



Mary Anning Award presentation

Dugald Ross is a remarkable guy. For decades he has collected dinosaurs and other fossils on the Isle of Skye in Scotland, taking time out from his busy life as a builder and a crofter. A self-taught fossil hunter, he has published numerous academic papers and is Scottish Natural Heritage's point man for safeguarding fossil sites on Skye. As a teenager he even started his own fossil museum, the Staffin Museum, by rebuilding the ruins of a one-room schoolhouse and filling it with bones, teeth, ammonites and other specimens from across the island. For these and his many other contributions to palaeontology, the Palaeontological Association awarded Dugald (or Dugie, as he is usually called) the Mary Anning Award in 2016. Unfortunately, Dugie was unable to make the long journey from Skye to Lyon, so I accepted the award for him at the Annual Dinner. However, to make sure his big achievement was properly celebrated, I made a presentation to him with my fellow PalAlba Group palaeontologists Tom Challands and Neil Clark when we were on Skye for fieldwork in May 2017.

On a beautiful sunny evening about 20 of us gathered at Dugie's house, near his museum. Dugie's family cooked up a fantastic Hebridean feast of boiled prawns, nettle soup and various puddings. We brought the Guinness, the champagne, and most importantly, the bottle of Talisker. I tried to imitate Paul Smith's style as best I could, formally presenting Dugie his certificate while waxing effusively about his pivotal role in putting Skye on the map for vertebrate palaeontologists, before Tom and Neil both said a few words. It was great that his family was able to meet many of the scientists Dugie has worked with and the students he is now helping to train in the field. And we were regaled by his stories of growing up in a Gaelic speaking household on Skye, of the time he found his first archaeological artifacts as a teenager, of how his father encouraged his obsession with Hebridean history (and prehistory), and of the many fossils that he knows are still out there, just waiting to be collected.

Stephen Brusatte

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The award ceremony in Staffin. From left to right: Steve Brusatte, Dugie Ross, Neil Clark and Tom Challands. Photo courtesy of S. Brusatte.

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