

### **History on the Police Force of Sutherland**

The office of "Constable" has existed in Scottish Law as a law enforcement Official since at least the time of King James VI (and I of United Kingdom). The term 'Police Officer' is however a much more recent innovation, and it is fascinating to find it in use in the County of Sutherland as early as the 1820's.

It is recorded in the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Commissioners Of Supply for the County at their annual meeting on 30 April 1828 that:

"The Meeting continue ... the salary of Twenty Five Pounds Sterling to James Stewart Police Officer for the year from Whitsunday 1828 to Whitsunday 1829.

Unfortunately the previous volume of the Commissioners' Minutes is missing, so it is not known when 'Police Officer' was first used in Sutherland.

Note: It is likely that his appointment commenced in 1824, as he features - twice in the same month (September) as making arrests and taking the prisoners to Dornoch Jail. Although there are earlier records from the Jail, the wording "Constable" is not previously recorded.

Transcripts of Dornoch Jail Records - by courtesy of  
'Am Baile'(The Gaelic Village) [www.ambaile.co.uk](http://www.ambaile.co.uk)

Note: In April 1822, when a Statutory Return was made up of all men over the age of 16 residing within the Parish of Dornoch (excluding servants), a William Henderson is shown with the occupation 'Constable' and residing within the Burgh of Dornoch. There is no mention in that list of anyone with the surname Stewart.

Information by courtesy of [www.highlandhearts.com](http://www.highlandhearts.com)

Mr Stewart was also referred to in the Annual Accounts as "Messenger, Dornoch", and was paid for conveying prisoners. It would seem he was a man of many tasks and responsibilities, and was essentially the Sheriff Court Officer at Dornoch. The Commissioners of Supply for the County also represented the Burgh of Dornoch, and it may be that Stewart's duties also included providing police services for Dornoch.

Note: The very informative website [www.highlandhearts.com](http://www.highlandhearts.com) also contains some Transcripts of the Parish Returns (required in terms of Statute) for Males resident in the Parish who were between 18 and 45 years of age and thus liable for Militia Service (unless they claimed exemption).

In the case of Rogart of 1824, and Loth and Clyne Parishes (1826), the return was completed by the Schoolmaster and Constable together. Both should then go to Golspie and swear on oath before a Justice of the Peace that it was a true account and that a copy had been posted on the door of the parish church the previous Sunday.

The Constable at Rogart in 1824 was Alexander Grant (who, since he does not feature, must have been over 45. He went alone to Golspie on 27th August with the list which had been signed by the Schoolmaster (who did not attend himself), which necessitated Mr Dempster, Deputy Lieutenant, having to write quite a long explanatory note before having Constable Grant sign and certify the list under oath as having "acted along with the Schoolmaster in taking & making this List"

The Clyne, Golspie and Loth 1826 Returns are all dated 22 September, on which date an appeal hearing had also been scheduled at Golspie (in the Inn!) to hear from those who had failed to convince the surveyors (the school master and Constable of the respective parish in each case, it would seem) that they should be exempted from Militia Service.

The Brora (Clyne Parish) Constable was James MacDonald of Achrimsdale, who was under 30, and listed as 'Constable' on the return along with (presumably) his father John (shown as "past 45 years of age") – whose inclusion was probably to cover the Constable from possible accusation of favouritism or selective amnesia!

The Golspie Constable who counter-signed under oath was Alexander Sutherland. Several of that name feature on the list, 2 fishermen, a mason and a servant, but it is likely the Constable was not one of those and simply did not feature by his being over 45 years of age.

The Loth Parish (including Helmsdale) list was compiled by, and sworn to, by the Loth school master and one James Matheson (who does not feature on the list). It would therefore seem that Mr Matheson was the Parish Constable for Helmsdale/Loth.

Information by courtesy of [www.highlandhearts.com](http://www.highlandhearts.com)

Meanwhile, back in Dornoch, the aforesaid Mr Stewart continued in post, and at the same wage, through until 1841. At their meeting on 30 April that year it was recorded by the Commissioners that:

"As the services of James Stewart as Police Officer terminate this day, and there has been another engaged from Whit Sunday first, in his place, the Meeting agree that he shall be paid a yearly salary of Fifty Pounds Sterling and be furnished a House Rent Free, and they appoint Messrs Gunn and Fraser a committee to see this carried into effect."

Carried into effect it was, as one year later it was minuted that "Philip Mackay, Police Officer" was to be retained for a further year at the same salary. This, it will be noted, was £50, exactly double the sum paid to his predecessor. One wonders why the massive increase for the new man.

Philip Mackay was in subsequent accounts sometimes shown as Police Officer and at other times as "Messenger". Various people around the county also submitted accounts, presumably for Criminal work, and they were always referred to as "Sheriff Officer".

In the 1843 Accounts however there appeared for the first time the word "Constable", in respect of Peter Mackay and George Mackay, Tongue and also "Donald Gunn, Constable, Strathhalladale".

Each year, at its Annual Meeting, the Commissioners minuted the re-hiring of the Police Officer - and also of the Keeper of the Mound - and these persons appear to have been the only employees of the County, other than the Jailer. In 1844, at the meeting on 30 April, however things began to change.

After confirming the retention for another year of "Philip Mackay, Police Officer" (and George Bell, the Keeper of the Mound), Mr Gunn of Meikle Swordale, who was Factor to the Duke of Sutherland, appeared before The Commissioners. He produced what must have been a most convincing argument as the Commissioners accepted:

"The necessity of appointing a local Police Officer to reside in Helmsdale".

As a result the Meeting unanimously approved the history-making submission.

The powers-that-be had obviously done their homework in advance, as it was immediately decided to appoint John Sutherland, Sheriff Officer, Helmsdale, as Police Officer for the Helmsdale District for one year.

Mr Sutherland was to be paid Fifteen Pounds per annum, payable half-yearly. This amount was a great deal less than Philip Mackay received, and it can only be surmised that Sutherland's duties were to be of a part-time nature, to be performed along with his 'day job' as a self-employed Sheriff Officer.

The Accounts for 1844 show the following personnel submitted claims:

Philip Mackay, Messenger, Dornoch	£30.17/3d
Charles Fraser, Messenger, Bonar	£ 1.17/4d
Serjeant MacLeod, Messenger, Dornoch	£ 2. 0/6d
James Grant, Sheriff's Officer, Rogart	£ 0.15/0d
John Sutherland, Sheriff's Officer, Helmsdale	£ 3. 5/11d
John Strachan, Messenger, Tain	£ 0.16/. 6d
Alexander Fraser, Sheriff's Officer, Strathay	£ 3.11/ 6d

No mention was made of the 'Constables' previously referred to. Perhaps there had simply been no criminal work to be done in Strathhalladale and Tongue in the period of the accounts ?

The 'Serjeant MacLeod' may well have been the Dornoch Burgh Officer, as municipal authorities tended to apply the title of Sergeant to their Council Officers, who usually had some local law enforcement responsibilities in addition to their other Council duties.

At the 1845 annual meeting, again held on 30 April, the meeting re-appointed Philip Mackay and John Sutherland as Police Officers for the current year with the same salaries as the previous year.

The Sheriff obviously had his ear to the ground and could see that there was the potential for piece-meal policing in the County rather than a properly organised (and commanded) Police Force. He therefore put pen to paper on the subject to the Commissioners, which resulted in the following minute:

"The meeting thereafter took into their consideration a communication from Mr Sheriff Lumsden dated the 3rd January last on the subject of establishing a Constabulary Force in the County - and the Chairman having submitted to the Meeting the draught of an answer which he conceived would embody the sentiments of the Meeting, the same was approved of and he was requested to address Mr Lumsden accordingly."

So what WAS the Chairman's response? Very likely it was a case of "thanks, but no thanks" - something along the lines of paying lip service to the proposal but saying that the Commissioners did not see the need at the present time for such a course of action. Of course they would have reserved the right, if the situation should change, to reconsider the matter.

When the 1846 meeting convened, yet again on the last day of April, it:- "reappointed Philip Mackay and John Sutherland as Police Officers".

These two men apparently continued to be one-man Forces for their Own Districts, responsible only to the Courts and the Commissioners. They appear to have been effective in their posts however as word had obviously spread around the County.

"Thereafter the meeting, considering that it would be expedient to grant an allowance towards the expenses of maintaining a Constable to reside at Golspie for the protection of the Peace in that district and for the suppression of vagrancy, allow the sum of Ten Pounds for that purpose and understanding that John Macdonald presently residing at Lairg would be a suitable person and willing to act, authorise Mr Gunn to employ Macdonald, whom failing any other person he may consider suitable accordingly at the above allowance for one year from this date."

George Gunn, Esq., of Meikle Swordale, reported back to an adjourned Meeting held on 15 June 1846 that he had indeed employed John Macdonald from 30<sup>th</sup> April. The Commissioners duly rubber-stamped this course of action, and also directed that Macdonald be paid quarterly.

So now the County had three Police Officers, each apparently operating independently, in the three major centres of population. The man in Dornoch was on a salary of £50 per annum, the Helmsdale officer was on £25 and the Golspie one was receiving only £10.

Although it was not minuted at that stage, someone obviously felt that there was a need to establish a form of pecking order or rank structure to reflect that the officer within Dornoch was on a salary FIVE times greater than his counterpart based in Golspie. Accordingly, Mr Philip Mackay was re-titled SUPERINTENDENT. This fact comes to light at the 1847 Annual Meeting when the Commissioners decided that Philip Mackay be "re-appointed as Superintendent of Police". That term was the normal title (within both Burghs and Counties) throughout Scotland at that time for the post of the Officer-in-Charge of a Police force. ("Chief Constable" would come later, by a law of 1857).

There was also recorded a considerable amount of activity on the Policing front. A Committee had been appointed - The County's first Police Committee perhaps? - consisting of Mr Sheriff Gordon, and Messrs Gunn and Fraser, and they had been given a remit of:

"Selecting and stationing a properly qualified Police Constable at Bonar Bridge".

This was the first occasion where the word "Constable" had been used, which leaves no doubt that was to be a proper Police appointment.

Sheriff Gordon reported that the services of an efficient man had been secured in December 1846 at an annual salary of £30. He was from the Aberdeenshire Police, but he had remained in the post for only three months. The Committee had however swiftly identified a replacement, namely Robert Elder, a pensioner from the 42nd Regiment, and he was performing his duties in a satisfactory manner.

The Commissioners approved and confirmed his appointment, and also decided to continue John Macdonald as the officer at Golspie for a further year. Indeed his performance appears to have been very satisfactory in the opinion of the local gentry, as it was agreed that his wage be raised to "£25 per annum, along with a suit of clothes." (One wonders as to whether this was a REAL Police uniform, or simply a suit of ordinary clothes so as he would not have to wear his own Sunday best and run the risk of having it dirtied or damaged in the execution of his duties?)

John Sutherland, referred to as "the Constable at Helmsdale", had, in the opinion of the Commissioners, become "too old and infirm for discharging efficiently the duties of Constable in that District". Poor old John had been summoned to attend and was summarily informed by the Chairman that his services were no longer required. He would have got only one day's notice.

The (Police) Committee was tasked: "to look out for another officer to be placed at Helmsdale at an annual salary of Twenty Five Pounds with a suit of clothes".

The Commissioners next considered the matter of policing, on 1st May 1848, when the rank structure was clearly set out, as they: "re-appointed Philip Mackay as Superintendent of Police, and Robert Elder and John Macdonald, Police Officers, for the ensuing year with the same salaries as last year, the two Policemen to be made equal".

Quite HOW they hoped to achieve equality - when PC Elder was on FIVE POUNDS a year MORE than PC Macdonald is not made clear!

So what about Helmsdale's new officer? Well, there seemed to have been no progress on that front to date. Mr Sutherland, Sheriff Officer and lately Police Constable, continued to feature in the accounts. While no longer deemed suitable to perform duty as a policeman, he was obviously still capable of acting as Sheriff Officer!

Despite his no longer holding the office of Constable, the locals in the Dale probably still regarded him as their local 'law man'. His post of "Sheriff Officer" would still authorise him to carry out much of his former duties, such as serving legal documents upon people (e.g. accused persons & witnesses in criminal cases, as well as on pursuers and defenders in civil cases such as debt recovery) - but he would no longer be doing any guarding, watching or patrolling. Any arrest he might make would be doubtless done in daylight with plenty of support and authorised by Warrant issued by a Court. No longer would he be expected to do, what he had doubtless had to do during his "Policeman" time - arresting two or more fighting drunks late at night, on his own!

The accounts detailed in the 1848 Annual Meeting show a major change from previous years - no ranks or titles are listed, merely the names of those who submitted accounts. The exception was William Mackay, Merchant, Dornoch who claimed £2:19/9d 'for Bonar Policemen'. This would presumably have been for providing the officers with uniforms, rather than the actual recruiting of the officers!!

The 1848 meeting was also momentous, in that it featured a Memorial from: Sheriff Hugh Lumsden; Alex Gordon, Sheriff Substitute; and W.S. Fraser, Procurator Fiscal.

The document was addressed to the Duke of Sutherland and the other Heritor's of the County of Sutherland. The matter which prompted these three eminent legal men to put pen to paper was the conditions prevailing in the Court House in Dornoch.

"The serious evils resulting from the very deficient state of Court House condition induce us to bring officially under the notice of the Heritor's a matter of such deep importance to the well-being and comfort of the community and we do so believing that the time has arrived when a subject affecting so powerfully the proper administration of Justice to all classes in the County of Sutherland will receive that attention which is so imperatively demands."

The problem was summarised very effectively as:

"The smallness of the Court House at Dornoch; its inaptitude for Jury Trials and the total want of accommodation for Jurors and Witnesses have been the theme of constant complaint for many years".

It was obviously not possible to conduct Jury Trials with the solemnity which the occasion required. The smallness of the Court "brings the audience in such close contact with the Jury Box", which would give opportunity for those in the public gallery to intimidate the jury.

Events at a recent trial had obviously turned what should have been a serious occasion in the annals of Sutherland justice into farce. Exactly how farcical the writers went on to highlight in graphic detail. Looking back now a century and a half later, it makes one smile, and it is hard to believe how such a situation should have been tolerated for so long.

"At the last trial after the Jury had sat for six hours they intimated to the Court that calls of nature were such that an adjournment for ten minutes was indispensable. The Court House was therefore instantly cleared. The jury were driven into the street in charge of a Messenger at Arms and there got mixed with the public (a good ground for setting aside their verdict) and had to relieve themselves in the open street for want of apartments and water closets to which they could retire."

This revelation brings a new meaning to the term 'Natural Justice' and serves to illustrate the very basic level of the problems in the cramped conditions prevailing in the Court House.

There was also a further serious matter. The most important requirement of a jury is to consider the evidence in private, taking as much time as they might require, and to make their own judgement as to guilt.

Only in that most unusual of occurrences - an extremely clear cut case, where all jurors immediately conclude that the accused is most definitely guilty - could the jury foreman almost at once report a unanimous verdict.

Normally however the jury requires to consider the evidence in detail and discuss same amongst themselves, especially where the verdict has to be unanimous. In such cases it is important that jurors have somewhere to retire to consider their verdict. As earlier mentioned, the proximity of the public seating to the jury box meant that those twelve good men and true could not discuss the matter without their deliberations being overheard - and no doubt commented on and contributed to - by the public, especially those with a vested interest in the outcome of the case.

The Sheriff and his co-signatories pointed out that there was nowhere for a jury to deliberate on their verdicts, and this of course was simply ridiculous. It was essential that the jury could be kept secure and sterile from interference. After all what was the point of a fair and impartial trial if the jury could not be afforded the facility to reach their verdict in secret and privacy.

Things were no better in respect of witnesses. It is a time-honoured tradition that defence witnesses and prosecution ones should be kept apart, and again there should not be the opportunity to interfere with any of the witnesses prior to their giving evidence. That is why witnesses who have testified in a case cannot have any contact with those still to enter the witness box, to avoid any suggestion that the already-heard witness has forewarned a fellow witness what is likely to be said in Court.

The facilities of the Court House in Dornoch seem to have been little more than one chamber, with few offices or ante-rooms. Accordingly the document explained how witnesses were treated. They "must be sent to the nearest public house to await their turn to be called."

It will come as no surprise at all to the reader to learn that a combination of boredom, inquisitiveness and the products which the public house purveyed had the end result that: "Many of them wander in the street and come in contact with those who have been examined ..... instances have occurred of witnesses coming forward from public houses in a state of inebriety which of course destroys the effect of their evidence greatly to the detriment of public justice."



The report listed the minimum requirements necessary to provide:

"A Court House to contain at least half as many more rooms than the present one, and filled up in the usual manner so as to separate the jury from the public";

Required were :

- Two jury rooms with water closets;
- A Sheriff's room;
- Two Witness rooms (one for males and another for females - well, this was in Victorian times when decorum required that ladies be kept safe and out of contact with men they might not know) and each should have its own water closet;
- Fire-proof Record Room (Court Records are important documents and the easiest way to dispose of them would be by burning, thus destroying damning and irreplaceable evidence);
- Sheriff Clerk's Room; and
- Room for Examination of prisoners upon apprehension. This room would avoid the need to bring every prisoner before open court at the outset of the criminal procedure and so prevent witnesses going to the public gallery to verify the accused's identity in advance of trial.

While the last room was desirable, the authors of the document saw Potential resistance from the Commissioners of Supply to providing a room which would probably not be used that often, so they offered a 'sweetener'.

They felt that this 'examination' room could also be used as a County Committee Room when not required for the purposes of law.

All of these rooms would require to be on the ground floor, the authors stressed, which appears to have been a subtle way of suggesting that other offices and rooms could be built above at only a modest additional cost.

If these facilities, as detailed above, were provided then:

"There would be nothing farther to complain of".

Remarkably the Commissioners agreed without further ado to give the Green light to such a proposal. They were probably spurred on by the fact that the events cited in the report would have already reached Edinburgh and London, and if they did nothing, then it was likely that a Government delegation would descend upon the County, and make their lives a misery by scrutinising absolutely everything the Commissioners had decided upon for years past.

So the Committee took the unusual step of meeting again, on 7 February 1849, by which time plans had been drawn up and estimates obtained. The plans were accepted and the building was to proceed at a cost of £2,427:16/6d.

This was no mean amount. The building was certainly going to be impressive and spacious - given that 20 years later it would only cost £700 to build a Police Headquarters (and including cells and two houses) for the County of Nairn, just across the Firth.

Although there was no mention of what was to become of the old Court building, it must be assumed that this would remain in County use. Since the only County employees, other than the Keeper of the Mound, were the policemen, it is probable that the 'Force' - or rather Philip Mackay as Superintendent - was finally given some form of office for his use.

The Annual Meeting was as usual held on 30 April, when it was reported that building was now under way. The meeting resolved to appoint Mackay for a further year as 'Superintendent of Police'. The appointments of Robert Elder (Bonar Bridge) and John Macdonald (Golspie) were also confirmed for a further year, all at the previous rate of pay.

While still no mention of replacing PC Sutherland at Helmsdale, for some reason a second man was appointed at Golspie: "on the motion of Mr Gunn the meeting appoint (note: in the Minute the first name is left blank) MacLeod residing in Golspie as an additional Constable for that district with the same salary as other Constables have and subject to the same rules and regulations."

PC MacLeod does not appear to have lasted long, as on 30 April 1850: "the meeting re-appointed Philip Mackay as Superintendent of Police and Robert Elder, John Macdonald and William Cuthbert as Police Constables for the ensuing year with the same salaries as formerly."

It can only be assumed that PC Cuthbert replaced MacLeod, but one is left wondering why Golspie required TWO men while such busier places as Brora and Lairg had NO Police at all. It may be that Macdonald had been temporarily posted to Helmsdale to fill the vacancy there until such time as someone more local was found. It will be recalled that PC Macdonald was from Lairg himself and had willingly gone to Golspie on appointment and thus showed himself prepared to move about the county.

The only other item of news, other than the usual annual matters of upkeep of the Great Road (now the A9) through the County and maintenance of the County Jail, was the fact that the "County Building" (the new Court House) would be "completed by the contractors easily in August."

At the 1851 Annual Meeting it was reported that Joseph Gilchrist had been taken on to replace PC Robert Elder who had died. PC Gilchrist's appointment was confirmed and the meeting also renewed for a further year the appointment of Philip Mackay as Superintendent of Police and of Constables John Macdonald and William Cuthbert.

There then followed an interesting little snippet in the Annual Accounts:  
" for Police Constabulary for year 1851 and 1852: £160 "

It was also reported that the Court House had indeed been finished.

My earlier theory that John Macdonald had been transferred to Helmsdale seems to be borne out by events at the Meeting on 30 April 1852. It was agreed that Superintendent Mackay and Constables Macdonald and Gilchrist would be re-appointed for a further year. PC Cuthbert (who we must presume replaced PC MacLeod at Golspie) is however not mentioned.

Further the Committee appointed one George Battens (or Batters?):  
"as Constable to the vacant station at Helmsdale".

It is extremely unlikely that the Commissioners would have allowed the village of Helmsdale - then probably the busiest place in the county - to remain devoid of Police for the five years since John Sutherland's services were dispensed with in 1847. Hence it certainly seems as though Mr Macdonald had done a stint in the 'Dale, but was presumably now keen to return from whence he came. This would then account for the recruitment of PC Battens.

There then follows a paragraph of particular importance - especially to the rate-payers of Sutherland - but which confused me for a considerable period, as it was totally unpunctuated. I have now applied commas at the points where I consider they make most sense.

(I trust that it gets across the message which the original clerk intended!)

The Meeting "... are happy to observe that, owing to the great diminution of crime which the Fiscal has taken place, to a reduction in expenditure as compared to the former year of £150, as well as to an improved system to be adopted by the Police Force for the suppression of vagrancy, find that it will only be necessary to assess for £400 for this year, being £260 less than the previous year."

A reduction of well over one third of the rates (termed the 'Rogue Money Assessment') would certainly have been well received by the local landed gentry who were the rate-payers.

Unfortunately exactly what the "improved system" which the Police had adopted is not divulged, more is the pity ! It could well be that the officer at Helmsdale made a point of patrolling the roads coming over the Ord of Caithness and down the Strath of Kildonan, in order to intercept any Caithness vagrants and turn them back around again.

The officer at Bonar would have likely done the same at the Bridge of Bonar, preventing entry of undesirables from Ross-shire. The Golspie man, probably in liaison with George Bell, Keeper of the Mound, would have ensured anyone coming down Strath Fleet would be directed (if not actually physically escorted) towards Dornoch, from whence the Superintendent would ensure their return to Ross-shire.

Superintendent Mackay had billed the Committee for £24:9/3d, which would appear to have been at least partially in respect of expenses incurred in his 'other' duties as Criminal Officer and Messenger At Arms.

Another account was received from William Mackay, Merchant in the sum of £9:16/6d " for Policemen's clothes ". Meanwhile the name of John Sutherland, Helmsdale, continued to feature in the accounts, so he was still able to perform duty as a Sheriff's Officer in the public service.

When next the Commissioners of Supply met, on 30 April 1853, it became obvious that the business had already been decided before the meeting. Matters to be discussed later in the meeting meant that (if approved) there was going to be an increase in the Police establishment. So when, at the outset, the Meeting set the Annual Assessment, they took account of such increase, finding:

"That in consequence of an increase in the Police Force £210 will be necessary for the salaries etc of Superintendent and Constables, and £260 to meet other salaries."

The usual annual re-appointment of the Superintendent of police (still Philip Mackay) and of the Keeper of the Fleet Mound (George Bell) followed.

"They also continue the Police Constables for the districts attached to Bonar Bridge, Golspie and Helmsdale subject to the powers of removal and dismissal contained in the engagements originally made with them on their appointments."

This meeting was almost a Police Committee meeting, as there was so much business discussed which related specifically to Policing. Indeed it almost took over the meeting as the major subject, from prisons and roads.

The men at Dornoch, Helmsdale, Golspie and Bonar were obviously doing a good job, and people from throughout the County would encounter the Policemen, either at the County Town or when entering the County. While the officers were providing a good service to the more populated East Coast of the County, however, word would quickly spread among the vagrant community. So most of the itinerants were likely to be bypassing that area and heading over to the north and west coasts. Crime, disease and nuisance was simply being displaced, and the folk of the North West had obviously had enough.

"There was laid before the Meeting a Petition from the Resident Magistrates, Clergy and principal Tenantry in the Parishes of Assynt, Eddrachilles and Durness to His Grace the Duke of Sutherland praying for the protection of a permanent Police Officer in that wide district of the County."

The Duke had passed on the letter to the Convenor of the Commissioners Of Supply, recommending the petition receive favourable consideration. With such a powerful request and the full backing of His Grace, the only thing the Commissioners could do was agree, and they did very eloquently:

"The Meeting, fully concurring in the justice and expediency of affording to the inhabitants of the West and north Coasts of the County the same benefits and protection that those on the East Coast are deriving from the Rural Police, unanimously agree to place an efficient officer on the strength of the establishment for the Scourie District at a salary of Forty Pounds per annum, and they authorise the Procurator Fiscal to engage a proper and qualified man for the purpose."

It was interesting that this time it was the Fiscal who was to organise the appointment. It must surely have been his turn!! Previous appointments had been delegated to Commissioners, and once to a Sub Committee chaired by the Sheriff Substitute. Sadly the Minutes do not state who was given the post as Constable for Scourie, but an appointment was definitely made.

The Commissioners then felt it necessary to put the Police officers in their place. Presumably subsistence-type allowances must have been paid without any particular checking, but now that the Annual Assessment was rising every year, it seems that the time was ripe to remind the officers that their entitlement was only in the following circumstances:

"The Meeting further desire it to be intimated to all the Police Constables that the extra pay of two shillings per day shall only be payable for the time employed by them after they leave their own districts when conducting prisoners to Dornoch and during the time they are on duty out of their respective districts, and that it will not apply for services of any description performed by them within the limits of their own beats which are already sufficiently defined."

In other words, assuming the beats (the first time that the word 'beat' as a Policing term had been mentioned in Sutherland) were much as they are today, the Constable at Helmsdale would not be entitled to any extra remuneration for going to Kinbrace or beyond, even although he would undoubtedly incur expense in terms of feeding or lodging on such a trip which could take several days to complete. He was after all within his own 'patch', and not being called upon to do anything outwith his contract of employment. Similarly the officer at Scourie, in visiting Durness or Elphin, would also be somewhat out of pocket but not entitled to any extra cash.

The question of funding - even at this early stage in the history of policing - had already arisen, with one Mr MacLeod of Cadboll recommending that the Convenor make: "an application to Parliament to relieve the Scottish Counties of the expense of maintaining the Rural Constabulary - to assimilate the Irish Police and to pay them out of the Consolidated Fund."

At this stage in proceedings it should be recalled that no Government grant was payable to Police Forces in Scotland at that point in time. As the matter of provision of policing was a VOLUNTARY one - there was no requirement but if a County felt it had need of a Constabulary Force it could go ahead and set one up by using powers already on the Statute Book - so there was NO funding provided by Central Government. (There were however certain pieces of legislation - some dating back to the time of the Jacobite rebellions, such as Rogue Money - which yielded some finances with which to support the police organisation of the counties.)

This would change with the advent of the 1857 Police (Scotland) Act, which provided for an Exchequer grant of 25 per cent of the cost of wages and uniform costs - provided that the Force was judged efficient in the opinion of the Government Inspector, and he would prove to be a hard man to satisfy.

Mr MacLeod may however have failed to grasp the main reason why the Royal Irish Constabulary was funded by Central Government - it was a National Force, with no County or other local government input. It was also paramilitary, and thus armed. Throughout the years Scottish local government has always sought to keep their police local, and has so far been successful in resisting any attempt to make a National Police Service.

If Sutherland had to apply to Edinburgh (or London, as there was then no Scottish Office other than in Whitehall) to have an extra bobby in Scourie, then it would take a long time, if ever, to achieve - assuming the Whitehall Mandarins ever managed to establish where the Parish of Eddrachilles was !

In any event the Meeting decided that there was no need for any steps in the matter as they were aware that a Committee of the House of Commons had just been appointed on that subject. The end result would be the 1857 Police Act.

The establishment of Sutherland Constabulary in 1853 thus comprised 5 men:

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DORNOCH	BONAR	GOLSPIE	HELMSDALE	SCOURIE
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Superintendent	Constable	Constable	Constable	Constable
P MACKAY	?	?	G BATTENS	?
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It does seem as though, despite the fact that Philip Mackay was in nominal charge of the Force, there was very little in the way of a proper organisation in existence. Rather the men seemed to be operating independently in separate units, with their only things in common being to keep vagrants out of the County (or out of their own district!) and to take arrested persons to Dornoch.

Another addition to the manpower of the Force came about in 1854 as a result of a further petition produced at the Annual Meeting - this time from the Tongue area on the North Coast. With the East Coast well policed, and the West Coast and North West corner now served by the man at Scourie, the only 'open door' was from Caithness along the north Coast.

It was also probably still possible for vagrants to enter Sutherland unseen from the south by sneaking up the south west bank of the Kyle of Sutherland.

Since there was no policeman at Lairg, it was therefore an easy matter to penetrate into the centre of the county. From there it would then simply be over The Crask to Altnaharra before moving on to the more fertile area in the Parish of Tongue.

As a result the Meeting agreed, with a resolution almost identical to that of the previous year, to provide a Constable for the Tongue area. The financial aspect was covered too:

"In consequence of a contemplated increase to the Police Force, £258 will be necessary to pay the salaries of the Superintendent and 5 Constables, including one suit of clothing for the latter."

It is interesting to note that, while the Constables were being given an annual issue of uniform, the Superintendent was not. This seems to have been a tradition which continues to this date that Chief Officers of a Police force are not provided with uniform free. It does seem therefore that Philip Mackay had by this time become recognised as a proper Chief Officer, although he was still expected to do the work of an ordinary Constable as well as his administrative functions as head of the Force.

The request from the North Coast public for a police officer had been submitted by Mr Horsburgh on behalf of all the resident Justices of the Peace in that District. Sadly his precise reasons for seeking a policeman were not reproduced in the Minutes of the Meeting.

Again the Meeting authorised and tasked the Procurator Fiscal to:

"Engage a properly qualified man for the purpose" at £40 per annum.

The new man for the North Coast was based at Farr, and he was continued in post at the Annual Meeting on 30 April 1855. Philip Mackay also had his contract as Superintendent renewed for a further 12 months, while the other constables attached to Helmsdale, Golspie, Bonar Bridge and Scourie were similarly retained on the Establishment.

A year later, all the staff were continued in post for a further term. One account rendered for payment at that meeting, on 30 April 1856, was described as being "included in the Report of the Committee for Policemen's uniform" and came to £36:6:0d.

Also listed as being in receipt of expenses were:

Philip Mackay;  
George Batters, Helmsdale;  
William Fraser, PC, Scourie; and  
David Ross, Bar Officer.

One presumes that the last named had been taken on as Court Officer at Dornoch, in order that Philip Mackay could concentrate upon his Police responsibilities.

On 14 January 1857 a Special Meeting of the Commissioners was convened, and James Campbell, Sheriff Substitute, explained that it had



been called:

"To consider the position of the County with reference to the rural Police force which appeared to him to be unsatisfactory as regarded the efficiency of some of the Officers on the Establishment."

Now whether this was a form of 'witch-hunt', or just a case of a 'new broom' seeking to brush clean, is unclear. In any event the meeting then discussed the matter 'anxiously and deliberately', before coming to the unanimous decision that:

"It would be expedient to dispense with the services of Philip Mackay at the end of his engagement on 30th April next and likewise with those of Donald Clark at Golspie and John Macdonald at Bonar, and the Clerk was instructed to intimate to them this resolution accordingly."

The Clerk was also directed to insert a Notice in the North British Advertiser newspaper for a Superintendent of Police for the County at an annual salary of £60, the same sum as Philip Mackay was currently receiving. It was also left to the Clerk to look for other men 'of some experience' to fill the vacancies caused by the paying-off of Clark and Macdonald.

When next the Sutherland Commissioners of Supply convened, at their Annual Meeting on 4 May 1857, Philip Mackay had already completed his contract and the Force - if such it could be termed - was without a leader. Somewhat belatedly the Meeting resolved to confirm their earlier decisions Concerning dispensing with the services of Mackay and the two Constables.

The clerk intimated that 'several Candidates of tried experience' had applied for the post of Superintendent. These applications had been passed on to Sheriff Lumsden, Principal Sheriff of the County, who had recommended Mr Peter Ewan of Aberdeen as appearing the most suitable. There had obviously already been some communication on the matter, as it was reported to the Meeting that Mr Ewan was prepared to accept the post at an annual salary of £70, to include an allowance for House Rent.

Despite the fact that he was looking for more money than had been originally set, Mr Ewan's offer was accepted by the Commissioners. It would seem that they felt they were getting a good man, who would be worth the extra cash.

Possibly the other suitable candidates also intimated that the salary as advertised was insufficient.

Ewan would also be a 'proper' Chief Officer, with previous experience,

probably in the Aberdeen City Police or the Aberdeenshire Constabulary.

So it was that Peter Ewan was appointed Superintendent with Immediate effect, and was to be so informed with the request that he would enter on his duties on or before the 15th day of May - only eleven days hence.

The meeting also resolved to continue the Constables for the five districts, subject to the usual powers. Although it does not say, one must assume that the two Constables singled out to be dispensed with were indeed paid off. It was remitted to the Sheriff Substitute and Procurator Fiscal "to make such changes as may be considered expedient by them." Presumably this meant the hiring and firing of manpower as necessary, more particularly to fill the two vacancies at Bonar and Golspie.

Of particular interest is the fact that the Meeting saw fit to state that: "The salaries for the officers at Scourie and Farr to be at the rate of £40 per annum and for those at the other Stations £35 per annum."

Quite why two men on the west side of the County should be singled out for extra remuneration is not made clear, but it may be simply because of the vast area they had to cover in comparison to their brother officers on the East County. It will be recalled that there had earlier been the vexed question of 'out of pocket' expenses, and it may be that this resolution was designed to even things up, so that the two West men were in effect receiving travelling and lodging expenses which were necessarily incurred in perambulating their immense beats.

Among the accounts this year were those in respect of:

George Batters, PC, Helmsdale;  
William Fraser, PC, Scourie; and  
William Mackay, PC, Farr.

There was also a bill from William Mackay, Merchant at Dornoch in the sum of £20:13:01d which was "for Policemen's uniforms".

On 17 October 1857 two special meetings were convened. The first, at which all the powers-that-be attended (including the Duke of Sutherland himself), was to mark the retrial - after 31 years in office - of Sheriff Lumsden. He was away back to his Aberdeenshire farm. Perhaps this connection explained the appointment of Peter Ewan - had Mr Ewan been the Sheriff's local bobby in Aberdeenshire? Doubtless the Sheriff returned to Aberdeenshire frequently and so would keep abreast of local policing matters and methods thereabouts, as well as checking up on his agricultural interests!

The second meeting, which significantly the High and Mighty did NOT attend, had been: "called by advertisement in the Edinburgh Gazette of 18<sup>th</sup> September and Inverness Courier of 17<sup>th</sup> September both last to meet time and place above mentioned in pursuance of the 1<sup>st</sup> Section of the Act 20 & 21 Victoria Cap. 72 entitled 'An Act to render more effectual the Police in Counties and Burghs in Scotland'.

The County Convenor, George Dempster of Skibo, produced the advertisements, the Police (Scotland) Act itself and a letter dated 23 September addressed to him by Colonel John Kinloch, who was termed 'Her Majesty's Inspector of Police for Scotland'.

Colonel Kinloch had a statutory duty to inspect and report upon the efficiency of each Police Force in Scotland, and it was apparent that he was giving the County of Sutherland notice to expect his arrival. This letter would strike panic in more than one local authority in Scotland, and caused more than a little heart flutter in a good many others, including Sutherland it would seem!

Mr Dempster went on to give an interesting statement of fact as regards the Constabulary in Sutherland at the time. This minute was as much for Kinloch's benefit as anyone at the meeting.

"The Convenor then stated that the existing Police Force maintained by the County consisted of one Superintendent at a salary of £70 who in addition thereto as principal Criminal Officer draws the usual fees from Exchequer and County for all business performed by him; two Constables at salaries of £40 each, and three at £35 per annum; that besides their salaries these Constables receive one Uniform Coat, Trousers and Cap every year at a cost of £5:10/- each, making the total annual expense to the County £272:10/- for salaries and clothing, but this was not all the expense borne by the County as he, the Convenor, found that fees were paid to these Constables for the suppression of vagrancy and for Criminal Business not repaid by Exchequer which averaged £25 per annum more."

The Convenor then reported that he had been doing his own detective work as to what was likely to be regarded as an adequate Force to meet the provisions of the Act, 'so as to afford due protection to the whole populace'.

He therefore proposed that as from 16 March 1858 - the date on which the new Act took effect - the Sutherland Police Force should comprise:

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One Chief Constable at a salary including the	
keep of a Horse and House Rent .....	£150: 0:0
One Superintendent at .....	£ 45: 0:0
Three Constables at £40 each .....	£120: 0:0
Four Constables at £36:8:0 each .....	£145:12:0
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	£460:12:0
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He proposed that these salaries should be inclusive of maintenance and lodging, but excluding uniform clothing and footwear. Each man should receive one complete suit of uniform and a greatcoat in the first year, and another suit of uniform each year thereafter with a greatcoat to be supplied every alternate year.

In addition the sum of one guinea (£1:1:0d) should be paid, in lieu of footwear being provided. It should be noted that this was slightly less than was the norm in other Highland county Forces at that time, where 6d was the average allowance (£2:6:0d per annum).

Having then heard the views of the Sheriff Substitute, Procurator Fiscal and Superintendent Ewan, the Meeting thereafter resolved that they were "perfectly satisfied that the number of men and salaries and allowances suggested are sufficient to meet all the wants of this County and do therefore approve and adopt the same."

It was then directed that copies of that Minute should be sent to the Home Secretary and to Colonel Kinloch. That would make those gentlemen sit up and take notice, to see that County of Sutherland was so organised in advance of the 'go-live' date of the legislation.

As for Superintendent Ewan, he must have thought that it was Christmas!!

He had been taken on for more money than the job originally carried, and now here he was - assuming he was to get the new job as Chief Constable - in line for the new top job at more than double his present salary.

Not only that - but he was going to be provided with a proper Deputy as well, whereas at present he was the only 'boss' (indeed the only supervisor) in the organisation.

The Meeting concluded its deliberations for this most eventful (and very

constructive!) day by appointing a Police Committee - as required by Section 2 of the Act - which would remain in office until the next Annual Meeting of the Commissioners on 30 April 1858.

The Committee, which would have the Sheriff or Sheriff Substitute as its convenor, would comprise:

- The Lord Lieutenant
- The Sheriff of the County or (in his absence),  
the Sheriff Substitute
- The Marquis of Stafford
- George Dempster of Skibo
- George Loch of Kirtomy
- Daniel Gilchrist of Ospisdale and
- George Gunn of Meikle Swordale

The best laid plans can of course go wrong! The Secretary of State had not after all turned the expected cart-wheels on learning of Sutherland being so organised. There was to be NO rubber-stamping of the Sutherland proposals, and this very clearly upset the Commissioners of Supply a great deal.

When they met on 10 November 1857, it was to be told that the Secretary Of State had certainly received their Resolutions, but that he had seen fit to draw their attention to: "the portions of the said Rules which relate to the pay and clothing of the future police of this County".

George Loch of Kirtomy, who chaired the meeting, launched into a quite considerable oration on the subject. Loch and his colleagues were obviously not used to having their decisions questioned. Perhaps they simply did not realise that they were in a period of major change for the whole country, where standards were being set. Individuality, where one County was remote from its brothers and could do as it liked, was being phased out. All would henceforth play the same game, on the same pitch, to the same rules.

These rules would be made by the Government, hitherto a relatively remote - and perhaps even almost mythical - type of authority, but which (as the rest of rural Scotland was already finding out) was now becoming a very real and effective power, and able to enforce its edicts by sending its inspectorate out to even the remotest location via the ever-improving transport networks.

These Inspectors also had power, in that they reported back without fear or favour to the Scottish (Scotch!) Office and if the report was not a positive one, financial sanctions could - and would - be imposed. No Government grant towards the upkeep of the Force would be forthcoming.

Loch stated that: "the Meeting must be well aware of the Great Gains

bestowed by the Commissioners in instituting the fullest enquiries before coming to those Resolutions which they were now called upon to reconsider".

He went to stress that "it was the opinion of all the Law officials, and of the present Superintendent of Police" that the scale of salaries set at the previous meeting was sufficient to ensure that it would attract men who were suitably qualified for the job and able to discharge their duties very well.

He continued that, while higher salaries might be acceptable in other Counties which were "differently circumstanced from Sutherland", it had been decided not to set the rates of pay higher than what was considered as "fair and adequate" for what was expected of the men.

The intention was, rather than have fewer men at higher wages, to have a larger force than other neighbouring Counties might have for a similar population.

"Smaller districts or beats would so far render the duties of the men easier and less irksome and be of greater advantage to them than if the number of Constables were reduced and their pay enlarged."

In another time this man could have sold fridges to Eskimos, but could he sell this strategy to a man based in Rhiconich whose beat was the size of some of the smaller European countries?

Turning to the salary of the Chief Constable, Loch pointed out that the minimum amount set by the Government was £250. Now it will be recalled that Mr Ewan had been on a salary of £70 per annum before the new Act took effect, and he was now to get more than double that - £150. He would not have complained at that increase!

There was always the danger from Mr Ewan's viewpoint that, if the job was pitched at a much higher salary, then there would be lots more interest (and a higher calibre of applicant!!) from the larger Forces in the South. The chances were that raising the salary to £250 would lose him the job.

Loch had a different reason for objecting to the £250 minimum. It would, he maintained, "be entirely disproportioned to his (Chief Constable's) social status in the County". The fact was that such a sum was more than the Fiscal or Sheriff Clerk received, and thus they would be up in arms - and of course be seeking a raise too! Inflation was obviously a concern then, as now.

Other matters raised by the Secretary of State were rather more trifling. The Government Rules laid down that one more pair of trousers were to be supplied than stipulated by the County. (The Committee gave in on this one!)

The rank of Superintendent was swiftly down-graded by the Committee to that of Sergeant - which is what it should have been at the outset (so they said, anyway!). As a result the salary could be pitched at 19 shillings per week, which worked out at £49:8/- per annum. This was actually £4:8/- a year MORE than originally intended for the (subordinate) Superintendent!!

The Secretary of State had also taken exception to the plan for two different pay rates in respect of Constables. It had been intended to have Three Constables at £40 each per annum and FOUR at £36.8/-. Now they agreed to standardise the salaries at 15/- each per week.

This would mean a saving of £10.8/- overall, so this more than evened things up from the grudging increase to be given to the Sergeant. Indeed it would also have covered the cost of the extra pair of trousers too. So, if the Government approved, everybody would win ! - except the men of course, but what else is new?

Unfortunately the bulk of business involving the Force thereafter appears to have been recorded in the Police Committee Minute Book, which has not been located. Only occasionally were matters referred to the full Committee of Commissioners of Supply. There is thus no record of who was appointed to the new Force, other than Peter Ewan of course.

The Force's surviving 'Personal Record and Defaulter' Book was not Commenced until the mid-1860's, so that similarly does not enlighten us any as to the original compliment of the Force.

What IS known is that the County was divided into eight Districts, each of which would have had one Constable, except perhaps Dornoch (of Helmsdale) which would have had a Sergeant instead. These Districts were:

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| BETTYHILL |
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| RHICONICH |      | HELMSDALE |
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| LOCHINVER |      | BRORA   |
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| GOLSPIE   |
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| BONAR    |      | DORNOCH |
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There is no mention of any further problems with Whitehall, so one

supposes that the Government accepted the revised proposals.

Meanwhile, across the Firth in Nairnshire the fledgling Police Committee was having similar dialogue with the powers-that-be. Nairnshire (excluding the Burgh of Nairn) had proposed a force of four, comprising a Chief Officer and three Ordinary Constables. The annual salary for the commanding officer was to be £70, and needless to say this was not acceptable to the Secretary of State.

Plans were then laid by Nairnshire to unite with another County - but then amended Rules were issued by Whitehall, and all-of-a-sudden Nairnshire was permitted to have its own Force - with a Chief Constable on a salary of £100 per year. An allowance for transport was to be an extra. Obviously the Goal posts had moved in the interim, perhaps because smaller Counties (in terms of Police manpower) were not overly keen to merge, and the minimum salary of £250 for the Chief was so very 'over the top'. Interestingly, Nairnshire's 'Ordinary Constables' were also to be paid the self-same sum of 15 shillings per week.

These smaller Counties, insignificant on the map to the far-off Mandarins at Whitehall, did however have some clout - in that the landed gentry who owned much of the Counties frequented, and usually had one (or more) home in, the London and Home Counties area, and would have a seat in the House of Lords.

Thus they were able to put across, into the most appropriate and influential ear, the concerns of local Police Committees. Such 'words to the wise' were undoubtedly effective, and the original proposals for policing were somewhat 'watered down' by the time the Act finally took effect.

So, on 15 March 1858, the new Sutherland shire Constabulary came into being, under the command of Mr Ewan. It was evident that not all of the Constables had been re-hired for the new Force.

When the Commissioners of Supply duly met for the first Annual Meeting – on 30th April 1858 - it was reported that:

"there was laid before the Meeting an application from four of the late Police Constables who, on account of their ages being above 40 and other circumstances, were not engaged by the Chief Constable to form part of the new force, claiming allowances to carry them and their families from their Stations to their former residencies and in consideration of being thrown out of employment."

In a rather generous (guilty?) gesture, it was agreed that each of these men would be given £5 "in full of all claims upon the County."

The Meeting now had to levy two different rates in respect of Law



Enforcement, namely the 'Rogue Money and County Assessment', and also that in respect of the cost of running the Police. It was reckoned that the Rogue Money costs would be £220. As regards the "Police Assessment":

"The Meeting having carefully examined the various sections and provisions of said Act (the Police Act of 1857), with an estimate prepared by the chief (Note: NO capital 'C' at 'chief') Constable of the probable sum that may be required to defray the expense of pay, clothing and contingencies of the Police Force of this County for the period of 14 months from the 15th of March last to the 15th of May 1859 find that it will be necessary to provide a fund of £798 to meet these in terms of section 29 although one fourth thereof will hereafter be reimbursed by Government."

The plan was obviously to build up a surplus, for emergencies as, in future, the sum calculated was AFTER deduction of the one-quarter Exchequer grant.

Colonel Kinloch conducted his first annual inspection of the Sutherland Force during 1858, and reported that the County had a force of EIGHT men to police 25,793 people and a land area of 1,207,188 acres. He seemed to be quite satisfied with things. It is interesting that there was a shortfall of one man from the intended establishment of a Chief, a Sergeant and Seven Constables. It is very likely that the post of Sergeant (and Deputy Chief Constable) had simply not been filled by that stage.

On 30 April 1859 the Commissioners of Supply met again to set the Annual assessments. Rogue Money (excluding Police) was set at £180.

The Police Assessment for the period 15/3/1859 - 15/3/1860 was fixed at £306. In the accounts it can be seen that the former Superintendent, Philip Mackay, was still active as Sheriff Officer and claimed for £2:2:6d. Chief Constable Peter Ewan lodged claims for a total of £12:9:7d in expenses.

One of the requirements of the 1857 Act was for the Chief Constable to produce a book of Rules and Instructions for the government of the Force. Peter Ewan produced such a document on 24 October 1859, which was approved by George Dingwall Fordyce, Sheriff of Sutherland and Caithness, four days later. Though similar, in many parts, to those issued by other Forces of the period, some localised items were included.

In addition to the fairly standard issue of uniform, each Constable would be issued with the following 'articles of equipment':

1 Baton;

1 Pair Handcuffs;  
1 Lantern;  
1 Belt;  
1 Tape Measuring Line; and  
1 Pair Compasses.

To ensure that all information circulated was timeously received:  
"25. Constables residing at a distance from headquarters must either call or send to the post-office at every delivery of letters - if practicable, Sunday included."

Normally these booklets forbade a Constable entering a public house on duty unless in course of that duty. Mr Ewan appreciated the distances involved and the communications problems, and so he gave permission for any constable to do so for refreshment or meals, if authorised by his superior. The next portion (in the copy of the book which the author has in his possession) has been underlined by the officer to whom the book was first issued:

"In the country, when the authority of a superior officer cannot be had, he may take refreshment in a public-house; but in all cases he must not remain longer than is absolutely necessary."

That effectively cover their rears - but the next paragraph totally prohibited any taking of alcohol at, or from the keeper of, such premises, and promised dismissal as the only punishment. Indeed any member of the force BEING IN THE HABIT OF drinking, or being drunk, on duty would result in immediate dismissal.

It does seem however as though the 'odd' wee nip just might possibly be excusable! A reviver after a night's trudging through a blizzard in Strathullie, where the wind cuts you to the bone, would seem to be covered!

Having a friendly dram with a supervisor would however be no excuse, since: "29. Any Serjeant or other superior officer known to drink with or take drink from a constable when either is on duty will be reduced in grade, and he and the constable will be liable to be dismissed."

Note the 'possibility' only in the foregoing. It was not going to be mandatory, and rightly so since bosses felt the cold too. The subtle hint here is obviously the "known to" bit - so keep it to yourselves!

Constables were to take their visiting books with them, for signature by all those respectable members of the community who he should make a point of calling upon on his daily patrol. They would be expected to call on all Commissioners of Supply and Justices of the Peace, who would be able to give them instructions (and the benefit of their local knowledge), and also on:

"Proprietors, Factors, Ministers, and respectable Farmers and

Teachers, who will be asked to sign the book and to note the date and hour of the call, and they will also be requested to set forth therein any complaints or remarks they may have to make respecting the police, etc."

The considerable amount of sheep in the county merits particular attention in respect of enquiries into sheep-stealing. Among other lines of enquiry, the officer is exhorted to search the dung-heap. I've done a few in my time!!

The mention of the rank of Sergeant, and the requirement for there to be an officer designated as Deputy Chief Constable, tends to indicate that there was already a Sergeant in post, which would infer that one of the Beats - probably on the West side of the County - had not been filled as yet.

Colonel Kinloch's next Annual Report - covering the period March 1859 to March 1860 - noted that the Force had now grown to NINE. All districts must by then have been manned. There were also proposals to build a police station in the County Town of Dornoch. Presumably the Force Headquarters at that time was merely a spare room (or two) within the Sheriff Courthouse, or in the old Court building (the one lacking the toilet facilities!!). Either would have been much less than satisfactory, being without any suitable accommodation in which to lodge prisoners - brought in from all parts of the county for Court appearance before the Sheriff.

It is very possible that the increase - by one - in the establishment was on account of the appointment of a new Sergeant (and Deputy Chief Constable).

It may well be that such appointment was an Alexander McHardy - of whom Much more later.

McHardy, who had served 16 months in the Aberdeenshire Constabulary, was obviously blessed with tremendous potential - as would be seen later in his Police career - and certainly at that time talented officers tended to climb the promotion ladder very, very quickly!

The salary of Chief Constable Ewan in 1859 is recorded by Colonel Kinloch As £200, which as we know included an allowance of £50 for the keep of a horse. By way of comparison, the Chief Constable of Caithness was at that time in receipt of £150 (plus £25 for the keep of a horse), while Ross-shire's Chief received £200 per annum, plus an additional £5 (yes, five!) for a horse.

Kinloch took a special interest in the village of Helmsdale, which he observed was also scheduled to receive a police office, and which he reported with interest was: "attracting many boats' crews of herring fishermen in the autumn".

The need for a police station in the 'Dale, and more particularly the need

for a cell or two, is best indicated by events on the Island of Lewis as recounted in Kinloch's report on the Ross-shire Police for the same year:

"Trouble broke out among the herring people at Stornoway; three officers had to cope without lock-up facilities. The police detained the rioters in the street and took them to their own private lodgings until a magistrate's warrant was produced to put them in prison."

New lodgings would doubtless have had to be sought after that event! The thought of noisy drunks ponging of fish and liquor, handcuffed to the bed in the spare room, would not have endeared the bobbies to their landladies.

It has long been a source of pride in the Scottish legal system that a person may not be put in prison until appearing before a Sheriff or Magistrate. Any person detained in custody must be brought before a court on the next lawful day, or released to be summonsed later.

Such is the reason for police cells being needed, to keep malefactors pending court appearance. It would be too easy to simply lodge someone straight in jail and then forget about bringing them to court.

Kinloch warned of the early existence of what we now call "travelling Criminals", and Sutherland in particular was going to have problems from these persons. We tend to think that travel was difficult in those days, before the coming of the railway, but Mr Kinloch's observations are very enlightening on that score:

"There are 'gangs' or 'tribes' of tinkers who live principally in Caithness-shire, but make periodic tours through different parts of Scotland. A gang of these people, with horses and carts, after passing through Argyle and Perthshire a few months ago, were detected by the police in Forfarshire, where they were carrying on their depredations; in the carts were found some of their plunder from Perthshire and elsewhere; two of them were convicted of various acts of theft; and they are known at Aberdeen and Wick as 'habit and repute' common thieves. Another gang from Caithness-shire has lately been passed out of the same county by the police."

That itinerary is substantial and seems to have been down the west coast, as far as Oban, and then across to the East coast and back up via Aberdeen.

The route would cross a good number of county boundaries and would have kept the local bobbies on their toes throughout.

Mr Ewan's Rules had covered this, by carefully warning his men that they:

"ought to be zealous and attentive in preventing intrusion into their districts of vagabonds, sorners, sturdy beggars, vagabonds living idle and fleeing labour, gypsies, and those whose object is to plunder and impose upon the public, and who are suspicious or in the company of improper characters. They ought to watch the different roads by which such persons are most likely to approach their districts, and they must keep a sharp look-out for Thimblers, Cardsharps, and Gamblers of all kinds, and do all in their power to prevent such parties from imposing upon or defrauding the public by unlawful games or deceptive procedure or acting."

(I can visualise "Proud Mary" paddle-steamer chugging down Strathullie, with Card Sharks and Riverboat Gamblers aboard!! "Big Wheels keep on turning!"

Sorry, a wee bit of regression to my rock & roll youth there)

Action to be taken in respect of these types of persons was, simply, to watch them like a hawk, night and day, and: 'follow them about closely, either until they act so as to warrant apprehension, or till they leave the county.'

If that course of action, which today would result in complaints of harassment, did not work? Then it seems Mr Ewan would take charge himself:

"If such persons, notwithstanding the constable's remonstrances, persist in remaining within the county, in a state of idleness and without the means of honest livelihood, so long as to make it plain that they must be gaining a subsistence either by thieving or by common begging, the constable should report to the Chief Constable for directions."

The 1860 Annual Meeting set Rogue Money Assessment at £340, while the Police Assessment was to be £570. A Dr Soutar presented an account in the sum of £5 'for Policeman'. This is likely to have been a medical examination for the extra man recruited, as noted by Kinloch.

Mr Ewan also produced accounts in the sum of £16:3:6d and:

"A Report by the Chief Constable Mr Ewan on the state of crime within the County for the year ended 31 March last was then read, showing a decrease since the year preceding of Trials and Convictions."

This report was a requirement of the Act, and the wording of the minute is

rather intriguing. Did it mean that crime had fallen - which was to be hoped since that was the primary purpose of the 'new Police' - or did it mean that there had simply been fewer detections ?

The Commissioners met again on 30 April 1861, when a further increase in the Rogue Money assessment was set, this year being £200. The sum of £350 was to be required as the Police assessment for the year to 15/3/62, to cover the cost of salaries, uniforms and other matters.

"The meeting do further assess a sum of £400 towards the expense of erecting a Police Station in Dornoch ... in terms of a pledge given (to) Colonel Kinloch, Her Majesty's Inspector of the Constabulary force in Scotland, as the condition under which he reported the police force of this County efficient, entitling them to draw the Government allowance of 25 per cent, but this sum was not to be collected before the first day of October next."

The plans of the Station, and all matters relating to it, along with the contracts involved, were delegated to the Police Committee with full powers to take the matter forward to completion. Mr Ewan also produced his Annual Report on the state of crime, and the Report was found to be satisfactory.

Alexander McHardy would have left the Sutherland force around May 1861, transferring to the Fife Constabulary. It is very likely that he did so in a promoted rank. He would return to Dornoch in due course - to succeed Ewan as Chief Constable.

In Kinloch's 1861 report (produced in April 1862), it was noted that plans were well advanced for the new Headquarters at Dornoch. He doubtless gave a wee chuckle at what really amounted to blackmail having paid off. It was no easy job he was doing, and inspection was only a part of it. Trying to make the thrifty men of local government see the benefits to be gained from an effective and efficient Police force was hard work.

Kinloch also intimated that the tinkers previously referred to were causing problems in the county. Obviously well versed in the art of removing anything which was not nailed down, they would doubtless be able to effect removal of property from Sutherland before the owner had even realised it had gone.

In the face of such adversity, the Force continued to receive a good report, although the nine men - including of course the Chief Constable, who would be expected to do all the administration AND still perform the duties of a Constable too - had a massive area to cover.

The Rogue Money assessment took another upwards hike at the Annual Meeting held on 30/4/1862. Now it was to be £250. As regards the Police

## Assessment:

"The Commissioners do therefore assess ... in the sum of £380, with a further sum of £300 to complete the Police Station now in the course of erection in the Burgh of Dornoch."

Mr Ewan's Annual Report presented to the Meeting was again 'satisfactory'.

The next (March 1862 - March 1863) Inspection Report by Colonel Kinloch saw mention of new buildings for Bettyhill, Lochinver and Rhiconich, presumably due largely to the boom in herring fishing, although there was no mention of extra manpower being provided in this respect. By way of comparison, the neighbouring Force of Ross-shire at that time had a number of supernumerary constables employed for 'herring fishery protection'.

As an indication of the itinerant population of the time (from which most of the crime emanated), Kinloch noted that there were 62,278 vagrants found in Scotland during 1862/63. By comparison, he recorded that there were 2,560 police officers in Scotland at that time. Three of that number were the poor bobbies in Stornoway whose landlady problems would have continued, as there was still no provision of police cells in Lewis.

Of interest is the fact that the mainland portion of Ross-shire had only eleven policemen at the time of Kinloch's 1862/63 Report, including the Chief Constable.

In addition, the Burgh of Dingwall 'boasted' a Police force of TWO men, and the Black Isle (alias Cromartyshire) had two forces - the County one and one for the Burgh of Cromarty.

The only problem was that these forces seemed to have recruitment problems!

The Burgh of Cromarty had only ONE police constable - but at least that was one more than the County ! Perhaps that is where the term 'no man's land' comes from? (Sorry!)

Mr Kinloch must have been glad to reach Sutherland, where at least there was a proper and organised Force, because Ross and Cromarty had him tearing his hair. He had plenty problems too in Caithness, where he would generate reams about Pulteneytown, which insisted on retaining its own little Police Force separate from the rest of the County. (It was able to do that – and also to hold out against being "railroaded" into submission - because of its unique position in law, having been set up as a new harbour-community entity by the British Fisheries Society, complete with its own Act of Parliament.) It was - and still is - the conurbation on the south side of the river Wick, where is located the main Wick Harbour. Its name lives on, largely through the local malt whisky "Old Pulteney", which is very appropriate as regards the early history of policing of the place - but that's

another story!

On 31 March 1862, there joined the Sutherland Force a man who would go on to be one of its longest and greatest servants. Formerly a Farm Servant, George Bridgeford had served 4 years in the Aberdeenshire Constabulary, when he transferred - apparently in the rank of Sergeant - to Sutherland.

Whether he held such rank before his transfer is unknown, but he certainly appears to have held that rank from the time he started in Sutherland.

Aged only 27 years upon his arrival in Sutherland, he was also appointed Deputy Chief Constable. He would go on to serve no less than 42 years in the Sutherland Constabulary, finally retiring in November 1904 - when he reached the age of 70. In that time he would see off three Chief Constables.

When the Annual Meeting of the Commissioners of Supply convened on 30 April 1863, those who would be called upon to pay the assessments would have been bracing themselves for yet another shock to the system.

They were not to be disappointed! The Rogue Money was set at £300, while the Police Assessment came to: "£850 including a balance due to the Bank disbursed on account of erecting the new Police Station." Value for money was important, and value the people of Sutherland got! That building would be used as a Police Station for nearly 120 years.

Mr Ewan had submitted accounts totalling £22:2:0d. All were accepted without question except for one in the sum of £5:4:6d, charged for 'Mail Gigs'. It would seem that he had availed himself of the 19th century equivalent of the post-bus to get around the North and West of his command area.

The Meeting was not surprisingly unimpressed, since:

"those charges are supposed to be provided for in his allowance of £50 per annum in raise of a horse to cover expenses for travelling to remote parts of the county."

Rather than have a shouting match however, it was decided to refer the matter to the Principal Sheriff, and to accept his opinion. As it was not mentioned thereafter, the outcome is not clear.

Incidentally it is worth pointing out that nearby Cromartyshire did in 1863 eventually get a policeman of sorts - the Heritors of Resolis decided to appoint a PARISH constable (i.e. from old-style legislation) at a salary of £10 per annum.

At the time, there certainly was a boom in the herring fishing industry, which was keeping Police officers busy in all the Highland Counties. Big



money meant big shots - of whisky - being consumed. For example, Kinloch reported that Lewis had had 205 arrests during 1863, while Sutherland continued to receive a good - if brief - report from him.

Wastage in the service in the early days was considerable. Of the men who were in the Sutherland Force upon its reorganisation in March 1858, only one lasted through to 1863. He was Constable Donald Stuart, a native of Banffshire, who had previously served 2 years and 7 months in Aberdeen City Police. He went on to retire on pension in 1891 after 36 years service.

It would seem that George Bridgeford was the man who instituted the Police Personal Record and Defaulter Book, probably at the behest of Colonel Kinloch. The book appears to have been taken into use during 1864 or 1865 and records details (some briefer than others) of each officer who served in the force thereafter.

The Book makes fascinating reading, and has enabled compilation of a database in order to establish (with some educated guesses in respect of missing entries) the establishment and location of members of the force throughout the years.

The 1864 Annual Meeting produced the usual accounts but surprisingly The name of Peter Ewan did not feature. Instead accounts were submitted by Sergeant Bridgeford (for 29/3d) and PC James Alexander , Bonar (for 2/6d). PC Alexander does not feature in the Personal Record Book so his period of service must have been brief.

So - why does Mr Ewan not get a mention? It does seem strange that his subordinates should submit accounts and yet he does not. Perhaps he had deliberately not incurred ANY outlay after his 'Mail Gig' bill the year before. Maybe too his health took a turn for the worse.

In any event it was minuted that the Report on the state of crime was produced by the Chief Constable, as per usual. It is not unlikely that this document could have been delegated to Bridgeford to produce.

Rogue Money Assessment dropped somewhat, back down to £250, while the cost of maintaining the Police force was to be £572 (of which £5:6/11d was due to be paid by the Burgh of Dornoch).

The Police in Sutherland, in common with all Scottish Counties bar Ross And Argyll, were issued with leather leggings during 1864. Kinloch obviously was deliberate in his mentioning the forces who did NOT provide such items, no doubt in an effort to shame them into so doing.

Undoubtedly these accessories would have been well received. Worn over boots, no rain or mud or snow would get inside the footwear. There

were no wellington boots or nylon over-trousers then! With diseases of farm animals being rife - largely due to the travelling vagrants who if they could, would sleep in a barn or hay store - it was necessary to disinfect the footwear of visitors at farms. Wearing these leather leggings made it a lot easier, and less uncomfortable, for the Police as they went from farm to farm in their travels.

Kinloch noted that the year also saw Scottish forces begin to adopt 'new uniform and head-dress' of the London Metropolitan Police – helmets instead of top hats, tunics in lieu of swallow-tail coats. Identity numbers, formerly embroidered on the coat breast and thus difficult to make out, were replaced by metal numerals of the high-neck collar of the new tunic.

The rank of Sergeant (originally 'Serjeant') was now denoted by three chevrons on the tunic sleeve, in place of a former practice which varied between forces and was not always easily seen. Interestingly the only garments upon which the chevrons were so worn were the tunic and the greatcoat. Both have nowadays gone to the great Clothing Store in the sky. Sergeants now wear metal chevrons on the epaulettes on ALL types of uniform.

Thus history repeats itself, as the rank insignia is not always easily seen.

By the time of the 1865 Annual Meeting, held on 1 May, savings were beginning to be made, with the Rogue Money coming down to £2490 and the Police Assessment also down considerably, now set at £460. Again the Report on the state of crime was produced by the Chief Constable, and no police officer featured in the accounts. It is likely that all such matters of a minor nature were being passed by the Police Committee.

The passing of the Trespass Act in 1865 had apparently quickly begun to have the desired effect upon the vagrant population, whose lodging uninvited in farm buildings had caused Cattle Plague, in particular, to spread. Kinloch, who it is believed was instrumental in convincing the powers-that-be of the need for such legislation, was obviously delighted to report that "since the passing of the Act, several tribes of tinkers who used to infect that County (Sutherland) are believed to have emigrated to America". The Police in Sutherland would not have been broken-hearted either !

Cattle Plague was causing a great deal of concern and extra men were being employed as Constables on a weekly basis to supervise cattle movement and to ensure quarantine regulations were observed.

Kinloch noted that Helmsdale had one extra policeman for the 1865 fishing season. He also observed that Constables in Sutherland had to provide their own lodgings, in other words no houses were provided for the policemen.

The proposed Police Office and Lock-up in Helmsdale had still not gone ahead.

An additional meeting of the Commissioners of Supply was held on 23 March 1866. The matter of Weights and Measures was one of the main reasons for the meeting, and members sought to re-negotiate the contract of the Chief Constable accordingly. There seems to have been more to just making Mr Ewan responsible for this, as one of the conditions was simply that he should have to visit each district of the Force on a regular basis. Perhaps he had not been doing so. It was not as if he should have to take the Weights & Measures with him, as another condition was that these should be sent around the County.

The Commissioners of Supply met again on 25 August 1866 to consider The minutes of various meetings of the Police Committee. It was reported that it had been decided to dispense with Mr Ewan's services with effect from 1 May 1866. He had been advised that if he were to resign then he would receive a gratuity of half a year's salary. Having clearly seen that much was to be gained by jumping, rather than waiting to be pushed, Ewan resigned on 1 May.

Sergeant Bridgeford took charge of the force between 16 June and 7 August 1866, pending the appointment of a new Chief Constable. The Commissioners were however concerned that the appointment of the new Chief Constable had perhaps been procedurally flawed and the matter was remitted to Counsel to consider.

In any event, the man who on 8 August 1866 took over the top job in Dornoch was Alexander McHardy, who was no more than 25 years of age, having been born on 9 June 1839 near Braemar in Aberdeenshire.

Prior to his appointment in Sutherland, McHardy had been a member of The Fife Constabulary for 5 years and 2 months, and before that he had served in the Sutherland force for 22 months between 1859 and 1861. It is believed that his previous service in Sutherland had been at a promoted rank, namely (Sergeant), and that he would have served as Deputy to the Chief Constable, being eventually replaced by George Bridgeford when McHardy had moved south to further his career.

Who was appointed to replace McHardy in the Sutherlandshire Constabulary as Sergeant (& Deputy Chief Constable) is not known.

Certainly if there was an immediate appointment in the summer of 1861, it was not a long-term one. The nine month gap between McHardy's departure and Bridgeford's arrival could mean another officer tried - and failed? - to fill McHardy's shoes, or that the powers-that-be in Sutherland were not immediately convinced at the need for the Chief constable to have an official Deputy. Doubtless H.M. Inspector would have soon put them right on that score!

McHardy's Police career had apparently begun in the Aberdeenshire Constabulary where he served for 16 months, 'having joined the latter force

on 22nd March 1858 at age of 19 3/12 years.' Before joining the Police he had worked as a gardener on Invercauld Estate, near Braemar.

Two of his brothers were also policemen, William (born 1836) becoming an Inspector in Aberdeenshire. His younger brother Charles (born 23.7.1844) had joined the Dunbartonshire Constabulary in 1863, rising through the ranks to become Chief Constable of that Force in 1884 until his death in 1914.

The force at the time of Mr McHardy's appointment would have comprised:

+-----+							
Rank	Surname	Forenames	Appt	1866 Station	Left	Reason	Left
+ ---- +-----+ +-----+ +-----+ +-----+ +-----+ +							
Chief	MCHARDY	Alexander	1866	DORNOCH	1882	Transferred	
Sgt	BRIDGEFORD	George	1862	DORNOCH	1904	Retired	
Cons	ANDERSON	Alexander	1863	HELMSDALE	1895	Retired	
Cons	CRAIGHEAD	James	1864	(WEST COAST?)	1891	Retired	
Cons	MELVIN	George	1864	BONAR BRIDGE	1892	Retired	
Cons	MURRAY	David	1866	PORTANLICK	18??	(Unknown)	
Cons	MURRAY	Hugh	1865	ROGART	1895	Retired	
Cons	O'CONNOR	George	1865	GOLSPIE	1867	(Unknown)	
Cons	STUART	Donald	1858	BETTYHILL	1891	Retired	
N.B.: Also 3 blank Records - probably men employed for Railway work.							
+-----+							

## GOING OFF TRACK!!

It is worth at this point to dwell for a little while on the career of that fascinating man who was Alexander - known as 'Alister' - McHardy.

The date on which Alexander McHardy joined the Aberdeenshire force was exactly one week after the provisions of the Police (Scotland) Act 1857 took effect, requiring each County to establish an efficient paid full-time Constabulary and to appoint a Chief Constable in charge. It may be that he joined up along with his brother William, or perhaps (more likely) William suggested him to the Chief Constable as a suitable and immediately available placement when another candidate failed to show (or to make the grade).

It would appear that young McHardy had a rapid ascent through the Police rank structure. Whether his initial move to Sutherland - in what would today

have still been his probationary period - was to achieve promotion is difficult to establish. It does however seem likely, as he was obviously something special.

His move to Dornoch is thus likely to have been as Sergeant (the rank of Inspector was a relatively recent innovation in Sutherland, and Sergeant was the only rank - other than Chief Constable), otherwise why should he bother to move to a relatively remote and small Force? He presumably made a good impression, returning within 6 years to take command of the Force!

His first spell in Sutherland was brief but it must be assumed that it served its purpose. After all, with only a little more than 3 years Police Service, he was off again, this time to the Fife Constabulary - in order to further advance his career, having quickly learned the ropes in dealing with the strong-drinking fishermen and especially the Irish tinkers who were then "plaguing" the Far North of Scotland.

It was not then necessary - as Forces were still evolving - to pass through all ranks, since no proper career structure had by then built up. Many of the County Forces had been in existence for many years by virtue of an early (discretionary) Policing Act, but in many cases a new broom was sweeping clean and bringing fresh talent. It seemed that the new regime then in Scottish Forces was keen on ensuring that police officers were not local to the area they were to police, and the Highland forces recruited from the Lowlands - and vice versa.

The April 1861 Census data for Kilmorack Parish (Beaully area) of the County of Inverness was examined for the author by kindly local historians to glean information as to the local police and their families. One unexpected bonus which appeared was that on Census night none other than Mr Alexander McHardy was visiting the dwelling known as 'Glassburn', a private house occupied by Colin C. Grant, (aged 29 years) (born at Glengairn - Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire) who was the "R.C. Priest of St. Beans".

Also residing there was his unmarried 22 year old sister, named Helen, Whose birthplace is the same as her brother, and whose occupation was recorded as: "Priests Sister". A Groom/Ploughman and a Maid were also listed there.

Alexander McHardy (Relationship: visitor), aged 21 years and unmarried, Born at Braemar, Aberdeenshire, is shown as "Sergeant of Police".

On the Census date he would still have been in the Sutherland force, but was about to move on to Fife - indeed possibly he was en route to/from interview at the time, and taking the opportunity for a few days courting/visiting, as the village of Beaully then stood astride the Great North Road (later the A9) between Inverness and Dornoch.

The Chief Constable of Sutherland at the time was of course Peter Ewan, from Aberdeen, so one must presume an Aberdeenshire connection in

respect of Mr McHardy's otherwise inexplicable decision to move up to Dornoch.

Possibly he had worked with Mr Ewan, or perchance Mr Ewan's connections in the Aberdeenshire force had recommended McHardy as an officer with very high ability and potential. Unfortunately none of the early records of Sutherland Constabulary have survived, but either Mr Ewan began with no Deputy, or the man appointed to stand in for him either left the Force or failed to live up to expectations.

In any event, the only supervisor rank in the Sutherlandshire force, that of Sergeant - and Deputy Chief Constable - would seem to have fallen vacant in or around June or July 1859, and it was duly filled by Alexander McHardy.

After two years in that post, McHardy was clearly sufficiently successful to prompt the Chief Constable of Fife to accept him as a transferee in the rank of Sergeant.

The County Police of Fife (in 1870) only had 4 Sergeants and 4 Inspectors - compared to 7 of each in Aberdeenshire - but presumably the opportunities were greater there, away from one's own back yard.

Such things as "transfers" did not of course exist in these very early days. Nowadays, an officer can literally transfer from one force to another, and lose nothing in terms of benefits and pension rights in the move. Back then, you had to "burn your bridges" and resign from one force in order to start afresh elsewhere. It was entirely up to the good nature of your new Chief to decide whether you retained your previous rank and/or pay scale.

In any event, Alexander McHardy was appointed to the Fifeshire Constabulary on 6th June 1861, in the rank of Sergeant, and was stationed at Cupar, then the Force's Headquarters. His descriptive details are listed as:

Age : 22 years      Height: 5 ft 10 in      Eyes: Grey      Hair: Brown  
Complexion: Ruddy      Native of: Braemar      Trade: Gardener

It is interesting that the Fife Constabulary make NO mention of his previous police service, which would normally have detailed for no other reason than to ensure he did not miss any pay increments. It had certainly been several years since he had earned his corn in any other way than as a police officer but the reference to 'trade' obviously meant the type of work an applicant to the police service had 'served his time' in and which he was likely to return to if leaving the service. Remember that this was only 3 years after the requirement to establish a police organisation in each County (& Burgh) throughout Scotland, and the 'new police' had not yet become accepted as a trade let alone a profession!!

On 16 November 1861, having clearly impressed Chief Constable William Bell, McHardy was promoted to the Rank of Inspector, and transferred to

Kirkcaldy.

Then on 14 February 1862 he was again promoted, this time to Superintendent, and Deputy Chief Constable, moving back to HQ in Cupar in the process.

Chief Constable Bell died on 15 May 1863. Mr James Bremner was appointed as his successor on 23 June 1863. During that period (and perhaps earlier, if Mr Bell had been ill prior to his death), McHardy found himself in charge of the Force. He had by this time a grand total of 5 years police service - and was only 24 years of age!

In the Fife County Police Committee minutes for 13 October 1863, Mr Bremner, the new Chief Constable, is recorded as officially appointing McHardy as his Deputy.

This prompted the Committee to minute the following:

'The committee consider it incumbent on them to record their entire satisfaction with the manner in which he discharged the duties of the office of chief constable during the vacancy which occurred betwixt the date of Mr Bell's death and the time at which the present chief constable entered upon his duties..'

Mr McHardy was also awarded a pay increase from 30/- to 35/- per week.

It will be recalled how Mr McHardy was recorded as visiting Beaulieu on Census night in 1861, and his reason for being there was undoubtedly to visit one Helen Monica Grant, the priest's sister. On 22 Jun 1864, Alexander McHardy married the said Helen Grant in their home area of Glenmuick. Intriguingly, Alexander's brother William, he who was also in the Aberdeenshire force, had married an Eliza Thomson from Fife in 1859. Could it have been Eliza who suggested Alexander try his luck in the Fife Constabulary perhaps?

Whether William had gone to Fife Constabulary ahead of Alexander is unknown, but if William had indeed been working down in Fife for a time, perhaps this would have been sufficient incentive for young 'Alister' to move down there too.

His term in Fife, of just over 5 years, saw two promotions and he achieved the high rank of Superintendent - next only to Chief Constable in the line of command. One is therefore left wondering why he did not remain there in Fife, conveniently placed for an opportunity to head a Burgh or County Force in the Central Belt - surely more appealing (and within easier reach) than the thought of a 250 mile move north to the County of Sutherland.

Alexander and Helen had a child during their time in Fife. Their daughter, Jessie Cameron McHardy, was born in 1865, and was christened in Cupar on

22 Sep 1865.

So, when Alexander McHardy returned to Dornoch for the second time, in 1866, he went as the new Chief Constable. Newly married, he obviously decided that now was the time to put down roots, as his 'reign' in Sutherland would last no less than 16 years.

Still a young man, he must have hankered after a bigger job. His lack of urban policing experience would however have precluded him from selection for the Chief officer posts in the Cities, larger Burghs and Counties in the Central Belt of Scotland. In any case, however, the Chief Officer's post in burghs was then 'only' one of Superintendent. The rank of "Chief Constable" only applied to County forces until passing of the Burgh Police (Scotland) Act of 1892.

Further, most of the County forces established in the Highland and Grampian regions had no vacancy for a Chief Constable. Most of these appointed in 1858 were still in place. Perhaps McHardy applied for the Aberdeenshire Constabulary job when it came vacant, but in any case the Commissioners of Supply opted for a seasoned military gentleman, Major John Ross, rather than a career policeman.

Sutherland, although a large County in acreage, was - and still is - very sparsely populated, a fact reflected in the small Police force it maintained. The strength of the Sutherland Constabulary during McHardy's tenure was (in 1870) a total of 12 men, comprising:

- 1 Chief Constable;
- 1 Inspector;
- 1 Sergeant; and
- 9 Constables.

His brother Charles in Dunbartonshire (though not by then the Chief Constable - he did not achieve that until 2 years after his brother became Chief of Inverness-shire) was a member of a far larger force. Dunbartonshire had a complement of 22 (in 1870), consisting of:

- 1 Chief Constable;
- 1 Superintendent;
- 1 Inspector;
- 2 Sergeants; and
- 17 Constables.

The friendly rivalry, with Alexander obviously seeing Charles 'coming up on the rails' as he climbed the promotion ladder, was obviously something which acted as a spur for Alexander McHardy. It is known that Alexander applied for the post as Superintendent (Chief Officer) of the Aberdeen City Police when it became vacant in December 1879.

The salary offered was £350 and there were no less than 43 applicants.



The Sheriff of Aberdeen and Kincardine drew up a short list. Superintendent Donald Sutherland (Paisley) who was his first choice, and joint second choice were Alexander McHardy and Superintendent Thomas Wyness, who was then Chief officer of the Inverness Burgh Police. The Town Council decided that the best man for the job would be Wyness and he was appointed on 27 January 1880.

Incidentally, the Superintendent Donald Sutherland who was the successful yet unsuccessful - candidate for the Aberdeen post, did eventually become a Chief Constable, of the Burgh of Paisley, when the title Chief Constable was finally applied to Burgh Police forces in 1892. The son of George and Jane Sutherland, of Clyne in Sutherlandshire, he appears to have died in service, possibly while back home in Brora on leave on 18 February 1899, aged 63. He had been in charge at Paisley for 27 years, and is buried in Clyne Kirkton cemetery along with his parents and also his wife (died 1914) who would seem to have retired to the family home at Clyne after his death. It is likely that Mr McHardy would have attended the funeral, and must have thought long and hard at wondering how neither he nor Donald got the Aberdeen job!

(Thanks to HighlandHearts.com for the Monumental Inscription information in respect of Supt Donald Sutherland and family)

Disappointed but not deterred, McHardy applied when in October 1882 there arose a vacancy for Chief Constable for the County of Inverness, to succeed William Murray who had held the post since the Force was reorganised in terms of the 1857 General Police Act.

McHardy's application being successful, he thus made what was to be his final transfer in December 1882, still only 43 years of age. Whether his career ambitions were satisfied by the move to Inverness, we may never know, but he was to remain in Inverness until his death on 30 April 1911 at the age of 71.

One thing which McHardy, always a keen sportsman, certainly did pick up from his time in the Kingdom of Fife was a love of the game of golf. Cupar Golf Club had only been in being since 1855, and perhaps the young McHardy was in the right place to learn much about the setting up and running such a club.

Certainly, within ten years of his return to the County of Sutherland he was one of the two prime movers in the formation of a Golf Club at Dornoch. This came about in 1876, by the Sutherland Golfing Society, of which McHardy was Secretary.

On 5 November 1877 the Sutherland Golfing Society, who played golf over the links of Dornoch and Golspie, applied through their Secretary, Mr

McHardy, to the Town Clerk of the Royal Burgh of Dornoch for permission to play golf over that part of the links of Dornoch which was the property of the Royal Burgh. Permission was granted on 9 November 1877, and a nine hole course was laid out by Old Tom Morris. It was officially opened the following year, and members paid 2s 6d (12.5 pence nowadays) dues.

A further nine holes were added in the next decade, and the course's fame spread. The "Royal" prefix was granted to the Golf Club in 1906 by King Edward VII, who was a frequent visitor to the Highlands. In his visits to Hunt in Inverness-shire, he would have had much to do with Mr McHardy who by then was Chief Constable of that county. While Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland is rightly credited with influencing His Majesty, did McHardy also have any input?

Thanks to <http://www.onlinescotland.com/html/regions/inverness/dornoch.html>

No sooner had he arrived in Inverness, than - as well as giving considerable thought to policing matters - McHardy obviously took stock of the situation as regards golfing (or rather the lack of it). On 13 November 1883, in the Caledonian Hotel, Inverness was convened "a meeting of gentlemen Interested in the formation of a Golf Club". One of those gentlemen was none other than Mr McHardy, who the following year was elected Club Captain, which position he would continue to hold for a number of years. The first play however took place at Muir of Ord, courtesy of Lord Lovat. It would be 1886 before the game would be played (over a nine-hole course) at Culcabock, where Inverness Golf Club is still located, and it was 1890 before the first clubhouse was erected there.

Source - [http://travel.ciao.co.uk/Inverness\\_Golf\\_Club\\_\\_Review\\_5113879](http://travel.ciao.co.uk/Inverness_Golf_Club__Review_5113879)

The course remained at nine holes in McHardy's lifetime, one reason perhaps why it had no "Royal" seal of approval - even if it was located just over the Mill Burn (incidentally the then boundary between Burgh and County of Inverness) from Kingsmills.

Culcabock, now lying well within the City of Inverness (and the current home to Northern Constabulary Headquarters), was a small village in the County of Inverness when Mr McHardy took over command of the Force. Indeed, it would appear that one of McHardy's first acts in his new position was to station a Constable at Culcabock. Prior to that, an officer had general responsibility for the area lying to the East of Inverness, but now a man would actually be resident in the village area with his house identified as a Police Station.

Alexander McHardy went on to hold the Inverness-shire post for no less than 28 years, which would be the longest reign of any Chief Officer in the

Inverness-shire Constabulary. In its 128 year existence, it had only 8 Chief Officers. McHardy's Police career spanned an amazing 53 years – almost 45 years as a Chief.

Mr McHardy was the first Chief Officer in the Highlands to hold the Presidency of the Chief Constables (Scotland) Club - which would later become the 'Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland' (ACPOS). In fact he held the office twice, a supreme honour.

In the first century of that organisation, no other officer was held in such high esteem as to be installed a second time, other than the organisation's founder and first president, Alfred List (Chief Constable of Edinburgh-shire 1870-1878) and Major John Ross of Aberdeen (1878-1880 and 1882-1883).

Chief Constable McHardy was the ninth Chief officer to hold the presidency when first so elected for the 1888-1889 session. Possibly he was also one of the YOUNGEST, at age 48. His second term came in 1911, when he was 70 and probably the OLDEST to hold the office. Sadly he did not complete his second term, due to his death.

Interestingly his younger brother Charles also held the office, for the 1894-1895 session. For two brothers to be elected to that position was not however unique, since Alfred John List's brother, George Henry List had also held the office while Chief Constable of Haddingtonshire, in fact succeeding Alexander McHardy for the 1889-1890 session.

**BACK ON TRACK!**

Having gone way off at a tangent (albeit hopefully one of some interest to the reader), let us now return to the Sutherland Constabulary which McHardy took command of in 1866.

The 1866 Annual Report produced by Kinloch reported that new rates of Pay had been applied for all ranks, along with free housing. It must be supposed therefore that the new broom was sweeping clean.

The Government Inspector also noted that, with the development of the railway to Golspie, three extra Constables were employed. This would account for three blank entries in the Force's Personal Record Book. These men would have been based at Portnalick, which was the navvies' camp at Culrain.

There would be a considerable change-over of the temporary Police personnel, as it would not be everybody's cup of tea. In addition these temporary posts were a way of gaining some police experience while waiting for acceptance into the 'regular' Force of one of the Counties or Burghs.

The 'railway' Police would be paid for by the contractor who was constructing the line, to ensure that the navvies on the line behaved

themselves and did not run amok in the district when they drank their wages. Other duties would include guarding the pay-roll and supervision of tools and equipment to prevent pilferage or even sabotage. Although the bill for these officers' services was not met by the ratepayers, these 'additional' constables were part of the Force, recruited by and at all times responsible to the Chief Constable of the County.

In his 1867 Report, Kinloch reported with pleasure on the provision of new Police Stations - at Golspie (Main Street), Helmsdale (Strathnaver Street) and Bonar Bridge. He also intimated that the Sergeant (which would have been George Bridgeford), who was the only supervisory officer in the Force at the time, was paid £15 for his Acting Chief Constablenesship. The force of nine regular officers appeared a happy one. Three supernumerary officers continued to do duty on the railway construction.

Pay featured prominently in the 1868 Report, and Kinloch explained that Constables throughout Scotland were now divided into classes, dependant upon their length of service and conduct. A new recruit received 17/6d (87p) weekly and the first class Constable from 20/- (£1) to 21/- (£1.05p).

Whereas no permanent addition to staff on account of the fishing was apparently deemed necessary in Sutherland, (which speaks volumes for the men on the West Coast and at Helmsdale) Ross-shire had increased their Stornoway contingent to six.

While no major problems with tinkers had arisen recently in Sutherland, to the north in Caithness there were difficulties aplenty. It was reported that some tinkers had taken occupancy of caves on the sea coast. Because these caves were not 'enclosed places', the Police could not take any action under the Trespass Act. The Helmsdale officer would paying particular attention to The Ord, no doubt, for fear of the cave dwellers spreading into his patch.

The 'silver darlings' - the herring off Helmsdale - soon began to play second fiddle to another precious metal locally. There had arisen a potentially more lucrative industry in panning for gold in the Strath of Kildonan. Such was the number of prospectors flooding into the area that it was necessary to increase the Police strength in Helmsdale by one. Further:

"In consequence of the great number of persons digging for gold, three extra constables are to be appointed under the Sergeant at Helmsdale and paid for by the Duke of Sutherland."

It rather looks as if Chief Constable McHardy had dispatched George Bridgeford up to Helmsdale to take personal charge of the situation.

It was estimated that there were upwards of 500 prospectors in the Strath at the height of the Sutherland Klondyke. There is no mention in the Force

Personal Record & Defaulters Register of any other officer being promoted to Sergeant around that time, or indeed for many years to come - until George Murray in 1895.

Having said that, the Register appears to have been 'overlooked' on many occasions, and it is known that there was at least one promotion which was somehow never recorded.

The three extra men appointed for duty at Kildonan were:

DONALD SUTHERLAND a 28 year old labourer from Lairg, who commenced duty on 27 March 1869. He had earlier served 3 years in Glasgow City Police and had just completed a stint as an additional Constable on the Sutherland Railway.

GEORGE KEMP aged 30, a Farm Worker from Evanton in Ross-shire who had had 7 years previous service in the Ross-shire Constabulary. He started at Kildonan on 9 April 1869.

JOHN MATHESON a Dyker aged 31 years from Skelbo, Sutherland, who Was also appointed on 9 April 1869. Of the three he was the only one with no previous Police experience.

Despite that (or perhaps rather BECAUSE of that) he was the only one of the three who was kept on in the regular Force after the Gold Rush ended.

He went on to serve around the County, finally retiring while stationed at Rhiconich on 10 May 1900 after 31 years service. He received an annual pension of £38:15:7d.

In that same period an officer was posted to Lairg to coincide with the opening of the railway line. The railway made the village even more important as the 'hub' of the County, being the rail-head for all points north and west. The line from Bonar to Golspie opened for public traffic on 13 April 1868 and, from the Force records, it would appear that William Gordon was Lairg's first bobby. He had been taken on in May 1867 as an additional Constable for duty at the railway construction, based at Portnallick, and then moved to Kildonan when gold fever arrived.

It is likely that McHardy decided to send PC Gordon to Lairg for the first few months, in view of his experience and knowledge of the area, rather than install a new recruit there. The fact that PC Gordon was relatively local, being from Skelbo near Dornoch, would also have been in his favour. He was also one of the few officers taken on as additional Constable who was retained on the force strength - most men moved on or were dispensed with after only a short time.

Sending raw recruits out with no training or experience was something that Colonel Kinloch had a bit of a hobby-horse about, and had made

considerable mention of the fact in his Reports. This was not something that the Sutherland Force was particularly guilty of, but other Forces were rather prone to such a course of action. Mr McHardy seemed to concur with that sentiment, and only rarely thereafter - normally only with an experienced officer transferring in from another force - was a new recruit posted direct to a Station without spending some time at Headquarters in Dornoch to 'learn the ropes'.

PC John Ross was the next man posted to Lairg. He had also served as an 'Additional Constable' as his record shows "previous service with Sutherland Railway Police". He had initially been taken on by the Force as a regular (but short-term) officer in July 1868. He began in Helmsdale and was moved to Golspie in September 1868, probably due to the railway activity there.

He left the force before the end of the year as his services were no longer required, but was re-hired on 20 February 1869 and posted to Lairg. Unfortunately his record contains no further information. It can only be assumed that he moved on to pastures new during the course of that year.

The Duke of Sutherland called a halt to the gold prospecting at the beginning of 1870 and in his Report for the year up to the end of March 1870, Kinloch commented upon the quiet that had returned to Helmsdale and the district. The Police had however to continue to give attention to the diggings long after the Duke's decree, as there were obviously some people who would not take 'no' for answer and still tried to make their fortune.

It is recorded that the strength of the Force in 1870 was 12, comprising:

-----				
Chief Constable	Inspector	Sergeant	Constables	
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1	1	1	9	
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It can only be assumed that George Bridgeford had been promoted to Inspector, and that a Constable had been made up to Sergeant in his stead.

The Personnel Records give us no information on the matter, but we shall speculate on the subject, later on.

By the 1870/71 Report however the need for 'additional' Police was no Longer there, and Kinloch recommended that their services could be

dispensed with. It was unlikely that the His Grace the Duke would continue to pay out good money for the wages of additional Constables unless there was still a valid need for their services. There undoubtedly was, as the Duke was himself financing the extension of the railway from Golspie to Helmsdale.

The line would open as far as West Helmsdale (Greenpark) in June 1871, and authority had been given to extend it up the Strath of Kildonan to Forsinard and then over into Caithness. Problems were however being experienced in actually getting the line into Helmsdale, and the cutting from Couper Park to Marrel was taking a lot of effort - hence the temporary terminus on the seaside plain short of the village. One extra man (another PC Donald Sutherland) was taken on to the regular force for duty in Helmsdale.

Meanwhile Kinloch was reporting that the combined effects of the 1870 Pedlars Act and the severe weather had made great inroads into removing the problem of vagrants. The Act required that persons selling from door to door required to be licensed by the Police. Failure to obtain such a licence involved severe penalties. This legislation was intended to prevent householders being pestered by itinerants begging or selling trinkets round the doors, sometimes merely as a front to allow them to scout out the lay of the land for future housebreaking, or to sneak in and steal from the house while the occupant's attention was diverted.

Lairg was growing due to the railway, but there was still no Police Office, which Kinloch had maintained was essential. Agreement had finally been given to build one, and H.M. Inspector also pointed out the need for proper Police buildings at Bonar Bridge and Tongue too.

Colonel Kinloch presented his final Report in April 1872, and his 15 years in the post had drained him. He had much to look back on, and his successes were many. He had kept at local Police Committees to ensure that proposals - especially for buildings - did not remain simply empty promises. He had found little to complain about in the County of Sutherland, and in comparison to other neighbouring Counties it seems to have been almost a pleasure to inspect. No small credit for that must go to Chief Constable McHardy, and Sergeant (Inspector?) Bridgeford, for running a tidy ship.

One of Kinloch's final mentions was that there had been an amendment to The Pedlars Act. The price of the Certificate (Licence) had been increase by 900 per cent, from 6d (2.5p) to 5/-(25p). Presumably the Police had been swamped with applications, and the increase was designed to separate the wheat from the chaff. Surprisingly it did not increase in price again for a further 96 years, when in 1968 it would rise to £1.25p.

During the course of 1872, Colonel Kinloch was succeeded by Charles Carnegie as H.M. Inspector of Constabulary, but Kinloch had conducted the

inspection of the Sutherland Force before being replaced. His final report on the Force was a favourable one. He was pleased to note that "those in charge of stations with cells receive £16 a year for fire and light".

He also highlighted that the Chief Constable and other officers were engaged in the usual extra duties - fairly standard across Scotland - such as procurator fiscal, sanitary inspector and being in charge of salmon fishings.

These duties attracted payment over and above the Police wages.

In Carnegie's first solo Report, produced in April 1874, he made mention of the lack of any pension provision for police officers in most Scottish Forces. Only in the case of officers incapacitated was there any allowance for a gratuity.

There were many instances of officers having to work until a very advanced age before being simply paid off as no longer able to perform their duties to a satisfactory standard. England had established a superannuation fund - so why not Scotland?

The arrangements whereby salmon fisheries were policed by officers from the regular strength in several counties - including Sutherland - never seemed to trouble his predecessor. Carnegie however took umbrage at the fact that these officers were being partially paid for by public money - via the 25 per cent Government grant - to provide policing services for private organisations. He considered that these men should be removed from the strength of the force and fully employed by the fisheries board, as was now being done more and more elsewhere.

He cited the case of Bonar Bridge where the Sergeant was in charge of the Kyle of Sutherland salmon fishing, for which the police authority received £52 per annum.

Now the County Police Personal Record Book makes no mention of another Sergeant on the strength, other than George Bridgeford. Enquiry has revealed however that it was not George Bridgeford who was the 'fishery' man.

Alexander Anderson (vide Personnel Record no. 3) - with NO promotion record whatsoever on his sheet - was that Sergeant at Bonar. His Station Occurrence Book, now held in the Highland Council Archives, covers the period from 11 June 1873 to 10 June 1875 while he was the (obviously 'extra') Sergeant based at what he himself termed : 'INVERSHIN (BONAR FISHERY STATION)'.

It would appear - although there is nothing in writing to bear this out - that Bridgeford must have been elevated to Inspector when the need arose for



a 'fisheries' Sergeant. After all, it would not be very clever to have the Deputy Chief Constable of the same rank as a man who was in charge of fisheries. Who would outrank who, indeed? The Deputy Chief Constable, as 2<sup>nd</sup> in command of a Police force, has always been the disciplinarian, and to do that effectively he must outrank all others - save for the Chief Constable.

To solve that awkward situation, it would thus have been necessary for the Chief Constable to promote Mr Bridgeford. Mr McHardy would not have had any difficulty in taking that decision. He would be taking plenty more in his career; he it was who was Chief Constable of Inverness-shire at the time of the Battle of The Braes on the Island of Skye.

Mr Carnegie raised the matter of fisheries again in his next Report. He made it abundantly clear that the Sergeant at Bonar Bridge had NO police duties other than taking charge of the fisheries on the Kyle of Sutherland. The Sheriff, Police Authority, Chief Constable, and indeed Colonel Kinloch had all approved of the arrangement, but Carnegie was not pleased that the man should be paid from the Government grant.

His rumblings had however fallen on stony ground, and he indicated that locally the water had been muddied, if you will pardon the pun:

'owing to the precipitate action of the sheriff-substitute other questions were imported into the controversy which have had the effect of delaying any possible settlement.'

As stated above, some of the questions do seem to be answered by Station

Occurrence Books of the Force, which recently were catalogued by the very helpful people in the Highland Council Archive Service. There is only the one Book - covering the period 1873-1875 - pertaining to "Invershin" (entitled 'Bonar Fisheries Station'). The officer whose duties are recorded in that Book was one SERGEANT A. ANDERSON. This would have been, as stated above, Alexander Anderson, who was listed as Record No. 3 in the Force Register. At the time of compilation (it seems to have been retrospective - so there was clearly 'back record conversion' then too!) of the Record Book, he was the third longest serving member of the Force.

A native of Morayshire, Alex Anderson joined the Sutherland Force in 1863, one year after George Bridgeford. He had previously served two years in the 'Morayshire Ry Police', which presumably would have been the Railway Police for the Morayshire Railway which was centred on Elgin. Their tracks had been completed by that time, so whether he had served as a Railway Policeman – or had worked on policing the construction of the line and then been paid off - is unclear.

Although there is nothing on his personal record, he very obviously was made Sergeant for that job protecting the salmon fishery. What then became of him

for some years is unclear, and it is very possible that eventually Mr Carnegie got his way and the job at Invershin was 'civilianised'. (Funny how some things never change!)

It is not known for certain whether Sergeant Anderson immediately reverted to being a Constable, but since there was no longer a Sergeant's post on the establishment, this is the likely outcome. Such was not uncommon in smaller Forces, where an officer assumed a temporary rank for the duration, and then reverted back to his original rank to await his substantive promotion in his turn, in what was affectionately known as the 'dead man's shoes' principle.

It is however possible that the force carried on for a while with a supernumerary (or even simply unofficial and undocumented) Sergeant rank - especially if Bridgeford remained Inspector, which he undoubtedly did.

Probably the personal rank was retained by Anderson, even although he would have had to refer to himself in official documents as a Constable.

His name (as PC A. Anderson) pops up again in the Occurrence Books for Brora (1881-1882, and 1884-1889) but also during that same period for Golspie (1887-1889). His personal record does record that on 20 June 1890 he moved from Golspie to Helmsdale. At some point, possibly on 15/11/91, he was restored to Sergeant. The very fact that the Record makes no mention of promotion is intriguing in itself, and does tend to imply that rules were bent somewhat. But we digress.

Carnegie also did a survey of uniform expenditure for the year 1874/75 and listed the lowest and highest prices of each of the staple items. Sutherland does not feature in either list so its equipment must lie somewhere in between the quite considerably different prices. Cost variations reflects the fact that the quality standards must have differed astonishingly.

Item	Highest	Lowest
Helmet	11/6d (57p)	6/- (30p)
Coat	48/- (£2.40p)	25/6d (£1.27p)
Trousers	24/4d (£1.21p)	13/4d (66p)
Greatcoat	50/3d (£2.51p)	27/9d (£1.39p)
Cape	30/- (£1.50p)	8/3d (41p)

The prices quoted were in respect of COUNTY Forces.

There were even greater variations in municipal Forces. Of particular interest is that the 'Burgh' of Pulteneytown, now a suburb of Wick, maintained a small Force which throughout its long life was always reported as inefficient, largely because of its steadfast refusal to unite with anyone else. Yet it provided its men with the most expensive coats and greatcoats of any Force in Scotland, namely 50/- (£2.50p) and 52/6d (£2.62p) respectively.

The County of Sutherland continued to receive a good 'efficient' report from Carnegie and his successors, and reflected great credit on the men themselves and on Chief Constable McHardy.

To miss out on the Aberdeen City job must have been very frustrating for an ambitious young man like McHardy. He was after all only 40 years of age when he applied for it. These 'seriously significant' posts only arise rarely.

Three years later however another high profile post arose. In October 1882, Mr William Murray intimated his intention to retire after 25 years as the Chief Constable of Inverness-shire.

The County of Inverness was the largest police area in the United Kingdom. Like Sutherland it was remote in parts, and it also had many more acres of hill land and sheep than it had people. Nonetheless it had a much bigger establishment. The County (excluding the Burgh of Inverness, which had its own Force) boasted no less than 42 men of all ranks, comprising:

Chief Cons	Supt & DCC	Inspectors	Sergeants	Constables
1	1	3	3	36

The Superintendent was responsible for the Inverness Division, and the three Inspectors commanded the other Divisions, namely Lochaber (Fort William); Skye (Portree); and Hebrides (Western Isles other than Lewis, and based at Lochmaddy on North Uist).

At the time Sutherland had only 16 officers, including Sergeant Bridgeford and the Chief Constable. There follows a list of the men in the Sutherland force at that time, together with details of where they were stationed. In many cases their 'current' station is an educated guess as, as you will have gathered from earlier remarks, the Personal Records were not always kept with the meticulous care of later times.

+-----+					
SUTHERLANDSHIRE CONSTABULARY - STAFF : 1882					
+-----+					
Rk	Surname	Forename	Join	Left	1882 Stn
+-----+					
CC	MCHARDY	Alexander	1866	1882	DORNOCH
+-----+					
PS	BRIDGEFORD	George	1862	1904	DORNOCH
+-----+					
PC	ANDERSON	Alexander	1863	1895	GOLSPIE
+-----+					
PC	CRAIGHEAD	James	1864	1891	ROSEHALL
+-----+					
PC	DONALD	William	1880	1882	DORNOCH
+-----+					
PC	ESSON	James	1882	1916	DORNOCH
+-----+					
PC	GORDON	William	1867	1897	BONAR
+-----+					
PC	MACKENZIE	John	1879	1902	HELMSDALE
+-----+					
PC	MATHESON	John	1869	1900	MELVICH
+-----+					
PC	MELVIN	George	1864	1892	LAIRG
+-----+					
PC	MURRAY	Hugh	1865	1895	RHICONICH
+-----+					
PC	ROBERTSON	Adam	1882	1884	BONAR
+-----+					
PC	ROBERTSON	George	1877	1882	BRORA
+-----+					
PC	SANDIESON	Alexander	1872	1907	LOCHINVER
+-----+					
PC	STUART	Donald	1858	1891	BETTYHILL
+-----+					
PC	WILL	Alexander	1880	1913	HELMSDALE
+-----+					

McHardy was successful in his application for the Inverness-shire post, and left the Sutherland Force on 2 December 1882. George Bridgeford would again have taken over control of the force in the interim. The Police Authority set about their search for his successor immediately, and at the end of January 1883, one of the applicants called for interview was Inspector Archibald Matheson of the Inverness-shire Constabulary, stationed at Fort William.

Inverness-shire Constabulary records - updated by Chief Constable McHardy himself - show that Inspector Matheson was absent from his Station at Fort William from 23 to 29 January 1883: 'to go to Dornoch – having applied for the office of Chief Constable there'. Incidentally, Archibald Matheson was NOT apparently of Sutherland ancestry - his Inverness-shire Personnel Record states that he was a native of Lochalsh in Ross-shire, and that he had previously served for 3 years and 6 months in Ayrshire Constabulary before moving to the Inverness-shire force in 1866.

His quest was however unsuccessful, the post being given (eventually) to Superintendent Roderick MacLean of the Ross-shire Constabulary.

The new Chief Constable was a native of Kiltarlity, a rural area near Beauly in Inverness-shire, and had also previously served in Ayrshire Constabulary (for 4 years and 2 months), before moving to Ross-shire, where he rose to be Superintendent and Deputy Chief Constable. He was 40 years of age when he took over the reins as Chief Constable of Sutherland to succeed McHardy.

It was six months after McHardy's departure before Mr MacLean finally took up his duties in Dornoch on 8 June 1883, and a young local lad named George Murray started as a Constable in Dornoch six days later. George Murray would go on to rise through the ranks to become Inspector and Deputy Chief Constable of Sutherland in due course.

George Murray was born on 20 August 1858 at the farm of Achley, on the outskirts of the Sutherland County Town of Dornoch. It is likely that his father worked the farm, and young George followed in his father's footsteps. At the age of 24 however he joined the Sutherland Constabulary where his first wage as a probationary Constable was 19 shillings (95 pence) a week.

Given the starting dates, and the fact that PC Murray would have probably been 'tied' to a farmer for an agreed period, he would in fact have been recruited by Chief Constable McHardy before he left.

The young Constable Murray was posted initially to Helmsdale. By that time the village had peaked as a fishing centre, and the Strath of Kildonan Gold Rush was just a distant memory. Nonetheless the 'Dale was still a busy place, having a bustling harbour for the fishing fleet, and it was also an important railway post with its locomotive shed providing motive power to support trains carrying goods and passenger traffic up to the Caithness Boundary.

George was obviously making satisfactory progress as on 2 August 1883 he was advanced to 4th class Constable, with a wage of 21 shillings (£1.05p) per week. A further wage advancement came on 3 August 1885 when he moved up to 3rd class, receiving 22/2d (£1.11) weekly.

Chief Constable MacLean's tenure did not last long. Still a young man, he died in Edinburgh on 8 April 1887 at the age of 44. It is interesting to note that during Mr MacLean's three years in post only three men were taken on, so the Force must have been in a very stable state. Out of those 'new' three, two of them - George Murray and John Polson - would in due course be promoted (indeed the next two promotions in the force apart from that of Alexander Allan) but these would be some years away. ("Dead man's shoes" was the term used, in small Forces such as this where promotion was slow!)

While a successor was being found, Sergeant (and Deputy Chief Constable) George Bridgeford, seemingly then the only officer higher than Constable in the Force, took command yet again. He had done this duty before, between the demise of the first Chief, Peter Ewan, and McHardy's appointment in 1866. He appears to have been in charge for a good long while, as Mr MacLean seems to have been unwell for some time before his death.

Inspector Matheson at Fort William would seem not to have bothered applying this time around - or if he did so, he did not reach the Interview stage. He died in service in 1892, still at Fort William, aged 53. Mr Bridgeford decided that, after 4 years in Helmsdale, George Murray was to move to Clashurn in the Assynt area on the West coast. This transfer took effect on 20 June 1887.

This time it took only two months to select and install a new Chief Constable. On 7 June 1887, Malcolm Macdonald, then an Inspector in the Inverness-shire Constabulary, stationed at Portree on the Isle of Skye, was appointed as the new Chief Constable of Sutherland.

He had joined the Inverness-shire Constabulary as a 3rd Class Constable on 2 December 1874 at the age of 26 years. Previously a farm servant, he had also served 2 years in the City of Glasgow Police before joining Inverness-shire.

A native of the Island of Skye, Chief Constable Macdonald stood 6'1" in height, had grey eyes and fresh complexion with dark and curly hair. He was a big man in all senses, with a considerable presence. Macdonald had not received any promotion from McHardy - his promotion to Inspector came from the previous Chief Constable, William Murray, six months before McHardy went to Inverness-shire Constabulary from Dornoch.

In fact his advancement to Inspector had come quickly, only 13 months after being made up to Sergeant at Beaulieu with only 9 years Police Service, some 7 of them in Inverness-shire. Such a rapid (at least in terms of promotions in Inverness-shire) ascent would likely not have pleased some of his Colleagues as it was upsetting the established order ("dead man's shoes").

That feeling of resentment would not apply however if his colleagues had identified, as they probably did in this case, that he was what was (and still is) termed a 'flier' (accelerated promotion - such flight being both 'upwards' and 'away'), and would be off to another force in a promoted rank soon enough, so that the previous order would resume with no harm done.

The new Chief, aged 39 on appointment, was awarded an initial salary of £200 per annum. He appeared to settle in very well in Sutherland, a land very similar in terrain and attitude to his own home Island. That he made a lasting impression on the local population is not in dispute. Sadly his wife died during his period in Dornoch, leaving the Chief to raise his family of six, three boys and three girls.

PC Murray had his wage upgraded again on 20 December 1887, when he was made Constable, 2nd class. Now his pay was 23/4d (£1.17p) each week. A further increment came on 17 January 1889 when he reached First Class Constable rate of 24/6d (£1.22p) per week.

After two and a half years in Assynt, George Murray was on the move again, on the second last day of 1889. This time he was posted to Rosehall, a strategic location in Central Sutherland, being one point of the triangle formed with Lairg and Bonar Bridge through which all traffic for the west and north of the county had to pass.

After 18 months in Rosehall, he was off again - this time going back to Helmsdale on 24 May 1891. This was only a relief posting however, perhaps to assist the resident officer in the fishing season. Possibly he went to perform a period of 'acting up' as Sergeant at Helmsdale, where PC Alexander Allan, then had been stationed at since June 1890.

On 26 June 1891 Murray was transferred yet again, this time to Lairg - the 'hub' of Sutherland.

In November 1891 George Bridgeford, still Deputy Chief Constable, had his salary increased to £100 per annum. He would also receive an additional £7:10/- every five years thereafter. Although it is not stated in his Personal Record, it would seem that his rank was upgraded to Inspector at the same time. (Rather it would have been officially ratified, having been a 'personal' rank prior to that).

At the same time Alexander Anderson (yes, the one-time Sergeant of Invershin fishery duties which so irked Mr Carnegie), then at Helmsdale, also had his wage increased. The rise, from 29/- to 30/10d per week, was undoubtedly Sergeant's wages, but, whether Sergeant Anderson was promoted in 1891 at the same time as Mr Bridgeford seems to have been 'made up', or whether both pay increases referred to previously awarded promotion is unknown. In any case there does not appear to have been a Sergeant at Helmsdale prior to Mr Anderson, and it is likely that Mr Bridgeford had been up there in earlier days when H.M. Inspector mentioned 'the Sergeant at Helmsdale'.

In November 1892 Mr Macdonald received a ten per cent rise in his salary, going up to £220, having served 5 years in the Force. The 15th of November seems to have been either the start or mid point of the Force's financial year. Almost all amalgamations of Forces occurred on 16 May or 16 November.

While at Lairg, PC Murray was on 12 April 1893 promoted to Merit Class Constable, taking his weekly pay up to 26/3d (£1.31p). Merit Class was an additional level of pay, intended to reward the officers who were most conscientious and well-behaved, in an effort to avoid losing them to other occupations.

On 14 November 1895 George Murray transferred yet again, returning to Helmsdale. The following day he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, and saw his wage rise accordingly, but only by the small sum of 1/2d (6p), to 27/5d (£1.37p) per week. On that same day Alexander Allan, stationed at Helmsdale, retired from the Force on pension. Although it does not say so on his record, Allan was by that time a Sergeant, and it would seem that he had been promoted to that rank on 15 November 1891.

After 2 years as the Sergeant - the third most senior rank in the force - his weekly pay increased to 28/7d (£1.43p). It was to be another three years before his next increment, going up to 29/9d (£1.49p).

George Murray was made subsequently promoted to "Sub-Inspector" in 1903 - on 19 August this time! This curious non-standard rank appears to have been created especially for him, to prepare him for 'high office' when he would replace George Bridgeford as Inspector (and Deputy Chief) in November 1904.

Sorry but it was NOT the 15th this time - it was the 22nd in fact.

On 17 January Sub-Inspector Murray saw his wages increase to 30/11d (£1.54p), which tends to suggest that Sub Inspector was more of an appointment as Inspector Designate than a promotion as such.

There was a promotion made to Sergeant on 19.08.03 - the date on which Mr Murray became "Sub Inspector" - with Constable John Polson, (a native of Helmsdale, and a Joiner to trade) who had joined the Force in 1886, being given his tapes while apparently continuing to serve at Lochinver.

John Macdonald, eldest son of Malcolm, joined the City of Dundee Police in 1898 and had been promoted to Sergeant in the following year. He surely was a 'flier'. With only 14 years of police service, he would reach the exalted rank of Superintendent (and be appointed Deputy Chief Constable) in Dundee by 1912, and then from 1931 to 1936 would be Chief Constable there himself.



As stated George Bridgeford finally retired on 22 November 1904, when He reached the age of 70. He could not be permitted to stay on any longer. was 22 November his birthday? There is no other reason springs to mind for his retiral on that date, unless it was the anniversary of his first joining the Police back in Aberdeenshire. Normally pension is calculated on the number of complete years served, but Inspector Bridgeford would have had at least 46 (42 in Sutherland, plus 4 more in Aberdeenshire), so it would be simply academic, since he had well exceeded the number of years - and the age - for entitlement to the maximum pension.

Perhaps, and here I do hope I am not doing him a dis-service, he simply did not wish to give up. He would not be alone in that. It is a quantum change from being in a position of power (and knowledge and respect) to being just plain Mister!

George Murray was transferred to Dornoch, promoted Inspector and appointed Deputy Chief Constable in his stead, receiving the same wage (£100 p.a.) as George Bridgeford had when upgraded to Inspector in 1891. He would also receive an increment of £7:10/- each five years.

Also on 22 November 1904 Sergeant Polson moved from Lochinver, but to Brora and not to Helmsdale. Two years later Sgt Polson moved again, to Golspie, which indicates how the relative importance of the three towns of the East Coast Section was changing. Golspie had long been the administrative capital of the County, while Helmsdale's place as the main centre of fishing was well on the wane. Brora's role as the industrial centre continued but with improved transportation it was Golspie which remained the focal point.

The last man appointed to the Force before George Bridgeford retired was Alexander Ross, a Carpenter from Lairg. He joined the Force on 18 July 1904 when 20 years of age. After initial training at Headquarters in Dornoch he was posted to Embo in August 1904. In March 1905 he moved to Helmsdale and while there he passed his St Andrew's Ambulance Certificate in first aid.

After 13 months in the 'Dale it was off again, this time to Rogart. Following six months there, he was transferred to Durness, before moving again, in April 1908, to Melvich on the north coast. While there, his son Kenneth was born, on 14 January 1912. We will hear more of Kenneth Ross later, which will explain why his father's career is detailed herein.

Attaining 5 years in the rank of Inspector, Murray received an increase of £7.10/- (£7.50p) - exactly the same sum as his predecessor had been awarded after the same period of time in the rank. On 15 May 1913 Sgt Polson was moved to Headquarters, and after 10 years as Inspector, Mr Murray had his salary increased by a further £7.10/- (£7.50p) to £115, in exactly the same way as Mr Bridgeford had had after he had been 10 years an Inspector.

After 3 years at Dornoch Sgt Polson was transferred to Bonar Bridge, and on 16 February 1917 Mr Murray received his final pay rise, a quantum leap indeed, to £135 per annum. It would seem that George Murray's health was suspect as he retired the following year, on 15 February 1918.

Normally an officer - and particularly a senior officer - would not have been allowed to retire in war-time but ill-health was the one reason acceptable. He provided a Medical Certificate to provide for his 'early' retirement, having served 34 years and was by then 59 years of age. He was awarded an annual pension of £81.2/2d (£81.11p) but did not have the opportunity to enjoy his retirement, as he died seven weeks later on 5 April 1918.

In May 1913 PC Alexander Ross had moved along the coast to Tongue, before removing to Helmsdale in April 1920. That was to be his final posting, retiring from the service there on 3 August 1937 after 33 years service.

We have however run on a bit ahead of ourselves, in order to detail these 3 officers' careers. Let us now return to the early part of 1906, and learn of an event which affected the Force considerably.

Chief Constable Macdonald died suddenly at his home in Dornoch on the afternoon of Thursday 15 February 1906 and a sense of shock was experienced all around the County. Until a successor was found, Inspector George Murray acted as Chief Constable.

An obituary article published in the Northern Times, Sutherland's local newspaper, describes the Sutherland career of Mr Macdonald very well, and is included at the end of this chapter.

The Inverness-shire connection did not end with Macdonald's passing, however. While Malcolm Macdonald was in charge of the Skye Division of Inverness-shire, he received a young recruit, Constable Hugh Chisholm. Born on 2 August 1862 in the Glenurquhart area of the County of Inverness, PC Chisholm joined Inverness-shire Constabulary on 9 January 1883, and his first station was Staffin in the north of Skye.

One year later he was posted to the other end of Skye to fill the vacancy at Isleornsay. Eighteen months later Chisholm moved again, this time going back to the north of Skye, to take over the station at Uig.

Macdonald would have come to know the young Chisholm quite well, and would not have been greatly surprised to see him rise to Sergeant at Inverness in 1892. Six years later, missing out the rank of Inspector, Chisholm was promoted straight to the rank of Superintendent and was also appointed Deputy Chief Constable of Inverness-shire.

So, upon Mr Macdonald's death in 1906, the Police Authority for the County of Sutherland again turned to McHardy's force for a new Chief. Hugh Chisholm was appointed Chief Constable of Sutherland on 26 April 1906, and took up his new duties in Dornoch on 1 May. Aged 43, he had served 23 years in Inverness-shire. Whether he had remained single, or was a widower, is unknown but in June 1911 - at age 49 - he married Phil Mackintosh Innes, who was 18 years his junior. They had one daughter, Catherine, three years later.

In 1912 the Force had a strength of 17 officers. The recruitment criteria - on the rare occasions when vacancies might arise - was for men not over 25 years of age and not less than 5 feet 11 inches in height. The population of the County then stood at 20,180 and the Force area extended to 1,207,188 acres. The force had stations at:

Bettyhill	Bonar Bridge (Sgt)	Brora (Sgt)
Dornoch (Sgt)	Durness	Golspie
Helmsdale	Lairg	Lochinver (Sgt)
Melvich	Rhiconich	Rosehall
Stoer Assynt	and Tongue	

By way of comparison, corresponding details for the other Police Forces in the Highlands are given below:-

Inverness-shire	63 men	pop: 65,054 (2,722,686 acres)(excludes Burgh)
Inverness Burgh	26	24,000 (2,400 acres)
Ross & Cromarty	52	77,353 (2,009,558 acres)
Caithness-shire	24	37,177 (455,708 acres)

(Source: Police & Constabulary Almanac 1912)

As mentioned earlier, when detailing the careers of the 2 promoted officers, George Murray was Inspector for 14 years until he retired in 1918, while Polson was Sergeant for no less than 18 years until his retirement in 1921. Although both retired within three years of each other, the Sergeant got a whole lot more of a pension than the Inspector.

This was because in 1919 the Desborough Enquiry into the British Police Service (which arose from the Police Strike, following serious unrest in the Service recommended a considerable rise in police wages, and as a result pension amounts rose by corresponding amounts. Hence George Murray's pension, based on his salary of £135 when he retired in 1918, was only £81:2:2d. Sergeant Polson, despite having only attained a lower rank, retired in 1921 with an annual pension of £195.

By 1925 the establishment of the Sutherland Force had risen by one to 18. to illustrate the fluctuations in manpower in those austere days, those of the other highland Forces follow, indicating the difference compared to 13 years earlier.

Caithness-shire 23 (down 1)  
Inverness Burgh 32 (up 6)  
Inverness-shire 60 (down 3)  
Ross & Cromarty 49 (down 3)

Source : Police Mutual Assurance Society (PMAS) Almanac & Diary 1925

It is interesting to note that the total of additions (7) to Sutherland and Inverness Burgh exactly match the reductions in the other Counties.

Chief Constable Chisholm was the first Chief Officer of Sutherland to retire on pension, which he did on 15 May 1933, at the age of 70 years. He had been Chief Constable for 27 of his 50 years Police Service. His departure must have been flagged well in advance, as the Police Committee were able to have his successor appointed prior to his retirement.

Douglas George Ross was the man chosen to lead the Sutherland Constabulary.

Despite his Scottish name, he had been born in England, at Ramsgate in Kent on 6 April 1897. After active service with the Royal Scots between 1915 and 1919, he had been appointed to City of Manchester Police in 1920.

He then transferred to Edinburgh City Police in 1922, and there rose through the ranks to Superintendent. So, aged 37 years and with 13 years Police Service, he took over at Dornoch on 5th May 1933. His starting salary was £400 per annum, which rose by £20 every second year until 1939.

Mr Ross's family appear to have set some kind of a record in that three members of his family were Chief Constables at the same time. Roderick Ross, Chief Constable of the City of Edinburgh, from 1900 to 1935, was Douglas Ross's father. Douglas's brother was Donald Ross, who was Chief Constable of Argyll from 1927 to 1961. It has been suggested that Roderick Ross, who incidentally bore a remarkable resemblance to King Edward VII, may have been born in Helmsdale.

Note: There is NO known relationship between this family of Rosses and that of Kenneth (son of PC A Ross referred to earlier). That assurance came from Kenneth Ross's sister, who it was who also informed the author that Roderick, the Edinburgh Chief Constable, was reputed to have been born in Helmsdale. Any information to confirm or deny that suggestion would be gratefully received by this author.

By 1940 the population of the County had dropped by 4,000 to 16,100 in 28 years, although the land area had apparently grown by about 90,000 acres to 1,297,908.

Police Stations which were operational in that year comprised:

Bettyhill	Bonar Bridge	Brora (Sgt)	Dornoch
Golspie	Helmsdale	Lairg	Lochinver
Melvich	Rhiconich	Rogart and	Tongue

The Stations at Durness, Rosehall and Stoer Assynt had closed in the period between the wars, while Rogart had opened. Police establishment remained at its 1935 level of 18.

In 1940 the authorised strength for neighbouring forces stood at:

Caithness-shire 24 (up 3 from 1935, to return to its 1912 level)

Ross & Cromarty 55 (up 6, and now 2 above its 1912 level)

Inverness Burgh 34 (up 2 from 1935 - total increase of 30% since 1912)

Inverness-shire 63 (up 3 from 1935, to return to its 1912 level)

Inspector James Adamson Thom was now the Deputy Chief Constable. A native of Findhorn in Morayshire, and an electrician to trade, he had joined the force on 14 September 1936 aged 24. His record shows no transfers (not necessarily conclusive proof of permanency at Dornoch, given the history of omissions in the Record book!) He was promoted to Sergeant, apparently at Headquarters on 5 January 1938 and then to Inspector on 8 June 1939. As Sergeant he received a wage of £5 per week, and when made Inspector (and DCC) he merited a salary of £300 per annum. That was an increase of only £40 - or less than £1 extra per week for all the added responsibility.

Telephone numbers were now being quoted, the Force Headquarters Office being "Dornoch 23". Bettyhill and Lochinver seemed not to be 'on line' but Bonar Bridge (222) Brora (222), Golspie (41), Helmsdale (30), Lairg (19), Melvich (205), Rhiconich (203), Rogart (13), and Tongue (222) were.

Source: Police & Constabulary Almanac 1940

Douglas Ross continued as Chief Constable for 29 years, when he retired and took his pension on 5th April 1962, the day before his 65th birthday.

Plans were already afoot to merge the Sutherland Constabulary with its neighbouring Force, Ross-shire, to form the Ross & Sutherland Constabulary.

Despite that, recruitment of a replacement Chief Constable went ahead.

Where other such instances have arisen in recent times, such a situation has not have been permitted, and ad interim the Deputy Chief Constable would be appointed Acting Chief Constable for the period up until amalgamation.

This could not happen in Sutherland, since Inspector (and DCC) Thom would retire on 1 November 1962, on reaching the age of 60.

The County of Sutherland appointed Kenneth Ross, BL, as its last Chief Constable, and he took up his appointment with effect from 6 April 1962. He went on to be the first (and only) Chief Constable of the Ross & Sutherland Constabulary, when that new force was formed on 16 May 1963.

When that Force in turn was merged with its neighbours on 16 May 1975 to form the present Northern Constabulary, Mr Ross became Assistant Chief Constable of the new Force until his retirement.

Mr Ross, who had served in Renfrew & Bute Constabulary where he reached the rank of Detective Chief Inspector, was 'coming home' when he moved to Dornoch as Chief Constable. A 'son of the nick', his father was Alexander Ross, who had served as a Constable in Sutherland between 1904 and 1937, and whose career is detailed above.

Kenneth Ross studied law while working in the County Council Offices in Golspie as a young man, before going to Renfrewshire to join the Police. He completed his studies in his own time, but chose to remain in the Police service rather than accept a call to the bar.

Sutherland's Constabulary had grown considerably from its original piecemeal set-up which saw the one officer in Dornoch added to, one by one, to make a 'force' of six local, almost autonomous, Constables in the villages and parishes around the County.

From the eight men who made up the new Sutherlandshire Constabulary on 16 March 1858, the Force had grown in just over a century to an authorised strength in March 1963 of 35 officers:

- 1 Chief Constable;
- 2 Inspectors (including one to be Deputy Chief Constable)
- 7 Sergeants (including 1 seconded to Civil Defence)
- 24 Constables (male); and
- 1 Policewoman
- -----
- 35 Total

In addition the Force was authorised to employ:

- 2 Police Cadets;
- 1 one female typist; and
- 1 part-time cleaner.

The force in 1963 was divided into eleven beats, namely:

Dornoch	Golspie	Brora Bridge	Helmsdale
Melvich	Bettyhill	Tongue	Bonar
Lairg	Lochinver	Rhiconich	

The establishment listed above was authorised early in 1963, and is a marked increase compared to the actual disposition of the Force as at 31 December 1962. Then there was only a total of 25 officers of all ranks (all male).

The Chief Constable, the one Inspector (DCC), 2 Sergeants, 1 Detective Constable, and 1 Constable, were based at HEADQUARTERS in Dornoch, as were the TRAFFIC UNIT of 1 Sergeant and 3 Constables.

The only other Sergeant was stationed at BONAR BRIDGE (where he was the only police officer).

DORNOCH BURGH, BRORA, GOLSPIE and HELMSDALE each had TWO operational Constables, while the remaining six stations were staffed by ONE Constable each.

After comparing the size of the Force in 1858 and 1963, it would be appropriate to consider the difference in population in the same period.

While the strength of the force had grown considerably, the total number of inhabitants of the county had dropped by around half, from 25,793 to 13,442.

Also in the year of 1962 the sum total of Pedlars Certificates issued within the County was THREE - changed days from the 1860's indeed.

Shank's pony was the order of the day in the early days until Superintendent Peter Ewan was granted an allowance to keep a horse on which he could get around the County. In 1962 the Force had fifteen motor vehicles, albeit that ten of these were B.S.A. 350 c.c. motor cycles. The remainder were:

- 1 Wolseley 6/110 saloon for traffic patrol,
- 1 Land Rover and
- 3 Morris Mini vans.

The intention was to gradually replace the motor cycles with Mini vans, but none of these vehicles would be very much use for the transportation of anything less than the most docile custody. Mind you, neither would a motor bike - or Peter Ewan's cuddy!!

Only the patrol car and the Land Rover were equipped with VHF radio, by which means they could keep in contact with Headquarters. This tends to show how different life was, even so recently (and of course the cost of the equipment so much more expensive) compared with nowadays. Radio equipment then was also huge, cumbersome to operate, used considerable battery power, and temperamental in the extreme.

Today each police car needs to be fitted with radio for prompt attendance to calls for Police assistance - or at least as promptly as is practical given the distances involved. Plans were in hand to provide a new transmitter at Bonar to enlarge the coverage area, and to provide more vehicles with sets.

Crime, even in 1962, was rare. There had been one assault against an officer of the law, 20 housebreakings (6 cleared up), 33 thefts (20 detected) and 6 frauds (all but one leading to charges). The most prevalent offence was reckless or careless driving - 55 cases in all, but only 32 of the 35 people proceeded against were convicted. Most of these cases would have occurred on the treacherous A9 road (now thankfully much improved, shortened via the Dornoch Bridge, and partially re-aligned but by no means finished) which then went from Bonar Bridge to the Ord of Caithness, north of Helmsdale.

The cases of housebreaking related to 11 storage premises, five shops and four dwelling-houses. One of these cases also involved a safe-breaking.

The most common non-traffic offence was salmon poaching, with 23 cases made known, of which 16 were detected. Of these proceedings were taken in 14 cases, but only 10 accused persons were subsequently convicted.

Surprisingly perhaps there were no deer poaching offences made known in 1962, as compared to three cases in 1961.

Out of the total of 322 crimes and offences made known, proceedings were taken in 227 cases. Of these, in only three instances were the accused persons female.

Extra duties which took up a great deal of manpower were the escorting of abnormal loads through the County, and duty at public events such as sheep and cattle sales. Stray dogs did not take up time - only one lost pooch was handed in to police during the year, and it was soon claimed by its owner.

In addition to 2 Registered Clubs, there were 60 premises (47 hotels, 5 public houses and 8 off-sales) in the County licensed for the sale of exciseable liquor, which the 1962 Annual Report stated gave an average of one such premises to every 228 members of the population of the County.

Looking to the future, Mr Ross intimated in what was his first - and Sutherland's last - Chief Constable's Annual Report, that approval had been obtained for the building of a new police station and house at Tongue, and a police station and two houses at Brora, all to be constructed in 1963/64.

Mr Ross also intimated his plans to revise the policing methods of the County, made possible by the increased number of Sergeants in the Establishment. He intended dividing the force area into four Sections, each under the supervision of a Sergeant. They in turn would be responsible to an Inspector based at Dornoch, who would have immediate responsibility for the general supervision of the area.



The Sergeants' Section Stations were to be at Dornoch, Bonar Bridge, Brora and Lairg. As Mr Ross explained in the Annual Report:

'This will give an improved standard of supervision which hitherto has not been possible'. (George Bridgeford would have agreed with that!)

The Policewoman would be stationed at Headquarters, but available for duty anywhere in the force area as required. The Cadets would also be based at Dornoch, where they would perform office and telephone duties, but would also receive training along with beat and traffic officers.

So on 16 May 1963 the Sutherland Constabulary became part of the new Ross & Sutherland Constabulary, with its Headquarters in Dingwall. Sutherland was not greatly affected by the merger, remaining intact as a Sub Division of the new Force. Needless to say Mr Ross kept a close interest in the County.

Again by way of comparison, although figures for 1963 are not available, the 1966 authorised establishment of neighbouring forces bears looking at.

CAITHNESS: still alone and resisting proposed mergers, now had 54 officers, and 2 Cadets (It would eventually join with Orkney & Shetland)

INVERNESS BURGH: now had 64 officers, including a chief Inspector as DCC and 3 Inspectors, plus one police Cadet (Population: 29,773).  
(It would merge with Inverness-shire in 1968)

INVERNESS-SHIRE: had 121 officers, including 9 policewomen, plus 3 cadets

ROSS & SUTHERLAND: 134 officers plus 6 cadets.  
(1966 population of Sutherland quoted as : 13,507)

The listing for Sutherland Sub Division comprised:

Sub Divisional Officer: Insp D Fraser, Dornoch

Traffic Dept: Sgt Alex Glidden, Dornoch

Dornoch Section: Sgts Duncan Matheson and Allan M MacLeod  
Stns: Dornoch (Tel 222)

Brora Section: Sgt Andrew Lister  
Stns: Brora (Tel 222), Helmsdale (Tel 222),  
Melvich (Tel 222)

Bonar Bridge Section: Sgt Alexander Wilkie  
Stns: Bonar Bridge (Tel 222),  
Lochinver (Tel 222), Golspie (Tel 222)

Lairg Section: Sgt Donald E MacLean

Stns: Bettyhill (Tel 222), Lairg (Tel 19),  
Rhiconich (Tel 222), Tongue (Tel 222)

(Source: Police & Constabulary Almanac 1966)

Again the amalgamation in 1975, to form the new Northern Constabulary, made little difference to Sutherland at the outset. It remained a Sub Division of the new Force, with its Central Division which - on the mainland at least - virtually equated to the former Ross & Sutherland force area.

It was however decided that the Tongue and Farr area - comprising Bettyhill (Section Station), Tongue and Melvich beats - in the north west could best be served by transferring it into the Northern Division as part of the Caithness Sub Division. As a result, additional manpower was more readily available from Thurso or Wick, rather than the long haul from Dornoch or Bonar. The Section still remained within the County (now District) of Sutherland, and within the jurisdiction of Dornoch Sheriff Court.

This meant that all crimes and offences committed in that area were still dealt with at Dornoch, which presented logistical problems in getting prisoners to court. This was of course nothing new, since PC William Mackay would have experienced exactly the same difficulties when he was appointed in the 1850's.

In the late 1970's, a large modern Police Station was built in Dornoch to replace the old building and finally the officers were provided with extra space which for so long had been lacking.

Other than the Sergeant at Bettyhill, supervisory staff in the county were based at Dornoch (Chief Inspector, Inspector, and 2 Sergeants), with one Sergeant each at Bonar Bridge and Brora.

Golspie and Brora each had three Constables, with Helmsdale and Bonar Bridge allocated two each.

The Sergeant at Bonar Bridge (whose 'patch' now also included Ardgay, which previous to then had been in Ross-shire) was responsible for supervision of the single-officer Stations at Lairg, Lochinver and Rhiconich.

The Brora Sergeant had responsibility for the Golspie officers (whose Beat included Rogart) and Helmsdale Beat which extended to the Ord of Caithness (and well beyond it sometimes!!) and to Kinbrace and Garvault and almost as far as Forsinard and Syre.

Helmsdale, which it was envisaged could become an oil-rig supply base, received a superb Police Station in the early 1970's. Big enough to support a Sergeant and 6 Constables, and with far more space and better facilities than the Section Station at Brora - and the 3-officer Station at Golspie - it was to be one of the few instances where a Police Office was built too big rather than too small. It is still no more than a two-officer Station.

The Kylesku bridge, providing a 24-hour link between the Rhiconich and Lochinver beats, made a significant difference to policing in the west of the County when it opened in 1984. The Constables in Lochinver and Rhiconich (near Kinlochbervie) were able to work together - or go to each other's assistance - in the silent hours without having to make a huge detour or calling out the ferry crew.

The opening of the Dornoch Bridge, linking Tain to Dornoch across the old Meikle Ferry route, also had a considerable effect upon police work. Removing the need to travel via Bonar Bridge and the Struie to transport prisoners to and from Inverness Prison, much police resources and time were freed. Assistance, if required, could also be supplied from Easter Ross much more quickly.

Economies were also brought about on the Court side with the Procurator Fiscal areas of Tain and Dornoch being merged under one Fiscal. It is probably only a matter of time before the two Sheriff Courts become one.

When in 1993 the Northern Constabulary was re-organised to remove its Divisional structure, the opportunity was taken to realign Command Units to share the same boundaries as Parliamentary Constituencies.

This was done as local Government was also being revised to remove the two-tier (Region and District) structure, alongside which Police Sub Divisions had been designed, and Districts (usually former Counties, or parts of) would be swept away.

As a result Sutherland parted company with Ross-shire and became part of The Caithness & Sutherland Command Area, with its Headquarters in Wick.

By this time the Chief Inspector rank at Dornoch had also been removed, leaving the Inspector in charge. Sutherland (except Tongue & Farr) is now a Sub Area of the new Command Area, and under the command of the Inspector at Dornoch.

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INSIGNIA:

It is hardly surprising, given the small number of officers, that insignia of the former Sutherland Constabulary is extremely rare.

(This section is still to be developed and illustrated)

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major revision 1997,  
updated 2004,2005  
fairly major revision 2006

## APPENDIX.

### SUDDEN DEATH OF THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF SUTHERLAND

Cutting from Northern Times 1906 (date unknown)  
preserved by the late Kenneth Ross,  
last Chief Constable of Sutherland

It came as a shock to the northern public on Thursday afternoon to hear of the sudden death at 4.40 p.m. on that day of Mr Malcolm Macdonald, Chief Constable of Sutherland, at his residence in Dornoch. The cause of death, it is understood, was heart failure supervening after a sharp attack of colic, which began about 10 a.m. on the morning of his death. He was at the curling on Loch-in-treel, and in excellent spirits the day before. He got up on Thursday morning as usual and breakfasted with his family, after which he went outside and did some work on his own premises. Returning to the house he complained of a feeling of being gripped as if some one had caught him by the throat, this gradually going down the chest to the abdomen when pain set in, which was at times very acute.

Dr Maclachlan was called about eleven o'clock, but no serious view was taken of the attack, and a prescription was given. Again at two o'clock the doctor saw Mr Macdonald, and, although he was still suffering nothing serious was apprehended; but unfortunately the unseen was at work, and he became alarmingly ill, and expired suddenly at the hour stated above, in the presence of his son and daughter and his sister-in-law. All the curlers, in view of the County Bonspiel, were out at Loch-in-treel, and when they heard the sad news on their return it could hardly be believed. The telegraph conveyed the news all over the county, and the sadness which it produced as it spread testified to the popularity of the deceased.

The "Chief," as he was popularly known, was 57 years of age and a widower. His eldest son is superintendent of police at Dundee, and there are two other sons and three daughters, six in all, mostly grown up. Mr Macdonald was Chief Constable of Sutherland for eighteen years, having succeeded the late Chief-Constable MacLean in July 1887. He was appointed from the post of inspector at Portree, which he had occupied under Mr McHardy, chief constable of Inverness-shire for about five years.

He was in Skye, of which he was a native, during the time of the crofter disturbances, and on one occasion he and the late Sergt Mackenzie, Kingussie, and four constables, visiting Glendale, encountered a violent mob, by whom the inspector was roughly handled, receiving injuries from the after effects of which he suffered for a long time. Mr Macdonald's connection with the Inverness-shire Constabulary began at Obbe, from which he transferred to Ardersier, afterwards becoming sergeant of police at Beaulieu.

Since he came into the County of Sutherland the Chief was one of the most popular public figures, and was welcomed wherever people gathered together. He was a man equally at home at a social gathering or at a public meeting, ever having an open eye to his duty, and ever ready to take his full share of public work.

It is a rare testimonial to a Chief Constable to say that he was one of the most popular men in the north and west of Scotland. From the nature of the duties falling to be executed by one in that position, people would naturally look for some enmity, at least on the part of those unfortunate enough to come on the wrong side of his official work. But the Chief had his own way of doing things. His official work never left the flesh raw or nor a feeling of revenge.

Everyone knew the big soft heart he carried in his big frame, and any unpleasant work that may have fallen to the Chief was done in the most pleasant manner possible. Therein lay his popularity. He never talked "shop". He never spoke anything but well of people, and where he could not do that he held his peace.

He gave a helping hand where he could, whether it was privately or in connection with public movements, either in the Burgh of Dornoch or in the County, or in his native island of Skye, and his death is mourned by a huge circle of friends all over the northern half of Scotland, who extend to the bereaved family every expression of sympathy.

The Chief was a fine specimen of the Highlander. Standing considerably over six feet in height, and huge of girth and limb he was an imposing figure, and the beau ideal in the public mind of what a chief constable should be. Coming from the misty Isle of Skye his knowledge of the Gaelic language was extensive, and he spoke with a correctness of tone and felicity of expression which often excited comment.

He was passionately fond of Gaelic song and story, and had an illimitable store of both, which, when it was tapped, was delightful. To see the fine erect figure, clad in real Highland dress, and to, at the same time hear him conversing in the Gaelic language, was to find the real embodiment of a Highlander, seemingly as far apart from English language and latter-day customs as the towering peaks of his native Cuchullins.

Although out of Skye for many years he always manifested a keen interest in the doings of the island, and was regularly a prominent figure at the annual "field-day" at Portree, renewing acquaintances with his many friends and following with zest the fortunes of the competitors at the cattle show and the Highland games, to the prize-lists of each of which he was a standing contributor.

Physically a strong man, he was naturally fond of the out-door life, although, within recent years, the attacks of rheumatism with which he was visited served to curtail his partaking in various games he played as much as he would have wished. Prominently, above all else, he was a golfer. Although he never tackled a club until he was about forty years of age, he worked himself down to "scratch" in a year or two, and for some years he held the record at the Dornoch course, and since then has always been reckoned as amongst the best five or six players the club possessed.

He was also a well-known figure on the Tain, Brora, and Golspie courses, and his style of play - so easy, confident, and sure with clubs remarkable for their lightness and shortness - was always much admired. Then, as a curler - and golf and curling are the two premier games of Scotland - he was as keen and hearty a man as ever "sooped a stone into the house" and none watched the counting of points with keener interest.

In all respects he was an ideal man for his position and the "good old chief" - decent soul that he was" - will long live in the memories of those to whom he was known. It will be many long years ere he has been forgotten, and there will always be those for half a century to come who will remember with softening of the heart and a dimming of the eyes the admirable Chief who they loved so well. Requiescat in pace.

## THE FUNERAL

The funeral took place to Dornoch Churchyard on Monday amid every appearance of mourning and sincere sympathy. It was largely attended by representatives from practically every corner of the county, and by all the officials and Constabulary. The remains were laid beside those of his wife and daughter, the coffin bearing the age of 57.

## TRIBUTE BY SHERIFF MACKENZIE

On Sheriff Mackenzie taking his seat on the bench in the Sheriff Court on Tuesday, he paid the following tribute to the late Chief Constable:-

Gentlemen - I am sure that the one thought uppermost in the minds of us all at present has reference to the untimely death of the Chief Constable of the county. Mr Macdonald was with us here in Court last Tuesday, apparently in his usual health and strength, but was struck down by sudden and fatal illness on Thursday, was buried yesterday, and today, to our great sorrow and regret, his place amongst us here is vacant, and, sad to think, it shall know him no more for ever.

Eighteen years ago he received his appointment as Chief Constable, and during the whole of this long period he has enjoyed the confidence and respect with which all classes were, at once, constrained to regard him, for, to a thorough knowledge of his official duties, he added a kindliness of disposition which enabled him to discharge these duties considerately but efficiently, and he thus made himself a favourite with all those he came in contact with.

It is to his official capacity that I speak of him here today, and I may say that on all occasions I found him most painstaking and conscientious, and so thoroughly conversant with his duties that it was an absolute pleasure to have his association in the conduct of business matters. By his death his family have been deprived of a devoted and most indulgent father, and our sympathy goes out to them in the fullest measure for their irreparable loss.

This county, too, has lost the services of a most capable officer, and we who knew him as a friend, while now mourning his death, can have still the consolation of being able to cherish pleasant recollections of him, and so keep alive his memory and worth in our hearts. Mr C.H. Urquhart, Honorary Sheriff Substitute, whom I am pleased to have on the bench beside me, desires to be associated in the remarks I have made.

Mr H.M. Mackay, solicitor, on behalf of the bar and officials of Court, concurred in what had been said of the Chief Constable, and tendered their sincere sympathy to the family of the deceased under their heavy trial and bereavement.

The End.