



CROSSING LOCH FLEET AT LITTLE FERRY

Traffic heading north from Dornoch to Golspie had to cross Loch Fleet at Little Ferry. The old ferry pier can still be seen beside the hamlet of Littleferry, though the original ferry pier was much smaller, and the very earliest ferries were probably just hauled up the sandy bay. By the mid 19th century, however, sailing boats crossed to Little Ferry from Burghead and even Leith, carrying cargoes of coal, lime, meat, salt and sometimes passengers.

Beyond the pier seen in this postcard, and quite a bit round the coast from Littleferry, a solitary building can be seen. This was once a grain store or giral. It is now a private dwelling.

Though this was a fairly short ferry crossing, the tide race was fierce at times, and this was a dangerous crossing at certain states of the tide. Sand bars were also a problem, and the sand bar at the mouth of Loch Fleet must have been a formidable obstacle for sailing boats entering the firth.

By 1816, it was possible to cross Loch Fleet by the embankment and bridge at Fleet Mound, so fewer people were prepared to risk life and limb on the ferry. It did, however, mean that journey times were much longer, and those in a hurry were still prepared to cross at Little Ferry.



BONAR BRIDGE

The first bridge on the site was designed by Thomas Telford and erected between 1811 and 1812. It was designed to by-pass the very dangerous Meikle Ferry, but many, especially foot passengers, continued to use the ferry, despite the disaster of 1809, when almost 100 passengers were drowned. The bridge crossed the Kyle of Sutherland at its narrowest point and closely resembled the Craigellachie Bridge. It stood against floods until 1892, when its pillars and abutments were undermined by flood conditions and the bridge gave way. A replacement bridge was erected by Sir William Arrol and was an iron girder bridge. The present bridge, designed by Crouch and Hogg, and built by William Tawse, was in use by 1973. A stone tablet records the building of the first bridge on the site.

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1. Bonar Bridge at the Kyle of Sutherland.
The railway crosses further up at Invershin
2. The third bridge on the site, opened in 1973, looking east towards Meikle Ferry.