

Elgin Museum Update June 2020



Dear Museum Volunteers, Moray Society members and other friends of Elgin Museum,

Greetings to you all! We hope you enjoyed May's edition, which is now available on the [website](#).

If there is anything different you would like us to include in future or if you have anything you want to add, then please do email curator@elginmuseum.org.uk

Claire is still going into the Museum on a care and maintenance basis, twice a week, and can deal with emails or phone messages.

In this Update:

- **Now and Next at Elgin Museum**
- **AGM**
- **The Moray Society**
- **Thomas Mackenzie**
- **Time for a Clear Out?**
- **Janet's Jokes**
- **Update from Jen**
- **Hello from Heather**
- **Mary's Quiz**
- **Geology**
- **Archaeology**

- Art
- Springwatch in Moray
- Historical Recipes
- Our "Virtual Museum"

Now and Next at Elgin Museum



Sadly we don't see an early return to the old normal in Elgin Museum, and realise what a hole this has made in all our routines without the daily meetings with other volunteers and our visitors from near and far. How much we have learned from chance encounters with foreign visitors, exchanging views on the world and hearing what they have experienced of Scotland on their holidays and making suggestions for what they mustn't miss. As this newsletter goes out, we are still confined to a 5 mile lockdown, and the virus is by no means contained.

What next as restrictions ease? We still don't see an easy way to reintroduce access to the Museum for volunteers and staff given the layout of the Museum (2 metre distancing squeezing through the office!) and the lack of some basics such as water heaters in the loos. Did you ever realise there is no hot water tank in the Museum?

We are at an early stage of planning for the best use of the uncertain times ahead, but we are already almost a third of the way through the open season. The necessary abruptness of lockdown means the Museum was left far from ready even for conventional reopening. To make the best of these abnormal circumstances, an option is to take a new approach: to concentrate on regaining "Location and Movement Control" by carrying out an Inventory of the collections, following the advice of Kevin Gosling, the "Digital guru" at Collections Trust. This would be led by Bill, and gradually bring in volunteers to help, as and when it becomes safe to do so.

Like all museums, we are realising the need to expand our virtual presence and to take the Museum to the community in new ways. The Inventory, with a tidying of our existing records, is the essential start to creating a modern database – and to being able to lay our hands swiftly on records and objects. Armed with this, we would be far better placed to create engaging and innovative on-line access to the collections. This model for a way forward, combined with deferring physical re-opening to visitors until next season, is looking a realistic, risk-limiting and practicable alternative. Should the scenario radically improve, limited opening perhaps using the Side Hall for exhibitions might be introduced.

As a theme for reopening in March 2021 we have the commitment of the Scottish Government and Visit Scotland to continue to promote the Year of Coast and Waters. With luck we will open with a splash and make waves as the iconic tetrapod *Elginerpeton* crawls ashore and the great and the good of the fossil world assemble in Elgin for the Fossil Finders' weekend.

Sad News

We learned last week that Brian Chandler had died after a long illness. He and his wife Sylvia were stalwart volunteers for many years, taking over the Museum Shop when Brian retired from Anderson and England. For many years before that, Brian was a keen member of the Civic Committee, until disappointingly it had to disband for lack of a Convenor. Our condolences to Sylvia at this sad and difficult time.

AGM



Members of the Moray Society may be wondering what has happened to the AGM! Along with the Fossil Hunters weekend at the end of April it had to be postponed. It will now take place, virtually, at on the 17th July 2020. We have been trialling a number of different communications systems both for our Emergency Committee meetings, and meetings with other museum organisations. Papers and all necessary information will be sent out by email to those for whom we have an email address and by post to those who have registered only a postal address. If you are uncertain, please don't hesitate to contact us, fao Bill Dalgarno, Membership Secretary.

The Moray Society



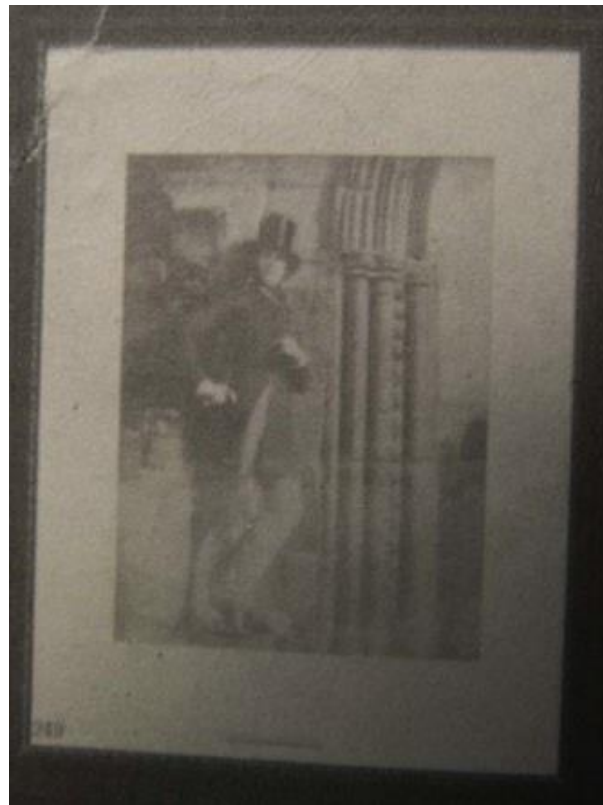
Your chance to support Elgin Museum!

The sole purpose of The Moray Society is to operate Elgin Museum, and, through the Museum's activities, to further the Society's aims of preservation and promotion of Elgin & Moray's heritage. This includes collections care, family events, exhibitions and displays, conferences, outreach activities, welcoming of visitors, integrating with like-minded organisations promoting and caring for Moray and so on.

For any friends of the Museum who would like to show their support for the Museum, do please consider joining the Society. Both the subscription and the solidarity expressed through membership are invaluable to the Museum.

Throughout 2020, you can help secure the future of Scotland's oldest continually independent museum from as little £15 per year (for single membership). More details on how to join can be found on the [website](#).

Thomas Mackenzie



Architect of the original Elgin Museum, 1842

Janet recently researched the "why?" of the Museum's design, and the fascinating result can be read on our website: "Elgin Museum and Italianate Architecture", in [Museum Musings](#).

This photo of Thomas Mackenzie appeared in the Edinburgh Architectural Association's Exhibition Catalogue, 1907. Blurry though it may be, she thinks it is worth sharing the image of our architect looking proud and suave in his top hat - though she doesn't recognise the building.

Time for a Clear Out?



A suggestion from Museum Volunteer and Moray Society Board Member, Edna Cameron. She has been recently given some 1950s ladies' clothing to dispose of for the benefit of the Museum. Have you had a Lockdown Clear Out of the useless and unwanted and are selling it on Gumtree or down the mart? Please consider donating the proceeds to the Museum - every little helps, and if you are able to Gift Aid that helps even more!

Janet's Jokes



"At the museum, I turned to the attendant and said, "I suppose this horrible thing is what you call Modern Art." Attendant: "Sir, that's a mirror"."

"What do you call a very, very, very, very, very old joke?"

Pre-hysterical!"

"How do you move a 100kg dinosaur?"

With dino-mite!"

"What did Richard III say when a planning proposal was submitted for building a car park?"

Over my dead body!"

"Did you hear about the angry mummy?"

He flipped his lid!"

Update from Jen



We hope you have been following Jen's output on the website and via Facebook: lots of ideas for children and grandchildren, parents and grandparents, to keep you busy and entertained. Here are some examples of feedback she's received:

From the Time Capsule activity: 9 year old Logan's "View from my Back Garden", on the postcard supplied by Jen and posted to the Museum with the message of his activities at this time twice using the new word, now commonplace: "Here is the view from my back garden. I've been going on my climbing frame a lot recently. In lockdown I am missing my granny a lot. My hair has also grown very long. I look forward to meeting my friends out of lockdown."



1 - Time Capsule Postcard



2 - DIY carved stone balls



3 - Home-made cropmarks

Hello from Heather



Hello friends,

I'm delighted to have this opportunity to say "Hi!" I've really missed you guys and dolls, especially (but not exclusively) the Monday Crew. If I haven't been in touch, it's not because I don't care and haven't wanted to call, but simply because I only have your phone numbers and emails in the volunteer file - and I have 100% been obeying lockdown and furlough rules and kept out of the Museum entirely!

Anyway, I hope you are all well and not going too bonkers during this unprecedented situation? Personally, I am exceptionally glad lockdown has happened at this time of year and not in the winter. I am taking every opportunity to be out of doors, gardening, enjoying wildlife, also ironing, sewing (yes, all outdoors) and walking down the beach – although not as much I should or could be.

I am still working for Moray Council in the ICT department which is, as you can imagine, pretty overwhelmed since March with every council worker and teacher in Moray asking to work from home

overnight – a request IT are working hard to deliver in impossible circumstances as the demand is so high. Whilst furloughed from the Museum, I am carrying out online Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to keep my hand in with the Museum and our collections.

Best wishes and take care, Heather



Mary's Quiz



And now for something completely different...!

Museum Volunteer and Moray Society Board Member Mary Shand has created a museums-themed quiz - how well do you know your museums? Answers at the end (no cheating!).

1. What is the origin of the word "museum"?
2. When was Elgin Museum's side hall opened?
3. The museum has a shrunken head. What is the official name of a "shrunken head"?
4. The museum's Imari ware comes from which country?

5. What's the name of the sheep on display in the National Museum in Edinburgh and why is it there?
6. Which is thought to be the oldest museum in Britain?
7. In which museum is the bust of Pharaoh Akhenaten's royal wife and what is her name?
8. Which museum has Abraham Lincoln's hat?



Mary has also been busy crafting while at home - and has even made her own miniature Parthenon - complete with figure for scale!

Geology



Efforts continue to promote *At the Water's Edge*, in anticipation that we will be open at some point in the future! The summer edition of 'Earth Heritage', the geological and landscape conservation magazine produced by Scottish Natural Heritage and other UK agencies, will carry a 3-page article about the forthcoming exhibition. A staff member at BGS produced 3-d scans of three of the fossils that will be on display, and very kindly printed the lower jaw fragment, with its impressive peg teeth. This model will be added to our Recognised Collection, forming the only tangible link that we hold to *Elginerpeton*. The 3-d scans can be viewed on the [exhibition web page](#) and, as a way of saying thank you, Alison has written a short article for the BGS blog. Links to both these articles should be available in the next newsletter.

Like many organisations, Museums Galleries Scotland has moved much of its activity online and Alison 'attended' a Recognised Collection Holders virtual meeting to discuss how museums are coping with the Covid-19 lockdown. Issues discussed included practical things like security and environmental monitoring but also the financial implications of loss of income and the difficulties for staff trying to work from home and/or facing employment insecurities. MGS realises that many smaller organisations may be facing the very real threat of insolvency and consequently all museums have been tasked with reporting what their plans are for their Recognised Collection, should the museum be forced to close. Inspection showed that provision for the disposal of items had been properly considered in both The Moray Society's Constitution and in the Elgin Museum Collection and Development Policy 2018 but that no specific instructions had been attached to the disposal of the Recognised Collection. An additional clause detailing these has been drafted by Janet, approved by MGS, and will be presented to the Board for their approval later this month. MGS also asked for Annual Returns to be completed and the return for 2019 has now been submitted.

Jen and Alison also attended virtual meetings of the new NE Forum that MGS is in the process of setting up. An additional member of staff has been employed by MGS to establish strategic priorities for the regional groupings and it will be interesting to see how this develops.

Alison has also participated in online meetings of the Geological Curators Group, both of which have proved interesting and allowed her to put 'faces to names' of people previously known only by their email addresses!

Dave has been continuing to visit Clashach by bike and had an article detailing work at the quarry and the significance of the Elgin reptiles published in the Open University's Geological Society newsletter, *Erratix*. He has also been involved in online events and showed some of his reptile trackway photographs to Neil Clark during a Geology Festival session hosted by the Scottish Geology Trust.

Archaeology



Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has various initiatives to improve access to their existing online services during the lockdown, including free online access to [Scran](#) until the end of July 2020. "Scran hosts over 400,000 amazing, fully-captioned images, sounds and film from over 300 museums, galleries, and archives including the V&A, National Galleries of Scotland, Glasgow Museums and The Scotsman to name a few."

For archaeology closer to home, why not have a look at (or revisit!) our [Collection Highlights videos on YouTube](#). Does your favorite archaeology object in Museum feature? If not, perhaps you could write about your favourite object in the Museum for our new "Museum Musings" blog!

Scottish archaeology in the news:

[The problem of the Picts](#) (Current Archaeology 364)

[Rare evidence of 5,000-year-old fabric discovered in Orkney](#) (BBC)

[Volunteers sought to help record Scotland's political past](#) (University of Stirling)

And, in case you missed it, [5 of Scotland's most fascinating archaeological finds of 2019](#) (The Scotsman)

Art at Elgin Museum



We are very grateful to Steve Storey for coming forward to volunteer to take over the role of arranging the art exhibitions. As yet, we haven't had a chance to make the handover or discuss how the role might pan out. There are certainly possibilities to be explored for virtual displays and/or using the Side Hall. Our art exhibitions have been very popular in the past, showcasing Moray's talent and also earning us a percentage from sales.

A priority will be the Members' and Volunteers' Art Exhibition (see May Newsletter) and we hope you are all polishing your portfolios! If you're a Volunteer or Moray Society Member, and you'd like to take part, there is still time to get in touch. We're also asking participants to think about incorporating or reflecting on the theme of Coasts & Waters in their submitted works, as we continue to celebrate the Scottish Government's Year of Coasts & Waters 2020-21. Email Claire at curator@elginmuseum.org.uk

Springwatch in Moray



Museum Volunteer and Moray Society Vice-President Claire Herbert shares some of her new-found lockdown interests...

I'm not known for having an interest in wildlife, my focus normally being on the historic rather than the natural environment. But with lockdown has come a renewed interest in the natural world around me. Working from my home in Moray instead of from my offices in Aberdeen & Inverurie has given me a bit of "extra time" each day. Time to enjoy the birds in the garden and time to explore my local surroundings again on my "daily exercises".

The call of "the feeders are empty" rings out in the house 2 or 3 times a day, and whatever the weather the feeders are duly restocked so that our resident (and expanding) flock of House Sparrows don't go hungry. We've watched the Wood Pigeons and Jackdaws learn how to use the feeders (with many an embarrassing mishap), watched on as the Blue Tits have fledged, and have cheered at the rare site of a Chaffinch or Goldfinch.

Out and about, we've learned to identify the call of the Yellowhammer and the Stone Chat. We've stood rapt by the melodious tunes of the Song Thrush. And we've followed the Eider Ducks as they've travelled up and down the coastline. Each week, each day, a new sight, sound or smell of nature!



4 - L: Eider Ducks; R: Small Tortoiseshell

This week's highlights, from a new walking route, have been sightings of young Roe Deer leaping across the cliff tops while Razorbills, Guillemots, Fulmars and more nest on the rugged cliff faces below. Watching and walking amongst wildlife has been a great tonic during lockdown - and I would thoroughly recommend letting yourself get immersed in the natural environment!

But it's not just helped me - I've also been reporting my sightings, dead and alive, common or rare, to the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre ([NESBReC](#)). Founded in 2000, NESBReC collates, manages and provides biological information for the North East of Scotland. So, if you've been out and about seeing wildlife or even just noticed more creatures in your garden, NESBReC would love to hear from you. You can report your sightings [online](#) or by email. They've also been running challenges during lockdown on their [Facebook page](#) - have a look for ideas of what to look out for!



5 - L: Roe Deer; R: Herring Gulls

Historical Recipes



Looking for inspiration for your next supper? Why not try one of Museum Volunteer and Moray Society Board Member Mary Shand's historical recipes - and let us know how it tastes!

Numidian Chicken

An ancient Roman recipe - Numidia was a Roman province on the North African coast, comprising roughly the territory of north-east Algeria.

1 whole chicken roasted until well cooked (or roasted chicken breasts)

Sauce

Pinch of ground pepper

Pinch of ground cumin

Pinch of ground coriander seeds

A handful of chopped nuts and chopped dates

1 dessertspoon olive oil

2 dessertspoons grape juice or red wine

1 teaspoon wine vinegar

Broth from stock cube or cooked chicken

Honey to taste

A handful of breadcrumbs

Put all the sauce ingredients into a saucepan and simmer over a low heat, stirring occasionally, for about 20 minutes. Adjust seasoning to taste. To serve, put the roast chicken, or chicken pieces, on a serving dish, pour the hot sauce over it and sprinkle with black pepper. This could be accompanied by couscous and salad or fresh bread and vegetables.

For more historical recipes, visit the [Museum Musings](#) blog!

Our "Virtual Museum"



As we featured in our last update, our "virtual museum" is expanding. You can watch videos on our YouTube Channel of our [2020 Display Highlights](#) and our 2017 [Collection Highlights](#) - and if you can, please consider subscribing to our Channel - the more subscribers we have the the more tools YouTube lets us have to make the Channel even better!

Jen has created fun activities and quizzes to [download from our website](#) and our [Young Marvels page](#).

Find and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) for more museum fun!

You can also keep yourself busy with our [Elgin Museum online jigsaw puzzles](#). You can even make them as easy or hard as you like, by choosing how many pieces the jigsaws have!

We've also created a new blog about the Museum, [Museum Musings](#) - let us know if you would like to contribute to the blog! Contact us by email at curator@elginmuseum.org.uk

Elgin Museum "Virtual Museum" Digital Survey

Could you spare 3 minutes to fill out our very short [digital survey](#)? We are looking for feedback on our digital content during lockdown and how we can improve it in the future. Every completed questionnaire is incredibly useful to us when applying for funding bids. Thank you. [Click on this link](#) to access the survey.

That's all for this Elgin Museum Update!



Finally, do please keep in touch. Every effort is being made to keep the show on the road, and the museum and heritage sectors are showing themselves to be very committed to ensuring we survive even if in re-imagined forms. Acknowledgement of the value of volunteers to museums and vice versa is a commonly held sentiment.

As ever, we send our thoughts and best wishes to you all during this difficult time. Stay safe, stay well.

All the best from the Museum Emergency Executive Committee

Please feel free to contact us by email, and do let us know if you enjoyed this Update! Don't forget to visit the [website](#), find and follow us on social media - and why not tell a friend about Elgin Museum online?

If you have enjoyed this newsletter, any of our Virtual Museum content, or would just like to make a donation to help support Elgin Museum, please visit our [Paypal donations page](#).

Thank you!

Elgin Museum

www.elginmuseum.org.uk

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QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. What is the origin of the word “museum”? ANSWER: From Greek “mouseion” – place of the Muses (goddesses of the arts and sciences)
2. When was Elgin Museum’s side hall opened? ANSWER: 1921
3. The museum has a shrunken head. What is the official name of a “shrunken head”?
ANSWER: Tsantsa
4. The museum’s Imari ware comes from which country? ANSWER: Japan
5. What’s the name of the sheep on display in the National Museum in Edinburgh and why is it there? ANSWER: Dolly – the first cloned animal
6. Which is thought to be the oldest museum in Britain? ANSWER: The Royal Armouries, Tower of London – oldest public museum is the Ashmolean, Oxford
7. In which museum is the bust of Pharaoh Akhenaten’s royal wife and what is her name?
ANSWER: Neues Museum, Berlin – Nefertiti
8. Which museum has Abraham Lincoln’s hat? ANSWER: The National Museum of American History, Washington DC, USA, has the hat Lincoln wore when he was assassinated.

How did you do? Let us know, by email or on [twitter](#) or [facebook](#)!