

THE EAGLE HOTEL, CASTLE STREET, DORNOCH

The Eagle hotel is the oldest established hotel in Dornoch. William Munro a carpenter leased the land from the 2nd Duke of Sutherland in the late 1840s and built the Eagle Inn, as it was known, as a coaching house. William and his wife Ann lived in the Eagle with their 3 daughters and 3 stepchildren along with his apprentice carpenter. It must have been crowded as at that time the building comprised of a bar room and a dining room on the ground floor. The first floor probably had 5 rooms, the 2nd floor 3 rooms were probably occupied by the family. There would not have been much room for guests.

The Eagle is the clan symbol of the Munro Clan. We believe the Munros occupied the building in 1847 as during renovations in the 1990s a letter dated 1847 was found under the 2nd floor floorboards. The letter posted in Liverpool on 24 August 1853 arrived in Dornoch on 26th August two days later, something only achieved today with the use of aircraft - in those days the railway hadn't reached Inverness.

William Munro died in 1875 and the lease passed to his daughters, and his eldest daughter Williamina and her husband Alexander Gunn ran the Eagle until his death in 1898. It is probable that the Sutherland Estates at this stage agreed to sell the freehold of the Eagle to Williamina.

Williamina then sold the Eagle Inn to George Tewsley from Hampshire in the south of England and he and his wife Edith and 2 of their 3 sons Hector (aged 10) and Gordon (aged 9) moved to Dornoch. Within a few months of the move George died of a stroke, he was only 42.

Edith took over the business and ran the Hotel with the ongoing help of Gordon for nearly 40 years until her death in 1937 aged 87.

Gordon Tewsley inherited the business he knew so well. He became an extremely well known personality in Dornoch and many stories of his eccentric behaviour are still told in Dornoch. The Second World War (1939-1945) brought heavy restrictions on access to the whole of the Highlands. Most Hotels and large houses were requisitioned by the War Office. Dornoch became a base for Norwegian, Polish and Canadian Troops. The Eagle remained in private hands run by Gordon Tewsley. The war brought changes to Dornoch including flattening of areas of the Struie golf course to form an airfield used by the RAF as a transit base for aircraft coming from Canada, including Lancaster bombers which were built under licence in Canada. Food and drink prices were strictly controlled and rationing was imposed over the whole of Britain. Gordon Tewsley had a contract with Robert Younger of Edinburgh to supply beer which was probably supplied by rail as at this time Dornoch had a rail link to the Inverness/Wick line. Even the Brewery was requisitioned.

The Eagle at this time owned the land where Mackenzies Garage stands and also the plot on the other side of Castle St., where Alex's Chinese Takaway and the Dentists' surgery now stand. Gordon Tewsley sold the land at the back in 1946, and the land across the road in 1958

The 63 year era of the Tewsleys ended when Gordon died in 1961 aged 72. He had remained a bachelor. After his death the Police were called as Gordon had not banked his takings for years and money in the form of cash and cheques, in fact so much money was found that the police had to escort the Clydesdale Bank staff who used a wheelbarrow to take it to their branch over the road. Unfortunately Gordon had been too ill to sign his will so the future of the Eagle was decided

by a Roup in the Dornoch Council chamber on 12th October 1961.

The hotel and its contents were sold by auction to John and Caroline MacCulloch (formally of the Old Mill Inn, Spinningdale)

In 1965 the MacCullochs purchased a narrow strip of land to the left (west) of the hotel and constructed a small two-story extension which now forms part of the frontage of the hotel.

The hotel was purchased by James and Annie Seatter in 1966 who ran it successfully for 8 years.

In 1974 James Duncan Ward Allen (of Mansfield Hotel Keith Bamffshire) purchased the Eagle and in 1977 redeemed the annual Feuduty from Sutherland Estates.

Duncan Allen sold the Hotel to Donald W. Cameron and Lesley A. Cameron (of Edinburgh) in 1977. The Highland area was greatly affected by the North Sea Oil boom which was just getting underway and shortage of beds in area was a restraint. The Camerons added a flat roofed two-story extension to rear of the building. Workers were bussed daily from towns (including Dornoch to Nigg Oil Platform fabrication site) Beds were so short that 2 hotel ships were moored at Nigg. But these booms come and go and during one of the downturns the Eagle closed.

In 1984 David Henry Shepherd, his wife Beryl, sons Alister and Ian with their wives Belinda and Karen (of Willenhall West Midlands) purchase the hotel as a partnership along with the Dornoch Inn. Ian and Karen Shepherd renounced their interest in 1990. In 1993 David Shepherd and his wife retired, leaving Alister and Belinda to run the Eagle and the Dornoch Inn..

In January 1996 Paul Ian Hart and Irene Margaret Hart latterly of Hartlepool(using their Company Huntring Ltd.,) Purchased the Hotel and contents. The hotel was closed for the winter at the time, Paul and Irene used this period to revamp the inside of the hotel moving the kitchen from the First floor to the downstairs function room, Closing the public bar to make way for a dining room, moving the bar into the function room and making all 6 rooms en-suite. On the 3rd May 1996 Irene and Paul moved the direction of the hotel towards a food outlet. In the winter 96/97 Paul and Irene replaced the slate roof on the front of the building and replaced the flat roof at the rear of hotel with a fibreglass roof they also constructed an en-suite one bedroom flat for themselves on the second floor and also added 3 extra en suite guest rooms from the old kitchen and restaurant area to bring the total to 9.

In 1999 Paul and Irene purchased the Clydesdale Bank building across the road and started restoration and conversion into letting rooms. In 2000 the Bank House was completed and became part of the Eagle for letting purposes, the Harts also moved out of the Eagle into the Bank House, this created space in the Eagle which was converted into 2 further letting rooms, bringing the total to 11 plus 4 in the Bank House.

In 2006 Paul and Irene sold the Eagle including fixtures and fittings to Punch Taverns a large Hotel and Pub chain. Punch agreed to retain Anne Gunn (nee Rosie) who had been the Harts Manager for 9 years as their Tennant. The Harts sold the Hotel on the 3rd May 10 years to the day from opening it