

Grave concern on a seaside stroll

The wonderful seaside setting of Royal Dornoch golf course.



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A SHORT distance from Dornoch and a stone's throw from its famous golf course lies a small, solitary gravestone. The "Cholera Grave" marks the spot where a man thought to have had the disease is buried.

In 1832 Dornoch took steps to prevent a cholera epidemic that was sweeping Britain from infecting the town. Guards were posted at the boundaries and the body of the 44-year-old in the grave was kept out.

The inscription on the gravestone is unreadable now, but an information board reveals that "emenent (sic) medical men" suggested cholera was not the cause of the unfortunate man's death. Whatever, Dornoch stayed free of the disease so the

measures clearly worked.

The stone is visited on this interesting walk that starts and ends in the Royal Burgh.

A glorious sunny day saw us walking north along Bridge Street to the old railway station – now used as a chiropractic clinic for the treatment of back pain, sports injuries and the like.

On the opposite side of the road look out for two signs pointing the way up some steps. One is inscribed Embo – our destination – and Earl's Cross.

Continuing through woodland round the back of a large house we reached a road, crossed it and went through a gate into Earl's Cross Wood. A sign indicates that



the wood is owned by Sutherland Estate and managed in partnership with Dornoch Area Community Council and the Forestry Commission "as a place of quiet recreation".

Peaceful it was too as we followed the yellow arrows of Dornoch's history links trail into gorse. The information board and the cholera grave are reached and a little further on, in a fenced enclosure, Earl's Cross. One theory is that this large stone pillar marked the boundary between the lands of the Earl of Sutherland and those of the Church, controlled by the Bishop of Caithness, but there's uncertainty about this.

The sea was audible now as we walked on towards it and the golf course, arriving at the old railway line where we turned left to reach a track. Dornoch's links course is renowned and golfers were out in force enjoying the sunshine, the sea air and a round on the manicured greens. We followed the track left to round a rather fine white house and on through a gate, descending to the golf course. Embo caravan park – rather cheesily named Grannie's Heilan' Hame – can be seen clearly ahead.

A metal gate, then a wooden gate on the other side of the course, give access to a narrow path across a field towards Embo.

Crossing a small bridge over a burn we turned right to take the shore path to the pier, with views of Ben Bhraggie and its giant monument to the Duke of Sutherland.

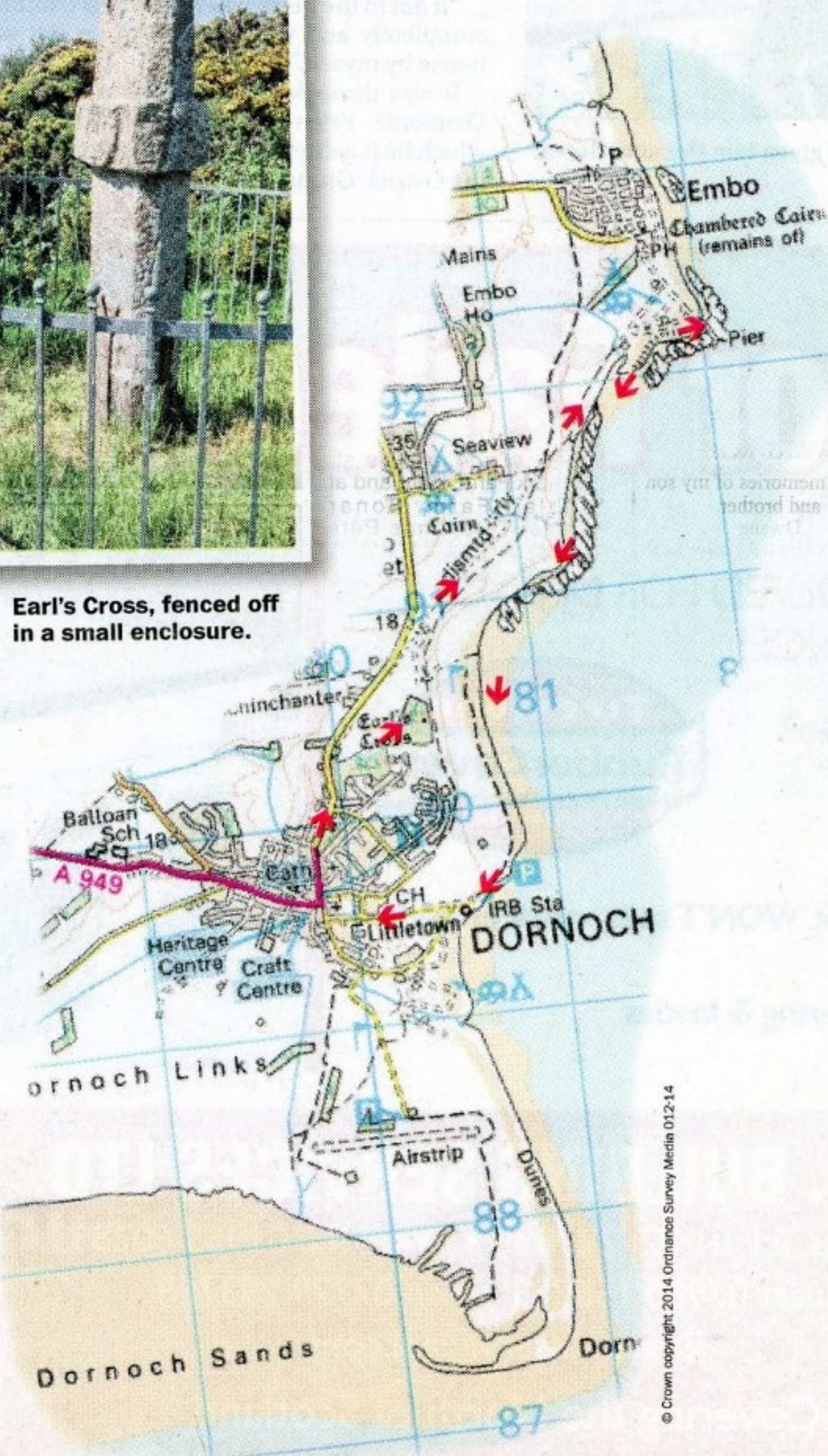
To return to Dornoch we took to the sand and strolled along watching the surf roll in. There's also a path alongside the golf course marked by red posts as an alternative.

We used it for a short distance when rocks made the beach walk more difficult, but soon returned to the sand down some steps.

Lots of locals were out relishing the chance of a picnic on the beach, while windsurfers skimmed the waves close to shore. Our walk ended on the path past the golf clubhouse leading back into town.



Earl's Cross, fenced off in a small enclosure.



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The stone marking the 'Cholera Grave'.

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