



# SMaL-TALK

The Scottish Mineral &  
Lapidary Club  
Newsletter

<http://lapidary.org.uk>

Issue 2017/1. February 2017



## EDITORIAL by Wendy Morley

I am delighted to produce our Newsletters for 2017. I wonder if you agree that the Scottish agate pictured on the right above (polished by Simon Akroyd) bears some resemblance to the one featured in our club logo? Maybe you have a better match? Please keep the ideas coming in for articles / themes to share with other members. If you have any SMLC-related news or stories that you would like to share in SMaLtalk, please get in touch: [scottishlapidary@gmail.com](mailto:scottishlapidary@gmail.com) or SMLC, 20 Maritime Lane, Leith, EH6 6RZ.

## CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS by Ian Marshall

Circumstances conspired against us for much of last session with one consequence being a single Summer publication of SMaL-TALK, though it did develop into a bumper issue!

The rest of the year saw three more training courses being run with some excellent results; the usual "Open Doors" weekend in September well attended with over 400 visitors; a four day display at Dynamic Earth during Schools' Education Week in October and of course, our annual clean, and new display for the "At Home" in November. 45 of our role of 128 members, associates and trainees supported this with several infirm individuals making the effort, but where were many of the others? It is YOUR Club so please try to attend the organised events.... and bring your families, neighbours, friends... many of whom were not aware of what we can do and make a point of returning for future visits!

About 30 members attended the AGM in December with 12 apologies noted. Ian Marshall continues as Chairman for a second year, Alan Hayes has taken on the duty of Secretary, Wendy Morley is Newsletter Editor and Scott Porter will manage the Club Web site - which means for the foreseeable future, we are lacking a Vice Chairman and Treasurer, as Alec McCreadie has retired after many excellent years of managing the Club finances. Any suggestions or volunteers to fill these positions would be greatly appreciated.

Continued over →

Over the holiday period, the grit traps in the grinding room were replaced to improve the drainage from the sinks. Thanks to Alan Hayes, Jim McClure, Donald Henderson and the experience of new member Andrew Turner, this was completed efficiently in several hours with support from Janet Smith and Bill Wilson. As winter has decided to take a back seat so far this season and nights slowly begin to draw out once again, the prospect of some decent days hunting the elusive agate may be enough to entice Members out of the woodwork, so dig out your wellies, hammers, flasks and waterproofs (just in case) and let's wish for "good hunting" in 2017.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### ROCK HUNTING TRIPS

It's the season for rock hunting! Once again we have sought permission from the kind farmers in Fife to go on our annual material hunting adventures.

Our first trip seemed productive, with everyone finding a number of agates, using a variety of tools including: garden rakes; barbeque forks; and divining rods →

**Future trips will take place on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb, and 5<sup>th</sup> March 2017 - Please sign up in the club.**



### CLUBROOM TALKS

**16<sup>th</sup> February 2017:** “*Pennine Perambulations*” by Ian Marshall.

**30<sup>th</sup> March 2017:** “*Salisbury Crags - Geological & Recent History*” by Godfrey Fitton and Richard Gillanders.

**27<sup>th</sup> April 2017:** Heddle Night. Speaker to be confirmed.

**Autumn 2017:** Members’ slide night.

**7:15pm for 7:30pm start**

Please join us for a stimulating series of talks in the clubroom through the winter, with refreshments served!

Details of topics will be displayed in the clubrooms nearer to the time.

### AUCTION

Plans are being finalised for an auction of lapidary and silverworking materials in the spring – the exact format is being finalised, after the previous successes of silent auctions, and the more exciting live auction.

Keep an eye out for further details on the clubroom noticeboards, and on the website events diary:

<http://lapidary.org.uk/events/>

## DISPLAYS & OUTREACH by Ian Marshall

On this third visit to Dynamic Earth, the display was expanded to 8 tables sited nearer to the entrance to catch the visitors as they arrived and also as they emerged from below, prior to exit. The 10 Members covering the four day event were kept busy moving between the tables as interest and groups moved to view or get 'hands on' with the exhibits. Along with the five fixed agate display cases (worldwide), examples of the Club Scottish agate collection, silver work and faceted stones were shown, as well as several of our larger mineral specimens expertly described by Richard. Danny Hargreaves brought along his moveable equipment and demonstrated and explained the art of faceting whilst youngsters could try to bring a polish to the dopped stones or were enthralled to see grains, shells, garnet and peridot come 'alive' from sand samples viewed under the microscopes. Thanks to Biff, Rod, John, Janet, June, Ray and Maureen for keeping an eagle eye on the little devils !!

Igneous Rocks were introduced as a new theme showing their origins - intrusive/coarse grained or extrusive/fine grained, and differences in colour & mass: lighter/silica-rich or darker, heavier/magnesium, iron rich. Examples of different granites (Scottish and foreign) and local volcanic rocks (Salisbury Crags, Arthur's Seat, Castle Rock, Traprain Law) could be handled & viewed under the microscope. Glass covered display cases were used to show materials e.g. lavas, ash, grit, volcanic bombs, pumice from a number of notable eruptions (Iceland, Vesuvius, Etna, etc) and also volcanic glass/obsidian from Earth e.g. Apache tears, tektites and metallic meteorites from Space. Display Boards, originally from Murchison House, were used to good effect to present pictures of Club activities, maps and posters explaining the structure of volcanoes & detail of igneous rocks in thin section.

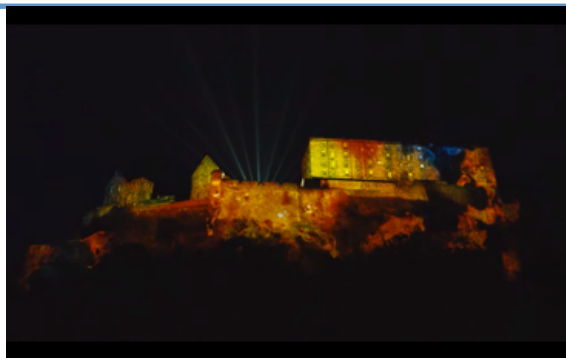
A thank you letter from Connor Ellis (Science Engagement Officer) mentioned that they had "had a really busy week at the centre and admitted almost 5000 guests to Dynamic Earth over the 4 days" and that it was "lovely to see so many people smiling & engaging with the additional programme on offer". We are of course invited back in the future... now to think up another theme for next time, but so far... It's a secret!



## EDINBURGH FESTIVAL

In 2016 the opening event “Deep Time” of the Festival celebrated the Edinburgh’s volcanic history (over 350 million years) with a dazzling visual display projected onto the castle and castle rock.

A video of the event is here:



[https://www.eif.co.uk/deeptime#.WivTCLaLQ\\_W](https://www.eif.co.uk/deeptime#.WivTCLaLQ_W)

## MEMBERS' NEWS

It is with great regret we learned of the passing of more members.

Jean Stephens 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 2017. A long-term member and regular mid-week attender, Jean went into a care home in December due to lung cancer. She is fondly remembered at the club.

Iain Barnett 25<sup>th</sup> Dec 2016. A recent but enthusiastic member on Wednesday evenings, electronic engineer Iain was taken by cancer after only 33 years.

Eleanor Leplatre reflects: “After a year away from lapidary, I came back to the saddest and most unexpected news that my fellow Club member, Iain Barnett, died on Christmas day 2016. I’ve been very fortunate to have known him. While I was at the Club, he turned up sporadically, because of work commitments, but I was always pleased to see him there, because I knew that we would have a great time chatting about Sci-Fi, politics, science, anything really. When I decided to make a light up sphere holder, Iain greatly improved on my original idea, which was to use a keyring torch! He gave me advice on where to buy LEDs, resistors, switches and wire online. He showed me how to solder wires. He complained bitterly about me shining LEDs in his eyes (unintentionally) while I was making it. From the very start, Iain went in his own direction; taking on the challenge of making sgian dubhs for his wedding. He did a fantastic job and started a craze for making them in the Club. If I had to describe Iain’s lapidary and silversmithing work, it would be the opposite to my own; precise, thoughtful, methodical and accurate – everything done to a high standard and finish. He will be very much missed by his friends at the Scottish Mineral and Lapidary Club.”

Aileen Moyes passed away in 2016. Avril Nicholson remembers: “Sadly Aileen died last year, so no Toddy Tart at our At Home event in November. However she did pass on the recipe to one of our members and here it is for all you talented bakers out there. The amounts of brandy and whisky are up to the baker, but I remember Aileen was very generous when she made it – maybe that's why it was so sadly missed for the last two years! I’m not promising to have a go at the recipe, but I hope someone will, it would gladden a few hearts if it appeared next year...”

# AILEEN MOYES' TODDY TART RECIPE

by Avril Nicholson

## 1. PASTRY CASE

Can be made in advance and kept in an airtight tin.

- 8oz plain flour
- 4oz unsalted butter
- 2oz icing sugar
- 2 medium egg yolks
- 1-2 tablespoons cold water
- (egg white for brushing)

Rub butter into flour until it is the consistency of fine breadcrumbs. Thoroughly mix icing sugar, egg yolks and 1 tablespoon of water, then mix into the flour & butter mixture with a round bladed knife (if too dry add more water). Make into a firm (not sticky) ball, wrap in clingfilm and chill for an hour.

Roll out gently to line an 8 inch rectangular tart tin, and again chill.

Preheat the oven to 190 C / gas mark 5. Blind bake for 15 minutes. Remove the paper and baking beans, and bake until dry and lightly coloured.

Brush the inside with egg white and allow to cool.

## 2. MINCEMEAT

Can also be prepared in advance.

- Jar of Robertsons mincemeat
- Brandy

Open the jar and fill with brandy, then allow the brandy to sink through the mincemeat.

## 3. SPONGE

- 4oz SR flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 4oz caster sugar
- 3oz unsalted butter
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon boiling water

Preheat oven to 108C / gas mark 4.

Cream sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Sift flour and baking powder together. Add the eggs one at a time to the creamed mixture with a little flour and mix gently until all the flour is used. Add a tablespoon of boiling water and mix well.

## 4. TART ASSEMBLY

Put a thick layer of mincemeat into the pastry case. Carefully cover with the sponge mixture. Bake until a skewer comes out clean. Remove from the oven and leave to cool AT LEAST overnight – you want the sponge to firm for the icing.

## 5. ICING

- $\frac{3}{4}$  lb icing sugar
- whisky

Sieve icing sugar into a bowl and gradually add sufficient whisky to make a stiffish icing. Scrape from the bowl onto the cake and use a slightly damp knife to spread out to cover the sponge completely (it should be about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick). Leave to set hard.

This cake keeps well in a tin. It may be frozen before or after icing (though if iced, the icing may take 3-4 days to dry out and stiffen when thawed).

# TRAINING

Our extended series of training continued in the second half of 2016 with more trainees becoming regular members of the Club. Congratulations to all completing these courses and we welcome those able to continue as full members.



JULY 2016:  
Andrew Morrison,  
Patsy Young,  
Richard Wallbank,  
Martine Callaghan,  
Lyndy Boyd,  
Andrew Turner.



OCTOBER 2016:  
Teresa Rafferty,  
Brett Fitzcharles,  
Ann Watson,  
Melanie Oxbrow,  
Roberta Pederzoli.



NOVEMBER 2016:  
Jon Cline,  
Alan Liddle,  
Lynne McCafferty,  
Jim Duffy,  
Seana Carroll,  
Toni Davidson.



JANUARY 2017:  
Alister Elwis,  
Martin Farnworth,  
Rick Eggleston.



# THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND EXHIBITIONS

By Wendy Morley

Whilst there has been some disappointment expressed amongst club members about the main geological displays in the museum, two excellent temporary exhibitions took place in 2016.

For a long time there was a gap (360-345 million years ago) in the fossil record covering the time when tetrapods (four-limbed, backboned animals) emerged from water onto land – called Romer's Gap after the Harvard Professor Alfred Romer (in the 1950s).

Stan Wood and Tim Smithson then discovered fossils in the Scottish Borders & West Lothian (East Kirkton Quarry) dating from within this gap. Stan was an amateur fossil hunter, but made meticulous notes, like this one showing a section of Willie's Hole in Whiteadder River. →

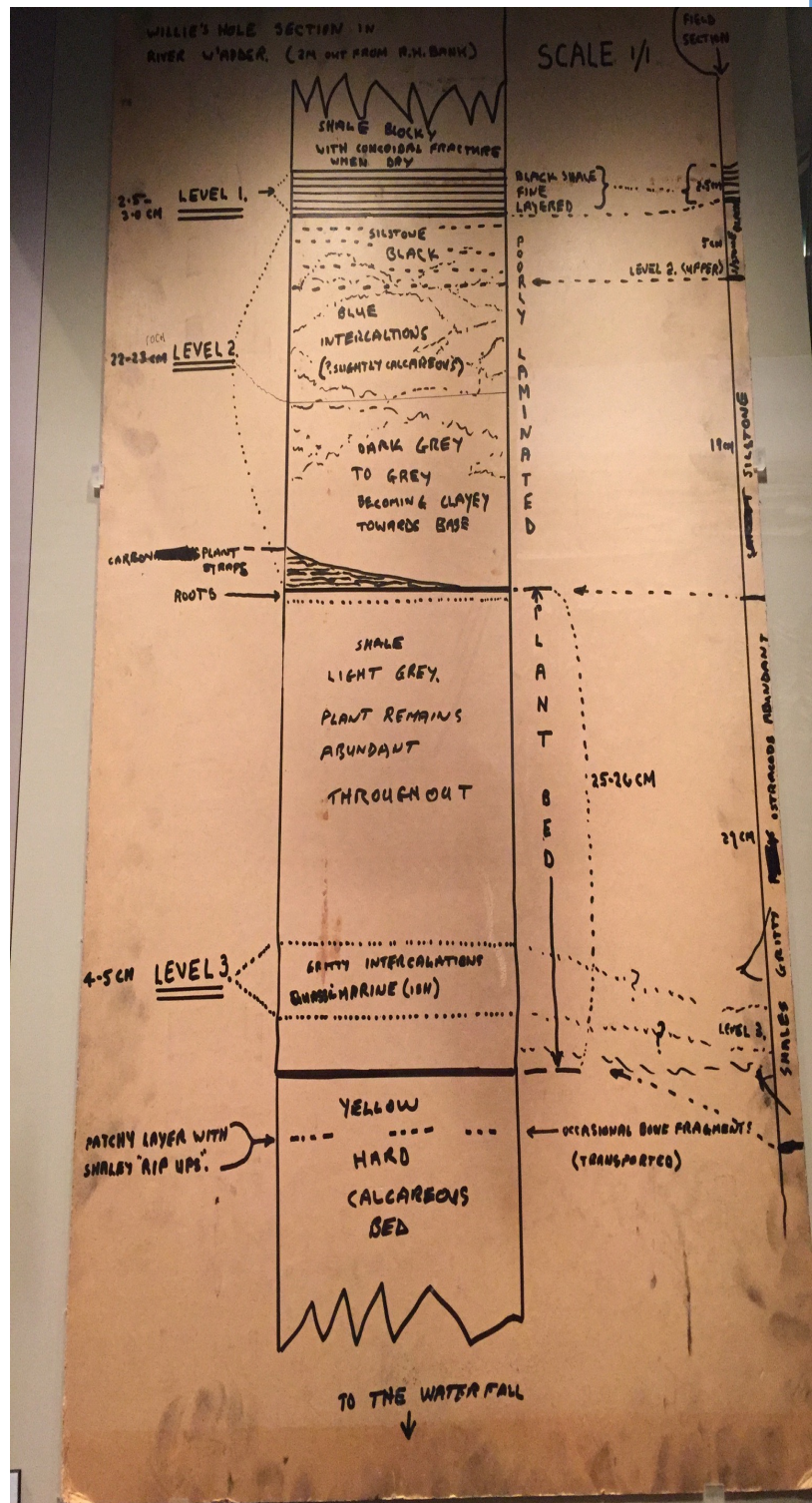
Scientists have recently excavated at Willie's Hole, finding more fossils from

Romer's Gap, including fossil scorpions and millipedes (a major project requiring partial diversion of the river, to allow excavation of the fossil-bearing river bed).

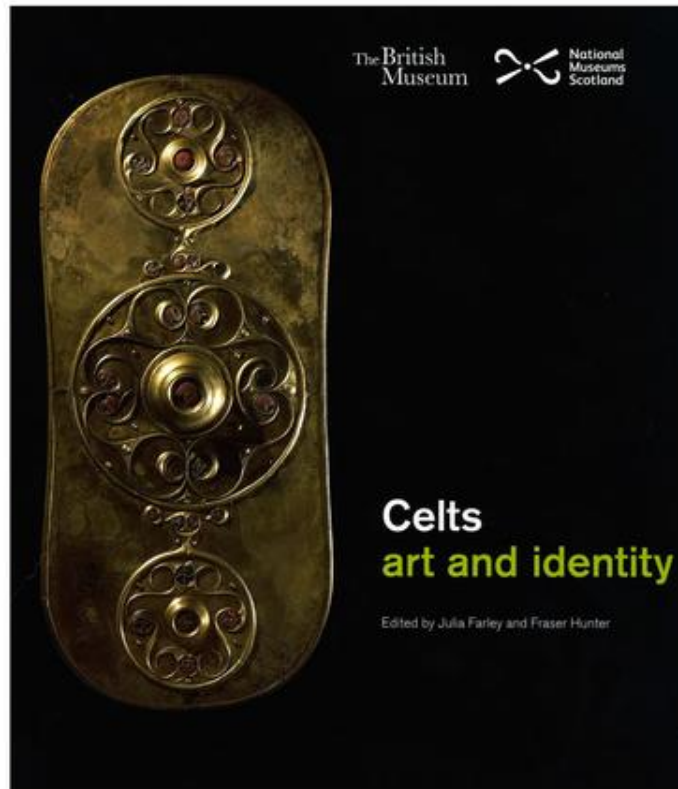
Further information and photos of the fossils can be found at:

<http://www.nms.ac.uk/explore/stories/natural-world/closing-romers-gap/>

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/safeguarding-geodiversity/protecting/fossil-code/>



The second exhibition featured the Celts, exploring the arts & artefacts of this disparate group across Europe. This display featured many amazing articles loaned from several institutions. It included items in a variety of metals (bronze, silver and gold) and demonstrated the typical use of swirling patterns including creatures and plants, often with one thing morphing into the other – the more I looked the more I saw within each object.



On the National Museum of Scotland website there is more information, including a video showing curators talking about and displaying their choice pieces from the exhibition:

<http://www.nms.ac.uk/celts>

My favourite part of the exhibition was seeing the Iron Age gold torcs (c 300-100 BC) of the Blair Drummond Hoard. These were found by David Booth on his first outing with a metal detector in 2009 (though he'd done research on where to look in advance). In a video shown as part of the exhibition he described the find, and the excitement shown by the staff from the Treasure Trove unit when they came to see the gold torcs, which were exquisite and extremely well preserved. David was then allowed to visit the archaeological excavation of the area, which uncovered a circular building in which the hoard was buried. A torc is on permanent display on level 1 of the museum. This website shows stunning pictures & the video interview:

<http://www.nms.ac.uk/explore/stories/scottish-history-and-archaeology/iron-age-gold-torcs/>

Another fascinating video showed the metalsmith Brian Clarke demonstrating his technique to reproduce the twisted ribbon torc, using antlers to shape the metal, an extremely satisfying process to create a beautiful torc. He has made a full documentary (available on DVD) and book – it is worth watching the trailer here:

<http://www.ribbonoroc.com/>



## MINERAL WATCH by Wendy Morley

Several of our mineral specimens were lent out to be featured in a film starring David Tennant, Rosamund Pike and Billy Connolly: “**What We Did on Our Holiday**” is a poignant family movie available on the BBC iPlayer.



This got me thinking about sharing some of the recommendations made by club members (thanks to Craig, Richard, Scott and John for their suggestions). I have noted where they were first shown to assist you when searching for them.

- **Radio:** “**Elements**” BBC World Service. This is a great series of 65(!) episodes featuring each of the elements, a fascinating resource covering their extraction, properties and uses.
- **TV:** “**Prospectors**” Weather Channel. A show following several families making a living mining Amazonite, Aquamarine, Fluorite, Smoky Quartz and Topaz in Colorado, USA. It demonstrates how challenging mining can be.
- **TV:** “**Walking Through Time**” Channel 4. Dr Tori Herridge, a palaeontologist from the Natural history museum looks into the story of a massive meteor hitting Scotland billions of years ago. Dramatic scenes of walking through Scotland.
- **TV:** “**Dangerous Earth**” BBC. Amazing footage of volcanoes using new imaging techniques (episode 2 of 6). Other episodes feature aurora, icebergs, tornados, avalanches & lightening.
- **TV:** “**Worlds Deepest Gold Mine**” Science Channel. An interesting documentary looking at the Mponeng mine in South Africa (2½ miles deep).
- **TV:** “**The Gold Rush with Dan Snow**” BBC. Following in the footsteps of the Klondike Gold Rush in Canada, this programme explains how difficult the environment was, and it is good to see some of the old photos from the time.

# AT HOME EVENT NOVEMBER 2016

The “At Home” event in November showed the amazing rocks produced by nature, as well as the skill and imagination of club members – with an animal theme:



John Priestley's spider & cat



“Moby Dick” by Bill Purves



Whale by Alan Hayes



Owl by Wendy Morley

Ian Marshall summarises the “At Home” event for us:

“The new display with an alphabetical theme of minerals, rocks, locations beginning with letters S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z plus Members’ “work done over the past year”, agates, faceted stones and silverwork, miraculously appeared overnight ready to delight Members and their invited guests. [Ed - Many thanks to Ian Marshall for organising this transformation.]

The amount of material offered was less than usual which meant that the middle Silver case was (and still is), used to show some of the Volcanic Display previously shown at Dynamic Earth.

The silver work by Jim McClure, Maureen Smith, John Priestley, Peter Dallas and others was greatly admired by all. Thanks to them; Avril Nicholson and the faceters; Ray and Maureen for providing and selling some impressive Australian and American slabs; Helen Gray and helpers in the kitchen and everyone else who helped make things run smoothly.

Materials provided by New Members and Outreach activities over the year can be viewed in the cabinets in the Coffee Room next to the Field Trip cabinets.

With the danger of becoming too repetitive, we still need support from a greater number of Members to run such events and advertise the Club and our skills to the general public.

The theme for next November? Not alphabetical, but probably Continental - minerals, agates, countries.”

