

Issue No 11  
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Editor:  
Martin Gostwick,  
Secretary

# Hugh's News

Newsletter of  
The Friends of Hugh Miller



## *"YOURS AFFECTIONATELY, HUGH"*

EXCEPTIONALLY important manuscripts which offer intimate cameos of Hugh Miller and his family's lives have very recently been rediscovered and secured for the Museum's collections.

One MS is a touching letter to his mother Harriet, with advice for his son William. A second letter seeks the company of his friend and business partner shortly before he died. The third reveals intimate details of his family's expenditures after his death. And a fourth vital document concerning Miller's writing career, a cuttings book, has been recovered in circumstances of extraordinary good fortune.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 5



*Henry McKenzie Johnston presents the Miller family "Cash Book" to the new museum manager, Dr Alix Powers-Jones, watched by senior visitor assistant Zooulla Spirou, centre, immediately following our May 7th annual meeting.*

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## *A CALL TO ARMS!*

Saturday 10th September is "Open Doors Day" in Cromarty. I am looking for volunteers to staff rooms in Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage and Museum.

To:

- Talk to visitors and tell why Hugh and Lydia Miller were such a remarkable couple.
- Bring life to the museum and cottage.

We need YOU!

Can you spare a couple of hours to spread the word? For further information or to volunteer your services please contact me, Alix Powers-Jones, at the Museum via email [apowersjones@nts.org.uk](mailto:apowersjones@nts.org.uk) or telephone on 01381 600245.

I look forward to hearing from you.

# NEW BEGINNINGS

## MINUTES OF 5TH ANNUAL MEETING, CROMARTY CENTRE, 07 May 2011

In attendance: Professor Nigel Trewin, Chair; Martin Gostwick, Secretary; Dr Lester Borley, Mary Borley, Rev Ken Dupar, Lindsay Hemy, Frieda Gostwick, Henry McKenzie Johnston, Zooulla Spirou, Janey Clarke, Reay Clarke, Miranda Kitchen, Henry Kitchen, Sue Rider Busby, Roger Rider Busby, Lilian Cameron and friend, Lillemor Jernqvist, Derek Lancaster-Gaye, Hugh Miller Clarke, Lesley Beake, Bill Sinclair, Muriel Sinclair, Peter and Sally Ridley, Bob Reekie (representing Edinburgh Geological Society),

As guests: Alix Powers-Jones; Richard Burkitt, publisher; Speaker David Worthington, plus 3 of his UHI students (during his talk).

Apologies for absence: John Nightingale, Stephanie Kulesza, Anna Gordon, Elizabeth Sutherland, Bob Davidson, Ralph O'Connor



*Rosemarie Hogg and her cousin Scott MacKenzie, 13, in Lydia Garden. Past meets present and future all the time. Rosemarie grew up in Paye House next door, and spent hours in the museum. Now young James has caught the Cromarty history bug too. Rosemarie is the proud possessor of Miller books once owned by Inverness Courier editors Robert Carruthers (Hugh's patron) and Mrs Evelyn Barron.*

### OPENING

Prof Trewin welcomed Dr Alix Powers-Jones, the new Curator/Manager of the Hugh Miller Museum and author Lesley Beake as guests of honour. Apologies for absence were tendered and minutes of the 4th AGM in 2010 approved.

### SECRETARY'S REPORT

Martin Gostwick presented the Secretary's annual report, celebrating the donation of £600,000 in September 2010 to the Museum by Henry McKenzie Johnston, who was warmly applauded. This had turned round the Museum's fortunes "at a stroke," enabling the appointments of Dr Powers-Jones, and three staff. The Museum was now opening 7 days a week, 5 hours a day during the season. This was a complete turnaround from the restricted opening and reduced staffing in operation in the second half of 2009 and 2010.

**Henry McKenzie Johnston had also donated £5,000 to the Friends for its work.**

Membership had increased to 123, including 23 direct descendants, 20% up in the last year.

The loss of members Bright Gordon and Douglas Bremner was mourned.

**John Nightingale of Cromarty, and Stephanie Kulesza were welcomed as new patrons in succession to Lester Borley and the late Marian McKenzie Johnston. Lester Borley was warmly thanked and applauded for his contribution.**

The publication by Richard Burkitt, and donation of copies to the Friends by Henry McKenzie Johnston of Lydia Miller's novel *Passages in the Life of an English Heiress* was welcomed, and 7 members attending purchased copies on the spot. Henry had also donated remaindered copies of Elizabeth Sutherland's *Lydia* biography.

Work on republication of *The Old Red Sandstone* was another project in progress.

The Friends had supplied a number of volunteers to support the paid staff in the two Museum buildings, and a new volunteer gardening team had been formed to maintain the new Lydia Garden, and Miller's Yard.

The National Trust for Scotland had completed the rethatching of the Birthplace Cottage in August and September 2010 at a total cost of £35,000. The skill and dedication and the finished product by master thatcher Graham Carter has been much admired.



*Glyptolepis* This is a ferocious Devonian era predator, about to devour prey in Lake Orkadie. It is one of a resin model set covering all Miller's Devonian fishes, which are on display in Miller House, and available for education.



...and this is the predator's amiable creator Stephen Caine. Stephen has made scale models of fossils for Elgin Museum, Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, and private collectors among others, as well as all the models in Miller House.

The back wall of the Birthplace Cottage garden has been rebuilt, and repairs are due to an adjacent wall of Aunt Jenny's cottage remains.

The other highlight of the Trust's year was the Highlands and Islands' architects association awarding Miller's Yard as the finest new public open space of 2010. The Museum had also retained VisitScotland's 5-Star status for the fourth time.

The Secretary's report was approved, with acclaim for a great year for the Museum.

In discussion, the Chairman proposed a project to expand and catalogue the Museum's archives, especially its book collection, and to make its resources better known to the public.

Lillemor Jernqvist asked that attention could be paid to looking after the grave of Lisa Miller in St Regulus Churchyard.

## PLAQUE PROPOSAL

The Secretary proposed that a plaque be erected in Lydia Garden in honour of Lydia and Hugh Miller and all their descendants. Some amended wording suggested by Peter Ridley was accepted.

The revised wording reads:

THE LYDIA GARDEN  
This garden is named The Lydia Garden  
In honour of Lydia Miller, her husband Hugh  
and all their descendants

It was agreed the plaque should be inscribed in Caithness sandstone, and that an estimate for this be obtained from Sutherland Stoneworks.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

**A Statement prepared by outgoing Treasurer Sheona Leonard was accepted, showing a balance of £5997.33. The principal income had been donations totalling £5670.00 and membership subscriptions £1181. The main expenditure was £4570.82 on the creation of Lydia Garden.**

*NB: It is worth noting that we have subsequently successfully reclaimed a sum of £2,266 in Gift Aid tax relief from the Inland Revenue.*

The Chairman announced the sudden resignation of Mrs Leonard. He invited nominations for the post, and Sue Rider Busby volunteered to accept nomination.

The unanimous decision by the Management Committee to award the Secretary an honorarium of £500 a year for the production of the charity's newsletters, and maintenance of the Hugh Miller website, was reported to, and approved by the meeting.

## ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Sue Rider Busby was duly elected unanimously as Treasurer. As she was already a member of the Management Committee, a vacancy arose. The Secretary proposed Lilian Cameron, and she was unanimously elected.

The remaining existing members of the management committee, Nigel Trewin, Martin Gostwick, Ralph O'Connor, Henry McKenzie Johnston, Rev Ken Dupar and May Hunter were re-elected unopposed.

## MEETING THE NEW MANAGER

**Dr Alix Powers-Jones introduced herself as an environmental archaeologist, who has carried out considerable research in the Outer Hebrides. She was previously for three years the director of The Highlanders' Museum at Fort George.**

**She said she wanted to build on the outstanding work already done at the museum over the last few years. Her particular interest was in life-long learning.**

**"My aim is to work in partnership with the schools and the community as a whole in Cromarty, the Black Isle and beyond, to develop and deliver learning in an engaging, surprising and sometimes inspiring fashion."**

The writer **Lesley Beake**, who lives in Cape Province, South Africa, said she had found visiting the areas Hugh grew up in and explored inspiring in preparing her novel based on Hugh's boyhood, which is expected to be published some time next year.

The Chairman concluded that it had been a most successful meeting, and the quick replacement of the Treasurer post was particularly welcome.

At the public meeting following, **DR DAVID WORTHINGTON**, Lecturer in History, University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI), gave a most stimulating talk on the theme: An "Immense Tract of Sea"? The Moray Firth as a region for historical study." He focussed particularly on the growth of its fishing and import/export trading activity in the 17th Century.

# SPECIAL INTIMATE ARTEFACTS REDISCOVERED

Here we present four most exciting documents recovered for the collections, taking us behind the scenes into Hugh Miller's personal life. Trifles his two letters may be considered in relation to his mighty works of science and literature, yet they are plain, unvarnished testaments to his humanity.

## 1. *My dear Mother*

(TRANSCRIPT OF LETTER FROM HUGH MILLER  
TO HIS MOTHER HARRIET WILLIAMSON (NEE MILLER)

Thurso, 25<sup>th</sup> August 1849

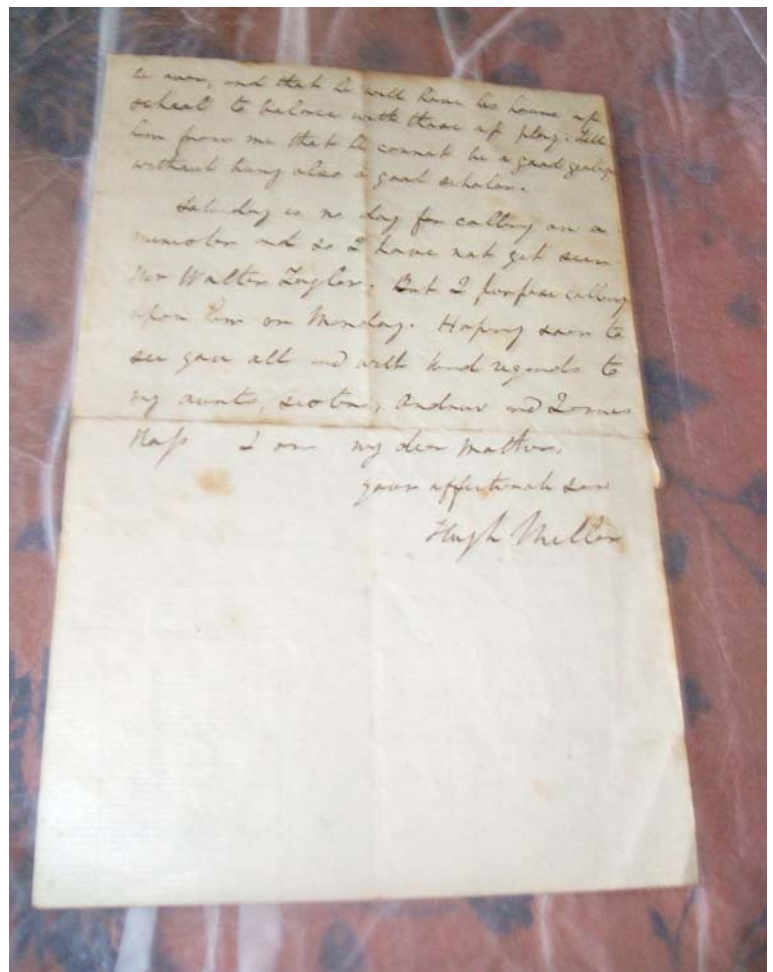
My dear Mother

I have got home after a very pleasant voyage of 24 hours from Granton pier to that of Wick, and then a drive of three hours in a gig. If the weather be favourable and all go well, I shall remain here for about a week, and then spend the greater part of another week on the east coast of Sutherland. So it will be Saturday fortnight ere I can get to Cromarty. I expect Bill to have over that time a great many fossils to show me, and that he will be able, like a good geologist to tell me much about them. The vacation will now I suppose be over, and that he will have his hours of ordeal to balance with those of play. Tell him from me that he cannot be a great geologist without also being a good scholar.

Saturday is no day for calling upon a minister, so I have not yet seen Mr Walter Taylor. But I purpose calling on him on Monday. Hoping soon to see you all, and with kind regards to my aunts, ? (one word, presumed someone's name indecipherable), Andrew and James Ross. I am my dear mother

Your affectionate son

Hugh Miller



The reverse side of Hugh's letter. Note the advice to Bill to be a good scholar if he wants to be a great geologist. Touching that the boy wanted to ape his father, but William went for a soldier instead, serving in the British Army in India.

## 2. My dear Mr Fairly

A SECOND very special and moving letter from Hugh Miller, written in the closing months of his life, appeals for company to his friend and fellow publisher Robert Fairly.

It came to the notice of one of our Museum's long-term contributors, Mr Nicholas Kidd, advertised for purchase on the internet, and he has very kindly offered to make it available to the Museum.

From 1854 onwards, Hugh had frequently to take weeks off work because of repeated attacks of the lung disorder, probably silicosis, which undoubtedly was a contributory cause of his early death.

Although the letter is undated, a pencilled note in another hand gives 1856, and a probable time is June when it is known he suffered an attack lasting two weeks. He died on December 24.

Like the letter to his mother, certain words have proved indecipherable. What we can read of the text is as follows:

*My dear Mr Fairly*

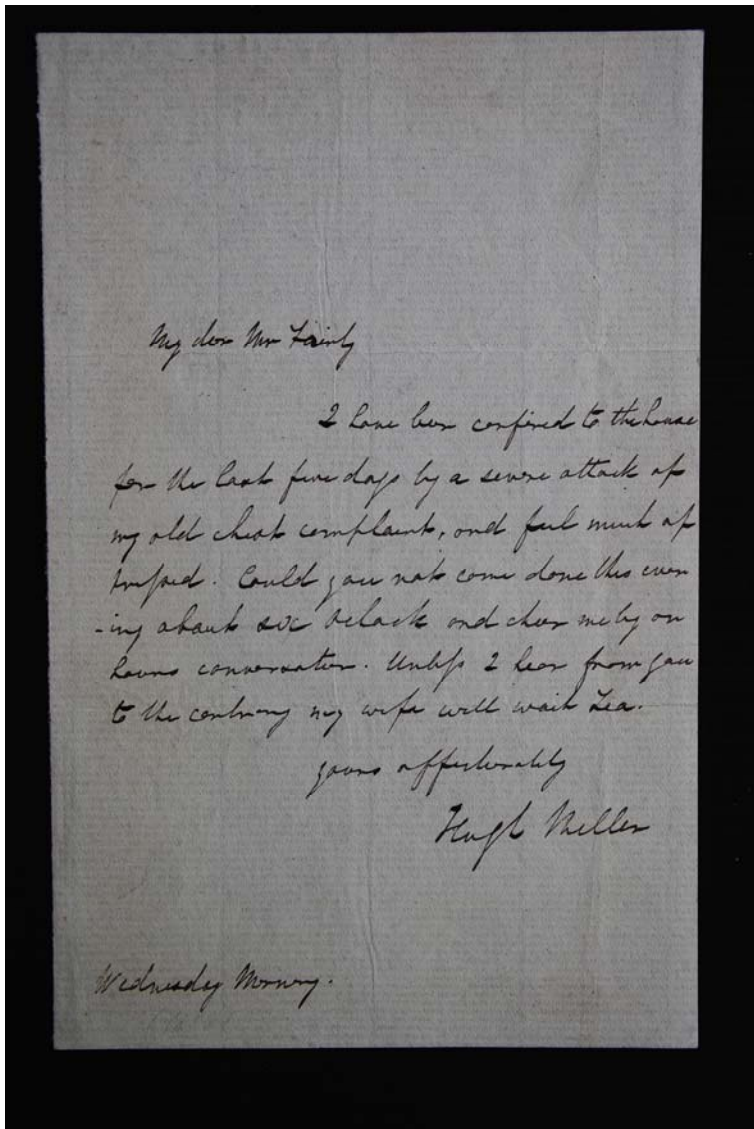
*I have been confined to the house for the last few days by a severe attack of my old chest complaint, and feel much of ?. Could you not come down this evening about six o'clock and cheer (?) me by an hours conversation. Unless I hear from you to the contrary my wife will wait tea.*

*Yours affectionately*

*Hugh Miller*

Nick Kidd is a fossil collector who has already benefitted the museum with a long-term loan of some remarkable Devonian specimens found on the same foreshore where Miller made his first discoveries.

He is also the artist whose embroidery in gold silk of an ammonite hangs in Miller House reception, and whose "puzzle" sculpture is displayed in the second geology room on the top floor. We thank him most sincerely for making this letter known to us.



*A dying man's request, couched in the humblest terms.*

## 3. Family Cash Book

THIS MARVELLOUS surprise donation sheds fascinating new light on the lives of Hugh's family in the years after his tragic death.

The document is a "Cash Book" itemising the Miller estate's income and the family's expenses, as managed by the Trustees of the estate. It was presented by Henry McKenzie Johnston.

He said he hoped it would prove to be of great interest to researchers, for the insights it offers, not only regarding intimate details of the Millers' lives and outgoings, but of the period the book covers, 1857 – 1862.

Included in the outgoings are pocket money for the children, fees for their education and lodgings, bills in connection with the ongoing publication of Hugh Miller's books organised by his widow, postages and small individual purchases of furniture, drawing materials, as well as feu duties on Shrub Mount, the last home of the whole family.

An initial examination suggests the entries were the work of a single Trustee, unnamed. He filled 42 pages in all, writing in the familiar elegant Victorian italic copperplate – minutely but perfectly legibly, with no crossings out or ink blobs.

Space allows for only a few entries here.

October 26<sup>th</sup> 1857. Mrs Cameron, Tain, for Hugh Miller's (the son's) board, £6 10/- And Academy fees, arithmetic 4/-. English reading and writing, 5s 6d.

October 26<sup>th</sup> 1857. R Henderson, Coldstream. Half-year's board and Education Year for Wm Miller, £24 18s 6d.

February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1858. John Adams A/c for drawing and engraving woodwork for Testimony, £32 0s 0d.

December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1859. Bessie Miller's to London (Xmas), £5 7s. Wm Miller to London (Xmas). £5 7s.

December 29<sup>th</sup> 1860. The whole family took a holiday in Germany. Mother Lydia's expenditures are given as £52 13s 1d, Harriet's, £62 1s 6½d, Bessie's was in excess of £40, Hugh Jnr, £46 19s 11d.

At a very approximate reckoning £50 in the 1860s would be worth about £230 today, but lodgings, food and travel were far, far cheaper in those days.

This was an important holiday, for while journeying down the Rhine, Harriet met her future husband John Davidson, then studying for the Free Church ministry.

#### 4. Cuttings Scrapbook

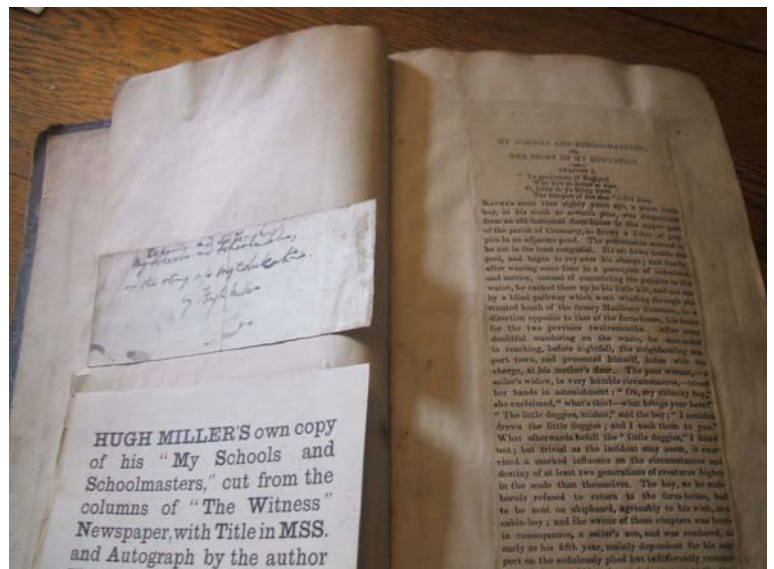
A FOURTH vital artefact to be recovered for the Museum is a cuttings book containing Hugh Miller's original serialised articles in *The Witness* of his autobiography, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, and his signature.

The provenance indicates that the articles were almost certainly pasted up at the time of publication in 1853, either by himself, or by members of his staff.

They may have been cut direct from the newspaper, or possibly run off its presses separately for use as galley proofs preparing for the work's publication in book form the following year, 1854.

It is a volume bound in thick board with a leather spine. The word "Proofs", in another hand, features on a small square of paper glued to the spine. The full title, *My Schools and Schoolmasters or The Story of My Education*, appears on a scrap of paper handwritten by Hugh.

It seems he may have toyed with another title for the book, because, again in his own hand, the words appear above the title: *Experience and its teachings*.



Chapter I appeared in *The Witness* on 18 June 1853, 19 of the subsequent chapters running in weekly instalments until 24 December of that year. The pasted cuttings finish near the close of Chapter XIV, at the point where Hugh is about to land at Leith Harbour, with the aim of disposing of a ruinous house owned by his family in the town, and of seeking "to make my way as a mechanic among the stonemasons of Edinburgh."

It is presumed that a second Proofs volume would have been needed for the remaining chapters of the book, but we have no evidence for its existence.

On the page inside the front cover, handwritten in ink, is the intimation: "Presented by M McDonald, Cromarty 1910." The assumption here is that a Cromarty resident of that name donated the volume to the Birthplace Cottage museum at that date.

How Mr or Mrs McDonald came by this MS will probably never be known. Its existence does however offer a possible solution to a long-standing puzzle.

In the Museum's Archive (Reserve Collections) Room is a set of vast, magnificently bound cuttings volumes containing whole *Witness* editions. But they have many large gaps, where sections had already been cut out.

It looks as if many, if not all Miller's articles were cut and pasted into scrapbooks such as this one, perhaps as mementoes, perhaps for use as publisher's proofs. If so, there will have been a great many of them. A similar volume is believed to exist for his book *The Cruise of the Betsey*.

This leaves other questions about the volumes of whole editions still unanswered. Who laboriously mounted them all, when, and why was so much trouble taken to preserve copies of the paper missing their most vital contents?

Only two complete, uncut sets of *The Witness*, are known to be extant, one in the Free Church headquarters and the other in The National Library of Scotland.

Another question has to be: Have any more cuttings books of proofs survived? Miller's family may have disposed of them following his death. Museum staff and The Friends would immensely value any information which could enlighten us on these mysteries.

How was the *My Schools* proofs book recovered? That we can answer. Episcopalian Minister the Rev Richard Burkitt found it in the cellar of his Inverness charity bookshop!

He is the publisher of Lydia Miller's novel, *Passages in The Life of an English Heiress*, and he explained: "While I was working on the Lydia novel, I vaguely remembered someone coming in with a load of books from the estate of one of my Cromarty parishioners several years ago, two of which concerned Miller.

"When I found them again - the *Witness* volume, and an early edition of *The Old Red Sandstone* - I realised they had once belonged to the Museum, and should go back there."

He duly presented them to The Friends on June 7, and they were formally handed over to the Museum on July 14. The Museum and the Friends warmly thank Mr Burkitt for his diligence in returning these items.

It was another instance of amazing luck, that the books had not gone straight to a skip, or a private sale, and that Mr Burkitt thought to check his stock, and connect them to where they belonged.

It is to be hoped that at some point in the future these four artefacts, or facsimile copies of them, may be exhibited in the Museum. They can be viewed on application in writing for an appointment to the Museum manager, [alixpowersjones@nts.org.uk](mailto:alixpowersjones@nts.org.uk).





## EAST CHURCH REOPENS

Two inspiring ceremonies over the May Bank Holiday weekend relaunched the Cromarty East Church as both a consecrated place of worship and a historic visitor attraction open to the public daily.

On Friday 29th April, festivities kicked off with a concert involving the entire pupil roll from Cromarty Primary School celebrating both the church reopening and the Royal Wedding.

The school had been watching the kirk's root-and-branch conservation and restoration programme from start to finish, and it was thus entirely fitting that the children should begin its new life. Their singing and the orchestra's playing was judged by all present to be beautiful.

On the Sunday, 1st May, a packed celebration service was led by the Cromarty parish minister, Rev Dr Willis Jones.

One of the highlights was undoubtedly Stephanie Kulesza honouring her three times great grandfather with a movingly sung rendering of the 23rd Psalm, the Lord is My Shepherd. Hugh Miller might have been looking down from his pew.

Later Stephanie fondly remembered worshipping at the church in her childhood with her grandfather, Brigadier Middleton, an elder resplendent in his kilt.

Rev Dr Willis Jones led the congregation in a rousing version of the great American hymn, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*.

He delivered a most stirring sermon on the theme, "Let the Stones Speak," recalling the church's often tempestuous history. He reviewed the long disputes between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians, and the debates over patronage,

which begot a lot of bad blood, leading even to fist fights in the pews.



*Stephanie Kulesza singing  
The Lord is My Shepherd during the*



*Shield (wall plaque). One example of the beautifully restored decorative motifs painted on to the pews*

The weekend's festivities marked the end of a long drawn out process, during which the Cromarty community looked on anxiously as the condition of the building visibly seriously worsened.

The Scottish Redundant Churches Trust (SRCT) took over the church in 1998, but it was some eight years before it was able to kick-start the church's rescue. Its appearance in the BBC2 Restoration Village series led to Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £641,000 in 2007. Other major funders were The Highland Council and Historic Scotland.

Work finally began on the £1.3 million project in the Spring of 2008, with Laing Traditional Masonry Ltd as main contractor, and their employment of local boys as apprentice stonemasons was one of the positive outcomes.



*The school orchestra performed beautifully*

A summary of the work includes: Removal of cement harl and gypsum plaster from the entire building and replacement with traditional lime harl; roof slates, window frames and panes and pews were all removed, cleaned and restored.



*Children's exuberance gives promise for a new future*

Archaeological surveys revealed important artefacts buried beneath the floor; new drainage ditches were dug in; the boundary wall was re-limed in harl, with new coping.

Since the opening, promising signs of the new future being sought for the kirk were the holding of services there every Sunday in July, and a fiddle concert performed by some 30 learners on July 10. It is open every day from 9.00am to 5.00pm, and the Visitors' Book testifies to great appreciation of its tranquillity and beauty.



## HIGHLAND HISTORY COURSE

Providing the Highlands and Islands with a university has been a centuries-long ambition. This ambition was realised in February when full university status was gained by the University of the Highlands and Islands.

The UHI Centre for History, based in Dornoch, Sutherland, is described regularly by UHI Principal James Fraser as a 'jewel in the crown' of the new institution.

Now the Centre is adding to its portfolio of degree courses and research opportunities by launching a Masters Programme in the History of the Highlands and Islands.

This course is available anywhere on earth. It can be taken as a whole, over a year or so, or in module-sized chunks.

More information is available here: <http://www.history.uhi.ac.uk/Postgr2134.asp>

Or contact Alison MacWilliam at the UHI Centre for History in Dornoch. Email: [Alison.Macwilliam@thurso.uhi.ac.uk](mailto:Alison.Macwilliam@thurso.uhi.ac.uk) Tel: (+44) (0)1847 889621



## APPEAL FOR BOOKS

Do you have any spare copies of the works of Hugh Miller, or works related to Hugh Miller? His best-known geological book is *The Old Red Sandstone* (1841), but there are several others on geology, religion and folklore. Would you like to donate books to the Hugh Miller Museum in Cromarty?

The 'Friends of Hugh Miller' aims to improve the Museum library by building up a collection of the various editions of Hugh Miller's publications. These would be available for research into the literary legacy of Hugh Miller.

Donated copies that duplicate editions already held in the collection would be sold to Museum visitors to assist The Friends in supporting displays and events at the Museum, and in the purchase of editions of Miller's work not in the library.

Donated books for this good cause can be sent to Martin Gostwick, Russell House, 55 Shore Street, Cromarty, IV11 8XL, or to Prof N H Trewin, Dept Geology and Petroleum Geology, Meston Building, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, AB24 3UE

Why not sign up and join 'The Friends'? For a mere £10 (or more if you wish!) you will receive details of meetings, publications, and a newsletter with reports of events. Visit the website at [www.hughmiller.org](http://www.hughmiller.org) for further information.

Prof. Nigel H Trewin  
Chairman 'The Friends of Hugh Miller'



# 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 55 SHORE STREET  
CROMARTY  
ROSS-SHIRE IV11 8XL.  
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EMAIL ADDRESS: martingostwick@tiscali.co.uk