

# Showing the way

## DORNOCH MOVE TO PRESERVE AND SIGNPOST HISTORIC PLACES

A MOVE was made at Dornoch on Saturday to form an organisation specifically to ensure the preservation and signposting of historic places in the Royal Burgh.

Ann appeal was also made for support for a proposal to re-form in the county of Sutherland a field club, which is being actively organised by the Rev. Gordon Scott, a master at Dunrobin School, Golspie.

At Dornoch on Saturday

Provost Harry Clunie and other guests visited the site of the stone at Earl's Cross, near the entrance to the boys-hostel, which marks the spot where the last execution took place in the burgh.

There had been nothing to tell visitors or residents what the stone was there for until Mr Henry Rowe, a retired Civil Servant from London who went to live at Dornoch three years ago, took the initiative and on his own account got a sign made to tell the story.

This he erected himself beside the stone. The sign is inscribed: "Donald Mackay was hanged here on May 26, 1738, for murdering a witch. His was the last execution at Dornoch."

Afterwards in the Eagle Hotel, where Mr Rowe was host, Provost deplored the fact that many of Dornoch's historic links had been allowed to become obliterated or lost altogether.

"I think it is a great shame and I feel that we have a responsibility and should be

playing an active part in preserving these links for future generations."

Actions such as Mr Rowe's were appreciated, particularly by visitors to the burgh. One step in this direction had been taken by Mr Rowe and his had been a very generous gesture. There were several other places which could be preserved for posterity where the same kind of thing could be done. It was not for one person to do this but for the community.

Provost Clunie added:

"Perhaps the time has come when a local group or organisation could well be formed to preserve such historic links with the past.

"We have the beginning of that here today and we can carry on this kind of work."

He could think of 20 places where action could be taken. Some of them were not known even to local people and when visitors asked questions they did not get the answer. This should not be. "Mr Rowe has indicated the way we should go."

Mr W. C. Wright, a Dornoch solicitor keenly interested in the burgh's history, thought Provost Clunie's proposal that a sort of civic trust should be formed was very desirable. Then he went on to say there was a very strong move afoot to re-form a county field club.

Within the last two months there had been archaeological lectures in Brora High School with attendances of between 50 and 70. Out of that had arisen this suggestion to re-form the field club and action had already been taken to that end.

### ACTION

The kind of action which Mr Rowe had taken was being done in Orkney where their brochs and chambered cairns were well sign-posted and preserved. No such step had been taken in Sutherland until now.

People who holidayed in Sutherland would be deeply grateful to find such signposting and information. But when there were no such signs the danger was that historic places were constantly deteriorating through being walked over and examined.

In the last 10 years or so there had been appreciable worsening of the position and Mr Wright referred specifically to the broch at Srathsteven just off the trunk road between Golspie and Brora.

The formation of a field club was one way in which such historic treasures could be preserved in the interests of all concerned. A civic trust as suggested by Provost Clunie could help too and he thought they could profitably work together.