

THE LOCH LARO TO LOCH AN LAGAIN SETTLEMENTS

The land north and east of upper Evelix, or Allt Loch Laro as the river is called in its early course, was part of the Skibo estate which was bought by the enlightened landlord George Dempster in 1786. His Constitutions of Creich (see the adjoining article) gave positive encouragement to families to settle in this area. Settlement began about 1792 at such places as Puill Fraoich, Leadnamone, Leathad a Chailein (also called Clashatenach) and Ceann-loch-lagain. The settlers would have been cleared from the more fertile coastal fringes in the main, though the MacKays of Leathad a Chuailein, whose descendants still live at Reidhbreac, came all the way from Strathmore in the parish of Durness about 1810-12.

Entered in the Creich Parish Register for 22nd July 1810 is the fact that “Donald Ross, tenant at Pillfrich (sic) had by his wife Nelly Munro – a daughter, Katherine”. The same Register tells us that “John Ross of Garvary married Catherine Ross of Pilfruich (sic) on 30th January, 1849”. The 1841 census lists 32 people living at Pilfroich (sic!). By 1861 the census lists only four persons at Pilfrishe(sic!) including Helen Ross 83, farmer of eight acres. By 1884 the Sutherland Valuation Roll lists the “House and land – Filleidhfraoich” as being rented by “Heirs of Alexander Ross” for two guineas and, sadly by 1887 there is no mention of a house, and the grazings had reverted to Skibo estate and a much less benevolent landlord than George Dempster.