

DORNOCH, the 25th day of April, 1832.

*At a Meeting of Heritors, Burgesses, Merchants,
Farmers, and other Inhabitants in the Burgh and
Parish of Dornoch ;*

ANGUS FRASER, Esq., Preses ;

THE Meeting having taken into consideration the very serious consequences likely to accrue to this part of the country, from the proposed removal of the passage from the Meikle Ferry to Newtown Point—*Resolve* to petition the Justices of Peace against a measure so fraught with prejudice to their general interests ; and a petition having been now accordingly prepared, the Meeting adopt the same, and direct that it be lodged with the Clerk of the Peace, for the purpose of being laid before the County Meeting on the 30th instant. They further direct that the petition be printed, and copies thereof transmitted to the Most Noble the Marquis of Stafford, Lord Provost of the Burgh of Dornoch ; to James Loch, Esq. M.P. for the Burgh ; and to each of the Proprietors of the Ferry.

The Meeting further nominate the following Gentlemen as a Committee to attend to their interests in this matter, viz. :—Messrs A. Fraser, T. Gordon, Rev. A. Kennedy, W. S. Fraser, and R. S. Taylor.

(Signed) ANGUS FRASER, Preses.

*Unto the Honourable his Majesty's Justices of Peace
for the County of Sutherland.*

The Petition of the undersigned Heritors,
Burgesses, Farmers, and other Inhabitants
in the Burgh and Parish of Dornoch,

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

THAT the petitioners having learnt that it is in contemplation to change the place of passage across the Dornoch Firth, from the Meikle Ferry to Newtown Point, deem it right to call the serious and immediate attention of this County to a subject involving some of their best interests, with a view to the prevention of a measure, calculated in its results so strongly to entail both loss on the petitioners, and inconvenience to the public.

That while the petitioners admit the great discomfort occasioned by the want of Piers at the Meikle Ferry, they believe it will be conceded that there does not exist a safer place for effecting a passage at all seasons any where on the firth. It appears therefore to be in a *pecuniary* point of view alone, as regards the expence of erect-

ing Piers, that a preference seems to be given to Ardmore and Newtown over the present site; but even on this view, the idea is fallacious; for assuming it would cost less money *in the outset* to build Piers at the proposed new station, it must be very obvious that the requisite sums for making and maintaining in repair several miles of new roads of approach, would in a short time far exceed the difference of capital necessary for erecting suitable landing places at the present station, laying aside altogether the loss of time, and consequent extra expence to be incurred by the public in travelling by Ardmore and Newtown.

That the great and primary object in selecting a ferry station ought to be the accommodation of the public. Now the portion of the public most interested in this ferry, because contributing most to its support, and because of their daily communication with each other, are the petitioners and the Inhabitants of the Burgh of Tain, who have already taken measures similar to those now adopted by the petitioners, and for the same reasons. It is clear that the nearer the Burghs of Tain and Dornoch can be brought together, the greater advantage must accrue to their general interests. Therefore, if a ferry could be established at Ardnacalk, which is perfectly practicable, the more desirable would it be; but the removal to Newtown, while it almost doubles the distance betwixt the towns, entails an additional tax in the mere transit of goods alohe to an incredible extent. The petitioners depend in a great measure on Tain for her Banks, her Shops, her Seminaries, and on Ballintraid, Invergordon, and Cromarty, for their communications with Leith and London. Any measure therefore which will place these towns and harbours at a greater distance from the petitioners, must of consequence subject them in expenses of a most serious and uncalled for nature, while it cannot fail to be also productive of the worst consequences, in every other point of view, to this part of the country.

That, moreover, the Newtown Ferry would not yield to the Proprietors that income which they derive at the Meikle Ferry—on the contrary, it would be a question whether it might not entail much expence upon them, because the Petitioners, in conjunction with Tain, would require to establish some communication lower down the Firth.

That the Petitioners, under such circumstances, do sincerely trust that your Honors will not hastily adopt any plans or suggestions for removing this Ferry; at all events, without affording to the Petitioners an opportunity of being heard for their interest, which is paramount to that of every other in this County, because it affects them directly, while to every other district it is a mere secondary consideration. The Meikle Ferry is the Petitioners' chief Shipping Port for their grain, and it is the place where their Leith and London Goods are generally carried to, where they cross to Tain to transact their Bank and Shop business, &c.; but if sent about on a useless and involuntary pilgrimage, by Ospisdale and Fload, to Newtown, the trade betwixt both sides of the Firth will be completely destroyed, and the Petitioners thrown on the most uncertain resources for what at present they enjoy by means of the establishment at the Meikle Ferry.

That the Petitioners understand one reason for shifting the Ferry is said to be, that it will ensure more regularity and certainty in conveying the Mails; but this is most satisfactorily answered by the fact, that for the two years the Mails have been crossing at the Meikle Ferry, there has only been a detention of *one hour* in each of *two days* during the whole of this period; while, from the near approximation of the mountains to Ardmore, and the consequent liability of that part of the Firth to sudden squalls, there would have been in the same time many days that no boat could put off from either shore there. That, besides, it is the opinion of people who have served a long apprenticeship as boatmen at the Meikle Ferry, and also of experienced seamen, frequenting the Firth, that of all stations the safest and most suitable for a Ferry, the present one has the decided preference.

That another strong reason which must weigh with your Honors against the removal of the Ferry Station further up the Firth, is the injury which would thereby inevitably accrue to the present Mail Coach Establishment. It is not too much to predict that the result consequent on such a step might lead to the discontinuance of that establishment—for it is quite clear that no coach to Wick can ever with advantage succeed, unless it proceeds by Tain, and from thence *by the shortest route*.—The shortest route is undeniably by the Meikle Ferry, failing, Ardnacalk.

As having as reference to this subject, the Petitioners, in conclusion, beg to notice the erroneous supposition which they have reason to believe is entertained, that the substitution of a Horse Post for the coach, by the Hill Road from Alesness to Bonar and the Mound, would be a means of accelerating the Mails to Caithness. This Road is well known to be very steep, and in Winter blocked up, and dangerous; and it will be seen from the subjoined statement of distances, ascertained by actual measurement, that this route, even by the projected Airdeens Road, as compared with that across the Meikle Ferry, would, instead of lessening the distance, increase it by *six* miles. Even were the fact, however, the reverse of what it really is, it cannot be supposed that the rich and fertile district of Easter Ross, including the Burgh of Tain, and the most populous Parish in Sutherland, with its only Burgh, and County Town, should be entirely sacrificed for the sake of an hour's earlier delivery of the Wick letters; but when, instead of securing to Wick any advantage of the kind, such a hypothetical scheme would have an opposite tendency; the Petitioners do not entertain a doubt, but that if such were agitated, it would be met with the most strenuous opposition, not only by the Proprietors of Ross-shire, but by the Northern public at large.

That the Petitioners trust they have made out a case which must satisfy your Honors of the highly impolitic notions of removing the Ferry Station to Newtown.

May it therefore please your Honors to refuse your sanction to the removal of the Ferry Station from its present site higher up the Firth. And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

Distance from Alesness to the Fleet Mound by the level Coast Road.

Alesness to Invergordon	-	-	-	2 Miles.
Invergordon to Tain	-	-	-	11½
Tain to Meikle Ferry	-	-	-	4
Meikle Ferry to Dornoch	-	-	-	4½
Dornoch to the Mound	-	-	-	5

—27½

Distance from Alesness to the Mound by Bonar Bridge and Airdeens.

Alesness to Bonar Bridge	-	-	-	18½ Miles.
Bonar Bridge to Mound	-	-	-	—33½

Distance from Alesness to the Mound by Bonar Bridge and Clashmore.

Alesness to Bonar Bridge	-	-	-	18½ Miles.
Bonar Bridge to the Mound	-	-	-	—16

—34½