



STEAM REVOLUTION: The Dornoch light railway is remembered on a new CD

DVD celebrates Dornoch light railway

MEMORIES OF BRANCH LINE EXPECTED TO BE POPULAR WITH STEAM BUFFS

A NEW DVD on the Dornoch light railway in Sutherland is expected to be a big hit with steam railway enthusiasts throughout the UK.

The DVD, which is to be shown publicly for the first time at an invitation-only premiere in Dornoch this evening, is the first comprehensive collection of all the available information on the line.

Dornoch Heritage Society secretary Robin Ashby said it had been produced for Historylinks Museum in Dornoch and was being advertised in the railway press.

He said the Dornoch light

railway, which was a branch line connecting the town with the main Highland Railway seven miles away at the Mound, was opened by a group of local businessmen in 1902.

"Two years later, they opened the Station Hotel - now called the Dornoch Hotel - with 60 stylish rooms and all the latest facilities.

And, for the next 30 years, this upmarket hotel was a magnet for wealthy tourists.

"For many local people, the Dornoch light railway was a gateway to the rest of the world. For the first time in history, travel was affordable

and relatively easy. Fishworkers from Embo could buy return tickets to the herring ports of England, and earn money to send home, and the parish's young people could travel easily to universities in the cities," said Mr Ashby.

He said that the increase in car ownership in the 1950s was responsible for the demise of the railway, which closed in July 1960.

Mr Ashby said they started gathering information on the history of the railway after acquiring a travelogue, entitled Proud Sutherland, which was produced in 1951 for the Fes-

tival of Britain. They then made a short film, called Memories, combining unique footage of the railway with accounts of people who worked and travelled on it.

Barry Turner, who lives in Dornoch, wrote a book, entitled Dornoch Light Railway, and a further film, entitled A History, was produced.

The 90-minute DVD brings together the travelogue, the two films and footage of The Dunrobin, the Duke of Sutherland's train that ran on the opening day and now runs in British Columbia.

The DVD is available at Historylinks Museum.