

14 June 2024

STEP BACK IN TIME WITH THE TRUST TO EXPLORE SCOTLAND'S PREHISTORIC PAST

- **National Trust for Scotland to host new fossil walks from Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage and Museum, Cromarty**
- **Visitors can take part in citizen science to record fossils along the shoreline of the Black Isle**
- **Fossil walks will take place from 21 June to 31 August with tours available to book online.**

The National Trust for Scotland is set to transport visitors back in time to follow in the footsteps of famous Scots geologist Hugh Miller to discover the prehistoric past of the town where he was born.

Scotland's largest conservation charity, which cares for and shares Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage and Museum in Cromarty, Ross-shire, for the access and enjoyment of everyone, is inviting the public to join one of its new Fossil Walks taking place throughout the summer and get involved in citizen science in the process.

Over 200 years after Miller found his first fossil, the National Trust for Scotland is offering visitors the chance to discover their own fossils on the Black Isle with an experience truly unique to the area. Prebooked walks will leave from Hugh's historic home in the town, where he was born in 1802, and walk along the shingle shoreline towards the Sutor headland guarding the Cromarty Firth.

The team at Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage and Museum are working closely with a palaeontologist from the University of Aberdeen, who is currently studying the fossils around Cromarty, and the walking tours will allow guests to take part in active citizen science to contribute to their studies. Any fossils collected from the shoreline during these walks will be recorded and displayed at the museum for a month before being returned to the beach.

James Ryan, National Trust for Scotland's Visitor Services Assistant at Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage and Museum, said: "We are excited to welcome visitors to our new Fossil Walks that promise to be an exciting journey back in time to discover an ancient Scotland that existed far before humans, mammals, and even dinosaurs walked the Earth. Visitors can follow in the footsteps of renowned home-grown geologist Hugh Miller to find fossils and explore the geology that captured his attention as a young man over 200 years ago. After discovering a fossil ammonite when he was seventeen years old, Miller became obsessed with studying the fossils around the town he called home and in 1830, he found the first of his famous fossil fish from the Old Red Sandstone deposits on the Black Isle.

"Our tours aim to discover the fossils; examine the rocks they are encased in and the geological processes that shaped this stretch of coastline here on the Black Isle over the

centuries. We want to ensure what we are doing doesn't damage the geological heritage of the site, so we will be highlighting how visitors can enjoy fossil hunts in a responsible, environmentally friendly and sustainable way. So, while visitors won't be able to take fossils home with them, they can enjoy contributing to our understanding of Scotland's prehistoric world through citizen science."

Hugh Miller's Birthplace Museum's fossil walks will launch on 21 June 2024 and are only possible during low tide. The tours are tide dependent meaning times may vary each week. Further details are available on the property's Eventbrite page where visitors can also book a place on one of the walks: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/hugh-millers-birthplace-cottage-amp-museum-33806402821>.

Stone mason, geologist, writer, and social justice campaigner, Hugh Miller was born inside a thatched cottage in Cromarty in the early 19th century. Starting from humble beginnings, he would go on to become one of Victorian Britain's greatest minds and a leading voice of the Scottish people.

Events like the Fossil Walks supports the National Trust for Scotland's vision to care for, share and protect Scotland's natural and cultural heritage, as outlined in its strategy launched in 2022, and contributes to its engagement objectives to provide access and enjoyment for everyone.

Further information about Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage and Museum is available on the National Trust for Scotland website, here: www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/hugh-millers-birthplace.

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Notes to editors:

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.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work.

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.