

Remains of cat to go on display at museum

HISTORYLINKS Museum has recently put on display the dried-up remains of a cat found under the floorboards of the Dornoch Free Church.

And now, the Historylinks team feels that it is only right that the cat should be given an appropriate name and so have launched a competition to find one.

In 2013 renovation work began on the church and during this time the remains of a cat were discovered just a few feet in front of the old pulpit. As the church was built in 1844 and has remained structurally untouched since then, the cat was very likely placed there during initial building works.

Cats, introduced to Britain by the Romans for vermin control, had by the 1500s come to be linked to superstitious beliefs, often seen as bringing bad luck and closely connected to the devil and witches.

This superstitious interest in cats explains why some cats were killed and placed within a building to ward off evil spirits. The cats are

also often found with a rat or mouse either in their mouth or claws and these cats are presumably there to protect the building from vermin.

Whilst the placing of a cat under the floorboards of the Free Church would have been against Christian principles in Victorian times, the workman may well have felt differently.

The cat is not "mummified" as it has just dried out over the years and so is desiccated.

Historylinks has acquired a purpose-built display box and the cat can now be seen by all visitors in the museum's new superstition display.

If you want to name the cat, you can send your entry to Historylinks on enquiries@historylinks.org.uk or use a form which can be picked up at the museum or through the Historylinks Facebook page.

There will be a prize of a £10 book token, sponsored by Archaeology North Ltd, and the new name will be added to the Historylinks display board.