

DORNOCH HERITAGE SOCIETY

January 2008

A Prosperous New Year!

Ian Ross-Harper

One of the most faithful and energetic members of Dornoch Heritage Society has left us. Ian was a prime mover to establish Historylinks Museum. An appreciation by Peter Wild is printed below

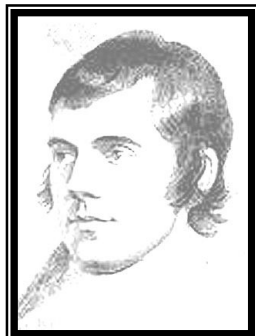
EVENTS

A TASTE OF BURNS

Please reserve Thursday January 17th at the Royal Dornoch Golf Club.

There will be music and recitations as usual. The programme is being arranged this year by Judi Sutherland and friends and any others who wish to entertain us.

The traditional fare, for which there is a charge of £5.60, will be haggis, neeps and tatties and a wee dram after the traditional Address. There'll be a chance for good crack afterwards with the bar open.



BOOK PLEASE on 821328
(Robin & Ullabritt Ashby) or by email
not later than TUESDAY 15TH

ANNUAL LUNCH

It was agreed at the AGM to have the lunch at Sutherland House. No date has been agreed yet.

AGM 6TH SEPTEMBER 2007

The meeting at Royal Dornoch Golf Club was very well attended and, after the business of the day was finished, everyone enjoyed a slide show of postcards from the collection of Basil Hellier.

The chairman, Ken Bromage, looked back on another successful year in his report on the activities of the Dornoch Heritage Society. He then resigned from the Committee and was thanked for all his efforts. John Barnes was elected to succeed him and George Munro was elected vice-chair. Other office-bearers remain the same. Steve Dallman, Gerard Fitzpatrick and Rick Bramley were elected as new Committee members.

Peter Wild then reported on the activities of Historylinks.

FUND-RAISING

The autumn Coffee Morning was held on 10 November in the West Church Hall. Despite the awful weather the event was well attended and raised over £415. A big thank-you to everyone who attended the event and everyone who helped at it. May 10 and November 8 are the dates for 2008.

CALLING ALL GARDENERS!!!

The next Coffee Morning is on May 10. Last year the plant stall was our best money-earner. However this year we need help with pricking out and growing on. We may also have a separate plant sale in the summer. We supply the seedlings and pots if you bring the plants on. Please contact Cliff Reddin (810012), Peter Wild or any member of the Committee.

MEMBERSHIP

Please note that we are sending out a reminder with this newsletter to those members who, according to our records, have not paid their dues for 2007/8. We look forward to these remittances.

FREE ENTRY TO HISTORYLINKS FOR ALL PAID UP MEMBERS

COMING EVENTS

January 17	Thu 7.30 pm	A Taste of Burns	
February 21	Thu 7.30 pm	Talk: <i>Janine Donald</i>	"Am Baile - The Gaelic Village"
March 20	Thu 7.30 pm	Talk: <i>Jennifer Maxwell</i>	"Victorian Strathpeffer"
April		Annual Lunch	Date to be decided



OPENING HOURS

10 AM TO 4PM

WINTER SEASON WEDS AND THUS

CONTACT DETAILS

TEL (01862) 811275

Email address: historylinks@dsl.pipex.com

Website: www.historylinks.org.uk

Archaeology

The Beach

In September 2007 the Dornoch Firth Archaeology Group field day was devoted to a survey of the anti-invasion defences of the Dornoch Firth,

A total of 100 posts were recorded, laid out in a regular pattern; it is believed they were placed there in the Second World War as a defence against enemy gliders. However information about their original design and purpose is very sketchy. If anybody has any personal recollection of the defences please let Historylinks know.

The Square

Prior to the erection of the new houses on the site of the old Sutherland Arms Hotel, a quick archaeological survey was made. The results can be seen at Historylinks at the moment. See separate sheet below for pictures etc.

Railway Film DVD set

The new film about the Dornoch Light Railway is now complete and has been boxed with the earlier railway reminiscences film and the short from 1951 'Proud Sutherland'. Extra items include aerial footage of the line of the route and a copy of Barry Turner's book on which the manuscript for the new film was based.

The DVD was launched at West Church Hall on 13 October in front on most of the 'actors' and crew. It has also been received well in the press and proved a popular gift.

Members can buy the DVD from Historylinks for £14.99.



Recent Acquisitions

include this photo



Murdo Macpherson cleaning Castle Street taken by Willie Morrison in December 1961, just after he had got hold of his first 35mm camera. He and his squad may have been cleaning up after some flooding.

Oral History Group

Anyone wishing to help make important recordings before it is too late please contact Peter Wild to learn how they can help.

Plans

SHOW SCOTLAND

Please note 3 and 4 May in your diary. There will be events in museums all across Scotland. Historylinks is applying to be part of that event. The aim is to attract new visitors. The activities will therefore have a strong element of entertainment with dressing up for the kids and quizzes for the grownups together with refreshments.

Of course those who are already members will be welcome, but please bring a friend who has yet to visit Historylinks. Keep an eye open for more information in the press.

Search facility

The Trust hopes to get new software in the near future to allow visitors to access the Museum's catalogue more easily. Further in the future, access online might be possible.

Extension

Finally it will have hardly escaped the notice of those of you who have visited Historylinks that the premises would benefit from an extension being built. The Trust has started to look into the matter.

The Committee 2007-8 are: Chairman: **John Barnes** Vice-Chairman: **George Munro**
Secretary & Treasurer: **Robin Ashby** Membership Secretary: **Ullabritt Ashby**
Ordinary members: **Jean Birkett, Rick Bramley, Steve Dallman, Gerard Fitzpatrick & Rena Oman**
Contact details: Robin Ashby, Secretary DHS, 01862 821328, kommevalla@supanet.com,
Postal address: Kommevalla, Edderton, IV19 1LQ



Before the construction of the new houses on the site of the old hotel which burnt down in 1941, an archaeological survey was carried out by John Wood and his team. John later gave a talk about their finds called 'Digging Dornoch' on 18 October and there is a display in Historylinks.

Andrew Macleod remembers the night of the fire. The fire brigade were using one small hose and taking water out of burn. He recalls seeing the piano in the upstairs lounge falling through the ceiling into the ground floor dining room. Perhaps most affected was owner Hector Ross standing in his pyjamas (which was all he had left) with tears rolling down his face at loss of his cairn terrier.

Illustrations (clockwise from top left):

Hotel card [note telephone number]: garage sign: melted bottle found during dig: bread basket marked SAH found in skip: bespoke crockery remains: embroidered table-cloth: the hotel before the fire. [All articles can be found at Historylinks]





Ian Ross-Harper – An appreciation.

On behalf of all those involved with the Dornoch Heritage Society and Historylinks this is a personal recollection of Ian in which I have tried to sum up the debt we owe him.

I suppose my first memory of Ian was in the East Sutherland Art Society when we used to meet at Golspie every week and attempt to paint. Ian was painting an osprey with a fish in its talons. He was very enthusiastic and, as I was to find out, this was always the case with his many interests.

We both lived in Dornoch and, I suppose amongst other things, he must have talked to me about the Dornoch Heritage Society. I went to the occasional lecture and did a few posters for them and then out of the blue at an AGM chairman Ian Ross- Harper proposed me to be a committee member. A few years on I was to take over from Ian as chairman.

Those in-between years working with Ian laid the framework for what was to become the Historylinks Museum. The regular committee meetings had been trying to formulate a plan to get a new building to house the collection that had been built up by Jimmy Bell and others. It was being stored in a Dornoch Academy classroom, which was not ideal, and with only temporary displays at an annual exhibition in Station Square and upstairs in the Library, (once shared with the Art Society) it had long been a dream to find something more permanent.

Things progressed, but it was slow and on many occasions we came away from our meetings feeling a bit overwhelmed and subdued by the enormity of our task. We had very little money but eventually with a degree of luck and help from unexpected quarters we had the ground, we had plans, we had our funding and work began. We continued to have our meetings which had very little to do with heritage but lots do with things like cash flow and VAT and construction.

It was a worrying time but through it all Ian continued with his undiminished enthusiasm for the project. He held us all together and kept our morale up. He was a Royal Navy man. He knew his objective and always aimed for quality. He was always there helping out at the many fund-raising events. He never failed to thank you for doing something however small. He was always a gentleman.

On many an occasion I would go round to his house to discuss some building issue and sooner or later after sharing a dram the conversation would drift into painting or some aspect of Dornoch for which he had a great passion. It was a small cosy room with a big roaring fire in the winter and I would always leave with a problem resolved and faith in the task ahead.

The museum was eventually finished and has evolved into the success it is today. We continue to sell the two books that he wrote and donated to the museum based on some of his lectures about the Cathedral and its ministers.

The museum continues to give great enjoyment to the many visitors from all over the world and great interest to all those involved in its development.

It was a privilege and a pleasure to have known and worked with Ian and the legacy that is Historylinks is a lasting tribute to him.

Peter Wild