

# From Our Old Files

## 25 YEARS AGO (July 15th, 1988)

IT'S UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) day in Embo tomorrow when the 250 villagers declare themselves independent of the Crown and under the sole government of the Laird of Embo, Jock Mackintosh.

Buckingham Palace and 10 Downing Street have been notified of this coup, which involves the setting up of a Customs post and the issuing of entry visas. The Queen's secretary has indicted that, if the new state sends loyal greetings, then they can expect a favourable response.

So far Margaret Thatcher has failed to make any public comment but Embo freedom fighter, librarian Elizabeth Gill, says: "We think she's planning an attack." Members of the SAS are likely to be from Sutherland Agricultural Society, though.

However, UDI is for one day only — and it's all in a good cause. Embo Community Centre Association has hit on this idea to raise funds for their centre, the old village school. Entry visas will be issued on receipt of a donation and visitors crossing the "State line" will be entitled to a free sample of Clynesh Malt at Grannie's Heilan Hame, which, chairman Donald Ward indicates, will be the revolutionary HQ and Government building.

The unique event has captured the imagination of the nation with press and radio interest. Following publicity on Radio 2's Derek Jamieson Show, an English flag maker is to try and get Embo's flag registered and, explains Elizabeth: "That means we can put forward a football team to the World Cup and even enter the Olympics!"

Villagers predict an era of prosperity with the dawning of UDI; the finding on the beach of a 40-gallon drum of oil has convinced them they have a secure oil-based economy and they have written to the American Embassy to arrange twinning with Hawaii.

## 50 YEARS AGO (July 19th, 1963)

A GRAPHIC account of what work was entailed in moving the secondary classes from the old building to Golspie's new high school was given in his annual report by the headmaster, Mr W. A. Rutherford.

He commented: "We were not able to enter the new building last August and had to face the apparently impossible task of accommodating an extra 65 secondary pupils in an already overcrowded old school and try to find extra staff to fit the needs.

"Meantime all the supplies of equipment and materials for the secondary school were arriving in the new building and the supplies for the primary in the old. We got through by the skin of our teeth and after a colossal amount of hard labour on the part of a group of people, involving many hundreds of hours of unpaid overtime, given ungrudgingly.

"Four primary classes were flitted to the new building. The rooms vacated in the old building were used as an art room, science room, etc. The Duke Street building was used for sewing. All the secondary equipment and supplies had to be flitted back to the old school.



This is the opening of the new Dornoch Primary School in 1913. Photo: Historylinks, Dornoch.

"The official opening was fixed for March 29th and the amount of work to be done to make the building presentable was formidable."

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IF the weather is fine, Sutherland Agricultural Society will be putting on their best ever sports programme at the Review Park, Golspie, tomorrow, the date of their annual show.

Last year the society suffered a heavy financial loss through rain. The sports programme in the afternoon was washed out. But, as they say, lightning never strikes at the same place twice.

The society will be looking to the sports programme to draw in the crowds and the cash and so recompensing them for their heavy loss last year.

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A COLOURFUL display of needlework, handwork and art was admired by parents and friends at the annual prize-giving at Skibo Primary School. A very pleasant programme was arranged for their entertainment.

A playlet based on that well-loved fairy-tale by Hans Anderson, The Emperor's New Clothes, was presented by the younger pupils who played their parts so delightfully that it was difficult to single out any special one for praise.

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SUTHERLAND Harbours Committee has agreed by seven votes to four to reduce landing dues at Culag Pier, Lochinver, from 6d to 41/2d in the £1 until Whitsunday, 1964.

## 75 YEARS AGO (July 21, 1938)

THE reception given to Miss Louise Carnegie Miller at a dinner and dance in the Carnegie Hall, Clashmore, on Friday night, warmly expressed the high regard in which she is held by tenants and employees on the vast Skibo Estate.

About 200 guests sat down to a splendid dinner following which two magnificent gifts were presented to Miss Miller on the occasion of her wedding to Mr J. F. Gordon Thomson, advocate, Edinburgh, which took place in Dornoch Cathedral at noon yesterday.

Mr J. P. Whittet, factor, filled the role of chairman admirably while various speakers testified to the goodwill in which the young bride was held by tenantry and staff.

The dinner was given by Mrs Carnegie and was purveyed in excellent style by Mr and Mrs Thomas Wooley of the Caledonian Hotel, Bonar Bridge. Full justice was done to the menu, the guests being seated round tables elegantly adorned with a profusion of lovely blooms.

Miss Miller, who sat beside her fiancé, was accompanied at the table by Mrs Louise Carnegie (her grandmother), Mr and Mrs Rosewell Miller (her father and mother), her two sisters, Margaret and Barbara, Mr J. P. Whittet and others.

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THE S.Y. *Killarney* and the S.S. *Lochgarry* both carried a full complement of passengers when they called at Lochinver during the week. The S.S. *Wisbech* discharged a cargo of coals for Mr Angus Mackenzie, merchant. The S.S. *Lythe* discharged a cargo of coals for Mr Robert Mackay, merchant. The S.S. *Lochgorm* discharged a large cargo of asphalt in drums. The S.Y. *Norseman* is anchored in the bay, also the motor launch *Tuffin*.

## 100 YEARS AGO (July 17th, 1913)

FOR some time past, poaching in Strathcarron district has been giving trouble to river watchers and early on Wednesday morning last week a stirring encounter took place between the bailiffs and a crofter.

Mr William Duncan, inspector of the Kyle of Sutherland salmon fishings and Mr James Murray, bailiff, Strathoykel, while watching the river Carron, saw an elderly crofter, George Ross, residing at Balnabruaich, Strathcarron, four miles inland from Ardgay, take a salmon from a net he had set in the river, right below his dwelling-house.

On seeing the intruders, Ross bolted across the river taking his gun and gaff with him. The watchers waded after and in the pursuit which followed, Ross turned twice and aimed at them without firing. They were gaining however and it is alleged that he turned a third time, aimed deliberately and fired. The bullet whizzed between their heads and rattled on the fence behind them.

Seeing that he had failed, the poacher halted to reload when Mr Duncan rushed upon him and grappled with him. Murray joined in the tussle and Ross was soon disarmed but picking up the gaff, he renewed the attack with this weapon. A prolonged struggle ensued and, after he was deprived of the gaff, Ross was allowed to go home.

Later a police constable went to apprehend Ross but he had taken to the hills. A large force of searchers eventually came upon him in Strathcarron wood, adjacent to his house. He had another gun in his possession and about 100 rounds of shot.

Shortly afterwards he was conveyed by motor car to Tain along with the trophies seized by the police, including four guns and about 500 loaded cartridges, which were mostly found in his dwelling-house.

That George Ross, a quiet, canny going, good hearted, inoffensive, elderly crofter, should be the principal figure in such an extraordinary escapade as this is a source of amazement to all who know him.