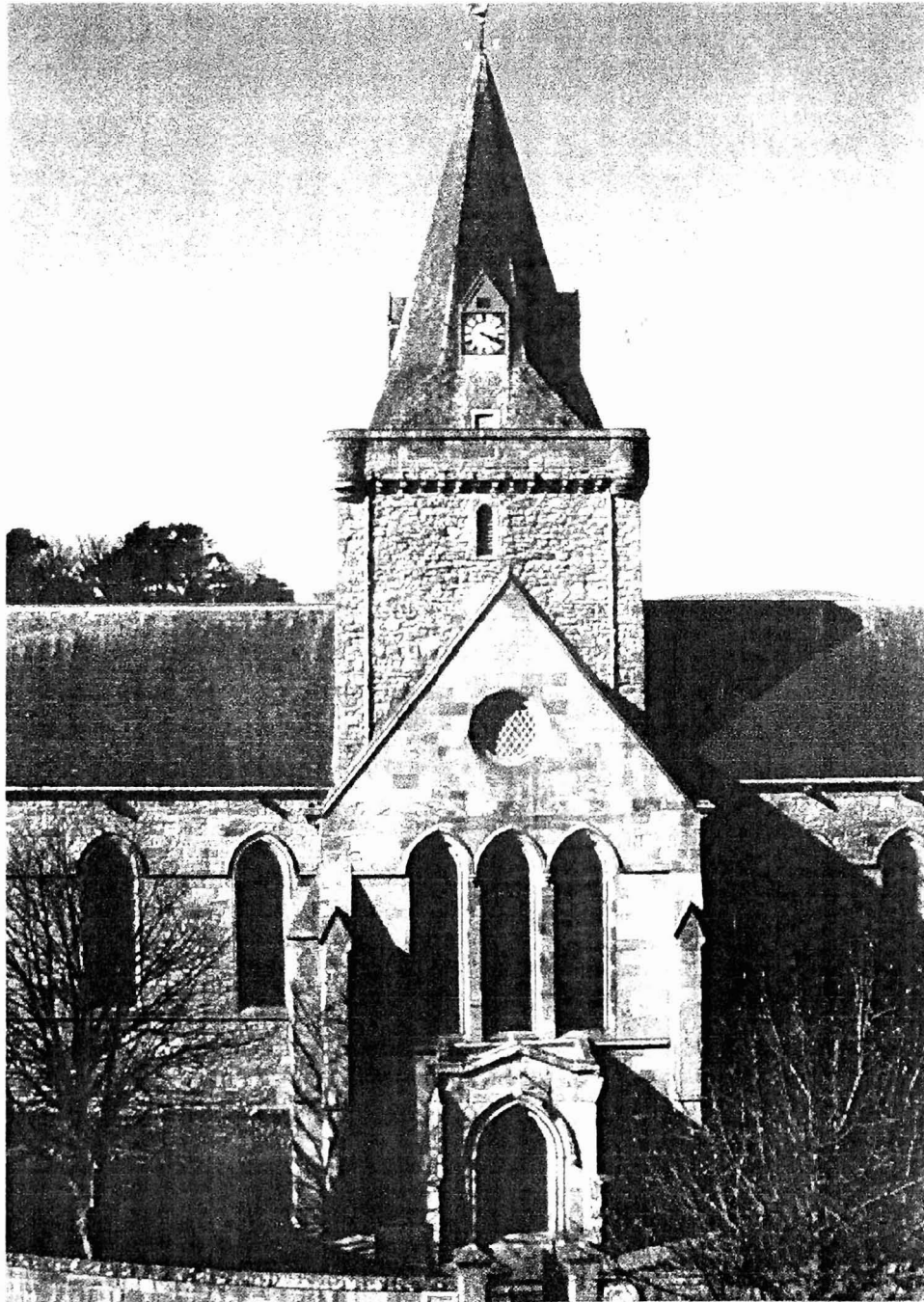


Dornoch Heritage Trail  
prepared by  
Dornoch Heritage Society



Dornoch Cathedral

1. Dornoch, so far as is known, had its origins as a Christian settlement in the sixth century. It is fitting therefore that our Heritage Trail should begin in Dornoch Cathedral. Construction began under Gilbert, Bishop of Caithness, about 1224. Its aisles and nave were almost wholly destroyed in a clan feud in 1570. In the 18th century it suffered from neglect, but the restoration work of 1835 - 37, and the loving care exercised on the fabric since then, have restored the building to the fine edifice you see today. More details can be found in the Guide which is on sale within.
2. On leaving the Cathedral by the south door, turn left and, passing the wrought iron gate bearing the arms of the Burgh, follow the cemetery wall to its eastern extremity where a plaque indicates the probable site of St. Barr's 6th century chapel.
3. Retrace your steps to the gravel path. Look for the "Plaiden Ell", the standard 38 inch cloth measurement used at Fairs and Markets held on this site since Medieval times.
4. We are now standing on the site of the old market place marked by the Mercat Cross. Here, according to Sir Robert Gordon, Sutherland's 17th Century historian: "St Barr his fayre was kept in former tymes the twentie fyfth day of September". The lane across the road used to be known as "Dog Street". Shepherds and crofters would leave their dogs there while attending the market. A young officer was executed here in 1654 - he had killed a brother officer in a duel.
5. Eastward, about a hundred yards distance, is the Carnegie Free Library gifted to the Burgh in 1906 by Andrew Carnegie. The building now houses the library and Sutherland District Council Chambers. Across the road from the library you will notice the arch of an old bridge built in 1800. This bridge would have been used by the old stage-coaches en route to the stables which lie up School Hill.
6. East from the bridge stands the fine old house, "St Michael's". If you walk a few yards up School Hill you will see an arch in the stonework. This wall is, according to Hector Mackay a former town clerk of the Royal Burgh, part of "one of the Cathedral's manses", probably the Precentor's manse, whose farm, Achinchanter, lay to the north.
7. Return to Station Road and walk north to Station Square, the one-time site of Dornoch Light Railway Station. From here in former days (1902-1960) a train ran to the main line some seven and a half miles to the north at "The Mound".
8. Some fifty yards north of the old station waiting room, now a Pizza Take-Away, stands a massive stone marked "St Michael's Well". It is placed there by the Sutherland Estates factor, George Gunn, who lived at Rhives, near Golspie. The Reform Act of 1832 decreed that voters in the Royal Burgh had to live within seven miles of St Michael's Well. the actual well lay just beyond the accepted distance. Nothing daunted, Mr Gunn had the stone you are now looking at hewn, inscribed and erected here - near enough to Rhives to let Mr Gunn keep his vote!
9. If you cross the road and follow the fork leading up the hill, you will, just past the cedar bungalow, see a path on your left which leads through Earl's Cross Wood. This wood's fine stand of hardwoods and Scots Pines, and undergrowth of vigorous seedlings is itself a testament to Dornoch's light fertile soils and equable climate. It contains Sutherland's largest rookery. Follow the path through the wood till you reach a cottage. Here go through the little gate and bear right past the big house (former Earl's Cross Boys Hostel) to the main gates. On your left just outside the gates you will see a plaque marking Gallowshill, site of the last public hanging in Dornoch in 1738.
10. Return now to the gate beside the cottage. Go down the path to the right which skirts the fence round the hostel grounds till you come to a stone marking a supposed cholera victim's grave. This area was the site of a battle with the Danes, according to local tradition. Numerous skeletons were disinterred when the foundations of Earl's Cross house were being built.
11. Return to the main path. Turn right and continue to a path leading left. Follow it till you reach a sculptured stone known as the Earl's Cross. It marked the boundary between the lands of the Earl of Sutherland and those of the church.
12. From the Earl's Cross proceed to the nearby stile. Here you can observe the world famous Royal Dornoch Golf Course, of which links Sir Robert Gordon wrote in 1630: "About this toun (along the sea coast) ther are the fairest and largest links (or green fields) of any pairt of Scotland, fitt for achery, goffing, ryding and all other exercises; they do surpass the fields of Montrose or St. Andrews". We hope you agree!
13. From the stile, turn right and follow the path above the links as far as Grange Road. Turn left beyond the Royal Golf Hotel to the bowling green. by following the narrow road west of the bowling green and continuing in a roughly south-easterly direction you will come eventually to Carnaig Street. In the garden in front of the first house you will see a stone with the date 1722. This marks the spot where the last execution in Scotland for alleged witchcraft took place.
14. If you look north-east from the witch's stone and across the road, you will see the quarry pool. In it, and in the quarry behind the beach car park, are buried some World War One German guns. Local people did not appreciate the placing of these guns in the town square - a grim reminder of a war which had cost the lives of so many of Dornoch's sons. They took the guns and unceremoniously dumped them in the quarries.



(13) From the stile turn right and follow the path above the links to where it joins the public road, taking care to avoid any wayward golf balls. Continue past the Royal Golf Hotel on your left, to Kennedy Avenue. Proceed down Kennedy Avenue to the bowling green. By following the narrow road west of the bowling green and continuing in a roughly southeasterly direction keeping to the right of the 18th green and watching for golfers on the 18th tee who may be out of sight, you will come eventually to Carnaig Street. In the garden of the first house you will see a stone with the date 1722. This marks the spot where the last execution in Scotland for alleged witchcraft took place.

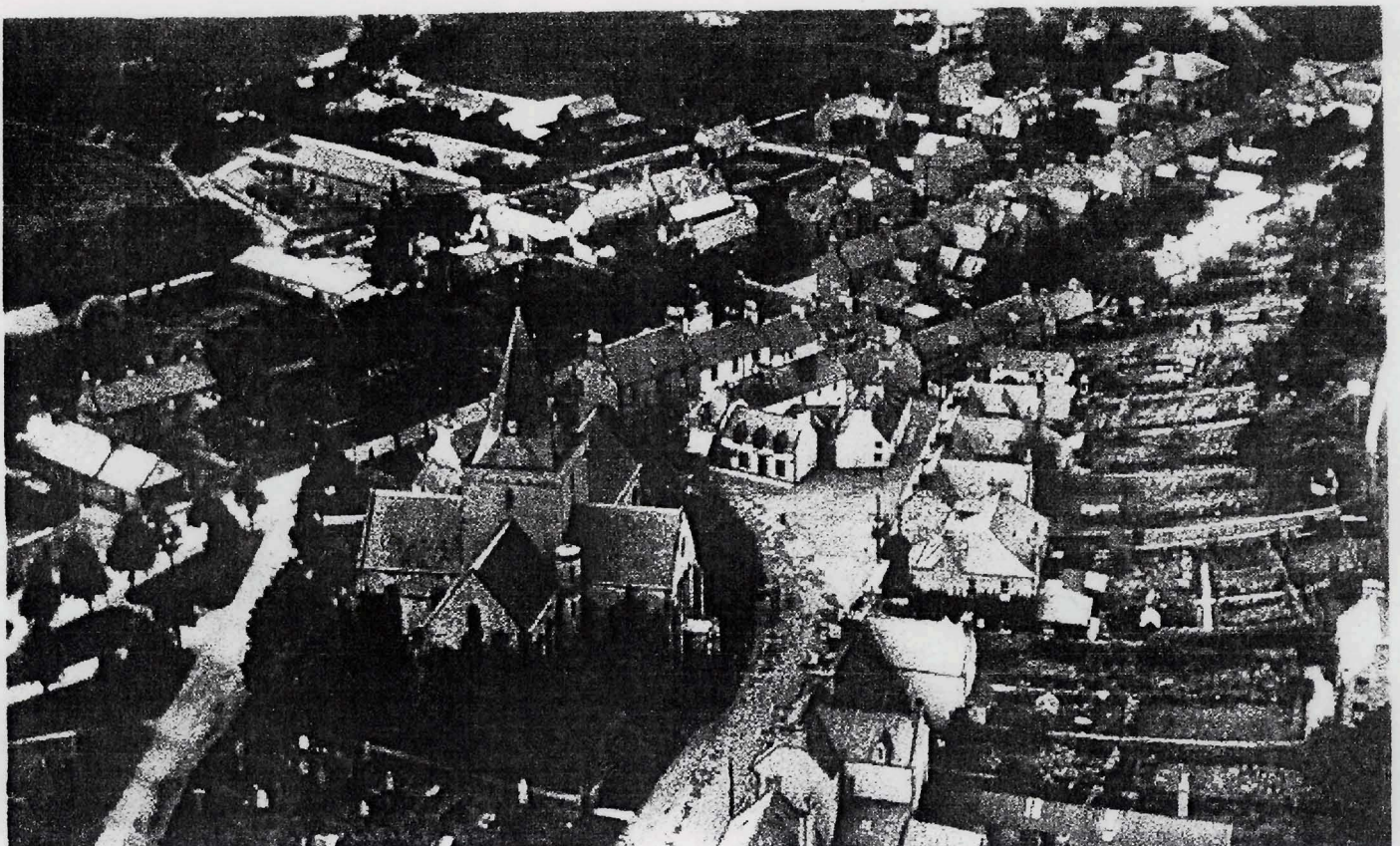
(14) Looking north-west from the stone you can see the witch's or quarry pool. In it were buried some World War One German guns. Local people did not appreciate the placing of these guns in the Town square as a grim reminder of a war which had cost the lives of so many of Dornoch's sons. They took the guns and unceremoniously dumped them in the quarry pool.

(15) Continue west along Carnaig street into Church Street and past the Free Church which was built shortly after the Disruption in 1843. The hall beside the church was formerly the Free Church School.

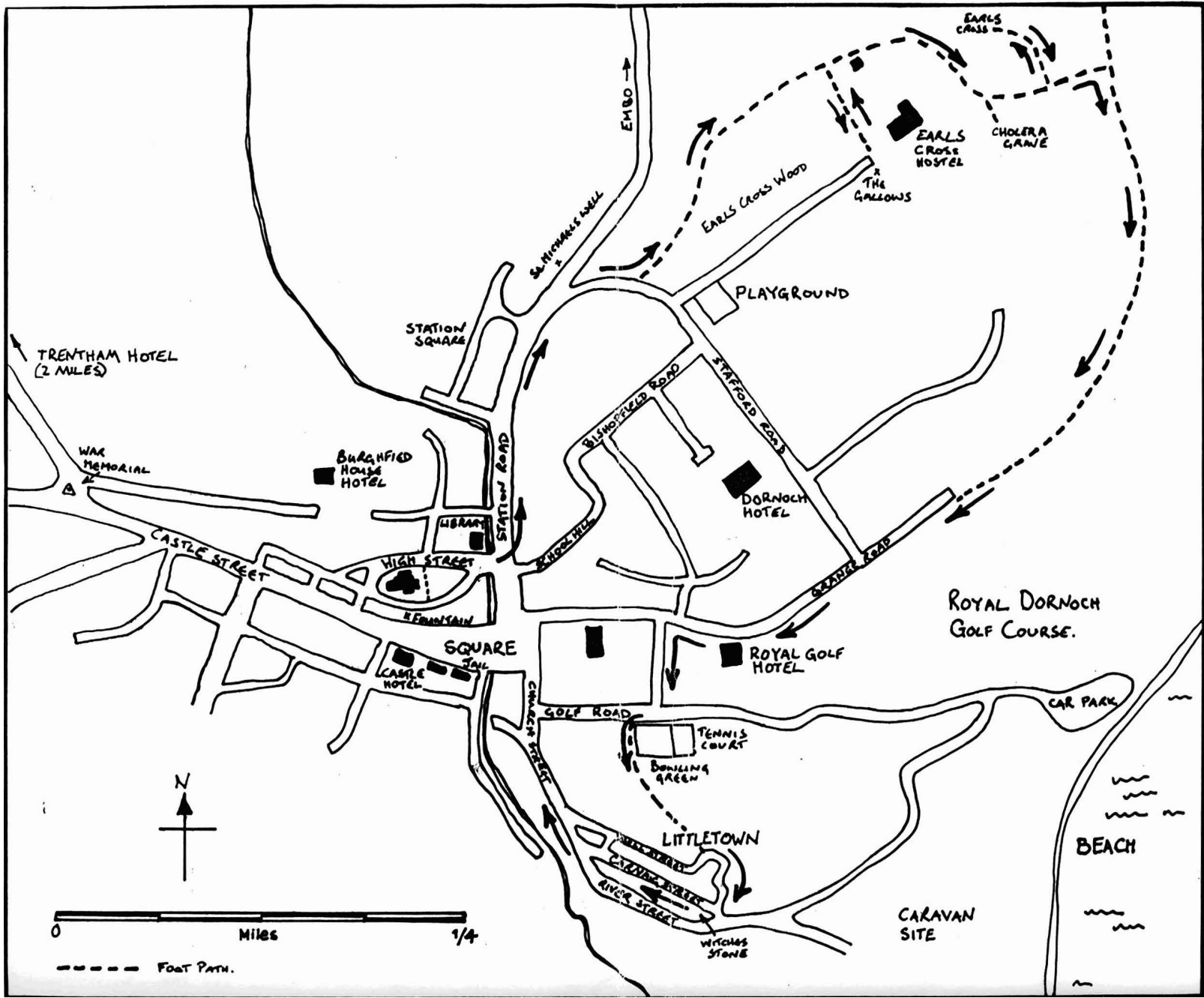
(16) A few steps takes us back into the Square, gracious and fitting centre for a Royal Burgh. To the east it is bounded by the new (1982) Divisional Police Headquarters. On the south as we move west are the old police station, the Town Jail, (now a commercial enterprise), the Court House which cost three thousand pounds to build in 1850, and finally Dornoch Castle, which is now a hotel. The "castle" was built in the 16th Century as the Bishop's Palace.

(17) Cross the road now to the green space between the castle and the cathedral. King Haakon of Norway planted a tree here in 1942 as an expression of the gratitude of the Norwegian forces for the hospitality they had received while stationed in Dornoch. One final feature is the fountain. Note the four coats of arms - on the south, that of the Royal Burgh, on the north, of the Sutherland family, on the west, of the Munros of Foulis, and on the east, of John Anderson of Aberdeen from whom the donor, Miss Georgina Anderson is probably descended.

We hope that you have enjoyed this journey through Dornoch's past.



# PREPARED BY: DORNOCH HERITAGE SOCIETY



THE SOCIETY HAS BEEN FORMED WITH THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPAL AIMS -

1. TO ENCOURAGE INTEREST IN THE PAST OF THE DORNOCH PARISH.

2. TO ENCOURAGE THE CONSERVATION OF THE DORNOCH HERITAGE.

3. TO PROMOTE LECTURES, HERITAGE NIGHTS AND FIELD TRIPS DEALING WITH OUR HIGHLAND HERITAGE.

4. TO SET UP, IN THE LONGER TERM, A HERITAGE CENTRE IN DORNOCH.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE SOCIETY CAN BE OBTAINED FROM :

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