

The Hugh Miller Writing Competition 2019-2020

Under 18 Poetry 1st Prize The Standing Stones of Stenness: Claire Rinterknecht

The Hugh Miller Writing Competition carries the name of one of Scotland's most endearing geologists, Hugh Miller (1802-1856), and aims to honour his legacy by inspiring new, original prose and poetry on the theme of Scotland's geoh heritage. The competition is organised by the Scottish Geodiversity Forum and The Friends of Hugh Miller.

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

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The Standing Stones of Stenness

My ocean blue dress sways
in the Orkney wind: clamorous, chilly, childlike.
It plays with my cropped hair, teasing.

Around me stand the Standing Stones of Stenness.
I am a Scottish lass surrounded by my ancestors.
They stand as tall as Dad seemed
when I dreamed of bows and arrows and thistle fairies.

The stones feel like Dad's chin, unshaven.
My pale fingertips touch the dark surface,
dappled with white and grey,
searching for the sand grain memories they have lost.

The stones smell cold, of purple heather, of dewy grass,
of sheep droppings, and sea salt.
I stood here once with Dad and Mum
Jules and Yves, Brooklyn pulling on her lead.

We created memories I now try to catch with my pencil.
They swirl around me, still caught in the Orkney wind.
They dance the Gay Gordan, still in primary school,
practicing for the ceilidh.

We left Scotland and I hid my heart
in a circle of lost friends, of bitter thoughts,
of long French school days.

Jules is at uni now, Yves is no longer wee.

I have grown as well, am no longer a sweet willowy girl
who dreams of fairies.

Now I dream of the day I become a sandstone
of sand grain memories, dappled with white and grey.

I dream of standing again,
among the Standing Stones of Stenness.

By Claire Rinterknecht