



Spinningdale Wood is a great place to go for a walk; from the top there is spectacular view of the length of the Dornoch Firth and the hills to the west.



Looking down on Dun Creich



Tain & District Museum and Clan Ross Centre is a charity recognised in Scotland SC 017848

Editor's Letter

A short car journey across the Dornoch Firth bridge takes you into Sutherlandshire, turn left at Clashmore and take the A949 towards Bonar Bridge and 4.5 miles along that road you come to Spinningdale Wood and a delightful walk. The view from the top takes in the length of the Firth and is perfect for viewing a site relevant to Clan Ross history; Dun Creich is said to have been built by Paul MacTyre whose daughter, Katherine, married Walter Ross, 3rd Laird of Balnagown. Their son, Hugh, succeeded his father in 1412.

Details about the site can be found at:

<http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/13808/details/dun+creich/>

The volunteers at Tain & District Museum and Clan Ross Centre have been busy welcoming visitors from across the globe as well as making preparations for the Clan Ross Gathering on 12th- 14th August. If that were not enough work commenced on the badly needed upgrade of our website, the results of which can be seen at <http://www.tainmuseum.org.uk/>. There is still a lot of work to do but we have plenty of ideas for developing the site and information to be shared so keep checking back as we add new articles, photographs, documents and artefacts.

This edition of the Tain & District Museum and Clan Ross Centre newsletter has great articles from three contributors; Lorna Cruickshank does a power of work to support museums in the Highlands and she tells us about a project which has brought various organisations together to promote this sector. Andrew Ross is a proud member of Clan Ross and will be making a presentation to the Clan at the Gathering this summer. He whets our appetite with a short summary. Finally, Ingegerd Ekstrand tells us about her ancestor William Ross and why so many Finns will be making their way to Tain this August.

If you haven't bought your tickets for the Clan Ross Gathering on 12th – 14th August yet then you can do so online at:

<http://www.tainmuseum.org.uk/tickets.asp>

Morag Ross Bremner

Tain Through Time
Tain & District Museum and Clan Ross Centre
Tower Street,
Tain,
IV19 1DY
www.tainmuseum.org.uk

E: info@tainmuseum.org.uk
P: 01862894089

Highland and Moray Homecoming 2014 Heritage Project



I have been privileged to be involved in the development of the current Highland and Moray Homecoming Heritage Partnership Project. I have worked for museums in Highland for almost 20 years and as chair of the partnership I am keen that this project highlights all the excellent museums we have in the area – their collections and events. I am also delighted to contribute to the Clan Ross Newsletter as a member of the Clan through my grandfather Andrew Vass from Shandwick, near Tain.

This is a special project for 2014, to coincide with the Year of Homecoming Scotland 2014. To make it happen the Highland Council is working in partnership with High Life Highland, the Highland Museums Forum, Moray Heritage Connections, and the National Trust for Scotland.

The members of the partnership care for a huge proportion of the total museums and archive collections of Highland and Moray, and some of the most significant heritage sites in the two areas. The project has received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Museums Galleries Scotland, the Highland Council's Culture Fund, the National Trust for Scotland and the Highland Museums Forum. The total budget is £124,000 approx which includes part-funding of High Life Highland and NTS events taking place as part of the project.

The project's title is taken from the poem by Robert Burns which includes the lines "My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go". It sums up our overall aim which is to explore, interpret and celebrate the intangible heritage of the Highlands and Moray - and to make links between this intangible culture and the historic sites and collections of objects and archival materials cared for by the various partners in our project. The focus of the project is to draw on the sites and collections of the partners to examine why it is that people living in the Highlands and Moray today - not to mention many people who live elsewhere - often have strong feelings of belonging here and a strong emotional attachment to the area. The project has been developed to be innovative both in its theme and in its delivery. We want to use new approaches and new technology to make heritage attractive and relevant to as wide an audience as possible.



Lorna and colleagues at the project launch

The specific objectives of the project are to:

- develop a co-ordinated programme of at least 80 high-quality events during Homecoming 2014 for local communities and visitors.
- encourage collaboration between national and regional institutions and the independent heritage sector in the Highland and Moray areas.
- pilot joint promotion through marketing activities based on visitor research, and assess the effectiveness of this through monitoring activities
- allow the partnership to pilot and review the use of new technology (an app) and promotion via social networks. We have produced a new "heritage trail" app, a Facebook page and Twitter account. There will also be a sub-project to record and upload people's thoughts on their attachment to the Highland and Moray area, in the form of a rhyming couplet and photographs.
- increase visitor numbers to individual museums and heritage sites.
- the project is also helping its members acquire new skills by providing training and networking opportunities

In the longer term we hope that the project will form the basis for an ongoing regional heritage partnership in Highland and Moray. Our app is now available for download from the Apple store and more information is available from our website www.hearthisland.org.



A Clan Ross Gathering is an experience not to be missed



Our backs straightened up remarkably when our group of 67 Ross descendants waving the Finnish white and blue flag was met by applause, while we were marching through the old streets of Tain during the Clan Ross Gathering in August 2009. Close to 400 years had passed since our ancestor William Ross, born around 1598, left Scotland, went to Sweden with his father George and finally ended up in Finland around 1627. There are two theories why William had to leave his home country - either because he and his father were so much in debt that they were put to the horn, or because they were opposed to the King. William Ross' second son, also called William/Wilhelm and born around 1635, was a man of many trades. He was a merchant, also the mayor of a small town in Ostrobothnia on the west coast of Finland and finally Member of Parliament in Stockholm (capital of the then united Sweden and Finland). William Ross Junior's granddaughter Margareta married a Lutheran minister by the name of Benedictus Granroth – and the lot of us marching through the streets of Tain, were all his descendants and members of the Granroth Association. Most of us were living in Finland, but some in Canada, Norway and Sweden. In collecting material for a Granroth book, published in 2010 and covering more than 1200 pages, I found many had emigrated – mostly to the United States, Canada, Sweden, Australia and South Africa; a typical Ross feature, as so many had to leave Scotland for different reasons over the years.

Strangely enough we felt immediately at home in Tain. The magnificent Scottish landscape was as different as could be from the plains of Ostrobothnia where William Ross settled, but we were met with such a warmth and hospitality by our Scottish hostesses and hosts that we felt like long lost friends – or, indeed, family members. The Gaelic language and songs that we were taught during the clan meeting was, though, a real challenge, but fortunately we got along in English, both with our new Scottish relatives and Rosses from all over the world taking part in the first Clan Ross Gathering in recent times.

Our group came to Tain some days before the Gathering. As the Granroth Rosses made a short visit already in 2007, including a visit to the Ross Clan Centre in Tain, we were fortunate enough to meet Mrs Morag Ross Bremner. Now she and the volunteers at the museum had planned an exciting programme for us. This gave us a good picture of the Highlands and the Scots of yesterday, as well as today.

At the Gathering itself we tried to give something in return. The youngest members of our group gave a performance of Lucia, a tradition among the Swedish-speaking Finns – as most of us were. But our hastily put together choir also sang in Finnish under the imposing vaults of the 14th century church of St Duthus.



We had the honour to meet the Chief of the Ross Clan, David Ross and his family. The clan tradition was something we had only read about in books before, and to see and live it gave us all a kick. The ceilidh with its superb programme brought us more knowledge of Scottish traditions, as did the Highland Games. All kind of sport rates high among us Finns, so we enjoyed seeing some new, typically Scottish sports.

So we are coming back in August, expecting to enjoy something out of the ordinary: A Clan Ross Gathering – something not to be missed!

See you in Tain!
Ingegerd Ekstrand,

William Ross'
descendant in the 11th generation
President of the Granroth Association
(all members are Ross descendants)

Photograph courtesy of Ross Orndorff and Anita Nykanen

Donald Ross: critic of the Highland Clearances, hero of the poor

by Dr Andrew Ross

'I feel immensely proud to be related to this incredible man and privileged to be able to add missing chapters to the history of the Highland Clearances and the Ross Clan.'

Donald Ross was the most outspoken critic of the Highland Clearances in the 1850s, though very little was known and has been written about him. His most famous publication was the 'Massacre of the Rosses' in which he described a notoriously shameful event in Scottish history when a group of women were brutally beaten by policemen prior to their eviction. A recent breakthrough in my family history research revealed he was the brother of my great, great, great grandfather. A subsequent thorough search in library and archive catalogues has revealed a wealth of pamphlets, newspaper articles and other documents relating to him, many of which have been overlooked by historians.

Donald Ross was born in 1813 and grew up on the Skibo Castle Estate at a time when the Sutherland Clearances were taking place on the neighbouring estate. By 1839 he had taken over as the miller at Clashmore after his father's death and married a woman much older than him. Four years later Donald's mother, and presumably other members of her family, was evicted from the mill, and incredibly she took the estate owners to court. Unfortunately she lost and her family then dispersed. Donald moved to Glasgow and was remarkable for defending the poor in court, who were living in the most deplorable conditions. It was at this time that he became an activist and prolific writer of pamphlets and letters to newspapers. He helped girls on Skye gain employment at a cotton mill in Manchester, but one of the girls was badly treated and died. An uproar by the girl's parents and local vicar resulted in the girls being returned to Skye, an episode referred to as the 'Weeping in the Isles'. Donald has until now been portrayed in a bad light over this, however he published a defence at the time and was vindicated. He raised a huge amount of money to help his fellow Highlanders suffering from famine and destitution, and supplied clothes, food and even fishing boats to them. He set up The Highland Benevolent and Industrial Society but this was exposed as not being a registered society. Not to be deterred he was then instrumental in setting up The Glasgow Celtic Society, supported by patronage from several dukes, earls and other eminent men.



Andrew and Emma Ross pictured at the 2009 Gathering

Unfortunately it all went horribly wrong when Donald fabricated a fund-raising letter and this was exposed in the press. This resulted in him resigning from the Society and he and his family emigrating to Nova Scotia, where he became a merchant and book-keeper.

Dr Ross will be making his presentation to Clan Ross on Wednesday 13th August. Tickets are available from our online shop <http://www.tainmuseum.org.uk/tickets.asp>



Tain & District Museum and Clan Ross Centre

Tower Street, Tain, IV19 1DY