



DORNOCH

OFFICIAL GUIDE



WITH MAP OF THE DISTRICT



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"About this town there are the fairest and
lairgest links (or green feilds) of any pairt
of Scotland, fitt for Archery, Goffing,
Ryding, and all other exercise: they doe
surpasse the feilds of Montrose or St.
Andrews." (Sir Robert Gordon in the
Earldom of Sutherland, written in 1630.)

Secretary and Treasurer

JOHN SUTHERLAND Town Clerk, Dornoch

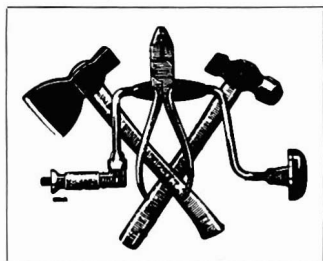
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DORNOCH

(SUTHERLANDSHIRE)

The Official Guide

By

J. SUTHERLAND

Town Clerk

Issued under the auspices of the
TOWN COUNCIL OF DORNOCH

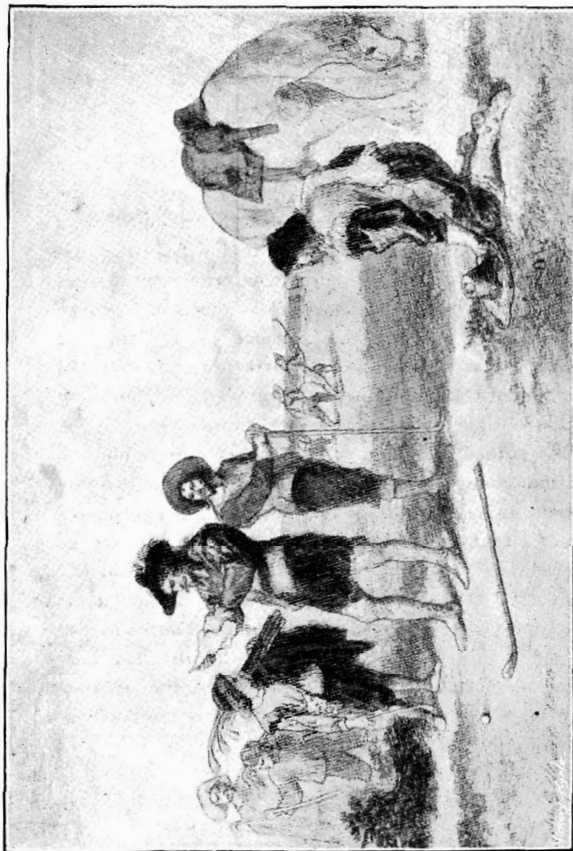


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Charles I (who erected Dornoch into a Free Royal Burgh in 1628), while playing golf on Leith Links, receives news of the breaking out of the Irish Rebellion

[J. Sutherland, Esq., Town Clerk

Foreword

Up till 1867, when Disraeli took the famous leap in the dark, Dornoch and Glasgow possessed the same political power as each Burgh belonged to a group which returned a member to Parliament. Let me add that up till 1867 for generations the Dukes of Sutherland had been successive Provosts of Dornoch and the Town Council of Dornoch elected its own successors in office. One-fourth of the sixteen members of the Council retired annually and the other twelve elected four successors to those retiring. It may be added that as a rule members were re-elected. At that time, as has been said, the Burgh had the same political power as Glasgow and one result of this was that the most prominent men in the County aspired to be members of Dornoch Town Council. Since 1867 the Town Council has been elected under the household suffrage. Ever since Dornoch was created a Burgh the Sutherland family has been closely associated with its destinies and the relations between the Burgh and Dunrobin have always been intimate.

H.F.C.

DORNOCH

HISTORIC

DORNOCH, the County Town of Sutherland, is a Burgh Royal, and enjoys the distinction of being, with the exception of Inverary, the smallest county town in Scotland. In ancient times it was the seat of the Bishops of Caithness, and had thus the honour of being one of the fourteen cities of Scotland.

Many years prior to the Reformation the city of Dornoch was incorporated as a Burgh of Barony, having magistrates and other officials, and holding of the Bishops of Caithness as its feudal superiors.

By Charter granted in 1628, Charles I erected Dornoch into a Free Royal Burgh, with a reservation, however, of the Earl of Sutherland's hereditary rights. This does not imply, as is commonly supposed, that the Duke and Earl is Superior of the Burgh, although he owns a considerable portion of it. "The Superiority of Dornoch passed at the Reformation from the Bishops to the Earls, and in 1628 from the Earls to the Crown, on the erection of the Burgh of Barony into a Free Royal Burgh."

It is scarcely credible that the worthy inhabitants of the County of Sutherland were regarded by their well-disposed King, three centuries ago, as "Barbarians," yet the sorry fact finds ample proof in the very first paragraph of the Royal Charter, which sets forth the considerations which influenced him in conferring the title. The Charter is in these terms:

"Charles, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the faith, to all good men of his land, clerical and lay, Greeting: Know ye that since it has occurred to us that our City of Dornoch, within the County and Province of Sutherland, is, and has been beyond the memory of man, the sole and only town within the said County and Province, to which the inhabitants of the said County naturally resort as to a common market-place for purchasing the necessities of life; and especially that, being constructed near the sea shore, it possesses a most suitable place for building a port and harbour for the importation and exportation of merchandise, and that it is therefore highly expedient that it may be erected into a free Burgh Royal, Free port, and harbour for the use and advantage of our subjects inhabiting that part of our kingdom, and, as they are mostly barbarous and savage mountaineers, it may be of the highest use in bringing them to a state of civilization;

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Photograph by]

Dornoch Castle

[C. M. Gillespie

ECHOES OF THE PAST

and as the Province and County of Sutherland is very wide, extending to a distance of sixty miles, it is much in want of having a Free Burgh erected within it."

There are no reliable data by which one can fix with **certainly the date of the erection of the See.** There is mention of a Bishop William about 1097; but it was about the middle of the 12th century, in the reign of David I, that the diocese of Caithness, consisting of the modern counties of Sutherland and Caithness, was regularly erected. Bishop Andrew was witness to a Donation by the "Sair Saint" to the Monastery of Dunfermline in 1150, and he accompanied William the Lion to England in 1176, to attend the famous Council at Norham-on-Tweed.

DORNOCH CATHEDRAL

The founder of the Cathedral was undoubtedly Gilbert Murray. He was consecrated in 1223, and he appointed ten canons, all of whom resided in Dornoch. The residences of two—the Dean and the Chanter—can still be traced. Indeed, on the site of the former stands a large house known as the "Deanery." Bishop Gilbert was a remarkable man, and was quite young, when, as canon of Elgin Cathedral, he attended the Norham-on-Tweed Convention, at which the Kings of Scotland and England were present, to discuss the project of bringing the Clergy of the Scottish Church under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of York. Gilbert was the first to get up and assert the independence of his Church, and he did so to such good purpose that the Legate thought it prudent to break up the assembly. Gilbert was afterwards Archdeacon of Moray, and Abbot of Glenluce, and when in 1223—forty-seven years after the Norham-on-Tweed Council—he was translated to the Bishopric of Caithness, he immediately began building the Cathedral Church at Dornoch, on or near the site of an older church, which had been dedicated to St. Fynbar. The Bishop died in 1245, "verie aged," and was afterwards canonised. The Cathedral, all but the tower and steeple, was burnt down by the Master of Caithness and Mackay of Strathnaver in 1570. The ruinous edifice suffered further in the beginning of the 17th century, for it is recorded that on the night the Gunpowder Plot was to have been carried into execution (5th Nov., 1605):

"the inner stone pillars on the north syd of the body of the Cathedral Church at Dornough (laiking the roof before) were blown from the very roots and foundation, quyt and clein over the outer walles of the Church; which

THE CATHEDRAL.

walles did remane nevertheless standing, to the great astonishment of all such as hath sein the same."

The Choir and transepts were practically reconstructed by Sir Robert Gordon, when Tutor to the Earl of Sutherland, and ultimately became the Parish Church. The last restoration took place at the expense of the Duchess Countess of



Photograph by]

[C. M. Gillespie

Dornoch Cathedral

Sutherland in 1835-37, the nave being at that time re-built, but without the aisles. The bodies of sixteen Earls of Sutherland repose in the vault below the South Transept; a sarcophagus surmounted by the rudely carved figure of a cross-legged knight, containing the relics of Sir Richard de Moravia, brother of the founder, and a fine life-size statue of the first Duke of Sutherland, by Chantrey, with handsome tablet, are placed in the nave. Within recent years some beautiful stained glass windows, notably those to the memory of the late Duke of Sutherland, his daughter Lady Ednam, and the late Andrew Carnegie of Skibo, have added an embellishment to the building.

BISHOP'S PALACE

Close to the Cathedral stands what remains of the Bishop's Palace, now named Dornoch Castle, a stately turreted pile which contributes largely to the quaint and venerable appearance of the burgh. Though only one of the towers and the Bishop's Kitchen chimney have survived the conflagration of 1570, they suffice to indicate the original extent and importance of the building. This interesting old pile, to which has been added a large modern wing, has served successively as the Bishop's Palace, the residence of Sir Robert Gordon (the great Benefactor of Dornoch in early days), the Tolbooth, the County Court House, the Prison; and, after renovation, the residence of the local Sheriff, and is now the private residence of Mrs. B. C. Sykes. While most of the ancient features have been preserved, it is fitted to modern requirements, and every comfort and convenience are to be found within its walls.

BATTLE OF EMBO

The word Dornoch is said to be derived from the Gaelic *dorn-eich*, signifying a horse's foot or hoof, and there is a tradition that during the Danish invasion in 1248, William, Thane or Earl of Sutherland, with his men met the invaders on Embo Links, and there routed them, the Thane greatly distinguishing himself by killing the Leader of the Danes with the leg of a horse, which he picked up as a substitute for his sword which had snapped in the combat. The horse shoe is a prominent feature in the arms of the burgh. On the other hand it is claimed that the place was known in 1150 by the name "Durnach," and a possible derivation is from "Dorn-ach" the stony place—stones the size of a man's fist being rather numerous in the land round about, particularly that known as the Bishop's Field.

An upright stone close by the 4th green of the Golf Course, called the "Earl's Cross," is popularly mistaken for another and more ancient obelisk, no longer extant, known as "Crois-Rìgh" (King's Cross), which had been erected in commemoration of the decisive victory of the Sutherlanders over the Danish King in 1248. The Earl's Cross is an interesting monument bearing the Arms of the Sutherland family on one side, and the Arms of the Bishop on the other side, all roughly carved. It may have been a boundary stone between the lands of the Church and of the Earl, or a Sanctuary boundary. The remains of polished stone axes, urns, ashes and human bones, have been found in the numerous stone coffins which abound in this locality.

THE WITCH STONE

In a garden close by the 17th Tee of the Golf Course a simple slab of rough bluish whin-stone bearing the date 1722 marks the spot where the burning of the last witch in Scotland took place. She was a poor old woman named Janet Horne; and the charge against her was the ludicrous one of transforming her daughter into a pony, and having her shod by the Devil!

GIZZEN-BRIGS

The existence of the Harbour which King Charles so devotedly hoped would bring the "savage mountaineers" to a state of civilization, was for ever doomed by the presence of the Gizen-Briggs, "Drochaid-an-Aoig," or the Water Kelpie's bridge. This is a great bar of shifting sand formed at the mouth of the Dornoch Firth and stretching many miles out to sea, which is a great haunt of the seal, and a terror to the sailor. By way of compensation for having deprived the little town and its "barbarian" neighbours of its harbour, the Gizen-Briggs, aided by the process of coast erosion which has been proceeding for centuries on the opposite side of the Firth, have richly endowed it with a great and constantly increasing stretch of glorious Links known locally as "the plains."

MODERN DORNOCH

The little burgh nestles on the northern shore of the Dornoch Firth, on the north-east coast of Scotland. As it is situated on the fringe of a considerable sand plain, which grows but the shortest and finest of grasses and is surrounded on three sides by a grand amphitheatre of heath-clad mountains and pine-covered hills—the "mountains not too close to overshadow, nor yet so far away as to lose their grandeur," the climate of Dornoch is necessarily bracing and invigorating. It has a fine open southern exposure, is well built, mostly of warm yellowish sand-stone, and is beautified by numerous stately trees, planted about the year 1832 by a former Provost and patriotic townsman—Mr. William Sutherland Fraser. A model of cleanliness, the burgh is the pride of its Civic Fathers, who work with the single aim of perfecting it as a Summer Resort of the most desirable type. It is provided with an excellent supply of water from Loch Lannsaidh, situated high up amongst the hills and well beyond the inhabited area, on the Estate of Birichen recently acquired by the Viscount Rothermere, P.C., the youngest burgess of this small but ancient Royal Burgh. The supply is the ample one of 80 gallons a day per head of the normal population, which,

THE BURGH TO-DAY

of course, is very considerably augmented during the summer season. The resident population of the burgh is 750, that of the parish 2,086. The sanitary system is modern and discharges into the sea.

Many places lay claim to having the least rainfall in Scotland, but, owing to its geographical position, the promontory of Tarbatness, which juts many miles out into the Moray Firth, possibly holds the record, taking one season with another. Dornoch lies nine miles west-north-west of Tarbatness, and the rainfall usually averages 24 to 25 inches, much the same as that of other popular summer resorts along the shores of the Moray Firth, the salubrity of whose climate has come to be universally recognized. Account has not been taken above of the rainfall during the years 1933 and 1934, which were years of serious drought all over the British Isles. The soil of Dornoch being of an exceedingly sandy nature readily absorbs the heaviest rainfall, a circumstance which accounts materially for the cleanliness of the place.

The open sea bathing is all that can possibly be desired. There are no whirls or eddies; the sands are always smooth, and the slope towards the water is gentle, ensuring perfect safety for old and young. For those who prefer deep water plunging, ample opportunity is afforded at the Rocks, a little to the east of the recognized bathing-ground. The beach is five minutes' walk from the centre of the town.

The comforts of the visitor receive due consideration. There are two large first-class hotels, within a few minutes' walk of Links and Beach; several desirable houses available for letting, a private Hotel, as well as a number of smaller places where apartments can be had. Amongst the last-mentioned there is ample room for expansion.

There are attractive pine woods both in the immediate vicinity of the burgh and a few miles beyond, to which the visitor who desires shelter and quiet has free access. Beyond are the rising moorland hills, stretching many miles before the base of the mountains is reached, away in the heart of the wide county. Normally by the end of May all trace of the east wind has practically vanished, and the soft westerly zephyrs travelling in turn over mountain, moorland, hill and pine wood make the climate of Dornoch a wonderfully equable one.

Through the influence and friendship of the House of Sutherland, Dornoch has been occasionally honoured with the presence of Royalty. In 1872 the late Queen Victoria paid a never-to-be-forgotten visit to the town; King Edward

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GOLF AT DORNOCH

honoured it by his presence in 1902, immediately after his coronation; Prince Arthur of Connaught attended the Annual Prize-giving by Duchess Millicent of Sutherland at the Links in the autumn of 1905; while the Grand Duke Michael, though a very indifferent performer, greatly enjoyed his golfing exploits at Dornoch, as do many other distinguished personages who come over from Dunrobin Castle, guests of the Duke of Sutherland, the President of the Golf Club.

GOLF

Few places can lay claim to such a golfing antiquity as Dornoch. Its links rank as the third earliest mentioned in history. The six historic links with date of first mention are St. Andrews, 1552; Leith, 1593; Dornoch, 1616; Montrose, 1628; Aberdeen, 1642; Musselburgh, 1672. Earl John was at School at Dornoch from 1619 to 1622, and in 1621 was joined by his brother Adam. The accounts for the young



Photograph by C. M. Gillespie

The War Memorial

Earl's board, lodging, and tuition, are preserved in the archives of Dunrobin Castle, and include items for golfing requisites. In still earlier days, however, there existed a close ecclesiastical and perhaps also a close golfing connection between St. Andrews and Dornoch. As already stated, it was about the middle of the 12th century that the diocese of Caithness was erected, and history tells us that in 1549 the Bishop was Robert Stewart, who "in 1557 and 1559 made over the Church lands to Earl John and Eleanor Stewart, his wife (the Bishop's own Sister), and to their heirs, including the Palace and City of Dornoch." In this connection the following extract from *Old Dornoch* by Mr. Hector M. Mackay, the late Town Clerk, published in 1920, may be of interest:

"About this time 1570, Bishop Robert left Dornoch, and took up his abode at St. Andrews. He doubtless felt that

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GOLF AT DORNOCH

Skibo and Dornoch were getting rather unsafe among all these war's alarms. He does not appear to have ever returned, though he kept his title of Bishop of Caithness to the last. At St. Andrews he turned Protestant once more, and took unto himself a wife. He obtained a gift of the Commendatorship of the Priory there. He also succeeded his brother as Earl of Lennox and became ultimately Earl of March. He flits across the page of Scottish history under these various titles for 20 years after his Dornoch days. So soon as his nephew, Earl Alexander, attained his majority, Bishop Robert granted the necessary deeds confirming the Earl in all the church lands granted to his father Earl John.

"It is not many," Mr. Mackay continues, "to whom the privilege is given to tell the Secretary of our Golf Club anything new about golf or golfers, but actually that was my happy privilege. Those of you who were present at his most interesting lecture on 'Old-time Golf and Golfers' will remember he quoted Melville's diary about the Earl of March, Commendator of the Priory of St. Andrews. A commendator was a gentleman who got a grant of an ecclesiastical benefice during a vacancy. The grant was made 'in commendam,' hence the word commendator. At the Reformation these grants were made 'in perpetuum commendam.' The quotation from Melville's diary was to the effect that this Earl:

'Colluded with the rewellars of the town to hold the ministerie vacand, and in the meantime tuk up the stipend, and spendit the same, with the rest of the Kirk's rents of the Pryorie, at the goff, archerie, guid cheir, etc.'

What I was able to tell my friend the Secretary was that this jovial old golfer was no other than an old Dornoch man—Bishop Robert Stewart—and that in all probability he learned his 'goff,' and perhaps his jovial ways, in our own old town and on our own classic links.

"The sort of house he kept at St. Andrews is shown by the Session Register there, where we find five different cases against his servants for evil conduct. Verily, he did not rule his own household as, we are told, a Bishop should."

The compiler of these notes, however, is inclined to the opinion that if any one person was responsible for having introduced the game of *golf* at that early period to this very remote corner of the country, it was in all probability Sir Robert Gordon, who, in 1582, returned from St. Andrews University and took up residence in the Bishop's Palace in Dornoch before going to the Court of King Charles I.

GOLF AT DORNOCH

In his *Earldom of Sutherland* completed in 1630, he writes as follows:

"About this toun (along the sea coast) ther are the fairest and largest linkes (or green feilds) of any pairt of Scotland, fitt for Archery, goffing, ryding, and all other exercise; they doe surpassse the feilds of Montrose or St. Andrews."

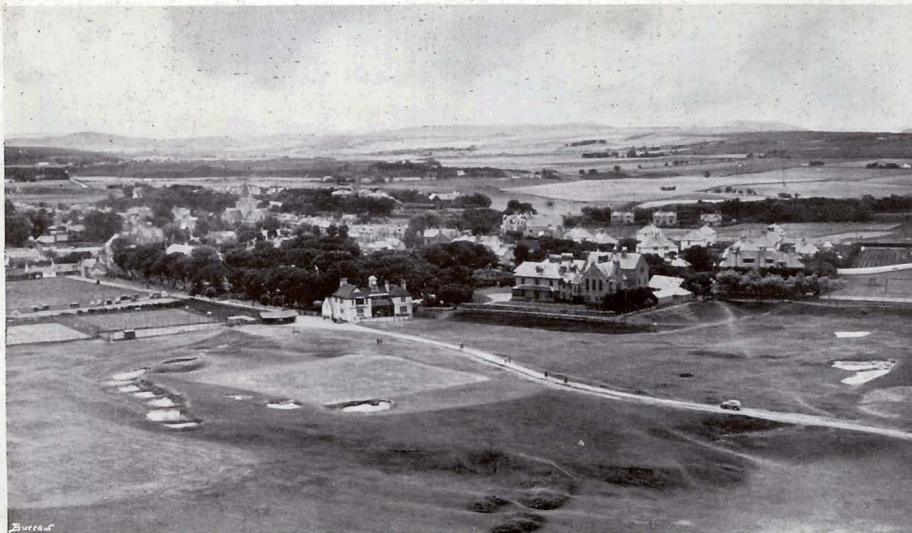
But to pass from legend and the relics of ancient times, we come to what after all are the present-day attractions to



Burghfield House
the Scottish residence of Viscount Rothermere

the visitor of this miniature town—its grand, unspoilt links, its fine bathing beach, unrivalled golden sands, and, even in these days, its old-world quiet. Now-a-days one is prone to associate links exclusively with the all-absorbing game of golf, but it may be observed that at Dornoch, where there are two 18-hole courses, only a portion of its links is monopolised by the golfer. Pedestrians have miles of links and children leagues of sands at their disposal, quite beyond the reach of molestation.

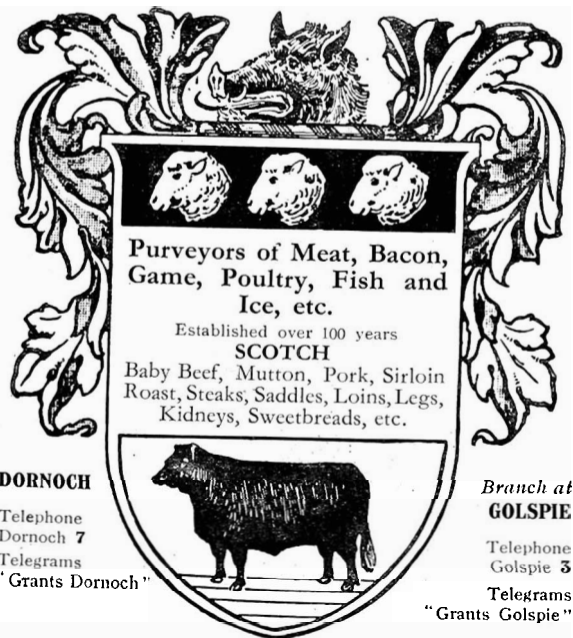
The links lie close by the sea. There are two courses of 18-holes each—the Old and the New. The first tee, in either case, is within five minutes walk of the Cathedral—the centre of the burgh. A distinctive feature of the Old Course—one which confers upon it an individuality all its own—is the many table greens which the round provides, while along



Dornoch from the Air
showing Golf Club-house, 1st Tee and 18th Green; Tennis Courts, Bowling Green and Cathedral

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SPORTS: PLACES OF WORSHIP

"It was at Dornoch, too, that I first experienced the blissful sensation of breaking 70. An ambition to score a full length course in 69 or under had been a secret and unsatisfied longing for years past. I have done it since elsewhere, but the greatest afternoon was when I played with Mr. Beaumont Pease. I hope that he will forgive me for boasting that I beat him four and three after he had gone round in 74. As he has had his revenge more than once since, I feel sure he will be quite unmoved by this disclosure."

—MISS JOYCE WETHERED (in "Golfing Memories and Methods." Winner of Ladies' Open Championship 1922, 1924, 1925, 1929; Winner of English Ladies' Championship 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924.)

TENNIS

The Tennis Courts, three in number, belong to the town, are run by the Golf Club and occupy a site on the links beside the shop of the Golf Professional. They are of brick-dust and lime finished off with En-Tout-Cas dressing. They are largely used by visitors and private season tournaments can be arranged.

BOWLING

Near-by the tennis courts is the Bowling Green, the gift of a townsman to the town. It is run by a Committee of local enthusiasts and maintained by the Golf Club. Visitors are welcomed.

SWIMMING

The open sea-bathing is of the very best—lovely, smooth golden sands, no whirls or eddies, no mud, shingle or other debris. The beach slopes ideally for old and young, while at one point there are rocks from which plunging can be indulged in at any stage of the tide.

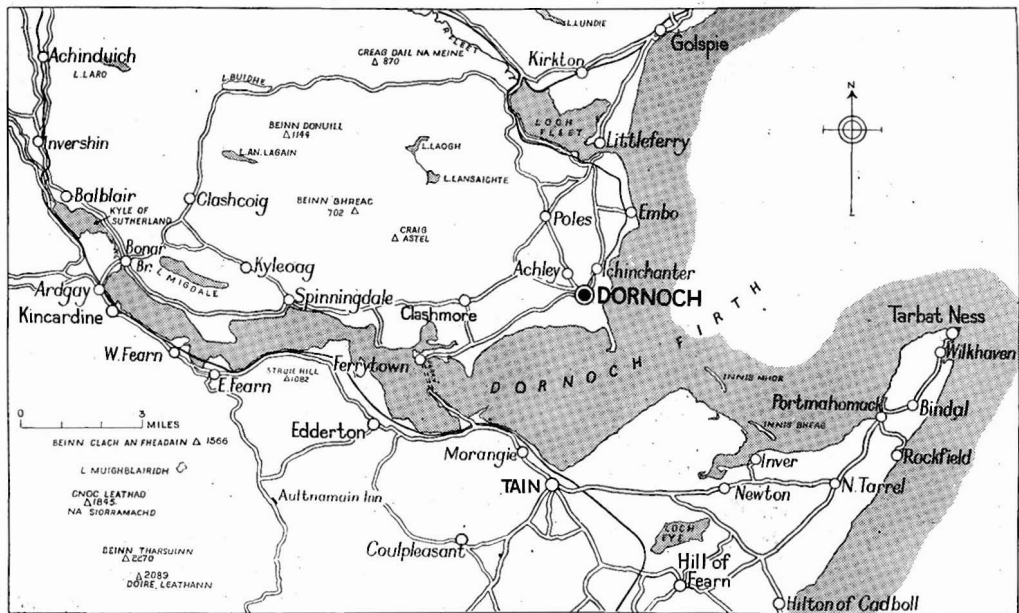
FISHING

There are no fresh water fishing rights attached to the Burgh, but sea-trout fishing can be pursued in the Kyle of Sutherland from where the Firth narrows to a few hundred yards some miles west of Dornoch. Boats can be hired at Bonar Bridge.

Visitors fond of deep-sea fishing can hire boats from the fishermen of Embo village, 2½ miles away.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Church of Scotland. The Cathedral Church, and The West Church.



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ROAD AND RAILWAY MAP OF THE DORNOCH DISTRICT

Ordnance Maps for this area are : *One-inch Scale*—Popular Edition Sheet 21. *Half-inch Scale*—Sheet 9.
Quarter-inch Scale—Sheet 7.