

Vice President's Report



Dear Members and other Friends

We are now three quarters of the way through the Museum's open season.

In a world and a Scotland full of uncertainty, Elgin Museum continues its 170-odd year record of providing public access to Moray's story in its broadest sense, housed in a splendid building of intrinsic architectural merit. Aren't we lucky! When I look around our Galleries, with our volunteers welcoming visitors from Moray to Melbourne or encouraging children and parents making origami or leading Young Marvels in medieval costume to Castlehill. I'm reminded of a recent broadsheet colour supplement: Caitlin Moran on the "malign conspiracies" promulgated on Twitter "dwarfed, every day, by benign conspiracies", which later she summarises as "Society, basically, Civilisation." And to her examples I would add the "slow, steady machinery" of the commitment of our volunteers and staff to Elgin Museum and all that its continuance embodies.

It was a great disappointment to start the open season without Di Hannan as Education/Outreach worker. This was particularly felt as we had just committed to a year of children's activities in support of an HLF grant application for our archaeology conference. You will read elsewhere how this activity has been planned and delivered largely by Mary Shand and Claire Herbert. A great relief to me – I'll tackle anything in the Museum but, for front-line with children or hoovering, it has to be a critical situation. We are relying on Edna to find us funding for a Di-substitute as, reluctantly, we have had to limit our school groups and outreach services.

From the autumn, we hope the Museum will be under siege by specialist workers carrying out much needed refurbishment to the building and funded by Elgin CARS. The detail of the total funding is still under negotiation as we go to press, but we hope another source will meet the shortfall from the CARS scheme. To prepare those who have got used to our rather bushy front garden, the earth around the masonry base will have to go as it is causing damage to the building.

We will be looking for a more restrained and manageable garden in pots and in the stone coffin.

The volunteers and the whole Museum team including Heather and Peter, as usual deserve high praise. We have retained our Visit Scotland 4* status. I hope everyone has an idea how much members of the Management Committee and Board put into the running of the Museum. It is very welcome when any volunteer sees a job that needs to be done and offers to take it on, from washing tea towels to enthusing coach drivers, from specialist input on Samurai armour to drawing the lines in the Visitors' Book. As there is no likelihood of our being able to afford a curator/manager again soon, we need volunteers who will share the back room jobs that get done only if someone does them! If you want a job, just ask!

The season will end with our archaeology conference which promises to be a great success, with new and old faces at the lectern. It wouldn't be an Elgin archaeology event without Fraser Hunter! The Sunday "field trips" have been chosen, we hope, to be user-friendly for early November. Before then are a couple more outings, both free, to Aberlour and to Duffus Castle. I was going to say to balance the year's many children's activities but in fact the parents and grandparents look to have been enjoying these too and the opportunity of doing things with their charges and no phones in sight.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, and many thanks to one and all.

**Janet Trythall,
Vice-President
August 2017.**

Education and Outreach

As Janet has mentioned above, we are now living life post Di Hannan after her huge success in improving the numbers of children visiting our Museum. The Museum is now a vibrant place to work and volunteer. The good news is that we have still been able to put on a large number of children's activities during the school summer holidays, in spite of having no funding in place to pay for a successor. This has been due to a huge commitment led by Mary Shand and with great assistance from especially, Frances Wardaugh and Claire Herbert. Without them we would not have made it!

**Bill Dalgarno
Museum Convenor**

Summer Activities 2017

Summer has come and gone! Well, at least as far as the museum's children's activity sessions are concerned. I think all went well - the children who came along seemed pleased with the things they produced and the adults they brought got to spend quality time with card, glue, crayons and other stuff!

Before she left, Di Hannan had planned out a six week programme, based on Medieval Times, for the Young Marvels, and to this we added four further "drop-in" craft sessions for any interested families. I agreed to lead the sessions when she left and had great fun finding craft ideas, colouring sheets, quizzes etc. We

were able to equip this year's Young Marvels summer programme thanks to the support of The Arts Society (formerly NADFAS) which allowed us to buy in all the necessary and varied materials – including some amazingly smelly faux suede to make Medieval purses. I told the children it was deliberate – to give them an idea of how bad the smells of the time were!

The Young Marvels learned a bit about Medieval Elgin and the food, clothes, weapons and castles of that period. They produced beautiful goblets, picture frames, swords and castles. And if they sometimes went overboard on the fluorescent felt pens and the bling of stick-on jewels...well, that fits in with the sartorial tastes of the Middle Ages too.

We ended our programme with a guided walk along the High Street, looking at the various buildings and considering what had been there in the Middle Ages. All



The Young Marvels at the North Port.
(Marion Yool is trying to hide behind the Museum banner!)

of the children dressed up, (as did Claire and I, of course) wielded cardboard swords and axes, shouted and yelled when asked and generally created interest in the passing population. There were stops at different landmarks for group photos and interviews given to local newspaper reporters. When we reached the base of Ladyhill, we found a piper waiting to pipe us up to the top! Thanks to the ladies at BID for that. At the top, we stormed the castle and surveyed the land around. What a great day!

The family “drop-in” sessions were run thanks to the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and formed part of our Year of History, Heritage & Archaeology events programme. The activities were all well attended, with a number of visitors to the town, as well as locals, bringing their children along. We started with Vikings, making clay runic pendants and card longboats, and continued with Picts, Romans and Victorians. Chariots were constructed, mosaics were made, boxes were decorated and lots more. None of this could have been done without the wonderful volunteers who did whatever they were asked to do – cheerfully and patiently! From setting out tables to cutting out card to clearing up...and making coffee. Many thanks to all who worked so hard making these and Young Marvels days such a success.



Two visitors from Edinburgh, with their painted Pictish stones.

Mary Shand



YOUNG MARVELS APPLICATION

I would like to join the Elgin Museum Young Marvels Club. I enclose my
Membership fee of £1
and look forward to hearing of the offers available.

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Email address.....

(Please supply your parents' email address if you do not have one.)

Parents – please sign below.

Name.....

Signature.....

Bill Dalgarno
Membership Secretary

Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology

Well, we are now halfway through the Year of History, Heritage & Archaeology. We've had some great events and activities, from the Neolithic to the Victorians with a Viking invasion in between, and there are still lots of fantastic events to come!

April saw our first Family Drop-In activities of 2017, which proved very popular with locals and visitors alike. The month continued with a talk and an object handling session for NESS, a local sensory charity, and ended with a Viking invasion where record numbers of visitors attended the museum to participate in various Viking-themed craft activities and meet Shetland's Up Helly Aa Jarl Squad.

May began with a finds identification day, with a representative from the Scottish Treasure Trove Unit. We also held our first late night opening event of the year, to celebrate the Festival of Museums, where we showcased our magnificent geology & fossil collections and offered a variety of dinosaur-themed crafts, including dinosaur origami, and even a dinosaur "photo booth" which was a real hit with the crowds. May ended with the first of our outside activities – a guided tour of Kinloss Abbey. The event was oversubscribed, and enjoyed by all – we even managed to offer a "live" video of part of the tour through Twitter/Periscope, which is now available to view on our dedicated YouTube channel.



Viking activities in the Museum

In June, our focus moved to Forres as the University of Lancaster's Dr Leif Isaksen led an excavation on Cluny Hill, supported by Elgin Museum's Year of HHA project, to find out more about this possible prehistoric fort. The excavation allowed locals to try their hand at excavation and archaeological survey; three free guided walks of the site were organised (and oversubscribed!); and a number of local school groups had their first experience of a real "dig". The findings after a mere two weeks on site? The team are now *fairly* sure there was once a "lightly defended" hilltop enclosure on Cluny Hill – there is post-excitation analysis ongoing, with material to be dated which we hope will give an insight into when the site was occupied. You can find out more about Dr Isaksen's work at our archaeology conference on 4th November – booking is now open, visit our ticketing website to find out more: elginmuseum.yapsody.com

Throughout July and into August, thanks in no small part to the tireless efforts of Mary, Frances and their band of (mostly) willing volunteers, 12 Young Marvels activities were delivered on the theme of Medieval Moray concluding with a costumed march through medieval Elgin and an "attack" on the castle! On top of this, 4 free family drop-in activity sessions were also run on themes from the Vikings to the Victorians. It was great to see such a good attendance at these events, which were enjoyed by all, and to see our Young Marvels membership increase to 226! We would also take the opportunity to thank The Art Society (formerly NADFAS) for their generous support of this summer's Young Marvels project.



Cluny Hill dig volunteers at Nelson's Tower

Lots more events are planned for the coming months, from guided walks and site visits, to more family drop-in activities, lectures, and, of course, our archaeology conference – pick up an events leaflet in the museum, and keep an eye on our website, Twitter and Facebook pages.

Saturday 19th August 2pm to 4pm
Guided Walking Tour of Aberlour



Join us for a guided walk around historic Aberlour led by local architect, Andrew Wright, exploring the architecture and heritage of this Speyside village.

Free but booking essential – book online at <https://elginmuseum.yapsody.com>

Saturday 9th September 2pm to 4pm
Guided Tour of Duffus Castle

Take a step back in time to the medieval period and learn about the challenges facing our historic sites on this tour of Duffus Castle led by castle expert, David Weinczoc and Historic Environment Scotland's Mike Pendery.

Free but booking essential – book online at <https://elginmuseum.yapsody.com>

Saturday 23rd September 11am to 1pm: Elgin Museum
Drop-in Activity – Architecture Paper Crafts

Explore our beautiful A-listed museum and help us celebrate Doors Open Day 2017 as we recreate the Museum building in miniature. You will also be able to try a variety of architecture themed paper crafts. Suitable for all ages – children must be accompanied by an adult.

Free: No booking required.

Saturday 14th October 11am to 1pm: Elgin Museum

Drop-in Activity – Ogham Pendants

Learn how to write your name in ancient Ogham and make your own decorated pendant.

Free: No booking required

Family Drop-in Activity – The Egyptians

Wednesday 18th October 2017, 11am – 1pm

Free – no booking required. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Find out about the ancient Egyptians, learn to write in hieroglyphs, and make your own Pharaoh's cartouche or Mummy pencil case.

Friday 27th October 2017, 5pm – 7pm



Late Night Spooktacular and Day of the Dead

Free – no booking required. All ages are welcome, but children must be accompanied by an adult.

Dare you visit in the Museum after hours? Join us for some Spooktacular Hallowe'en fun, ghost stories, puzzles & games, and make your own "Dia de Los Muertos" (Day of the Dead) skull mask! Fancy dress is optional, but encouraged!

Saturday 4th November: 9.30am to 4pm

Forgotten, Hidden, Lost: unearthing Moray's archaeology

Conference – see separate advert.

Sunday 5th November: 10am 12noon

Insight Tour of Elgin Cathedral

An exclusive tour of Elgin Cathedral with guest speakers sharing insights on carved stones, medieval glass and the history of the Cathedral.

£5 (students £4): Booking essential – book online at

<https://elginmuseum.yapsody.com>

Sunday 5th November: 1pm to 4pm

Guided walking Tour: Elgin's Hidden Treasures

Join local historian, Mary Byatt and archaeologist Claire Herbert for a guided tour exploring the architectural and archaeological treasures hidden "in plain sight" in Elgin's town centre.

NB This walk covers a variety of terrain including a steep climb up Ladyhill.

£6 (students £5): Booking essential – book online at

<https://elginmuseum.yapsody.com>

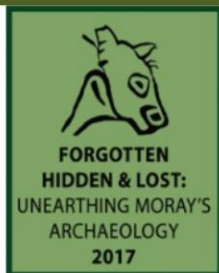
Saturday 25th November: 11am to 3pm
Treasure Trove Drop-in Finds Day



Treasure
Trove

Bring along your finds for identification by the experts from the Scottish Treasure Trove Unit and find out how to report your finds.

Free – no booking required.



The Moray Society's Archaeology Conference 2017

Forgotten, Hidden & Lost: unearthing Moray's archaeology

Join us in celebrating the Year of History, Heritage & Archaeology at Elgin Museum with our archaeology conference showcasing some of Moray's lesser known and forgotten archaeological and historic sites.

Speakers include: Dr Fraser Hunter & Dr Gemma Cruickshank (NMS), Dr Gordon Noble (University of Aberdeen), Prof. Ian Armit & Dr Lindsey Büster (University of Bradford) and many more!

Saturday 4th November 2017, 9:30am - 5:00pm

Alexander Graham Bell Centre, Moray Street, Elgin

Adults: £10 / Students: £7.50

For more information and to book tickets (online booking only):

<https://elginmuseum.yapsody.com/>

The Moray Society - Charity No: SC017546 / Company No: 106529

Archaeology Report

Treasure Trove

Seven Treasure Trove cases covering artefacts found within the Society's collecting area will be presented at the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel (SAFAP) meeting in August. These have a total value of £2,250.

It has been decided not to bid for three cases. Two comprise badly corroded coins that would require expensive conservation and have little interest for the Museum's collection.

Also we will not bid for a late 18th century gold wedding ring found in Keith and identified by the Treasure Trove Unit at NMS as having being made by the goldsmith John Keith in Banff. This is clearly of interest to the Banff Museum and

we have agreed with the Aberdeenshire Museum Service that they should acquire it.

The four remaining cases which we will look to acquire have a value of £825.

Meanwhile payment to the Society of £1,170 from the National Fund for Acquisitions is being progressed. This represents 50% of the value of the six Treasure Trove cases allocated to the Society at the March meeting of SAFAP.

Lesmurdie Assemblage

The twenty boxes containing the archaeological assemblage from the excavations that took place at Lesmurdie, Elgin in 2002 were received by the Society in March this year and are stored in the cellar.

The content's lists and associated documentation have been reviewed along with examination of selected boxes. A list of discrepancies and "missing" information has been sent to CFA, the archaeological contractor who carried out the excavation, for explanation.

Of particular interest are the seven "pots" that were found during the excavation, comprising one early Neolithic Bowl, one Bronze Age Irish Food Vessel and Five Bronze Age Cremation Urns. Of these three are suitable for display and one is "missing."



Food vessel from the Lesmurdie assemblage

It is always good when our collections are used for research. In the spring we were visited by Marta Innes, a PhD student from Glasgow University, who looked at our Bronze Age Food Vessels from Littleferry (ELGNM 1837.1, so acquired in the very earliest days of the Museum) and Carsewell, and the diminutive one from Rothes which was on display last year. The Lesmurdie assemblage arrived the day after her visit, and so she is returning in September.

The Food Vessel looks extremely fragile (see photo) but some decoration is visible. The box must have been built around the vessel as no way could it be lifted out for examination. We hope to get at least some of the Lesmurdie finds on display next year, remembering what a stir it caused in Elgin when they first came to light!

David Marquardt
Archaeology Representative

Geology update

This has been a busy summer for the EMGG (Elgin Museum Geology Group); the group has benefitted considerably from the addition of palaeobiologist Matthew Harrop (see inset) who is volunteering at the museum whilst job hunting.

Publication of recent work on fossils from the Recognised Collection by Christian Kammerer (American Museum of Natural History, New York) and Maria Belén von Baczko (CONICET, Buenos Aires) has led to the reclassification of our 'dicynodonts' to the taxa Anomodontia and to the return of our ornithosuchid specimens to the original designation of *Dasygnathoides longidens*. These changes illustrate the continuing international importance of the fossils held by the museum and the necessity of the protection that hosting a Recognised Collection offers. The revision of the specimen designations has necessitated amendments to their documentation and to the display panels, on which work is on-going.

The group is also continuing to accession the orphan items identified by Sue Beardmore during her time as curator of the geological collection. Recent activity has focused on the variety of amber specimens found in the museum. Amber is fossilised tree resin and items range from decimetre sized blocks with bark impressions to a 'pebble' collected from the sea off Norway which contains an unidentified flying insect a couple of centimetres long. Other items have a distinctly human element to them: one is Victorian curio carved to represent a small book and others are hand-size blocks of resin formed by heating amber with turpentine to produce a varnish used by boat builders. Most amber is opaque but people are generally attracted to the translucent form, leading to a general bias in museum collections. Amber can be found along the coasts of the Baltic and the North Sea but unfortunately only one of our natural specimens has provenance. Work will continue over the winter to label these and other accessioned items and to rescue more of the orphaned items.



Alison and Matthew with some of the amber specimens

Matthew was awarded a degree in Palaeobiology from the University of Portsmouth in 2012 and has recently completed an MA in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Splitting his time between Newburgh in Aberdeenshire, where he grew up and Portknockie. Matthew is volunteering three days a week in a variety of roles.

Dr Alison Wright
EMGG

Activities Committee

The Committee has been busy putting together the Winter Lecture Series for the Museum Hall and have an exciting programme for the season. The talks for this year are

Friday 22nd September:

Kinloss, Covesea and Portgordon: heritage architecture and the challenge of public access.

Dr Nick Brown

Elgin Museum Hall 7.30pm (doors open 7pm)

Friday 13th October:

Whisky in the Cabrach: illicit stills and early distilling

Colin Mackenzie

Elgin Museum Hall 7.30pm (doors open 7pm)

Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th November: (see separate advert)

Forgotten, Hidden, Lost: unearthing Moray's archaeology

Alexander Graham Bell Centre, Moray St., Elgin

Saturday 9.30am to 4pm Sunday 10am -12 noon and 1pm to 4pm

Friday 24th November:

Treasure Trove in Scotland

Stuart Campbell of Treasure Trove Unit, Scottish National Museum

Elgin Museum Hall 7.30pm (Doors open 7pm)

"Highland to Hindustan" in Edinburgh



Photo courtesy Friederike Voigt

After the AGM in April we had a lecture by Friederike Voigt, National Museum Scotland and Professor Roger Jeffrey, University of Edinburgh: "A Taste for Indian Sculpture: India, Moray and Elgin Museum". This followed the Society's decision in 2016 to donate our Hindu sculptures to NMS for their safe keeping and potential display. Friederike has written to tell us that one of the Vishnu sculptures (V.2016.36) is now on display to the public in the University Library. She said: "...everybody in the team was very pleased with the outcome – I think it's going to be a real highlight of the exhibition." JT

Exhibition Gallery, Main Library of the University of Edinburgh, George Square, EH8 9LJ. Monday - Saturday 10am-5pm, and Sundays throughout August. Until 4th November, 2017.

Museum Assistant – Behind the Scenes Report

In November/December 2016, Rebecca Russell arranged for us to be visited by Trevor Kyle of Lyon and Turnbull Auctioneers in Edinburgh and to conduct a preliminary insurance valuation of individual articles of interest within the Museum Collection. Trevor's speciality is primarily jewellery and silver, of which we have a small but good quality collection but his initial assessment of other aspects of the collection has also allowed us an insight to elements of the collection that would benefit from further scrutiny from professionals in the field.

Some aspects of the collection have either been overlooked in the past or have not been re-examined for some time. I must stress that this exercise is NOT in



order to 'sell' any item of the collection, but rather, to ensure we are listing individual items appropriately for Insurance purposes in the event of fire, theft or damage and that we know as much about the museum collection as possible.

Above: Collection of Sri-Lankan (formerly Ceylon) Jewellery



Above: The Elgin Tolbooth Clock

Certain artefacts that we have valued in historical terms have actually turned out to be quite valuable. For instance, the iron turret clock that was made in Aberdeen by James Brown in 1720 and used in the Elgin Tolbooth (or gaol) in the centre of Elgin High Street for many years, would have an insurance value of

about £X! The early 15th century Seal Matrix on display in The People and Place 'Medieval Church' case in the main gallery is one of a kind and so extremely rare, and should be insured for £X. Other items which we might have expected to have been of great value, are not in terms of cash value but remain interesting from an historical standpoint and will remain in the collection.



Above: Japanese Samurai Armour

Our small collection of swords, knives and sheaths is worthy of a mention here. The majority of them have not been looked at in any detail since the late 1970s/1980s and thus lies the first of many suchlike projects. Whilst we had objects out of the stores for Trevor to examine, I took the opportunity of photographing many of the objects and putting together a database of his findings to work from, adding photos and details to the Museum Objects data cards.



Above: Heather Townsend and Heather Cruickshank are instructed by Dr Kemp about Katanas

Around the same time, Dr Neil Kemp joined us. It transpires that Neil has 30-40yrs practical knowledge of Japanese weapons and armour – he also has extensive contacts throughout Japan, Britain and America that are proving a valuable asset to accurately identify and date our Samurai Armour, Wakizashi and Katana.

Neil has provided us with some excellent reference material published by weaponry experts throughout Britain's museums to identify other weapons within the collection – I must admit, I am learning such a lot that I am becoming interested in this aspect of the collection too, albeit the craftsmanship alone and not the gruesome purposes to which they were often put!

One object had previously been identified as a modern copy of a Roman centurion type sword and thought to be of no value and in poor condition but is actually a Russian Artillery short sword circa 1847. It has rounded quillons, a 25 inch saw-back blade, the end of which is double edged and rather bulbous; it is the successor to the Model 1827 Pioneer Sword. This sword would have been carried



Above: Russian Artillery short sword

in a leather and brass mounted scabbard and it is unlikely that it would have been used in a combat situation.



Above: Ngombe Execution Knife and(below)Naga Dao



At the other end of the scale we have rare African hilt weapons, including an 'Execution Knife' of the Ngombe people of Zaire, a Hausa sword from northern

Nigeria and Indian and Southeast Asian weapons including a heavy bladed 'dao' from Assam's Naga people and Javanese or Malayan 'kris's'

Further instalments to follow in future Moray Society Newsletters!



*Above: John Trythall and David Marquardt save the day when rain water floods the museum in July.
Right: Stuart Campbell, Treasure Trove Unit Manager identifies finds by (now famous) Metal Detectorist Alistair McPherson in November 2016*

Moray Society Prize Draw

Why not join the Prize Draw to help the funds of the The Moray Society.
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). Payment can be made at the Museum or ask for standing order mandate for your payment.

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.....

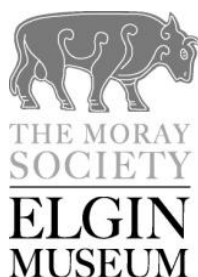
Post Code..... *please delete if inappropriate

Ritchie Mabon, Prize Draw Co-ordinator

Diary Dates

See separate adverts or website for details

- Sat 19th August:** Guided Walking Tour of Aberlour
- Wed 23rd August:** Moray Society Board Meeting
- Sat 9th September:** Guided Tour of Duffus castle
- Fri 22nd September:** Lecture –Architectural heritage at Kinloss, Covesea and Portgordon
- Sat 23rd September:** Doors Open Day – drop-in activity
- Fri 13th October:** Lecture – Whisky in the Cabrach
- Sat 14th October:** Drop-in Activity – Ogham Pendants
- Wed 18th October:** Drop-in Activity – The Egyptians
- Fri 27th October:** Late night Spooktacular & Day of the Dead
- Sat 4th November:** Forgotten, Hidden, Lost - Conference
- Sun 5th November:** Insight Tour of Elgin Cathedral
- Sun 5th November:** Elgin Walking Tour
- Fri 24th November:** Lecture – Treasure Trove in Scotland
- Sat 25th November:** Treasure Trove Drop-in Finds Day



ELGIN MUSEUM – Scotland's oldest independent Museum – Established 1836

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