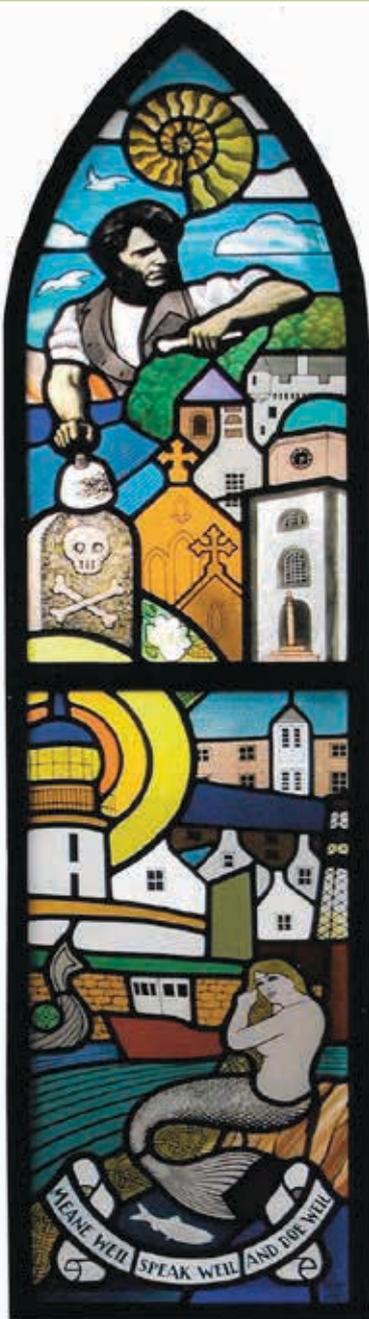
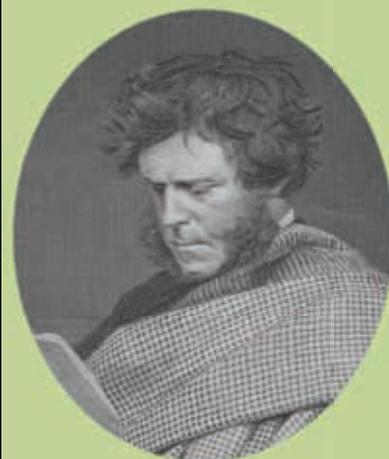


Issue No 22  
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Editor:  
Martin Gostwick,  
Secretary

# Hugh's News

Newsletter of  
The Friends of Hugh Miller



"Mein weil, speak weil, and doe weil" reads the motto on this great stained glass window. Originally of the Urquhart clan chiefs, it has now been adopted as their philosophy by Cromarty Primary School. The images of Miller and the stories he told fill the scene. Can you identify the buildings and the tales? The window was designed and made by Kiltarlity-based artist Erlend Tait to mark the Year of Highland Culture 2007. A fan of Hugh Miller's writings, he used pupils' own drawings of their favourite places in the town, and said "it was thrilling to work with the children to bring them to life again." (see Hugh's News No5, Spring 2008)

## FROM LAND AND SEAS TO CLASSROOM AND HALL

A Hugh Miller national festival is now planned to take place over the month of September. The festival month is a project being promoted by our partners the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) to embrace a range of public events across the country. They include a range of exciting educational initiatives all set to unfold around the forthcoming Betsey Reenactment Project, and geared to promoting geology as a study subject and to spreading the legacy of Hugh Miller.

The replica voyage (6th-12th September) aboard the converted trawler *Leader* in the wake of the *Betsey* yacht's voyage made in 1844 by Miller and his friend, Rev John Swanson, provides the focus round which all the events take place. They will include activities in Oban, Fort William, Musselburgh, and on the islands of Eigg and Rum, and in Cromarty, Miller's birthplace.

Musselburgh grammar school in Midlothian is taking forward a most unusual and imaginative approach. PE teacher Aileen McSherry is devising a dance round Miller themes primarily based on his life and work in and around Edinburgh – to be performed on the local beach.

The logo for the voyage and all the festival activity which takes place around it will be taken from a banner which Cromarty Craftworkers are making as a commission from the Friends. Images are to be featured on it of Miller, his birthplace cottage, and the Cromarty Firth. RSGS and the Friends are partnered in the Miller festival month by the National Museum of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Geodiversity Forum, and Scottish Geoparks.

On the *Leader* will be several senior secondary earth sciences students who will be spreading the word about the need to keep geology upfront as a subject in Scotland's secondary schools. As reported in the last issue, Mairi Gilmour of Culbokie, Black Isle, will be among them, sponsored by The Friends, just before she goes to Glasgow University.

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## FROM LAND AND SEAS TO CLASSROOM AND HALL

The *Leader* will in some aspects resemble Rev John Swanson's "floating manse," operating as an art studio, science lab, and communications centre. Among the passengers will be an intergenerational mix of geologists, geographers, artists, writers, ecologists, storytellers, theologians and historians (including Gaelic speakers), as well as the students.

A key group of teachers, academics and industry representatives, known as Earth Science Education Scotland, has already proposed a new Higher in Earth Science for S6 students (see *lobby wins support*, ps 3-4).

RSGS is also developing two new educational resources round the voyage for secondary and primary levels. One, a pilot for S3, will introduce 13 and 14-year-olds over a period of around six weeks to Scotland's earth story drawn from geography, science, English and history, written by Society medallist Alan Parkinson. It will combine indoor and outdoor learning. The Society is working with Education Scotland to recruit schools to take part in the pilot. The second pilot is a primary resource about landscape and geology, with a focus on Hugh Miller, which is being written by Sally Harkness, author of the much admired storyline materials for the Society's driving routes project of 2013. Primary schools in Cromarty, Edinburgh, Oban and Eigg have already agreed to take part in this pilot.

Cromarty Primary School's senior pupils are to play a prominent role in the We Are Cromarty mini-festival in Cromarty (23-25 September). They will visit the Hugh Miller Birthplace Cottage and Museum, in the week before the festival, so get some idea of what the man was all about. They will participate in pottery workshops led by Cromarty Pottery maker Barbel Dister, and in a workshop taken by sculptor Leon Patchett. Head teacher Henri Shepherd pointed out to the Friends: "You can't possibly have an event calling itself 'We Are Cromarty' without the involvement of our primary school." A statement with which we could not agree more, and we are working with her to organise their most effective participation.

A film of the Musselburgh dance will be shown at the festival. We are also pleased to announce that Pat Davidson, artist, is to exhibit some of her natural sciences-themed paintings, alongside the work of the four other contributing artists.

## "I AM A BIT OF A FAN," SAYS "JURASSIC" CLARK

A FASCINATING description of his own geologising on Skye – and Hugh Miller's before him – has been sent to us by one of Scotland's leading earth scientists, Dr Neil Clark, curator of palaeontology at the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow.

Dr Clark also responded to our request to give us a goodwill message for the Betsey Reenactment Project. Part of his letter reads: "I have been made aware of the project to undertake a voyage similar to that taken by Hugh Miller's *Cruise of the Betsey* as a council member of the Geological Society of Glasgow and also as part of the executive of the Scottish Geodiversity Forum. I have to admit to being a bit of a fan and have a well-thumbed first edition of his book myself.

"As you may be aware, I am a frequent visitor to the Isle of Skye, although I have not visited many of the sites Hugh Miller visited on that isle. Most of the sites I visit are further north of Portree and I don't think he went much further north than Holm. He travelled by post-gig to Portree from Broadford and walked from there to Holm across to the Storr and along the ridge south again. Little did he know that he would have encountered the remains of dinosaurs had he ventured as far as Staffin, but getting there from Por-



Mairi Gilmour



Dr Neil Clark

tree may not have been as easy as it is today with the tarmac-covered single-track road. I wonder what Hugh Miller would have made of dinosaurs at that time? By 1844 there had been a few scientific papers written on the subject, but none had been found in Scotland.

"After being scorched by the sun on his walk along the cliffs from Portree to Holm, he returned by the ridge soaked in fog and heavy rain. The rocks he looked at and the fossils he saw (mostly belemnites and ammonites) were described in his book most eloquently. It is as good a read today as it was in the 1800s! "I wish you every success in this venture and will endeavour to support you in any way that I can."

*\*Dr Clark is so renowned for his work on dinosaurs that he was nicknamed "Jurassic" in an article in The Times Educational Supplement.*

## "BEDROCK BOAT"

ONE of the stories coming out of this adventure, which may become legend, is how the Betsey Project began. It kicked off with an extraordinarily fortunate mobile phone conversation between RSGS education officer Joyce Gilbert, then sailing aboard the *Leader* trawler off the Isle of Jura, and the geologist, who happened to be in Sri Lanka at the time. Only later did she find out that the said geologist, Simon Cuthbert, secretary of Glasgow Geological Society, had been on a far away continent; both of them had only fleeting reception, and therefore realised how lucky they had been to communicate at all.

Joyce had been involved in several geology projects in 2013, including *Stories in the Land : The Bedrock Walk*, which covered some of the old droving routes, and this had helped her to "see the landscape in a completely different way."

She recounted: "I was so excited by the geology while anchored off Jura, that I contacted Simon to suggest we should plan some sort of geological project which would be a follow up to the *Bedrock Walk*, but instead of travelling on land, take a journey for a week on a boat, ie charter *Leader*, the 'Bedrock Boat', if you like!"

Did he have any possible sources for historical travels at sea?

Simon immediately replied: "Ahhh, that would be Hugh Miller and *Cruise of the Betsey*." When Joyce got home later that week, "I was able to Google 'The Cruise of the Betsey', and I was hooked."

## HIGHER GEOLOGY LOBBY WINS GOOD SUPPORT

FOUR Highland and Islands MSPs so far have responded with their backing for the Friends' lobby for the retention of Higher Geology as a key subject in Scottish secondary education.

The Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS), which is leading this campaign, and several other bodies promoting geology, have made representations to education ministers, and individual MSPs, including Oil & Gas UK, the official voice of the offshore industry. Meetings were understood to be imminent with Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning Mike Russell, his number two Alasdair Allan, and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). It is hoped to persuade the politicians and the SQA to reverse the proposal to drop the Higher from next year, and retain it instead until a new Higher in Earth Sciences is developed.

The Friends' letter to Highlands and Islands MSPs stressed geology's status as an educational priority, and cited evidence of a growing enthusiasm for it in secondary schools. We emphasised the needs of the energy industries, and the importance of training more teachers in the earth sciences. One of our members, Gavin Berkenheger, wrote to Mike Russell directly, and to his MSP, Dennis Robertson (SNP,



*Leader trawler at sea*



Left to right: Tavish Scott, Dennis Robertson, Jean Urquhart, John Finnie

Aberdeenshire West) in his capacity as a consultant exploration geologist currently exploring for gold and other precious metals in Scotland. Geology in secondary school had been instrumental in defining his career.

He is currently advising the Scottish Government on legislation for mineral exploration and exploitation. "This has the potential to be a multibillion pound industry," he pointed out.

He added: "If government has foresight they would see how important geology is for our young Scots, be they in the emerging sector of mineral exploration and exploitation, geothermal energy, or understanding our role as world citizens in relation to climate change. I do not have to highlight how important the oil industry is for Scotland, and our responsibility to provide labour with at least a background in geology. Having a workforce prepared for these markets is key to Scotland's future. We can not rely on foreign labour who will take wealth out of the country."

Mr Robertson said he had asked Mr Russell to consider and respond to Gavin's points.

Tavish Scott MSP (Lib Dem, Shetland) replied to the Friends' letter: "Having been at an excellent event in Our Dynamic Earth recently which highlighted Scotland's geoparks, one of which is Shetland, I very much agree with these sentiments. I will write accordingly to the Education Minister in the Scottish Government."

John Finnie MSP (Independent, Highlands & Islands) wrote: "I understand that my colleague Jean Urquhart (Independent, Highlands & Islands) is pursuing the matter with the Cabinet Secretary which will hopefully open up discussion on the issue. Please be reassured of my support for retaining Higher Geology."

RSGS advised the Scottish Government that a focus group of teachers, academics and industry representatives, known as Earth Science Education Scotland, has already proposed a new Higher in Earth Science which would cover the



*On this beach Hugh Miller was the first with his companions to discover the "singing sands" of Eigg, and this is how he described the view in his Cruise of the Betsey: "The island of Rum, with its abrupt sea-wall of rock, and its steep-pointed hills, that attain, immediately over the sea, an elevation of more than two thousand feet, loomed bold and high in the offing, some five miles away, but apparently much nearer. The four tall summits of the island rose clear against the sky, like a group of pyramids; its lower slopes and precipices, variegated and relieved by graceful alterations of light and shadow, and resting on their blue basement of sea, stood out with equal distinctness."*

wide range of topics that modern Earth Sciences currently spans, and that would typically be offered in Year 6. The connectivity of these subjects would be lost if they were dispersed. The geology content in the new geography curriculum has been diminished, while its place in biology, physics and chemistry showed a distinct lack of breadth and depth. Importantly, the new science curriculum will not equip students to understand the behaviour of the solid Earth, natural resources and exploration, energy challenges, the hydrocarbon industry and geological climate change.

An Earth science qualification is a unique opportunity to consolidate on the learning achieved within the pure science subjects by studying a more applied science subject that underpins the economy and tackles some of the most difficult questions of our time: present and future energy challenges, new sources of natural resources, and climate change. In this context, surely we want to develop informed citizens who have at least a basic understanding of how the planet functions and where resources come from. By offering Higher Earth science in the final year of secondary school, pupils have an opportunity to additionally develop skills training (including outdoor fieldwork), research experience, some independent learning and careers awareness prior to leaving school.

Finally - geology is a vital part of our cultural and natural heritage in Scotland. It underpins biodiversity and defines who we are by shaping our inner & outer landscapes. With such mighty figures as Hutton, Murchison, Miller, Geikie, Peach & Horne to name a few, Scotland is **the** world-renowned 'cradle of geological thinking'. This rich cultural and natural heritage is celebrated in our poetry, music and art, and spectacular Scottish Geoparks which draw thousands of tourists every year. With this backdrop, it is even more astonishing that pupils in Scotland will soon no longer have the opportunity to study Earth science in the senior phase at school.

Let us hope that the politicians will listen to the energy industries, the earth scientists, and supportive MSPs, and revise their thinking – quickly.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### I WILL KEEP ON TELLING THE STORY

From Mrs Lilian Cameron, 3 May 2014

I felt I wanted to confirm in writing my intention to resign from playing an active part on the Management Committee of The Friends of Hugh Miller group. I recognise it is a prestigious group to belong to, and I hope I have been able to be of some assistance at the meetings, although at some considerable distance.

As I have already mentioned to you, I have known of Hugh Miller as a man of considerable importance from the time when I was a little girl, from my uncle Mr William Manson of the Geological Survey in Edinburgh, and who took me under his wing frequently on his journeys to his native Caithness, I being brought up in Wick. Such was my advantage compared with my contemporaries. As the years passed and visits to Cromarty continued, my knowledge of Hugh Miller and geology and of Cromarty increased, and The National Trust for Scotland had taken over; the rest is history.

Living in Wick as I did meant proximity to Thurso, the only other town in the county of Caithness, my home. I had heard that a certain geologist and botanist called Robert Dick lived there, and who corresponded with Hugh Miller, passing on specimens to him. The story was becoming more and more interesting.

So there is so much for The Friends of Hugh Miller to tell the world. I for one will be happy to keep on telling the story.

With kindest regards and best wishes.

Lilian

***Editor's Note:** Lilian has been a member since 2007, a member of the management committee for two years, 2012-2014, and a generous subscriber and donor. We are delighted she is continuing to participate.*

## THE MIDDLETON CONNECTION

From Mr Henry McKenzie Johnston

Dear Friends I feel it is important that the story of the connections between the Middletons and the Millers should be better known, and look forward to seeing the information on the relevant websites.

Hugh and Lydia's eldest child, Harriet, born in 1839, emigrated to Australia in 1870 with her husband, the Rev John Davidson, when he was called to the Chalmer's Church in Adelaide and then, in 1874, appointed Professor at the University there. He died there in 1881 and she in 1883, when her four children came back to Scotland. The eldest child, Lydia, born in 1864, married Thomas Middleton (later Sir Thomas, a distinguished agronomist) of Rosefarm, Cromarty. Two Middleton brothers from County Durham in England had moved to the Black Isle in the 1770s as tenant farmers. Their various descendants eventually managed to buy their farms, Thomas buying Rosefarm in 1923. The memorial to his wife Lydia is in the fenced Middleton family plot in the Gaelic cemetery just over the wall behind the Hugh Miller Monument, as well as memorials to their two children and three of their grandchildren. The continuing local connection with Hugh Miller now rests with John Gordon, who inherited Rosefarm from his grandmother, Bright Middleton, herself one of Lydia Miller's grandchildren.

*Editor's Note: We thank Henry most warmly for this information. The development of the two websites, The Friends of Hugh Miller which is already "live" online, and the proposed replacement of the Discover Hugh Miller site are both works in progress.*

## SO SPECIAL FOR ME

From Mrs Janey Clarke

Thank you for your email and all the nice things you said about my contribution to the museum - I have loved volunteering there and having the opportunity to spend more time in Cromarty - just walking through the streets to the museum never fails to thrill me. It is so special for me.

Your newsletter is really inspiring - I wish you all success with the new projects - the trip on the Leader is a tremendous new initiative for Hugh Miller and I am really pleased for you that this opportunity has arisen with the benefits and rewards and recognition to Hugh Miller it will bring after all the work you and Frieda have done to keep the spirit of the great man going for so very many years.

With very best wishes to you both.

Janey

*Editor's note: Janey has been the most active direct descendant at the Museum, serving since 2009 as a volunteer both at reception and guiding work within the buildings, and in gardens maintenance. On 10th April 2010, she opened Lydia Garden behind the Birthplace Cottage, named for her three times great grandmother, Lydia Miller, and her own mother, the late Lydia Clarke, together with the other descendants.*

## MINUTES OF THE 8TH AGM, 3 MAY 2014

# FESTIVAL WELL FUNDED

Attendance: Nigel Trewin, Martin Gostwick, Henry McKenzie Johnston, Stephanie Kulesza, Marek Kulesza, Lillemor Jernqvist, Derek Lancaster-Gaye, Bob Davidson, Pat Davidson, Elizabeth Sutherland, Zooulla Spirou, Roy Nelson, Gavin Berkenheger, Frieda Gostwick, Sidney Dantuma Johnston

Guests: Mairi Gilmour; Bill Taylor; Alix Powers-Jones.

Apologies: Janey Clarke, Peter Ridley, Myra Lawson, Lester Borley, Liz Broumley, Reay Clarke, Jane and Menno Verburg, Lindsay and Piers Hemy, Louisa Heard, Alison Wright.

Minutes of the 7th AGM agreed.

Bill Taylor, on behalf of RSGS, gave a rundown of what will be happening during and after the Betsey replica voyage. Mairi Gilmour explained how she applied to sail on the voyage as a student of earth sciences.

### **Secretary's Annual Report.**

Martin Gostwick noted that 53 of The Friends' membership so far had raised their subscriptions, many very generously. We had made 11 new members during 2013/14. One member, Sir Graham Hills, had passed away. Martin welcomed the new partnership with RSGS, and hoped the forthcoming Betsey replica voyage and Cromarty festival would boost the group's profile and membership, especially among young people.

Affiliations of Aberdeen & Highland Geological Societies were warmly welcomed. Edinburgh and Glasgow GeolSocs to be approached.

The new Friends of Hugh Miller website had been launched, and the existing Discover Hugh Miller site was to be replaced as a priority. Four editions of the Hugh's News had been produced.

For the We Are Cromarty festival, Martin reported grants from Nigg Energy Park, Highland Council and the Cromarty Trust, to a total value of £2,500. The meeting agreed the recommendation to put £1,500 of The Friends reserves at the festival's disposal, and to support the Secretary's and Mairi Gilmour's berths aboard the Betsey voyage.

### **Treasurer's Report.**

Sue Busby presented the Financial Statement for 2013/14, unanimously approved, showing an income of £2,726.48, and outgoings of £1,737.73, with a balance of £7,050.81.

### **Property Manager's Report.**

Dr Alix Powers-Jones was heartily welcomed back to her post after her illness. She expressed great enthusiasm for the Betsey project and told Mairi Gilmour it would be a life-changing experience. She mentioned two forthcoming events the Museum will be holding, a "One Day's Tides" photography day in late August for Fortrose Academy students and others, and a Seashore Roadshow beach day for local primary school pupils on 6th September. She had resumed work on a 5-year Development Plan for NTS, which would transform the Museum and Cottage into a centre for lifelong learning.

### **Election of management committee and office bearers:**

Henry McKenzie Johnston and Lilian Cameron's resignations from the management committee accepted, with thanks expressed for their excellent services. Tribute was paid to Henry's outstanding contribution since the group's foundation and to the Museum, and he was voted an Honorary Vice-Chairman by acclamation. Henry, thanking the meeting, assured The Friends of his continued support, and promised he would "remain in the background" to help the committee when needed.

Bob Davidson, nominated by Nigel Trewin, seconded by Sue Busby, was unanimously voted on to the Management Committee. A vacancy now exists on the committee, and nominations would be sought in the coming year.

The meeting agreed to thank Janey Clarke for her services as a volunteer.

Nigel Trewin presented the Museum with a copy of *The Old Red Sandstone*, and Martin presented three of Lydia Miller's children's books, donated by member Charles Smith.

The public meeting followed to which Dr David Alston presented an excellent illustrated talk on "The Cromarty Hugh Miller knew."

### DAVID ALSTON'S TALK

## A "DANGEROUS" TRUANT HUGH AND HIS MERRY GANG

David Alston did a fine piece of research work in unearthing the names and backgrounds of Hugh's boyhood gang, piecing together their identities from Hugh's autobiography, the Rev Peter Bayne's 1871 biography, and other written sources



"Waterloo" Clarke's 1825 engraving showing Cromarty at the height of its prosperity.

He revealed that Hugh was probably the oldest member of the group, and suggested that being the "leader of the gang" was probably a very formative experience for him.

Some of the Cromarty boys of the time may have been of mixed race, the sons of Scots who owned cotton plantations in the West Indies. Hugh's autobiography tells of a fight he had with a "mulatto." (*My Schools and Schoolmasters*, p134, Edinburgh, 1993). "I had, however, ... become a wild insubordinate boy. ... I got into sad scrapes. ... And in a subsequent quarrel with another boy – a stout and somewhat desperate mulatto – I got into a worse scrape still." Miller records that this boy "drew his knife upon me. ... I immediately drew mine, and, quick as lightning, stabbed him in the thigh." The mulatto boy was not seriously hurt, but Hugh rightly got "the character of being a dangerous boy."

One of the gang Dr Alston named was a John Layfield, who died in Berbice, Guyana in the 1820s. He said he had almost certainly been sent to school in Cromarty from that colony. It was likely that he was the son of a Cromarty man and either an enslaved woman or a "free coloured woman." Dr Alston posed the question whether John Layfield could have been the "mulatto boy" with whom Hugh fought – although at some stage he became one of Hugh's gang.

In Chapter VII of his book Hugh thrillingly recounts the Huck Finn-like doings of his band, scrumping for apples, camping and cooking in the South Sutor woods, lighting shale-fires in caves, carrying ancient disused weapons about, and contending with the Cromarty Estate gardener.

Hugh's companions Dr Alston named as David Ross, Andrew Forbes (the son of a neighbour), Walter Williamson (a cousin), Adam McGlashan (whose uncle had made money in Newfoundland), John Mann (the son of a sea-captain), John Swanson (another sea-captain's son), Alexander Finlay, and the aforementioned John Layfield.

Finlay, though docile, was also his boldest cave-companion. Much later in life, he would seek Miller out again, by which time Finlay had prospered as a merchant – in Spanish town, Jamaica. Swanson would convert him to evangelical Christianity, and take him with him on *The Cruise of the Betsey*, geologising and ministering to the Free Church congregations in the Small Isles.

Dr Alston also described how Hugh grew up in his great grandfather John Feddes' old thatched cottage, while the newly prosperous merchants built their handsome new villas around him. The town saw a property-owning class emerging on streets built to a grid pattern during the Napoleonic Wars. It gained a hotel, a circulation library in 1821, and thrived through its trades. But by the early 1850s, when Miller returned, he found forlorn houses and vacant streets. Invergordon had built its own harbour, and Cromarty's trade had collapsed.

