

# From Our Old Files

**25 YEARS AGO**  
(June 22, 1979)

Helmsdale Community Council are to appeal to the Ombudsman in their bid for maternity services in Sutherland, after receiving a firm "no" from both former and present Secretaries of State.

Armed with the support of 12 of the 15 community councils in Sutherland, Helmsdale have been putting pressure on St Andrew's House to provide a modern general practitioner unit at the Lawson Hospital, Golspie.

Miss Margot McGregor, secretary of Helmsdale Community Council, has written to both past and present Secretaries of State for Scotland, Mr Bruce Millan and Mr George Younger, urging a re-think on the whole question of maternity facilities in Sutherland. But it appears that the Tory view is the same as that of their predecessors in Government.

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Engineers testing the rock formation on the Altnabreac moors, on the border of Caithness and Sutherland, for possible deep storage of nuclear waste, have come across indications that some previously unsuspected minerals may be there.

The drilling programme, carried out over the past six months on Viscount Thurso's estate, has shown certain anomalies in the rock formation. The bores were made by scientists from the Institute of Geological Sciences, who have discovered rocks much older than they thought existed in the north.

They have also found diorite in a strange formation which could go down to the earth's mantle. And the rock is not reacting as it should to certain tests.

Lord Thurso said: "The drilling programme has given us some extremely interesting information about the geology of the area which would not otherwise have been found.

"We know there was gold here during the 1800s when the Kildonan gold rush was on, and it is possible the tests could unearth the mother lode. But I am not seriously expecting to find a second Johannesburg — it could easily be some other mineral," Lord Thurso said.

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Visitors to the Strathnaver Museum over the last week showed a great deal of interest in a National Library of Scotland exhibition which was on show there.

Called "Emigration From The Highlands, 1800-1900", the exhibits included a number of prints of eviction and emigration scenes and a large number of photostats of letters from emigrants comparing the conditions they found themselves in with the conditions they had left.

The exhibition was sponsored by the leisure and recreation

department of Highland Regional Council, and because of the interest shown it is hoped it will return to Bettyhill in August.

**50 YEARS AGO**  
(June 18, 1954)

When Sutherland County Council met at Dornoch last Monday to consider the 42 recommendations in the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Crofting Conditions, much of the debate was concerned with a motion that support should be accorded Mrs Margaret Macpherson, the only member of the Commission who had disagreed with the report.

Mrs Macpherson's main contention was that without nationalisation of land "the purpose of the rest of the report would be lost". And she recommended that the State should take over all crofting land in the seven crofting counties. When the motion was put to the vote it was narrowly defeated — by 7-6.

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The North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board are marking the start of work on their £8,500,000 Loch Shin hydro-electric scheme with a ceremony at Lairg on July 6, when Miss Jessie Murray, a crofter, of Drumnahaving, Lairg, will fire the first explosive charge on the site of the dam. Board officials to be present will be Mr Thomas Johnston, chairman, and Sir Hugh Mackenzie, vice-chairman. All public bodies in Sutherland will be represented.

Miss Murray represents the fifth generation of her family at Drumnahaving. Her grandfather, Robert Murray, developed the croft and rebuilt the croft house. He brought the slates for the roof by horse and cart from Invergordon, over 50 miles away. A cattle dealer, he used to ride on horseback with his stock to the Falkirk market.

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"A Queen Is Crowned" was the most popular film shown by the Clyne Amenities Association at Brora during the year ended April 30 last, it was stated by the secretary, Mr A Sutherland. Nine hundred paid for admission during the week of showing — this had only once been bettered, by "Whisky Galore", when the attendance was 916.

**75 YEARS AGO**  
(June 20, 1929)

The public are invited to attend the fancy fair to be held in the Old School Buildings and Grounds, Dornoch, on Thursday, 18th July, under the auspices of the Dornoch Social Club and Boy Scouts.

It will be an outstanding gala day in the annals of the county. To miss it will be to miss a day's genuine enjoyment. There will be innumerable entertainments to please both old and young — in fact so varied and attractive is the day's

programme that all who attend shall be sorry when the fair is over.

The stalls, of which there will be a large number, will be full to running over with fancy goods, jumbles, fruit flowers, sweets, produce. There will also be ample light refreshments and ices. Music will be discoursed during the fair by the Dornoch Orchestra.

The above is a summary of the great fair on Thursday, 18th July. Given but good weather the event will be a red letter day in the annals of the county.

**100 YEARS AGO**  
(June 16, 1904)

**THE NEW STATION HOTEL DORNOCH** — This large, commodious, excellently-equipped, and beautifully-situated hotel is now practically finished. The growing popularity of Dornoch as a golfing resort, and the completion of the Dornoch Light Railway two years ago impressed the Highland Railway Company with the necessity of providing adequate accommodation for the yearly-increasing numbers of visitors, that they resolved to build a large hotel.

No sooner was this resolution adopted than effect was given to it by the immediate commencement of the work, with the result that the hotel is now finished, and is to be formally opened on the 30th of this month.

Though golf is the main attraction for visitors to Dornoch, the Company, in building this hotel, did not fail to consider other advantages which make the place attractive. They selected the best site, commanding magnificent views of the Dornoch Firth as far south as the mountains of Aberdeenshire, and also the surrounding country to the north and west.

It is not too much to say that no hotel of the sort in Britain is situated in the midst of a more beautiful panoramic scenery.

The hotel itself is a substantial building designed by Mr Burnett, architect, Inverness. It contains 65 bedrooms. A large coffee room capable of seating 150 visitors, a large lounge hall, ladies' writing room, smoking room, billiard room, lavatories, golfers' corner, hairdresser's room, drawing room and several private sitting rooms, besides ample kitchen and servants' accommodation.

The hotel is lit by electricity generated by an engine sixteen and a half horse power taken from Hornsby's, Grantham. A large produce garden, croquet, lawn tennis and bowling greens are in the course of formation. If the visitor wants quietness, leisure or golf, health and scenery, Dornoch is his haven. He has there surroundings from which he can contemplate nature in all her phases. He is in the "Golfers' Paradise".