

6 Castle Street,
DORNOCH,
Sutherland
IV 25 3SR.
9.11.85.

The District Clerk,
Sutherland District Council,
District Council Office,
Golspie.

Dear Sir,

Along with several other members of the public I attended a meeting of the Community Council in Dornoch on 4th November and I was disturbed at the way the matter of the proposed road alterations and movement of the War Memorial was dealt with.

We discovered that in August last year the Council had decided that, on account of the small amount of business to be transacted, their meetings would be held every two months instead of monthly as previously and that two members of the Council could deal with "routine matters" which might arise in the interim. I was amazed to learn that when the plan for the movement of the Memorial was received here those two members apparently treated it as a "routine matter" and gave approval without consulting the full Council.

I understand that Mr. Ashplant was one of the two members above mentioned and he was chairman at the meeting on November 4th. My impression was that his whole aim was to uphold their decision to approve the plan and was not going to accept any suggestion that did not agree with this. He stated that the only decision to be made was whether the Memorial was to be moved a few yards or to the square. There was no question of it remaining in its present site. The suggestion of a referendum was not proceeded with.

At the beginning of the discussion Councillor J. Bell gave details of the sculptor of the statue and of how he had said that it had been designed for its present site and that he considered it to be his best work. Only one Councillor advocated moving it to the square but that was not seconded. The other Councillors did not speak.

The Chairman then asked for comments from the public present and Mr. J. Grant produced newspaper cuttings with the report of the unveiling of the Memorial when a pledge was given by the Provost on behalf of the Burgh that the Memorial would stand "there for all time". After the second world war a similar pledge was given by the then Provost using the word "forever" instead. The Chairman interrupted Mr. Grant's remarks saying such promises were not legal. When Mr. Grant started to continue his remarks the Chairman peremptorily told him to "sit down and keep quiet. You have had your say". The other members of the public seemed taken aback by this and there was silence until Mr. A MacLeod said that he thought it better to move it the few yards than to the square. The Chairman then said that this agreed with the plan which had been agreed to previously and that he would again be advising the Roads Dept. accordingly.

He had said that these alterations were necessary to improve road safety but during the 63 years the Memorial has stood there, there has never been an accident. I do not see how this can be improved upon.

Some years ago there was a proposal to cut back the bank at the wood corner to allow for a sidewalk for pedestrians and perambulators but this was turned down at the time for lack of funds. This could now be implemented without disturbing the Memorial. Should the Roads people still wish to widen the road, surely they could slightly reduce the size of the grass plot surrounding the Memorial and that should be sufficient.

Since the meeting I have spoken to many of the people who have been born and brought up in Dornoch and all without exception have condemned the proposal to disturb the Memorial and most have had forthright remarks about "incomers trying to change everything".

I myself am an incomer as I only came to Dornoch in 1932 but I have learned since of the great unexpressed pride that the people here have in their Royal Burgh and in its Memorial. Personally I think it is the finest war memorial I have seen anywhere since it so perfectly symbolises the soldier gazing towards where his comrades fell in battle.

I wonder how many of the recent "incomers" know of the Victory Flag presented to Dornoch in 1919 for the "greatest contribution to the war effort" per head of population of any town in Great Britain. As I have already said the people of Dornoch do not boast about their war achievements and sacrifices but the strong feelings are there and should command our respect and full consideration before such drastic action be taken. Apart from the statue itself, the plinth is of Cumberland stone specially brought here.

To move the Memorial and have it damaged in any way does not bear contemplation. I hope you will let it stay where it is.

Yours sincerely,