



SEASONS GREETINGS

President's Report



Armistice Day in the Museum

"Remembrance Day is always a busy one for the Johnston family but this years was especially so. I was pleased to attend the Museum's outstanding exhibition in support of the fallen. The poppies cascade and the exhibition upstairs were so well presented and supported by detailed commentary. We were pleased to contribute to it. But my thanks to Mary and her volunteers for all this hard work so well reported in the press.

And so onward to another winter season. We have some interesting lectures for you. But we also have the start of the hard work on conservation and recording. And if you really want to see how much detailed work we have to do on our accreditation, I can send you countless documents that support our museum and its policies and its rules and regulations. Janet and Claire have put a huge amount of work into this. But, given that I have to read it all before signing off, can I tell you that it gives me a real insight into just how our wonderful museum works.

It stresses that we must continue to be "business-like". So we will be.

We never give up on looking for opportunities to do better. We never give up on looking for more funding. We never give up on seeking more volunteers.

We never give up!

I wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Good New Year and if you want a Christmas present for someone try our shop!

Grenville S Johnston
Hon President

World War 1 Commemorations

Remembrance Day Opening

For the past five years, Jenny Cook and I have put together a display examining the events of WW1. We learned a lot as we decided on the aspects to cover, the people to mention, the impact the war had on society and the forgotten stories to share. Artefacts and papers from the museum collection were displayed as well as items loaned by volunteers and members of the public. Of course, not every angle could be covered but we hope that enough of interest to most people was shown.



There but not There



Part of the Poppy Cascade

In the final year of the commemorations we decided to attempt a Poppy Cascade from the bannister to the ground of the main gallery. We contacted Poppy Scotland for advice and their representative, Frances Beveridge, came to the Museum to help with the idea. She also publicised our efforts and had the P&J come to take photos at the start of the process. The Cascade proved to be popular with visitors, many making and dedicating poppies during their visit. We also had groups of people making poppies and sending them in and all were put up, giving a wonderful visual impact when you entered the gallery.



The Cascade



Part of the Mezzanine display

As the season came to an end, and knowing that all of the display would be dismantled, we suggested that the Museum could open for a while on Remembrance Sunday, giving people a last chance to see what was on show. We also applied for and were given, by The Armed Forces Covenant Trust, six transparent, "There But Not There" figures which were set up around the main gallery. Other items of interest were loaned, by a number of people, for the day so we expanded the display into the art exhibition area and called it "The Lessons of History".

The Museum was open from 11.30am to 2.30pm on Remembrance Sunday, with refreshments available. Coffee was very kindly supplied by Starbucks in Elgin and biscuits by Walkers of Aberlour. As soon as we opened people started to come in, many from the service at St. Giles. Families, service personnel, teenagers, people from voluntary groups came to see the display and chat about the WW1 centenary commemorations as well as to look around the Museum. Many had not been for years and were very impressed by what they saw. The atmosphere was warm and friendly.

By the end of the time over 100 people had visited, including Grenville Johnston, Lord Lieutenant of Moray, and President of The Moray Society. Despite his extremely busy schedule that day, he managed to come along to support the Museum's effort. All the volunteers who were there thought it had been a worthwhile day and another example of the important role the Museum can play in the life of Moray.

Many thanks to everyone who helped in the preparation and delivery of the special Remembrance Sunday opening of Elgin Museum.

Mary Shand

Learning and Outreach

It's been an absolutely jam-packed year for me – thank you to all the Museum volunteers who have helped run events, donated materials and most importantly volunteered knowledge to get me up to scratch with geology, fossils, the Incorporated Trades, WWI, natural history, archaeology, ethnography, medieval history and the lesser known coinage of the world, to name just a handful of the subjects we've covered! Your help has been invaluable and I look forward to continuing to work together into 2019.

One recent highlight has been working with the History Department at Elgin Academy on Archaeology, with older students visiting the Museum to help build dig boxes for the first years to excavate. Explaining the basics of stratigraphy and site mapping to the older students and seeing them able to cascade this knowledge to the younger pupils has been brilliant – it's always good to be able to illustrate your point with cake too!



NOT my cake but definitely an idea for a session in 2019!

We have also had Caitlin, a sixth year student from Keith Grammar, working with us a day a week as part of a Foundation Apprenticeship with the College and the "Developing the Youth Workforce" programme. After spending last year gathering useful skills at college, aspiring archaeologist Caitlin has joined us and is assisting me, predominantly with our handling box collections. She has already been in touch with the British Museum to identify one of our more obscure African objects; her research showed our 'lip decoration' rather to be a Massai armlet! Caitlin is now donning her purple nitrile gloves to delve into a collection of historical medical objects we hold, with the hope of creating a resource box that will be available in time for the Dr Gray's Bicentenary celebrations in 2019.



Do not try this in your mouth for size!

At the beginning of November I travelled to Belfast for the Museums Association Conference which was tremendously interesting. I attended an array of sessions from 'Creating Profitable Events Programmes' (sleepover at the Museum anyone?) to workshops on social media, museum ethics and measuring socially engaged practice. There were many ways in which the work being done in larger, more affluent organisations could (with a little creative thinking) be adapted to work in Elgin Museum.



My favourite session – Ulster Museum Opening Reception – Possibly

The programme for 2019 is well on its way to being planned with some exciting sessions including a torch-lit tour, a focus on the Picts for the Easter holidays including 'make your own Pictish soldier' and a natural dyeing workshop. The trails that were popular in 2018 will take the form of Elgin Museum A to Z activity sheets, with a different letter every couple of weeks, hopefully drawing attention to some of the lesser spotted stars of the collection. Details will be available from early next year, do keep an eye on the website!

Jen Kelshaw

Learning and Access Officer

Nov 2018

Elgin Museum Sunday Opening 2018 and 2019

The Museum opened on Sundays in July and August this year from 1pm to 4pm.

The Sunday opening was generally successful with the number of visitors being 6, 0, 23, 26, 31, 23, 30, 30, 5 on the nine Sundays, an average of 17 visitors for the half day in July and 22 in August. This year there was a fairly small number of volunteers on the rota who attended on Sundays, but there was always enough to have the Museum open. The general view of volunteers who participated was that Sunday opening was worthwhile and should be repeated. Sunday opening was promoted through the Northern Scot, posters and social media; some visitors were asked how they had known the Museum was open on a Sunday; typical replies were that they had looked at the website, Facebook and social media or had assumed it would be open. Some other museums and similar visitor attractions around Elgin were also open on Sundays, so having Elgin Museum open too gave local residents and visitors to Moray more choice of things to do on a Sunday afternoon. At a recent meeting of Moray Heritage Connections (a group of heritage and cultural voluntary groups in Moray) those groups attending who were open on Sundays in 2018 said they intended to open on Sundays in 2019.

The Elgin Museum Management Committee discussed Sunday opening at its meeting on 5 November 2018 it decided that in 2019 the Museum would open on Sunday afternoons in July, August and September. A new form will be prepared for volunteers to put their names down for helping on each day of the week in July, August and September 2019.

A big **THANK YOU** to all the volunteers who attended Sunday opening in 2018!! We can repeat the success of Sunday opening next year and make the Museum even more accessible to those who live in and visit Moray and Elgin. There will be reminders of Sunday opening and the chance to take part near the start of the Museum's 2019 season and towards July.

Stewart Halkett

Shop News

As the start to the new season was delayed this year, due to the renovation works being carried out to the Museum, I had expected this late start to reflect in the sales of the Museum shop. However, I am pleased to report that not only did we exceed last year's figures we also bettered the previous year!

October's income was greatly enhanced by our holding the Pictish Art Conference at the Museum, providing us with our best month's takings in the last three years, but we still need the front-of-house volunteers to encourage our visitors to browse our wee shop – they are sure to find something they didn't know they needed!

Our in-house publications continue to sell well, along with books, cards and artworks from local craftspeople and suppliers, and many new lines I brought in this year have sold out, so we must all be doing something right!

Gayle Henderson

Shop Manager

Elgin Museum Geology Group Summer and Autumn report 2018

The Geology Group again had an interesting and busy summer.

Our geology related visitors to the Museum began in August with a visit from Hamish Johnston, the great-great grandson of famous mineralogist and mountaineer, Matthew Forster

Heddle. On this occasion he was researching into correspondence between Matthew and our own Dr George Gordon. In October, Hamish returned to give a lecture on Heddle with special regard to his mountaineering and mineral collecting exploration. Heddle did his Scottish mountaineering before Munro compiled his tables (1891) and climbed 350 peaks over 3000 ft. Munro's list of separate mountains over 3000 ft came in at 283, and too late for Heddle to claim to be the first official Munroist.



Hamish Johnston studying in east store



Mesacanthus pusillus a Tynet Burn fossil fish

In August, Bob Davidson, a fossil fish expert, arranged a 3 day field trip in honour of Prof Nigel Trewin who sadly passed away last year. Aberdeen and Highland Geological Societies, Elgin Museum and scientists from National Museum Scotland (NMS) were represented. Local Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Tynet Burn and Scaat Craig were visited and explored although thorough searching by a dozen enthusiasts resulted in no finds. Collecting material from loose debris is allowed at SSSI locations as long as finds are reported. Dave got involved with leading the group through Spynie and Clashach quarries which was an honour although the site of six cars heading into the quarry with me having opened the gate running behind trying to catch up wasn't in the plan. As usual Bob displayed an impressive collection of model fossil fishes from the area including *Mesacanthus* (see photograph). A cute little fish but unfortunately near the bottom of the food chain!

Marta Zaha, a PhD student from the University of Bristol, came to the museum in September with a view to using photogrammetry on our specimens of *Elginia* to try and get more detail out of the specimens. Her supervisor is Prof Mike Benton who has been familiar with our fossils for over 30 years.

Then Dr Davide Foffe visited the museum in October. Davide is based at NMS, Edinburgh, and is a recent recipient of a Royal Commission 1851 award which will fund his studies into the Elgin Reptiles. This is an NMS collaborative project which has been several years in discussion! Davide came to look at our smaller Triassic fossils and he was particularly looking for cavities in the host rock which may be suitable for CT scanning. With this method he is hoping to glean more detail from our specimens with the scanning due to start in December at Bristol University.

By serendipity, Davide was working at a table in the Rear Gallery the day we received an ad hoc and informal visit from Davide's new boss at NMS, brought in by Jilly Burns, Head of National and International Partnerships, NMS. Dr Xerxes Mazda, Director of Collections, NMS was very taken by our Museum in general, and the fact we had a researcher (and one he had just appointed) working while the Museum was open to the public.

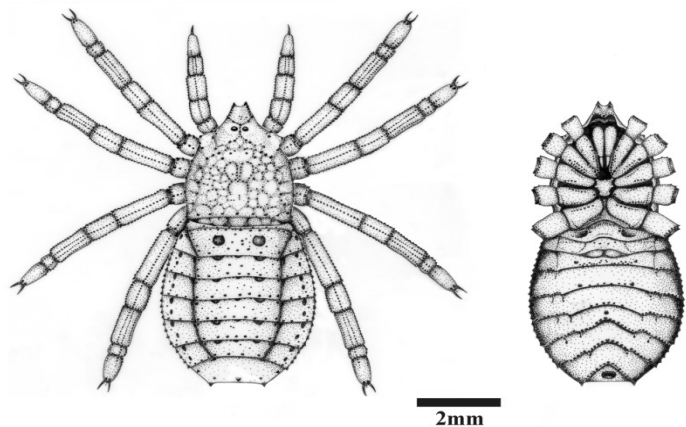


Marta Zaha with Alison studying Elginia



Dr Davide Foffa measuring Triassic reptile fossils

As part of the museum's support for the Highland Archaeology festival in October, Dr Alison Wright gave a lunchtime "History Bites" lecture about Dr William Mackie (1856-1932). He was Medical Officer of Health in Elgin and had a passionate interest in geology. He studied the mineralogy and petrology of local sandstones and, in 1911, discovered the Rhynie chert, the world's earliest preserved ecosystem (dated at ~410 Ma). Mackie was a member of the Elgin Scientific and Literary Society, the forerunner of the Moray Society, and donated the large block of chert that forms part of the geology display in the rear gallery. Alison's talk highlighted the recent donation of a model trigonotarbid by Margie Trewin (Nigel's widow). Trigonotarbid are small arthropods (similar in form to spiders) and several different species are known from the Rhynie and near-by Windyfield cherts. The latex model is also on display in the geology corner and has created much interest with our younger visitors.



Twelve members of Turriff U3A also visited the museum in October to see our geology and fossil collection. Alison and Dave were kept busy by a very enthusiastic group and hopefully in the New Year we'll be taking them to our quarries for a small field excursion.



Dave explaining the local geology to the U3A group



Dave with various rock samples

With regard to quarrying, Tennants of Elgin have been awarded a large contract to supply building stone for the renovation of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, a prestigious building with important links to the local area. The quarry is expected to contribute 2000 tonnes of stone from Clashach quarry to the project which is expected to finish in 2025. Dave continues to photograph and note newly found footprint trackways from Clashach and Elsa Panciroli from NMS has also been visiting to experiment with photogrammetry of the tracks.

Dave Longstaff

Heritage Coffee Morning

Thanks are due to all who supported our Heritage Coffee Morning held as part of Doors Open Day in Moray. The venue, Austins Tearoom, now Moray Bridge Centre was as big an attraction as ever. In fact, we must apologise to those who queued but did not reach the tearoom – the day was much busier than in previous years. Do try again next year.

Also to be thanked are the volunteers (the staff) who helped out on the day as well as those who baked or otherwise contributed to the success. I am delighted to say that the marvellous sum of over £1300 was raised on the day.



"The staff" at the Heritage Coffee Morning

End of Season Get Together

As usual, following the end of our open season, a get together was held in order to thank volunteers for the work they had done throughout the year. As well as a thank you, volunteers who were willing to work behind the scenes during the winter were recruited. Anyone who was not there but would like to come along during the winter should contact Heather Townsend on a Monday or a Tuesday or send an email to curator@elginmuseum.org.uk,



Volunteer lunch

Visitors to the Museum



National Museum

We had surprise visitors who dropped in for an informal visit: Jilly Burns and Xerxes Mazda from National Museums Scotland. Xerxes has not been long in post as Director of Collections but had already heard a lot about us from Nick Fraser and Fraser Hunter, our informal mentors respectively in palaeontology and archaeology. He said: 'I am really impressed with all you continue to achieve, and now have a much better idea of what my teams are working on with you.'

He was interested in everything and incredibly enthusiastic and positive about all aspects of our Museum. Serendipity – Dr Davide Foffa, who has just started working at NMS, was in the Rear Gallery studying our Triassic fossils and thus boss and employee met. Thanks Jilly for thinking of us!



Pictish Arts Society Conference: Moray and beyond



fascinating insights into the Pictish world, and offered us the opportunity to bring out some of our Pictish stones not normally on display, not only from our own collection but also some kindly loaned by the Falconer Museum. The latter are the stones formerly on display in Burghead Library. The weekend was a great success and thoroughly enjoyed by all those in attendance. Thanks are due from the Museum to the PAS for their generous donation of £500 for the use of our facilities.



Researching Viking Age Strap Ends

We were delighted to welcome archaeologist Craig Stanford to the Museum on Friday 5th October, continuing work on his project investigating a corpus of unique Scottish Viking Age strap ends. We look forward to his and Caroline Patterson's upcoming publication on the subject.



Lyon and Turnbull

A very welcome visitor to the Museum was Colin Fraser from Lyon and Turnbull, auctioneers of Edinburgh. Colin with colleagues, spent a day in the Museum offering valuations of objects in exchange for a donation from the owner. Colin developed his interest in antiques through his membership of the Elgin Museum Discovery Club when he was a schoolboy.

Winter Lecture Series 2018-19:



The life & times of mineralogist Matthew Forster Heddle

A very well received talk on Thursday 4th October by the great-great grandson of the renowned Scottish mineralogist Matthew Forster Heddle. Many in the audience were familiar with the then soon-to-be-designated Munros, but not climbing with a 14lb hammer. Hamish had tracked down the map of the Moray coast showing Heddle's walk with one of the Museum's founders, Rev Dr George Gordon in 1877.



Aberlour Orphanage

A most interesting talk from a great friend of Elgin Museum, Dr Lester Borley. Lester showed many pictures of the Orphanage in its heyday showing how big a part of the Aberlour community it was.

Weddings

The Museum has been delighted to host several weddings during the past year and other dates are booked for the next two years. It is truly a most attractive venue and all of our brides and grooms have been delighted with our arrangements. So, if you have wedding plans in mind for son or daughter or for yourself, do not hesitate to get in touch with Gayle at the Museum, who will happily advise all that we can offer or email curator@elginmuseum.org.uk.



Our stand at the Wedding Fair



All ready for the wedding

Moray Society Prize Draw

The Prize Draw has now been running for seventeen years and during that time has raised nearly £20,000 for the Moray Society. 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 85 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).

Even if you are not attracted by those odds, remember that you are still helping 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.

Many thanks to all who have subscribed to the Prize Draw since its inception. This is my last letter to you within the newsletter as I have passed over the running of the Draw from the start of next year to Mary Shand. Thanks again to all who have helped in any way.

Please address any questions or applications to the Museum (curator@elginmuseum.org.uk)

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 the Museum, f.a.o. Mary Shand.

Ritchie Mabon

Retiring Prize Draw Co-ordinator

CARS and the future



The renovated Upper Floors

Following the work on the Museum which was carried out under the CARS improvement scheme, the Museum is looking wonderful – from a distance. However..... most of the work which was done was at upper floor level. When we began, the intention was to restore the whole museum but, on closer inspection, lots more work was required than had been thought due to poor workmanship in the past. The decision was therefore taken to complete the works which required scaffolding access and to leave the ground floor for the moment. We were also unable to work on the side hall as Moray Council disputed our ownership of it, originally. This has now been confirmed as ours, at some legal and emotional expense.

Since the scheme finished, we have decided to commission a survey to look at all of our properties; Museum, Hall and No 3 High St in order to decide what work we need to do next. The ground floor of the Museum still needs renovation, the roof of the rear gallery needs renewed, the side hall needs renovated and reslated and the upper floors of No 3 need total renovation. We will find the full requirement once the survey has been completed and we have been able to set priorities.

To summarise, we will require to tighten our belts for a few more years, we would love a new CARS scheme and we will require to do lots of fundraising. Any help from members or supporters would be greatly appreciated. Work in the Museum goes on apace thanks to volunteers – let's hope that we can keep on working on the exterior to get that to the standard we aspire to.

A Great Christmas Gift Idea

As you can see from the newsletter, there are lots of activities happening for members of the Moray Society. Why not share this by giving a gift membership for Christmas? All you have to do is fill in a standing order (page 14) and send it to The Membership Secretary, Elgin Museum, 1 High St., Elgin. IV30 1EQ. Membership rates, if paid by standing order) are £25 for a single membership and £40 for a family of up to two adults and three children.

As a very special offer, we are offering membership for £10 for a single person and £20 for a family in the first year as long as a standing order for the full amount is payable from 2020.

GIFT MEMBERSHIP I would like to apply for membership for the undernoted. The membership secretary will send a membership pack to the recipient after Christmas and will send an acknowledgement to the subscriber. Below are my bank details. The membership is in favour of:

Name.....

Address.....

..... Post code.....

Recipients email address.....

* * * * *



STANDING ORDER MANDATE

To _____ Bank (Your bank)

Please set up the following Standing Order and debit my/our account accordingly

.....

1. Your account details

Account name _____ Account number _____

Account holding branch _____ Sort code ____ - ____ - ____

.....

2. Payee details

Organisation you are paying:

The Moray Society

Payment reference (to be completed by Moray Society)

Bank of Scotland, Elgin

Sort code 80-06-66

Account No 00476195

.....

3. About the payment

Date and amount of first payment

Date_1st January 2019

£ _____

Annually from January 2020

£ _____

(allow 3 working days for receipt)

.....

4. Confirmation

Customer signature(s)

1. _____

2. _____

Date _____

Accreditation

Lastly! Once again a huge thanks to Janet Trythall, who has spent the last few months preparing the Museum for renewal of our accreditation. This is required by Museums Galleries Scotland, on behalf of Arts Council England, in order to keep us as a fully functioning museum. Without it, we would be unable to apply for many of the grants available and we would cease to be a repository for Treasure Trove items whose finding continues to add to the history of our region. Janet has nagged us to get all of the paperwork updated and will be delighted when the submission, deadline 10th December, is completed. A holiday in Spain is definitely required!! Thanks also to Claire for our new forward plan which she has redone, expanding from 1 page to 19 pages but is now a fully functioning plan.

Diary Dates

2019

Thursday 28TH February, 2.30 pm – Lorna Hall - Scottish Dolphin Centre

Find out about the work of the Scottish Dolphin Centre at Spey Bay.

Friday 22nd March, 7.30 pm – Ian Urquhart of Johnstons

A talk on Johnstons of Elgin and estate tweeds

Friday 26th April – Moray Society AGM followed by refreshments and a chance to “meet the volunteers”

Much more is in process of being arranged and will be publicised in the next newsletter. Please also keep watch on the Museum website and our regular messages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the “Town and Country” column under “Elgin” in The Northern Scot.



1 High Street, Elgin, Moray, IV30 1EQ – Tel: 01343 543 675 – Email: curator@elginmuseum.org.uk
ELGIN MUSEUM – Scotland's oldest independent Museum – Established 1836

The Moray Society: Company No 106529 Charity No 017546