

## President's Report

The Museum is about to open for the summer season on 29<sup>th</sup> March!

I must record, with gratitude, the great endeavours of our volunteers over the winter period. Aided and abetted by Heather they work away on the vital cataloguing and recording that we need to do to keep up to date.

Our acquisitions through Treasure Trove continue, and now it looks as if we may be allocated a real show stopper in the Craigellachie Pictish stone.

You will note amongst your AGM papers that we wish to dispose ethically of some birds, birds' eggs and butterflies. The reports put, in very official language, what we have suspected for some time. Frankly they are, for the most part, worthless and not even rare. They take up space and time and we should just be practical about this. I hope that you will support the Board over this.



And we intend keeping the Museum open with free entrance for another year. This is thanks to the support of Walkers of Aberlour and Baxters and the generous donations of those who visited the Museum and enjoyed it.

We are approaching the start of WW1 commemorations. You will see how the Museum intends to take part in these, and I hope you will share your memorabilia and family memories over the next few years.

We are also part of the Elgin regeneration proposals, Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere and the "CARS" scheme and I hope that we will have more information about our involvement in due course.

Moray Council continues to support us. We accept that their grant is likely to remain static in these financially strained times but the fact is that the Museum is a significant asset to Elgin's High Street and to the whole of Moray as a museum, tourist attraction, source of heritage advice, a "Visitor Information Point", a home to a Recognised collection of fossils, a hub for local archaeology, a venue for education and entertainment – I could go on! It is a grant well spent!

Please do visit us over the summer and support our work. We have the AGM on the 25<sup>th</sup> April at 1830hrs in the Museum. Come and support us!

My final comments are to say that I am most grateful to Heather, Di and Peter, the volunteers and the Museum Management Committee for all the hard work they do over the year. The Board are very supportive of all you do and frankly, without Janet and Bill we would not happen.

**Grenville S Johnston**  
**President**

**\*\*\*\*\* Please note start time of 6.30pm \*\*\*\*\***

## **Annual General Meeting**

Notice is hereby given of **The Moray Society Annual General Meeting to be held at 6.30 pm on Friday 25th April 2014 in Elgin Museum Hall.**

1. Welcome from the President (Chair)
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of AGM 2013 - for approval
4. Matters arising from above
5. President's written report Grenville Johnston
6. Written reports of committees
  - i) Elgin Museum Management Committee Bill Dalgarno
  - ii) Civic Committee David Marquardt
  - iii) Activities Committee Mary Shand
  - iv) Fundraising Committee Edna Cameron
7. Financial Report and 2013 Accounts Ken Ferguson
8. Board membership
9. Proposal: That having read the reports as published in the March 2014 Newsletter, and prepared by Martin Cook for the Elgin Museum Management Committee, the membership agrees to the ethical disposal of birds and birds' eggs identified as inappropriate for the Museum's collection, as outlined in the reports below.  
Proposed: 1. Janet Trythall 2. Bill Dalgarno
10. Proposal: That the membership agrees that the Elgin Museum Management Committee can work on rationalising the Butterfly collection of the Museum and agrees to the ethical disposal of any of the collection which are deemed inappropriate for the Museum. Proposed: 1. Janet Trythall 2. Bill Dalgarno
11. Board meeting dates – to be decided by the Board.
12. AOCB
13. Close

Papers for the AGM will be available in the Museum in the week before the AGM, and will be sent out by email to those on the Moray Society members' email list.

The AGM will be followed by a lecture at 7.30 pm: Alan Stevenson: Light for the Moray Firth by Janet Trythall. This is free and open to the public, but donations are welcome.

### **Potential disposals from Elgin Museum's collections: AGM agenda items 9 & 10.**

These proposals arise from the need to rationalise the Museum's stores. Objects have been coming into the Museum since its inception in 1836, and until Registration/Accreditation of the Museum in the past 20 years, in the absence of an Acquisitions Policy. In the past 10 years, the storage situation has become worse, partly as 1) several natural history cabinets became homeless with modifications to the East Store consequent on the Main Gallery upgrade, "People and Place" and 2) the capacity of the West (geology) store was severely reduced by relocation of its partition. The latter holds the Recognised collection of fossils, currently in totally inadequate conditions.

With a grant from the Recognition Fund, we took professional advice from the National Museum of Scotland towards the future safe, accessible and appropriate storage of this collection. That advice has continued, through the close interest of Dr Nick Fraser, Keeper of Natural History, who also carried out his PhD on our Triassic reptiles. He arranged for advisory visits by his colleagues Dr Bob McGowan (Birds) and Dr Keith Bland (Butterflies). We have also been very fortunate to have the considerable input of Martin Cook, Elgin Museum Volunteer and local bird expert. Ultimately, we aim to rehouse the geology in the North Store, but to do this we need to rationalise the items of natural history which are at the moment of neither use nor ornament, and to facilitate access to what is of value and retained and to the collections in general.

We have Keith Bland's preliminary report, but while more work needs to be done on the butterfly collection before we have information to the required level of detail to advise a final plan, it would be very helpful if the membership would at the AGM devolve powers to the EMMC to make a future decision about disposal and appropriate alternative display and storage. Martin Cook's reports on the birds and eggs are reproduced here in full (except for the Excel spread sheets of individual species, which are available on request).

If anyone has any queries or comments, please contact me, Janet Trythall, by email: [trythallj@btinternet.com](mailto:trythallj@btinternet.com) or via Elgin Museum.

# 1. RE-ORGANISATION OF ELGIN MUSEUM BIRDS' EGGS COLLECTIONS

## The starting point

*Three wooden cabinets housing the Hilton Brown egg collection*

*A fourth wooden cabinet of eggs, many of unknown origin*

*A small, black glass-fronted case with narrow sliding drawers, housing eggs of unknown origin*

*Twenty cardboard boxes of various sizes, housing eggs of mixed, but largely unknown, origin*

These cabinets and boxes contained only a very small number of eggs with reliable provenance although many were identified to species, apparently correctly in most instances. There was very little information on dates or localities of collection. Eggs of the same species often occurred in more than one collection, and sometimes in more than one location in the same collection.

Within the collections there were numerous broken or badly cracked eggs, unidentified eggs and eggs from non-UK species, largely Indian.

## The re-order

Unidentified and damaged eggs, and the great majority of non-UK eggs, are for disposal. Bob McGowan (Senior Curator, Birds at NMS) has commented as follows:

*"If any of the eggs have collection data (date and locality), then they are worth holding on to. The better collectors usually marked the eggs in a clutch with a set mark that could be linked to details on clutch cards, smaller data-slips or, indeed, scraps of paper. More 'amateur' collectors didn't bother marking the eggs in any way, so there is always some risk that slips of paper became mixed up in the collection. Some parts of the Elgin eggs collection appeared to have no associated data, and it is these that have no scientific value (unless there is a Great Auk egg lurking there)."*

All eggs with collection data have been retained. In fact, most of the eggs have no associated data – certainly none of those which are intended for disposal. There is, unfortunately, no Great Auk's egg!

Eggs of UK breeding species, in good condition, have been retained and merged into a single collection which is housed in four wooden cabinets (Cabinet 1-4) and seven cardboard boxes (Egg box 1-7).

For ease of accommodation within the cabinets, eggs have been categorised into small, medium and large. Within these categories, whenever possible, eggs have been placed in the currently accepted ornithological systematic order. All eggs belonging to each species have been brought together from the various collections.

## Documentation

Two Excel files have been prepared. These files can be searched readily, according to any of the column heading criteria, using the Excel filter facility.

'*Birds' eggs re-order*' lists the retained and re-ordered collection along with accession numbers and locations prior to the re-order.

'*Birds' eggs for disposal*' lists all the eggs which are recommended for disposal as having no relevance to the Elgin Museum collection. This includes damaged eggs, unidentified eggs and eggs of species that do not breed in the UK.

### The significance of the collection

The collection cannot be taken to have a great scientific value. Most eggs have a relatively recently applied accession number which cannot be traced back to the origins of the collections. Within the collections, eggs were identified with loose paper labels and in only a very small number of cases is the identification and origin of the egg written on the egg itself. So the dates and localities of collection of most of the eggs are unknown.

In some cases, due to the natural variability within eggs of one species, even the identification cannot be certain. However, few obvious misidentifications have been found and the great majority of the eggs are likely to be correctly identified.

### Remaining work

At present, every egg is accompanied by a small hand-written paper slip on which appears the identification, the accession number and the previous location of the egg in the former storage system. It remains to produce printed versions of these labels which will be permanently attached within each compartment in the drawers.

In addition, a proportion of the eggs do not have the accession number written on the egg. This must be done to maintain the connection between the specimen and its accession details and current location.

It is likely that this work will not be completed until autumn 2014 and in the meantime very great care must be taken to avoid muddling the locations of any eggs that might be removed from the cabinets. If possible it would be best if the eggs were to remain untouched until this labelling is complete.

## **2. RE-ORGANISATION OF ELGIN MUSEUM BIRDS COLLECTION**

### **i) Cased mounts**

1. In the East Store are three large, glass-fronted cases containing raptors, owls and wildfowl. These are all American in origin and are very faded – to the point where some are unidentifiable.

Bob McGowan (Senior Curator, Birds, NMS) has commented:

The mounts were generally extremely faded and give a poor representation of the species' true appearance. Specific collection data are lacking (as is often the situation with cased mounts), so the specimens have no scientific value. The only specimen that could be said to be fairly realistic (due to its predominantly white plumage) is the Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*. It may be considered that this specimen is worth retaining, as Snowy Owl has been recorded in the local area.

Recommendation: These cases should be destroyed.

2. In the 'People & Place' display is a case of pipits and larks (1976.139). These are in good condition and the species are local breeders.

Recommendation: This case should be retained.

3. In the 'People & Place' display is a case containing a Gyr Falcon (1958.7). This is in good condition and Gyr has been recorded in Moray.

Recommendation: This case should be retained.

### **ii) Individual specimens**

These fall into three categories;

1. Specimens in good/acceptable condition which have relevance to Moray
2. Specimens in poor condition and/or with no local relevance
3. The collection of North American ducks

Specimens in **Category 1** are listed on Excel Sheet 'Birds to be retained', together with reasons for their retention.

Recommendation: These specimens should be retained by Elgin Museum. Those which NMS wishes to acquire (yellow highlight) will need to be transported to Edinburgh at some stage.

Specimens in **Category 2** are listed on Excel Sheet 'Birds for disposal', together with reasons for their disposal. Subsequent to his visit to Elgin Museum I have corresponded further with Bob McGowan and he is in agreement with the following recommendation.

Recommendation: These specimens are of no value to Elgin or to NMS and should be disposed of/ destroyed.

Specimens in **Category 3** are mostly North American ducks with no local relevance and should also be disposed of/destroyed. Two of these (1978.782 and 1978.783) are labelled as Velvet Scoter but are probably specimens of American White-winged Scoter. An issue here surrounds the following entry in '*Catalogue of Stuffed Birds, Quadrupeds and Sundries Presented to Elgin Museum September 1854 by Thos. Macpherson Grant*':

*19. Velvet Scoter. Male and female killed by a fisherman in Firth of Forth in January 1832. Stuffed by Edmonstone. Yarrell Vol III p.312.*

The possibility arises that the birds referred to here might be 1978.782 and 1978.783. If so, and the identification is confirmed as White-winged Scoter, these would be highly significant as the first UK records of this species.

Bob McGowan (NMS) has commented:

*"The most significant specimen is the potential **White-winged-Scoter Melanitta deglandi**. This taxon has only been recognised as a species fairly recently, having previously been considered a subspecies of Velvet Scoter. The Elgin Museum specimen is listed in catalogues as a Velvet Scoter, collected in the Firth of Forth in January 1832. Further identification work is required on this specimen; if it is a White-winged Scoter, an account should be submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee for consideration as the first British record (pre-dating the current one). If accepted as such, it would be a highly significant specimen. I would be happy to collaborate in the preparation of this account. The NMS would be keen to acquire this specimen, even if it proves only to be a Velvet Scoter.*

*and*

*Yes, the White-winged Scoters! The Macpherson Grant specimen appears in the bird listings (as Velvet Scoter) in various catalogues that I saw there. I think (from memory) that its feet **did not** show any traces of the taxidermied groundwork that was evident on the main group of north American ducks. I think there were traces of vegetation on the webs of the latter's feet which supports the case for these having been from a different source from Macpherson Grant's bird. I strongly recommend that some images are taken of the feet of all the duck mounts as this may help to show that the other White-winged Scoter was one of that same large batch of north American ducks. I still think it would be worth writing up a note about Macpherson Grant's bird, so it is important not to destroy anything that might be useful evidence."*

I have taken images of the feet of the ducks and passed these to Bob McGowan. In addition, the feet of all the ducks have been closely examined for traces of material from previous mounts and this information has been passed to Bob.

Recommendation: The two White-winged Scoter specimens (1978.782 and 1978.783) should be retained by Elgin Museum until such time as they can be passed to NMS. To facilitate comparison (possibly by X-ray) with other ducks in the collection, Bob has asked that the two specimens of Black Scoter (both 1978.784) and the two specimens of Hooded Merganser (1978.777 and

1978.778) should also be passed to NMS. Bob agrees that the remaining specimens in the duck collection should be disposed of/destroyed as we think fit.

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## **Education and Outreach**

February 2014

The school year has started with the usual rush for the museum's services, I have already been to schools with the WW2 and Victorian handling boxes – my car has often looked like a mobile museum with a number of handling boxes stashed in the boot - and there have been a number of visits already to the museum by school groups.

The Schools Art competition closing date is 25<sup>th</sup> February. We have had a number of entries and a few more still to come. The exhibition of work is opening on 29<sup>th</sup> March, with a prize giving for the winning entry to be held at 11.00am in the gallery. Please feel free to come along and have a look at the art work that will be on display. This is the first year that this event is held and we are hoping to run a similar competition every year with the annual prize, a Cup presented by our member, John Smart of Lossiemouth. Thank you, John, for your keenness to interest children in the activities of the Society and the Museum.



*Morag and Di at work with artefacts in the office*

The museum is taking part in the Highlands and Moray project 'My Heart's in the Highlands'. This is a joint project to encourage more visitors into museums and heritage sites across Moray and the Highlands, with a variety of special events being held this year in a wide selection of locations. Check out the museum website, 'facebook' page and local press for more information throughout the year.

The museum now has a 'twitter' page, just search for 'Elgin Museum' on the twitter home page to see current events and activities. This site provides yet another way of using social media to keep communities and individuals up to date with museum activities and allows us to link in with other museum and heritage sites across the world – it's also free to use!

Keep an eye out for the drop-in craft and activity sessions that will be running across the year for all the family.

## **Di Hannan**

Education and Outreach

## **ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT – FEBRUARY 2014**

### **Treasure Trove**

A promise of 50% part funding has been received from the National Fund for Acquisitions for the purchase of thirteen "cases", TT.80/13 to TT.91/13 inclusive and TT.103/13. The majority of the artefacts were found during metal detecting at Clarkly Hill, Burghead, together with some items found recently at Barmuckity, a new area of interest.

Three new TT cases have been offered by Treasure Trove as being of interest to the Moray Society. TT 142/13 covers items found at Clarkly Hill, while TT 143/13 offers items found at Birnie Kirk. At both locations discovery was made by metal detecting.

Case TT 138/13 is much more unusual, very exciting archaeologically, but more costly. Last year a farmer found a large stone with Class I Pictish symbols while ploughing a field near the River Spey at Craigellachie. The stone is large, over 1.6 metres long and weighing in the order of one tonne. The discovery of the stone has been a well-kept secret up till now, but its description as a Treasure Trove case will make it public knowledge.

Members of the Moray Society have been in discussion with the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeological Dept. and other interested parties and it has been agreed that the Moray Society will bid for this stone. The Treasure Trove estimated value is £3,000.

Our bid has to be submitted by 7<sup>th</sup> March and the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel will meet to decide to whom the stone should be allocated on 27<sup>th</sup> March.

Assuming that the Society's bid is successful, a number of decisions have to be made and some considerable challenges faced. These include:-

- Where the stone is to be located; access, protection and security are issues. Perhaps in the Elgin Museum, alternatively current archaeological opinion encourages display as close as possible to its find spot.
- How is the stone to be moved: it is understood the farmer does not want it to remain on his property.
- Where is the stone to be stored, if that is needed, before it can be moved and erected in its new location.

### **Examination of the Assemblages from the Lazarus Lane excavations of 1976/77**

Derek Hall visited the Museum on 25<sup>th</sup> November together with George Heggerty from National Museums of Scotland to look over material and documentation retained from these excavations that is currently stored in the Cellar of No.3, High Street. The excavations which took place in advance of the construction of Alexander Road uncovered medieval buildings and a wide range of artefacts. Unfortunately, because of a lack of funding, the findings have never been published. It now appears that Historic Scotland is prepared to fund the publication of an abbreviated report.

While examining the material Derek and George noted that the majority of the pottery was not in their view worthy of retention.

## **Clarkly Hill / Birnie Conference at Moray College**

A conference chaired by Dr Fraser Hunter was held in the new Alexander Graham Bell Centre at Moray College on Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2013. Presentations were given by a range of speakers addressing the summer's excavations at Clarkly Hill and the work undertaken by archaeologists and volunteers in the Archaeology for All Project during the past year. The event was well attended, with over 140 folk appreciating the state of the art facilities provide in the new lecture hall.

**David Marquardt Feb 2014**

## **Grampian Archaeology meeting, Aberdeen**

Janet Trythall represented Elgin Museum on 20<sup>th</sup> February at a meeting with the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeologists, Bruce Mann and Claire Herbert, also attended by Liz Trevethick for Moray Council Museums Service and Helen Chavez for Aberdeenshire Council Museums Service. It was altogether a friendly afternoon, with all pledging collaboration!

The focus was the bid for the Craigellachie stone and all were in favour of Elgin's bidding for it, offering specific support. Helen's colleagues, a conservator and a photographer are keen to get involved, and all promised letters of support to SAFAP. Gordon Noble, Aberdeen University, will do geophys. of the find site and Bruce can contribute to C14s if anything dateable is found. The exact find site is known as the plough was brought to a halt by the stone and the tractor has GPS! Claire and Bruce also have a possible plan for the removal and temporary storage (in a special box) of the stone as it is getting damaged in the farmer's shed.

Stimulated by a recent meeting in Edinburgh held by RCAHMS, Bruce spoke on the broader issues of his statutory role as archaeologist for Moray and Aberdeenshire, and the theory and reality of archaeology and the planning system. There is general concern in the archaeology world about museums and their resources to deal with Treasure Trove and allocated assemblages, and the problems of keeping archive and finds together – concerns held by Elgin Museum! We all made suggestions about how we felt the system could be improved, and Bruce agreed for example to tighten up on enforcement of archaeology planning conditions as they affect local museums, from the planning application to post-ex and ultimate storage. Also, sometimes we become aware only after a dig (development or academic) has finished that excavation has been going on on "our patch", and Bruce says he will advise those he knows of that we want to be kept in the loop – and can offer the resource of local knowledge for example to help with desk top surveys. He has a meeting planned with commercial units, and also listed those he knows of who are carrying out or planning academic work locally. A brief note of introduction from us might be appropriate to the academics!

Other topics discussed included a possible regional store, and the idea of a deposition charge towards future storage of artefacts as a ring-fenced one-off payment by developers, and developer contributions via community engagement and education/outreach worker support.

We each described our current funding difficulties, Moray's being well known to us. Aberdeenshire has no curators but several specialist staff and

Helen is very keen we should visit Mintlaw. The position at Aberdeen University is uncertain but they are unlikely to get back into the Marischal. The Council archaeologists have 2.8 staff and at the moment this looks set to remain, but it is not understood by their Council that their service level agreements (eg with Moray Council – which has another 2 years to run) cover more than just *planning* archaeology. One of their other problems is archaeological finds going direct to TT so that they are not aware when they are screening planning applications for archaeological clues. A recent example has resulted in a development being allowed without conditions on a battle site because they were not aware of a find of musket balls.

There are clear advantages from working together, and Bruce intends to make meetings a regular event with e-communication between. We are expecting a follow-up visit in conjunction with the CARS project, on 25<sup>th</sup> March, by Bruce and Claire with archaeologists Charles Murray and Derek Hall, to look at other historical assemblages allocated to Elgin Museum.  
Janet Trythall 5/3/2014

### **A 'new' lithic raw material from Moray**

*Torben Bjarke Ballin*

*LITHIC RESEARCH, Stirlingshire*

*Honorary Research Fellow, University of Bradford*

#### **Introduction**

In connection with the examination, cataloguing, and analysis of early prehistoric lithic assemblages from Dr Fraser Hunter's (National Museums Scotland) Clarkly Hill and Birnie excavations, Moray, I also examined and catalogued thousands of lithic artefacts in the county's two main museums, Elgin Museum, Elgin, and the Falconer Museum, Forres. As expected, the vast majority of the lithic finds from Moray turned out to be local brown flint, with small amounts being local quartz or quartzite.

However, an additional raw material was also present, in the excavated assemblages, as well as in the museum collections. It was difficult to identify this material immediately, as much of the lithic material had been exposed to 'sand-blasting', that is, abrasion by exposure to Aeolian activity in the region's dunes or adjacent areas. Consequently, these finds were initially defined as 'either flint, quartz or chalcedony', due to varying degrees of similarity with these three raw materials. It was not until the analyst had examined large, fresh geological samples of this material in Elgin Museum that the raw material's identity became apparent. Although very small abraded artefacts in this material may be difficult to identify, slightly larger pieces are easy to recognize due to the raw material's characteristic spots, bands and 'brecciated' appearance (see for example Fig. 3).

Basically, this prehistorically exploited raw material is Stotfield silcrete, which used to be referred to as Stotfield chert. Below, Stotfield silcrete is briefly characterized and the spatial and temporal distribution of archaeological specimens is touched upon. The purpose of this small note is simply to make colleagues aware of the presence of this raw material in

our archaeological collections, with the consequences this may have on discussions of local raw material procurement and exchange.



*Fig. 1. Silcrete microblade core CAT 82 from Clarkly Hill, Moray.*

### **The appearance of Stotfield silcrete**

When most heavily sand-blasted, small artefacts in this raw material are almost undefinable as to whether they are flint, quartz or chalcedony. Slightly larger pieces have a more obvious chalcedonic lustre, and fresh break facets of natural nodules frequently have an appearance like very fine-grained quartz. Hollows are commonly filled with quartz crystals, like those encountered in the central hollows of chalcedony and agate nodules ('geodes' or 'druses'). In many cases, Stotfield silcrete appears brecciated, with notable swirling banding around the material's various component bits. This banding is in many cases reminiscent of the banding characterizing agate. Some pieces display obvious purple colours, probably indicating the presence of fluorite.



*Fig. 2. Silcrete blade SF 2415 from Birnie, Moray (dorsal view).*



*Fig. 3. Silcrete blade SF 8580 from Birnie, Moray (ventral view).*

## **The distribution of archaeological pieces**

The identification of the raw material of 15 pieces from Clarkly Hill as being local Stotfield silcrete is interesting, but the use of this resource is possibly not diagnostic – CAT 82 (a microblade core) from Clarkly Hill is in silcrete (Fig. 1), but one barbed-and-tanged arrowhead (Accession No. 1979-293b) from the Falconer Museum in Forres is also in silcrete, indicating that this material may have been exploited from the Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic and into the Early Bronze Age. Further research may reveal whether it was used in the Mesolithic period or from the Early Neolithic period onwards. At Birnie, 44 pieces were identified as silcrete, including two regular blades (Figs 2-3). Particularly the blade Fig. 3 has an obvious brecciated appearance, seemingly being 'glued' together by bits, and with the cement being either quartz or chalcedony.

Although Birnie is c. 30 kilometres from the shores of the Moray Firth, with its exposed outcrops of Stotfield silcrete (Lossiemouth), the Birnie settlers clearly valued this resource enough to carry nodules of silcrete across the landscape. Silcrete artefacts have also been collected from the Elgin area, near Lossiemouth, as well as from Culbin Sands, c. 40-50 kilometres west of Lossiemouth, and these artefacts now form parts of the collections of the Elgin and Falconer Museums. However, although the best Stotfield silcrete clearly allows controlled flaking, its internal structure is not as homogeneous as that of for example flint, and one would not expect it to have been exchanged across extensive distances. This, however, needs to be tested by future research.

I hope to be able to return to Moray during 2014, to have a closer look at the coastal exposures, as well as relevant geological strata in the areas' now mostly abandoned sandstone quarries.

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## **Activities Committee**

### **Remainder of Lecture Programme 2013-14**

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

Fri 28<sup>th</sup> March 7.30pm **World War 1**

by Derek Bird, North Scotland Chairman, Western Front Association

Fri 25<sup>th</sup> April 7.30pm **Alan Stevenson: Light for the Moray Firth**

(after AGM) by Janet Trythall, Vice President, The Moray Society  
Free entry – donations welcome.

### **Visit to Moray College UHI Science Department.**

As part of this year's programme, Linda Duncan kindly organised a visit for Moray Society members to Moray College's Science Department. All who visited enjoyed a talk about the department by Gill Berkeley, Assistant Director and a tour of the department as well as a tour of the new Alexander Graham Bell Centre.



Members enjoy a talk about the Science Dept  
by Gill Berkeley in the new Alexander Graham Bell Centre

## **Museum Report**

### **Volunteers**

With the beginning of the season almost on us I would appeal to members to think about becoming a volunteer to help in the Museum while we are open to the public. With the increase in numbers and the great interest shown by visitors and locals alike, anyone joining us would find the position very interesting and fulfilling. If you are interested in joining us why not come along to one of our start of season get togethers in the Museum and have a chat with one of our present volunteers. You could also contact either Heather at the Museum on Monday or Tuesday all day or Wednesday morning to find out more or contact us by email at [curator@elginmuseum.org.uk](mailto:curator@elginmuseum.org.uk). Our volunteer mentor, Mabel Rennie will then get in touch with you to arrange for you to find out more. Volunteer get togethers are at 2pm on Monday or 10am on Tuesday at the Museum. Do come along!

**Bill Dalgarno**

### **WWI display cases**

Jenny Cook and Mary Shand are preparing three upstairs display cases on the theme of WWI. A five year plan is envisaged, with the displays changing each year to reflect different circumstances as the war progressed.

This year's idea is to give a flavour of society in Britain and the Empire in 1914 just as war was becoming a reality. Items have been taken from the museum stores to be put on display, as well as plans, maps and images. Notes on the display items and the background to the different levels of society will be available. It is hoped that some forgotten but fascinating stories will come to light - like the pigeons which carried miniature cameras to take surveillance photos of the terrain!

Also on display will be a Seaforth Highlander's uniform and a wedding dress from about 1910. It is hoped to have a laptop or digital picture frame showing a selection of photos of the period. Any information, local photos or personal items which could be used in later years would be welcomed.

**Mary Shand**

## **Museum Assistant Update 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

What a whirlwind – it's March already and we're rushed off our feet ready for opening on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March and I can report we have heating and lighting that works both in the small computer room office and throughout the building – hooray!

With thanks to Dr Fraser Hunter (and funding from LEADER, the Gordon & Ena Baxter Foundation and the Robertson Trust) Torben Ballin, Lithics Specialist was asked to visit Elgin Museum and the Falconer Museum, last month to provide expert knowledge and training in identifying and categorising flint. Preparation took about 90hrs of work to locate all the flint in the museum, re-label the bags and update the museum documentation cards but it was well worth the time and very enjoyable as Torben shared his expertise – we worked Torben to the grindstone, getting him to identify around 5,000 flint cores, flakes, knives, scrapers arrowheads and axeheads in one day! – fried brain? We have added to the 2 million pieces he had already seen during his career. Thanks to Torben for sharing his essay on silcrete – what we knew as cherty rock of Stotfield.

Our gold torc from the Law Farm hoard is being brought together with other members of its family to be displayed in a prestigious new exhibition entitled 'Scottish Gold' on view from 14<sup>th</sup> March to 15<sup>th</sup> June at the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow.



*Elgin Museum's 'Law Farm' torc*

A number of us have been (and will be) busy preparing for the Museum open day for the nationwide Festival of Museums. Our event will be held on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March entitled 'Victorian Times in Moray – a Snapshot' . Rich or Poor? Come and see for yourself a snapshot of what life was like as a Victorian in Moray. Re-enactors in Victorian costume will take you back in time for a day and give you a glimpse of the future – where would we be now if it were not for the Victorians? The day will consist of Performances at 11.30 and 1.30pm and throughout the day incorporate the following themed activities:

- Agriculture – Life as a farmer, food of the day, sweets and meats.
- Entertainment – Musical performances, toys of the day, leisure activities, art and crafts and meet one of the first Geologists.

- Incorporated Trades – Hard graft and technological advances, wealth and expertise in Victorian Moray and how they impact on us today; original archive display.
- Textiles – What did people wear, what materials were available, how was clothing produced, what would you look like in the eyes of a Victorian?!



*Grace from Lossiemouth preparing for the Festival of Museums*

We also have 5 art exhibitions planned for this year opening with:

- Children's art competition entitled 'Old Things' opening and prize giving on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March at 11.00am running until Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May to be followed by;
- Mary Byatt's 'Moray and Beyond', open evening on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May at 6pm until Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June.
- Sue Sabro's 'Mark Making in Moray', open evening on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June at 6pm until Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August.
- Angus Donaldson – title TBC, open evening on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> August at 6pm until Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September.
- Local Quines 'Local Quines Making an Exhibition of Themselves', open evening TBC but open from Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> September until Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2014.

Please support the artists by coming along with your friends to the open evenings to meet the artists and partake of some modest refreshments – mark the dates and times in your diary now!

It is intended that we will close for the season on a high with an 'Antiques Roadtrip' event on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November hosted by Lyon and Turnbull (Fine Art and Antique Auctioneers and Valuers) who will come up from Edinburgh and London for the day to value and define Moray's prized possessions at a small cost per item; refreshments will also be provided at a small charge. We hope the event will encourage members of the public to come along for the day with their family heirlooms to see what they can learn.

There have been at least 15 volunteers working hard behind the scenes; here's what some of them have been up to this winter...

Mary Allan has been working on all the coins in the collection, locating and moving them all to one location and updating the object cards. Mary Shand and Jenny Cook have been working on three upstairs exhibition cases to illustrate life before the start of World War I and how the war changed lives forever. Davie Milne is keeping everything mechanical in order and has almost resigned himself to be known as a volunteer. Alan Ralph has done a sterling job of the shop stock and organised the shop supplier lists (going back quite some years), to ensure we pay everyone their dues, and Tracy Metcalfe has taken over the ordering and maintaining of the museum shop with some help from Mary Shand – please everyone come and buy a museum bag and a postcard of the Pictish stones!

Heather Cruickshank has been covering the older books in the museum for their preservation and longevity and Oonah Grigor has started to list the books on each shelf following their move since the original list was started some years ago. Jan MacWilliam is engrossed in organising the object history files having finished cataloguing the maps and plans in the collection. Milan Ardis has read 13 books on weapons and guns in order to provide us with the gruesome but interesting detail for 2 new exhibitions upstairs. Leanne Demay took some beautiful photos that we have been able to use for postcards and to add to the documentation cards and Mabel Rennie is inducting new volunteers and making sure all are happy and assigned to tasks they are willing and able to do.

Mary Shand has been plugging the museum to all and sundry and putting us on the map as the place to book for a wedding – we have 4 booked for this year already. Janet Trythall has practically moved into the museum, still replying to emails at 10.30pm on Sundays and stopping off into internet cafes when she is meant to be on 'holiday'. Ritchie Mabon has scared the life out of some of us but done a wonderful job up scaffolding - changing the 120 light bulbs in the main hall and repairing some of the ceiling. Joanna McQuaker, Janice McKenzie and Michelle Walker are working away on the archaeology from the North Store and Ken Ferguson continues to make all the books balance, pay all the invoices on time and make sure they come out of the right 'pots' – Ken – **everyone - you are a star thank you!**

In the words of the volunteers themselves, here's what 3 other volunteers have been up to:

### **Archaeology on Display**

There is currently what seems like, a non-stop business at Elgin Museum, in order to get ready for opening on the 29th March, and the norm is for major eekness whilst we run around like headless chickens, double checking facts and ensuring our spelling is correct! However, I have emerged relatively unscathed this year as I am simply updating past exhibitions on Culbin and Beneath our Feet, ensuring that they look fresh and interesting and thanks to a wee master class from Torben Ballin, my knowledge of flint has increased slightly and I can now recognise a piece of Yorkshire flint (although I would implore that this is not put to the test by randomly asking me, as running away often offends). Thus I have been

enjoying taking time to decide what's going back in and writing up interesting snippets of information for your viewing pleasure, and as it always gives me great joy to unpack objects and decide on how best to interpret their story, this task has taken more time than allocated for, which may lead yet to eekness from me as time slips by and Marches on..."

**Morag MacDonald, Volunteer**

05/03/2014

**Stuffed birds and birds' eggs in Elgin Museum**

The museum holds a small collection of stuffed birds and birds' eggs. These are of very variable quality and variable relevance to the Moray area. In recent months I have been attempting to revamp these collections into something smaller which reflects something of the bird life of our area.

Some of the stuffed birds are in glass-fronted display cases and some are as single specimens. There is a large emphasis on ducks. Many of these, and also the glass-fronted cases, are of North American origin and have no local provenance or importance. Many are very faded. Following advice from NMS in Edinburgh, the collection needs to be rationalised into specimens to be retained and specimens for disposal, pending final approval.

The eggs were stored in four wooden cabinets and numerous cardboard boxes. Many were unidentified and others were damaged, while eggs of the same species appeared in several locations. The various collections have now been amalgamated into one, with unidentified and damaged eggs gathered for disposal when this has been approved.

**Martin Cook, Volunteer**

4/3/2014

**From the collection...**

Next time you are in Aberdeen, cast your eyes over Union Street. It is reckoned to be the widest street in Scotland. Between 1780 and 1850 it was a jostling melee of horses, carriages, passengers as well as stable boys, ostlers and coach-spotters. Aberdeen was the mail and stage-coach hub of Scottish travel. It was possible to travel to and from Peterhead, Elgin, Inverness, Thurso, Dundee and Perth daily. The ticket office opened at 5am and coaches departed at precisely 6am. Church clocks were adjusted to 'coach time'. In the museum there are 2 small coach clocks from around 1800 made by David Murray of Edinburgh.

The coach drivers and guard were the pin-up boys of the period. They wore livery of scarlet with yellow lapels and silver buttons and a grey beaver top hat. The coaches, six or four-in-hand, glittered with colour and were 'The Fly' the 'Elgin Star' or 'Defiance'.

Until 1819 when Thomas Telford laid 500 miles of new roads, travel was very dangerous and uncomfortable. No bridges, drunken ferrymen, flood, vandal attacks, deep snow, broken axles and weak horses. On show in the

museum this year there is a flintlock musketoon, carried on a coach, and a blunderbuss probably used for the same purpose.

During this period, the ticket seller stated that 600 passengers bought tickets daily. Forty coaches clattered over the cobbles and over 400 horses were fed and stabled. No wonder Aberdeen is famed for its fine rose bushes!

However, the coach business slowly ground to a halt in 1849. The railway arrived in Aberdeen. Some coaches continued to operate until 1900, mainly providing service to small towns in Buchan and Moray until they in turn, welcomed the train.

### **Milan Ardis, Volunteer**

02/03/2014

### **New in Town!**

I imagine a few of you might have seen me in the Elgin Museum during the last few weeks. Now that I have finally moved to the City, and begun the work I came here to do, it is time to introduce myself properly. My name is Dr Susan Beardmore and I have been chosen for the role of Curatorial Assistant at the Elgin Museum. My background includes an undergraduate degree in geology (University of Leicester), a master's in palaeontology (University of Bristol) and, most recently, a PhD researching the preservation of Triassic-aged vertebrate fossils from Switzerland (University College Dublin). My volunteer experience includes excavations of dinosaurs in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument of southern Utah, USA, jellyfish in the Solnhofen Lithographic Limestone, famous for sourcing *Archaeopteryx* and the like, in southern Germany, footprints in Triassic mud flats from Winterswijk, on the Netherlands-Germany border, and weird invertebrate creatures from the Cambrian of Morocco, which I would be happy to discuss with anyone who is interested!



*Sue getting acquainted with the Geology store in the Museum*

My role at the Elgin Museum is primarily to organise the West (geology) store, utilising the space available in the best way, packaging various rocks, fossils and minerals within to preserve them for the future, and ensuring specimens are labelled, regarding what they are and where they

came from, as fully as possible. A further task will be to promote specimens, particularly those of the Recognised collection, to the local community, volunteers and for use in academic research. These and other tasks will be undertaken over the next year, which has been allotted for the curatorial assistant post, and has already been helped by the new lighting recently added to the West Store and adjacent workspace. No doubt you will see many changes, big and small, in the near future as this work continues. I look forward to meeting, and working, with everyone in the Elgin Museum and the numerous, related groups!

**Susan (Sue) Beardmore**

Curatorial Assistant, Geology and Palaeontology, Elgin Museum

**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 93 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](mailto: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

Please address any questions or applications to me at the Museum (or tel 01309 673597).

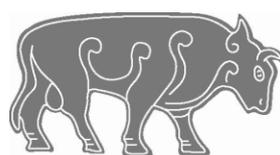
**Ritchie Mabon**

**Prize Draw Co-ordinator**

# HERITAGE COFFEE MORNING



These ladies are all going to the  
Annual Heritage Coffee Morning  
in Austins' Tearooms on South Street  
(Moray Bridge Centre)  
on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June from 10am to 12.30pm.  
Are You?



THE MORAY  
SOCIETY  

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ELGIN  
MUSEUM

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