

A year in the life of Dornoch's history

Online

DORNOCH'S award-winning Historylinks Museum and the Centre for History at the University of the Highlands and Islands are celebrating the first anniversary of their collaborative venture – the historylinksdornoch blog.

The blog, which has been running for one year today, investigates the history and archaeology of places within a 30-mile radius of Dornoch.

Posts over the past year have ranged from a study of medieval

place names, a case of "child murder" at Inveran, reports of a field trip to the Strath of Kildonan and a "lunatic" imprisoned in Tain.

Several posts have explored the adventures of local people who ventured as far as India, Canada or the United States.

In its first year, there have been 37 posts attracting 5031 views, and visitors from 53 countries, predominantly the UK, but also from Canada, Australia, USA, New Zealand and South Africa.

The posts provide a fascinating insight into the social fabric of south-east Sutherland and north-east Ross-shire in times past.

Dr Elizabeth Ritchie, a history lecturer at the University of the Highlands and Islands and member of the Historylinks Museum committee, edits the blog.

In addition to her own research and writing for the blog, she has been successful in attracting posts from researchers based in Aberdeen, Stirling, Dundee and Edinburgh. Several of her students on the Masters degree in Highlands and Islands history have developed research on the local area and have contributed their findings to the blog.

Local experts, such as Historylinks curator Sue Higgins, have also contributed.

The blog is complementary to Historylinks Museum's web presence which has been progressively enhanced in the last few years.

Before 2005, the museum's website was rudimentary and did not attract many visitors. The new website provides not only details about the museum, but the War Memorial pages added in 2009, and quarterly reports on Dornoch Heritage Society and Historylinks Museum activity.

In 2008 the Historylinks Image Library was launched, providing a collection of old photos, postcards, documents and artefacts held by the museum. There are now 11,483 "Picture Pages" which have collected 976 comments, many of which have added information about people and places in the images.

This year the library has attracted 17,197 visitors, including international interest from tourists, ancestor-hunters and students.

Anniversaries help focus attention on significant events and 2014 will hold two such anniversaries for this region.

In the spring it will be two centuries since the intrepid emigrants from

historylinksdornoch

The History and archaeology of Dornoch and district



Donald's Journey Part 1

Posted on February 25, 2013

Donald Sage was born in the Manse, half way up the Strath of Kildonan, in 1799. When he was twelve he and his elder brother Aeneas were sent to Dornoch to go to the grammar school there. (Aeneas was the Anglified form of Angus). In middle age Donald reminisced about his life in a book with the rather off-putting title of *Memorabilia Domestica*. A few weeks ago I blogged about his description of Dornoch's market day and of a funeral which turned into a fight. Over the next week while I am going to post about more of his schoolboy experiences in the town, which really bring to life what Dornoch was like over two hundred years ago. His journey to the town, being only his second trip away from home, made quite an impression on him and gives wonderful glimpses into the places between Kildonan and Dornoch.

Today is the first anniversary of Historylinks Museum blog.

Kildonan, who had overwintered near Churchill, Manitoba, walked and canoed their way south through hundreds of miles of lakes and snowy forest to reach Red River, today's Winnipeg.

This remarkable feat of determination will be commemorated on the blog, with two guest posts from eminent historians James Hunter and Marjory Harper.

The better-known anniversary is, of course, that of the outbreak of the First World War. In 2008 the museum was fortunate to acquire the "Captain Rose Collection" which included a handwritten war diary from July to October 1914 and three photograph albums.

The diary and accompanying photographs provide an intriguing insight into the British Expeditionary Force action in the early phase of the war and the website version of the diary includes some historical summaries and maps to give context, particularly about the retreat from Mons.

Uploading the diary online led to a

remarkable event. In February 2011, Stella Barber emailed, seeking contact with the descendants of Captain Rose. She explained that her father, Corporal Arthur Honeyball, had served with the Cameronians and he had recorded his experiences, including an account of the action on 22 October 1914 in which Captain Rose was killed.

Corporal Honeyball was trying to move Captain Rose to safety after he was first injured, when he received a second fatal shot, dying in the arms of the Corporal.

It is expected that the blog will run for another two years, promoting research into the region and making publicly available stories of the people and places around Dornoch which, until now, have sat dustily in archives and attics.

■ The website can be found at www.historylinks.org.uk. You can access the image library and blog from there or directly at www.historylinksarchive.org.uk and www.historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com