scotland (NTS) properties earmarked in February this year for closure, unless its operating deficit could be eliminated.

In May, the incoming NTS Chief Executive, Kate Mavor, announced a reprieve from closure of the Hugh Miller Museum and Birthplace Cottage "for the foreseeable future," following drastic pruning of running costs. However it seems apparent that NTS will seek further savings, and the future of the Museum as a visitor centre open to the public **cannot be guaranteed beyond the end of this season.**

The biggest cutback has been the axing of the Property Manager's post. Our Secretary, Martin Gostwick, has consequently been made compulsorily redundant, and relinquished his post on August 11th. He accepted this on the basis that it would help to turn an operating deficit of £17,000 into a modest surplus, and thereby secure the Museum's future.

The work performed so admirably by Martin and Frieda Gostwick as managers for 17 years has thus come to an abrupt end. There is no immediate prospect of the Trust reinstating a full-time salaried post.

Additional serious cutbacks involved reducing the property's opening times from 7 days a week to 4 (April to October), and a reduction in seasonal staffs to a single Senior Visitor Assistant.

During this summer, Martin Gostwick has worked tirelessly to make these opening times possible, principally in recruiting and training the Senior Assistant, and assembling a team of 12 volunteers to staff the two buildings.

However, this is clearly not a long-term solution to our problem. As custodian, Martin was able to apply for external grants to fund development projects, organise conferences, cultural events, maintenance of collections, educational visits, and other activities to promote Miller's legacy, such as seeking to maintain publication of his most accessible books.

Without a custodian, it will be difficult to arrange such events and developments, or to efficiently manage the Miller properties, seek external grants, make acquisitions and seek donations, and respond to the many inquiries.

We are fortunate in that Martin has been willing to continue serving the Museum as Volunteer Co-ordinator, and in his voluntary role as Secretary to the Friends. It is also beneficial that NTS has awarded the Senior Visitor Assistant, Mrs Zooulla Spirou, a contract to keep the Museum open until the end of this season, and a retainer to act as caretaker over the winter.

However, the employment in a salaried post of a person with museum management experience is clearly required in the long-term for the Miller Museum and Birthplace Cottage.

The National Trust for Scotland has initiated discussions with the owners of the two other visitor attractions in Church Street, the Cromarty Courthouse Museum and the Cromarty East Church, and other parties, with a view to setting up a Management Partnership so as to manage the three as a single entity. Among these bodies are, Highland Council (owners of the Courthouse), the Courthouse Trustees, the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust, Cromarty Community Council, and The Friends of Hugh Miller.

The purpose of these meetings has been to assess the viability of forming a Social Enterprise Company, which could provide the professional management required, and achieve benefits in joint marketing, ticketing, staffing and voluntary support. Further meetings are scheduled. I am representing the Friends at these meetings, at the NTS's invitation, and we will as an organisation make every effort to contribute towards a successful outcome, but this is a long term objective.

We feel in this situation that the Friends must do our utmost to ensure the Museum's long-term future, as set out in our Constitution (2: Aims). To that end, we need to be able to raise funds ourselves to support a post dedicated to Miller House and the Birthplace Cottage remaining open, next year and beyond.

We are therefore launching an appeal for funding in this newsletter to all our members, and indeed wider afield, to as many possible sources of support that we can identify. At the least, we should be aiming to help maintain a seasonal post, with some professional input. Our provisional estimate of this cost is about £10,000 over an opening season of six months.

The Friends does not at present have the funds to assist (current balance £4,806.14), and hence we are setting up an appeal fund for this purpose. **This appeal is supported by the National Trust for Scotland.**

We ask our members to consider one-off donations, and particularly contributions over a period of years. We will also be seeking corporate support for this enterprise. Clearly, longer-term financing helps stability and aids forward planning.

Suggestions for fund-raising which the organisation as a whole could undertake will be welcome.

Please feel free to contact the undersigned who will attempt to answer any questions.

Donations for this purpose must be sent to
The Friends of Hugh Miller, c/o myself.

Professor Nigel Trewin
Patron, The Friends of Hugh Miller
Altries Cottage, Maryculter, Aberdeenshire AB12 5GJ



Prof. Nigel Trewin

SOME APPRECIATIONS

We print here expressions of strong support for the Museum remaining open, from among letters sent to the National Trust for Scotland, and hundreds of signatories to online petitions.

Cllr Craig Fraser (Black Isle, Highland Region)

There are many reasons why this small but hugely significant property should be kept open to the public, but the main reasons are the sheer importance of Hugh Miller's work in influencing the world's understanding of geology, and the invaluable contribution of the Museum to the Cromarty community and economy."

Hugh Miller's work had an impact that was truly global at a point when communications were still carried by horse and ship, and yet his influence today is largely forgotten. We need to make more of our Highland and Scottish pioneers.

Marian McKenzie Johnston

I am the eldest living great great grand-daughter of Hugh Miller, and I was proud to have been invited to perform the opening ceremony for this Museum. My husband I have personally put a lot into it, and it has so far proved a great success.

Ali Smith, author

Hugh Miller was truly a renaissance man. Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland is one of my favourite works.

James Robertson, author

Hugh Miller was a quite remarkable man, a self-taught polymath whose life opens a window to the times in which he lived and which he influenced. Stonemason, geologist, scientist, journalist, folklorist, poet and religious activist, he presents many facets of 19th Century society in a specifically Scottish and Highland way. So much of what he had to say still rings with clarity, honesty and extraordinary vividness.



Magnus Linklater, journalist

The wonderful Hugh Miller Museum at Cromarty is a small but perfectly preserved shrine to the great pioneer geologist, who was posing searching questions about the earth's creation 20 years before publication of *On the Origin of Species*.

Dr Ralph O'Connor, historian

Miller House, which only opened relatively recently, has been such an outstanding success. The place is very close to our hearts.

Lillemor Jernqvist, psychologist

My visits have provided me with a special interest in Lydia Miller, so much so that I chose her as one of 100 women significant in Scottish history to be included in a plaque which hangs in the Scottish Parliament.

Kath Bennett, Barnoldswick, Lancs

Once gone, these treasures are lost to future generations forever and ought to be saved at all costs.

Ted Nield, Editor, Geoscientist Magazine

Miller's portrait hangs outside my office. His Birthplace is the only real significant memorial to Hugh Miller. For Scotland, it is of inestimable value because Hugh Miller held a pivotal role in a time of emerging enlightenment.

Alix Cooper, New York

A figure from whom one can learn a great deal about the history of science, environmental history, Victorian history, and the histories of Scotland and the British Isles.

Tracy Mackay, Cyprus

I am discussing with my children a trip "home" this summer, and visiting Hugh Miller's Cottage and fossil hunting on the nearby beaches. The cottage holds many memories and dreams, now and in years to come.

Alan Owen, president of the Geological Society of Glasgow

The Museum's historical importance to geology to that part of the country is enormous. It helps promote greater public understanding of geology and science, and its closure would be a terrible loss.

Andrew Kerr, Isle of Barra

Miller's was the original stimulus for bringing about the saving and conservation of historic Cromarty. Fruitful possibilities exist for increased emphasis not only on Miller's importance to science, but as writer and social historian of his community.

Gwen Anton, Fortrose

There is only one NTS property in the North with such a compelling all-round appeal – not only the exhibitions about the man himself, also the remarkable garden.

Ian Paterson, geologist

As a Scot and geologist who spent a good part of my working life studying the Old Red Sandstone, I regard Hugh Miller as one of the great pioneers in my chosen discipline and his cottage deserving of preservation.

Dr Helen Handoll

As well as the undeniable importance of the man himself, the cottage with its pokey rooms gives a sense of life in those days. The fossil collection is also fascinating.

Terri Carr

It's a wonderful surprise for the casual visitor, although many people travel to the historic town of Cromarty just to see it. It is a sound and well cared for and well used resource which celebrates one of our country's most famous sons.



THE SHOW MUST GO ON

SECRETARY'S STATEMENT

August 2009

May I start by most sincerely and warmly thanking the more than 150 individual enthusiasts, who have been, and in the majority continue to be members of The Friends, for their crucial support since I founded the Group in April 2006.

Frieda Gostwick, Property Manager (January 1992 – July 2000), and myself in that post (July 2000 - August 2009) have been custodians of the Hugh Miller Museum for 17 years, and in that time have participated in the most exciting developments of both the Museum, and the public's appreciation of Miller's legacy.

We cannot do more than very briefly summarise the progress made. It began in the early 1990s with the republication in paperback of two of his best-known works, *My Schools and Schoolmasters* and *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*, followed by *Testimony of the Rocks* and *The Cruise of the Betsey*.



Frieda and Martin Gostwick

An outstanding event was the conference series and scholarly papers organised by our Patron, Dr Lester Borley CBE, around the 2002 Bicentenary, and another, the performance in that year of the Cromarty children's opera, *Hugh Who?*

Several new critical studies emerged in this period, and Dr Michael Taylor, Principal Curator of Vertebrate Palaeontology, National Museums Scotland, brought out in 2008 the first full biography, *Hugh Miller, Stonemason, Geologist, Writer*, for over 100 years.

He had earlier edited the new edition of *The Cruise of the Betsey*, and it would be impossible to over-emphasise the contributions made by Dr Taylor and other NMS colleagues, both to learned publications, and to the displays in Miller House.

Hugh Miller's great great grand-daughter Mrs Marian McKenzie Johnston, and her husband Henry, researched tirelessly to produce an authoritative family tree, to sponsor a first biography of Hugh's wife, Lydia Mackenzie Falconer Fraser, and to make donations of family memorabilia.

The single greatest advance has undoubtedly been the opening of the Museum in Miller House in 2004, at a cost of nearly £300,000, with substantial grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Ross and Cromarty Enterprise and the oil company BP, as well as several charitable trusts.

This museum immediately gained, and has just, for a third time, been re-awarded 5-Star grading by VisitScotland, one of only four NTS properties to enjoy this rating. It has enjoyed universal approbation from more than 35,000 visitors in its six seasons to date, for the clarity and depth of its interpretation covering all aspects of the great man's life and work.

But there was no stopping there. In April 12/13 2008, on the initiative of Professor Trewin, the Friends organised a two-day conference, in Cromarty *Hugh Miller: Local Hero*, marking the Bicentenary of the Geological Society of London. This was attended by some 60 delegates, an outstanding result given our remote location.

It was also a considerable coup that Scottish Natural Heritage chose Cromarty as the venue for the launch, just before the conference, of the *Scottish Fossil Code*, believed to be a world first of its kind for guiding collectors. Scottish Environment Minister Michael Russell did the honours.



Helen Denerley's ammonite sculpture in Miller's Yard

This was followed on June 3 by the opening of Miller's Yard: Garden of Wonders, behind Miller House by another great great grand-daughter, Mrs Bright Gordon, and some 25 children in floral costume of Cromarty Primary School. This beautiful "open-air extension" cost £70,000, towards which a £10,000 grant from the Awards For All scheme was raised by The Friends.

In the Yard, Helen Denerley's astonishing ammonite sculpture is the latest stunning artwork to have been commissioned to augment the Museum displays and give it fresh contemporary interest. We are blessed also with a magnificent Bicentenary silver medallion by

Robert Crerar, a sculpture and an embroidery by Nicholas Kidd; letter-cutting by Charles Smith; and a replica sundial pedestal by Neil McBean.

We should thank in particular National Trust for Scotland interpretation planner Caroline Tempest and Curator Ian Gow for their inputs to creating the Miller House Museum, and the NTS Gardens Department for the concept, and landscape architect Calum Anton of Fortrose for the development of Miller's Yard. NTS Surveyor Glyn Young led both Projects through umpteen hurdles to successful completion.

At the Museum, it has always been our aspiration to maintain a constant momentum of expansion and improvement in the amenities of the property, and as we go to press, The Friends group is funding and overseeing the redesign and replanting of the Cottage Wild Garden.

Members will be glad to know that I will be continuing to strive to sustain this momentum, and to minimise the impact of losing the post Frieda and I had the honour and privilege to fill during these great years, and of the other cutbacks.

I will be doing this in my dual capacity of Volunteer Co-ordinator for the Trust, and Secretary of this group, and, with Frieda, looking forward to the future in both.

WINNING THROUGH

In the following pages we set out no less than FOUR "good news" stories showing how the Friends are helping the Museum not only to cope with the dire straits into which it was placed this summer, but to progress with exciting new developments!

FOR THE FAMILY – PAST AND FUTURE

A SECOND new garden (following Miller's Yard) is in process of being created for the Museum, this one directly dedicated to the Miller family down the generations.

The site is behind the Birthplace Cottage, on what has been known since the mid-1990s as the Scottish Wild Garden.

This Wild Garden has performed magnificently over more than 10 years, in putting forth the native flora of the Cromarty environs so beloved of Hugh Miller, and celebrated in his writings. It featured oak, birch, cherry, hazel, willow, blackthorn, and holly trees and bushes, and more than 100 wild flowers and plants to be found in the nearby shorelines, woods, gardens and verges.

However, we have unavoidably to replace this garden, because it became hopelessly overgrown over time. The speed of growth of all these plantings was underestimated, and budget constraints have prevented adequate ongoing maintenance.

The opportunity is being taken to redesign and replant the space, and give it a new theme and name, The Lydia Garden. This is at the suggestion of Hugh and Lydia Miller's great great grand-daughter, Mrs Bright Gordon.



Dave Linn (Junglebusters) removes an old wattle fence



Bright Gordon

She said: "By all means let's keep an emphasis on the much-loved old Scottish native flora, but let's also be modern and forward-looking with new flowers and plants. Naming the garden for Hugh's wife Lydia would also connect it directly to the family, and give our descendants a stake in it for generations to come."

The Friends of Hugh Miller has taken up her proposal with enthusiasm. We have commissioned landscape gardener **Jerry Pamphilon** to design the new amenity, and awarded a contract to Fountains Enterprises to carry out the work.

This is scheduled to start in October.

Jerry was the consultant to landscape architect Calum Anton who provided the extraordinary plan for the borders of Miller's Yard in 2008, with its unique mixture of contemporary British natives and Jurassic-era exotic ferns and palms.

Some of the previously existing trees are being retained, such as birch and rowan, along with bushes such as juniper, heather, broom and burnet rose. A new herb garden will reflect the family's use of this space as a kailyard in Hugh's day, and an apple and a pear espalier will be trained along the long red sandstone wall.

Leading off the central winding gravel path will be a new semi-circular footpath, inviting visitors to get in amongst pillar roses, and other bright flowers, such as varieties of euphorbia, clematis and buddleia. At the southern end will be an improved seated area, with a more ordered raised bed, and better-presented well.

We have every reason to expect that the Lydia Garden will provide a brilliant new attraction to start Season 2010, and this time, with our superb new team of volunteers, we should be able to keep on top of the maintenance!

I am sure you will all join me in paying tribute to Bright Gordon for the inspiration behind this venture.

TO THE RESCUE: SUPPORTERS WORLDWIDE...

WHEN the bombshell dropped about a potential closure, the tidal wave of public support which rose up round the Museum was hugely encouraging for the beleaguered staff, and indeed for all those in Scotland and internationally who share the concern.

The NTS leadership recognised in response that Hugh Miller's legacy is indeed of national and international significance, and that his Museum is a profoundly important cultural asset in its care, which carries a deserved, very widespread recognition.

We most gratefully thank all those who sent the shoals of letters to the NTS leadership, and local Black Isle Councillor Craig Fraser, who launched one on-line petition on his own initiative, and another by the Scottish National Party (SNP).

These two petitions remain on-line and carry a total of nearly 300 signatures, from 10 states in the USA, the UK, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Poland, Germany, Turkey, France and Russia. They can be found by entering "Hugh Miller Petitions" in your favoured search engine – for you to add your own name to either, if you wish!



Martin Gostwick with Lilian Cameron

A summary of the key points made by supporters features in the Appreciations which follow the Appeal Statement leading this newsletter (see above). Here we must thank the principal supporters who copied their correspondence to us. They are: Mrs Marian McKenzie Johnston; Mr Anthony Bryant; Mr Bob Pegg; Mrs Gwen Anton; Mr Anthony Kerr; Mr Ian McCrae; Ms Kath Stevenson Bennett; Dr Ralph O'Connor; and Mrs Lillemor Jernqvist.

A particular mention should go to the journalist Magnus Linklater who led one of his weekly columns in The Times newspaper (22/04/09) with a warm tribute.



Zooulla Spirou

... AND A HAPPY BAND OF VOLUNTEERS

OUR strongest guarantee of a long-term future has been the coming forward of no less than 14 volunteers to staff the museum and support its activities.

Cutbacks in staffing pre-season have left the property with only one paid member of staff, Senior Visitor Assistant Mrs Zooulla Spirou, who joined us for the first time this year.

Outgoing Property Manager Martin Gostwick issued an emergency appeal to the Cromarty community for help to cover more than half the shifts for the opening times the Trust required, and the response has been superb.

Zooulla, Greek Cypriot by birth, is an artist who owns a gallery in Cromarty, where she has lived for 20 years. NTS has awarded her a contract to manage the museum for the rest of the open season, and she will continue in a caretaker capacity over the winter. She has brought real enthusiasm, and superb efficiency to the work, and raised morale among the team.

In the mix of volunteers are three husband and wife couples, and individuals with a very wide range of abilities, who are already offering additional skills beyond those needed to cover the shifts at the reception and shop counters. Several have also put their names down for maintenance work on the property's two gardens, as well as stewarding events and administrative assistance.

Among them are a Miller direct descendant, Janey Clarke, (his four times great grand-daughter), a professional museums consultant, a business manager, a company director, a town planner, a former Scottish Natural Heritage regional director, a practising GP, and an amateur geologist.

Janey Clarke, the descendent, who created and curates the inspiring droving exhibition at Dingwall Auction Mart, says: "I cannot imagine a greater privilege than to serve the public who come to appreciate the great legacy of my ancestor."

Lindsay Hemy, who was previously on the payroll as a seasonal assistant, agreed to continue on a voluntary basis. Her husband Piers Hemy has given very generously in laying out and printing a flier, which Lindsay proceeded to distribute to visitor centres and tourist information offices all round the Moray Firth – and on the west coast too, a contribution altogether adding up to journeys of many days and hundreds of miles.



From left: Martin Gostwick; Janey Clarke; Patsy Thomson; Sandy Thomson; Yvonne Lambert; Zooulla Spirou; Frieda Gostwick

Yvonne Lambert listed and labelled the fossils on the top floor "hands-on" workbench, and laid out and labelled the eight most commonly found local rocks on a second bench. This has rendered the "hands-on" displays more informative and easier to manage, while the rock specimens are a very worthwhile addition.

The roll of volunteers on the duty roster is as follows: Martin Gostwick (Co-ordinator); Lindsay and Piers Hemy; Janey Clarke; Yvonne Lambert; Sandy and Patsy Thomson; Peter and Fran Tilbrook; Vanessa Hallhead; Estelle Quick. Three more volunteers are on stand-by as reserves: Frieda Gostwick; Ian McCrae; and Robert Moore.

THE LIBRARY BOX

AN ENDLESS SOURCE of new inspiration comes from visitors springing surprises with offers to add to the Museum's assets – and the latest offering is a unique "library box" hand-made in Black Isle birch bark.

Bryce Reynard, retired forester of Inverness, was visiting the Birthplace Cottage when he saw the box there which represents the one which Miller refers to in his autobiography as acquiring as a child for his first books.

That box was ordered from a craft collective in Siberia, and Bryce immediately said: "I will make you one in Scottish native birchbark if you like, as a gift."

Needless to say, this magnificent offer was accepted at once. A full article will follow in the next edition.

THIRD ANNUAL MEETING SPECTRUM CENTRE, INVERNESS 27TH MARCH 2009

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The meeting was addressed by the distinguished Scottish newspaper editor **Magnus Linklater** on the significance of Hugh Miller's editorial charge of *The Witness (1840-56)*, and the parallels and contrasts with his own career at *The Sunday Times*, *The Scotsman*, and *The Times*.

Magnus portrayed Miller as a forthright editor, independent of external authority or party interest, who fearlessly spotlighted the issues confronting the society of his time. He was on controversial ground – as befits a good talk! – when comparing Miller's hostility to Chartist agitators with the Murdoch press battles against the print trades unions.

Martin Gostwick was re-elected Secretary, and Sheona Leonard, Treasurer.

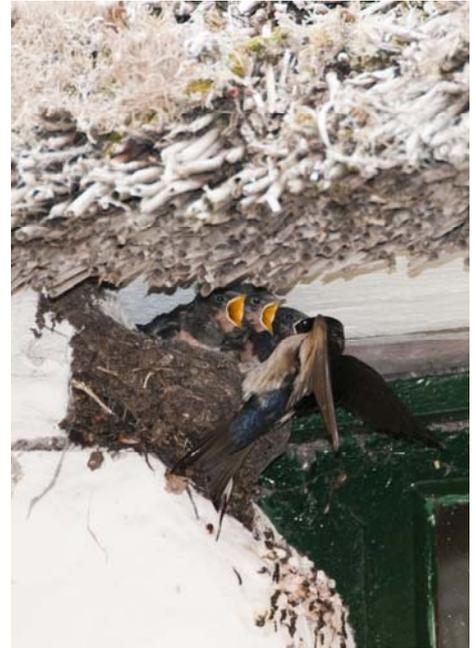
May Hunter and the Rev Kenneth Dupar were re-elected to the Management Committee.

The following continue to serve on The Friends consultative committee:

- Lilian Cameron;
- Russell Kirk;
- Bob Davidson;
- Colin Heape;
- Rev Len Black;
- Dr Ian Lancaster;
- Muriel Dymock.

The Friends had 90 members with paid up subscriptions at the end of Year 08/09.

Following (overleaf) is the financial statement submitted by Treasurer Sheona Leonard.



Birds nesting, Birthplace Cottage



Model fish in Miller House

FRIENDS OF HUGH MILLER

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2008/09

The following financial statement is a true and fair assessment of the income and expenditure for the Friends of Hugh Miller for the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009

<u>Financial Statement as at 31 March 2009</u>		£
Opening Balance at Bank as at 1 April 2008		5234.72
<u>INCOME</u>	£	
Membership Subscriptions	956.00	
Pedestal Appeal	1470.00	
Highland Members Centre – SunDial	500.00	
Conference Fees	452.50	
Bank Interest	42.77	
Inland Revenue - Gift Aid	276.97	
Scottish Natural Heritage Grant	899.37	4597.61
		<u>9832.33</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	£	
Hugh Miller Conference Costs -		
Printing, postage, catering, mileage	254.64	
Prof N H Trewin	564.74	
Strathnairn Community Access Group	25.20	
Cromarty History Society	10.00	
Cromarty Bakery	27.95	
Andrew Dowsett - Images DVD, CD Roms	290.00	
Royal Hotel, Cromarty	110.00	
Cromarty Training Centre - hire PA, microphone, screen	58.75	
Lester Borley - Travelling Expenses	132.00	
Cromarty Arms Inn – catering	75.00	
Frasers Coaches	100.00	
Hire of Victoria Hall	101.50	
Mr A Taylor – Expenses	137.90	
Dr O'Connor – Expenses	50.00	
University of Aberdeen	163.01	
Plexus Digital Media	29.38	
Plexus Newsletter	138.00	
BookPurchase	110.99	
Hugh Miller Newsletter	171.17	
Stone Pedestal Carving	2800.00	
Mr A Holmes - Refund due to Overpayment of Subscription	180.00	
Martin Gostwick – Postage	10.20	5540.43
		<u>4291.90</u>
<u>Closing Balance as at 31 March 2009</u>		<u>4291.90</u>

The balance as at 31st July 2009 stood at £4,806. The annual claim to the Inland Revenue for Gift Aid repayments has yet to be lodged. It should realise some £250.

An outlay of between £3,500 and £4,000 is anticipated on the Lydia Garden project (see news item, For the Family – Past and Future).

FRIENDS OF HUGH MILLER APPEAL INVITATION

Having read this newsletter, will Members now please consider some of the following actions:

- Increasing your subscription contribution.
- Making a donation.
- Inviting family or friends to join, with the following message from us:

We have pleasure in inviting you to consider subscribing to the charity, named The Friends of Hugh Miller. The Friends' annual subscription has been set at £10 per person. Subscribers receive a Membership Card, a copy of the constitution, a periodical newsletter and an annual report. We look forward to welcoming you as a Member of the Friends.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

I WISH to become a member of the charity, The Friends of Hugh Miller (SC 037351), in order to support its work in making Miller's life and work better known, and in particular to assist in the development of the Hugh Miller Museum and Birthplace Cottage in Church Street, Cromarty.

Name

Address

.....

.....**Postcode**.....

Tel No

Email address

Membership subscription is £10 annually, payable by cash/cheque or bank standing order.

We will send standing order and Gift Aid forms on request.

RETURN TO:
MARTIN GOSTWICK, SECRETARY, THE FRIENDS OF HUGH MILLER, C/O HUGH MILLER MUSEUM,
CHURCH STREET, CROMARTY, ROSS-SHIRE IV11 8XA.
TEL NO: 01381 600245.
EMAIL ADDRESS: mgostwick@nts.org.uk