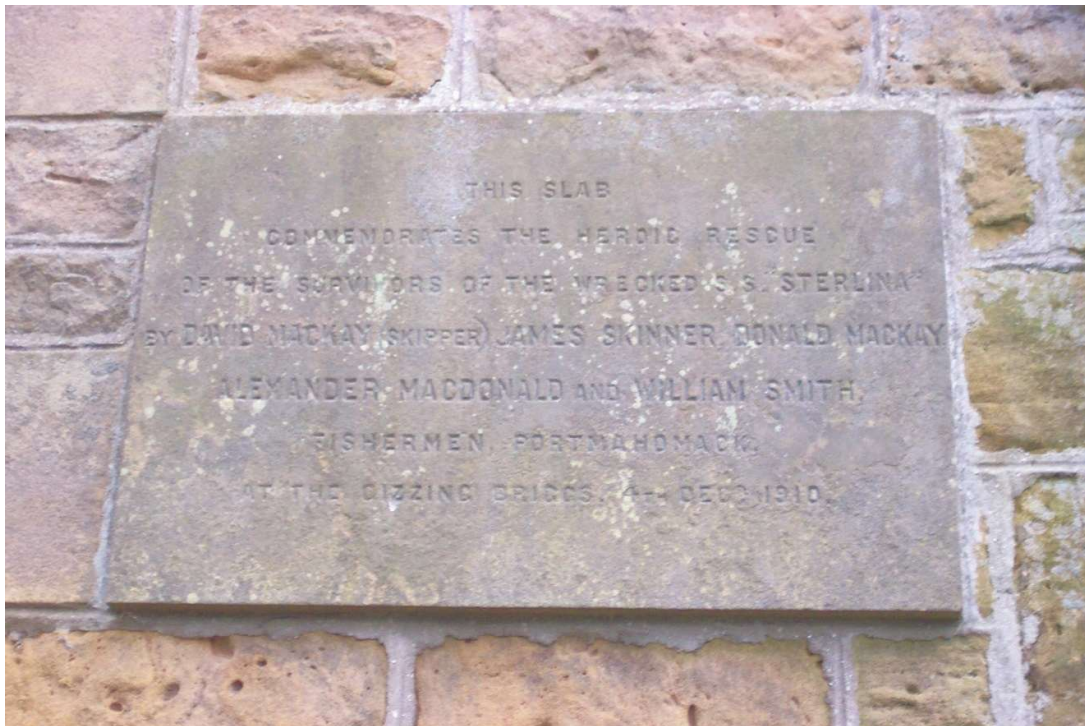


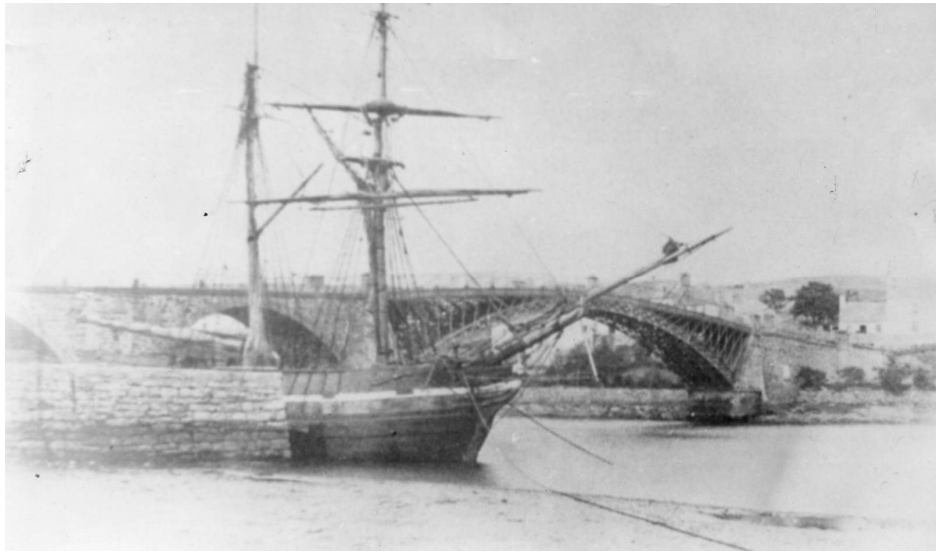
S.S.Sterlina wrecked on
Gizzen Briggs 4th December 1910
By Douglas Gordon

Plaque on Carnegie Hall Portmahomack on left of main door



I came across the fatal accident inquiry of the S S Sterlina when doing family history research in Inverness Library newspaper records. This got me started on recording all I could find out about the Sterlina.

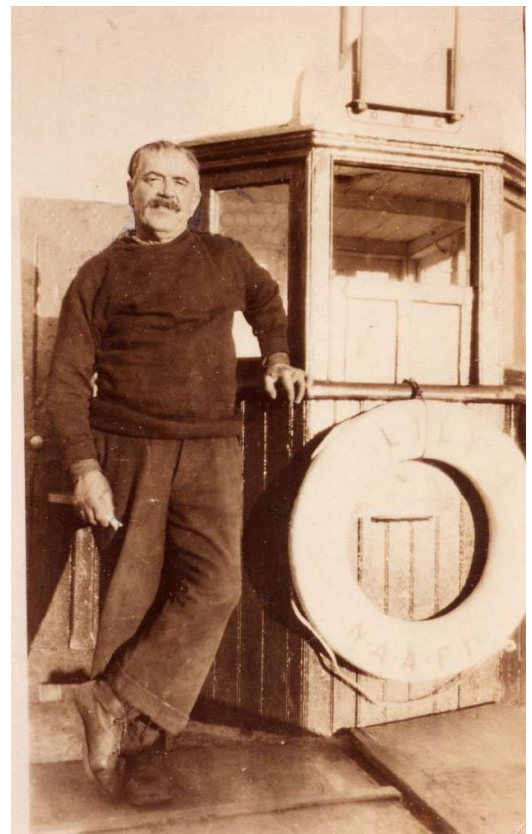
When I was doing research into this boat, it mentions the boat had come from Creich which I found out is the Parish of Creich and the boat loaded up with wood at Bonar Bridge on opposite side of river from Bonar Bridge where there was a harbour and sawmill. The logs were floated down the river to Bonar Bridge.



I met Bunty Gordon (no relation) of Bonar Bridge historical society who was a great help to me and showed me photos of sailing boats tied up at Bonar Bridge harbour in front of bridge. This photo was taken 1812 – 1893 with schooner.

Richard MacRae Captain of S.S. Sterlina showing him years later, on NAAFI boat the Lilly taking naval supplies to ships in the Cromarty Firth.

His granddaughter lives in Tain, she sent me this photo of her grandfather.



The following information I got from Jim Fallon who did research for me in Portmahomack Harbour trust records.

East House,
Portmahomack.
Friday 17 February 2006

Douglas,

S.S. 'Sterlina'

Further to our discussion and the newspaper report you gave me, I've had a look at my transcription of the Harbour Books for the period.

The S.S. 'Sterlina' docked at Portmahomack harbour on only four occasions, all in 1910. (It gives one a rather chilly feeling to realise that the following details were the run of the mill working life for the crew – little did they know that the shipwreck tragedy lay only a few months away.)

12 May 1910 S.S. 'Sterlina' Reg. Invergordon. Arrived from Invergordon.
34 tons. Harbour charge 8/6
IN 2 tons L. CAKE 1/4 charged to Cran
10 cwts MANURE 6d charged to Denoon
2 cwts MANURE 2d. charged to Bremner & Rose
44tons 18cwts MANURE charged to Cran & Co
Total dues £2-5-0
OUT 63 tons POTATOES in bags
(43 tons – Geanies, 8 tons - Brucefield,
12 tons – Arbolli)
Total dues £1-1-0
Total paid £3-14-6
Vessel left for Invergordon

8 June 1910 S.S. 'Sterlina' Reg. Invergordon. Arrived from Invergordon.
34 tons Harbour charge 8/6
IN 67 1/2tons COAL £1-2-6 charged to Bremner & Rose
OUT 150 Qrs. BARLEY (Hilton) 18/9 charged to Brooks
Total paid £2-9-9
Vessel left for Cromarty.

12 June 1910 S.S. 'Sterlina' Reg. Invergordon. Arrived from Wick.
34 tons Harbour charge 8/6
IN Light
OUT 80 Qrs. OATS 10/- charged to Brooks
Total paid 18/6
No destination was shown for the vessel.

3 September 1910 S.S. 'Sterlina' Reg. Invergordon Arrived from Aberdeen
34 tons Harbour charge 8/6
IN 73tons 9cwts OIL CAKE £2-9-0 charged to Rockfield
OUT Light
Vessel left for Invergordon.

The broader picture.

I've studied in detail the 2 Portmahomack Harbour Books which cover the period 1878-1953. There would have been earlier records, but they don't seem to have survived. Like many important sources, e.g. Domesday Book, the Harbour Books were financial records – in this case indicating the fees paid for the vessel and for the incoming and outgoing cargoes. Though Portmahomack owed its existence very largely to the fishing industry, these harbour books do not show the fishing activity after about 1890. The really substantial fishing catches were then being taken to bigger ports like Fraserburgh and Peterhead, and whatever smaller-scale fishing continued thereafter was not recorded in these books. The Harbour Books were ledgers written up by the harbour master of the time. Andrew Ross was in post from 1861, but by 1881 he had been succeeded by Charles Clanchy who remained until 1895. For the years 1896 and 1897 Kenneth Mackenzie was Harbour Master, and then 2 long serving men took over – Hugh Thompson 1898 to 1927 and John Fraser 1927-48. Duncan Macniven was the last from 1948-50. They all lived in Harbour House during their employment in the post.

The story of the S.S. 'Sterlina' in its visits to Portmahomack and its later wreck give an interesting view of the broader picture. The S.S. 'Sterlina' was a relatively small vessel – only 34 tons. She had been built in 1871, and was operating in 1910 from Invergordon. Smaller ships coming to or from Portmahomack usually berthed at Invergordon, though this was not necessarily the initial starting point nor the final destination for the vessel or the cargo. Harbour dues for ships were charged at 3d. a ton, and this rate never changed in the 75 years covered by the books (no inflation in those days?). There was also a table of charges for the different goods carried in the hold, e.g. cake for animal feed was 8d. a ton, manure 1/- a ton, potatoes 4d. a ton, coal 4d. a ton, barley and oats a penny halfpenny per quarter.

Though there had been a thriving herring trade in the late 1870s and 1880s, the main outgoing cargoes from 1890 onwards consisted of POTATOES – almost 54,000 tons. They were sent to many different ports throughout Britain including even the Irish ports of Dublin and Cork, but the vast majority arrived in the East Coast ports of England – South Shields and Stockton 13% each, Newcastle 11%, Sunderland 10%, and Wisbech 9%. (I believe you still have dealings with the latter.) The main merchants paying were Ross 1879-1915 – nearly 16,000 tons (probably Gilbert Ross and later his son David J.), Bindal 1885-1938 – nearly 7,000 tons, Gill 1916-30 – 3,640, J. Cran 1891-1907 – 3,399, Rockfield 1886-1932 – 2,961, and George Ogilvie of Montrose 1932-9 – 2,581. Cran ran a successful business at Bunchrew, Inverness and at Invergordon, and specialised in fertilizer and animal feeding stuffs.

The second most important outgoing cargoes were those of grain. The largest quantity was BARLEY – 42,000 qrs, followed by WHEAT – nearly 24,000 qrs, and OATS 21,500. The main producers were Rockfield, Bindal, Wilkhaven, Seafield, and Brucefield in that order. In the early period the leading merchants were Alex. A. Gregory and J. Robertson, but later J. Cran & Co. and A.W. Brooks & Son were prominent. Some barley went straight to the distilleries, notably Morangie and also Dalmore and Teaninich via the Belleport pier at Invergordon as well as Glenmor at Inverness.

Far and away the main incoming cargo was COAL – over 76,000 tons. Though this came from a variety of ports, (the harbourmaster sometimes distinguished between English and Scottish coal !), the vast majority (77%) came from Sunderland. Those who dealt with it at Portmahomack were usually the Ross family (Gilbert and David J.) and Finlay Munro from Rockfield. (It was interesting to see that the Lighthouse Commissioners took regular supplies for the lighthouse keepers, and one of the firms involved in arranging this is still in the coal business – Bruce Lindsay.)

There were 2 other important incoming cargoes. The first of these was MANURE and other fertilisers. They arrived regularly, and were clearly in demand at all the local farms, though the organisation lay mainly in the hands of J. Cran & Co., Finlay Munro at Rockfield, McKenzie at Inverness, and the Highland Agricultural Company. Tonnage totalled at least 8,883. Usually it was described simply as 'manure', but the records sometimes named guano, Liebig's, Kainit, nitre, and bone-flour. LIME accounted for over 10,400 bolls (approx. 434 tons ?) The firm of G.R. Hall, later J. Hall, was the main merchant for the lime at the time of greatest demand 1879-91. Nearly all the lime shipped in during the years 1881-90 was brought directly from Sunderland. There was a large delivery to Bindal in 1925 (20 tons). Manure usually came in via Invergordon, but there were cargoes from Ghent in Belgium and Lazand in Holland in the period 1923-7.

The other cargo of real importance was feeding stuff for animals. The total quantity for the period was just short of 8,500 tons. Over 88% of this was described as 'CAKE', most frequently oil-cake, but also cotton-cake, and sometimes more specialised names were used – 'Hull' or 'Thorley's'. A striking feature of the early years 1878-95 was that a large amount of oil-cake (over 5,000 tons) came in from St. Petersburg in Russia. The rest of the cargoes for the animals were normally noted as 'FEEDING STUFF', but occasionally more information is given – bran, meal, maize, or dried grains. It is also noteworthy that approximately 25 tons of TREACLE arrived in barrels and casks to be blended in with the feeding stuff.

As regards the wreck of the 'Sterlina', the captain's testimony shows that the ship steamed up from Invergordon to Creich (situated on the north side of the Kyle of Sutherland towards Bonar Bridge, just west of Spinningdale). They took on a cargo of wood from the sawmill (the area has always been important for wood and is still forested today). The ship went down on the Gizzen Briggs shallows between Tain and Dornoch. Richard Larn, the main expert on shipwrecks around the coast of Britain, says the person who saved Richard Macrae of the 'Sterlina' was Donald Mackay, master of the fishing boat 'Auricula' registered at Inverness No. 146.

During the 75 years of the harbour records no less than 642 different ships called at Portmahomack. Many came only once, others very frequently – e.g. the smack 'Gold Seeker' 107 times 1902-10, 'Balone Castle' 49 times 1911-14, and S.S. 'Warlock' 48 times 1893-1900. The smallest vessels could be really tiny like the 6 tonners 'Freedom' and 'McMillan', and the 8 ton tug 'Draig Goch'. The two largest ships to berth were from abroad – S.S. 'Bernadotte' 242 tons from Stavanger in Norway and S.S. 'Aron' 221 tons from Goteborg in Sweden. The average tonnage was between 50 and 100 tons. In the days of sail the majority of ships were schooners. What they all faced in common, no matter what their size, was the peril of the sea. It seems incredible that of the 642 ships no less than 170 were eventually wrecked (possibly

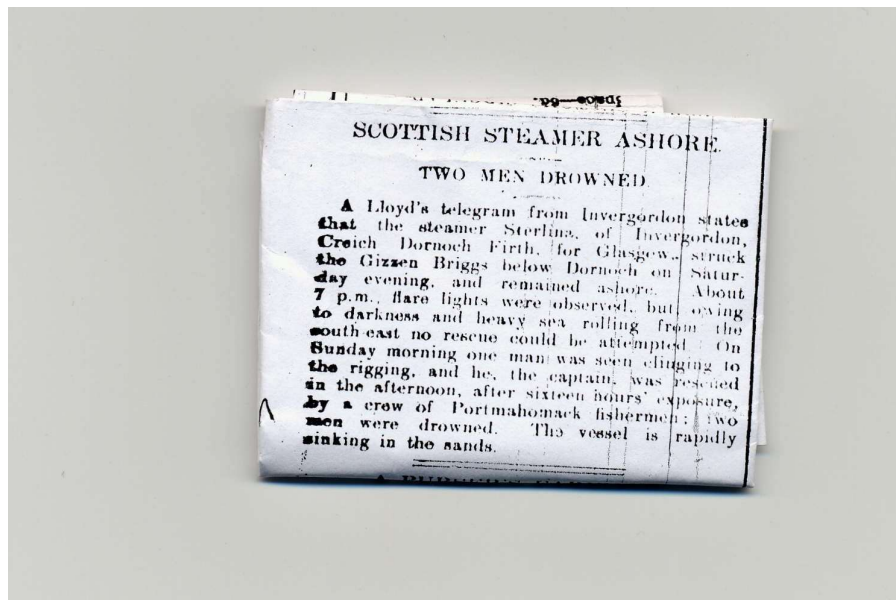
the figure could be as large as 197, but accurate identification of ships with the same name clouds the issue).

One other shipwreck had a close connection with Portmahomack. 'Young Fox' was a powered ketch of 64 tons coming from Sunderland to Portmahomack with a cargo of 139 ½ tons of coal late in 1928. She had previously visited Portmahomack 12 times in the period 1927-8. This time however she foundered in rough seas 3 miles east of Tarbat Ness. She went down in water 140 feet deep on 6 December 1928. All hands were lost.

Jim Fallon

Newspaper reports

Ross-shire Journal 9th December 1910



Wreck in the Dornoch Firth.

Two Men Drowned.

The steamer *Sterlina*, of Invergordon, the property of Messrs Bremner & Rose, Invergordon, was wrecked on the bar known as the Glizen Briggs, at the mouth of the Dornoch Firth, on Saturday evening last. The vessel, the crew of which numbered three—Skipper Richard Macrae, David Mackenzie, and Donald Macleod—was bound for Glasgow, from Bonar, with a cargo of timber, when she struck on the Glizen Briggs, the engines breaking down, and causing her to drift on to the sand-bank. There was a heavy swell on the sea, and it was evident that the vessel would soon be a complete wreck.

Signals of distress were shown, and although these were seen at Tain and Portmahomack, no rescue could be attempted, owing to the roughness of the sea. It was not until after noon on Sunday, that a fishing boat from Portmahomack put in an appearance, and after considerable difficulty, succeeded in reaching the *Sterlina*. By this time two men, Mackenzie and Macleod, had been washed overboard and drowned, but the skipper, Macrae, who had lashed himself to the top of the mast, although in a state of utter collapse, was still alive, and was hauled aboard the boat. His experience must have been a trying one, for he witnessed his two fellow companions drop from the rigging and disappear among the waves. He is, however, making good recovery.

The sad event caused much distress in Tain and district, references being made to it in several churches during the evening service. Much credit is due to Mr Patience, Morangle Road, Tain, who was instrumental in sending notice to the surrounding places along the coast and for the manner in which he assisted as far as he could to effect the rescue. To the crew of the Portmahomack boat, however, the credit of the actual deed belongs, for had it not been for their daring and skill, three lives would have been lost instead of two.

Northern Chronicle Dec 1910 This paper covered the North of Scotland and stopped getting printed in 1960s

Reformation.

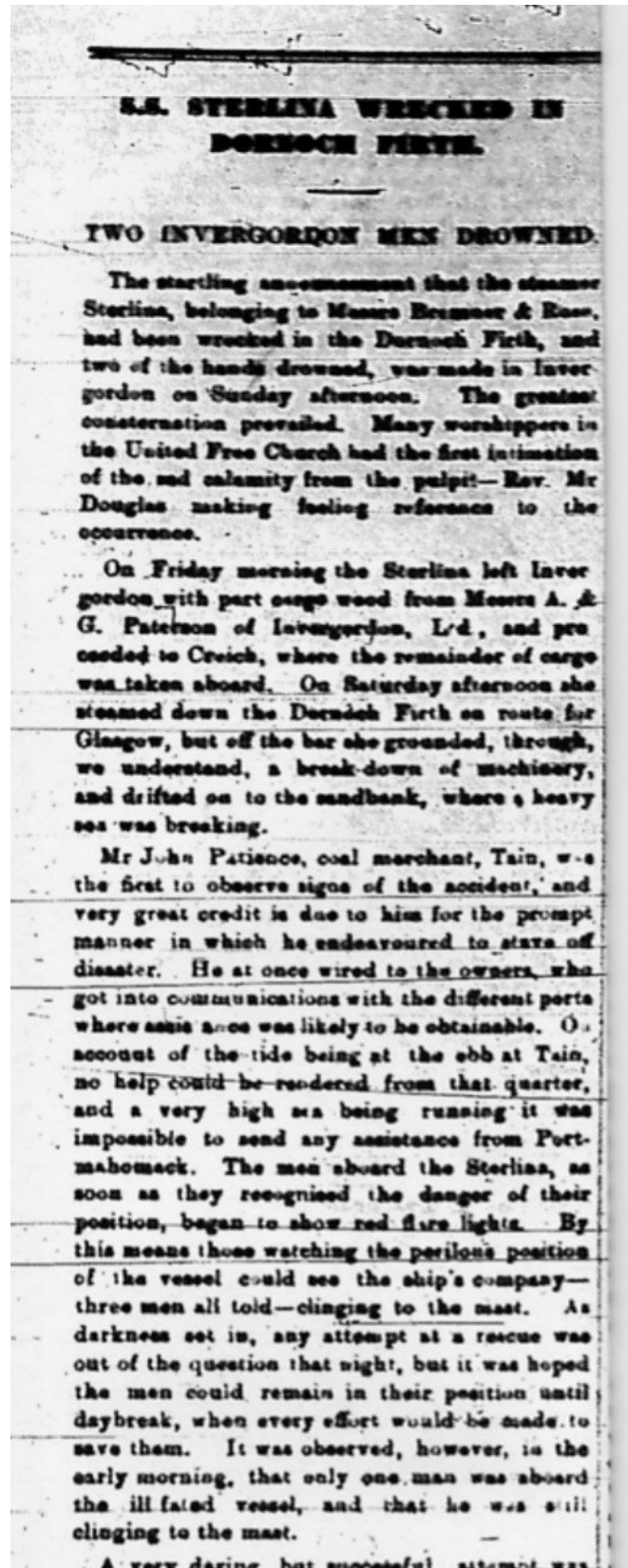
VESSEL WRECKED IN DORNOCH FIRTH.

TWO LIVES LOST.

The small steamer *Sterlina* (70 tons), of Invergordon, owned by Mr Gill, Tomich, was on Saturday proceeding down the Dornoch Firth from Creich with timber, bound for Glasgow via the Canal. Somehow she had missed the proper channel, and there being a strong east wind, she went on shore before 3 p.m. on the Briggs inside the Firth. The heavy surf flying over the Briggs at once fixed her. Flares were burnt to call assistance somewhat after 3 p.m., and were seen from Tain, and Mr J. Patience telephoned to Invergordon. By that time it was getting dark, and the reply was that nothing could be done till daylight. As she was in the inside, there was no great apprehension for her safety. The Nairn life-boat crew was communicated with—the nearest to the scene. Mr James Ross, telegraphed to Portmahomack early on Sunday morning, and D. Mackay, the pilot from Portmahomack, with a fishing boat and four other men, sailed to the place. They reached it at 1 p.m., and found a tremendous surf running over the shallows and on to the wreck, and one man, the skipper, A. Macrae, clinging to the mast. Several times the boatmen breasted the dangerous surf before they could get near enough to throw a line, and at last managed it and got Macrae pulled through to the boat. He was in a very exhausted state, having been in the rigging for sixteen hours. The other two men, A. Macleod and David Mackenzie, known in Invergordon as "Devil," had clung to the rigging till 2 a.m., and had dropped off exhausted. Their bodies had not been recovered on Tuesday. Macleod, who was about 27 years of age, lived with his parents. Mackenzie, who was about 54, leaves a widow and family. The boat returned to Portmahomack with Macrae, who was attended to by Dr Gillies from Tain, and still lies in a weak state, but may recover. A boat from Tain and the life-boat from Nairn, both arrived after the rescue had been effected. The owner's own boat was smashed after the vessel stranded.

Invergordon Times 10th December 1910

This paper finished in 1915 due to restrictions in reporting during the First World War as Invergordon was a major naval base.



clinging to the mast.

A very daring, but successful, attempt was made to render help at the earliest possible moment on Sunday, but even this great risk could not be undertaken before mid day. A fishing boat from Portmahomack, manned by a courageous crew, put off under sail. The capable handling of the boat was keenly watched, through powerful glasses, at Dornoch, Tain and Portmahomack, and the great bravery of the crew was highly commended. After a great deal of systematic tacking, the rescuing boat got close enough to the stranded vessel to enable one of the crew to throw a rope to the man aboard. This was luckily caught by the man, who was promptly taken aboard by the rescue party. Richard Macrae, who was thus saved, was captain of the Sterline. He was in an exhausted state, but after being conveyed to the Tarbatness Hotel, where Dr Gillie, Tain, was present to apply restoratives, he recovered sufficiently to give an account of his suffering during an exposure to the elements of twenty hours. His companions, David Mackenzie and Donald Macleod, were washed overboard about two o'clock on Sunday morning, and drowned. Both these men were natives of Invergordon. Mackenzie was a married man, and leaves a widow and family. Macleod was unmarried, but was the chief support of his father and mother. Great sympathy is felt for all the bereaved.

The survivor, who resides in Hugh Mole Street, Invergordon, returned home yesterday. He stated that an attempt had been made to leave the stranded ship. The boat was launched, and several necessary articles were put aboard; both Mackenzie and Macleod were also on board and he was about to join them, when a tremendous sea capsize the craft. Although Mackenzie and Macleod managed to get aboard the steamer again, the soaking they had got through this mishap unfitted them for the long exposure which Macrae endured.

The bodies of Mackenzie and Macleod have not yet been recovered. The boat, and parts of stranded vessel and cargo, as well as some clothing, have been washed ashore on the Sutherlandshire coast. There is only slight hope of saving the vessel, which is deeply embedded in the sandbank.

PORTMAHOMACK.

CARNEGIE HERO AWARDS.—GALLANT RESCUE

on Inverness-shire Man. The list of Gallant heroes is rapidly growing. The Trustees have issued an unusually long list of awards, including the following:—David Mackay, pilot; James Skinner, Donald Mackay, Alexander Macdonald and William Smith, fishermen, all of Portmahomack, on the 4th December, 1910, rescued Richard Macrae, master of the s.s. Sterline, from drowning in the Dornoch Firth. As the vessel was leaving the Dornoch Firth all went well until she reached the "Gimmon Brigg," a quicksand in the estuary known by navigators to be very dangerous. At this point her engines broke down, and she drifted on to the quicksands, where she gradually settled down. A heavy sea was running, and the waves swept over her, compelling the crew, which consisted of the master and two seamen, to take to the rigging. Darkness had set in, and the captain had signalled by means of flare lights. These were seen at Portmahomack, but it was too dark for a boat to enter so dangerous a neighbourhood. The following morning the above named fishermen volunteered to go to the rescue. There was a strong south easterly wind, with a heavy sea, which rendered an attempt at rescue very dangerous. The rescue party, however, succeeded, after a good deal of manœuvring, in throwing a line across the wreck, by means of which Captain Macrae was rescued. The other two men had disappeared. Each member of the rescue party has been awarded the sum of £3.

TAIN.

THE WRECK OF THE STERLINA.

PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE RESCUERS.

A CROWDED meeting of the inhabitants of Portmahomack and the surrounding districts assembled in the Carnegie Hall, Portmahomack, on the evening of Saturday, to witness the interesting ceremony of handing over gifts of money to the five men, who went to the rescue of the crew of the Sterlina, which stranded on the Gizzing Briggs, in the Dornoch Firth, on the 3rd of December last.

It will be remembered that on the date mentioned the vessel, laden with a cargo of wood from Creich, bound for Glasgow, was wrecked, and two of her crew were swept away and drowned. The captain, after being in the rigging for something like 24 hours, was rescued by a crew of fishermen from Portmahomack on Sunday afternoon, the 4th December. The matter was brought under the notice of the Board of Trade, and the Carnegie Hero Fund Trust, and the former sent a cheque for three guineas to each of the men, and the Carnegie Hero Fund £3 for each.

The presentations were made under the auspices of the Tarbat Parish Council, and unusual interest was attached to the proceedings by every class in the community, the hall being crowded in every part.

The chair was occupied by Mr F. Munro of Rockfield, chairman of the Council, and he was accompanied to the platform by the other members of the Board. Mr M'Nicoll, chief officer, Coastguard Station, Cromarty, was present, and represented the Board of Trade. The boat's crew were also accommodated on the platform. Their names are David Mackay, pilot, Portmahomack; Donald Mackay, fisherman, do.; William Smith, do.; Alexander Macdonald, do.; James Skinner, do.

The Chairman said that he never had greater pleasure in taking the chair at any public function than he had had that evening. It appealed to the highest instincts of human nature to be called upon to do honour to men who jeopardised their own lives to rescue the lives of their fellow beings. Continuing, the Chairman said that many brave deeds were done in the excitement of the moment, but the action of the men whom they were met that evening to honour was quite different. They could not proceed to sea when they were informed that the wreck occurred and that a man was seen in the rigging. No, they had plenty of time to reflect and to take into consideration the hazardous, yea dangerous, nature of the journey they proposed undertaking; yet, when they knew that the lives of others were in imminent danger, they brushed all these considerations aside, and proceeded, as indicated, to the scene of the catastrophe, and succeeded in saving the life of, and bringing safely to land, the captain of the ill-fated vessel. It was worthy of mention that the wives of some of the members of the crew did not raise a single objection to their husbands undertaking so dangerous a voyage. If it was hard for the men to venture out to sea, it was more trying for the wives to watch and wait. Mr Munro concluded by suggesting that a memorial of a permanent character, recording the brave deed, should be provided.

The proposal met with the warm approval of all present, and a subscription was there and then set on foot.

County Councillor D. Macdonald, as representing the Board of Trade, handed over the gifts to each of the men. Mr Macdonald at the time wore the bronze medal of the Humane Society for saving life.

Mr Ewing, headmaster, Tarbat, who represented the Carnegie Hero Fund Trust, presented each of the rescuers with a cheque for £3. The Chairman, on behalf of the Board of Trade, handed the skipper of the boat, Mr Mackay, pilot, a fine binocular.

Pilot Mackay, on behalf of his brave comrades and himself, returned thanks for the honour done them. Interesting speeches were delivered by other gentlemen present, and during the proceedings a number of songs and recitations were rendered. Before dispersing, the audience sang the National Anthem.

His can't be both.—I am, etc.

DINGWALLIAN

The Wreck of the Sterlina of Invergordon

Fatal Accident Inquiry at Tain.

Sheriff Hay MacWatt and a jury, in the Tain Sheriff Court, on Tuesday, held a public inquiry into the cause of the deaths of David Mackenzie and Donald Macleod, both seamen on board the S. S. Sterlina, which foundered on the Gizzon Briggs, in the Dornoch Firth, during a gale, on December 4th last.

Mr W. T. MacTavish, Procurator Fiscal, Tain, conducted the case for the Crown, while Mr James Munro, solicitor, Tain, appeared for Messrs Bremner & Rose, Invergordon.

Richard Macrae, master of the ill-fated Sterlina, aged 37, was the principal witness. Sturdily built, with a weather-beaten face, he is a typical coasting skipper. His story was told clearly and unhesitatingly, with just a little touch of emotion as he recalled the last words of his comrades.

In answer to Mr MacTavish, Macrae said the Sterlina was registered in Glasgow, the owners being Messrs Bremner & Rose, Invergordon. He left Invergordon about the 2nd of December, bound for Creich. He acted as engineer, and also attended to the tiller on deck. There were two lands' besides himself, David Mackenzie and Donald Macleod. They took turn about at steering the vessel. They left Creich on Saturday afternoon at the height of the tide. The wind was blowing south-east; it was just a fresh breeze. There was a full cargo of wood below, and some on the deck. They were bound for Glasgow. Mackenzie and he went to sea when they were boys—about 20 years ago. This was his first trip with Mackenzie. Macleod was also an experienced boatman. They were perfectly sober when they left Creich. The engines had been overhauled by David Urquhart, engineer, Invergordon, (one of the witnesses) before leaving Invergordon. All went well until in the Dornoch Firth, about one mile from the Black Key opposite the Morrich Moor. There was a squall on the south by a black buoy. The Gizzon Briggs were a sandy shoal to north of the red buoy. While he was at the tiller the engines suddenly slowed down. He put Macleod to the tiller, and went to examine the engine, and found steam was escaping from the side valve. This might or might not have accounted for the slowing down. It was his opinion that there was a defect in the eccentric gear. The engines stopped when he went on the tack, the vessel was drifting north and he reversed the engines. The vessel was then going about half speed astern. She drifted on to the Gizzon Briggs. He let go the anchor as soon as the vessel struck. The small boat was launched, but she capsize, and, after they had put her right, they left her handy for any emergency. The vessel never moved from the spot after the accident happened. When the tide rose the wind increased. The vessel began to break up. They tried the small boat a second time, but had to give up the idea and remain on the vessel. It was dark by this time, and they had lighted a flare. Macleod and he went up the port fore rigging, and Mackenzie was at the mast. The sea became worse. They were about three or four feet up the rigging. They thought it would be better there. He then went up the mast, and asked the other two to follow him, but they were unable to do so. They said they were done. About two or three hours passed before Macleod said he was fit-had. Mackenzie also called out "I'm done, Dick, goodbye." He heard nothing more after that. The waves were breaking over the vessel. There was little chance of rescue. Nothing short of a life-boat could have saved him and his companions. He was taken off the vessel on Sunday by a Portmahomack fishing boat, the crew of which had great difficulty in rescuing him. The sea was very heavy. He had not any doubt that Mackenzie and Macleod were swept overboard and drowned.

Examined by Mr Munro, solicitor, Tain, Macrae said he had made several voyages in the Sterlina. He had been to Sunderland, etc. He had found no difficulty with regard to the engines. There were five life belts and two life buoys on board. He had navigated this channel four or five times before.

David Urquhart, engineer, Invergordon, (35), stated that he had made some repairs to the vessel before she left Invergordon. Questioned as to whether a vessel might go astern though she could not go ahead, he said it was quite possible.

William Simpson, sawmillier, Creich, (80), said

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William Simpson, sawmillier, Creich, (80), said he knew Macrae and the other two men. The vessel left Creich all right, and he heard no complaint about engines being made there. He had been present at the loading of the wood, of which there would have been about 40 tons.

Donald Mackay, pilot, Portmahomack, (64), said he knew the coast well; he had been going up and down it for 37 years. He saw lights from the Gizzon Briggs on the Saturday night. As the boats were aground at Portmahomack they were not able to go out. On Sunday morning they received a wire stating there was a wreck on Gizzon Briggs. He did not expect to be able to reach the Gizzon Briggs for the rough sea, or to get across the bar which was about four miles from them. Their boat reached the Sterlina, however, and Macrae was rescued.

Cross-examined by Mr Munro, he said he knew of other wrecks taking place there.

James Skinner, fisherman, Portmahomack, (40), corroborated the evidence of the previous witness.

Sheriff Hay MacWatt, addressing the jury, said the case was simple enough, though it was a sad one. What they—the jury—had to decide was when and where the accident and deaths occurred; what was the cause or causes of the accident; and whose was the fault, if fault there was. It seemed to him the combined causes were the break down of the engine, and the state of the weather. Any verdict they would find then, would have no other result.

The jury then retired, and after a few minutes returned a formal finding that David Mackenzie and Donald Macleod, while in the course of their employment on board the S. S. Sterlina, were swept from the vessel and drowned on 4th December, 1910, in the Dornoch Firth, about the Gizzon Briggs, owing to the engines having stopped, and the ship losing way and drifting on to the Gizzon Briggs, and to the rough weather.

The Fishermen who did the rescue of Sterlina



Fishermen who rescued crew of S.S.Sterlina

Thought you might be interested in names of crew who went to the rescue of the Sterlina

Sorry I cannot fit names to faces:-

David Mackay (Pilot) whose boat was used, no relatives around now but known to have a grandson in London.

Alex "Dolac "Macdonald

James "Jimsack "Skinner

Donald " Dannack" Mackay

William " Willa " Smith

There are still relatives of these fishermen living in our village of Portmahomack today