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James K. Bell  
Rhian  
Dornoch.

The Parish of Dornoch

by

Rev. William MacLeod, J.P., M.A., H.C.F.

Situation.- The Parish of Dornoch in the County of Sutherland may be described as a peninsula, bounded on the South and East by the Dornoch Firth and on the North East by the Little Ferry and Loch Fleet. On the West and North West lie the Parishes of Creich and Rogart. The Parish lies slightly to the South of 59° and just to the west of 4°W. It is 15 miles long, 7 miles broad and in area 33,012 acres.

Name.- The name Dornoch cannot be derived with accuracy. In previous Statistical Accounts it is stated that "the Town and Parish of Dornoch derive their name from the Gaelic words Dorn - Eich, which signify a horse's foot or hoof". This derivation relies upon the tradition that at the battle of Embo fought about the middle of the 13th century by the local inhabitants under the leadership of Richard Murray, brother of Bishop Gilbert (1222-1245), and the Earl of Sutherland, against the Danes, the Earl singled out the Danish Commander for combat and dispatched the Commander with the leg of a horse he found on the battlefield. Heraldry, in the horse shoe in the Arms of the Royal Burgh of Dornoch, supports this tradition. The great obstacle to this derivation springs from History before which Heraldry and Tradition must give way. The name Dornoch is mentioned in a Mandate of King David I over 100 years before the battle of Embo. The name may well

have a worse origin. At any rate as recently as last summer the Town Clerk of Dornoch received a letter from a Scandinavian country and the post-mark showed that it was sent from a place called Dornach. In byegone days the name of this parish was spelt in that way.

Districts.— The parish is divided into various districts and has within it a Royal Burgh, the Burgh of Dornoch. Besides the Town of Dornoch the following districts have been listed for official purposes, namely:— (1) Embo, Hilton, and Ballachery, (2) Skibo, Overskibo, Clashmugach and Clashmore, (3) Cyderhall, Cuthill, Lonemore and Davochfin, (4) Achinchanter Achley, Proncynain, Proncy Croy, Evelix and Camore, (5) Coul, Skelbo, Fourpenny, Trentham and Poles, (6) Torboll, Cambusmore, Cambusavie, Balvraid, and Badininish, (7) nearquhar, Birichen, Achosnich and Achormlarie.

Population.— The population of this parish with its one town seven districts is 1,921. When it is stated that in 1831 the population was 3,380 it will be seen that a very serious depopulation has taken place here. Fifty years ago the population was 2,794 and never has the parish since statistics were first noted, fallen below 2,000 until 1951. This depletion applies to the landward part of the parish, for the population of the burgh has considerably increased since 1884. In 1881 the population of the burgh stood at

497, in 1951 the number was 725. The cause of this depletion is usually attributed to the difficulty of living in these remote parts and in particular the disadvantages arising from the lack of such amenities as adequate transport, water supplies, reasonable housing and the like. Any real appreciation of the cause however must take into account that in the intercensal period from 1931-1951 very great progress has been made in providing amenities in the burgh and parish especially with regard to transport, housing, electricity and that during that period the decrease in population continues never-the-less. Until 1902 Dornoch was without modern transport of any kind. Most of the local agricultural produce went to the markets by sea from the Little Ferry and much merchandise came into the parish in the same way. In 1902 the Dornoch light railway was opened and so the town and parish of Dornoch were connected with the main railway line from Wick to Inverness. Within the last 25 years however great strides have been made in the development of amenities. Upon this development some comment is necessary.

Development.- Between 1930 and 1940 in the town and parish great changes came in transport. Bus services to Inverness and to Wick began with the result that travellers no longer had to rely upon the one railway link to the Mound of Sutherland. The motor transport has now been developed so that goods as well as passengers travel by road, and Dornoch burgh is no

longer an isolated town but rather an important junction in the motor transport services. Indeed recently 'bus services have been established within the parish itself. Outlying districts which are not within reasonable distance of the main north and south roads are provided on certain days of the week with 'bus connection with the town of Dornoch. The districts mainly affected are Embo and Mirichen - Rearquhar. Such transport facilities are of course made possible by the great improvement in road conditions in recent years. These road improvements are the outcome of the local authority's determined efforts sustained by grants from the Ministry of Transport terms of the special provisions for the crofter counties by the Government. The lot of the people in the outl parts of the parish is greatly improved by these 'bus services. The isolation that made life so difficult in remote districts is banished, and opportunities for enjoying community life are created.

In 1933 an event of signal importance to the town and parish took place. In March of that year electricity was introduced and the days of the old system of lighting in the town of Dornoch were ended. About 10 years before, the civic authorities tried to interest the L.M.S. Railway in a project for the supply of electricity to the town, but their efforts were fruitless. In 1932 however the town council signed an agreement with the Ross-shire Electricity Company

whereby a supply of electricity would be given by means of a submarine cable across the Dornoch Firth at the Meikle Ferry. The town council was able to comply with the terms of the Agreement through the munificence of one of the citizens - Lord Rothermere. By a most generous gesture this worthy citizen gave the burgh of Dornoch advantages which only came to neighbouring parishes many years later. In the twenty years following the introduction of electricity into the burgh, great strides have been made in providing an adequate supply of electricity to the rest of the parish. Due mainly to the encouragement given by the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board, electricity has been supplied to Embo, Clashmore, Birichen, Hearquhar, Balvraid, Evelix and Camore and to most of the large farms in the area. This advance in the provision of modern facilities in which must be included the telephonic facilities furnished by the numerous kiosks throughout the parish, has had a ready response from the inhabitants. Now they look back upon the former days with little nostalgic sentiment but with great gratitude for the deliverance they have obtained.

Besides the advance in transport and electricity, there has been a decided step forward in housing and in the provision of water supplies. Among the drawbacks of the landward parts of the parish the lack of adequate water supply has been prominent in the past. The burgh of Dornoch

has had a fairly good supply for many years, and in the year 1926 and in the '30s considerable improvements were effected. Outside the burgh however only the village of Embo had a piped water supply - and this supply from Loch Laogh was very poor until about the year 1935. There is however no scarcity of water in the parish. The two large lochs to the west of the parish, Loch Laogh, and Loch Lannsaidh can according to competent technical opinion more than supply the whole parish with piped water. At present Loch Laogh supplies Embo, and Loch Lannsaidh the burgh of ~~B~~ornoch. Water supplies are in hand however for the whole landward area of the parish. The county council of Sutherland are, with the help of government grants given for rural water supplies, at present engaged in bringing a water supply to the agricultural community of Hilton (Embo). The work is under construction and in a few months time, it is confidently expected that this needy part of the parish will have a proper supply of water. The remainder of the parish is scheduled to be covered by 1956. It may be noted here however that the Dornoch Water Supply and the Embo Water Supply have provided supply to many houses, to farms, to schools and to the one hospital ~~xxx~~ in the parish at Cambusavie all outwith the bounds of both Dornoch and Embo. Dornoch Town Council has been particularly generous in this respect. Indeed without the co-operation of the town council, the

county council could not at this stage provide a water supply for the rural district of Hilton (Embo).

The local authorities, the town council and county council, have taken advantage of the various housing acts and housing schemes in the landward part of the parish and in the burgh have greatly improved the housing condition. The county council has completed schemes in Embo and in Camore and the town council has completed schemes in Bishopfield, Dornoch providing over 50 additional houses in the burgh. These modern houses in town and parish have proved an incentive to crofters and cottars to avail themselves of the improvement grants that are offered for the improvement of their dwellings.

There are 615 houses in the parish, 370 in the landward part and 245 in the burgh of Dornoch. There are very few shops in the landward area but in the town of Dornoch there are 30 shops of various types. All the hotels in the parish are in the burgh - six in all. Some of the hotels are open only in the summer months. Of the 615 houses in the parish more than the half are in very good condition and well appointed. There is a steady increase in the number of houses that can be classified as good. When the whole parish has a public water supply this increase will be accelerated. All the houses are substantially built and where water and drainage are available the proportion of good houses is correspondingly high, e.g. in the town of Dornoch 179 out of 245 houses are

classified by the authorities as good.

Occupations.- The occupation of the inhabitants of this parish is mainly agricultural or related to agriculture. The parish rises in gentle gradients from sea-level to the neights of Astle in the west and Rearquhar, Birichen and Cambusavie in the north west and north. The greater part of the parish forms a huge semi amphi-theatre around the town of Dornoch with the spire of the Dornoch Cathedral as its centre. In all the landward part, farms, holdings and crofts fill most of the area. There are good arable farms in this parish. There are the farms of Embo, Achinchanter, Coul, Skelbo, Cyderhall, Cuthill, Davochfin, Drumdivan, Achley, Cambusavie, Evelix, Proncy-nain, Pitgrudy in the east electoral division in the parish, and Milton, Overskibo, Proncy and Torboll in the west division. There are approximately 153 crofts and holdings and speaking generally 10 to 15 acres can be reckoned as the average size. The farming and crofting in the parish are of a high standard, and the introduction of the tractor and other motorised agricultural implements has given a decided impetus to good husbandry in these par

Embo District.- There is one district in the parish in which, although agriculture engages a considerable number, there is an emphasis on other employments. The district of Embo and Milton (Embo) differs in various respects from the



APPENDIX

(Burgh Statistics)

Population

(as at 27.10.53)

Children under 14 years	-	184
Persons 14-65 years	-	500
Persons over 65 years	-	<u>104</u>
		<u>788</u>

Occupations

Stationmaster	1	Post Office	1
Tailor	1	Bus Cleaner	1
Fish salesman	1	Caretaker	1
Slater	1	Bakers	3
* Butchers	12	Masons	7
Joiners	5	Plasterers	5
Plumbers	5	Electricians	5
Painters	6	Lorry Drivers	9
Labourers	7	Hotel Employees	21
Shopkeepers & Assistants	27	Policemen	6
Bus Drivers	8	Schoolteachers	16
Bus Conductors	5	Gardeners	11
Golf course employees	5	Typists	4
* Clerks of Works	4	Mechanics	6
* Planning Officer	1	Clerkesses	11
Vanmen	3	Farm Servants	9
Railway Workers	4	Water Engineer & Assistant	2 *
* Forestry Workers	2	Cabiner Makers	2
Postmen	4	Domestic Servants	13
* Asst. Sanitary Inspector	1	Woodmen	4
School Cleaners	3	Bookstall attendant	1
Clerks	4	Architect	1
Canteen Workers	3	Dental Mechanic	1
* Town Clerk	1	Sexton	1
Chief Constable	1	Appr. Sanitary Inspector *	1
Janitor	1	Shoemaker	1
Dairy	3	Dental Surgeons	2
Motor Hirers	2	Postmaster	1
Shepherd	1	Bank Employees	4
Slaughterman	1	Sheriff Clerk	1

Occupations (contd.)

Assistant Architect	1	haulage Contractor	1
P.I. instructor	1	Funeral Undertaker	1
Hairdressers	4	Ministers of religion	2
Medical Practitioners	2	roadman	1
Telephone Operators	3	App. Road Surveyor	1
Barman	1	Hostels-Indoor staffs	7
Bus Inspector	1	Chemist	1
County Clerk	X 1	Solicitors	3
Burgh Officer	X 1		

HOUSING STATISTICS

Total number of houses - 245.

3 storey	-	1st class condition	-	6
3 "	-	2nd " "	-	13
3 "	-	3rd " "	-	9
2 "	-	1st " "	-	106
2 "	-	2nd " "	-	50
2 "	-	3rd " "	-	37
1 "	-	1st " "	-	5
1 "	-	2nd " "	-	4
1 "	-	3rd " "	-	11
ruinous			-	4

Type and number of shops in the town:-

Newsagent	1	Tobacconist	1
Ironmonger	1	Dairy	1
Fish & Chip	1	Grocers	5
Drapers	6	Cafe & Tearooms	2
Cabinetmaker & Photographer	1	Boot & Shoe Shop	1
Electrical & Radio	3	Butchers	2
Bakers	2	Hairdresser	1
Chemist	1		

Hotels

Sutherland Arms Hotel Annexe	-	Open all year
Burghfield House Hotel	-	" " "
Eagle Hotel	-	" " "
Dornoch Hotel	-	Open for holiday season only
Castle Hotel	-	" " " " "
Royal Golf Hotel	-	" " " " "

Bus Services

Scottish Omnibus Service to Wick and Inverness daily. X

X Railway Services

British railways - Branch line to The Mound - two trains daily to connect with main line.