

The Meikle Ferry's Place in History.

The Meikle Ferry was the most easterly crossing point on the Dornoch Firth linking the counties of Ross and Cromarty, and Sutherland. As far back as 1290 there is an item in the expense account of the English Commissioners on their way to meet the Maid of Norway which records the charges "in payment of ferry passages across the waters and the hiring of horses". The waters are not named but, from the references to Skelbo, Dornoch, and Nigg, are presumably Meikle and Little Ferry.

In 1612 John, Earl of Sutherland, met George Ross of Balnagowan at the Meikle Ferry to settle matters of dowry and tocher. In 1643 the Earl met David Ross of Balnagowan at the Ferry to seek help in a matter of stolen horses. Large numbers of troops used the Ferry in 1654 at the time of General Middleton's rising on behalf of Charles II. Again at the time of the Forty-Five we find Lord Loudon, commander of the Hanoverian forces, retiring via the Meikle Ferry into Sutherland at the approach of a large Jacobite force which itself used the Meikle Ferry to advance into Sutherland. Ardnacailc.

Tragedy struck at the Ferry in 1809 when ninety-nine people were drowned. The overloaded boat was conveying mainly Sutherland folk on their way to Tain Market. This was a major disaster for Dornoch and the surrounding parishes. Over £3000 was raised for the relief of bereaved families.

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The Meikle Ferry's Place in History (cont'd)
Even after the bridging of the Forth at Bonar,
Meikle Ferry continued to be an important
link between Sutherland and Ross-shire. It closed
officially in 1957.

(Based on information supplied by Mrs. Rosemary
Mackenzie Tain and by members of Dornoch
Heritage Society).