

Issue No 25  
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# Hugh's News

Newsletter of  
The Friends of Hugh Miller



above, Joyce Gilbert  
below, Isle of Luing, Argyll

## SECOND VOYAGE HAILING MILLER'S "TESTIMONY" SETS SAIL

Hugh Miller sails - in spirit - off the west coast of Scotland again this summer, aboard the traditional ketch, *Leader*. This time the voyage is off the Argyll Islands. All on those on board are investigating, as its theme proclaims, the "Testimony of the Rocks."

This, the title of Miller's last book to be published under his personal direction, has deliberately been chosen for the voyage (20-26th June), setting sail as we went to press. It is the natural follow-up to last year's epic passage in the Small Isles, following in the wake of "The Cruise of the Betsey."

The team of passengers is once again being led by education consultant and Friends member, Dr Joyce Gilbert. She told *Hugh's News*: "We had three very good student applications so decided to offer places to all of them! It's a very mixed group again this year and I'm excited to have storyteller and musician Bob Pegg on board."

She added: "We have two young artists, two young film makers, a young Gaelic singer plus the three young Earth Scientists, all aged 20 - 30 years."

We are delighted to announce that Dyfan Roberts, 20, is one of the young students, a geology student at Cardiff University. Dyfan is a nephew of Friends' member Jane Verburg. Jane was inspired by the presentation of last year's Betsey Project at our AGM and by our Friends website, to contact Dyfan, and he followed through with an application.



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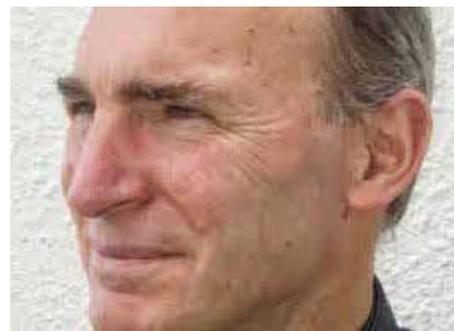
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Here is the official announcement of the voyage:

**Testimony of the Rocks: Journeys through Time 20th-26th June 2015**

**'There are few things more interesting in geological science than those snatches of human history, or those peculiarities of human condition, which we find associated necessarily often, but usually unexpectedly, with certain formations of rocks.'** **Hugh Miller**

The Scottish Geodiversity Forum, the Isle of Luing Community Trust and the Friends of Hugh Miller, will mark the launch of the new Atlantic Islands Centre on Luing, by chartering the sailing boat *Leader* in June 2015. The project, builds on a recent initiative entitled **Hugh Miller & The Cruise of the Betsey** ([www.cruiseofthebetsey.wordpress.com](http://www.cruiseofthebetsey.wordpress.com)) run by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, the Friends of the Hugh Miller and the Scottish Geodiversity Forum in 2014.



Norrie Bissell

The new Atlantic Islands Centre on Luing, celebrates the rich history, geodiversity and biodiversity of the Argyll islands. A major focus is the relationship between people and place, including how the underlying geology of these remarkable islands has shaped people's lives over the millennia.

For our journey in 2015, we have recruited an intergenerational and interdisciplinary team of fifteen people (aged 20-76), to follow the ancient sea routes taken by travellers over the ages around Argyll's Atlantic Islands. Three places for young Earth scientists are being supported by the Glasgow and Edinburgh Geological Societies. The voyage, which begins from Oban on the 20th June, will take the form of a mobile conference during which participants will have opportunities to broaden and deepen their appreciation of the Argyll islands geodiversity, but also to gain new and probably unexpected perspectives on the geology, landscape and people of this beautiful sea-bound realm.

A report of the voyage will feature in our next edition and on the website.

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## MILLER'S STAR ROLE IN 'SELF HELP' BOOK

A visitor to The Friends' website, Mr Robert Turner, has kindly drawn our attention to a book which contains several hagiographic tributes to Miller.

This is the Victorian classic, *Self Help*, by Samuel Smiles, first published in 1859, and for decades almost as commonly found in people's homes as the Bible.

Mr Turner obligingly provided references which we were able to check in the Museum library's copy of the work, which is a reprint published in 1996 by the Institute of Economic Affairs, a think tank which deemed it to have contemporary relevance.

Smiles, who also wrote a biography of Miller's friend and collaborator, the Thurso baker Robert Dick, described Hugh the stonemason as "among the common class of day labourers," who found toil, even the hardest, to be "the noblest of schools" (p18).

Toil for Miller was "full of pleasure and materials for self improvement." On ps 91-92 praise is heaped on Miller's autobiography, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, for its reflections on self-respect, self-dependence, and the faculty of patience.

On p124, those who bring about their own downfall from rank and fortune are typified by John, supposedly Earl of Crauford, employed as a hodman to the masons, including Miller, working on Niddrie House.

Miller is again quoted, p137, on the nobility of character and self-education, brought about by honest toil. Finally, p185, he is quoted from his autobiography, on the evil of strong drink, and his vow never to touch the stuff again, after a couple of drams on his first day at work.

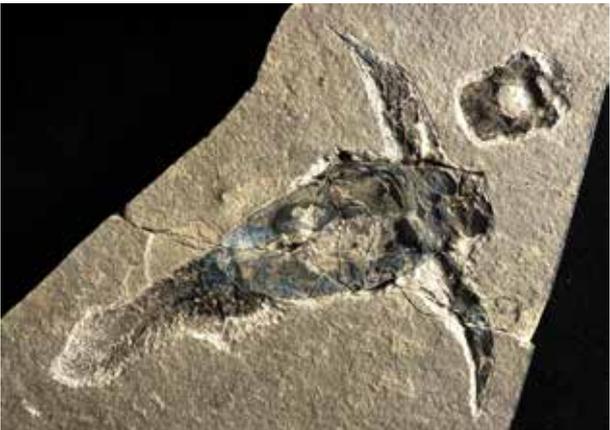
Smiles did not attempt to analyse Miller's complex social and political views.

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FOSSIL FIVE WINNERS

# AMAZING SUCCESS FOR HUGH'S

## DEVONIAN FISH



Fossil Five Awards - Scotland's Favourite Fossils 2015

Overall winner  
**Devonian Fish**

The nominees: The Irish Elk (Megaloceros) - Jurassic  
triceratops - Jurassic dinosaur of the Isle of Skye -  
Jurassic oysters (Gryphaea) - Triassic reptiles -  
Jurassic sharks - Fossil trees - Carboniferous stromatolites  
(Fossil corals) - Early tetrapods - Conodont animals from  
Scotland, Edinburgh - Eurypterids - Devonian Fish - Early  
land plants - Trilobites - Graptolites - Stromatolites



<http://www.scottishgeology.com/poll/>



A very bright idea on the part of the fast-growing Scottish Geodiversity Forum for popularising geology among the public has been staging a poll this year to find which are the Scottish people's favourite fossils.

And perhaps rather surprisingly, the Devonian fish made famous by Hugh Miller emerged at the top, ahead of what might perhaps be considered more spectacular contenders.

Second came the Jurassic dinosaurs of the Isle of Skye, third were early tetrapods, fourth trilobites, and fifth, fossil trees. Figures were not given for the votes cast, but the contest was well publicised by the Geodiversity Forum, though a "fossil extravaganza" event at Our Dynamic Earth attended by the public in their thousands, as well as through online voting on its website, and favourable media coverage.

Forum chairperson Margaret Greene presided over a delightfully light-hearted awards ceremony in Glasgow University's Hunterian Museum. Science writer Lara Reid got a special mention for her organising efforts. Appropriately enough, It took place just in front of a giant *Plesiosaur*, another specimen of the same Jurassic animal which Miller found on Eigg.

It could be strong support from the earth sciences faculties of Edinburgh and Aberdeen Universities which helped the scaly creatures Hugh discovered to top the poll, supported by a public inspired by images from his own collection provided by our Friends' ex-chairman, Nigel Trewin.

Some of Nigel's Devonian specimens featured in the poll. Top, *Pterichthyodes*, left, *Coccosteus*. Below, the *Plesiosaur* in the Hunterian collection.

At the ceremony, our secretary, Martin Goswick, said Miller would be "surprised and doubtless very pleased" to learn his finds were Scotland's favourites. He was handed the award certificate by Dr Tom Challands, teach-



ing fellow at Edinburgh University, who earlier this year gave a talk on Devonian fish at the Museum (see *Hugh's News* No 24, Spring 2015).

Martin Gostwick in turn passed on at the Friends' annual meeting a framed copy of the certificate for display in the Museum.

Tom Challands said earth scientists had been studying these fish for 184 years, and were still finding new things about them. They lived at a transitional time when fish were evolving into land animals. Fossil fish can still be found on pavements made of Caithness flagstone, for example in the streets of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee.

Hunterian Museum curator Dr Neil Clark said Scotland had one of the most important fossil heritages in the world, with a huge variety of species, gathered as it travelled across the globe over hundreds of millions of years.

## "NESSIE" NONSENSE EXPOSED

Promoters of the mythical aquatic reptile "Nessie" pulled off the most extraordinary "discovery" in the history of palaeontology in April when they claimed to have found a link between the beast and Hugh Miller's Devonian fish, *Pterichthyodes milleri*.

Gary Campbell, president of the Official Loch Ness Fan Club, spotted a resemblance between the creatures when he was visiting the Inverness Museum, and claimed that this offered proof of Nessie's ancestry.

An article in *The Herald* newspaper ("Nessie link to fossil found in Highlands," 4 April, 2015), suggested this link had gone unnoticed when it had been under the noses of the public for over a century. It was presented in the article as part of new research for an upcoming Inverness Science Festival.

A quote attributed to Inverness Museum curator Cait McCullagh appeared to lend credence to the notion that the structure of Miller's fish corresponded to the popular image of the Loch Ness Monster.

However, Cait told *Hugh's News*: "There was a wee bit of poetic licence taken with my actual sentiments here. In fact, the thrust of the event being publicised through the editorial piece was to encourage people to look at the fossil record and the fine specimens we have here at the museum, as an exciting alternative to speculative monster hunting."

Our leading palaeontologist, Professor Nigel Trewin, commented: "The newspaper article was a ludicrous hoax. *Pterichthyodes* was a bottom-feeding fish in the basin known as Lake Orcadie in the Devonian era between 350 and 400 million years ago, when Scotland lay south of the Equator. Loch Ness was the product of glacial erosion in the Ice Ages, which have only occurred in the last two and a half million years, and the alleged monster is supposed to be a reptile not a fish."

Notwithstanding the Nessie hoax, and Miller's fish supposedly being nicknamed "Pessie," Cait McCullagh reported that the pilot Inverness Science Festival this year, organised by the University of the Highlands and Islands, had been a success, and it was hoped its scope could be widened in future years.

She confirmed that the fossil specimen displayed in the above-mentioned article was actually one of those donated by Hugh Miller in 1835. They mark a long and distinguished connection between Miller and the Inverness Museum.

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## A GREAT SHARED HISTORY

Inverness Museum and Hugh Miller have a long history together, all of it offering splendid examples of cooperation and collaboration.

It began with Hugh's friendship with, and debt to, George Anderson, an Inverness solicitor and keen naturalist



Above: Nessie fantasy image  
Below: *Pterichthyodes*



who founded what would later become the Inverness Museum. George founded the Northern Institution for the Promotion of Science and Literature in 1825, and co-wrote with his brother Peter, a *Guide to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, a very early form of tourist guide published in 1834.

In keeping with the fashion of the times, the book contained a serious amount of material on the region's geology, and as such served as a "primer" for Hugh for his own studies. Three or four years had passed since Miller began studying the Old Red, alone and unaided by any source of reference, when this providential book arrived on his desk. He gave his fullest acknowledgement of its value in his own masterpiece, *The Old Red Sandstone*, (first edition, 1841, ps 122-124), describing it as "a work which has never received half its due measure of praise." Especially invaluable was the 50-page closely printed appendix on geology, containing "the completest description of the rocks, fossils, and formations of the Northern and Western Highlands, which has yet been given to the public in a popular form." He learnt from it, for the first time, of the fossil fishes of Caithness and Gamrie.

He was quick to make a grateful response. In the following year, 1835, Hugh presented, according to the Institution's records, – "a beautiful and extensive collection of rocks, minerals and fossils from the neighbourhood of Cromarty". However, the Institution had its final meeting that same year, and its collections were moved over the next 40 years to two different premises, and by 1876 had deteriorated into "rather a sad state."

The collections got a permanent home in the fine new combined Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery built in appropriate Old Red Sandstone in 1881. This survived until the town council's horrible act of municipal vandalism, the demolition of almost the whole Victorian Bridge Street area in 1963, to be replaced by the present edifice in Castle Wynd.

Through all these vicissitudes, remnants of Miller's 1835 donation have thankfully survived, including the *Pterichthyodes milleri* specimen proudly featured on the Museum's website. Six are identified by labels as from Hugh or his son Hugh junior. Other notable geologists to have donated included John Horne, T D Wallace, and Charles MacLeod. And the links between the Inverness and Cromarty museums have happily continued. A copy of the Andersons' book was donated to the Cromarty museum by historian of geology, the late Professor Michael Collie, on the occasion of Miller's bicentenary in 2002.

In 2004 Inverness Museum's then curator of natural history, the late Jon Watt, and conservation officer Jeannette Pearson lent their invaluable professional assistance over several days in packing and archiving the old fossil collection housed in the birthplace Cottage in preparation for the opening of Miller House in April that year.

The Miller House displays include the silverplate salver presented to Miller in 1854 by friends and admirers "appreciating very highly his eminent services in the conduct of *The Witness*", which is on long-term loan from the Inverness Museum.

Long may our rewarding association continue.

## MORAY GEOLOGY

A major conference themed on *Moray Geology, Past, Present and Future* took place under the aegis of Elgin Museum in March. It was introduced by our former chairman, Professor Nigel Trewin, with a presentation on the Moray Society's history. Papers were also given by our members Mr Bob Davidson, The Friends' present chairman, on Devonian palaeontology in the area, and Alison Wright on managing the effects of climate change on sandstone buildings. The proceedings of the conference can be obtained from the Museum, 1 High Street, Elgin IV30 1EQ, for £8.40 (including P&P) Tel. 01343543675 or [curator@elginmuseum.org.uk](mailto:curator@elginmuseum.org.uk)

## INTRODUCING "RE-ENACTORS"

Alison Forrest (right) is one of two volunteers now performing re-enactment of life in Hugh's time in the Birthplace Cottage, c1802-1819. In mutchcap, bib and gown, she could be Hugh's mother, Harriet!

Alison, of Evanton, Easter Ross, is a library manager based in Inverness, and has been in the service for 29 years and counting. Recently, she became part-time, and was looking for a volunteering opportunity in her spare time, and called at the Museum. She says "I didn't imagine I would end up doing this in fancy dress, but I'm enjoying it." Here she is with two visitors in Hugh's writing room with Vic and Jackie Long from Bradford, Yorks. The other volunteer is Cat McKenzie of Cromarty.



# A SURPRISE HUGH MILLER ITEM - A LUCKY FIND

by Nigel Trewin

On the morning of April 1st, our 48th wedding anniversary, Margie and I called at Logie Steading near Forres for morning coffee. We had driven from Grantown-on-Spey through a landscape covered in fresh snow, but had been lucky to see a black throated diver in breeding plumage on Lochindorb, and also the first wheatear of spring.

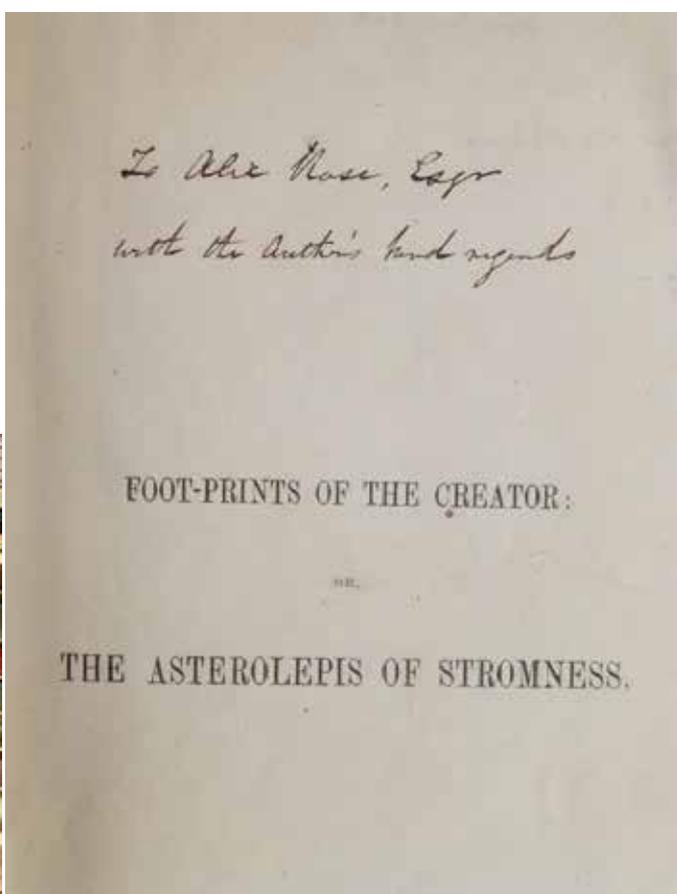
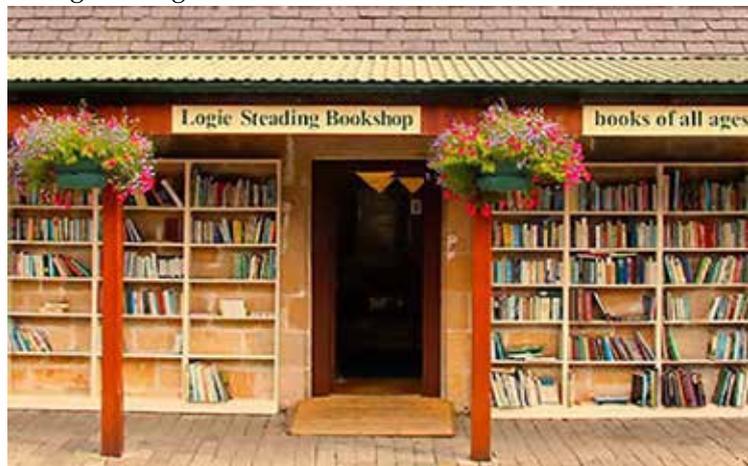
After warming ourselves with coffee Margie went to inspect the art gallery, and I went to the second-hand bookshop. In a corner I found a small shelf labelled 'Scottish Geology', but with little of interest. As I turned to go, a Hugh Miller title caught my eye on the adjacent wall, a worn and foxed copy of 'Scenes and Legends', and of little merit. However beside it a small red spine with the top missing clearly belonged to an early version of 'Footprints of the Creator'. Pulling it from the shelf revealed that the back cover was detached, and the binding cracked. Nevertheless, it was the 1st edition of 1849, and with the text in reasonable condition, it could be a candidate for rebinding or repair. As always I looked to see if there were any previous owners marks, and there on the title page was the dedication,-

*'To Alex Rose, Esq with the Author's kind regards'*

The dedication was clearly in Hugh Miller's hand, not the less desirable dedication written by a publisher. With slight trepidation I turned back to the flyleaf to check the price. Good news, certainly affordable at £2! Margie then walked in to find me firmly clutching the book, and asked if it was anything she could keep for a future present, but when I showed her the item she said it was clearly far too tatty to be given as a present.

Alexander Rose (1781-1860) is known as the 'Father' of Edinburgh Geological Society which was founded in 1834 by a group of his students. Rose lectured in Geology and Mineralogy at Queens College in Edinburgh (not part of Edinburgh University), and the fledgling society met at Rose's house at 2 Drummond Street. Rose started his career as a wood and ivory turner, following his father who came from Cromarty. He was also a dealer in minerals, prior to taking up lecturing. The Geological Society of Edinburgh has a fine specimen cabinet and a chair both made by Rose. Alexander's son John Rose (1828-1894) met his future wife Ann Trail at the house of Hugh Miller in Edinburgh. Thus there is a clear link between Rose and Miller from Cromarty, to geology and social life in Edinburgh.

So this was no April fool, but an exciting find lying unloved in a second-hand bookshop. Faint pencil marks that had been erased by a previous owner, show that it had previously been recognised by a dealer as a 1st edition with author dedication and priced at £40. That must have been a long time ago!



## MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE & 9TH ANNUAL MEETING, 9 MAY 2015

# MANY CHANGES AND GREAT ADVANCES

Among the headline items was a presentation from the Friends to the Museum of £500 towards the purchase of "re-enactment" costumes for volunteer staff.

Dr Ralph O' Connor confirmed that a new edition of *The Old Red Sandstone* is almost ready for publication.

It was also decided to attempt to expand activities in our capital city, with the help of our partners, the Edinburgh Geological Society and the Scottish Geodiversity Forum.

Professor Nigel Trewin resigned as chairman, and presented two very significant acquisitions to the Museum. He is succeeded by Bob Davidson.

Property manager Dr Alix Powers-Jones reported on major changes of interpretation and layout in the Birthplace Cottage.

### REPORT IN FULL

At the committee session before the AGM, the resignation on grounds of ill-health of our chairman for our first ten years, Professor Nigel Trewin, was regretfully accepted. Nigel is generally held to be one of Scotland's leading palaeontologists, and an authority on the Devonian areas fishes of the Old Red Sandstone. He is Emeritus Professor of Geology, University of Aberdeen, who for many years lectured in the University's Department of Geology and Petroleum Geology, and led countless field trips for his students to key localities on the North East coast.

He edited the fourth edition of *The Geology of Scotland*, and is also the author of *Fossils Alive*, and *Scottish Fossils*. One of his major achievements on behalf of The Friends was to organise a geological conference in Cromarty in 2008, honouring Miller the "Local Hero," attended by some 60 delegates from all over Britain. He chaired the Scottish Natural Heritage committee which produced the Scottish Fossil Code, which remains the essential guide to collecting practices in this country. He was also influential in securing the launch of the Code in Cromarty on the same weekend as the conference. (April 10-12) The then environment minister, Michael Russell MSP, presided and this included his visit to the Museum.

As a chairman, Nigel has acted primarily as a chief source of expertise for us on the natural sciences, but also as a collector who has donated several important artefacts to the Museum, as an editorial adviser on our newsletter, *Hugh's News*, and our Friends website. He has also blessed our annual meetings with genial, and briskly efficient chairmanship. The committee, and subsequent AGM, thanked him for his redoubtable services.

The committee agreed that at the AGM, he would nominate as his successor, Bob Davidson, who was duly elected by acclamation. Bob is a freelance oil well engineer, and honorary research fellow at Aberdeen University. He regularly leads excursions to Devonian sites for both professional and amateur groups. He has also been a generous donor to the Museum.

Dr Ralph O'Connor also submitted his resignation. Author of the magnum opus, *The Earth on Show*, and an inspirational speaker on the history of the natural sciences, Ralph is another sad loss to the committee. Ralph has had to bow to the simultaneous demands of his role as lecturer at Aberdeen University, and bringing up a young family.



Nigel Trewin



Kirstie Dale

### NEW OLD RED EDITION NEARLY FINISHED

He, of course, remains a member, and his next major contribution is expected to be the completion in collaboration with Dr Mike Taylor, of a new edition of *The Old Red Sandstone*. This is a project which the Friends have supported since our foundation, and are committed to helping secure its possible publication. Ralph has written: "We really have made a lot of progress in the last year, and the end - or at least a submission of a polished sample to a publisher, really is in sight."

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# THE GEOLOGIST

by Dr Simon Cuthbert

*Simon Cuthbert's illustrated talk to the public meeting brilliantly depicted the Betsey Project voyage on Leader last year. He expounded on the geology of the seas and lands surrounding the Small Isles, as well as life on board. This was extensively reported in Hugh's News No 23, Winter 2014. Here we present the piece he wrote about a geologist-in-the-field, which held all spellbound, both when read on board, and again at the meeting. It was judged comparable to the pen of Miller himself.*

There it is. The late afternoon sun lights up a pale rocky facet on the heathery hillside. There rests the treasure he's sought. His hill-craft brought him here, tracking his quarry along a subtle steepening, spotting its spore in a patch of scree, connecting outcrop to outcrop, stepping stones spanning eons. Hill-craft, yes, and curiosity, a desire to spin a saga in the dizzying depths of time. His eye scans the rock surface, an illuminated manuscript full of symbolism to his tutored eye. The rock is a mica schist, silvered and scaly as a salmon's flanks. A streak of quartz like the sinuous stroke of a quill writes of motion; the implacable stone was once fluid, stirred by a confluence of continents. A tiny blade of kyanite, cornflower blue, encodes crushing pressure - a mountainous burden the weight of a continent ponderously thrust over it. And like an ancient manuscript the rock is a palimpsest where old narratives have been erased and overwritten; folds are refolded, cleavages crumpled, crenellated. Peering with his lens into the pomegranate heart of a garnet he glimpses, as if through an ancient, roseate window, an even older saga.

Yet he knows that the glittering medium in which this fragmentary story is written was, in the even deeper past of its urtime, mere mud on the bed of some long-vanished ocean. Ocean becomes orogen, mud begets mica, schist rots away on the wet mountainside, its mica is shed and glints in a stream-bed, starting its journey to become mud once again. This is his genesis-story but, he asks, what energy drove those changes; what engine moved those mountains? He needs patterns, numbers, the order of the laboratory to unravel the untidiness of raw nature. A piece of this treasure must come home. Unsheathing his hammer from the holster on his belt, he curls his fingers around the warm hickory shaft, feeling the familiar, pleasing balance and heft of this craft's-tool. His mason's eye seeks a flaw in the rock-face - a crack to spring open, a cleavage plane, an edge for his hammer-head's brute, blunt bite that will break the surly bonds binding his prize to Earth. Try that spot?. The hard steel, campaign-scarred and travel-rusted, makes a savage, blurred arc and strikes. Crack! Dust. A faint whiff of brimstone. The flaw has widened. A moment's work with the pick is enough for a fist-sized block to fall into his hand, the freshly broken rock feeling the sun's rays after a billion years of Stygian darkness. That's the stuff! With a cricketer's panache he flicks the fragment above his head, his gaze following it upwards. It turns slowly in the air and seems to hesitate for a moment at the apex of its flight, lit by the low sun glancing over the silhouette of a distant ridge. Catching the light, the brilliant mica strikes sparks onto his eyes, then the stone falls back into shadow. He fields it easily and flips it over a few times until its angular mass nestles comfortably in his palm, cool and hard. Frowning through his lens he assays its value - its wealth of information. Then, with a silent nod of satisfaction, he makes busy with his hammer's chisel, tidying his morsel of mineral wisdom. No point lugging a lot of useless weathered stuff home, is there? A few strokes of a thick-nibbed pen scribe a utilitarian identity across a dusty facet, and the new specimen (number GH23) is dropped into his sample bag, joining its fellow story-tellers with a noisy clack.

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## "MY PASSION FOR GEOLOGY"

It was a moving message from Mairi Gilmour, the Glasgow University earth sciences student whose £500 berth the Friends sponsored on the replica Betsey voyage, which undoubtedly formed a highlight of the ninth annual meeting. It was followed by possibly the most inspiring talk our AGMs have ever had from the onboard geologist, Dr Simon Cuthbert of West of Scotland University.

Mairi, of Culbokie, Black Isle, was at Fortrose Academy, when we met with her last summer. In April 2015, she was in the final stages of her first year at Glasgow University, when she wrote: "Today, six months after the voyage, I remember the week spent on the *Leader* as one of those memorable life experiences. It was a week that seemed longer than most, as if lasting forever, as experience after experience rolled into one. The people that I met and the knowledge that I obtained have fuelled my passion for geology. A full day was spent exploring the island of Eigg and its geology. However music, stories and poems with the locals, as well as climbing to the top of the impressive Sgurr of Eigg, were also part of the experience.

Returning to the mainland started with the company of dolphins enjoying themselves in the wake of the boat and putting smiles on all our faces. It was also interrupted with a cold dip in the sea for those of us with less sense. Finally, the last night was spent dancing and singing as a whole group, creating the lasting memory of the trip in my mind.

The chance to see first hand what Miller described in his memoirs allowed me to understand more clearly the formation processes that have created the dramatic west coast landscape. The chance to speak to experts in their field, on a variety of topics, has broadened my general knowledge as well as my geological interests. Just as Miller's memoirs include countless stories and anecdotes, so our week was not solely focused on geology. Instead many other experiences were incorporated and personally the voyage itself is the most memorable part. Being on the deck of the *Leader* with the wind and salt spray would vary between simple contemplation by oneself, stories told from Hugh Miller's book or a whole range of conversations with such a variety of interesting people.

Finally, looking back I can see what I have gained from this opportunity. The experience has made me appreciate how much time people such as Hugh Miller have spent so that we can now understand the landscape around us. I hope to continue enhancing our knowledge of the planet through my future career and hopefully inspire other to do so, just as my fellow crewmates have inspired me."



Mairi Gilmour



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The sun subsides behind the ridge. Suddenly it's cooler; it's getting late and he's still high on the hill.

Time to head home. He turns west, pulls down his hat-brim to shade his eyes from the sun's glare and pulls up his collar against the deepening chill. Hurrying downhill, his boots kick the slope up behind him. The shoulder straps of his heavy pack bite into his shoulders, his burden a billion years of creation-stories.



Surrounding Simon's word pictures, we show some images of geologists in the field.

**On page 8: left:** two members of Highland Geological Society contemplate the might of MacCulloch's Tree on the Isle of Mull, having traversed very arduous terrain to get there. They are dwarfed by the coniferous fossil, existing as a pipe-like cast, framed in a basalt column. It and the others in the area probably represent the last remains of a forest that was covered by a lava flow approximately 60 million years ago.

**middle:** Professor Nigel Trewin, standing over reptile footprints, Clashach quarry, Elgin.

**right:** our new chairman, Bob Davidson, shows nodules of Devonian fish he has just opened on the Cromarty shore-line to participants in the "We Are Cromarty" festival.

**On this page:** Simon reads from the *Cruise of the Betsey* aboard *Leader*.

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Gavin Berkenheger of Muir of Ord was nominated and elected by the AGM to the management committee. He has served as an adviser to the Scottish Government on minerals exploration, and supported the campaign to maintain geology as a subject in Scottish higher education. He mounted an exhibition of minerals and precious metals at the "We Are Cromarty" festival last year.

There remains one vacancy on the committee, and it remains open to any member to nominate someone suitable to fill it.

The committee agreed that, given the overspend of over £850 on last year's festival, we should form a sub-committee as and when necessary to oversee future projects.

It was further agreed to donate the sum of £500 towards the cost of educational materials which the Museum had placed on the NTS annual "wish list" circulated to all its members. The sum will cover six 19th Century-style dressing up costumes for children, and two costumes for adults, as well as some consumables for lifelong learning. Property manager Dr Alix Powers-Jones accepted with alacrity.

Treasurer Sue Rider Busby submitted her annual statement which showed an opening balance of £7,050.81 at 1 April 2014, and a closing balance of £4,698 at 31 March 2015. The shortfall was in large part due to the expenses of the festival. However, the statement showed an increase of nearly £1,000 in membership subscriptions, to £2,575, indicating a great response to the increase in subs from £10 to £15. The 2015/16 subs coming in should restore the Friends' balance to over £7,000.

After some discussion, it was agreed that Liz Broumley would look into the feasibility of the Friends' producing a calendar as both a potential revenue earner and recruiting tool.

## MIDDLETON FUND

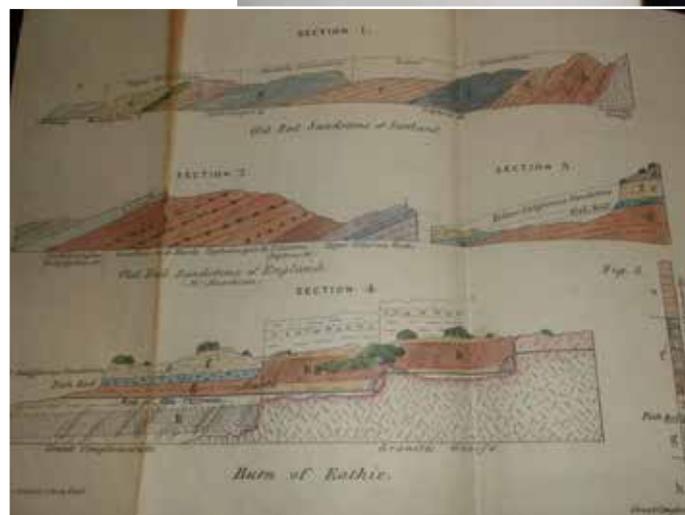
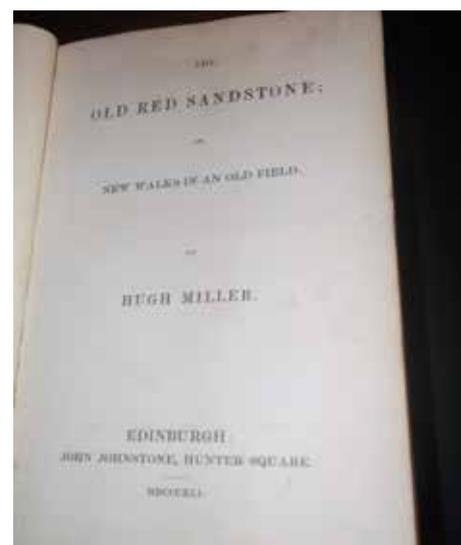
The National Trust for Scotland submitted their annual report to the Friends on the Fund. It was noted that the Fund was continuing to run an operating deficit, which at £25,301 on 28 February 2015, was very considerably up on the previous year. Nigel Trewin noted a very large increase of costs on staffing which had not been explained. However, there had been a most encouraging growth in the capital, of nearly £100,000 to £719,035.00

## ANNUAL MEETING

Secretary Martin Gostwick reported on the We Are Cromarty festival which concluded the Betsey Project. It had embraced many local organisations voluntarily contributing their skills, including Hugh Miller Museum NTS staff, the Youth Cafe, the Camera Club, the History Society, Cromarty Craftworkers, and many local artists and musicians. Talks and walks were led by geologists, naturalists and a folklorist. He explained a number of factors responsible for the £870 overspend, and the meeting agreed the proposal to form sub-committees to help with organising and funding such events in future.

He handed over to Dr Alix Powers-Jones a framed copy of the Scottish Geodiversity Forum's certificate showing Miller's Devonian fish had been voted by the public as Scotland's favourite fossils.

An extremely valuable set of acquisitions was presented to Alix by Nigel Trewin. The first group consisted of two specimens of Hugh Miller's Reptile Bed from Eigg containing bone fragments, as described in 'Cruise of the Betsey' p73-80. Nigel explained these were suitable for handling. The second set contained written documents by both Hugh and Lydia Miller of support for a hard-up Cromarty youth, James Milne, inside a pamphlet on bank-



ing which Miller wrote. Nigel's acquisition of these precious items from a library sale was fully reported in *Hugh's News* No 18, Summer 2013.

In her annual report, Dr Powers-Jones outlined a whole series of events she and her staff had organised expanding the Museum's role in life-long learning. These included re-dressing the Birthplace Cottage parlour so it could revert more closely to its original contents, and moving the shop from there to the former reading room. The library in the reading room had been transferred to the parlour in Miller House.

Five talks open to the public had been held in the parlour and very well attended. Two volunteers were now tour-guiding, and re-enacting in 19th Century costumes in the Cottage. Drama students at the University of the Highlands and Islands had taken part in a story-telling event, and an exhibition themed on journeys, entitled *High Days and Holidays*, had been organised by volunteer Kirstie Dale in the Cottage, with the Friends' banner taking one of the prizes.



*Dr Alix Powers-Jones*



*Intern Xavier in the new shop*

Work had re-started on the garden room behind Paye House. Alix spoke of her ambitions for "long-term reinterpretation" of the museum in Miller House.

Bob Davidson was duly elected to the chair. Officer-bearers and other committee members were re-elected unopposed.

Minutes of the 8th AGM, 2014, May 2014 were adopted and the Financial statement approved.

In attendance: Roy Nelson, Katie Nelson, Lester Borley, Mary Borley, Gavin Berkenheger, Marina Berkenheger, Russell Kirk, Dr Alix Powers-Jones, Ro Scott, Piers Hemy, Lindsay Hemy, Pat Davidson, Margie Trewin, Bob Davidson, Frieda Gostwick, Lillemor Jernqvist, Derek Lancaster-Gaye, Sidney Dantuma Johnston, Martin Johnson, Jane Verburg, Liz Broumley, Peter Scott, Kenny Taylor, Vanessa Hallhead, Nigel Trewin, Martin Gostwick.

Apologies for absence: Reay Clarke, Maureen Sturrock, Rona Dunbar, Stephanie & Marek Kulesza, Henry McKenzie Johnston, Peter Ridley, Cyril Digby Grant, Sue Busby, Eleanor Hodges, Myra Lawson, Ralph O'Connor, Nick Hide, Alison Wright, Douglas Hamilton.

## DID MILLER CAST HIMSELF IN THE IMAGE OF JAMES HOGG?



*Hugh Miller*

Once in a while a new insight comes along casting fresh light on Hugh Miller's personality and his place in Scottish culture, which makes looking after his legacy worthwhile.

This insight came to me standing in front of a portrait of James Hogg, the "Ettrick Shepherd," in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, by Sir James Watson Gordon in 1830, wearing a humble shepherd's plaid, when he had already achieved considerable literary fame in the capital.

It was no affectation. It had been and would continue to be his habitual wear



*James Hogg*

when farming in the Borders. I was immediately struck by its startling similarities to the famous etching of Hugh Miller reading, and his portrayal in the great Disruption painting by David Octavius Hill.

The caption to the Hogg portrait suggested that he deliberately wore the plaid to "reflect his rural background." The thought followed that Miller actually took Hogg for a role model, and consciously emulated him in his dress. Miller achieved the height of his fame in Edinburgh only a decade or so after Hogg rose to literary stardom.

Further inquiries into both men's back stories revealed many more similarities. By chance, both their fathers went bankrupt, causing them to be raised in great poverty. Both were brought up with religion and folklore as formative experiences. Hogg's father was a church elder, and his mother was steeped in the oral tradition. Hugh's devout mother, Harriet, was descended from a renowned preacher and seer, and she, together with his Uncle James, filled his head with stories.

Both men launched their careers with legendary tales. Both wrote and spoke in Scots and English. Hogg in *The Three Perils of Women* in 1823, explicitly portrayed the horrors of the Highlanders' treatment, during and after the Jacobite risings. Miller would pen excoriating accounts of the Highland Clearances in *Sutherland as it Was and Is* and in *The Cruise of the Betsey*.

Hugh's hero Sir Walter Scott was a mentor to Hogg, the latter having helped the laird of Abbotsford to compile his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders*. The Cromarty man would certainly have been aware of the Ettrick Shepherd and at least some of his work, although they would never have met.

They were in very different modes as writers. Hogg's poetry and fiction was mysterious, sometimes satirical, Miller's journalism more straightforward. Quite what Miller would have made of Hogg's terrifying masterpiece, *Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and its diabolical dealings is anybody's guess. But Miller would in real life encounter supernatural terrors in his final hours, suggesting a duality in his soul comparable to the Borders man.

Hogg's plaid will sit on his shoulders forever in the National Portrait Gallery. Miller's is wrapped in a roll in his Museum, which also contains his best known images.

MG

## LIFE AT SHRUB MOUNT

# THE GRAVITY OF HUGH MILLER

by Fraser MacDonald

*Another important article on Miller's history in Edinburgh comes from a blog post accidentally found on-line, which we have reproduced and edited with the author's permission. It gives a fascinating personal view of Miller's family life at their last home, Shrub Mount, and geologising in Portobello, Fraser MacDonald is a lecturer at Edinburgh University's geosciences faculty, who has written widely on the interactions between buildings and people.*

There are certain places that prove quite irresistible. We can find ourselves under a compulsion to know or inhabit or encircle a particular site.

I am enlivened by one such place; I pass it daily and often feel its pull. It is an unlikely spot: the Istanbul kebab shop at 80 Portobello High Street.

Some time ago this building was known by a different address, by a different appearance and for the renown of its celebrated occupant, whose name is no longer met with universal recognition.

'Shrub Mount', as Istanbul was then called, was the Portobello home of the eminent Victorian geologist, editor and writer Hugh Miller.

It was to this building he escaped from the stresses of editing a national newspaper, *The Witness* – it then outsold *The Scotsman* – and where he retreated to study in the private museum he had built in the grounds of a once



*Istanbul Kebab House*

extensive garden.

The bounds of this property are now unwittingly marked by the daily ebb of parents discharging their children at the adjacent Towerbank Primary School. These ordinary residential streets give little indication of the histories that precede them.

Hugh Miller was one of the most important figures in nineteenth century science. A correspondent of the preeminent scientific figures of his day, from Louis Agassiz to Charles Darwin, he was also a leading proponent of the ecclesiastical Disruption that saw the formation of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843.

In his Edinburgh life, he was close to the other Disruption “worthies” – Thomas Chalmers, William Cunningham and James Begg – at a time when the young Free Church was brimful of intellectuals.

Miller, however, never quite fitted in with either his scientific or ecclesiastical contemporaries. He didn't look like them, nor did he sound like them. He eschewed urban fashions for the heavy woollen plaid, a knowing self-presentation as the outsider that was famously captured in the stills of David Octavius Hill.

Steeped in the folklore and superstitions of his native Cromarty, Miller had left school at 14 to become an itinerant stonemason and had educated himself through reading, corresponding and by closely observing “the testimony of the rocks”.

His rise from wayfaring workman to scientific luminary, brilliantly narrated in his *bildungsroman* memoir *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, is a canonical story of nineteenth century Scotland.

Miller's modest origins in combination with his forthright politics meant he was often rejected by the scientific establishment. The University of Edinburgh, for instance, turned him down for the Chair in Natural History – a position for which he was more than qualified.

In time, the exchange of Marchmont and Jock's Lodge in the capital for the seaside village of Portobello might have been something of a relief. In any case, Edinburgh's east was already familiar to Miller from a spell of masonry work on Niddrie Marischal House twenty years earlier.

When Hugh Miller returned to Edinburgh in 1840 as the archetypal self-made man he had no desire to proclaim his ascent into respectability. Shrub Mount was, to be sure, no Niddrie Marischal.

He sought a quiet life, at a distance from his peers in science and religion.

He worked. This meant writing, walking and reading the landscape.

I imagine that being in Portobello would have been a welcome reminder of his beloved Cromarty, both being situated on the south side of grand eastern Firths. Miller could take his four children down to the beach; or fossil-hunting among the rocks at Joppa; or guddling for invertebrates in the Figgate burn.

Guddling was always purposeful. By such means, Miller worked out that the red clays of the Figgie burn – famed for the production of Portobello bricks – “must have been slowly deposited in comparatively tranquil waters”.

At an exposure from a local brick works – a site near the old Roman road of the Fishwives' Causeway – Miller found a bed of ancient shells. Though a long way inland, these were identified as *Scrobicularia piperata*, a distinctly intertidal species.

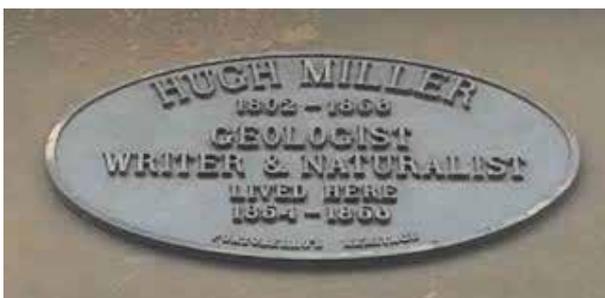
There was no mistaking the force of such evidence: the coast line had retreated. This land was once sea. Edinburgh itself had to be re-imagined:

He wrote: “We are first presented with a scene of islands – the hills which overlook the Scottish capital, or on which it is built –

continued on page 14



*Shrub Mount front portico in Hugh's time. The columns are still there, enclosed inside the tenement block's close.*



*This plaque was placed over the mouth of the close on the occasion of Miller's Bicentenary (2002). It was the product of an initiative of the National Trust for Scotland, Portobello History Society and Portobello Public Library.*

# HARD GOING AT NIDDRIE

We have been able to find, thanks entirely to Fraser MacDonald's blog, an image of Niddrie Marischal House, a few miles south of Edinburgh, on which Hugh worked as part of a mason's gang in the early 1820s, and about which he wrote extensively in his autobiography, *My Schools and Schoolmasters* (Chapters XIV & XV, ps 294-329).

We had previously no idea any images of this mansion existed, and learnt from Fraser that it had been demolished by the council in the 1930s to re-house families of slum clearance, Niddrie Marischal House was the seat of the Wauchope family, who had lived in the area for centuries. Here the young Hugh Miller fashioned stone mullions and transoms for the windows of the big house. In the shadow of this same house he had also witnessed at first hand the widespread poverty of the Scottish colliers, the older among them having been the Wauchopes' serfs from birth.

At Niddrie Mill, he described, rather unsympathetically, a "wretched assemblage of dingy, low-roofed, tile-covered hovels," the occupants of which were "a rude and ignorant race of men, that still bore about them the soil and stain of recent slavery." In later passages, he bore witness with more pity on their degradation.

Hardship still stalks the people of Niddrie, one of the most deprived districts in the whole of Scotland.

It was not a happy time for Hugh at Niddrie. He lodged in a tiny apartment of an old cottage. He was regarded by his fellow workmen with "undisguised hostility and dislike," because he would not drink with them, and they had no religious faith. They boycotted him at work, and he spent his leisure hours wandering alone in the nearby woods. Typically of him, however, he used these outings to gain some understanding of the geology of the coal measures. As we know, the quarry dust he inhaled at Niddrie caused a lung disease from which he suffered for the rest of his life.

MG



*Niddrie Marischal House*



continued from page 14

half sunk in a glacial sea. A powerful current from the west, occasionally charged with icebergs, sweeps past them ... and in the sheltered tract of sea to the east of the islets, amid slowly revolving eddies, the sediment is cast slowly down, layer after layer, the brick clays are formed along the bottom."

One can only suppose that an unveiling of this magnitude, one not always welcomed by his co-religionists, might have proved exhausting. Miller's life and death have all too often been interpreted as a simple tension between a commitment to Biblical inerrantism on the one hand, and empirical science on the other – with the vexed question of evolution in the middle.

This is why – so one now discredited version goes – that one Christmas Eve, in his upper room at Shrub Mount, Hugh Miller scribbled a note to wife, lifted his fisherman's jersey and shot himself through the heart.

Miller's suicide cannot be so readily explained. A fuller account might point to his failing health, overwork or domestic unhappiness. It's complicated; and ultimately unknowable.

It is fair to say that at the end he was haunted by the apparent gap between the natural and the supernatural, between mystery and revelation.

'Last night I felt as if I had been ridden by a witch for fifty miles' he told his doctor, 'and rose far more wearied in mind and body than when I lay down'.

So convinced that he had been involuntarily abroad in the night, that he would check his clothing for signs of the journey. In the end he put an end to these nightmares.

All of this happened in a room above Istanbul. And I feel the gravitational pull of this site, this centre of geo-logic calculation: a modest retreat for thinking, for reading and writing, for arranging the long history of the Earth, for life and love and family.

It is his life, not his death, that moves me.

# THE GRAVE IN THE GRANGE

by Martin Gostwick

The Grange Association is to be heartily commended for introducing information at the Grange Cemetery early in June, alerting the public to some of the foremost Scottish luminaries buried there, including Hugh Miller.

The following is information provided on their website. In 2015 the Association donated two information boards at the East and West Gates of the Grange Cemetery to its owners, Edinburgh City Council, and the council helped put them up. These boards identify 24 prominent figures who have headstones, and where they can be found.



Grange Cemetery was established in 1847 by the Southern Cemetery Company Ltd. on land donated by the Dick Lauder family of the Grange Estate. It lies on Beaufort Road to the south of the city centre, and has been expanded to Kilgraston Road. It contains about 6,250 burial plots and is still in use today.

Among the 24 are Miller's mentor, Free Church founder Rev Thomas Chalmers, who was the first to be buried there, and great friend and parish minister, the Rev Thomas Guthrie, founder of the "Ragged Schools" for

the children of the poor. Charles MacLaren, his rival (and friend) as Editor of *The Scotsman* also lies there.

We introduce here the text on the board devoted to Hugh Miller. We have omitted the data in the biographical section, which is well known to our readers, but what may be less known is the actual layout of the Miller family graves, and it can serve as a guide to those who may wish to visit the site. Hugh's headstone is the second in from the West Gate.

2 Hugh Miller (1802-1856)

Hugh Miller's headstone is a plain block of stone simply inscribed HUGH MILLER DIED 24 DECEMBER 1856 AGED 54. Nearby are



*The Rev Thomas Chalmers*

three other monuments dedicated to members of his family. To the left is that of his younger son, Hugh Miller FRSE (1850-1896). To the right is a Celtic cross commemorating his elder son, Lieutenant Colonel William Miller (1842-1893); his daughter Elizabeth (1845-1919) who married the Rev Norman Nicolson Mackay; and their son Norman Nicolson Mackay (1886-1916) who was killed in the

First World War. At the base is Captain William Henry Miller (1887-1920), the son of William Miller.

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

Sources:

1. Discover Hugh Miller, <http://www.hughmiller.org/>
2. *The Scotsman*, 27 December 1856
3. "Hugh Miller, stonemason, geologist, writer", Michael A. Taylor;  
National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2007, ISBN, 978190526705
4. "Lydia, wife of Hugh Miller of Cromarty", Elizabeth Sutherland,  
Tuckwell Press, East Linton, Scotland, 2002, ISBN 1 86232 221 X

Edinburgh City Council is planning to introduce a publication featuring the 24 notables.





## 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.....

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.....

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Membership subscription is £15 annually, payable from 1st April, by cash/cheque or bank standing order. A standing order is preferred for administrative convenience, and if you wish to take up that option, please contact the Secretary, details below. A Gift Aid declaration form is also available, which would enable us to reclaim 25p in the £ tax on your subscription.

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