

Painting a portrait of historic Scottish life

Heritage: Photographs date from late 1800s

BY BLAIR DINGWALL

These images painting a stark, stunning and realistic portrait of the Highlands in the late 1800s have lain gathering dust in an island's attic for decades, until now.

The photographs – more than a century old – came into the hands of Donald Macdonald, 66, of Orkney, through his grandfather who had been a station master based at Tain in Easter Ross.

Mr Macdonald said: "It's just one of those things, it's been in our family for the last 60-70 years that I know of."

His grandfather, another Donald Macdonald, found the images abandoned in a carriage in the 1940s, and when no one claimed them back, they

became a Macdonald family heirloom.

He said: "They've always been around, they've just been lying up in the attic."

"The reason I passed them on is because people appreciate photos of a bygone day."

"And the pictures you see, that's before the days of cars."

The images are a collection of original prints used by pioneering postcard company Valentine's and Sons.

This Dundee-based postcard company – set up by legendary Scottish photographer James Valentine in 1851 – became one of Scotland's biggest postcard manufacturers.

The photographs in Mr Macdonald's collection show life in the most northern points of mainland

Scotland at the end of a century of mass clearances and famine.

In 1780 huge changes began on the highland estates, with landowners forcing an exodus of the dependent population of ten-gone day.

"They've always been around, they've just been lying up in the attic"

ant farmers from their homeland.

The clearances lasted almost 70 years and were followed by the Highland potato famine.

Occurring on the back of Ireland's Great Famine, the potato blight in Scotland further forced masses of

Highlanders from their homes.

Highlanders fled to the cities, or overseas to countries such as Canada, America, Australia and New Zealand.

These changes to the Scottish landscape severed the Gaelic culture of the Highlands forever.

For Mr Macdonald, it's the images of "Zulu"-type fishing boats sailing from Wick harbour which brings the era to life.

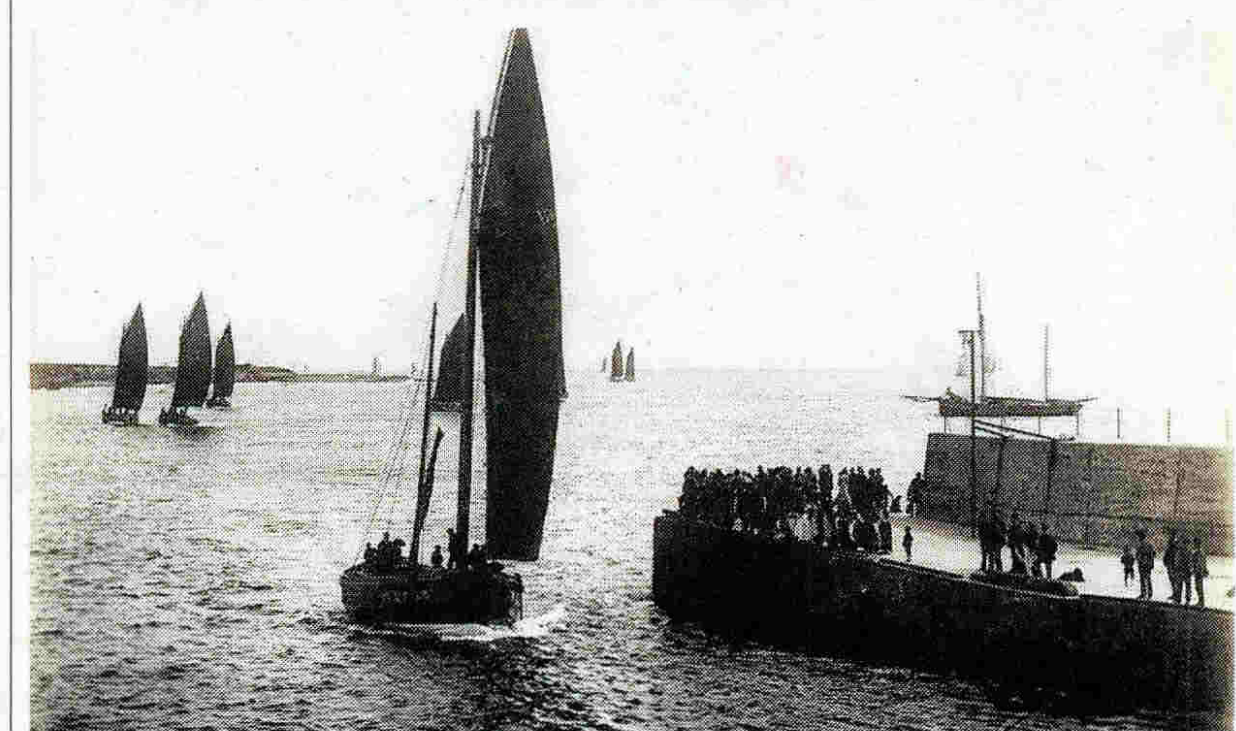
Mr Macdonald added: "Those were the main fishing boats seen in the day."

Images of a family participating in a game of golf at Tain also had him in awe.

He said: "My father was a handicapper at Tain golf course in the 50s. And these photos are 50 years before that."



TRADITIONAL LIFE: This image of well-dressed golfers at Dornoch golf links is



Fishing boats arrive at Wick harbour

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believed to have been taken in the late 1800s



A golfer takes a shot at Dornoch golf links



Fishing boats head out from Wick



Golfers enjoy a game at Dornoch



A seemingly peaceful scene at Wick

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