

President's Message

Greetings again to all our members and friends.

As we move into 2022, sadly Covid is still with us.

We certainly wish and intend to re-open the Museum to the public from sometime after Easter, and to continue welcoming visitors. We will find the correct balance to achieve this, even if it means that, constrained by the layout of our building and for the safety of all, we have to continue the mitigations we took last year. I for one did not find the requirements of mask wearing and following the arrows too onerous, understanding the responsibility we all have for not inadvertently spreading the virus.

One benefit of the new system was the more active presence of volunteers in the galleries, primarily to ensure the "Covid system" worked, but also engaging with our visitors. The number of happy sounding children was also encouraging despite our having had to remove the usual activities, to facilitate the enhanced cleaning regime. However, a practical problem is encouraging our "meet and greet" volunteers back again. Many have already stepped forward, but we need to return to the numbers we had before Covid. If you wish to talk about this, please do tell us.

Meanwhile, as you will have seen from the outstanding Museum email updates, we have been busy and active in continuing working with researchers, and also the never-ending cataloguing, buildings and collections care and general admin. And still without the funding for a Manager/Curator. We are now working on our new displays, some themed with the Scottish Government's Year of Stories and others showcasing new donations and objects acquired through Treasure Trove. Of course, Her Majesty's 70th Jubilee will be celebrated with exhibitions in the Museum and in town, and we have already begun by decorating our Number 3 High Street window.

Please, if you have been hibernating and remaining indoors for the last two years and have missed our company now is the time to discuss a return to normality.....but at your own pace and ours. We remain hugely grateful to our staff and the team of volunteers who have continued to maintain the Museum and look after it.

We are also very grateful for the continued financial support you have given us. While all donations are very welcome, some this year are sadly the consequence of the passing of old members and volunteers.

Onward into 2022.

Grenville Johnston, Hon President

Minutes of The Moray Society Annual General Meeting 2021

17th September 2021, 7.00pm, via MS Teams Platform

Draft Minutes

1. Welcome

The Vice-President, Claire Herbert (CH) and Trustee Janet Trythall (JT) welcomed those present.

Trustee Janet Trythall shared the sad news of a number of Moray Society members who had passed away in the last year. Members are encouraged to consider The Moray Society/Elgin Museum in any bequests.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies from President Grenville Johnston

27 apologies received

3. Minutes of AGM 2020 – accepted nem com

4. Matters arising from above

JT thanked Treasurer & Volunteer Graham Robertson for dismantling the de-accessioned mangle and delivering it to its new home at a heritage centre on the Black Isle

5. President's and Vice-president's written reports on the activities of the Society (President, Grenville Johnston, Vice-president Claire Herbert)

On file

6. Receive the Financial Report, including draft Accounts (Treasurer and Company Secretary, Graham Robertson)

This year has been a difficult year, but we've managed to get through. Support received from government grants, but income from visitors has obviously dropped as the Museum has not been open over the summer (we only reopened to visitors in August, on a limited basis). We have managed to take a better control of expenditure, but still some large outgoings which are "essentials" such as insurance.

One major change to draft accounts to the final accounts that c. £85K of expenditure still being carried on the display cabinets in the main gallery (installed 20+ years ago). These cases are now showing their age, so have agreed with accountants to begin a more accelerated write off of this expenditure – depreciation in final accounts of c. £25k as opposed to c. £12K shown in draft accounts.

Note an error in the balance sheet circulated, which featured previous year figures for 2018 alongside the current year. Hold investments @ c. £200K at time of meeting, but approx. £110K are restricted (donations for specific purpose), the remainder is being held back due to uncertainty in coming years as well as essential building works which will be required.

7. Appointment of Ritsons, Chartered Accountants, Elgin as independent financial examiner for 2021

Accepted

8. Board Membership - Annual Election

The following existing Trustees are resigning and standing for re-election having been duly proposed by two Ordinary Members. See notes for the Agenda:

Bill Dalgarno *ex officio*

Nick Brown (new, co-opted on 2nd June 2021) 1. Edna Cameron 2. Sara Marsh

Claire Herbert 1. John Trythall 2. Alison Wright

Stuart Huyton 1. Alison Wright 2. Dave Longstaff

Grenville Johnston 1. Angela Monroe 2. Mary Byatt

Richard Laing (new, co-opted on 2nd June 2021) 1. Mabel Rennie 2. Heather Cruickshank

Graham Robertson 1. Dave Longstaff 2. Claire Herbert

Donna Skelly 1. Ritchie Mabon 2. Mabel Rennie

Janet Trythall 1. Mary Shand 2. Tom Duff

Caroline Webster 1. Grenville Johnston 2. Donna Skelly

Accepted

Thanks were given to those Trustees who had stepped down in the last year: Mary Shand, Rebecca Russell, Edna Cameron.

JT highlighted that Grenville Johnston is staying on as President, and was thanked for this, however he was due to “retire” from this position in 2020. Any suggestions or volunteers for new Trustees welcomed!

CH added that an individual does not have to be resident in Moray to be a Trustee

9. Amendments to Constitution

Written outline of amendments circulated, and on file.

9.1 Changes allowing use of online meeting platforms for future AGMs and EGMs

Accepted

9.2 Changes to categories of Membership

Accepted

10. Membership report

Note proposed changes to Membership categories under point 9.2 above, and paper circulated (on file)

Fixing of annual subscriptions. The Board recommends:

Ordinary Member (18 to 25 Years old): Free

Ordinary Member over 25 years of age: £25 (Paid by standing order)

Ordinary member over 25 years of age: £30 (if not paid by standing order)

Family member: £37.50 (paid by standing order)

Family member: £45 (if not paid by standing order)

Junior member (under 18): Free

Corporate Member: £500 minimum contribution.

Life Member: £500 – SINGLE PAYMENT

Membership subscriptions Accepted

11. AOCB

Mary Shand – consider reviewing publicity & marketing strategy and volunteer roles, since focus now on digital. JT suggest bringing this to the next EMMC meeting, to discuss all the Management Committee roles.

12. Close

Moray Society Prize Draw – Mary Shand

Any member can buy a ticket for the Prize Draw – for ticket price of £10 for 4 draws throughout the year.

Numbers drawn: £20 no45 (B. D.); £30 no73 (A. W.); £50 no68 (P. C.)

James Welsh flagged that he had not yet sent payment for two Prize Draw tickets. Noted by Mary Shand.

JT offered thanks to Mary for running the draw. If anyone would like to buy a ticket, get in touch.

CH highlighted that rather than the usual post-AGM in person lecture, a new virtual event had been released – a new episode of Elgin Museum: In Conversation, featuring conservation architect Pinny Muir from LDN Architects. This can be viewed on the Museum's YouTube Channel. Suggestions for other guests welcomed!

Alison Wright asked that thanks were noted to the Executive Group (Graham Robertson, Janet Trythall, Bill Dalgarno, Claire Herbert) for their work over the last year to steer the museum through the challenges of Covid-19. Seconded by Duncan Alexander and Mary Byatt

CH thanked Alison Wright and the geology group for delivering the excellent "At the Water's Edge" exhibition and events under very difficult circumstances. New publication "The Elgin Reptiles" available to buy, see museum website for details.

AGM Appendices:

1. President's Report

As ever, I would firstly like to thank all of you for your continued support of the Moray Society and Elgin Museum.

Next, I urge you to visit the Museum, reopened at last if only at weekends at the moment. This is my personal recommendation as I thoroughly enjoyed my own visit (after booking my slot as a visitor, on the website): the welcome from the volunteers on duty throughout the Museum, the new displays and the general approach to balancing Covid safety and enjoyment for all. There has been a steady stream of visitors and I understand that they are spending more time examining the exhibits.

We have taken the decision to hold this year's AGM online again – partly because our building does not lend itself to safe gathering of a large group of people in the ongoing pandemic, and partly because the Lecture Hall is "repurposed" as the new shop and exit from the Museum!

In your papers for the AGM, you will see we have to change the Constitution to allow us to have the option of this "virtual" AGM and for the future. At the same time, we propose a revision of the Constitution's membership categories and in parallel, changes to the subscriptions to encourage younger members.

Since March 2020, three stalwarts, members of both the Board and Management Committee, and led by our Vice-president, have carried on the bulk of the management tasks and responsibilities; this has covered both the day to day and the additional tasks arising from Covid and a crumbling building. There are too many priorities to enumerate here, but I will highlight the urgent need for funding for the proposed building programme and for a Manager/Curator for the Museum. I have left it to our Vice-president to write a report which I hope gives you a flavour of what has been going on behind the scenes while the Museum has been “closed”.

Finally, please do return to volunteering at Elgin Museum. We are open for business and being very safe about it. The regular email updates you have received have been wonderfully put together using digital technology. It keeps you up to date and contains such interesting topics. (And good jokes!) But to experience the real thing come back and help us.

Best wishes to you all.

Grenville Johnston, President, The Moray Society

August 2021

PS. I wonder how many of you purchased the tomato plants being sold in aid of the Museum? I paid for three. I have fed and watered them. I have eaten three tomatoes and have thirty on the way!

2. Vice-president's Report

Another year has passed, and, although we've only recently reopened to visitors, there has been a lot of work going on in the background! The Emergency Executive Group (myself, treasurer Graham Robertson, museum convenor Bill Dalgarno and Janet Trythall) has continued to meet regularly and steer the Museum through this challenging situation with the ongoing support of our very dedicated Museum Management Committee and Board.

We've continued to carefully monitor all Government and Sector guidance around the ongoing Covid-19 situation, and, as you can imagine, our over 170-year old building does not lend itself to social distancing or other Covid-19 safety measures (for example, we have no means of ventilating the building). With advice from a local H&S company (Safe Hands), we've put in place mitigation measures to ensure safe access for all staff, volunteers and now visitors. We have as an organisation made a conscious decision to put the safety of our staff/volunteers and visitors first. This does mean that although we have reopened to visitors this month, it continues to be in a more limited capacity and with mitigation measures still in place (social distancing, one-way system, booked timeslots, face coverings). We expect these measures to remain in place for the foreseeable future, to be re-assessed monthly.

Even with these changes, it has been wonderful to welcome visitors - and more volunteers - back to the Museum, and certainly all of those who've visited so far seem to have enjoyed the chance to explore our new exhibitions! If you haven't visited us yet, head over to our website to book your free ticket now – don't miss your chance to see our new *At the Water's Edge* exhibition which brings together fossils of *Elginerpeton pancheni* for the first time in over 375 million years!

We've also continued with some essential collections work since the last AGM, with Bill leading a small team of volunteers in carrying out an inventory of the Museum's collection. The group has started with the North Store, and work continues in earnest – if anyone would like to help out, please contact Bill via email (curator@elginmuseum.org.uk).

In March we appointed a new Learning & Outreach Officer, who sadly has recently left us to take up a full-time, long term post. During her time with us she added greatly to our online activities for young people (all still available on our website and YouTube Channel) which, given the Covid complications of delivering events and trails in the building, gives us time to review for if and when the situation improves.

As always, I'd remind you to explore our website, social media and YouTube channel – we now have over 150 subscribers to our channel and almost 50 videos for you to watch. Keep an eye out for a new episode of Elgin Museum: In Conversation coming out on 18th September to celebrate Moray Doors Open Day!

My thanks to everyone who has supported Elgin Museum in the last year, whether by volunteering, by watching one of our videos, or by donating. As we head towards our 180th anniversary, all of your support is more critical than ever in helping us keep going!

Claire Herbert, Vice-President August 2021

3. Notes for AGM 2021 Agenda item 9

i) The required wording for the Resolution as drafted by our solicitors, J&H Mitchell, and included in the Agenda and on the Proxy Form:

Special Resolution (Amendment of Constitution) to be passed by not less than 75% of the Ordinary Members present and voting thereon (no account therefore being taken of Ordinary Members who abstain from voting or who are absent from the meeting), that with the effect from the conclusion of the meeting the draft Articles of Association, a draft of which accompanies this Notice, be adopted as the Articles of Association of The Moray Society in substitution for and to the exclusion of the existing Articles of Association.

ii) The draft revised Articles (showing the changes in red) are included in the papers circulated for the meeting. A copy of the existing articles (The Moray Society Constitution 2018) can be found on the Museum's website. <https://elginmuseum.org.uk/policies/>

iii) If the Special Resolution is passed, our solicitor will provide us with the relevant notifications to sign for Companies House and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), and thereafter lodge these on our behalf.

Agenda 9.1 Changes allowing use of online meeting platforms for future AGMs and EGMs

Background to the need for the proposed amendments:

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and various forms of lockdown and other necessary precautions relating to meetings in person, necessitated our 2020 AGM's being held on an electronic platform. This was despite our Constitution (or Articles of Association) excluding electronic meetings. OSCR allowed emergency arrangements for 2020 but not ongoing. We have discovered many advantages in electronic meetings while managing the Museum and Society since March 2020, allowing us to "Work From Home".

In the context of the 2021 AGM, we do not have a safe space in the Museum for a gathering of members so this is not an option. Given that the predominate means of transmission of the virus and its variants is by droplet spread and that the Museum has no external ventilation, we continue to take a precautionary approach for the safety of staff, volunteers, members and visitors: facemasks, 2m distancing and restricting numbers. One consequence is that the Side Hall is repurposed as the exit of a one-way route through the Museum and enlarged shop space, for visitors.

Article 2.1 Definitions – includes definitions of the terms relating to electronic meetings (in red).

Article 6. General meetings – please see the tracked changes but the Board does not consider there are material changes proposed to the holding of meetings, other than permitting the option of an electronic format.

Article 6.1.2 The maximum time permitted between AGMs remains 1 year and 3 months. AGM 2020 was delayed from the usual April to July and again postponed for 2021, to September, because of the various and many knock-on effects of Covid on management of the Museum and The Moray Society.

Article 6.4 outlines the proposed permitted arrangements for electronic EGMs and AGMs. In future, we will have the options of a return to meeting in person in one place or continuing with electronic meetings or a combination. As most of us become more confident with electronic communications we may even increase attendance by those who cannot attend and vote in person, but proxy votes remain an option – although we are advised, not postal votes.

Article 12.6 Minutes – attendance of those present at a meeting whether in person or electronically will be recorded.

Agenda 9.2 Changes to categories of Membership

Background to the proposed changes – please see notes for Agenda item 10 Membership Report. If Agenda item 9.2 is passed then the revised membership categories will form the basis for the setting of subscriptions in Agenda item 10.

Article 5. Membership

Article 5.1.2 (f) Student membership – it is proposed that this is deleted. There are currently no members in this category.

Article 5.6.2 By the introduction of concessionary rates it is hoped to attract to Ordinary membership, younger adults in the age range 18 – 25. The actual rates are agreed annually by the members at the AGM, and the subscription amounts are not specified in the Constitution.

Janet Trythall, for The Moray Society Board, 21/8/2021

4. Notes for AGM 2021 Agenda number 10

Membership Report

Because of the restrictions of the last 18 months or so, changes in membership have been relatively few with little opportunity to recruit new members through visitors to the museum or attendees at our lectures. Unfortunately, during that time we have also lost several long-standing members who have passed away.

The current membership stands at a total of 254 with a breakdown as follows:

Ordinary memberships: 138

Family memberships: 64

Life memberships: 52

Following research and work done by Rachael Forbes, our recent Learning Officer, it was suggested by her that we change the categories of membership in order to try to attract younger members to the Society. The proposal will add a new category of Junior Member and remove the Student Member category.

Accordingly, it is proposed that the new categories will be as below:

Ordinary Members: who shall be aged 18 or over and pay an annual subscription due and shall have one vote.

Family Members: who shall be two or more persons residing at the same address and shall be obliged to pay a subscription at a rate of one and a half times that of one Ordinary Member. Each such person aged 18 or over shall have the same voting rights as an Ordinary Member and references to Ordinary Members within these Articles shall refer equally to each person aged 18 of a Family Membership.

Junior members: who shall be aged under 18 and pay any annual membership subscription due. Junior members are neither eligible to stand for election to the Board nor to vote at any Members' meeting (although they may attend any Members' meeting in a non-voting capacity).

Corporate Members: any organisation(s) which pays any annual subscription due, each of which will have one vote exercised by its Authorised Representative or Named Depute appointed in terms of Article 5.2. An Authorised Representative, whom failing Named Depute, shall have the same voting rights as an Ordinary Member and references to Ordinary Members within these Articles shall refer equally to an Authorised Representative, whom failing Named Depute, unless otherwise provided for.

Life Members: who shall be 18 or over and pay a Life Membership subscription and have the same voting rights as an Ordinary Member and references to Ordinary Members within these Articles shall refer equally to a Life member.

It is proposed that subscriptions change as below:

Subscription rates:

Ordinary Member (18 to 25 Years old):	Free
Ordinary Member over 25 years of age:	£25 (Paid by standing order)
Ordinary member over 25 years of age:	£30 (if not paid by standing order)
Family member:	£37.50 (paid by standing order)
Family member:	£45 (if not paid by standing order)
Junior member (under 18):	Free
Corporate Member:	£500 minimum contribution.
Life Member:	£500 – SINGLE PAYMENT

Given the difficult conditions we are working under at the moment, I would again urge all members to think of any friend / friends who might be interested in joining the Moray Society and helping to preserve the heritage of Moray. Application forms can be found on the Elgin Museum website. Now, more than ever, we need to help to preserve the fine collection of artefacts held in the Museum and ensure they are available for future generations to enjoy.

Bill Dalgarno, Membership Secretary, August 2021

Some Trustee Snapshots – more to follow in the next edition.

Grenville Johnston is Hon President of The Moray Society. He qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1968 and moved back to Moray to join the firm founded by his father in 1935. He became Senior Partner of W D Johnston & Carmichael in 1975 and retired in 2000. He served as a consultant until 2005. He has been involved with museums at Fort George and Aberdeen. Some years ago he attended a military curator's course. He joined the Territorial Army in 1963 and served until 1988 by which time he had reached the rank of Lt Colonel and had commanded 2nd 51st Highland Volunteers in Elgin.

He was appointed HM Lord-Lieutenant of Moray in 2005 and served until Jan 2020. He has been a member of The Moray Society for many years and has served in various capacities. He is involved with numerous charities in Moray including Morayvia Aerospace centre, Moray College Holy Trinity Church and Spynie Village Hall.

Professor Richard Laing grew up in Elgin, and retains links to the town and area through family connections. A former pupil of Elgin Academy, he moved to Aberdeen in the late 1980s to study at RGIT (now RGU).

His research concentrates on the subject of visualisation and its use within public evaluation of open space, built heritage and urban design. Skills in relation to visual environmental valuation have developed through his leading a number of significant externally funded research projects, including a number of current projects dealing with people, urban design and mobility. He has been an active participant in research concerning the evaluation of public open space, and the manner in which such studies can benefit from information visualisation (IV).

Richard is a Fellow of the RSA, a Chartered Surveyor and is a trained chairman and assessor for the RICS APC. He has represented the RICS on the European Construction Technology Platform, and is a member of EPSRC peer review college.

Dr Nick Brown is a Chartered Town Planner and a RIAS Accredited Architect in Conservation and in Sustainable Design, based in Cullen. After working in private architectural practices in Forres and Cullen, Nick worked for Moray Council as Principal Planner, then Aberdeenshire Council as a Partnership manager, followed by General Manager in a specialist construction company, before setting up his own practice in 2007.

Nick has volunteered across Moray since 1987, including the Board of Moray College, Buckie Community High School Board (chair) and Walk-Jog-Run Moray (chair). He is currently chair of community recording initiative Radio Buckie, and is an active member of his local heritage group.

He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, has been a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation since the early 1990s, and is an active member and contributor to the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group.

Janet Trythall was born in London, studied medicine at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and has followed a mainly northward trajectory moving to Covesea on the Moray coast in 1990. Here she worked as an anaesthetist latterly at Dr Gray's but also at Raigmore and elsewhere, retiring in 2007. Museum visits were part of childhood; their attraction for the opportunities they offer for acquiring knowledge outside her (former) career interests has continued.

Janet joined the Moray Society in 1990 as a member of its Civic Committee through her interest in the built environment, or the effects of buildings in the countryside. She soon met the mentors, many sadly passed now, who would foster and encourage new understanding of our local geology, fossils and human pre-history, and became a Museum volunteer.

A past Vice-president, and continuing member of the Board and Management Committee, since retiring, Janet has become more involved with the management side, along with leading Accreditation returns, coordinating policies, membership of the Geology Group and acting as Archaeology Volunteer. She has no formal museum qualifications but has attended multiple training courses and built up a much-valued range of contacts with subject specialists in the museum world.

Claire Herbert has lived in Moray since early childhood. She studied archaeology at undergraduate level at the University of Edinburgh, specialising in the ancient Near East, and at postgraduate level at Durham University, with a focus on surveying. Claire is one of two regional archaeologists at Aberdeenshire Council, also covering Moray, Angus and Aberdeen City Council areas. She has worked at Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service since 2008, having previously worked as an archaeological contractor in the Highlands, Moray & Aberdeenshire. She is a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA). Claire has an interest in the built environment, in design, and in the role of social media in promoting the historic environment.

She is a volunteer at the Museum, looking after the website, social media channels, Covid-19 H&S, and is host of Elgin Museum: In Conversation. Along with Treasurer Graham Robertson, Claire is also progressing the Museum's building redevelopment project.

Volunteering at Elgin Museum

Firstly, a HUGE thank you to the relatively small band of dedicated volunteers who manned the museum every weekend last summer and Autumn. We desperately need more volunteers for 2022, both those who have not yet returned and new ones too.

Would you be interested in joining us, at least initially for front of house duties when we reopen in the Spring?

We continue to be mindful of the Covid situation and are also aware of the limitations imposed by the building's layout. We therefore require mask wearing, hand sanitation and 2m distancing. This very rewarding work includes welcoming visitors, explaining mitigation measures regarding Covid including the one-way system round the Museum.

A working knowledge of the displays, or a willingness to learn and ability to explain to visitors how and where to access information, are essential. Looking at the displays and their interpretation is the best way to familiarise yourself – and to ask questions of more seasoned volunteers on duty with you.

The ability to serve in the shop, including the use of a (very simple) card reader and to communicate with the front desk via walkie talkie are required.

Training will be given in all the above skills with an induction to the Museum's workings. Volunteers will need to be comfortable and able to work independently after being given initial training.

Remember, it's YOUR Museum. Use it or lose it!

If you feel this volunteering role is for you, please email: curator@elginmuseum.org.uk Preferably attach an application form from the Museum's web site: <https://elginmuseum.org.uk/l/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Elgin-Museum-Volunteer-Application-Form-and-Agreement-pdf-188KB.pdf> The Museum's Volunteer Mentor will then get in touch with you.

Jenny Cook, Elgin Museum Volunteer Mentor

Volunteering in Elgin Museum during 2021 by Dave Longstaff

After being closed to the public for over 18 months Elgin Museum re-opened in August last year. The management had reorganised certain aspects of the Museum in order to be Covid compliant to make visiting, and working, in the Museum as safe as we could possibly make it. A new one-way system was put in place with volunteers manning 4 separate posts, the front door meet and greet, a main gallery host, a rear gallery host and somebody manning the shop which had been relocated to the side hall. We wore masks for our 4 hour volunteer shift but in all honesty the shift usually passed very quickly and wearing the mask didn't prove too onerous. After all it was always possible to pop out of the Museum during quiet spells to get a breath of fresh air for a few minutes. Being keen on geology I usually manned the rear gallery while on duty and my main memory of last year was when the museum would absolutely spring into life when a family with younger children entered the main gallery. I would hear excited voices slowly growing closer as the family neared the geology section and on many occasions, I'd hear "Dinosaurs, Dinosaurs" (sorry Janet!) as the little ones came down the small stairwell into the rear gallery. This was usually followed by "shhh" from mam and dad as they studied items from Elgin Cathedral or grandad mentioning he could remember sitting at a school desk similar to the one hidden around the corner.

Well, not wanting to be a spoilsport I'd usually quietly whisper in mam and dad's ears that we didn't really have dinosaurs and that our fossil collection actually consisted of much more interesting creatures. Very often after hearing one or two stories attached to our fossils the parents would show great interest in our collection while the young ones gasped at the size of Trigger (before being disappointed when told it was actually the size of a small insect) and would shout in surprise when I pointed out our dramatically lit Elginia perched on top of a cabinet looking down on them! Having a volunteer in the rear gallery definitely improves the visitor experience I'd say. Even if I was asked about archaeology I could quickly get help from any knowledgeable volunteer on duty and I think that personal touch was really appreciated by our visitors.

It's moments like this that really brought a shift to life and is what makes volunteering definitely a worthwhile experience. The fact that everyone was wearing a mask and keeping a distance away seemed to be of little consequence compared to the pleasure of allowing the public to spend an interesting hour or so in our museum.

Membership of The Moray Society – to be a friend of Elgin Museum

As you will see from the draft minutes of the 2021 AGM, our membership rates have changed. I will be in contact with all members affected shortly following this newsletter. The change will be good for many – especially those who pay by standing order - but will mean a slight increase in fees for those who pay by cheque. It would be useful and economical if those who we have to contact by mail to renew their membership could fill out a standing order form to save the expense and time that has to be spent. At the next renewal, you will be sent a standing order form – please complete it and return to the Museum.

Back in Time



The silence in the Museum, caused by COVID and our enforced closure, has been recently broken by the arrival of a chiming grandfather clock in our displays. The clock was made in Elgin nearly 200 years ago and has been gifted to the Museum by Rick Clemente, a film studio boss and his wife Debbie from Albuquerque, New Mexico. The clock was manufactured by local silversmith and clockmaker, William Stephen Ferguson in the 1830's. It is believed that Mr Clemente's grandfather, George Taylor bought the clock in 1904 at the same time as he bought the Laird's House at Dykeside, Birnie.

Mr Clemente kindly shipped the clock back from his home in New Mexico, in order to present the clock to the Museum and to bring it back to its place of birth. He and his wife were present at Elgin Museum in September of last year to hand over the clock to Grenville Johnston, our Honorary President. Thanks, by the way, are due to Laich of Moray Locksmiths, who unpacked and checked the clock and made new weights for it after its arrival from the US.

In a stroke of good chance, Grenville met, that morning, Stuart Lynch, the great, great grandson of William Ferguson and he was delighted to come along to meet Rick Clemente. Stuart was kind enough in 2017 to donate portraits of William Ferguson and his wife to the Museum.

The couple also donated an iridescent lilac-blue wedding dress made by an Elgin seamstress, Margaret French, for her wedding to Mr Clemente's great-grandfather, Alexander Taylor.

Museum Convenor

The Museum continues to be closed to the public, although Heather and Peter are now back at work with Heather catching up on accessioning and Peter having changed his hours to come in on days when work is being done in the Museum giving a thorough clean at the end of each day. **Keep watch on our website, however, as it is hoped that we will be able to open in late April or early May.**

Thanks are also due to Claire for her work in keeping the displays in our window at No 3 High Street updated. Thanks to those who donated items for use in the window.

The new window display commemorates the 70th anniversary of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II to the throne. It showcases select items from the Museum's collection, including a photograph taken in February 1952 of an event to mark the proclamation in Elgin town centre.

See the exhibition for yourself at no3 High Street, Elgin and, if you have any memories or souvenirs of the Coronation or Queen's jubilees and would like to be part of an exhibition in the Museum this summer, please contact us!



Do keep looking on our website if you can, to keep up to date with the latest happenings, including virtual visits to the inside of the Museum.

Bill Dalgarno, Convenor, Elgin Museum Management Committee

Archaeology and Elgin Museum – some updates

Those of you with email and access to the Museum's website may have seen some of this report already but that does not include all the Society's members.

1. North East Concordat

This concept for amicable acquisitions by museums in Scotland's North East has been re-raised by Aberdeen City Museums. The original Concordat introduced by Neil Curtis, Aberdeen University museums, dates back to the 1990s, arising out of a conflicting claim for the infamous Thomshill bowl. Our Acquisition and Conservation Policy, now Collections Development Policy, have made reference to the Concordat, and also to our agreement with the Falconer Museum that we would bid for Treasure Trove west of Alves. When they lost the ability to bid, as Moray Council withdrew support, we agreed with the Falconer curator

that we would bid for anything in Moray to retain it in Moray. There have been a couple of Concordat meetings in more recent memory but at last there is an active plan to redraw the guidelines. The Concordat will be confined to archaeology, and geographically to Accredited museums in Aberdeen, the City and University, Aberdeenshire and Moray.

2. Interaction with the Treasure Trove Unit (TTU), Edinburgh

There has only been one meeting of the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel (SAFAP) since the first lockdown. The only item from Moray was an assemblage from “Sunbank, Lossiemouth” TT 80/21 Medieval to Post-Medieval assemblage, ie the housing development near Kinneddar. As it is a development excavation, there is nothing to pay but we have yet to contact the excavators to discuss transfer and set eyes on the finds.



3. The Kinloss stone (TT 117.19) – another Early Medieval carved stone for our display.

Allocated to us through Treasure Trove, after being found on the beach at Kinloss, the stone spent some time being desalinated in the care of the conservator Graciela Ainsworth. The transfer here was delayed by Covid until this January when her team, Jonathan and Will, came up from Edinburgh to install the stone. They had to remove most of the existing stones to bring forward the back support to attach the nuts to the bolts but it all seemed to go very smoothly. You can see here the similarities of the chance-find fragment with our Class II Pictish stone from Kinneddar (via Ogstoun kirkyard at Gordonstoun).

The work has been funded by grants from ICON's TruVue Conservation & Exhibition Grant, and the Pictish Arts Society (PAS). John Borland, PAS and recently retired from Historic Environment Scotland, has promised a drawing. We need this to update our Museum catalogue of carved stones. The 3rd edition will be available this season.

4. Scottish Government Archaeology Strategy and Museums

Following on from reference to that expected excavation assemblage, it is worth noting this group. I have been representing Elgin Museum for a couple of years. Bruce Mann, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service, prepared an all singing and dancing document to facilitate understanding and procedures between excavators and museums for the stage “before the museum”. Unfortunately, he had to draw a halt when the tricky question of developer fees for museums' processing costs was reached. It is hoped the process will be resumed; it was looking very promising for example as a way to exclude unprocessed soil samples and inconsistent numbering systems, the bane of all museums accepting Treasure Trove.

There is also a move to obtain funding for a Scottish Archaeology Special Interest Group. This would aim to bring together anyone – not just professional archaeologists - working with archaeology in museums, as a mutual support group.

5. Iron Age (IA) mirror handle and loan from National Museums Scotland (NMS)

After consultation with Dr Fraser Hunter (Principal Curator of Prehistoric and Roman Archaeology, NMS), I have again delayed the loan. The intention was always to have this small piece of unspectacular looking metal loaned to us for display, after we agreed with NMS not to bid for it. The plan was that Fraser would arrange its conservation and interpretation, and we would have it on display in the context of other IA material and a conference or event. We are now looking at 2023 with altogether a better chance of an audience and maybe even more consolidated post- ex available on the IA site at Birnie. No-one is in a position yet to commit for 2022. Let's hope we can return to our fantastic and well-received in person conferences!

We also intend to commission a new archaeology case to make better use of the space still temporarily left to the quern stones. We have £5k burning a hole in our pocket – a donation from an American supporter of Fraser's work. Previous experience has taught us that the makers of display cases never have the misfortune to have to use them in practice. Never mind the required additional funding still to be found, we'd like dust exclusion, access without lying flat under a drop-out key bolt or the need for a purchased (or DIY) device essential for opening the case, adjustable lighting and shelves for changing displays.

6. Archaeology and the Public

Both 2020 and 2021 were in their different ways very different from 2019. No more school and family visits making use of our archaeological resources with on-site craft sessions and handling boxes. Instead, activities through social media (including interviews with archaeologists now on our Youtube channel) and virtual visits and collections information on the web site, have added new dimensions to the Museum. We intend to get the handling boxes refreshed and find ways to share them especially with schools, thanks to a donation collected at the funeral of longstanding member, Bert Laurenson. RIP.

Professor Gordon Noble, Aberdeen University, brought in staff, volunteers and students (in clean shoes) for their annual visit during the Burghead dig. Dr Chris Stewart-Moffitt paid another visit to look at our carved stone balls and also a Neolithic stone axe. There are at least weekly enquiries via the Museum email which I can now follow up even when Covid-bound in Spain. Today's is from a researcher in Cambridge pursuing the archaeological work of Sophia Dunbar, one of our Women of Moray. All more fun than worrying about the latest roof leak!

Janet Trythall, Archaeology Volunteer, 28/2/2022

Museum Assistant Report



The photograph above Ella Paul, Treasure Trove Unit (TTU) Officer, processing metal detectorist finds at Elgin Museum, November 2021.

In November, two TTU Officers visited Elgin Museum for 3+ days, their 4th day cut short due to storm warnings. They were able to examine and process a number of metal detectorist finds on the premises, whilst larger assemblages were taken to Edinburgh for further analysis. Approximately 12 boxes of

disclaimed finds were left with Elgin Museum for detectorists to collect (instead of the long journey to Edinburgh). Another two boxes were returned to Elgin Museum containing exciting TT finds that we had successfully bid for through the TT Panel 2+ years ago, but due to the Corona Virus pandemic (and the closure of NMS to staff), we were only able to take ownership of in November 2021. We now have an agreement with the TTU that an Officer will visit Elgin Museum twice a year to collect, return and process metal detectorist finds, in order to speed up the (currently very lengthy) process and provide the vast number of Moray metal detectorists with a base closer to home than Edinburgh to encourage the declaring and depositing of local finds.

What should I do if I find something?

In Scots law, the Crown can claim ownerless property. The legal term for this is "bona vacantia".

The Crown has a right to Treasure Trove (TT) and this is exercised in Scotland by the Queen's and Lord's Treasurer Remembrancer (QLTR). There is no statutory definition of Treasure Trove, but it may be described as a "portable antiquity" - and can cover virtually anything (stone, wood, metal, woven material) which has been taken out of the ground and which is thought, on the basis of its age or rarity, worth preserving for the nation.

The Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel (SAFAP) recommends to which museum the item of TT is to be allocated. SAFAP also recommends the amount of each ex-gratia payment.

If you are metal detecting, ensure you have landowner permission before going to the site. This includes public parks. It is a criminal offence to detect on scheduled sites without permission from Historic Environment Scotland.

If you think you have found something of archaeological significance in Scotland, you are obliged by law to report it to Treasure Trove:

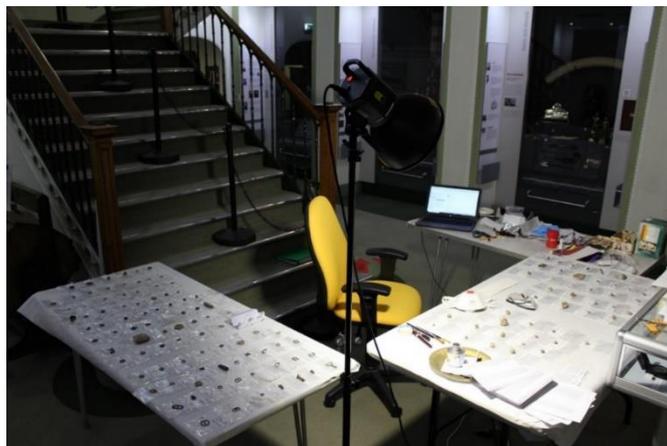
- Accurately record each findspot using a GPS device or map. National Grid Reference preferred e.g. NJ 12345 67890
- Individually bag each find and clearly label with findspot.
- Do not clean the finds or apply oils, varnishes, waxes or acidic substances.
- Report objects to the TTU: <https://treasuretrovescotland.co.uk/information/information-for-finders/> E-mail images and [reporting form](#) in the first instance.
- If you find what you believe to be human remains, contact the police.
- For potential TT found in Moray, you are encouraged to liaise with Elgin Museum.

In situ finds, such as hoards, may contain valuable additional archaeological information. In this event:

- Leave objects in the ground and cover over.
- Take a GPS/10-figure grid reference or mark on a map the location.
- Contact TTU or your local authority archaeologist immediately. In Moray, this is ACAS: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/contact-us/aberdeenshire-council-archaeology-service/>

I have been concentrating on the labelling of artefacts during the winter period, set up in the main gallery. Whilst working from home I processed a good deal of the documentation side of accessioning artefacts; it was not until December 2021 that I could begin the physical labelling with a Museum accession number, because the majority of the items I have been labelling have been Treasure Trove acquisitions.

There have been some particularly noteworthy finds acquired as Treasure Trove, from the fields surrounding Spynie Palace. Detecting on the Palace site itself is not permitted as it is a scheduled monument under the jurisdiction of Historic Environment Scotland but Metal Detectorist Alistair McPherson has permission from the farmer and landowner to detect on the surrounding fields. The vast number of finds he has located, accurately recorded and reported, has led to an increased knowledge of activity in and around Spynie Palace. I hope you will visit the Museum when we re-open to see these finds for yourself. *[More information to follow in the next edition of the Newsletter].*



This week I am working on a recently donated collection of the Misses Park sisters of Bishopmill. One of the items donated includes an album of autographs, illustrations and poems created by soldiers wounded in France during World War I and recovering at Nursery Park, Woodside Hospital, Glasgow. Some of the content such as the poems, are harrowing and heart wrenching, some poignant and expressing pride in their regiments. Others contributed pastoral and other scenes, comical caricatures and words of gratitude for their Red Cross Nurses.

The three Misses Park Sisters, Sarah Jane, Helen and Ann are all believed to have nursed during World War I. Sarah Jane was appointed a Matron at Forres Fever Hospital as early as October 1911, before being assigned elsewhere to help treat the war wounded in the central belt, and possibly in France itself – having been awarded the Territorial Force Nursing Service Medal in 1917 and the 1914-1919 Victory Medal. Along with the album are a selection of cap badges and buttons gifted to the Nurses by wounded soldiers they were treating and a Red Cross Nurse finger ring. Later, one of the Park sisters went on to run the Post Office at Bishopmill and following the death of all three Sisters, their collection of memories was gifted to an interested friend by the executor.

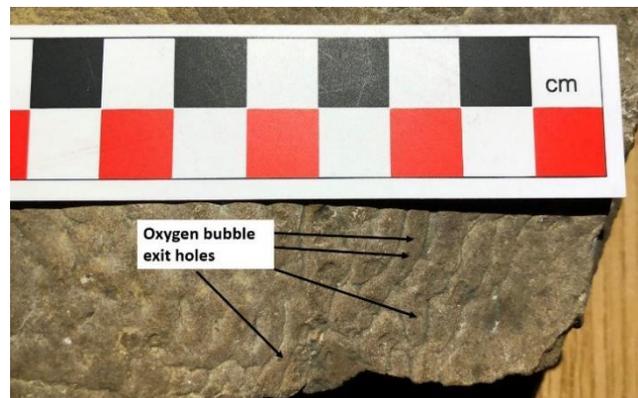
Newly discovered features on an old Elgin Museum geology specimen

In January, Dave Longstaff from the Geology Group hosted a visit to the Museum by Dr Alex Brasier, sedimentologist and Aberdeen University Senior Lecturer, and student Kirsten Flett. Kirsten is about to start her dissertation on the mineralogy of fossil reptile trackways from Moray.

In addition to footprint specimens, Dave showed Alex a small slab of sandstone donated to the Museum by William Taylor, JP, a Lhanbryde-based chemist and amateur palaeontologist. Taylor made several important discoveries of Devonian fossil fishes and Triassic reptile remains, making donations to the Natural History Museum, National Museums Scotland, as well as to Elgin Museum. Two species of fish and the reptile *Scleromochlus* bear the name *taylori* in their nomenclature as evidence of his scientific contributions. The Elgin Museum record card for this specimen, ELGNM 1978.1050, contains very little information except to say it was a ripple marked slab from the late Triassic Lossiemouth Sandstone Formation. Taylor collected in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but the find is only dateable as before his death in 2021.

Dave suspected that the slab showed a 230-million-year-old fossilised algal mat. Microbial mats are the earliest forms of life for which there is good fossil evidence and first evolved ~3.5 billion years ago. These mats are composed of blue-green cyanobacteria and were the first organisms to photosynthesise, producing oxygen which gradually accumulated in the atmosphere around 2.7 billion years ago. Modern algal mats, and plants of course, still contribute oxygen to the air we breathe.

Alex was able to confirm that the slab was indeed covered in fossilised algal mat. Almost immediately, he was able to point out minute holes on the surface of the mat, showing where bubbles of oxygen gas had been released. These exit holes are a feature that only a specialist would have known to look for. Reports in earlier newsletters have detailed how modern CT scanning techniques are revealing new information about the Triassic reptiles, but this shows how additional details can still come courtesy of an expert using only his naked eyes!



Moray Society Prize Draw

The Prize Draw has been running since April 2000 and has raised over £8000 for Elgin Museum. This helps with the day to day running costs and the Society is very grateful for this income.

Organisation of the Draw

Draw tickets are strictly limited to Moray Society members.

Income from the sale of tickets is paid directly into the Moray Society Prize Draw account.

All proceeds are used for the exclusive benefit of the Moray Society.

Tickets are £10 each per annum and are valid for 4 draws.

Draws are held quarterly with prizes of £25, £15 and £10 respectively for the first 3 numbers drawn, in sequence, at each draw.

These prizes are based on an income of £1000 in tickets sold ie. 100 tickets.

Many members have annual standing orders with their banks, which greatly reduces our costs. Standing orders can only be amended or cancelled by the persons concerned.

Mandates for standing orders are available from the Museum, or myself, on request. Cash, or cheques made payable to the Moray Society Prize Draw, are also accepted.

There is no limit imposed by the Society on the number of tickets that may be held by individual members.

Please contact me at the museum for queries about the draw or for application forms.

Mary Shand (Prize Draw Organiser)

Museum Tel. No. 01343 543675

Email curator@elginmuseum.org.uk

Moray Society Prize Draw

Please allocate me tickets in the Moray Society Prize Draw @ £10 each.

*I enclose my payment of £

*Please forward me a standing order mandate

*Delete as appropriate

Name

Address

Post Code Email address



We're delighted to share with you our "virtual" *Friends of Elgin Museum Art Exhibition 2022!*

This year we have another wonderful selection of arts & crafts created by our very talented Museum volunteers, staff and Moray Society members for you to enjoy. The exhibition features paintings, photographs, art cards, jewellery, glass work, block prints...and more!

Visit the exhibition on our website (<https://elginmuseum.org.uk/online-art-exhibition/>) and explore at your leisure. If anything catches your eye, please do get in touch as all items are for sale, with monies raised helping to secure the future of Elgin Museum. Further information on how to purchase items can be found on the website.

We hope you enjoy the exhibition – and we would encourage you to share details of the exhibition with friends and family!



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 SC017546