

President's Report



After a successful season the Museum has closed for the winter but work still goes on with volunteers and staff completing the on going cataloguing and research. But the end of season lunch for volunteers is an occasion to thank them all most sincerely for their hard work and dedication. I was unable to attend but one of our Patrons, James Welsh, was able to and followed up the event with a further most generous gift to our Acquisitions Fund. This support is heartening and we have also received a generous legacy from the estate of the late Gordon Baxter. He was a huge supporter of all we do.

Although not directly our business I have been following the developments around the Falconer Museum in Forres with friendly interest. We are not going to interfere but we are friends and any help or advice that we can give should be available to any committee that might be formed to progress that museum. We work well together despite our different constitutions. But we are all interested in history and artefacts and have a common cause.

Plans are being made in Moray to commemorate World War 1 between 2014-2018. They will be measured and appropriate and it is right that the Society plays a part in this. Fort George museum has already created a first room to record events at the start of that war. I had the pleasure of opening it and much enjoyed the exhibits and the involvement of local school children. We have some plans of our own for next year.

2013 has been an extremely successful season and I am delighted that the EMMC has recommended to the Board that we should continue with free entry for 2014, dependent on further sponsorship being obtained.

As we approach the festive season can I record my sincere thanks to all our volunteers, staff, Board members and the many friends who have helped us in 2013. A Happy Christmas and a Good New Year to you all.

Grenville S Johnston
President

Membership

I am delighted to report that we have 12 new members this year most of whom have joined under the special offer giving reduced membership rates for the first year.

One problem we have is that many of our members are no longer paying the current rates for their membership and with us having to be wary of our finances, I would be glad if all members would check how much they are paying on their standing orders. The current rates are given below.

If you have received this newsletter, please check that your membership dues are being taken from your account or that you have replied if you have received a letter asking for dues. Please also let us know your email address if you have received this copy by mail and you are able to get an electronic copy.

Current rates are:

CURRENT SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Adult £25 (each member)
Family (up to 2 adults and 2 children) £40
Student (ES40 & under 18's) £10
Corporate Membership £100

Bill Dalgarno

Education and Outreach

December 2013

It has been a very busy year for Education and Outreach, with lots of schools visiting the museum as well as a number of community groups visited on Outreach sessions – I have certainly found my way around vast swathes of Moray...with the help of my trusty satnav I must add.

There are a number of activities to look forward to in 2014, with the Schools Art Exhibition in April and the Festival of Museums shortly after that to name a couple. We are hoping to run some more craft activities during the school holidays – these have been particularly well received in 2013 – as well as continuing with the school and community group visits.

The last event for 2013 will be the Christmas Crafts drop in session to run on Saturday 14th December from 11.00 till 2.00pm. This will involve vast quantities of glue, card and glitter so we will be setting this up in the Hall to avoid 'glitterising' the displays in the Museum itself. Feel free to come along and help out or make some Christmas decorations for yourself. All are welcome.

I would like to thank all those who have helped out with the education and craft activities this year. Your help has been invaluable and if anyone feels that they would like to get involved in helping next year then please get in touch.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

Di Hannan

Education and Outreach

ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT – NOVEMBER 2013

Treasure Trove

The Society was successful with its bids for thirteen “cases”, TT.80/13 to TT.91/13 inclusive and TT.103/13 at the Scottish Archaeology Finds Acquisition Panel meeting held in October. The majority of the items were found during metal detecting at Clarkly Hill, Burghead, together with some items found recently at Barmuckity, a new area of interest. The total cost of all the cases is £2040 and the National Fund for Acquisitions will be approached to fund half this amount.

Storage Boxes

48 plastic, stackable storage boxes to accommodate the growing collection of artefacts being acquired by the Society from Treasure Trove have been received and are presently stored in the cellar of No.3, High Street, beside the Museum.

Clarkly Hill Excavations

For three weeks in September Fraser Hunter led an excavation at Clarkly Hill. This was the third season at this site, although this year the focus of interest had moved a few hundred metres to the East, where another Iron Age round house was uncovered. In addition excavation also revealed what could be a metal working area and a multitude of post holes. More information will be revealed by the results of carbon dating and the ongoing post excavation work.

ARCHAEOLOGY for All

The Archaeology for All project has continued with David Anderson showing a group of interested volunteers the basic principle of finds washing, residue sorting and archiving information.

In addition volunteers were given the opportunity to help with some geophysical investigations, “geofizz” to watchers of Timeteam. In this instance the device being deployed was a Bartington gradiometer. This was used at a number of sites to investigate anomalies revealed by aerial photography. The device has to be walked over the ground in a predetermined pattern at a regulated speed. The measurements taken are recorded on a data logger that can be later interrogated by a software package to produce a scaled plan of the area covered showing the location of any magnetic anomalies present in the ground. Volunteers helped to lay out survey grids.

Surveys were carried out at Easter Calcot, Birnie and Ninestanes over the Friday, Saturday and Sunday (15th, 16th and 17th November). The results are awaited with interest.

Lectures

24th October: Rona Walker and Robin Murdoch gave a lecture about the history of glass making and a report into their investigation of Elgin Cathedral glass found during the excavations carried out in advance of the building of the relief road in 1977/6/7.

1st November: Fraser Hunter spoke about this year’s excavations at Clarkly Hill, describing what had been discovered and what more it was hoped would be revealed by post excavation work and the analysis of finds

ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Remainder of Lecture Programme 2013-14

Elgin Museum Hall (Entry £3, members £2, students £1.50)

Thurs 23rd January 2pm Robert Burns in Moray
By Sandy Cooper

Thurs 6th February 2pm Visit to Moray College Science Dept.
For Moray Society Members & Elgin Museum Volunteers

Thurs 27th February 2pm Moray's Church Interiors
By Marion Yool, NADFAS

Fri 28th March 7pm World War 1
By Derek Bird, North Scotland Chairman, Western Front Association

Fri 25th April 8pm Alan Stevenson: Light for the Moray Firth
(after AGM) by Janet Trythall, Vice President, The Moray Society

MUSEUM CONVENOR'S REPORT

Museum admission

I am delighted to say that we have had an exceptionally busy year in the Museum during 2013. Our total number of visitors by the end of the year should be about 12,000 – almost double last year's figure. The success has come about largely because of the free admission, for which we have to thank our main sponsors, Baxters, Walkers of Aberlour and Johnstons. We also, however, have an increased presence because of the work being done by Di Hannan, our Educational Outreach assistant, who has been very busy visiting schools and community groups as well as leading school groups visiting the Museum.

The increased numbers have meant that our volunteers have had a much more interesting time as custodians and gallery assistants. The extra visitors have meant that these posts have become much busier and as a result, much more fulfilling. We still have openings for more volunteers, so if you are interested in helping when we open again for the year at the end of March, do contact Mabel Rennie or Heather via curator@elginmuseum.org.uk.

We have also been helped greatly by regular appearances in the local press due to the work of our Publicity representative, Mary Shand. Seldom does a week go by when we do not get a mention somewhere!

Collection

Heather's work load has been heavy with the increased numbers as well as a greatly increased number of new artefacts coming in to the Museum through the interesting archaeological work being done in the area. As you will see from the archaeology report, lots of new Treasure Trove is coming to the museum and this has given much work in accessioning, cataloguing and adding to the exhibition.

As Grenville Johnston has said in his report, we intend to join with other museums and heritage groups in Moray to commemorate World War 1. We do, however, have a great shortage of artefacts dealing with that period and would like to ask members if they have any that they could lend to the museum to use in an exhibition. Any item with a story concerning a member of the family or someone from Moray would be especially welcome.

Volunteers

On 19th November, we had an excellent end of season lunch for all volunteers, which was very well attended. See the photograph on page 7. It had been intended to have a free raffle at the lunch but, since it was immediately after the typhoon in the Philippines, it was decided to charge and I am delighted to say that the sum of £87 was raised for the Typhoon Appeal. Heather will be back in the Museum after the New Year on 6th January. She will be working her usual, all day Monday and Tuesday and on Wednesday mornings. For access at other times, please email or phone to see if a keyholder can be available or is planning to be here. The Museum will reopen to the public on Monday, 31st March..

Recognition Fund

Good news! We have been successful in our application to Museums Galleries Scotland's Recognition Fund for funding to employ and support a postgraduate Curatorial Assistant (Palaeontology) for one year. The closing date for applications will be 7 January 2013. Anyone interested in applying should email Janet Trythall at elginmuseumgeology@hotmail.co.uk for more information, or see www.geocurator.org and click "Search for jobs here".

The background to this opportunity starts with our need to reorganise the storage of and access to our fossils, as befits a collection "Recognised" by the Scottish Government as of national significance, no small achievement for Elgin Museum. We have been taking the project forward step by step: moving the fossils from their tottering trays in the West Store behind a door that can hardly be opened for stuff behind it fundamentally involves making a space somewhere else in the Museum – and how do we do that?

Fortunately we have excellent support from National Museums Scotland, and Dr Nick Fraser, Keeper of the Natural Sciences Department who will act as specialist mentor for the Curatorial Assistant post. Experts from his department have already visited Elgin to review our birds and butterflies, helped from our end by Martin Cook, (www.birdsinmorayandnairn.org) who has this year joined us as a volunteer. In addition to educating us all further about our fossils and their care, the appointee carry out a comprehensive assessment of our fossils to inform their future storage plan and coordinate a wider review of our natural history – so we can move on to the next step.

Meanwhile, our Triassic reptiles will feature next year in a film in the Fukui Prefectural Dinosaur Museum in Japan. We were visited by Dr Tai Kubo, Curator and his cameraman who were very impressed by the displays and their sunny visit to Lossiemouth Quarry where the fossils were found. Tai's special interest is the early evolution of the dinosaurs and he did his Master's with Bristol Professor Mike Benton, who like Nick Fraser did his PhD on our fossils.

BUILDINGS REPORT NOVEMBER 2013

General – The new central heating system is now installed. Unfortunately there is still a problem in that the hot water is not circulating fully and the service corridor and attached offices are not warming up. The plumbers are scratching their heads but are sure they can

clear the problem. As the problem was not theirs, there will be a charge for this service depending upon the extent of the necessary work.

Internal– We are to repaint the four doors, both sides and surrounding woodwork, in the museum entrance plus repairs to the ceiling immediately outside the visitor toilet in order to improve first impressions of the museum when visitors enter the building.

Lighting– The bulbs in the main gallery pendant light fittings are due to be replaced on a bi-annual basis. However we have decided this year to replace the bulbs with LED bulbs in an effort to reduce by one third the energy required and also, the LED bulbs will only require to be replaced every four to five years.

Tower Rooms – As a precaution, a dehumidifier has been positioned in each of the upper rooms. When properly set up, they will be automatic and cost effective while requiring the minimum attention

OBITUARY

Sinclair Ross

Moray's most important geologist since the Victorian era died at his home in Forres on 19th September, aged 87 years.

Sinclair came from Mainland, Orkney, but in the later stages of WWII, aged 17, he signed up with the RAF. He trained as a meteorologist with the Met. Office and spent the majority of his career as a forecaster at RAF Kinloss. He met his wife at RAF Dyce and they moved to Jean's home town of Forres in 1962.

During a posting in Germany Sinclair became interested in geology, and largely self-taught, he became an expert in such techniques as making thin sections and the use of the petrological microscope. It was a source of great pride that he was considered to be more knowledgeable than many professional geologists working in the field! Sinclair was much sought after as a leader of field trips, and was a stalwart of the Edinburgh and Highland Geological Societies and the Moray Field Club. His research into the geomorphology of the Culbin was published as "The Culbin Sands-fact and fiction" (1992) and he contributed to The Moray Book (1976), Moray: Province and People (1993) and George Gordon: Man of Science (1995).



Elgin Museum owes a particular debt to Sinclair. He held various posts, as Honorary Curator and a member of Council but also acted as a jack-of-all-trades both in the building and out with, for example wielding a spade at the formal excavation of the Roseisle cist in the 1980s. Palaeontology was not his speciality, but with Kris Sangster, then curator, and his academic contacts in the top of their fields, he put together the 1989 award winning fossil display in the Rear Gallery which is still appreciated by visitors. He did not suffer fools gladly but could not have been more generous to those who listened and learned, and thus his knowledge continues to be of value in the Museum today.

Sinclair's wife predeceased him, and he leaves a daughter and two grandchildren.

JT (with contributions from the organisations mentioned).

Moray Society Prize Draw

The Prize Draw has now been running for twelve years and during that time has diverted almost £12,000 into the Moray Society current account. This total includes donations submitted through the Prize Draw fund but does not take into account any further income accrued from Gift Aid generated by eligible donations.

This has been of considerable benefit to our daily running expenses and continues to be so, given the huge inflationary price rises on all our utility bills

The price of the tickets remains unchanged and at present there are 90 tickets in circulation at £10 each. These are all eligible for the 12 prizes during their lifetime (1 year/4 draws with 3 prizes each).

If you are not attracted by those odds then remember that you can still help the Society by purchasing one or more tickets in the sure knowledge that the only winner can be the Society itself.

All income generated by the draw goes directly into Moray Society funds apart from the prize money paid to the lucky winners.

Please address any questions or applications to me at the Museum (or email mabritch@keme.co.uk, or tel 01309 673597)

Moray Society Prize Draw

Please allocate me tickets in the Moray Society Prize Draw @ £10.00 each.

*I enclose my payment of £.....

*Please forward me a standing order mandate

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code..... *please delete if inappropriate

Ritchie Mabon
Prize Draw Co-ordinator

QUIZ NIGHT

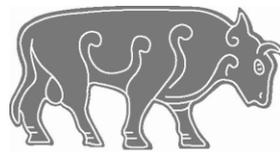
On Friday 30th November, the Fund Raising Committee held a quiz night in the museum in aid of Museum funds. The grand sum of £500 was raised on the night through entry fees and a raffle. Refreshments on the night were sponsored by Diageo so a pleasant night was had by all. Thanks to Diageo, to Hamish Cameron for setting the questions and to Edna Cameron and Liz Robinson for organising the evening. Thanks to those who attended for their support. Watch out for the next one.



A happy group at the Volunteers' End of Season Get Together



*Season's Greetings from
All at Elgin Museum*



THE MORAY
SOCIETY

ELGIN
MUSEUM

1 High Street, Elgin, Moray, IV30 1EQ – Tel: 01343 543 675 – Email: curator@elginmuseum.org.uk
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