



Photograph of the official party and members of the public at the opening of Dornoch light railway.

THIS WAS A GREAT DAY FOR DORNOCH

Opening, in 1902, of Light Railway

THE Dornoch light railway was opened on Monday, June 2, 1902. The report in "The Northern Times" regarded this event as "a red letter day in the history of Dornoch and the British Empire — the day on which railway communication was opened to the royal and ancient burgh, and the day on which it was made known to the world that the long and sanguine South African war was ended."

Of course, it was a holiday in Dornoch, and "every house was decorated for the occasion with flags and bunting, while the fishing village of Embo was out en masse to see the unique spectacle of a passenger train passing the village. All along the line, from Dornoch to The Mound, the public manifested their interest in the event by having more than one run on the train during the day, the drawings for the opening being approximately for Dornoch £16, Embo £10, Skelbo £4, and The Mound £5—total £35."

ABOUT 1030 THERE

The Duke of Sutherland's private saloon and engine, Dunrobin, joined the ordinary train at The Mound and proceeded to Dornoch. Meanwhile, the Town Council of Dornoch, headed by Provost Sutherland, had marched from the municipal buildings preceded by the local brass band.

The opening ceremony was performed by Mr Maclean, factor for the Duke of Sutherland, and about 1000 people were assembled on the railway platform. But it was raining (as our picture shows) and the opening ceremony was "curtailed very much." But photographers were busy. As our report stated, "Mr MacMahon, photographer, Inverness, had the privilege of taking two photographs of the directors and the assembled crowd and Mr Mackenzie, cinematographer, Inverness, was busy taking the moving mass from first to last."

The then Duke of Sutherland took a great interest in the founding of the Dornoch light railway. He had surveys made with a view to forming a

private company, but in 1893 the Light Railway Act was passed, and this made it easier and secured the support of the Government.

Others present on that great occasion, and who may be included in our photograph, were, besides Provost Sutherland, the Rev. Donald Grant (Dornoch), Mr Andrew Carnegie of Skibo, Mr Andrew Lindsay (Golspie), convener of Sutherland County Council; the Rev. James Macdonald (U.F. Manse), Col. John Mackintosh (Proncy), Mr J. A. Arthur (solicitor), Mr J. R. Kennedy, Mr H. M. Mackay (secretary to the Dornoch Light Railway Company), Bailie Fraser (Dornoch), Councillor Mackay, Dr MacLaughlan, Mr Macrone (sheriff clerk), Mr John Grant, Mr Gillespie, Deah of Guild Murray, Mr Ross (Ivy Cottage), Mr Archibald Argo (county clerk), Mr John Melville (Brora), Mr James Hardy (factor, Skibo), and Chief Constable Macdonald.

DUKE'S GIFT

The Duke of Sutherland had given a free grant of land, £5000 and a guarantee of £3000 to the Highland Railway Company.

According to our report of the Dornoch Light Railway Company's annual general meeting, on October 8, 1902, the railway was formally opened for traffic on June 2, 1902. For the three months to August 31 the gross earnings of the line amounted to £562, and the working expenses £380, showing a net profit of £182. No fewer than 15,930 passengers were carried during the three months, the train mileage for that time being 4115.

The total cost of construction of the railway was estimated at £30,000. The fares for the 15,930 passengers amounted to £315 and season tickets to £3.

Mr Arthur, solicitor, Dornoch, brought up an interesting point. He said, "It would be an improvement either to have shorter carriages with only four wheels or carriages with bogie wheels instead of the long carriages with fixed wheels at present in use, which at some of the sharp curves are displacing the rails."