

From our President...

Hi everyone, and welcome to our Summer Newsletter.

Hopefully, you will find our latest update to be interesting and informative.

As most of you will know, we are now deeply into a phase where we are concerned about the continued ingress of water affecting both the building and the collection, and we are actively trying to find long-term solution to this worrying issue.

It is, indeed, a struggle to keep the Museum opening during such conditions, so we are grateful for all the effort being put in by the volunteers to keep the Museum functioning safely. We thank them, as well as you the members, for your patience and understanding whilst we journey through an unknown period of limited opening.

On a highly positive note, though, we have been extremely successful with our recent funding bids and - thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund - are now, at least, able to commence with our ambitions towards a modernised Museum through the appointments of an Inventory Manager and a part-time Redevelopment Project Manager.

We have also, amongst tight national competition, been awarded funding to conserve the Spey Coracle, which reflects both the status of the artefact and the quality of the bid (see below for more details of these awards).

We have continued to foster links with Moray Council and the development team for renovating Grant Lodge and are succeeding in putting the Museum firmly 'on the radar' of the emerging Cultural Quarter for Elgin. We, of course, wish the proposals for Grant Lodge all the best towards realisation and look forward to a long-term future relationship to mutual advantage with this planned 'gateway building to Elgin and Moray's heritage'.

Also exciting is our forthcoming 'Breaking new ground' conference at UHI Moray in September, which will have an array of eminent speakers celebrating some of the key recent archaeological finds in our area. This event should be of interest to many and deserves a large turnout – see details below and on our website.

On a sadder note, having said goodbye to staff member Heather Townsend earlier this year, we now acknowledge the departure of our Treasurer Graham Robertson, who has given many years of assiduous service to the role. We wish him well with his new life in north England and thank him greatly for responsibly agreeing to fulfil a handover role with his successor – appointment to be confirmed shortly.

Staying on the topic of people who volunteer to help with the governance of the Society and Museum, it should be noted that we currently have a couple of spaces available for new Trustees. If you fancy such a role, or know of someone else who

might, please do get in touch with us on how to apply. We would particularly welcome someone on the Board who can represent the younger generation.

Finally, turning Kitchener's slogan on its head, 'What more could we do for YOU?' That is, if we can do anything to make your membership more meaningful and valued, please don't hold any idea back and keep it to yourself; do let us know.

Meantime, enjoy the newsletter.

Nick



Breaking New Ground: Sharing archaeological discoveries from Moray
Elgin Museum Archaeology Conference 13th September 2025

Hear from a wide range of speakers covering all aspects of archaeological investigation carried out in Moray in recent years, from academic research projects to developer-funded commercial projects, as well as discussion about public benefit opportunities in archaeology – from community excavations, through to school involvement and what happens to all the finds that are excavated.

TICKETS CAN BE BOOKED ONLINE VIA OUR [TICKETING PLATFORM](#):

[***IN PERSON***](#) (price includes refreshments during breaks and lunch)

Students £15.00 // Moray Society Members £22.50 // Adults £30

[***ONLINE ONLY***](#)

Students £5 // Moray Society Members £7.50 // Adults £12.50

[Visit our online booking page to book your place – spaces are limited, so book now!](#)

Why not consider becoming a Moray Society member and enjoy discounted entry to the conference? [Find out more on our website.](#)

Full list of conference chairs and speakers:

Session Chairs:

Martin Cook, AOC Archaeology Group; Nick Brown, conservation architect; Dr Fraser Hunter, National Museums Scotland

Speakers:

Derek Alexander, NTS: *Pioneering Spirit – excavating the old distillery site at Upper Drumin, Glenlivet*

Michael Stratigos, Interdisciplinary Research Fellow/Lecturer Archaeology, University of Aberdeen: *Loch Spynie Through Time*

Gordon Noble, Professor of Archaeology, University of Aberdeen: *The Citadel Project: Rescue and Research: Excavations at Burghead, Moray*

Professor Ian Armit, University of York and Dr Lindsey Büster, University of York/Canterbury Christ Church University: *Close Encounters with the dead at the Covesea Caves*

Dr Fraser Hunter, NMS: *Metalwork in Moray: Celtic art, Roman connections*

Mary Peteranna, AOC Archaeology Group: *Iron Age settlement and industry at Knockomie, Grantown Rd, Forres*

Ana Rodrigues and Dr Clive Waddington, Archaeological Research Services Ltd: *Settlement and Metal Production in the Iron Age: Scotland's Largest Iron-Producing Site at Lochinver Quarry in the Context of the Agricola Invasion*

Yvonne Robertson, AOC Archaeology Group: *Prehistoric Portgordon and the excavation of a timber 'hall' in Moray*

Martin Cook, AOC Archaeology Group and Janet Trythall, Elgin Museum: *Why are we digging? The public benefits of excavation and research in Scotland*

Book your tickets at www.bit.ly/EMConference2025

SUMMER OPENING

We are delighted to confirm our summer opening for 2025!

Unfortunately, because of ongoing problems with our 182 year old building, we can only open in a limited capacity this summer. Despite this, our Volunteers are excited to welcome you back to the Museum, and we hope you will make time to visit!

Our first open weekend was 18th – 20th July, when we had over 200 visitors including from as far afield as Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada! If you missed our first weekends, we'll be open again in August, 1pm - 4pm (last entry 3.30pm) on the following dates:

- 15th, 16th, 17th August
- 22nd, 23rd, 24th August

Entry is FREE! Donations are welcomed.

Please check the website before visiting in case of last minute cancellation!

What will be on display?

As well as our permanent displays, in the People Place gallery and the Rear Gallery, you'll be able to see the recently conserved 18th Century embroidered map of the world. On display for the first time, the replica of the recently conserved 1853 John Martin geology map. A newly acquired silver tea set will be on display (see below for more information) and in the rear gallery, never before seen archaeological artefacts excavated in 2004 from what is now the site of Marks & Spencer. Access to the Mezzanine gallery will, however, not be possible.

Do I need to book?

No pre-booking is required, but we recommend that you check the website before visiting in case of last minute cancellation.

What if can't make those dates?

Visiting outside of the above dates is possible, by appointment and subject to Volunteer availability. We require a minimum of 3 days' notice to accommodate visits by appointment. Please contact us by email to arrange a visit.

We look forward to seeing you over the summer!



Elgin Museum Fundraising Quiz Night

Time to get those thinking caps on and test your general knowledge whilst helping to support Scotland's oldest community-run museum!

15 August 2025 6.30pm - 10pm (Doors open 6.15pm, quiz starts at 6.30pm sharp)

PLEASE NOTE: the quiz will be held at the Ex-Servicemens Club, 9 High Street, Elgin

Join us at our fundraising quiz for a fun night that will test your general (and local) knowledge! Alongside the quiz, we'll also have a raffle. Snacks will be provided, and drinks can be purchased at the venue.

Suitable for over-16s only. Come on your own or bring a group of friends & family!

Book your tickets online now: Adults £5, Moray Society members £4 – got to the “What’s On” page on our website or www.bit.ly/ElginMuseumQuiz

All proceeds go towards our Building Redevelopment project to help us enhance and improve Elgin Museum and make it a museum fit for the future.

Update on Peru

At an EGM on 20th May 2024, by a vote of over 75% of those present, the membership agreed to deaccession from the Museum collections the Peruvian mummified young woman, with a view to her return to Peru. While our door is still open to Peruvian authorities to continue discussions, their engagement has gone quiet. Elgin Museum is a member of the Museums Galleries Scotland Restitution and Repatriation Group which has been charged by the Scottish Government to address related issues in the museum sector. One of the members with considerable experience in the subject, and a recently retired Curator at Glasgow Museums, has offered to visit Elgin and advise us on a way forward. We have gratefully accepted this offer and will also continue to work with Neil Curtis, Aberdeen University, now Chair of the MGS group.

Archaeology Update

Elgin Museum Archaeology Conference, Saturday 13th September 2025

Not long now to the conference so make sure you have booked either to attend in person (The Alexander Graham Bell Centre, Moray College, UHI) or on-line. [Breaking New Ground: sharing archaeological discoveries from Moray - Elgin Museum](#)

The programme includes a roundup of academic archaeologists: Fraser Hunter (an Iron Age metal work overview), Ian Armit and Lindsey Büster (Covesea Caves), Gordon Noble (Burghead) Michael Stratigos (Loch Spynie), Dan Rhodes, NTS (early Glenlivet and whisky); and commercial archaeologists working on development sites: from AOC, Martin Cook (overview), Yvonne Robertson (Prehistoric Portgordon), Mary Peteranna, (Grantown Road, Forres) and Ana Rodrigues and Clive Waddington, ARS Ltd, (Lochinver Quarry). We haven't continued with the idea of Sunday visits, trying to prioritise from the multitude of our other current challenges!

Treasure Trove

We still await positive outcomes from the King's and Lord's Treasurer's Remembrancer (KLTR)'s Review and Report. The law relating to Treasure Trove in Scotland may be like democracy, the worst form of government except for all those other forms that been tried before. It *is* a system accessible to those who want to detect responsibly and declare their finds to an independent arbiter representing Scotland. Of course, it needs greater investment and resource.

We are pleased that in March we were able to host another 'Finders' Drop-in session', with two of their staff, Moray representative, George Prew and numismatist, Carl Savage. This gives some encouragement and support especially to detectorists, who welcome the opportunity for interaction with specialists to discuss their finds.

The Scottish Archaeology in Museums Strategy's 'Before the Museum' project has made some progress with the much-needed reforms to the process between excavation and arrival of material and archive on a museum's doorstep - material needs to be ready for display or storage, especially for the growing number of even Accredited museums that don't have specialist curatorial staff. However, as there are cost implications, there is still not agreement by all parties.

In consultation with our Collections Management Group and Treasurer, we continue to bid for Moray items listed for SAFAP meetings that meet our Collections Development Policy. Commercial i.e. development excavation assemblages attract no finders' fee but for the more usual 'chance finds' we are grateful for the 50% contribution from the National Fund for Acquisitions. Currently, a Late bronze Age assemblage (TT 30/24), called rather grandly the Ballindalloch hoard, is still on loan to NMS for non-destructive research. We look forward to being able to display this with interpretation augmented by their findings, using techniques to which we would otherwise not have access.

We have had to make a few changes to displays in advance of emptying the Museum for the proposed building works, including the Birnie display. This may seem a bit ahead of ourselves, but arranging return of loans is not the work of a

moment, especially when liaising with NMS. It was good to see Jim Wilson and Craig Angus again, Assistant Curators who have been regular visitors over the years refreshing the cabinet.

To refill the cabinet, Claire has resurrected finds from the 2004 Excavations at 213-225 High Street, Elgin (Marks & Spencer site), dating from 12th – 15th Century.

[2025-07-10-MandS-EXCAVATION-CASE-NOTES.pdf](#)

The assemblage would have been accepted into the Museum as Treasure Trove but has never been on display previously. We hope that resources can be found for long-term conservation.

Janet Trythall, Archaeology Volunteer

Elgin Museum Geology Group report (July 2025)



Just before Christmas 2024 BGS building stone geologist Luis Albornoz-Para visited the museum to study and photograph the late Sinclair Ross's quarry rock sample collection. This collection comprises around 40 samples from quarries in the Elgin region and is recognised as being of some importance when identifying the provenance of local building stones. Luis's photographs are now on the British Geological Survey website for anyone to study.

Left: Part of the Sinclair Ross Elgin Museum quarry stone collection.

Visitors to the museum to see our geology and palaeontology collections

Early this year the geology group were honoured to host Prof John Diemer and his group from the University of North Carolina which included a museum visit then a short outing to Rosebrae Quarry. Being a sedimentologist, John was very keen to see the Old Red Sandstone/Permian unconformity at Rosebrae Quarry and we were delighted to oblige!



Prof John Diemer and group in museum side hall and in Rosebrae Quarry.

More recently Prof Mark Wilkinson and a group of MSc geology students from the University of Edinburgh visited the museum to see our collections and take a break from travelling from Helmsdale to Edinburgh. As always these brief visits are welcomed by the students who get to see the rocks and fossils from 'our side' of the Moray Firth after they've been studying the geology on the Sutherland coastline.

Moray Walking Festival field trips and talks.

Dave, helped by Alison, led 2 geology walks for this year's Moray Walking Festival, A Hopeman to Clashach and a Quarrywood walk. Both walks went very well with a very engaged audience, decent weather always helps, and it seems likely we'll be repeating the events next year. Dave also gave his talk 'Hopeman to Lossiemouth' to a Nairn U3A group earlier in the summer, 70 members turned out which isn't bad for a geology talk!

The Elgin Reptiles book

The Elgin Reptiles book which the EMGG produced in 2021 has now sold out but the group will be revising and updating the publication over the next few months. Recent work by scientists Dr Davide Foffa and Hady George has improved our knowledge of some of our Triassic creatures and the book will incorporate the latest findings.

Oops!

The geology group are always open to answering enquiries from the public and one such example occurred very recently.

A person, known to the group, had purchased, at a considerable sum, a fossil fish at an auction on the premise it was a fossil found in the Elgin area in the 19 century and would be from the Devonian period about 350 million years ago.

He brought it into the museum asking if we could identify the specimen and if it was thought important, he was willing to donate the fossil for our collection.

The Moray Society: Company No 106529 Charity No 017546

We sent photographs to our fossil fish advisor, Bob Davidson MBE, for identification and instead of a Devonian fossil fish from Elgin the specimen is actually a Cretaceous (66-150 million years ago) specimen from Brazil!

On hearing this news our eager enquirer replied with 'Oh well, I'll stick to minerals now instead!'

Appeal to Members

We have several fundraising events coming up in the next few months and would be delighted if members were able to donate some raffle prizes. Please only donate items that you would be glad to receive as a raffle prize! To donate please contact Claire Herbert by email at curator@elginmuseum.org.uk or pop in on one of the weekends we are open. Many thanks in anticipation.



Museum display at Elgin Library

Thanks are due to volunteers Stewart Halkett, Dave Longstaff and Sheila Henderson for their contribution in putting together a case of artefacts on display in the foyer of Elgin Library. It is good that we are able to keep a presence in the town, given our problems re opening and also the demise of our presence in the High Street shopping centre. Above are photographs of their latest case.



The National Lottery Heritage Fund Small Grant: Laying the Groundwork for Elgin Museum's Future

We are pleased to announce that we have been successful in our Small Grant application to The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for project funding aimed at helping to drive forward our much-needed Buildings Redevelopment Project.

The project will see the appointment of two new staff members: a Full Time fixed term independent collections Inventory Project Manager and a part time Redevelopment Project Manager.

Outcomes of the project will include:

- A full inventory audit of the collection, providing us with a detailed description of our collection in preparation for the collections being removed to an offsite location while redevelopment works are carried out. The Inventory will also be used as a basis to inform the future redisplay of collections in the Museum, will improve collections documentation and will assist with rationalisation of the collection.
- Management of the development and delivery of the Redevelopment Project, identifying and applying for funding, identifying and mitigating project risks and issues, and helping the architectural team secure statutory consents. This role in particular will alleviate some of the current pressures faced by our volunteer management team.
- Engagement with volunteers, Moray Society members and all other Museum supporters, through regular updates and progress reports, social media content, in person and online talks.

Stay tuned for further updates as the project progresses. We are grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for supporting us by funding this project Museum's Future.

The 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. Sales of the Draw tickets are strictly limited to Moray Society members and 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 priced at £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.

Tomas Christie (Prize Draw Organiser) Museum Tel. No. 01343 543675

Email curator@elginmuseum.org.uk

Moray Society Prize Draw Application:

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

*I enclose my payment of £ *Please forward me a standing order mandate

*Delete as appropriate

Name

Address

Post Code

Email address

Join the Moray Society and save

Pay now and get 16 months for your first year's payment

This edition of the newsletter offers you or a friend the opportunity to save twice when joining the Moray Society.

Firstly, as a very special offer, we are offering 16 months membership for a single person or for a family from now and pay no more till 2027. Secondly, if you wish to attend the Moray Society Conference, mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter, your membership will allow a £7.50 reduction on your ticket price.

All you have to do is visit the membership page of our website and complete and return a membership form: <https://elginmuseum.org.uk/membership/join/>

Where are these pictures taken

To get you in the mood for our quiz night, mentioned earlier in the newsletter, here is a quiz to see how much you know of old Moray. Answers to the Newsletter editor at curator@elginmuseum.org.uk

A



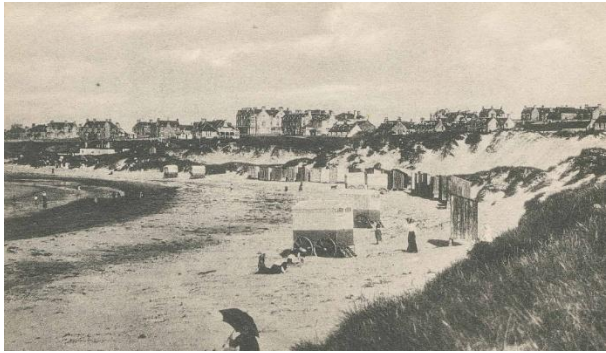
B



C



D



E



F





It was great to have a visit back in June from Richard Lochhead, MSP and a member of The Moray Society, along with Joson Rose from Museums Galleries Scotland, to give them some idea of the problems we have in keeping our 183 years old building alive and active.

He was quoted as saying:

“Good to visit Elgin Museum this week to hear about their plans for the summer and the work they do with local schools etc.

We also discussed their plans to carry out essential repairs to the building and their ambitions to make the museum more accessible for all.

The Moray Society deserves huge credit for the tireless work they do to run Elgin Museum and to care for the thousands of artefacts in its collection.”



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

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