

Vice President's Report



I'm pleased to say we've had an excellent season already this year, and I would encourage you all to visit (and bring a friend!) if you've not already done so – the Museum is open to visitors Wednesdays – Sundays, 1pm – 4pm. This wouldn't be possible without our dedicated band of Volunteers, and I would take this opportunity to extend a vote of thanks for their hard work and enthusiasm. One look at our Visitors' Book will tell you what a positive impact our Volunteers have on our visitors! If you're not already a Volunteer, why not consider signing up? More information can be found on our website, or you can email us at curator@elginmuseum.org.uk to find out how to apply.

Our Volunteers have been working with local schools and other community groups again this year, with more events planned for later in the year. Our new Museum Convenor, Dr Alison Wright, has been leading on this (in the absence of a Learning & Outreach Officer), so our thanks go to Alison and her team of Outreach Volunteers for delivering so many events and activities. Alison also oversaw a wonderful art challenge in collaboration with Art Fund, *The Wild Escape @ Elgin Museum*. Working with local schools and other youth groups, participants were encouraged to create and imagined creature to release into the wild, taking inspiration from the Museum collections. The results of which can be seen in the Upper Gallery of the Museum – and even made it into an online news article by The Guardian!

We also have an excellent programme of "in-person" lectures coming up, beginning in August with a talk by Museum Volunteer Dave Longstaff about the geology of the Moray coastline. More info can be found elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Lastly, this year marks our 180th anniversary as a Museum, having welcomed the first visitors to the Museum on 25th October 1843. We'll be marking this momentous occasion with a celebration (details to follow!) and some wonderful commemorative souvenirs, as part of our ongoing fundraising efforts to help ensure the Museum can stay open long into the future – perhaps for another 180 years!

Claire Herbert, Vice President

Convenor's Report

Many of you will have noticed some changes in the organisation over the last few months: Bill Dalgarno has stood down as Convenor of the Museum Management Committee and Dr Alison Wright appointed to the role. Bill remains on EMCC as Convenor of the Collections Management Group and is currently progressing the Inventory, assisted by a team of volunteers. Alison is also Co-ordinator of the Geology Group and has been a volunteer since 2015.

David Bennett has taken on the role of Buildings Volunteer and has been pivotal in ensuring that our safety documentation is up to date, arranging visits by the police, fire brigade, and security and electrical contractors. The fabric of the building continues to be a concern and we are working with architects LDN and Historic Environment Scotland to expedite plans for a major overhaul of the Museum and No. 3. This will require planning consent which, once secured, will also allow us to apply for grants to support the necessary work.



Alison with David Bennett, our new Buildings Volunteer

We have had a number of new volunteers this year and old and new faces have joined the sub-committees, bolstering the Activities Committee and supporting a Learning and Outreach Programme. We are delighted that a full programme of Winter Lectures will take place over the coming months and hope to see many of you at the talks.

Peter Manson, our part-time janitor and Saturday custodian, has stepped down after 12 years in the role to take up full-time employment at Gordonstoun. Peter was thanked for his efforts during the time he spent with us, receiving a bottle of whisky as a small token our appreciation. Cleaning of the galleries is currently being undertaken by a local commercial company.



Bill Dalgarno wishing Peter well on his last day in the Museum

Our Meet & Greet team have been doing a sterling job since we opened for the season in April. Although our hours are still more restricted than pre-Covid, opening Wednesday-Sundays is allowing Heather, our Museum Assistant, and the Inventory team to work uninterrupted on Mondays and Tuesdays, addressing both the backlog of items to be accessioned and the need for appropriate Location and Movement control of objects in the collections. Jo Houlden has been appointed as our Seasonal Weekend Visitor Experience Steward to give professional support during the weekends that we are open to the public. Jo joins us with a wealth of customer service experience, including time spent on board the QE2 and with Marks & Spencer.

Special mention needs to be made of the MBE received by Mary Byatt in the King's Birthday Honours in June this year for 'services to Education, to the Arts and to Charity in Moray'. Mary has volunteered and supported the work of the Museum over many years and her award is justly deserved.

Sadly, Davie Milne, another long-serving member of the Society, died earlier this year. Davie was 'a weel-kent' face around the Museum, and his photograph appears in the displays helping to excavate the Roseisle Cist and bringing the log-boat into the Museum. He also wired-up Teddy, allowing him to wave a cheerful thank you to visitors adding coins to the donation box in the Main Gallery.



Davie Milne helping to identify some artefacts (left) and with the Museum's Souter engine which Davie succeeded in running.

Lastly, we regret, also, to hear of the recent death of a great friend of the Museum – May McGarrie, who died on 12th August in Dr Gray's Hospital. May was an Honoray Member of the Moray Society, having spent many years as custodian of the Museum.

Obituary



We mourn the passing of one of our long serving members, Professor Sir James Dunbar-Nasmith, who has died aged 96. As well as being a renowned architect and restorer of historic buildings, he was a great friend to Moray, having practised in Forres and lived in Findhorn for many years. Sir James was celebrated for his contributions to Edinburgh International Festival, Scottish Civic Trust, The Royal Incorporation of Scottish Architects and the Theatres Trust. He was appointed CBE in 1976 for services to architecture and was Knighted in 1996.

Locally, he was an active trustee of Kinloss Abbey Trust and showed great interest in all local heritage. He remained active until very recently. A service to celebrate his life was held in Edinburgh at the end of June.

Visit to Elgin Biblical Garden



Moray Society members and Museum Volunteers were made very welcome by the Trustees and Volunteers of the Biblical Gardens in Elgin on Wednesday 26th July. After a somewhat temperamental July, we were treated to a lovely sunny summer's evening as we explored the beautiful gardens. Trustees Jules and John gave a wonderful tour, explaining the history of the gardens and the hard work that goes into their ongoing upkeep. The group works closely with UHI Moray as well as other community groups and have created a magnificent floral display. We were even treated to tea and cakes! The Friends of the Biblical Gardens are always happy to welcome new volunteers or supporters, and if you would like to find out more please visit their website: <https://biblicalgardenelgin.co.uk/>
The gardens are open to the public between May and September and entry is free.

Upcoming events

We're delighted to confirm the return of our Winter Lecture Series, which this year begins in August! Although there is no event listed in October 2023 or February 2024, we do expect to hold talks or events – information will be circulated in due course. We will also be open for Moray's Doors Open Days, on 23rd September 2023, with bookable store tours, and we'll also be running some family-friendly workshops in October – again, information on when/where/how to book will be shared.

As of 2023, all Moray Society members can attend all of our lectures or free as part of their membership, but (free) tickets must be booked in advance via our online ticketing website – go to the "What's On" page of our website and follow the link to book:
<https://elginmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/>

Friday 25th August 2023, 7pm

The Geology of the Moray Coastline from Burghead to Lossiemouth
Dave Longstaff

Friday 29th September 2023, 7pm

10,000 years around Loch Spynie: people in a changing coastal environment
Michael Stratigos

Friday 24th November 2023, 7pm

Are We Nearly There Yet? The history of Scottish Milestones
Bruce Keith

Wednesday 6th December 2023, 7pm

Barmkins, Bottles, Casks and Castles: Archaeological Research at the National Trust for Scotland.
Dr Daniel Rhodes

Friday 12th January 2024, 7pm

A New Perspective on the North of Scotland in the Century before Culloden: The Life-Writing of Rev James Fraser (1634-1709), the "Curious Cleric"
Prof. David Worthington

Friday 22nd March 2024, 7pm

Recent Archaeological Investigations
Prof. Gordon Noble

Elgin Museum Geology Group summer report 2023

After a hectic Spring, the Geology Group has, by our standards, had a relatively quiet Summer but we've continued to host visits and to take part in activities.

One of the delights of volunteering is never knowing what objects visitors might bring in for identification. In May, we were handed a very heavy circular object, an iron concretion, which contained 'something' interesting, possibly a cross-section through a fossilised ammonite, although it was difficult to be sure. Questions asked on fossil forums, and communication with Scarborough Museum, the Museum of Wales, and with the Geological Curator's Group confirmed our tentative identification. The ammonite is likely to be Late Jurassic or Early Cretaceous and, after death, acted as a nucleus around which siderite, an iron mineral, was deposited, protecting the ammonite as the sediments were compressed. Once the rock was eroded, millions of years later, it's probable that the concretion was transported from the western side of the Moray Firth by ice action, subsequently being deposited in the Buckie area. As the find has no clear provenance, it's been returned to the owner, especially as the specimen is far too heavy for a handling box! Interestingly, we could see part of the internal chamber of the animal, known as a 'cat's paw' because the voids are normally filled with later mineralisation creating the impression of a paw print. The siderite coating meant that fluids couldn't reach the chambers, leaving them open – every day's a school day!



'Cats Paw': internal chamber of fossilised ammonite (top left of image)

On 19th June, Dave assisted Dr John Barratt in leading a Moray Walking Festival walk from Duffus to Hopeman to Burghead to Inverugie and back to Duffus, a very long day indeed! John is an expert on the local history of the area and Dave was able to explain the geological features encountered along the coast: the group enjoyed a memorable, if tiring, day.



Dave and John Barratt by Clashach Quarry pointing at evidence of quarrying: Hopeman

On 25th June, Alison and Dave hosted a group of MSc students from the University of Edinburgh led by Drs Mark Wilkinson and Stuart Gilfillan. The students had been looking at sedimentary rocks around the Moray Firth as onshore analogues for offshore deposits and assessing their potential for carbon capture and storage.

These informal visits, usually at the start or end of their week-long excursion, are greatly enjoyed by both the students and their leaders and allows the EMGG to keep in touch with the academic community.



University of Edinburgh MSc students being shown the geology exhibits

A new edition of the Scottish Fossil Code, a guide to responsible fossil collecting, has been in preparation for 2-3 years, and has involved volunteers as well as professional palaeontologists. Dave has been part of the team examining this, with additional help from other members of the EMGG. The new code is almost ready for publication: Elgin Museum is one of the institutions acknowledged, helping to keep the Museum's name at the forefront of paleontological activity.

Finally, we hope to see Hady George's paper published later this summer: Hady inspected our collection in May 2022 when he was an MSc student at the University of Edinburgh. He has been examining high resolution scans of the skull of *Gordonia traquairi*, taken from the mould of the block found in Clashach Quarry in 1995. This study should provide important new information and, once again, shows that our Recognised fossil collection remains relevant to scientific study.

The Wild Escape @ Elgin Museum

Part of the Museums Recovery grant that we received from Museums Galleries Scotland for Education and Outreach activities was used to fund The Wild Escape @ Elgin Museum. The Wild Escape is a UK Art Fund project that aims to engage with every primary school pupil aged 7-11 and is 'a major creative project for museums and schools inspired by the wildlife found in museum and gallery collections'. To date, over 530 organisations across the UK have taken part.

We ran an art competition entitled *Postcard to Nature* and invited the primary schools to view our Natural History collection online and to then draw a picture of their favourite animal on a postcard. On the back, we asked them to write a message imagining how the animal would feel to be back in the natural environment. This was supported by Art Fund resources showing, for example, how the wider project linked to the (Scottish) school curriculum. The winning entry was submitted by Ellie Denoon, a pupil at Greenwards Primary School, and she was awarded the Smart Trophy at the end of term. Her entry was also selected by the ArtFund to promote the project and subsequently appeared in *The Guardian* online. The postcards received are currently on display in the Museum, mounted on a mural of an imagined Moray landscape, created by Claire Herbert.



The winning entry in our *Postcard to Nature* competition. Ellie's drawing was one of the images selected by the Art Fund to promote Earth Day on 22nd April and appeared in *The Guardian* online:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/gallery/2023/apr/21/the-wild-escape-on-earth-day-in-pictures>

Eighty-eight pupils aged 7-11 took part in 3 Wild Escape workshops, with a similar number of younger pupils working on linked activities. Footprints created during the workshops were used to make a promotional video to celebrate Earth Day on 22nd April which was launched on our social media channels that day, receiving nearly 300 views on Instagram. You can also see the fun clip on the Museum's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJn8gkzt-ic>

The wider grant funding allowed us to have direct contact with more than a quarter of Moray's primary schools and, with the support of sessional staff, we delivered 17 activity sessions for 18 primary school classes from 9 schools between Dec 2022 and Mar 2023, involving over 380 children and more than 50 adults. None of this would have been possible, though, without the additional and considerable support of our volunteers – thank you to everyone in the Learning & Outreach team!

Alison Wright

Become a Friend of Elgin Museum

Join the Moray Society



If you are not already a member of the Moray Society or you are a member and know someone who might be interested in keeping alive the heritage of Elgin and Moray, could we suggest that you / they come and join us. We have a special offer for the first year of membership and offer the following membership benefits:

- Free admission to Moray Society talks and events.
- A regular newsletter.
- Option to join the Moray Society Prize Draw.
- Access to the Museum's research opportunities.

Subscriptions:

Junior member (under 18): FREE

Young Adult (18 – 25): FREE

Adult (over 25): £15 for year 1, then £25 annually, by standing order.
£30 annually if not paid by standing order

Family (2 adults and children): £25 for year 1, then £37.50 annually, by standing order.
£45 annually if not paid by standing order

Corporate Member: £500 minimum contribution.

Life Member: £500 – SINGLE PAYMENT

Application forms can be found on the Elgin Museum website or contact the Membership Secretary at Elgin Museum.

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

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. 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 i.e. 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



Friday 25th August 2023 at 7pm

Evening Talk

The Moray Coast from Burghead to Lossiemouth



Museum volunteer, Dave Longstaff shares tales of his explorations of the Moray coastline from Burghead to Lossiemouth. Come and discover some hidden heritage from quarries and caves to ancient reptile footprints and much more.

Booking essential: www.elginmuseum.org.uk/whats-on

“Condolence”

The Museum has recently been gifted a large number of books and Christmas numbers by the Northern Scot. Among them is a book of poems by Harry I Simpson of Elgin which was published by the Northern Scot. This poem, “Condolence” caught my eye regarding the refusal of Moray Golf Club in 1916 and 1924 to grant membership of the Club to J Ramsay MacDonald.

Dear Ramsay MacDonald
Nae doot ye’ll aloo
You’re feeling gey sma’
And doon in the moo
Since the voice o’ the mighty –
Staunch patriots a’ –
Has again put a ban
On yer game at the ba’

In motors they cam’
Ay, a hunner or mair –
The flooers o’ the Coonty
Were a’ gethert there
Determined to stan’
By their motion or fa’
In trying to stop
Your wee game at the ba’

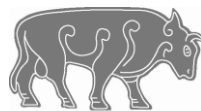
Some gallants among them –
Their names dinna speir
But during the war
They kept well tae the rear-
Noo showed they had mettle,
An led the attack -
An Ramsay, puir chief
You’re nae getting’ back

Ye may handle wi’ skill
The sma’ things o’ the State
Ye may strive tae bring peace
Amang nations wha hate;
Hob-nob wi’ your King
An’ play ither high jinks
But you’ll nae play at gouf
On yer ain Lossie Links

There the saut o’ the earth
Play a dignified game;
Being men o’ great minds
They a’ think the same.
But ye dared to haud views
On what’s richt an’ wrang
Quite different frae theirs,
So – you’ll jist hae tae gang.

Na, na you’re nae fit
To breathe the same air
Wi sodgers like Noad*
Wha wad do an’ wad dare.
Dire, dire is your fate,
An dark your outlook –
Noo there’s only Spey Bay
An’ a game wi’ the Duke.

* *Mr Noad moved the expulsion motion*



THE MORAY
SOCIETY

ELGIN
MUSEUM

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