

27 August 2025

CHARLES DARWIN LETTER TO SCOTTISH GEOLOGIST GOES ON DISPLAY AT CROMARTY MUSEUM

- **A letter from Charles Darwin written to Scottish Geologist, Hugh Miller, is now on display at Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage & Museum.**
- **The letter is a request from Charles Darwin for research that Hugh Miller conducted on fossil shellfish.**
- **The letter shows the importance of Miller's contributions to the scientific world.**

An 1855 letter written by Charles Darwin to Scottish geologist Hugh Miller requesting his research data on fossil shellfish, is now on display inside Hugh Miller's Birthplace Museum.

Whilst many associate Darwin with his groundbreaking work on evolution and natural selection, he conducted a large amount of work on barnacles over several years and published multiple works on the topic. His correspondence with Miller highlights how important Miller's contributions were to the scientific community, remarkable for a self-taught man with no university education.

In the letter Darwin also expresses 'great pleasure' from the reading of two of Miller's books and though Miller did not have the chance to read Darwin's book, *On the Origin of the Species*, he does receive a mention: *'He who most closely studies the action of the sea on our shores, will, I believe, be most deeply impressed with the slowness with which rocky coasts are worn away. The observations on this head by Hugh Miller, and by that excellent observer Mr. Smith of Jordan Hill, are most impressive.'*

The letter has now been framed and is on display in the National Trust for Scotland's museum. The letter was part of the original contents of the cottage that the Trust acquired in 1938, which suggests it was kept in the Miller family and passed down the generations. The new display was supported by the Friends of Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage and Museum.

The new frame features UV protective glass to ensure the safety of the delicate letter and the preservation of the detail of the writing. Debbie Reid, Visitor Services Manager at Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage and Museum, said:

“We are thrilled to be able to share this letter with visitors to Hugh Miller’s. To have such a unique piece of history preserved and on display is wonderful and we hope visitors will gain a wider view of Miller’s work and his importance to the world of natural history.

“With the recent announcement of Darwin’s work being recognised by the UNESCO International Memory of the World Register we are proud to have our own special link to Darwin on display.”

Caring for items like this letter helps support the National Trust for Scotland’s vision to care for, share and protect Scotland’s nature, heritage, and beauty, as outlined in its strategy launched in 2022, and contributes to its engagement objectives to provide access and enjoyment for everyone. For more information about Hugh Miller’s Birthplace Cottage & Museum, visit <https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/hugh-millers-birthplace>.

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Notes to Editors:

Images: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/CaebJLNRv0>

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland’s largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland’s magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022 the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland’s heritage which doesn’t have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland’s heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk. The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.