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CROMARTY

Official Guide

CROMARTY

IN THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND

The Official Guide

to this ancient Scottish Burgh
and ideal Holiday Resort
amid unrivalled scenery

Issued by authority of the
CROMARTY TOWN COUNCIL

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The magnificent viewpoint of Cromarty Hill overlooks Cromarty Town and Firth

The photograph above and that on the cover are by J. B. White, Ltd., Dundee

CROMARTY

IF you look at a map of the north of Scotland you will observe that the town of Cromarty is perched at the end of a peninsula jutting into the Moray Firth, one side of it washed by the Cromarty Firth and the other side by the Inverness Firth. The town itself is situated near the mouth of the Cromarty Firth under the shelter of the South Sutor, one of the massive headlands which guard the entrance to the magnificent land-locked harbour known to the ancient map-maker as *Portus Salutis*. By virtue of its geographical situation, its extremely low rainfall, and its modern water and drainage systems, Cromarty is one of the most bracing and health-giving holiday resorts in Scotland, an ideal spot set amid unrivalled scenery.

Cromarty, which at the 1931 census had 837 inhabitants in the burgh, has had quite a romantic history. To the antiquary the Grey Cairn at Glen Urquhart and the hut circles which are dotted over the moor, will appeal as relics of the days of the Vikings. In historic times, however, the place was an important element in the military and administrative machine of the Scottish Kings. It was a Royal Burgh from the twelfth century until 1685. In 1179 William the Lion erected a castle of the motte-and-bailey type at Dunscaith, Nigg. The revenues of the Ferry, which were attached to the castle, appear in the Royal Accounts and the Ferry to the present day is known as "the King's Ferry." At a later date a similar castle was erected on the motehill, where Cromarty House now stands, and there is an explicit statement about it in a charter by James III in 1470. The stone castle belonging to Sir Thomas Urquhart, the famous translator of *Rabelais*, was built on the same site in 1507 and 1631, and stood there until 1772. Other important documents referring to Cromarty are those of Edward I, in 1305, Robert Bruce in 1316, and David II in 1364. Bruce was in Cromarty in 1309 and again in 1323.

The Ferry was on the main "road" to the north. When King James IV journeyed to the shrine of St. Duthus at Tain, his route was from Aberdeen to Cromarty by the coast. Accompanied by his picturesque retinue he rode along the high road of the Black Isle into Cromarty by the path now skirting the Gaelic churchyard known as "The

Paye," down the Big Vennel to the beach, thence across the Ferry. In March, 1497, he stayed overnight with the priest at Cromarty, and it is on record that the three boats required for himself and his party cost His Majesty half a guinea. On 13th November, 1501, he again crossed the Ferry when he paid the ferryman eight shillings, returning from Tain by the same route. In 1592, the Earl of Bothwell also crossed the Ferry on his flight to the far north. Later, in February, 1746, Lord Loudon's force crossed the ferry on their way to Sutherland, chased by Prince Charlie's Jacobites.

The existing town of Cromarty is really the third of that name. The site of the first is now covered by the sea, and the " Kirk-stanes " below the Fishertown mark the spot where a church and churchyard once stood. The site of the second is also partly covered by the sea, but a part remains at " The Causeway," where the Town Cross (now in front of the Town Hall) used to stand, and which is the road to St. Regulus' Churchyard and the Hill. The present town is divided into two parts, one of them is the Fishertown which, like the rest of the town, is industrially only a shadow of its former self. During the nineteenth century and until comparatively recent years a flourishing fishing industry was carried on, but the change from sailing-boats to steam-boats and motor-boats, the flight of the herring, the destruction of the inshore fishing by the depredations of trawlers, and other subsidiary causes have reduced the industry almost to vanishing point and with it the number of intrepid fishermen. *Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.* On the land the sole industry is farming on a large scale. In the burgh itself on the west, the derelict hemp factory is now utilized as stores, etc., and there is also the old brewery on the east.

How can the tourist get to this old-world burgh which is such a strange mixture of the old with the new ? Luckily no ugly railway line scars its fair face. The visitor from the south can reach it from Invergordon by a comfortable motor-boat, and the half-hour sail across the Firth is an enjoyable experience ; or he can cross Kessock Ferry at Inverness and be conveyed by motor-bus to his destination ; or take a motor-bus from Dingwall and be driven along the other side of the peninsula. The motorist can choose his own route, and the roads are excellent.

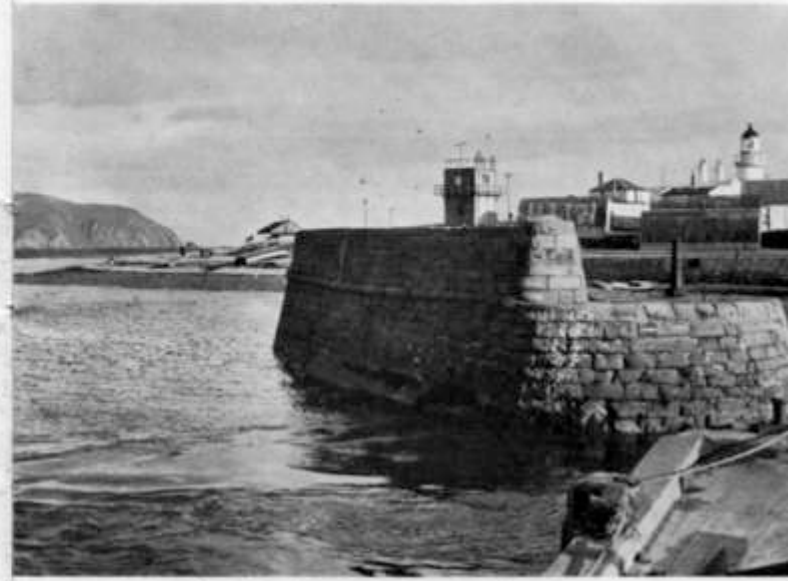


Photo: J. B. White, Ltd., Dundee

The Harbour, Cromarty, with the North Sutor beyond, one of two rocky headlands guarding the entrance to Cromarty Firth

The rocky McFarquhar's Bed—
a favourite picnicking spot

FOR THE SPORTS' LOVER —

Players, Spectators and Children

FOR the young and energetic there is abundant scope for recreation. Boating and fishing may be indulged in to one's heart's content, and angling from the pier-head for "cuddies" may be varied with trolling for mackerel or ling. Anyone desirous of fishing for cod and other deep-sea fish can have his wish gratified.

The inside of the harbour affords a natural pond, excellent for swimming. A water-chute is provided and there are fine stretches of sand for the children. The annual Regatta with Swimming Gala, held in August, is a highly popular event.

The blaise tennis courts and the bowling green are at the east end of the burgh and visitors are made welcome. Tournaments and matches continue throughout the summer. Football is played on the Recreation Park beside the Victoria Hall, and there are facilities also for quoiting and other games.

There is an 18-hole golf course at Nigg, reached in five minutes by a motor-ferry. It is a "natural" course among the sand-dunes and one of the best in Scotland. The glorious sands on the beach provide the children with endless enjoyment.

MEMORABLE WALKS

Walks to the top of THE SUTOR, to the site of the Gallows, a relic of feudal times, to THE LOOKOUT, and to MCFARQUHAR'S BED will be found memorable. The roads and paths are excellent and the panorama of sea and land on the magnificent scale. At McFarquhar's Bed—a favourite picnicking spot—is a salmon fishing station. The MARCUS CAVE is close by and easily accessible. Rock-climbing is dangerous and should on no account be indulged in.

About two miles from the town is EATHIE BURN, a picturesque gorge with three waterfalls. Hugh Miller relates that he talked with an old woman who, when a little girl, had seen myriads of fairies dancing on the edge of the burn. The story of "The Passing of the Fairies" is charmingly told by Miller in his *Old Red Sandstone*.

(*For more detailed descriptions of these walks see page* 10.)

FOR THE WALKER —

Hills, Caves, Waterfalls and Sea

THE HILL OF CROMARTY affords pleasant excursions, and the view from any point is both extensive and picturesque. Those having time to visit the different parts of the Hill will do well to take the road along the shore at first. Leaving the town from the east, the path skirts the shore, past the old shooting range, and goes along the foot of the Hill among the rocks as far as the DROPPING CAVE, on which hangs one of Miller's tales in *Scenes and Legends*. On the way from the Dropping Cave to the higher path, the FIDDLER'S WELL may be seen. Tradition assigns some remarkable cures to this well, which form the basis of another of Miller's legends.

The Hill, however, is more commonly approached by the main road turning to the right on leaving the town. It is a curious fact that this road, though now outside the town, was once its main street, and is still known as the Causer'en', from the fact that the main street was cobbled. Towards the top of the road we come to the old burying ground of St. Regulus (see page 7). The spot is a very pretty one and is known to have inspired some of Hugh Miller's finest writing. "One night," says he, "towards the close of last autumn, I visited the old chapel of St. Regulus. The moon, nearly at full, was riding high overhead in a troubled sky, pouring its light by fits and starts as the clouds passed, on the grey ruins, and the mossy tilt-like hillocks, which had been raised ages before over the beds of the sleepers. The deep, dark shadows of the tombs seemed stamped upon the sward, forming, as one might imagine, a kind of general epitaph on the dead, but inscribed like the hand-writing on the wall, in the characters of a strange tongue. A low breeze was creeping through the long withered grass at my feet; a shower of yellow leaves came rustling, from time to time, from an old gnarled elm that shot out its branches over the burying ground, and after twinkling for a few seconds in their descent, silently took up their places among the rest of the departed; the rush of the stream sounded hoarse and mournful from the bottom of the ravine, like a voice from the depths of the sepulchre; there was a low monotonous

Photos:
J. B. White, Ltd.
Dundee

The Town from the Harbour—
and Cromarty Lighthouse

murmur, the mingled utterances of a thousand sounds of earth, air and water, each one inaudible in itself; and at intervals the deep hollow roar of waves came echoing from the caves of the distant promontory. The dead of a thousand years are sleeping at our feet; the poor peasant serf of ten centuries ago, whom the neighbouring baron could have hung up at his cottage door, with the intelligent mechanic of yesterday, who took so deep an interest in the emancipation of the negroes. What strange stories of the past, what striking illustrations of the destiny and nature of man, how important a chronicle of the progress of society, would this solitary spot present us with, were it not that like the mysterious volume in the Apocalypse, no man can open the book." Close to the churchyard gate, on the outside, may be seen the grave of Sandy Wood (see page 7).

On the left a path will be found entering the wood. This leads to different parts of the Hill, and must be followed to the end of the wood, where the visitor can take his choice of three roads. The lower of the three leads to Charlie's Seat; the middle one to the Lookout, and the highest to the top of the Hill.

From THE LOOKOUT one of the most extensive and picturesque views in Scotland may be had. If the weather be fine no fewer than seven counties can be seen, *viz.*, Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, Inverness, Nairn, Banff and Elgin, as well as the Beauly, Moray, Cromarty, and Dornoch Firths. The walk may be continued round the Hill, till the road leading back to the Mains Farm is reached; this can be followed back to the town.

Another pleasant walk in this direction leaves the town by the same route, passing the Mains Farm directly across until the shore is reached on the Moray Firth side. When the highest point of the road—a short distance above the farm steading—is reached, the view is very fine. Underneath on one hand we have the winding Cromarty Firth; on the other the Inverness Firth; and northward in the distance the Dornoch Firth. The hill on the left bears the name of the GALLOW HILL. The site of the gallows can still be traced. Following the road, and passing through a splendid avenue of beech trees, we then descend the cliff by the footpath, and reach the salmon fisher's hut. The large detached rock on the beach is known as MCFARQUHAR'S BED from the fact that a notorious smuggler

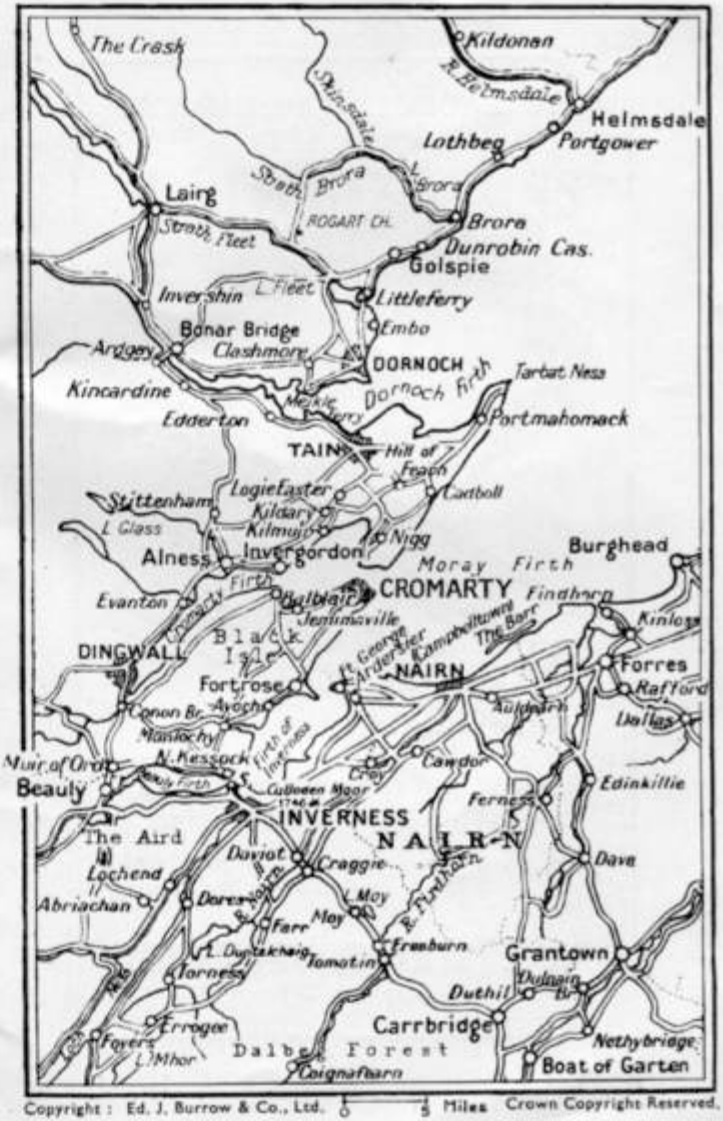
of that name used to make it his watch-tower. Readers of *My Schools and Schoolmasters* will be familiar with the DOOCOT CAVES, but these are accessible only by boat. None of these rambles on the Hill will extend to more than two or three miles.

EATHIE BURN will be found well worth visiting, both for its fine scenery and for its literary associations. Geologists will be aware that it was here that Miller made discoveries and described in *Old Red Sandstone*. The burn is about three miles distant, and to reach it the road leading from the top of the town must be taken. Following the road for a mile, we leave the smithy on our right, and cross over to Navity Farm, which is close to the burn. Miller, describing the place, says: "A deeply secluded dell of exquisite though savage beauty; one of those hidden recesses of nature, in which she gratefully reserves the choicest of her sweets for the more zealous of her admirers."

The easiest approach to the burn is by following the main road leaving Navity on the left till the site of a cottage in the corner of a field adjoining the burn is reached. The edge of the burn should be followed from here. About half-way down, a path will be found descending into the burn and leading to the principal waterfall. The more agile of foot may follow the course of the stream as far as the sea.

Some two or three hundred yards westwards from the mouth of Eathie Burn and on the cliffs facing the sea, is situated St. Bennet's Well (see page 7).

On the ridge of the Black Isle, from the Hill of Cromarty westward, there are various remains of early battlefields. The principal of these is about four miles distant, on the road passing over the ridge of the Black Isle, and is marked by a large cairn some twenty or thirty feet high, known as the GREY CAIRN. The right road from the town is taken for some three miles, when the Davidston Smithy is reached. Turning to the right and proceeding for another mile we reach the wood in which the cairn is situated.



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