



Cullen, Deskford & Portknockie Heritage Group

**Minutes of Meeting held in the Hall Church, Cullen,
Monday, 4 January 2016, Beginning at 2pm**

1. Business and Information B Wood, President.

The President welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished all a happy New Year.

2 Brenda introduced Bill Davidson who proceeded to impress upon us the social and economic impact of both the introduction of the railway system to Cullen and other coastal towns.

2.1 The Impact of Railways on Cullen and other coastal towns.

Railway transport and communication was the Victorian equivalent of the internet. This, said Bill, was the significance of the introduction of the railway system to the coastal towns of Aberdeenshire and Moray (Banffshire).

The battle royal between GNSR and Highland line was resurrected when Black Isle representatives, weary of Highland procrastination, approached the GNSR to provide a line into the north. A great engineering feat was considered to span from Fort George to Chanonry Point. Whilst this was well within the engineering capacity of the time it was not financially viable and became one of many lost routes.

The reasons for this rail route bore similarities to the Tochieneal to Buckie line, access to rich sources of fish and agriculture.

The impact of the railway connection to, otherwise remote, towns and villages was great. There was a shift of labour away from food production to construction. Produce, of all kinds could be sent away for sale and goods could be brought in. Therefore, there was a decline in locally sourced items, such as beer and whisky and an increase in trade. Building standards were raised as the availability of sawn timber and stone from sawmills and quarries became available. There is a significant difference in buildings before and after 1885 due to the availability of manufactured building materials.

Merchants were keen to acquire the latest materials and resources from the cities of the south. Prices from suppliers were as delivered to the nearest railway station, therefore it was advantageous to have a station as locally as possible (web access point?).

The railways provided a stability of economic growth that lasted for two generations (unheard of now). Goods coming in (Wall's ice cream and material for Cullen Drapers) allowed local shops to flourish. Exports of farm produce and fish brought the prosperity to support this expansion. Road transport increased in the 1960's and this contributed to a decline in rail usage. The increased mobility resulted in a decline in local businesses, which continues to this day.

The railway which brought prosperity to Cullen and other towns on the coastal route was closed in 1968 after a life of 83 years. After this the commerce of the coastal towns had no apparent future only a past.

2.2 Brenda thanked Bill for his interesting and thought provoking talk and suggested that he might return to give us the next instalment. A view that was greeted with enthusiasm and applause.

2.3 Steve showed a selection of photographs of local people donated by Mary Duncan. These were mainly of the Findlay family and many of the photos had names, which is useful. There was a lot of identification and much humour culminating in the identification of an original water closet!

2.4 John Rennie displayed and explained a series of photographs taken at the stables in Grant St (behind the Bank of Scotland). This building dates from 1822 and it is remarkable in that it is mostly in its original condition. There are some unusual architectural features for a Scottish barn and it is built in part with bricks and tiles from Tochieneal, all of which make the barn an architectural heritage gem.

Brenda then closed the meeting

The next meeting is on Monday 1 February at 2.00pm when Jim Mackay will entertain and educate us about World War I

A Maloney 6/01/16