

open-fronted lean-to gave waiting passengers shelter, a thoughtful provision on occasions when the ferry was delayed due to personal business pursued by the ferrymen when on the opposite side. The boat was a coble, flat-bottomed and propelled by the ferryman using two oars. The grave of 'Jock (Jumbo) the Ferry' can be found in the old churchyard at Dingwall.

The obvious point to cross the exposed and treacherous Dornoch Firth was the narrow passage at the Meikle ferry. The Great North Road, connecting with the Meikle ferry, was the shortest route to Thurso and Wick but the dangers experienced at the ferry often persuaded travellers to take the much longer but safer way via the Bonar Bridge. Not only was the Meikle ferry a notorious crossing but the vagaries of the tide frequently left boats stranded on sandbanks. One of the first references to the Meikle ferry, known earlier as Portincouter, is in a charter dated 4th March 1560, by Alan Ross of Balnagowan in favour of Donald Dingwall, natural son of Alexander Dingwall, prebendary chaplain of Cambuscurry, who was no doubt aware of the strategic value of the ferry location.

During the seventeenth century, when both the pros and cons of the Covenanting cause were receiving local support, the Meikle ferry was frequently used for the transportation of troops. The captive Marquis of Montrose was hustled across the ferry on his way to Tain, the south and subsequent death. A century later during the 1745 uprising, the ferry man, McGill, acted as a reliable spy for the government by reporting the positions held by the rebel forces. Eventually, he suffered retribution when his ferry boats were destroyed and only escaped with his life. Nevertheless, his information enabled Lords Loudoun and Forbes to organise the assembly of all available ferry boats at the Tain side of the ferry in order to evacuate their troops at the most appropriate time, thus taking the Jacobite forces by surprise.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Statistical Account states that the Meikle ferry was served, on each side,

by 'a large boat for transporting carriages, horses and other cattle; as also a yawl for the accommodation of foot passengers'. Cattle were encouraged to swim over the passage but often the beasts refused to go into the water because it was so cold. Consequently, they had to be ferried across, causing much delay and extra effort. It is said that drovers could foretell the outcome of the market according to the willingness of the cattle to swim or not; if the beasts swam, prices would be high, but if not, there would be little profit. By the beginning of the next century, the Meikle ferry had been worked by three generations of the Patience family but they had seen few improvements during that time. The boats were in a poor state with frayed ropes, torn sails and defective rudders; there was no proper quay for landing and delays were insufferable even to the most tolerant traveller. Strong arguments for the building of a bridge were consistently ignored until, in 1812, Telford erected an iron bridge at Bonar at a cost of £13,971. This was built after a public outcry at conditions at the Meikle ferry following an appalling accident there in 1809. James Mitchell, the famous civil engineer, unwittingly witnessed the scene as he arrived too late to catch the ferry boat which had just set sail.

Late in the afternoon of 16th August 1809, the day of the great Lamma Fair in Tain, Hugh McCulloch, sheriff-substitute, came to the Meikle ferry. The shore was crowded with people returning home from the fair. On McCulloch's arrival he was quickly seated in the stern of the ferry yawl followed by a pushing, pressing throng all anxious to be taken across the water. McCulloch became apprehensive about the numbers crowding aboard and even turned away about forty folk. Still the boat was overladen but the water was dead calm and the ferrymen set sail. When the boat was halfway across the passage water gushed in, the boat sank and ninety-nine people drowned, including the sheriff-substitute; only twelve survived. Another accident occurred on 28th October 1835 when the ferry boat was holed and sank. On this occasion there were seventeen passengers

aboard but only one, J. H. Richardson, a shipping secretary from North Shields, was drowned. The ferryman showed great presence of mind by using a small boat moored nearby to rescue the remainder of the passengers.

In spite of these tragedies and the building of the bridge at Bonar, traffic at the Meikle ferry continued to be sufficiently heavy to merit a design by Stevenson for a bridge over the Dornoch Firth. However, as no money was forthcoming to build the bridge, the project was abandoned. Even the mail coach, drawn by two horses, used the ferry until the 1850s when the increasing delays dictated re-routing via Bonar Bridge. Still the ferry continued to operate, and in the early twentieth century the Contour Guide books gave clear directions to travellers: 'The boats are on the north side. Hoist flag on the south side. This is an exposed ferry and useless in stormy weather'. There was a further warning: 'Motor cars carried when water suits the big boat only'. Subsequently, only passengers were carried, with the 1948 review concluding that 'there is not sufficient demand . . . for the institution of a vehicular ferry . . .'. It was not until 8th January 1986 that the long-awaited promise of a bridge was pledged with the announcement of a competition for the design of a bridge over the Dornoch Firth. It is to be 800 metres long and will cost between £11 million and £16 million approximately. Although the completion of this bridge will no doubt be welcomed by local people and travellers alike, the ancient Meikle ferry will always have an important place in the history of Easter Ross.

Two additional ferries were employed on passages over the narrow entrance to Loch Fleet at Little Ferry and at the 'port of Unes' on Lake Unes north of Dornoch. One boat at Little Ferry was served by four ferrymen but the ferry came briefly to prominence during the 1745 uprising only. In 1746, the Earl of Cromarty and his men were urgently summoned to join Prince Charles Edward at Inverness, but when they reached Little Ferry they were suddenly attacked. In the confusion the Earl and his officers retreated hastily to

Dunrobin Castle but the men crammed into the only available ferry boat to try to escape. The boat became quickly overcrowded, and those who could not climb aboard clung on to the sides to be pulled through the water. The boat was in great danger of capsizing until those soldiers who were aboard drew their dirks and hacked off the fingers of the others clinging to the gunwales. Many died. The following day, the Battle of Culloden was fought and perhaps the lack of reinforcements from the north due to this adversity may have contributed to the defeat of the Prince.

The ferry boat at Lake Unes was in use by 1467 when Margaret, Countess of Sutherland, a daughter of the Earl of Ross, Lord of the Isles, was returning home to Dunrobin Castle at Golspie. Her husband John, the third Earl of Sutherland, recorded that when the Countess was on the ferry in the middle of the passage, a severe storm arose, overturning the boat and throwing the lady into the water. She was washed up on the shore, still 'with some lyff in her'. There she was found by a fugitive, John Dairg, who recognised her as *someone of great importance*. For some unknown reason he 'promptly dispatched her', then fled, but had little chance of escape as the distraught Earl carried out a thorough search for his wife's murderer. John Dairg was executed almost as soon as the Countess was buried in the churchyard at Golspie. The ferry continued to operate, with records showing that, in 1630, the annual rent for the privilege of leasing the passage boat was 40 bolls of barley 'to be delivered at the ferry of Unes or the girdel of Golspie'.

The replacement of ferries by bridges on these north-eastern estuaries has spanned many decades, from the building of the Bonar Bridge over the Dornoch Firth in 1812 to the anticipated completion of the Dornoch Bridge in the late 1980s. Current, sophisticated, convenient travel across all these firths cannot blot out the memory of the struggle, effort and sacrifice that bedevilled the ferry services which provided access to the most northerly parts of Scotland.

Dornoch, 25th August, 1809.

THE melancholy event which happened near this place on Wednesday the 16th inst. when the Passage-boat from the Sutherland side of the Meikle Ferry sunk, with upwards of one hundred persons on board, has already been intimated to the public. It is impossible to convey, by description, an adequate picture of the heart-rending scene which followed in this parish and vicinity, upon which the calamity chiefly fell. There is scarcely a family which has not to lament a parent, child, or other relative; many have by this misfortune become destitute widows and orphans, and several aged parents are bereft of their support and hope, through the loss of their grown and useful children.

Penetrated by the cry of a distress so affecting and extensive, and witnessing the mourning crowds searching the shores by night and by day for the mangled remains of the objects of their tenderest affection, and summing their persons, as well as endangering their lives, by adventurous efforts, though hitherto with very partial success; some Gentlemen here, no longer able to remain silent spectators of this scene of woe, met this day with a view to implore the humanity and compassion of the public, and having previously collected the most correct and authentic information of which the case appeared to admit, they submit the following facts to the consideration of a generous public:—

1. That of all the persons on board the fatal boat only twelve were saved; and that, besides a group of strangers whose number and names are unknown, above 100 persons are ascertained to have perished, belonging to this and the neighbouring parishes.

2. That of this last number there were many heads of families, all of whom (with the exception of Mr McCulloch, late Sheriff Substitute here) being of the lower class of society, left families in extreme poverty.

3. That the present calamity is marked by circumstances of unexampled severity. The unfortunate sufferers had been on their way to a public fair which then held at Tain, and had with them any money they could glean for the occasion: but this is not all; they consisted chiefly either of small traders who had cash or bills to remit to their correspondents; of manufacturers, having to purchase leather and other articles for their respective occupations; of removing tenants, who had converted their stock into cash, to be lodged in the Bank of Tain; and of recruiting parties, having their all about them, except their destitute wives and families. Hence it appears that it is not the loss of useful lives alone that is to be deplored in the present case, but the loss of much property, stripping the miserable surviving families of all they had possessed in the world.

4. That not presuming to anticipate any resolutions or measures which the county may be pleased to adopt, when they have a convenient opportunity, the present statement is intended for the information of such persons at a greater distance, as, moved by the singular magnitude and pressure of the calamity, may be disposed to contribute to the relief of so many wretched objects, many of whom require instant support.

5. That for the purpose of carrying the object of their meeting into effect, the Gentlemen present have nominated Captain Robert Sutherland in Dornoch, Chairman; William Taylor, Sheriff Clerk of the County, Secretary; & the Rev. Mr. John Bethune of Dornoch, Treasurer; who are authorized, in conjunction with Bailie Boag, Captain John Munro, Messrs. Hugh Leslie and Angus Fraser, or any two of them, to adopt such measures as are necessary, until a general meeting of Subscribers take place, and which meeting is to hold at Dornoch on the 9th September next, to nominate a Committee of general management.

6. That the names of Subscribers for the above charitable purpose shall be regularly published in the Inverness Journal; and Subscription papers remain with the following Gentlemen in the North, viz.

- The Rev. Mr. Bethune, Treasurer to the Fund, & Mr. Angus Fraser, Postmaster of Dornoch;
- Mr. Hugh M'Pherson, merchant, Brossa,
- Major M'Leay, of Wick,
- Mr. George Douglas, Sheriff Clerk of Thurso,
- James Innes, Esq. Bank Agent in Tain,
- Mr. Henderson of the Customs at Cromarty,
- Mr. P. Hay, Postmaster of Dingwall, & at Inverness, with Mr. Young, Publisher of the Journal.

R. SUTHERLAND, Chairman.
Wm. TAYLOR, Secretary.

N.B. The Meeting here, the high satisfaction of learning, from unquestionable authority, that the officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates of the 5th Ross regiment of Local Militia, commanded by Col. M'Leod of Geanies, had, in the handsomest manner, contributed each one day's pay towards the relief of the families of the unfortunate sufferers, and that before any appeal had been made to the public in

SALE OF CATTLE IN THE ISLE OF SKYE.

To be Sold, by public roup, at Kingburgh, on Tuesday the 26th of September next.

THE WHOLE STOCK OF BLACK CATTLE on that Farm, consisting of from Forty to Fifty milch Cows, young Cattle, &c. Their quality is well known to be inferior to none in the Island of Skye, and they are well worth the attention of any person wishing for real highlanders. As it is meant to stock the farm entirely with Sheep, the Cattle will be sold off without reserve, and credit will be given for eight months, on good security. Should any gentleman who cannot attend with to purchase, by sending a commission to Mr. Campbell, at Kingburgh, they will be supplied on the same terms as if personally present.

A CARD.

MR. ARCHD. M'LEAN, Teacher of Dancing, from Peterhead, begs leave to inform the Ladies and Gentlemen of the County of Sutherland and Town of Dornoch, that his BALL, the last for the Season, is fixed for Friday the 8th September. Impressed with a grateful sense of the liberal encouragement he has met with since his arrival in this place, he cannot leave Dornoch without returning his sincere thanks to those respectable Families whose Children he has had the honour to teach. And in the accomplishment of the promises held forth to Mr. Beattie, Teacher of the Grammar School here, he hopes to be able more amply to verify the good opinion which first induced them to send for him, by a regular attendance every Season.

He also begs leave to announce to his Friends in Fortrose and its vicinity, that he intends to open his School there, immediately after the Ball; he therefore solicits that patronage which he has so liberally experienced there on former occasions, and for which he will ever be grateful.

To the Public in general Mr. M'Lean begs leave to observe, that as he has his instructions regularly every Season, from the first Teachers in Scotland, his Scholars may expect to be taught the newest and most fashionable mode of Dancing.

Dornoch, 25th August, 1809.

COUNTY OF MORAY.

THE MICHAELMAS HEAD COURT of the COUNTY holds this year on Friday the 6th day of October next, at twelve o'clock, in the Court-house of Elgin, when claims for enrolment will be presented for the following Gentlemen:—

- William Brodie of Elgin,
- Colonel Alex. Duff of Lochmichael,
- Captain James Duff M'Kay of the 10th Militia, and
- Colonel Alex. Grant of Redcastle.

PAT. DUFF, Sh. Clk.

Elgin, 28th August, 1809.

HOUSES, NEW INN, SHOPS, AND GARDEN GROUNDS AT FORT WILLIAM, TO BE SOLD.

To be sold at Inverness, on the Friday of the Martinmas market.

THE PROPERTY in the village of Fort William, or Gordonsburgh, which belonged to the late Donald M'Donald, at Tain; consisting of a large New Inn, with Office Houses, Shops, Garden Grounds, and Dwelling House. The whole will be sold in one or two Lots; and for the encouragement of purchasers, a part of the price may be allowed to remain in their hands, upon legal interest.

Offers to be made to Campbell M'Intosh, at Inverness, or Mr. Gillespie at Ardoch.

TO SHIP OWNERS.

Wanted immediately, by the Brodie Wood Compy. FROM TWENTY to THIRTY VESSELS, about four or five keels, to carry Wood for Hull and other places, 9d. per foot cub. freight, line measure, paid on delivery, and 8l. allowed as port charges; the other freight in proportion. Vessels in the kelp trade will get freights for the north of Ireland. The timber is tolerably well squared.

Letters addressed to Messrs. R. M'Kenzie, & Co. Nairn, will be regularly answered.

LANDS IN ARGYLE-SHIRE FOR SALE.

To be Sold, by Public Auction, within the Royal Exchange Coffee-house, Edinburgh, on Monday the 11th day of September, 1809, between the hours of one and two in the afternoon, in whole or in lots, unless previously sold by private bargain.

THE ESTATE OF CARAIG, comprehending the Lands and Island of Caraig, and Clackvar, North and South Glenfaul, Upper and Lower Arinadamore, and Leachy, lying in the parish of N. Knapdale.

These lands extend from sea to sea, from the sound of Jura on the one side to Lochween on the other; and having two good harbours, the bay of Caraig, within about twenty minutes sail of the Crinan Canal, on the west, and the bay of Tayvellich on the east side, along which the public road passes through these lands to Crinan.

SALE OF GROWING CORNS, & HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE.

On Wednesday the 6th day of September next, there will be exposed to public sale and roup, at the farm of Wester Keshoch, occupied by Mr. Hugh Cobban.

SEVERAL extensive fields of WHEAT, OATS, and BARLEY, in a thriving condition, which will be fit for being cut down about immediately. The Barley crop in particular is good, and will be fully ripe by the day of sale.

The whole of the Household Furniture in the dwelling house of the said Mr. Hugh Cobban, at Inverness, will in like manner be exposed to public sale and roup on Wednesday the 30th day of the said month of September, at the house, which is situated on the East Street of Inverness; and the quality, as well as variety, merits attention from all who stand in need of such articles.

Credit on good security will be given, and the sales will commence at ten o'clock in the forenoon of each day.

Inverness, 31st Aug. 1809.

(One Insert.)

HOUSES FOR SALE.

To be Sold by Private Bargain.

THAT BACK HOUSE, situated in Carlisle-street, presently occupied by Mr. Alexander M'Kenzie, confectioner, consisting of Dining-room, Kitchen, and Bed-room Closet, with Coal-cellar, on the first floor; two excellent Bed-rooms, Bed-closet, and two Keeping-closets, on the second floor; two Garrets with fire places, and a Lumber and keeping Garret; with a Garden, and large Stable behind, capable of containing ten horses. The local situation of the house, and the great convenience of a Garden, would render it a desirable object for a family abode, either in public or private life. If not disposed of betwixt and Martinmas, it will be let from the terms of Whitsunday next.

Intending purchasers will please apply to Mrs. Marchion, care of Alexander Tolmie, merchant, Inverness, who can give any further information required regarding the subject.

If an intending purchaser inclines, he could be accommodated with the front house occupied by Mr. K. M'Rae, which would also be disposed of on reasonable terms. It consists of Two excellent FRONT STORES; a Dining-room, Kitchen, Bed-room, and Closet on the second floor; two good Bed-rooms on the third floor; with convenient Garrets; and is a very desirable and eligible object to persons in want of these accommodations.

(One concern.)

Day and Place of Sale Fixed.

SALE OF LANDS NEAR INVERNESS.

TO BE SOLD within the Mallin Lodge of Inverness, upon Friday the 6th day of September, next, at six o'clock in the afternoon.

THE LANDS and ESTATE of CULCLACHY, or NAIRNSIDE, upon the north side of the river Nairn, parish of Daviot, and shire of Inverness, with the servitude upon the Moller and Muir of Craggie.

This Estate is situated at the distance of four miles from the thriving town of Inverness, near the line of the new road to the south country; and consists of about 600 acres, a considerable part of which is inclosed and surrounded with belings of hard wood, larch, and fir. The situation along the river is beautiful and romantic. Among many advantages which this property possesses, there is a new House, fit for the accommodation of a genteel family, having a commanding prospect of the Moray Firth, the Caille of Calder, and whole neighbouring country; a good garden, well sheltered, with a variety of fruit trees in a thriving condition, a great extent of ground, planted with Ash, Oak, Birch, Elm, and other wood.

The Lands lately improved, and the soil in general, is inferior to none in the country—produces Wheat, Barley, and other crops of a very superior quality.

The whole Estate is out of lease, and the greater part under Grass, to be entered upon immediately, and fit to be ploughed up. The mairs abound with different kinds of game, and the river with Salmon and Trout.

The House and Grass Parks are still to be set for the season, with the Garden.

Application to be made to Campbell M'Intosh at Inverness, or to Mr. Coll Macdonald, W.S. Edinburgh.

GENERAL POST OFFICE, LONDON.

July 22, 1809.

A CAUTION.

PENALTIES to the Amount of Two Hundred Pounds, with full Costs, have lately been recovered and paid, in Actions brought in the direction of the POST OFFICE, against a very considerable Mercantile House in London, having also an Establishment in a manufacturing town in the country, for offending against the Statutes of the 9th of Queen Anne, c. 10. & 17. and the 42d. Geo. 3d. c. 51. s. 5. by sending LETTERS IN PARCELS and