

Footprints in the Sand: the Hugh Miller Writing Competition II 2017-2018

Highly Commended in Poetry

Fiona Ritchie Walker: After life: finding Tiny

Footprints in the Sand: The Hugh Miller Writing Competition II carries the name of one of Scotland's most endearing geologists, Hugh Miller (1802-1856), and aimed to honour his legacy by inspiring new, original prose and poetry on the theme of Scotland's rich fossil heritage. The competition was organised by the Scottish Geodiversity Forum, The Friends of Hugh Miller and other partners.

Further details of the competition, and all the winning entries, are available at www.scottishgeology.com/hughmiller/

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After Life: Finding Tiny

Not so much rock as a stone womb,
preserving life lived, waiting for discovery,
pick and chisel replaced with discerning scan,
today's technology birthing
this 3D re-creation, which I have found
in a coffee break while flicking through headline news.

I'm drawn in by simple language,
Tiny's sharp teeth, dimpled chin,
that take me to the end of the age of fish,
my birth land straddling the equator,
and though I say I have no interest
in old Scottish rocks, Latin names,
I find Hugh Miller in my local library,
take his history home.

My tongue twists round Tournaisian,
I picture Tiny, her five digits pulling
our shared backbone, hinged jaw, lungs
through swamp water to lycopod forests,
towards today where my mirror fingers
hold a pen, record this life change

that has sent me to rocks and beaches,
museums and scree slopes,
tracking our shared journeying
in this world of air and land.