

6: Where are the Women of History?

History is mostly written by men, about men. This display looks at the “hidden” history of the Women of Moray.

1. Witches' Ball

This is the metallic pink/red ball hanging from the ceiling up on your left. Witches' balls were hung in cottage windows to ward off witches or, alternatively, to attract them so that they could be captured within the ball.

ELGNM: 1977.31

2. Christening dress

This christening gown was given to Mary Grant Cobban in about 1880. It remained in her family until 2010, and was last used for a baptism in 1994. The gown was donated to Elgin Museum by Robert (Bob) Duncan, New Jersey, U.S.A. after his mother, Edith Scott, requested that the gown return to Scotland. The gown is made in a technique known as Swiss embroidery on an embroidery machine called a pantograph. The finished work of satin, stem and overcast stitches is almost indistinguishable from hand stitching.

ELGNM: 2001.1

3. Poorhouse dress

The purple dress on the back wall was the uniform of the inhabitants of the Morayshire Union Poorhouse in Bishopmill. After 1930 it was known as Craigmoray and was only demolished in 1976. The people in the poorhouse could only go out at specified times and if permission was granted. The poorhouse was the equivalent of the workhouse in England.

ELGNM: 2002.28

4. Parasol

The parasol is made of silk and is decorated with cord and tassels. The handle is made of brass and bone. The silk is now deteriorating with age.

ELGNM: 1972.37

5. Umbrella

The cover of the umbrella is black with cream stripes. The handle has a leaf pattern and is decorated with black and white pompoms.

ELGNM: 1985.11

6. Black Dress

This very fine black silk dress with gold brocade was worn by Mrs Elizabeth Lawson (nee Fraser). She was born in 1827 and died in 1877.



Her husband, Alexander Lawson, was the owner of Oldmills, Elgin. The style of the dress dates it to around circa 1870. Elizabeth was the grandmother of the donor, the late Mrs Jean Marshall of Hopeman.

ELGNM: 1976.103

7. Sampler

The sampler to your right is by Catherine A. Kennedy aged 9 years at Kirkton Public School. Catherine was left-handed but had to use her right hand to sew the sampler.

ELGNM: 2010.4

8. Pressed flowers

The flower is *Trifolium dubium*, Lesser trefoil. It is from the herbarium of Mary McCallum Webster, collected in 1966.

ELGNM: 2009.21

9. Drawing of a frog

The drawing is by Anna Buchan, later Mrs or Dr. Suckling and probably dates from her undergraduate studies at Aberdeen University.

ELGNM: 1998.1

10. Brittle star fossils

The brittle stars are from the clay pits at Gilston and are similar to the fossils that Anna Buchan was studying for her PhD in the clay pits at Windyridge, between Lossiemouth and Elgin.

ELGNM: 1978.943. B and C

11. Book 'The White Bird Passes'

A first edition of Jessie Kesson's first novel from 1958.

ELGNM: 2009.15

12. Book 'Women of Moray' (Luath Press, 2012)

A celebration of the women of Moray and their contribution to history; written by women of Moray. Copies are on sale in the Museum shop. The named women in the display all have entries in the book.

ELGNM: Uncatalogued

The archaeological finds in this case are from Miss Sylvia Benton's archaeological excavation at the Sculptor's Cave, Covesea, 1928-30.

Other material from the Sculptor's Cave is in the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

13. Neck bones

Human neck bones: 2 axis and 1 atlas upper neck vertebrae. Note the cut marks that suggest beheading.

ELGNM: 1931.14.1 Adult axis

ELGNM: 1931.14.3 Adult atlas

ELGNM: 1931.14.2 Child's axis

14. Gold plated penannular ring

Late Bronze Age base metal core covered with gold. Suggested uses include money, hair ornaments or a nose ring. A similar ring, in perfect condition has also been found at Clarkly Hill, Burghead.

ELGNM: 1931.6

15. Bone discs

Bronze Age/Iron Age bone discs of undetermined use, possibly counters or crude copies of Roman coins.

ELGNM: 1931.8

16. Amber beads

Irregular, rounded, amber beads. Late Bronze Age or later.

ELGNM: 1931.5.3

ELGNM: 1931.5.1

ELGNM: 1931.5.2

17. Boar's tusk

Bronze Age/Iron Age bone tool, boar's tusk, sharpened at one end.

ELGNM: 1931.13

18. Bone Pricker

Late Bronze Age bone pricker made from a sheep's metacarpal.

ELGNM: 1931.10

19. Bone pin

Iron Age pointed splinter, bone tool.

ELGNM: 1931.11

20 Bone pin

Iron Age bone pin.

ELGNM: 1931.12

21. Lead disc

A pierced lead disc, possibly a spindle whorl or a net sinker.

ELGNM: 1931.9

22. Bronze wry-necked pins

Two Iron Age bronze wry-necked pins.

ELGNM: 1931.2

23. Tweezers

Copper alloy Iron Age tweezers.

ELGNM: 1931.7

24. Pottery

Six fragments of Iron Age coarse pottery rim sherds.

ELGNM: 1931.1

Front Shelf – Women's Accessories

This is a selection of fashions items from various times. Some of the objects have been in the Museum for many years but we have no record of their provenance or history.

25. Lorgnette

A lorgnette is a pair of spectacles with a handle to hold them in place. They were popular in the 19th century and fashionable ladies preferred them to spectacles. They were mostly used at masquerade parties and at the opera, becoming the model for today's opera glasses.

ELGNM: 1978.747

26. Powder box

Powder box made of wood and bone with a swan's down puff.

False rumps, false teeth, false hair, false faces,

Alas, poor man! How hard thy case is;

Instead of woman, heavenly woman's charms,

To clasp cork, gum, wool, varnish, in thy arms.

ELGNM: 1978.1358.11

27. Gold bracelet

Date and donor unknown.

ELGNM: 2007.17.8

28. Jet bracelet

Jet is a geological material and is considered a minor gemstone. It is the product of high-pressure decomposition of trees from millions of years ago. Jet found at Whitby, Yorkshire, is of early Jurassic age, approximately 182 million years ago. Jet was used in the Bronze Age for beads and necklaces and later as 'mourning' jewellery, popularised by Queen Victoria after the death of her beloved husband Albert.

ELGNM: 2007.17.11

29. Purse

A silver purse and chain decorated with chasing. It is possibly a visiting card case. The etiquette of visiting cards was very complex with different rules for ladies and men. A woman's card should always have the prefix of a title, Miss or Mrs. The address might also be added, and if a Society woman had a particular day for visits, the day was announced on the bottom left-hand corner.

Visiting cards were the calling cards of Regency and Victorian ladies and gentlemen, the custom persisting until the Second World War.

ELGNM: 1977.157

30. Earrings

A pair of earrings with pearl drops circa 1910.

ELGNM: 1977.184

31. Buckle

The two sides of the buckle link together to form a belt of leather or fabric, circa 1880-1910.

ELGNM: 2007.17.16

32. Hatpin

The hatpin has an enamelled dragonfly. The dragonfly can swivel to adjust to the required angle. Hatpins have been made since, at least the 1660s as a cottage industry and were originally used to fasten head coverings such as veils and wimples.

By the 1880s Birmingham had become the centre of hatpin manufacture but pins had to be imported from France to keep up with the demand. Alarmed by the effect that imports had on the balance of trade, Parliament passed an Act restricting the sale of hatpins to two days in the year at the beginning of January. The enormous, flamboyant hats around 1900 required very long hatpins

to keep them in place and the pins became known as "every woman's weapon".

ELGNM: 2008.28

33. Hand mirror

The mirror is probably Chinese. It has a silver handle and the back is decorated with enamelled flowers and a cockerel.

ELGNM: 1957.126

34. Bakelite bag

The bag has a cord and is decorated with a large black spider. Bakelite is a synthetic resin. It contains a comb, lipstick, 2 powder puffs and a mirror.

ELGNM: 2004.30.12



Above: Photo of the inside of the Halloween-style bakelite bag.

35. Scent bottle

The glass bottle is divided internally so that it can be filled with two different perfumes.

ELGNM: 1965.7.2

36. Goldoid powder box

Goldoid is a trademark name for flatware with a gilt plated finish. This piece has also been decorated with a Cinderella-themed illustration in enamel and still contains powder.

ELGNM: 1978.1358.12

37. Ladies shoes

A pair of pale blue satin slippers with Louis heels, probably made circa 1900-1915.

ELGNM: 1972.36

In the Peephole

Patch Box

You will notice an 18th century patch box in the peephole to your right.

Look in the mirror to see the contrasting caricatures – one month before marriage, one month after marriage.

Women kept their beauty spots in such a box. The patch consisted of a small piece of black fabric to be stuck on the face.

ELGNM: 2007.8

The quotation beside the peephole is by Eric Hobsbawm, born in 1917 and died in 2012 - "*an unrepentant Marxist*", a Jew, born in Alexandria. He was multilingual and an influential historian and author.

To the right of the display cabinet are two early washing machines.

Victorian Washing Machine

Washday was a major event in the Victorian times. Due to the time and labour involved it was also infrequent, occurring perhaps once a month in order to make the work more economic. The less frequent the washing, the 'better off' a family could claim to be as this meant that they had sufficient clothing to wear until the next washday.

This particular model was known as the 'vowel' brand. It was manufactured by Thomas Bradford and Co., Laundry Engineers (London, Manchester and Liverpool) which was founded in 1857. They won many awards for their designs.

The washing machine was gifted to Elgin Museum in 1975 by the North of Scotland Hydro-electric board.

ELGNM: 1975.112

Washing Machine

Dated to circa 1932, this washing machine has a stirring, squeezing, sucking and rubbing movement. Simple in action, easy to use. Galvanised body with a hardwood top. An additional wringer could be bought if required.

It was donated to Elgin Museum in the name of the late Mr John Smith, Surgeon at Dr Gray's Hospital, Elgin.

ELGNM: 2011.6