

SKELBO CASTLE

In March Historic Scotland carried out emergency preservation work to Skelbo Castle. This involved removing loose rubble and filling certain gaps with special 'sandbags' and scaffolding (see picture). Further ties were added to the Manor House and the last few roof beams were removed.



This work had been discussed in November at a meeting hosted by DHS with Historic Scotland and local stakeholders. More vital work needs to be done within the next three years, but this is unlikely to be funded by Historic Scotland. Another partner needs to be found.

That partner will not be the incommunicable Russian owner, the Baron of Skelbo. Mr de Buar died last September in testate. His widow, his former longstanding wife and his children have applied to the courts in Russia for a settlement. Until the ruling is handed down, Skelbo Castle is without an owner.

AGM 2009

The 2009 DHS AGM was held on 1st October. Ullabrith Ashby stepped down from the Committee and was warmly thanked for her contributions.

The Committee for 2009/10 consists of:

Chairman: George Munro

Vice Chairman: Rick Bramley

Secretary: Robin Ashby

Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Gerard Fitzpatrick

Ordinary Members: Jean Birkett, Steve Dallman.

NEW LOGO



After using the Earl's Cross as the DHS logo and its accompanying name in Harrington font (see left) for about a decade, the Society asked for new logo designs at the last AGM. John Muir's entry was chosen and will be used in the Society's marketing from this summer on. So hang onto this issue of the newsletter which displays the old font. Who knows, it may become a collector's item.

BACK TO CHAMBERS

For a variety of reasons DHS will not be using the Royal Dornoch Golf Club as its venue for talks in the future. The Society would like to thank RDGC for letting us use its facilities over the last few years since we had to vacate the Royal Golf Hotel. Before that we were in the Council Chambers and that is where we are returning in the autumn. Several other venues were considered carefully by the Committee, but the Council Chamber, admittedly not a perfect venue, was deemed the best compromise.

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Some members will be receiving this newsletter by e-mail which means delivery does not cost DHS anything. But most members will receive hard copies sent through the post. For these the Society has to pay for printing, an envelope, a label and postage.

So if you have an e-mail address that DHS can use, please confirm this in a message so that the membership list can be updated. Write to Rick Bramley, who is taking over as membership secretary, at rick.bramley7@btopenworld.com.



Open 10 am to 4 pm

May to September open 7 days a week

FREE ADMISSION FOR MEMBERS

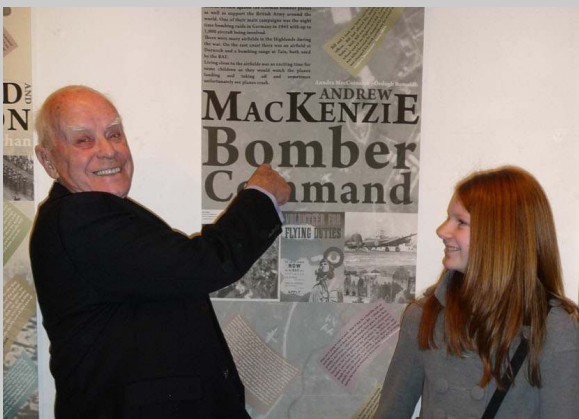


STONE CARVING

Historylinks has been lucky to secure the loan of a beautiful rare armorial 'Marriage' stone from Embo House. Dated 1677, it shows the initials of Sir Robert Gordon (2nd Baronet) and his wife Dame Jean Leslie, who lived in a former dwelling house, which was demolished, prior to present Embo House being built. As Sir Robert died in 1693, it is assumed that 1677 is the date of their marriage.

This Sir Robert is in a line of Gordons stretching from Adam, Dean of Caithness in 1500, to the 12th Baronet who died in 1871. The Gordons married into the Earldom of Sutherland and quickly became powerful landowners in the area, including Embo. Another Sir Robert Gordon (1st Baronet) was a famous historian who wrote a genealogical history of the Gordon family.

In order to have a permanent record of the stone on public display in the museum after the return of the original Historylinks has secured funding for a local stone mason to carve a replica. This will take place to the rear of the museum and will be open to the public to see a traditional craft in action from start to finish. There will be two sessions - the first being 20th, 21st and 22nd of June and the second on the 10th, 11th and 12th August. There is no extra charge for this. There will be a follow-up exhibition about this and many of the other unusual stones in the area later in the year.



RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Interviews and film of Andrew Mackenzie and Bill Grant for the 'Their Past Your Future' project. Photo of exhibition launch in Inverness Museum with Andrew Mackenzie (Bomber Command) and interviewer Rebecca Riddell. (left)

Copy of booklet for The Highland Railway Company Tours for 1896 showing the cost of a First Class single from London to the Mound - 163s 11d

An 18C Gentleman's or boy's small sword (below)



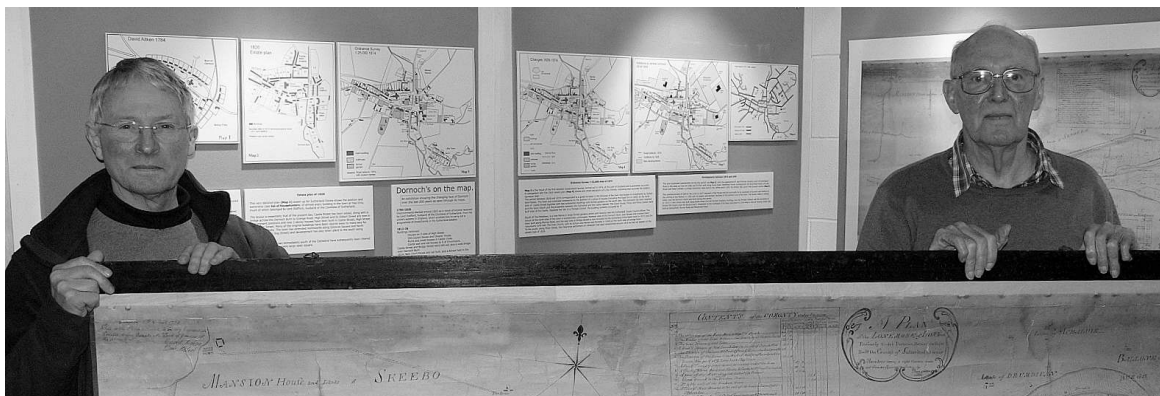
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THE CHANGING FACE OF DORNOCH HISTORY IN A SKIP

Historylinks is opening its summer season with a unique exhibition which traces the many changes that have taken place in the town's layout as shown through maps, from the late 18th century to the present day.

The earliest of the exhibition's displays is based on a map of Lonemore and Dornoch, drawn up by one David Aitken in 1784. Rescued from a skip in the 1970s by Dornoch man Charlie MacKay and donated to Historylinks Museum in 2002, this large map, over 6' wide, was hand painted on silk, backed by linen.



Graham Park has used this map, together with a more sophisticated 1826 Estate map and subsequent Ordnance Survey sources, to produce a number of displays which compare the streets and buildings of Dornoch at various points in time across more than two centuries. The location of the female school, the removal of the buildings in the square and the coming of Littleton and Bishopfield are just a few of the fascinating insights.

COMING EVENTS

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Event</i> | <i>Details</i> |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| June 20 - 22 | Stone-carving sessions at Historylinks | |
| Fri 9 July | Excursion to Dunbeath | <i>Details overleaf</i> |
| Sat 24 July | Sutherland Show | Volunteers welcome |
| August 10 - 12 | Stone-carving sessions at Historylinks | |
| September | AGM | Date to be decided |
| Sat 13 Nov | Coffee Morning in West Church Hall | |
| January | Our Burns event | Date to be decided |
| October - April | Our usual variety of talks - archaeology, prospecting, heraldry and railways are amongst the topics | <i>Dates and speakers to be confirmed</i> |
| also | A film show of Historylinks' films not normally shown | Date to be decided |

EXCURSION BOOKING FORM

How many people in your party? _____.

Do you want to be guided at the archaeological excavation? _____

Do you wish to take part all day or only in the morning? _____

Do you want to eat at the Bay Owl restaurant:

Soup and a main course? _____ Soup and sandwiches? _____

Do you want to lunch at the Laidhay tearoom? _____

Do you need seats to Dunbeath? _____

How many places can you offer in your car to Dunbeath? _____

Contact name: _____

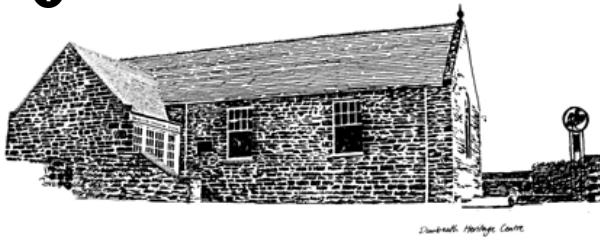
Preferred contact details: _____

If you are unable to participate in July would you want to attend a new trip in August? _____

EXCURSION TO DUNBEATH ON FRIDAY 9TH JULY

An excursion to Dunbeath (whole or half day) is planned for 9 July. Why a Friday? Two reasons. The Heritage Centre is closed on Saturdays. And we could be guided round an archaeological excavation by Professor Lloyd Laing who is in charge.

①



WHAT TO DO

Dunbeath Heritage Centre ① Much of the permanent display is given over to Dunbeath's native son, Neil Gunn. His novel *Highland River* is celebrated in the special floor ② and quotations inscribed in the windows ③. We have been promised an introduction to the Centre. Admission: £1:50 a head. More information at www.dunbeath-heritage.org.uk/heritage.htm.

②



③



Dunbeath Strath Heritage Trail ④ . It winds up the river of Neil Gunn's novel from the village. You can walk it as far as you like. An excavation is taking place at *Ballachly* about 500m along the trail and we can expect to be guided there. More Information at www.dunbeath-heritage.org.uk/trail.html

⑤



Laidhay Croft Museum ⑤ . A typical Caithness croft house with a collection of vernacular buildings and farming equipment which you may have seen next to the A9. Admission: £2 a head
More information at www.caithness.org/community/museums/laidhay/index.htm.

WHERE TO EAT

A group lunch can be arranged at the *Bay Owl* restaurant at the Inver Arms. We can have soup, a main course and coffee/tea for £12.50 a head. Sample menu: Steak pie, haddock etc. Alternatively, soup and sandwiches. *Laidhay* also has a tea-room with snacks, soup and sandwiches etc. Both establishments can be busy and we have been advised to book. Of course, you would be free to make your own food arrangements - perhaps you would like to explore all of the Strath Trail with a picnic lunch.

HOW TO GET THERE

As usual we expect car-sharing. So state how many you can take in your car or whether you wish a lift.

WHOLE DAY OR HALF DAY

That depends completely on what the participants prefer. Some may consider the longish drive and all the activities too much and wish to return before or after lunch. That's fine. The only group activity we need to agree on is the introduction at the heritage centre. The excavation guiding would be optional.

HOW TO BOOK PRELIMINARILY

By **25 June** fill in the booking form on page 3 and return it to Robin Ashby, Kommevalla, Edderton, IV19 1LQ. Or send the information asked for to robin@kommevalla.plus.com.

