

Skelbo I

The accompanying typed sheets outline the history of Skelbo from Viking times to the late 18th century. It played a part on no less than five occasions at putting the Stuarts back on the throne.

The very name Skelbo given to the area by the Vikings meaning Place (or big farm) of Shells shows that the Mesolithic peoples had gathered their shell-fish and fashioned their quartz scrapers here - attracted no doubt by the safe anchorage and seal colonies which can still be seen on the sand banks at low tide. (Photos needed)

The oldest extant expense account still surviving is that of the English commissioners who had hoped to escort the Maid of Norway (1290) back to England from Skelbo to marry the young prince Edward (later Edward I). We have copies of the expense account and a list of the gifts brought for the young princess by the English commissioners. This seems to me to be one event that must find a place in our exhibition.

Visuals needed - a 13th Century craft - Norwegian
* sailing through the narrows of Loch Fleet - the old keep of Skelbo Castle - models of some of the gifts sent by Edward I for the Maid - e.g. a silver jug, a gold cup from the Archbishop of Canterbury, another from a Bishop of York, etc. ten items in all.

* Photos available

Skelbo II

We concentrate here on the occasions when Skelbo played a part in the attempts to restore the Stewarts to power - see items 4, 5, 6, 7 on the typed sheets.

1. The Glencairn Rising 1654

"About eight daies since Middleton and his company landed in a hoy from Holland --- at the Ferry of Uney in Sutherland with about eighty men. --- It is said he brought with him --- in his own vessel at first three hundred barrels of powder, one thousand firelocks, with about five thousand pikes, muskets, and pistols, and these, with two field-pieces, were lodged in the Castle of Skello (sic) - Skelbo.

We have authentic illustrations of a hoy - the type of vessel used by Middleton. The tragic execution of one of Glencairn's young officers at Dornoch Cross is related to this campaign.

2. The 1715 Rising - We have an excellent copy of the portrait of the Third Lord Duffus who forfeited his Skelbo lands, fled to Russia, and became "intendant of Maritime Affairs ashore" at Kronstadt near St. Petersburg where he died in 1732. See typed material items 5 and 6.

3. See typed material - item 7 for the Forty-Five.

Skelbo III

The Clearances as they affected Skelbo are fully documented in Dr. Rod Houston's "The Clearances in South-East Sutherland." Materials from this article included here are:

1. A map of the Skelbo Estate in 1788
2. A map of the same area in 1820 following the clearance
3. A map of the area to which the crofters were to be removed, 1810
4. Alternative plans (2) as proposed for the Marquis of Stafford's steading for Skelbo farm 1811 and 1812.
5. An outline history - five pages of Skelbo farm 1808-1958.

In addition we have enclosed a "Petition to Countess of Sutherland 1802" from the Tenant in Especk (Innes Breac), a poor piece of land on the Skelbo estate. Apparently the petition was refused.

Other Clearance material is available.

1. In "Firthlands of Ross and Sutherland"