

There is a road that crosses the eastern corner of Ross-shire, leaving the main road from Inverness a little beyond Evnaton and climbing to the high ground that lies near the coast. For miles ~~it~~ runs across open moorland, hills making a barrier ahead, then a sharp turn brings it out on the shoulder of Struik overlooking a view that cannot be bettered in the north.

(overlooking a view that never loses its enchantment for those who know it best)

Far below lies the Dornoch Firth pointing toward the west. To the east, (the long ramp of ~~Struik~~) the hill of Struik stands up boldly and on the far shore there is a glimpse of Ben Vraggie above the hills that slope towards the firth. All round the coast there is a network of fields and behind this band of green vast a landscape of mountain and moorland, where clouds hurrying across the sky cast dark shadows below, making now one and now another mountain stand out in deepest blue from its neighbours. Spread out like a map lies the ancient earldom of Sutherland and

but for the strip of cultivated land edging the shore it must have looked much the same when Norse raiders sailed towards the coast over a thousand years ago. This is the ideal road into Sutherland. From the roadside on ~~ac~~clear day many of Sutherlands highest peaks can be picked out and to help the stranger ^{A.A. Indication} ~~an~~ has been shows on a ~~table~~ the names and direction in which to find Ben Hope Clibrech, Ben Hee, and many others

The greater part of the Sutherland population is in the north

Sutherland is the least known of all the Scottish counties. Over a million and a quarter acres in extent, it has a population of only 13,000 and for its size is the most sparsely populated region in Britain. Of this scanty population, by far the ~~greatest~~ number live on the eastern side of the country where land has been cultivated from time immemorial. Here, hardwood trees flourish.

trees line the roads and border the fields on either side. The countryside is dotted with the whitewashed cottages of crofters and with well -cultivated farms and plantations of hardwood ^{wood} hide some of the larger houses from the road. The east coast of Sutherland has a rainfall of only 31 inches, in contrast to the north-west which has an average rainfall of 40 to 60 inches. There is a saying in the country that for every mile to the west there is another inch of rainfall. Although the winds on the east coast can be sharp and cutting, the Dornoch Firth and many of the straths that run up to the interior are sheltered, and with a dry and sunny climate, it is no wonder that from earliest times this part of the county carried a numerous population.

But the further one goes to the north west, the wilder and more barren the country becomes. The central part of Sutherland is a mountainous wilderness of bog and heather interspersed with tussock, grass, with

here and there a patch of green, once the meagre fields of an old croft. The mountains are vast outcrops of rock, treeless, their sides seamed and furrowed with the scars of innumerable water-courses. At a distance, on a fine day, they may be only one shade deeper than the blue of the sky, a delicate turquoise like a chinese enamel; in bad weather they stand out black and forbidding, mists clinging to their sides throwing deep shadows on the rocks and gullies below. Near the coast pools and lochans lie in hundreds among rocks on which only a little coarse grass or patches of heather can find a living.

Travelling along the roads miles pass without a sign of a house, except ^{haps} perhaps the buildings of one of the large sheepfarms, the boundaries of which may extend to as much as 30,000 acres, or an isolated shooting-lodge, occupied for only a few months of the year. ^{on a gray day} on a gray day the colouring is monotonous and dreary, but a gleam of ^{shine} sun brings ^{out} an ever-varying blend of colours, bleached

yellows and soft browns fading into a blue distance.

On the western side of the county the road to Assynt is dominated by the toothed peaks of ²Sullivan, by ³Canisp, ⁴Quinag and the great bulky mass of Ben More, Assynt. It would be difficult to say which looks the more impressive as first one and then another of these mountains comes into view, but of all of them Sullivan is the strangest in shape; silhouetted in deepest blue across the waters of Loch Borralan it is a fit guardian for that country with its stories of battles and feuds in past centuries.

In the very heart of Sutherland lie Ben Klibreck and ^{Ben} Armine, and further to the north lie Ben Stack, Arkle and Foinaven. Beyond Strath Dionard, running down from the Kyle of Durness, lie Gran Stacach and Ben Spionnaidh, the two most northerly peaks, and almost level with Foinaven, Ben Hope and Loyaghal dominate the northern wastes. Judged by height alone these mountains are insignificant among the world's giants but seen towering in the mists and rain that often sweep across this desert

they have a solitary grandeur. Not for them the green pastures and tinkling cow bells of the Lower Alps. Theirs is grim and jagged outline, guarding a country where life has ever been a struggle for a bare existence, drenched with storms and in winter often deep in snow.

Between the mountains lie the great lochs and the ^{which?} rivers which flow from them. ^{Oral-} Beside them run the few roads that cross the central wilderness, roads that roughly follow the line of ancient tracks which were sometimes impassable in winter. On the west and north coasts there is some of the finest rock scenery in Britain, ~~etc~~ precipitous cliffs rising in places to The west coast is broken by the salt water lochs of Inchard Laxford and Cairnbawn, the latter, the largest of the three, separates Eddrachillis from Assynt; At Kylescue, Cairnbawn narrows to a passage only about a quarter of a mile wide, where it is crossed by a ferry, then it widens out into the two lochs of Glendhu and Glencouls both lying in some of the finest scenery in the county.

Rhu Stoer is the most westerly point in Sutherland and Cape Wrath, with its famous lighthouse, is the most northerly. Between these headlands the whole coast is nicked and dented with innumerable bays and inlets while off the coast lie numbers of small islands which may be anything from a few yards to a mile or more from the mainland.

The outline of the north coast is even bolder than that of the west. Between Cape Wrath and the Caithness border at Drumholistan three great fiords divide the country (into ^{peninsulas} promontories of great extent.) They are the Kyle of Durness, Loch Erribol and the Kyle of Tongue, Loch Erribol would comfortably shelter a whole navy of small ships; the Norsemen knew them and made use of them in their adventurous voyages. ^{King} ~~Haco~~ ^{King} took shelter in Erribol after the battle of Largs ~~in~~ ^{his defeat on the 22nd of May} in 1263. As the crow flies the distance between Tongue and Cape Wrath is only about ^{very} miles but it is a different story by road

The inhabitants of this area are gathered into small ^{communities} villages lookig to Thurso for supplies.

On the coast itself the rock scenery is magnificent, headland after headland juts out into the sea, edged with a fringe of white surf leaping against the cliffs. In stormy weather the wind can carry a man over the cliffs into the surf ~~raging~~ below, yet, in summer, for days on end, the sea ripples over small sandy beaches between the headlands where many hours can be passed basking lazily in the sun.

~~in Scotland~~
 Few places are more beautiful than the Kyle of Tongue on a fine summer evening when the tide has run out leaving a floor of golden sands, and the solitary tower of Castle, ^{perched} on its hill, is outlined against the evening sky, and ^{in the distance} southwards Ben Loyal, its precipices softened by the evening haze, ^{light} rises like a wall of blue and fills the horizon.

One can take the bus from Tongue and travel to Thurso over what is to my mind the most romantic road in Britain. From these northern shores a straight

The bus from Tongue travels to Thurso over over This is Ben very edge of Britain & from here a straight out to sea could reach the arctic circle without crossing land

line out to sea could reach the arctic circle without ^{Crossing} touching land. (Some people who come from the south find the loneliness of ^{the} this country repellent but once the mind is detached from the slavery of shops and offices the silence of the moorlands is a rest. Here are the real Highlands, unchanged for centuries, and only the distant hum of a car or the sound of an aeroplane over head brings one back to the 20th century.)

Between Tongue and the Caithness border at Drumhollistan four rivers empty themselves into the sea. They are the Borgie, flowing from Loch Loyghal, the Naver, which rises in Loch Naver, Strathy Water, and the Halladale river, which enters the sea at Melvich. miles

beyond Melvich the boundary with Caithness is reached and from there runs right ^{down} across to the Ord of Caithness on the East Coast. At one time the boundary lay ^{on} along the River Halladale but in 16 the line was altered and it now marches across

^{along} across the heights that form a ^{natural} division between the two counties.

Near the north coast the land is high, much of it lying at altitudes of 600 feet without any distinguishing features, but about half way across it begins to rise to the Heights of Knockfin, over 1400 feet, and reaches its highest point at the summit of Cnoc an Eirearnoch, which touches 1700 feet. High up among the hills ^{part} just on the Caithness side of the border, lies Loch Scalabsdale, Creag Scalabsdale stands above it and from there the boundary runs down till it reaches the sea at the Ord pont. No roads cross this desolate region, though the old inhabitants had many a track across its bleak inhospitable moors. The Highlanders needed no roads, indeed they preferred on occasions to be able to go about their business unseen and nothing is more surprising, in the accounts of old clan battles and forays, than the distances the Highlanders could cover in a day. Men, and women too

travelled light and made little of a journey which would be thought a hardship to-day.

In contrast to the north coast with its deep fiords the east coast keeps fairly straight line till it reaches the mouth of the Fleet river, when it sweeps out to the point on which stands the county town of Dornoch. In place of the sea lochs we have Strath Halladale, more often called Kildonan, ~~Strath Brora~~ Glen Loth, Strath Brora and Strath Fleet, running up into the heart of the county. Along the coast, till the beginning of the nineteenth century, ran the only road that could bear any comparison with roads further south and even that has been described as a "broken rugged pathway running by the sea shore from the Ord Head to the Meikle Ferry". Before the Mound was built to carry Telford's road to Caithness, all traffic had to cross the Little Ferry at the mouth of the Fleet River but in fine weather there was comparatively easy communication with the south by sea, by crossing to Banff, or

or by sailing up the Murray Firth to Inverness, thus cutting off miles of hard travelling overland.

The small towns of Helmsdale, Brora and Golspie, and the villages of Port Gower and Embo all lie within easy reach of each other. Farms and small holdings make a continuous band of cultivated land between them. There are many names on the map intimately connected with the history of the county. They represent lands once held by descendants and supporters of the old Earls of Sutherland whose vast possessions stretched right across to the Reay Country in the north and whose castle of Dunrobin has been continuously in occupation since the 15th century.

Dornoch, the county town, stands on a sandy point of land at the entrance to the Dornoch Firth. Its situation rather cuts it off from the rest of the county, for it is not on the main road north and it has no harbour. The town itself consists of unpretentious stone houses

solidly built and comfortable to look at as well as to live in. Its ^{Dornoch} High Street is certainly more picturesque than that of any other small town north of Inverness but then no other town has a castle and a cathedral facing each other across a green open space, nor has it yet been disfigured by the chromium plated shop fronts of chain stores. The golf course is famous and a large camping site very popular with tourists in the summer beside having several good hotels. & many of the houses take in visitors for "bed and breakfast". But perhaps what fascinates both the visitors and the inhabitants of Dornoch most is the view from the golf links, the distant shore of Banff and the sweep of the coast line to the north backed by hills ~~and~~ The sparkling blue sea on a fine summer's day