

# From Our Old Files

## 25 YEARS AGO (August 26th, 1988)

IT was like a scene from one of her own novels – the lady in pink dominated the entire audience who sat spellbound to her every word.

Barbara Cartland, the "Queen of Romance", swept aside all her critics in a flurry of shocking pink on a dull Thursday to declare open a shrine dedicated to her life and works in the Timespan Heritage Centre at the end of Telford Bridge in Helmsdale.

Despite protestations from some backwoodsmen and a very direct reference by her to the burning down of her family's home at Kilphedir four years ago, Miss Cartland (87) attracted almost 200 people, many of them tourists to see her cut the ribbon. Pink, of course.

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POLICE are investigating two thefts in the Helmsdale area – one involving part of the wooden mast from the old Royal yacht Britannia.

Missing from the outbuildings of burned-down Suisgill Lodge, Kildonan, is a hollowed out piece of charred mahogany, 30ins high, oval in shape, 3ft x 3ft with a brass inscription plate. It had been used as a hall stand. Also taken were a mahjong set, books and dining room chairs.

The lodge was burned down in a mystery fire in February 1984 and has not so far been rebuilt by owners Mr and Mrs Edward Reeves.

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THE family of Seaforths' Lance-Corporal Charles MacKinnon of Bonar Bridge, who died seven years after the end of the last war, are now taking advice to obtain further medical evidence in support of their claim that his name should be included on the village war memorial.

Family members say he died in 1952 from wounds sustained on active service in France during the war.

Sutherland District Council voted 7:5 on Monday not to entertain a petition from 81 adults and a further 50 letters requesting that the lance corporal's name should be inscribed alongside those of his brother and father.

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DAVY Duff, lead singer with Country and Western band Colorado until he lost his sight, has been invited to help boost a £500,000 appeal for the Royal National Institute for the Blind in a charity drive this week.

## 50 YEARS AGO (August 30th, 1963)

THE massed pipe band parade at Dornoch last Saturday night was a great attraction for the many visitors to the town. The bands concerned were the Inverness British Legion, Thurso and Dornoch and altogether there were 50 bandsmen on parade and three drum majors.

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THE Secretary of State has consented to revoke Dornoch links bye-laws with effect from today which means that



Angus resident Marigold MacLeod recently unearthed this picture which shows Sutherland's "top ten" beauties from 1945. Marigold is standing at the far right in the back row. She is unable to identify everyone in the picture and is appealing to local people to help jog her memory. Back row from left: Nellie Cormack, Bella MacDonald, Margaret Cormack, unknown (possibly Murray), Marigold MacLeod. Front – Mary Cowie, Helen MacGregor, unknown (possibly Dornoch), Mary Murray, unknown (possibly Helmsdale).

the local golf club, if they wish, can permit Sunday golf on their course.

The bylaw concerned, made 50 years ago, stated simply: "No games shall be played on the links on Sundays." This bye-law affected only part of the links – that part which was under the burgh's jurisdiction.

The golf club asked the Town Council to approach the Scottish Secretary on the matter. The council vote in favour of acceding to the club's application was 7-2.

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THERE was a fascinating display in the industrial tent at Lairg Crofters' Show last Friday. Visitors to the county were amazed at the quality and quantity of the exhibits. And the miniature gardens section for children was indeed a showpiece. Most of the gardens boasted ponds while in one case the exhibitor went to a lot of trouble to introduce a dry-stone dyke.

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SIR John Gilmour, MP for East Fife, reaffirmed to Sutherland Unionists at a fete in Golspie last Saturday that the north railway line (from Inverness to Wick) would not be closed unless there were adequate alternative transport facilities.

That was a pledge given to Sutherland Unionists at Skibo last year by Mr Michael Noble, Secretary of State for Scotland and he believed that pledge still stood.

The fete was held in the grounds of Dunrobin Castle and after very heavy rain just before the opening ceremony performed by Sir John Gilmour, the weather cleared and the stalls in the great marquee were soon abuzz.

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lost his sight, has been invited to help boost a £500,000 appeal for the Royal National Institute for the Blind in a charity drive this week.

## 75 YEARS AGO (September 1st, 1938)

GOLSPIE Secondary School reopened after the summer holidays yesterday. Until the new school, now in course of construction, is completed, pupils and staff must put up with the cramped conditions which exist. The new school is being pushed on with all speed by the contractors, but had there not been such a delay with the preliminary arrangements, all could now have been housed within a beautifully situated, well lit and hygienic building.

The education committee have certainly not accelerated the work on the new building scheme.

Their delay at the preliminary stages has made the winter's outlook for pupils and staff one of isolation.

Two years in which to build a new school makes it seem that motives other than the well-being of the scholars were behind the minds of some of our county educationalists. Ere long a school playing field must be provided. It is essential that this should have the immediate attention of the education committee.

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GUIDING in Lairg has sustained a great loss by the departure of their well-beloved Captain, Miss Sutherland, for Egypt. Guides, Rangers, officers and a number of ladies who have the interest of guiding at heart met on Saturday evening, 27th August, in the Reading Room to bid farewell to Miss Sutherland and show their appreciation of her services.

Patrol Leader Jessie MacLennan, before presenting Miss Sutherland with a silver and enamel dressing set, spoke of her qualities as a Guide and

of the inspiration she had been to all of them.

Miss Sutherland, replying, thanked the assembled company for their good wishes and for their handsome gift. She especially thanked Miss Mackay, her lieutenant, for the invaluable assistance she had given her.

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WHILE taking part in bombing exercises on the Mhorrich Mhor range in the Dornoch Firth, an RAF 5-seater machine had to make a forced landing.

While doing so the plane narrowly missed coming into collision with some huts which were occupied by staff. The machine was badly damaged and the occupants were fortunate in escaping with severe bruises.

## 100 YEARS AGO (August 28th, 1913)

MR Hector Mackay, Sydney House, Lairg, has presented another shelter to the county of Sutherland for the use of tubercular patients. The shelter is intended for patients in the parish of Lairg, but when not required there, Dr Bremner, the medical officer, is authorised to use it otherwise as he sees fit.

A year ago Mr Mackay presented a shelter to the county. It has been used at Embo and it is pleasing to note that the patient treated in it is doing very well indeed.

Mrs Barrow, Dornoch, has presented a shelter for the district of Embo with permission to use it elsewhere in the county when not required in Embo.

This is the ninth shelter Dr Bremner has secured for the county of Sutherland and it is gratifying to learn that these shelters are of benefit to patients and their friends.

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A PICTURESQUE incident was witnessed at the Crofters' Show at Golspie on Saturday. The Sutherland farm servants carried Major Sutherland along the field in triumph with flags flying and pipers playing.

The enthusiasm was aroused by the helpful interest taken by Major Sutherland in the half-holiday movement. Farm servants deeply appreciated "Proncy's" kindness and were angry when they learned of the sneering criticism of his action by several members of the Sutherland Farmers' Club.

A farm servant from Rogart proposed that the Union should mark its appreciation of Major Sutherland's worth; the proposal was seconded by a representative from Dornoch and cordially supported by men from the parishes of Golspie, Clyne and Loth.

Mr John Macdonald, the genial proprietor of the Sutherland Arms Hotel, Golspie, was asked if he could oblige the representatives of the Sutherland farm servants with the use of a carriage for the afternoon.

Major Sutherland was escorted to the carriage by the executive of the Union and placed on the front seat. The pipers struck up "The Cock o' the North" and away the company marched to continuous cheers.