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## The settlements of the Beaully-Wick coast and the historiography of the Moray

### Firth

#### Introduction

In an 1820 account, Edinburgh-born lawyer and estate commissioner for the first duke of Sutherland, James Loch (1780–1855), outlined his efforts to induce the swelling population of the coastal village of Helmsdale to emulate the ‘South-frith [firth] men’.<sup>1</sup> This article will leave to one side the vast ‘*what* did he mean?’ question this poses in terms of the contested policy in question, crucial though that is to northern Scottish and Highland history. Instead, it will focus on *who* the group he was referring to were and explore the implications of this as regards the history and historiography of a several-hundred mile length of littoral. Loch wished clearly to suggest that the population of east Sutherland should invest in larger boats, in imitation of those fishermen, many of greater financial means, living thirty miles or so across the water to the south-east. It was an impractical policy and one that was beginning to transform the lives, often traumatically, of many Highlanders. However, there might be considered to be one important truth within his statement, its indication of a polarisation - a gulf that was ethnic, cultural, psychological as well as physical - between the population around the southern edge of the firth - the ‘South-frith men’ - and the people then resident or displaced along what was still, for him, its disappointingly ‘unimproved’ other landward section, the northerly stretch of coastline. To many, Loch’s identification of a political, economic and social imbalance between these two landed edges of northern mainland Scotland will be seen as a convincing illustration of disequilibrium as a defining feature of that shared history. When the region’s past is posited as a ‘Lowland Moray’ defined against a ‘Highland north’, disparity can seem to be the overriding feature. Certainly, one could point to many ‘sites

of memory' relating to the early modern and modern periods which would seem to support Loch's premise.<sup>2</sup> Many of these suggest that the bond linking the southern fringe of the firth, most especially the low-lying, coastal Laich of Moray centred around Elgin to Brodie, with the coastal rim to the north, has been one whereby a wealthier 'core' wielded power over a subservient, impoverished 'march' or 'semi-periphery' (assuming the north-western and western Highlands and Islands to comprise the outer edges of that periphery). Looking at physical monuments alone, the statue to Loch's employer, the first duke of Sutherland, gazes towards Moray (the location from where the dukedom's most notorious factor and lawyer, Patrick Sellar, had arrived) from the top of Ben Bhraggie, by Golspie. Other south-east or east-facing coastal structures along the northerly firth edge which suggest this polarity, might include the emigrants' monument further north in Helmsdale or the abandoned, wind-battered cliff-top township at Badbea, just a few miles onwards from there. Furthermore, when we shift our historical perspective backwards and sideways, additional physical evidence crops up to suggest this inequality in the relationship. The Fort George garrison points out boldly from a southern firth promontory and suggests, again, a control from there of what was considered to be a less tamed coastline and hinterland further north and west. All of this appears to position Moray and the Lowlands as the carrier of 'progressive' forces within the firth region, an approach which presumes an unstoppable advance of influences from the south and south-east of the region to its other edge and, from there, ever further into the Gàidhealtachd. The concept of a 'Lowland Moray' providing a 'core' and a 'semi-peripheral' Beaulieu-Wick coastline the 'fringe', has resonance also when considering how we might compare wider developments in 'coastal history', to use Isaac Land's term, or, following Michael Pearson, 'littoral history'.<sup>3</sup> Given the evidence presented above, the region seems to fit with John Gillis's points regarding the coast not only as a 'place of dreams' but also of 'nightmares'.<sup>4</sup>

Certainly, we need to recognise the specific traumas of the immediate post-Culloden period down to the nineteenth century in the Highlands, and their economic and social implications for the subsequent history of the people living around the Moray Firth.<sup>5</sup> However, other evidence suggests that the two adjacent edges have each exerted influence on each other across long periods and share a mixture of maritime traits and other elements brought from upland, inland regions.<sup>6</sup> In this manner, the Beaully-Wick section of the firth has a multi-layered identity that is not exclusively that of a satellite and, as a consequence of which, there is value in viewing its relationship with the firth and with Moray not just in terms of the encroachment of modern political structures and centralisation from the south and south-east. Instead, reference can be made to longer term cultural and environmental aspects, as has characterised the Firth of Forth according to a pioneering recent account.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, this article will suggest a more complex balance, by taking its perspective, not from modern-day Moray, but from that of the settlements along this more northerly stretch of coastline. The geographical definition of the firth to be used will be relatively uncontroversial, comprising the roughly triangular area of sea and coastal fringe linking the River Beaully at its south-westernmost point, with, to the east, Fraserburgh, and, to the north, Wick.<sup>8</sup> Important to consider, however, will be that the shorter of the two landward stretches is the Beaully-Fraserburgh one, sub-divided into western and eastern sections, most obviously, by the River Spey. The longer, if today less well-populated edge, is the deeply indented Beaully-Wick one. The Kyle of Sutherland (An Caol Catach) splits that between the Black Isle and Easter Ross, on one side (the 'firthlands', encapsulated by the Beaully, Cromarty and Dornoch Firths, all taken here to be distinctive sub-regions) and East Sutherland and Caithness, on the other.<sup>9</sup>

This article, the work of an historian, will suggest the value of an interdisciplinary approach extending beyond history into other disciplines, indicating how ideas from geology,

geography, archaeology, architecture and linguistics would be useful in providing channels of enquiry. It will begin with a survey of the relatively modest historiography of the firth. This part of the article will argue, following Franklin R. Ankersmit, that it is due to a process of historical ‘forgetting’ and disassociation that, although tourist authorities, environmental agencies, business people, journalists, cartographers and geologists use the term ‘Moray Firth’ relatively frequently, with some notable exceptions, historians have, until recently, balked at it, leaving the past of the settlements of the northerly coastal fringe, in particular, poorly represented often in Highland histories and largely ignored in histories of the Lowlands.<sup>10</sup> The second part of the article will reverse the coin, comprising an interpretation of the history of the Moray Firth that will reject a focus on encroachment from the south and south-east as the sole defining factor. Instead, it will explore human agency within the littoral but starting from reference points drawing on the history of seven settlements from around the Beaulie-Wick edge: Pictish Portmahomack, Norse Dingwall, the medieval burgh and pilgrimage site of Tain, early modern Dornoch, nineteenth-century Wick, and, eventually, returning to Easter Ross to comment briefly on the industrial and post-industrial histories of Invergordon and Nigg. Inevitably, there will be gaps, both chronologically and thematically. Latheron, Lybster, Dunbeath, Brora, Golspie, Alness, Evanton, Cromarty (well-served by David Alston’s 2006 book), Rosemarkie, Avoch and Beaulie will receive scant coverage here, to name just a few of the larger coastal settlements, while a focus on concentrations of population may seem to minimise the rural and clanship-oriented quality to life around parts of the northern firth fringe as well as the story of the inland straths often just a few miles away.<sup>11</sup> We should remember too the guiding words of Fernand Braudel who insisted that ‘an historical study centred on a stretch of water has all the charms but undoubtedly all the dangers of a new departure’.<sup>12</sup> However, there is still scope in an article-length exploration to assess how peoples in

the location that has been outlined were ‘in some way made different by virtue of their maritime surroundings’, and forged connections with each other, in part, due to living on adjacent coastlines, albeit recognising that they looked also inland, these being complementary approaches for understanding societies, like Scotland’s, where these two types of influences ‘keep coming back at each other just as do waves.’<sup>13</sup> The prevalence of brochs, Pictish remains, castles, royal burghs and industrial ‘growth points’ along the Inverness-shire, Ross-shire, Sutherland and Caithness section of the littoral is powerful in indicating distinctive ties to both sea and land during the past several millennia. These interacted with and influenced, rather than simply mirrored or opposed, the society and culture of the Laich. Consequently, this reappraisal of the posited ‘north firth’ area will, it must be hoped, indicate new possibilities in terms of historical writing on the Moray Firth more broadly.

### **Historiography**

Although it will be shown to be entirely feasible, in the twenty-first century, to separate a body of history-writing on the ‘Moray Firth’ from that on ‘Moray’, it is essential to recognise that the latter has, at many points, encompassed a region extending further westwards and northwards than today and has had an association, since the later medieval period, with political power, and largely, but not exclusively, a ‘Lowland’ identity. The etymology of the term ‘Moray’ connects with the meaning ‘sea dwellers’, while scholars such as Omand and Seller have agreed that it has always been a ‘debatable land’, its definition encompassing, at various times, that of a province, diocese, synod or the much smaller, modern administrative district of that name of which Elgin is the largest population centre.<sup>14</sup> Each of these versions has been ‘different in historical significance or spatial extent’ and has, in more recent centuries, mixed Lowland and Highland characteristics albeit with

the former always being given precedence.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the imagining and re-imagining of the Moray Firth in terms of a dominant, Lowland element dates back, at least, to the growth of a medieval origin myth, which posits the de Moravia family, the ‘Moravii, or Murrayes, driven from Germany by the Romans’, as having sought shelter in Scotland, then been given possession of the land between the mouths of the River Spey and Beaully and, according to some interpretations, a mission to extend their greater ‘Murrayland’ westwards and northwards from there.<sup>16</sup> John of Fordun’s fourteenth-century identification of Scotland’s firths as ‘incomparable places of refuge from the perilous tempests of the ocean’ indicates the imprint which narrow bodies of sea could have even for those more inclined, due to the Scottish kingdom of the time’s geography, to focus on landward, ‘Lowland’ communities and power centres.<sup>17</sup> Moray’s maritime connection, while not key to its history across all periods, sometimes led Moravians not only to the North Sea, but north-westwards. For example, Hector Boece wrote, as translated in Bellenden’s version:

Merchand with Cathnes lyes Sutherland, ane profitable cuntre baith for store and cornis. On the yond side of it lyes Murray, sum time namit Vararis. Bot it hes nocht the samin marchis now as it had than; for all the boundis betwix Spay and Nes to the Ireland seis, wer namit Murray: bot now it lyes sum time beyond the watter of Spay and Kissok, quhil it cum to the Ireland seis.<sup>18</sup>

Some fifty-one years after, Bishop Leslie noted that ‘A part of Rosse is Moray land and lyes upon the cost side’<sup>19</sup> Certainly, prior to the eighteenth century, ‘greater Moray’ had wider boundaries than today that could extend as far as Ross.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, in whatever geographical definition,

and even when associated with a maritime world, ‘Moray’ has generally been assumed to have the Laich as its geographical and ethnic hub.

As regards the firth, its very name as well as its wider topographical limits have varied over the centuries too, even if its definition has, without exception, given more weight than that of ‘Moray’ has, in terms of etymology, to sections of the coastline and sea north of Inverness. Certainly, the history of the settlements of this part of the coast have often appeared more enigmatic to all those, since late medieval times, operating in terms of the Scottish binary opposition of ‘Lowland’ and ‘Highland’. The earliest surviving mentions of the firth pre-date the notion of a divide of that sort, however, and come from Ptolemy’s reference to the ‘*Varar æstuarium*’ (‘estuary of Varar [Farrar]’), from the second century and, thereafter, mentions in the Old Norse of the *Orkneyinga Saga* to the region as comprising the ‘Breiðafjörðr’ (‘broad firth’).<sup>21</sup> In Gaelic, the firth has been defined variously as Linne Mhoireibh and Caolas Mhoireibh, or, much less commonly, Geòb Mhoireibh or An Cuan Moireach, all of which refer to Moray, have slightly different topographical connotations but indicate, at least, a narrow body of saline water and a varying extent of adjacent coastline around it. For some early modern and even nineteenth century commentators, this section of the North Sea, albeit deemed significant in a geographical sense, appeared rather devoid of a human element, the firth being, to Sir Robert Gordon, simply ‘a great arme of the sea’, for Daniel Defoe, ‘an open gulph or bay in the sea’ and, for Cromarty’s most famous son, Hugh Miller (1800-56), an ‘immense tract of sea’.<sup>22</sup> This selection of perspectives on its shape and scope took influence from cartography, regarding which, the early modern era saw an expansion in surveys of the north, these mapping the area into existence for an emerging, and increasingly curious foreign audience. The influence of Mercator (1595) - by means of various early seventeenth century copies and interpretations of his cartography - influenced the first

detailed surveys of the region (Timothy Pont, in the 1580s and 1590s) and reached a large national and international public, especially with the publication of Joannis Blaeu's *Atlas Novus* (1654). To convey that seventeenth century northern Scottish cartography was a purely external enterprise would be too simplistic. As Withers has shown, pioneers such as Sir Robert Sibbald relied on Robert Gordon of Straloch, Martin Martin and other informants who were able and willing to operate between Lowland and Highland.<sup>23</sup> Ptolemy's 'Varar' captivated occasional writers while the northern sections and their not always subservient relations with lands to the south did not go unnoticed, even if early modern histories and other accounts of Scotland fail to give us more than a basic outline of the history of the firth region, especially when describing its western and northern sections. Thomas Tucker, in the 1650s, followed Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty (1611-60) in commenting on Cromarty as being 'a little towne in a bottome, with one of the delicatest harbours reputed in all Europe' and Tain as 'a small towne lyeing neere the mouth of a river of that name.'<sup>24</sup> Tucker was dismissive of their pre-Cromwellian commercial importance while east Sutherland had 'onely Dun Robin, and some two small creekes more' leaving it to 'Thursoe and Weeke, two small ports' to send out 'good store of beefe, hides, and tallowe'.<sup>25</sup> Defoe had plenty to say, early in the following century, regarding the wildlife of what he called the 'North Land' beyond Inverness, admiring, like Tucker, the potential of Cromarty, 'noted for being the finest harbour', but, similarly, considering it a port otherwise 'left intirely useless in the world.'<sup>26</sup> For Defoe, geographers were:

almost as much at a loss in the description of this north part of Scotland, as the Romans were to conquer it; and they are oblig'd to fill it up with hills and mountains, as they do the inner parts of Africa, with lyons and

elephants, for want of knowing what else to place there. Yet this country is not of such difficult access, as to be pass'd undescrib'd, as if it were impenetrable; here being on the coast Dornoch a Royal Burgh, situate upon the sea, opposite to that which they call Tarbat Bay, eminent for the prodigious quantity of herrings taken, or, which rather might be taken here in their season. There is a castle here belonging also to the Earl of Sutherland, and it was the seat of a bishop; but the cathedral, which is but mean, is now otherwise employ'd. All the country beyond this river, and the Loch flowing into it, is call'd Caithness, and extends to the northermost land in Scotland. Some people tell us they have both lead, copper, and iron in this part of Scotland, and I am very much inclin'd to believe it: but it seems reserv'd for a future, and more industrious age to search into; which, if it should happen to appear, especially the iron, they would no more have occasion to say, that nature furnish'd them with so much timber, and woods of such vast extent to no purpose, seeing it may be all little enough to supply the forges for working up the iron stone, and improving that useful product: And should a time come when these hidden treasures of the earth should be discover'd and improv'd, this part of Scotland may no longer be call'd poor, for such a production would soon change the face of things, bring wealth and people, and commerce to it; fill their harbours full of ships, their towns full of people; and, by consuming the provisions, bring the soil to be cultivated, its fish cur'd, and its cattle consum'd at home, and so a visible prosperity would shew itself among them.<sup>27</sup>

That curiosity as regards what was considered to be an under-exploitation of the region's coastal resources lessens from the mid-eighteenth century. Bishop Pococke, in his tours, speculated on the unifying, social elements brought about by the region's littoral features.<sup>28</sup> Regarding Thomas Pennant though, who arrived shortly afterwards, he mentioned the firth only when contemplating its views.<sup>29</sup> Even Bishop Robert Forbes, in his *Episcopal Visitations* of 1762 and 1770, spends more time describing the scenery of the firth than its people, when travelling 'for nine Scots miles along the Frith of Inverness, a Branch of the Murray-Frith, and for most part in sight of it, being one of the finest Prospects in the World, pretty Bays opening here and there'.<sup>30</sup> Munloch, Fortrose, Hilton of Cadboll, Dornoch and Golspie had pleasing vistas for him too, if little, it seems, of a connected history through their location on the firth edge.<sup>31</sup>

However, the firth, still clearly defined as including most if not all of the settlements of the Beaulieu-Wick coastline, continued, in fits and starts, to emerge from topographical, touristic, commercial and social obscurity, as an historiographical space. A focus on the sea-going peoples of the early medieval firthlands is apparent in the work of Banff-born Episcopalian minister, Charles Cordiner, who was able to correct Pennant in his 1780 publication, *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland, in a Series of Letters to Thomas Pennant*, on the importance of Easter Ross for Pictish 'obelisks'. As Cordiner put it:

You [Pennant] have by no means neglected observations on this species of monuments; but I beg leave to rectify your mistake, in confining them to the south of the firth of Moray; for you may be assured, they are far more numerous to the north.<sup>32</sup>

Of wider impact than Cordiner's work on the 'remarkable ruins' linking the firth's two adjacent edges, and also more recent bonds, were the writings of Lachlan Shaw, Rothiemurchus-born scholar and, from 1734, Church of Scotland minister in Elgin, who finished a groundbreaking book in 1775. Shaw's *History of the Province of Moray*, posthumously republished in a revised form in 1827 and 1882, rejected the Moravian origin legend yet focused, as the title suggests, on the Speymouth to Beaulieu region.<sup>33</sup> Although the northern part of the firth area still appeared, for him, as a location largely lacking a history, he did make a connection between its coastline and its past, having much to say on the nature and etymology of the term:

It is generally allowed, that, by the *Æstuarium Vararis* is meant, the Frith of Moray; and hence some have conjectured, that Moray was anciently called Varar. But it is of the Frith, not of the country, that Ptolemy speaketh, and Friths were denominated from the rivers that emptied into them.<sup>34</sup>

Isaac Forsyth, an Elgin bookseller, instigator of the first circulating library in Moray and co-founder of Morayshire Farmers' Club, published an account of Moray twenty-three years later, in 1798.<sup>35</sup> For him, as for Shaw, Moray's geographical boundaries should be 'ascertained by ecclesiastical jurisdiction' although he, similarly, viewed the firth as bearing its own character and influence on and from the peoples who lived and worked around it. Geology was prominent in Forsyth's thinking in this regard, at least compared to its relative absence in Shaw's work:

The low lands, or champaign, of Moray may be conceived as a long-extended valley, bounded by the Frith upon the north, and a winding range of mountains along its southern fide, which bears a striking uniformity to the mountains on the other side of the Frith; the conical hill of Cullen landing against the Morven (called the Pap of Caithness), and the valley opened by the Spey answering to that of the river of Helmsdale; with other corresponding elevations and depressions.<sup>36</sup>

One wonders about the influence of William Millar of Sutherland Coal Works on Forsyth's comparison. Millar helped him convey his own version of the region in cartographic form, thereby providing 'the most accurate map of the province of Moray ever offered to public notice' as well as a view of Elgin Cathedral which comprised, Forsyth claimed, 'the most correct and striking yet exhibited of that magnificent ruin'.<sup>37</sup> There is also the 'firthland' connection with the Forsyth family of Cromarty to consider: later in life, Isaac Forsyth acted as host to Hugh Miller and his wife Lydia on their honeymoon in Elgin.<sup>38</sup> Moving forward a century, the legally-trained scholar, Charles Rampini's *A History of Moray and Nairn* from 1897 recognised ever more clearly the role of the firth in shaping the history of the people who populated its edges and sought, in one statement, to integrate that with the history of the Laich. Rampini argued that 'the Moray Firth - the sea here referred to - is the key to its [Moray's] history', and 'no territory could have a more appropriate designation'.<sup>39</sup>

From then until the 1980s, the firth is almost completely absent as a focus in the work of historians of Moray or of the north of Scotland more broadly. Potential torchbearers were presumably dissuaded by observations such as that of Cuthbert Graham who argued, in 1977, that

the term 'Moray Firth' had 'as many meanings as an onion has skins'.<sup>40</sup> However, the 1980s witnessed a new effort to assess it, instigated, in part, by scholars whose background connected them to the Beaully-Wick fringe, at least its Black Isle and Easter Ross component. One of them was Ian Mowat, a Dingwall-born writer who followed a career as a university librarian. Although his contribution to the field took eighteenth century Easter Ross as its main focus - a region which, at that time, he concluded to be 'part of the province of Greater Moray' - Mowat had many points to make on the firth's non-Moravian elements.<sup>41</sup> In his eighteenth-century focused contribution to the multi-disciplinary 1986 John R. Baldwin edited book exploring the 'Firthlands of Ross and Sutherland', Mowat asserted that: 'the Moray Firth acted as a bridge whereby landowners established links in both directions'.<sup>42</sup> It is unfortunate that an untimely early death prevented Mowat from exploring these themes further. Sadly, Marinell Ash died too before her exceptionally well researched book on the Cromarty Firth, commissioned by Cromarty Firth Port Authority, was completed by James Macaulay and Margaret A. Mackay and published in 1991.<sup>43</sup> As a result, it is Ian Hustwick who provides us with the first full-length single-authored historical work to use the Moray Firth region as its focus, in 1994, with the laudable, nineteenth-century oriented, *Moray Firth Ships and Trade*. For Hustwick, the 'seafaring element amongst the inhabitants of the firth' provided the motivation for studying the region although, curiously, despite adopting a standard geographical definition, he chose not to cover the ports of Wick, Helmsdale or Fraserburgh.<sup>44</sup>

It is only in the last five years that Mowat and Hustwick's works have had their successors. The first to come to print was an article of my own, which argued that, during the seventeenth century, environmental, commercial, cultural, intellectual and religious factors had interacted to make the firth 'a designation that has great potential for historians'.<sup>45</sup> More ambitiously, James Miller, an independent writer, originally from Caithness, published a popular

and wide-ranging history of the firth in 2012. Miller makes many striking points in the book, most especially his reflection towards the end that a ‘history of dynasties, warlords and tribes has given way to a more all-encompassing collective history’.<sup>46</sup> He even addresses the possibility that ‘a regional consciousness has tentatively been appearing, an increasing awareness of common interests that span the firth’, and that modern-day residents may be ‘returning to a commonality in life around the firth, something that was perhaps known to the Picts and something that has probably existed for a long time among seafarers’.<sup>47</sup>

This modest recent growth in the historiography of the firth can be seen in the light of wider social and cultural developments in the region, such as the foundation and development of the Highlands and Islands Development Board (1965) and its successor, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, as well as, more recently, the establishment of the University of the Highlands and Islands (including its Centre for History in Dornoch) and other bodies such as the Moray Firth Partnership.<sup>48</sup> In terms of more strictly historiographical surroundings, the renewed focus on the Beaulieu-Wick fringe could be sharpened further by viewing it in the context of wider debates and reassessments over the last two decades as regards Scotland’s Highland and Lowland pasts. With respect to the twentieth century, John Burnett’s recent book explores the ambiguities, connections and contrasts between ‘Gaelic’ and ‘Highland’ history.<sup>49</sup> For the nineteenth century and in relation to the creation of the seven Crofting Counties, we have Ewen Cameron’s work, which has pointed out that ‘the existence of “Lowland” conditions on the East coast, north of Inverness, complicates the matter’ when it comes to accounting for the period.<sup>50</sup> However, it is as regards the early modern, and the publishing, since the 1990s, of key works such as those by MacInnes and Dodgshon, that the most extensive interrogation of the historical trajectories previously traced by historians of the Highlands and Lowlands, respectively, has taken place.<sup>51</sup> Much of this work has

downplayed the idea of the former as a 'realm apart'. Indeed, the most recent writing on the theme, for example, that of Alison Cathcart, has claimed that, topographically, the Lowland and Highland divide in Scottish history is only 'the most basic of distinctions', and that we should consider all sorts of 'overlaps, grey, mixed areas and subdivisions'.<sup>52</sup> The Moray Firth can be viewed as a key exemplar here. Thomas Brochard recently completed a University of Aberdeen PhD, a similarly provocative account which posits the question of how historians should define and sub-divide the Highlands during the early modern period. Looking at Ross, Sutherland, Caithness and the Outer Hebrides, Brochard seeks to 'balance the focus of Highland historiography away from the West Highlands'.<sup>53</sup> Throughout the work, he is keen to emphasise 'syncretic elements' and cultural 'hybridity'.<sup>54</sup> For example, he examines the more complex religious observance he considers to have characterised the north, and views local chiefs and lairds in the region as active in introducing new techniques from elsewhere in Europe, especially as regards architecture, heraldry and paintings.<sup>55</sup> Another relatively recent arrival on the scene, Allan Kennedy, has claimed, similarly, that Highland clans on the north-eastern mainland seaboard north of Inverness, should be viewed, on one hand, as 'conduits for the penetration of Lowland values and lordly culture' and, on the other, as operating within a 'cultural greyscale' that was neither wholly 'Gaelic' nor entirely Lowland.<sup>56</sup>

Evidently, the coastal and maritime history which has linked the Beaulieu-Wick fringe of the northern Highlands with Moray via the firthlands is beginning to attract more attention and a more dynamic and controversial kind of scholarship. What this work suggests, first, is that, notwithstanding all of the associated power, violence and oppression that have featured in Moray Firth history, some of the southern cultural and environmental impact on this more northerly edge has been decidedly less alien and destructive than that represented by the Sutherland Clearances,

traumatic though that historical event was. In addition, it shows that influences could move in the other direction too. In many ways, the assumption of a dominant ‘centre’ centred around the Laich versus a subservient margin to the north is too crude a simplification of the *longue durée* history of that ‘gathering stream’ which has brought about a relative concentration of human life and settlement around the firth. Furthermore, Moray, in its various political, administrative or ecclesiastical versions, scarcely fits the role of a ‘core’ within wider Scottish or British history. An assumption of northern subservience to a Moray taskmaster as defining the experience of the peoples of the Beaully-Wick fringe should be rejected as an inadequate explanation then. A re-presented historical approach to the Moray Firth would assert it as the study of the past of a contiguous coastline, in which a two-way interaction based on social, cultural and economic transfer may have been the norm rather than the exception.

### **Case studies**

One way in which the potential of such a re-oriented historiography of the firth could be fulfilled would be to explore the ferry crossings which operated over the centuries, and especially within the inner firth and firthlands. Some initial comments can be made relating to the early modern and modern periods. In the 1790s, the Minister of Cromarty concluded that the ‘safety of this ferry [Cromarty to Invergordon] may be judged of’ since ‘no accident has been known to have happened upon it’, a point made also about the Ardersier to Chanonry route by his counterpart in Rosemarkie and by claims, in the 1830s, that, despite the absence of a steamship, there remained ‘no ferry in Scotland better attended to’ than the Inverness to North Kessock service.<sup>57</sup> These crossings of the firthlands may have served local passengers well enough on the whole, it seems. However, external commentators usually conveyed an impression that the ferries were dangerous, at worst, and

uncomfortable at best. In the 1650s, English visitor, Richard Franck, described the Inverness to North Kessock route as ‘exceeding hazardous’ and ‘rugged’, believing he would be capsized not just due to the ‘luxuriant tides, and aggravating winds, that violently contract the surff of the sea’, but because of the ‘porposses’ [porpoises or dolphins] that he thought were in danger of leaping into the boat.<sup>58</sup> In the early nineteenth century, James Loch remarked that the vessels were ‘without every accommodation which could make them either comfortable or convenient, the passenger being left exposed to all the inclemency of a variable and boisterous climate’, so that ‘the risk of crossing these narrow friths, hemmed in between mountains, was considerable’.<sup>59</sup> The Minister of Kincardine near Ardgay was justified in being perturbed about the Meikle Ferry crossing across the Dornoch Firth which ‘is considered one of the most dangerous and inconvenient in the north; and many lives have been lost in crossing it’.<sup>60</sup> Tragically, the ferry capsized there during a 1809 crossing causing up to 100 people to be drowned. Shortly after, Bristol-born poet and traveller, Robert Southey, met a son of one of those who died who ‘could never bear to set foot in a ferry boat after that catastrophe, and was thus cut off from communication with the south till this bridge [Bonar Bridge, 1812] was built’.<sup>61</sup> Possible loss of life aside, travellers complained, even on calm days, of delays, discomfort and cold. In the 1760s, Bishop Robert Forbes was ‘long detained’ at Ardersier since ‘the Boat could not take over the Pasengers that appeared, the Horses and the Chaise all at once’.<sup>62</sup> James Loch’s horse and carriage were only ‘slowly and unskillfully put into the wretched boats’<sup>63</sup> and Southey claimed that passengers on the Invergordon to Cromarty service had been ‘sometimes obliged to mount their horses nearly a quarter of a mile from the shore, and ride mid-leg deep in the water’.<sup>64</sup> Despite calling the Kessock ferry the ‘best in Scotland’, Bishop Forbes noted that ‘they have no good means of getting carriages on board, and there was considerable difficulty with one of the horses’.<sup>65</sup> Ferries in the firthlands could also be expensive.

Moray minister, the Reverend James Allan, remarked in 1690 that ‘tho I kindled no smoak, they forced me to pay a shilling sterling’ on the Ardersier to Chanonry crossing. For Isaac Forsyth, a century later, the ‘very considerable revenue exacted’ by the various ferry proprietors may have been ‘requisite for the support and navigation of the boats’, but still ‘few are satisfied with the provision made either for their accommodation or their safety in the passage of the ferries’.<sup>66</sup> A broader study of Moray Firth ferries would allow us to assess the degree to which communications operated to link the inner part of the region, especially in its northern section.

Seven case studies will now be presented, however, as exemplars of the potential fruitfulness of a coastal history of the Moray Firth across an even wider chronology, in the way posited at the outset of the article. Beginning with the Pictish period, the eighth to tenth centuries provide us with perhaps the most illuminating example of northern Moray Firth collective agency and assertiveness. It is one regarding which historians have become indebted to archaeologist colleagues working at Pictish Portmahomack on the Tarbat peninsula.<sup>67</sup> As Martin Carver has stated:

At present we are probably entitled to believe that Portmahomack was Columba’s port, founded during his expedition in the sixth century on the nearest thing that the saint could find to an island at the opposite end of the Great Glen to Iona. This peninsula estate, with its landing beach and portage, developed over the next 250 years in close association with both Dalriada and Northumbria, while maintaining the substrate of Pictish culture that survived in its symbols. By AD800, the peninsula was the object of massive investment in the form of some of the most impressive

monumental sculpture known from early-medieval Europe. Placed at the edges of the peninsula overlooking the surrounding seas, the huge and complex cross-slabs functioned as seamarks and portals to a famous if ephemeral ecclesiastical centre - an 'Iona of the East'.<sup>68</sup>

Possible exaggeration aside, Carver and his team's discoveries at Portmahomack have been of major importance. They open up an historical firth with a 'settlement ribbon' that was 'like the rim of a wheel connected by boat journeys' and which, towards its centre 'with a fine sheltered beach and adjacent portage for use in rough weather' was Portmahomack.<sup>69</sup> It is certainly an account which, along with work on the Rosemarkie slabs and stones from the same period, impacts on historical understanding of the Pictish Moray Firth by widening the canvas beyond Burghead and Kinnedar to one inclusive of the Black Isle, Easter Ross and even locations north of the Kyle of Sutherland. This is a shift which also seems to resonate, tantalisingly, with Alex Woolf's recent scholarship, Woolf having argued that the Pictish kingdom of Fortriu, usually located further south towards Strathearn, probably lay further north than that.<sup>70</sup> Without doubt, the Portmahomack discoveries show a site that deserves to be treated as an 'Iona of the East', citing Carver, or, using James Fraser's analogy, a 'Lindisfarne of the North'.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, despite the presence of these stones and some possibly-related fish midden evidence at nearby Castlehaven, it is equally striking how shrouded in obscurity this ecclesiastical and monastic site seems to have been to all previous generations. From this perspective, the work of the aforementioned Rev. Charles Cordiner, based on his 1776 visit, deserves special mention again. On visiting Easter Ross, Cordiner was able to highlight the existence of 'several fragments of other obelisks lying on Tarbetness'. It may be indicative of a wider local awareness at the time that he was helped in his discovery by a 'Mr

McLeod of Catbol [Cadboll]’ who ‘from a veneration for the consecrated ground has enclosed it with some trees’, even if Cordiner concluded that the remains he saw at Tarbat Ness and Portmahomack were, unlike the Pictish stones at Hilton of Cadboll or Shandwick, ‘so shattered to pieces that their connection is lost’.<sup>72</sup>

What we continue to have less information on at Portmahomack, even following the archaeological work of recent years, is how the settlement came to an end. Carver and his team identified ‘stratigraphically simultaneous burning’ indicating ‘deliberate destruction’.<sup>73</sup> In any case, Vikings surely played a part in this, as Barbara Crawford’s work makes clear. At some point following the end of the eighth century, the Norse succeeded in establishing their governance over ‘virtually the entire Highland mainland to the north of a line extending roughly from Dingwall to Ullapool.’<sup>74</sup> Whether they destroyed the community at Portmahomack in the ‘frontier territory’ or not, the coastal and maritime context must be considered again as regards the development of another settlement, this one at the innermost point of the Cromarty Firth, and where we have the clearest example of Viking influence. The place in question, Dingwall (meaning ‘assembly-field’ in Old Norse), is hardly an ideal port today but has, as it did then, access to rivers and forests. It may have been due to this strategic combination or part of a wider stratagem to move southwards from the Dornoch Firth towards the mouth of the Ness and so the Great Glen that the Norse sought to build it, perhaps consciously, as a replacement for what had been at Portmahomack and Rosemarkie.<sup>75</sup> Not only that, but scholars are now examining whether it was a Cromarty Firth capital which, initially, harboured colonising ambitions towards regions beyond, perhaps even towards Moray. Crawford tells us that: ‘[Dingwall] is a remarkable survival of a significant administrative place-name so far south which must reflect the organisational activity of a community of Norse speakers settled around the Cromarty Firth in the wake of the recorded

conquest of the earls in the late ninth and the eleventh centuries'.<sup>76</sup> This much is generally accepted. Still, she goes further to state that 'we can understand Dingwall to have functioned as a social, economic and perhaps religious centre for the Norse settlers of the Cromarty Firth, Beaully Firth and dales of Ross.'<sup>77</sup> Whatever the nature of Dingwall's connections to the sea and to Moray, evidently, the Norse established there the basis for the medieval and, indeed, modern town, and developed a settlement of pan-firthland significance. Dingwall was visited frequently by later travellers, although, as with what is now known about early Portmahomack, a crucial element in its past remained shrouded in mystery thereafter for several centuries, a state from which it is only now beginning to re-emerge.<sup>78</sup>

If Dingwall in some senses took over from Portmahomack and Rosemarkie, then at what point did Tain emerge as a place of religious, intellectual and commercial significance towards the eastern coastline of Easter Ross? It may be too speculative to posit nearby Fearn Abbey, in place from the thirteenth century, and the by-then nascent royal burgh, as inheritors of some of Dingwall's cultural capital, due to the impact of Farquhar MacTaggart (d. c.1251) and the founding of the earldom of Ross.<sup>79</sup> Historical sources for the period that follows shed little light on this although certainly, the Scottish crown was obliged, from the 1450s, to pay attention to a local cult in Tain - that of St Duthac - and to reassert its control locally as a consequence by establishing a collegiate church. As Turpie as well as Oram *et al.* have made clear, the cult attracted people southwards as well as northwards and thus across the firths.<sup>80</sup> This, and James IV's regular visits to Tain from 1493, are hardly an indication of the complete deference of the peoples of coastal Easter Ross to their southern and south-eastern neighbours then. Instead, they appear as active participants in ensuring that the collegiate church, and also Fortrose Cathedral further south, exemplify to us now a 'thriving tradition of mason work along the Moray Firth', part of an

architectural history which connects them with Elgin Cathedral and Pluscarden Abbey in Moray.<sup>81</sup> We can only speculate as to whether it is this later medieval cultural and social setting that we see traces of in the works of both Hector Boece, who remarked, in the early sixteenth century, that St Duthac remained in veneration in Tain, or Bishop John Leslie, whose 1578 book, *De origine moribus, et rebus gestis Scotorum libri decem*, indicated the positive impression created on him as regards the fishing technology in use in the shallower bays of the region.<sup>82</sup> Certainly, the local salmon trade was a significant one by then, and is a theme that calls for further archival research.<sup>83</sup>

In early modern times, we have further signs of collective agency from further north along the Beaully-Wick edge, and additional evidence, as a result, not only of its connections with the western Highlands, but of a two-way transmarine interaction involving it and the southern Moray Firth fringe. This is due to the temporary growth of another combined intellectual and commercial centre at the longstanding cathedral town of Dornoch. Dornoch's early seventeenth century development, including its rise to Royal Burgh status, was to some extent the product of externally-driven forces, and significant alternatives from the north remained. Moreover, its location prevented it from developing as a port, while the influences from east and south may have been as much those brought about by Sir Robert Gordon's continental experiences as by the ties that connected the Gordon earls of Sutherland with kith and kin in Moray and Banff. Yet, Dornoch's position at the south-eastern tip of Sutherland benefitted it in many ways. In his own account, Gordon makes clear his favouring, perhaps in competition with Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty, the establishment of 'chief scooles for learning' and sports instruction in the town.<sup>84</sup> His family sought to exert control over this section of the coast also through trade, with Gordon claiming possession of significant anchorages both at 'Holmisdell [Helmsdale]' and, a few miles to the south, at the mouth of the River Brora, from where, besides fish, 'sea coale' and, after 1598, limited

amounts of salt from the Inverbroray works - pioneered by Lady Jean Gordon, Countess of Sutherland (c.1546-1629) - were shipped out.<sup>85</sup> Gordon also asserted the growing potential of the silver, slate, limestone and iron industries there, while cattle hides, wool, tallow, butter, cheese, plaids and pearls were amongst other items he could have listed as being sent occasionally by sea from local beaches, in the absence of a suitable port. From 1620, this caused some tension as Dornoch began to take greater prominence for the earls, and to emerge also as a competitor to Tain, just a few miles away on the other side of the Dornoch Firth.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, Dornoch developed to the extent that, in 1626, the then Bishop of Caithness provided the fourteenth earl of Sutherland with a charter giving him the right to construct 'wynd-mylnes' there, while, within two years of that it had become a royal burgh.<sup>87</sup> The merchants of Moray took consideration of the town too: Elgin Burgh Council expressed concern, in 1696, at 'the abuses our merchants and traidsmen meet in the mercats of Tain, Dornoch and Dingwall'.<sup>88</sup>

Moving further north, Wick also had developed into a Moray Firth port centuries prior to the 1786 founding of the British Fisheries Society and the growth of Pulteneytown. Considering it having been the seat for a sheriff court from 1503 and having royal burgh status from 1589, Frank Foden's description of it as a 'place of little account' before the eighteenth century seems overly dismissive.<sup>89</sup> Within the firth context, seaborne merchants from the town were active in the seventeenth century bere and oatmeal markets to the extent that they could, for example, be an annoyance to Elgin town council, in their numerous references, from 1639 and 1643, to William Istone, Alexander Doull, George Abernethie, and Jon Cormack. All four were said to be from 'Weik of Cathnes'. They were recorded as having come to shore at Covesea, east of Burghead, individually, to sell their wares, and presumably undercut the Moray merchants.<sup>90</sup> By 1793 though, John Rennie could report there to be 'no place between the Cromarty and Pentland Firths, indeed

to Scrabster Roads (a range of 120 miles) whence a vessel in distress can take shelter', describing it as 'a matter of great national consequence that a Harbour should be made somewhere between these places' so that, 'if proper encouragement is given to Settlers, a large & populous village will soon be established' around Wick harbour.<sup>91</sup> Consequently, by 1840, a different kind of settlement had developed next to the Caithness burgh, at Pulteneytown, its growth dependent on the capricious herring. As Dunlop tells us: 'the development of Pulteneytown was like a snowball which rolled of itself downhill, increasing in size and speed, with the Directors who had launched it on its career requiring only to run behind'.<sup>92</sup> According to Hunter: 'there were, by the 1840s, well over a thousand herring boats operating out of a purpose-built harbour round which there had developed - as well as scores of curing businesses - street after street of homes, shops, lodging houses and pubs'.<sup>93</sup> Foden's work reminds us that, although Wick 'bubbled with activity' at the time, its emerging rope, pavement and gas works, distillery, meal mill, saw mills, shipyard, foundry, and newspapers (the *John O'Groat Journal* from 1836, then the *Northern Ensign* from 1851) should be seen in conjunction with the arrival of cleared populations from inland straths living in extremely cramped and destitute conditions, cheek by jowl with other settlers from Moray and the Western and Northern Isles. This led to frequent outbreaks of smallpox, typhoid and, in 1832, cholera, combined with increasing loss of life at sea for 'crofter-fishermen' and was accompanied at times by riots.<sup>94</sup> Wick would soon go into decline, whatever one's perspective on that short-term boom that for some - locals and newcomers alike - we can associate with the 'silver darlings'.

Throughout the period of social change brought about by the Disruption of 1843, the Education Act of 1872 and the creation of the Crofting Counties in 1886, the mix of people to be found living around the largely under-developed Beaulieu-Wick coastal fringe remained complex.<sup>95</sup>

They were identified as a collective on occasion: in March 1812, the Admiralty had sought men from amongst ‘the Fishermen and others on the coasts of the Murray Frith, and to the northward of it’, hoping to repeat a previous mustering from 1803 when ‘many hundreds of stout young men were obtained’ from the region.<sup>96</sup> Did the circle of geologists and theologians associated with the ‘north firth’ coastal fringe, such as Sir Roderick Impey Murchison (1792–1871) - born at Tarradale in Easter Ross and who wrote on coal mining at Brora - or Hugh Miller, help create a ‘Moray Firth’ intellectual world through taking their findings southwards to Elgin and places beyond?<sup>97</sup> Certainly, Miller could be, depending on the context, rhapsodic or elegiac in his accounts of the stretch of water on which his father had died as a fisherman, a tone comparable with that found in numerous ministers’ reports from the north side of the firth in the pages of the Old and New Statistical Accounts for Scotland.<sup>98</sup> When describing the view from the cliff-top area to the south of the entrance to the Cromarty Firth, Miller writes:

...the wide extent of the Moray Firth stretches out to the dim horizon with all its veinlike currents and its undulating lines of coast; while before us we see far in the distance the blue vista of the Caledonian valley, with its double wall of jagged and serrated hills; and directly in the opening the grey diminished spires of Inverness.<sup>99</sup>

The end of romanticism may have threatened this vision of the firth, but it neither undermined completely local entrepreneurial activity nor ceased wider efforts at establishing ‘growth poles’ on this section of its coastline. Local fishing and shipbuilding developed along the northern parts of the firth edge following the creation of Pulteneytown, as has been mentioned.

Tourism grew in pockets too with the arrival of steam and rail, taking visitors towards Strathpeffer and Dornoch, while the simultaneous development of the region's manufacturing and banking history may also have had distinctive local qualities.<sup>100</sup> A more immediate example of the collective agency of people around this edge of the firth, however, involves modern Easter Ross and the Black Isle, regarding where aluminium, oil and, more recently, renewables, have signalled what may, in the long run, prove to be a less stuttering upturn in fortunes.<sup>101</sup> In a recent 'recasting' of the history of Highland economic development, Perchard and Mackenzie quoted from a *Tribune* edition from 1967 which reported on the then 'frequently propounded concept of a linear city stretching from Inverness to Invergordon - an academic fantasy in terms of the immediately practicable'. Although the magazine may have found an easy target in mocking the idea in question, the HIDB too continued to propound a 'growth point strategy' based upon the encouragement of major industries around both sides of the Inner Moray Firth (as well as Caithness and Lochaber).<sup>102</sup>

Regarding this, the maritime advantages of the outer section of the Cromarty Firth had long been known. Invergordon had, from being a small settlement at the coastal point of the Inverbreakie estate, begun to grow from the late eighteenth century, and, by the twentieth century, hosted a major naval base and distillery. Nearby Nigg, meanwhile, had developed from its Pictish origins, remaining a largely Gaelic-speaking community (like much of the rest of Easter Ross until the twentieth century) centred around its parish church and religious identity, as seen, for example, in the revival led by 'The Men' (Na Daoine) after 1739. Despite this, and the major contribution that both settlements made to coastal and sea defences during both world wars, it may still not have been apparent to the compilers of the HIDB's first report, from 1967, the extent to which both were about to be transformed even further. The report stated that: 'We will do our utmost to

generate major growth points, involving substantial increases of population, wherever the natural advantages of the area seem to warrant it; the Moray Firth is unquestionably the most important of these areas'.<sup>103</sup> Evidently, it was this part of the Cromarty Firth as well as the immediate 'South-frith' (in the form of Ardersier) that some of the founders envisaged as benefitting, an approach which attracted resentment in some quarters.<sup>104</sup> As Ewen Cameron has shown, the HIDB's strategy towards the firth 'was held to have a detrimental effect on more remote areas'.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, James Hunter has argued that there is 'a case to be made in defence of the HIDB's pro-industry stance' in the area and that, despite the quick and troubling demise of the Invergordon aluminium smelter (1971-81), 'the economies of Easter Ross and Lochaber, by the later 1990s, were a lot larger, and a good deal more varied in their composition, than they had been ten, twenty or thirty years before'.<sup>106</sup> Not only that, but the direction and influence of local people was once again becoming apparent, according to this account. Although some of the profit was still being whittled away elsewhere, much of the economic success of the region since the HIDB's establishment has been achieved, in Hunter's words, 'as a result of indigenous effort'.<sup>107</sup> Turning to renewables, we have a recent, and again more locally-driven, symbol of local influence in the example of the Beatrice offshore wind farm development. The East Sutherland-based artist, Sue Jane Taylor, described the sight of the crane barge, tugs, pilot boats and first turbines leaving Nigg Yard in 2006 as being akin to seeing 'one of Leonardo's machine sketches coming to life' and has subsequently worked on and produced an exhibition about the Beatrice project.<sup>108</sup> Again, Hunter, in his contribution to the Beatrice exhibition catalogue, has revealing insights on the controversial social and cultural implications of this and of the arrival of renewables for the peoples of the Beaully-Wick coastline more widely, there being, for him no other recent industrial development in the far north which has held more 'promise for the future' than Beatrice.<sup>109</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has used the approach of coastal history to indicate the insights that might be made through an approach to the Moray Firth which accounts equally for the peoples around its northern and southern edges, thereby highlighting an aspect of the region's past which has previously been understated and frequently gone unacknowledged. It has been argued that an historiographical chasm has emerged due to the locating, since the medieval period, of the peoples in question along the edge of what, in cultural and linguistic senses, has been considered a fluctuating Highland-Lowland frontier, in which Moray has been seen as providing a 'core'. It has been shown, however, that a developing approach which gives equal weight to every section of the firth coastline, from Fraserburgh to Wick, can allow scholars to question that narrative of the Beaulieu-Wick fringe which posits it as being, inevitably, in thrall or a junior partner to Moray and the 'south'.

The article has identified several cases of more complex, transmarine and overland interactions that show how influences could transmit from 'Highland' to 'Lowland' too, so that Mowat's assertion that Easter Ross can be 'likened to a Scottish Lithuania, attached to a Poland composed of Moray and the eastern Black Isle', should be seen as useful for a particular early modern context but misleading as regards any wider explanation.<sup>110</sup> Many questions remain. How specific have the region's commercial, cultural and other connections with the outside world been and to what extent did these international ties influence local culture, society, economy and architecture in a unique way? George and Alexander Gordon, James and George Wallace, and John Robertson were all Banff men who became burgesses in Bergen, being accompanied in the Norwegian city by several merchants from Fraserburgh too.<sup>111</sup> On the other landward edge, three

examples might point to a wider trend: ‘Reichart of Wick, Kathnes’ was in Wrocław (Breslau) from as early as 1471, where he was tried alongside a wider group of Scots for unlawful trading or ‘vagabondage’, Patrick Doull traded from the same Caithness town with Gothenburg in the 1750s, while a son of Easter Ross, Alexander Ross, was the most prominent of several local merchants of that surname to migrate to the North Sea and Baltic countries, in his case, achieving status in early eighteenth-century Cracow until, in 1721, a sasine provided him with titles to the lands of Easter Kindeace near Nigg, which he subsequently returned to.<sup>112</sup> Moving to the British Imperial world, how has this collective agency been expressed through forced or voluntary emigration and, following David Alston’s recent work on the ‘Highland’ part of the firth, what influence has involvement in slavery, as well as return and reinvestment from empire, had on the coastal area between Brodie and Fraserburgh?<sup>113</sup>

Numerous questions remain to be explored by historians of the firth. Geography will perhaps always be a part of the debate. How far and to what extent has Moray’s influence stretched along the coastline *east* of Elgin or the Spey? Are there any similarities between the Speymouth-Fraserburgh stretch of the southern firth zone and the Kyle of Sutherland-Wick one in terms of the ‘peripheralisation’ explored at the very start of the article? Might the perspective from the eastern section of the coast bear comparison with that from the eastern Sutherland and Caithness coastline, despite being located much more firmly in the geographical Lowlands and much closer to Aberdeen? Oral history could be of significance here and elsewhere, and historiographical developments in the area might follow the example set by Jill de Fresnes.<sup>114</sup> There is a need for the papers of locally-significant families and estates to be exploited fully for coastal material also. Finally, there is another factor which has perhaps balanced the southern and northern edges and

which has been ignored here: Inverness has always, if perhaps at times unconsciously or even unwillingly, linked Highland and Lowland, and may have brought some unity to the firth.<sup>115</sup>

The Gaelic and Scots elements to the firth will be important to consider in future studies: fishing communities and maraichean ('seafolk') in, for example, Embo, Golspie and Brora, retained a distinctive form of Cataibh (East Sutherland) Gaelic until recently.<sup>116</sup> A wider lens will surely allow for confirmation that the linguistic situation is more nuanced than most previous writers have suggested. Greater understanding of this may raise such complex historical encounters as those between, for example, Nairn's Gaelic-speaking community on the 'Lowland' southern shore and Cromarty's Scots-speaking inhabitants in the 'Highland' north. An approach which is open to contributions from linguistics and other scholarly areas could be of benefit to historians, in any case, and allow for a truly two-way story of interconnections and disunities within and around this triangle of sea and coastal fringe.

Literature is another focus that could suggest alternative historical identities within the firth region. Neil Gunn's *Dunbeath*, Jessie Kesson's *Black Isle in Another Time, Another Place* and, less obviously, Iain Banks' *Tarbat Peninsula* in *The Wasp Factory*, may just be the tip of another proverbial iceberg in identifying a literary landscape in which the Black Isle and Easter Ross interacted with coastal Nairnshire and the Laich.<sup>117</sup> It is perhaps fitting to finish though with a recent study which has focused on clothing, most obviously, the gansey or fisherman's jersey, of which there once was a range of versions in favour within the entire coastal area. Different knitting patterns and other clothing types appear to have characterised the various sub-regions. In terms of the northern fringe alone, in Easter Ross, women wore a specific mutch or bonnet. In Brora, Golspie and Embo, they preferred a dark blue or dark brown cloth. In Avoch, meanwhile, at one time, fishermen never went bareheaded and wore different colours to their near neighbours

in Easter Ross.<sup>118</sup> What clearer example might we posit of the capacity of the, economically, most-impoverished peoples of this section of coastal fringe, to express an identity with its own local and gendered characteristics? This has been one tied not solely to the geographical Highlands, on one hand, or the Laich of Moray, on the other, but has been interwoven with both, via the Moray Firth.

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<sup>1</sup> James Loch, *An Account of the Improvements on the Estates of the Marquess of Stafford*, (London, 1820), 132-3, 183. For more on Loch, see Eric Richards, *The Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh, 2002); Eric Richards, *Patrick Sellar and the Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*', *Representations*, 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989), 1-21. See, also, Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und Politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, (Munich, 1992); Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, 'Collective Memory – What is it?' in *History and Memory*, 8, (1996), 30-50; David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985). For an example of these theories applied to historical research, see Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Madison, 2007). For art, 'cultural clearance' and the Highlands, see Murdo MacDonald, 'Towards an Exhibition of Highland Art', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 15(2-3), (2009), 163-74.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Land, 'Tidal Waves: The New Coastal History', *Journal of Social History*, 40(3), (2007), 731-43; Michael Pearson, 'Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems', *Journal of World History*, 17(4) (2006).

<sup>4</sup> John Gillis, *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History* (Chicago, 2012), 158-9. For some possible maritime and coastal comparisons, from Scotland and beyond, see: Aonghas MacCoinnich, "'His Spirit Was Given Only to Warre": Conflict and Identity in the Scottish Gàidhealtachd, c. 1580-c. 1630' in Steve Murdoch and Andrew Mackillop (eds), *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience, c. 1550-1900* (Leiden, 2002), 133-162; T.C. Smout and Mairi Stewart, *The Firth of Forth: An Environmental History* (Edinburgh, 2012); Barrie Trinder, *Barges and Bargemen: A Social History of the Upper Severn Navigation 1660-1900* (Stroud, 2005); David Hussey, *Coastal and River Trade in Pre-industrial England: The Bristol Region, 1680-1730*, (Oakville, CT, 2000); Adrian J. Webb, *A Maritime History of Somerset - Volume 1 - Trade & Commerce* (Taunton, 2010); A.R. Nielsen, 'Economic Adaptation among the Coast Sami Population in Finnmark c. 1700', *Acta Borealia*, 3(1) (1986), 21-41; Beatrice Moring, 'Household and Family in Finnish Coastal Societies, 1635-1895', *Journal of Family History*, 18 (1993), 395-414; Otto S. Knottnerus, 'Structural Characteristics of Coastal Societies: Some Considerations on the History of the North Sea Coastal Marshes', in Juliette Roding and Lex Heerma van Voss (eds), *The North Sea and Culture (1550-1800)* (Hilversum, 1996), 41. Silke Reeploeg, a doctoral student at the University of the Highlands and Islands' Centre for Nordic Studies, is currently preparing a thesis on Nordic regions of culture in which the north of Scotland features prominently.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (London, 1989); David McCrone, Angela Morris and Richard Kiely (eds), *Scotland-the Brand: The Making of Scottish Heritage* (Edinburgh, 1995); Charles W. J. Withers, 'The Historical Creation of the Scottish Highlands', in Ian Donnachie and Christopher Whatley, (eds), *The Manufacture of Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1992); Charles W. J. Withers, 'Place, Memory, Monument: Memorialising the Past in Contemporary Highland Scotland', *Ecumene* 3, (1996), 325-44; Laurence Gouriévidis, *The Dynamics of Heritage: History, Memory, and the Highland Clearances* (Aldershot, 2010); 'Representing the Disputed Past of Northern Scotland: The Highland Clearances in Museums', *History and Memory*, 12(2), (2000), 122-41; John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, "'The Graves of the Gallant Highlanders": Memory, Interpretation and Narratives of Culloden', *History and Memory*, 19(1) (2007), 5-38.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Longworth, 'The Senj Uskoks Reconsidered', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 57(3), (1979), 353, 356; Catherine W. Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca, NY, 1992); Mark Cornwall, 'Scots and "Skoks": Exploring the Cultural Interaction of Scotland and Croatia, 1600-1918', in Mark Cornwall and Murray Frame (eds), *Scotland and the Slavs: Cultures in Contact, 1500-2000* (Newtonville, MA, 2001), 75-101. See, also, David Abulafia, *The Great Sea* (Oxford, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Smout and Stewart, *The Firth of Forth*.

<sup>8</sup> For a more precise definition, see David Worthington, 'A Northern Scottish Maritime Region: The Moray Firth in the Seventeenth Century', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 23(2) (2011), 183.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Crawford, *The Northern Earldoms: Orkney and Caithness from AD 870 to 1470*, (Edinburgh, 2013), 152-6. Crawford views Easter Ross as the major 'buffer' in the north of mainland Scotland during the tenth to twelfth centuries.

<sup>10</sup> F.R. Ankersmit, 'The Sublime Dissociation of the Past: Or How to Be(come) What One Is No Longer', *History and Theory*, 40(3), (2001), 321-2.

<sup>11</sup> There is, of course, a wealth of history writing, much of it excellent, regarding the towns and other settlements that flank this part of the firth, and the coastal and maritime context of relevance to this article is covered to varying degrees within these. It is not possible to list all of these here, while those with a particular focus on the wider firth will be covered in the first part of the article. For fully-referenced, scholarly works from the 1980s onwards, however, see, for example: Peter Anson, *Fishing Boats and Fisher Folk of the East of Scotland* (London, 1930), chs. 15-16; David Alston, *My Little Town of Cromarty* (Edinburgh, 2006); Marinell Ash, *This Noble Harbour: A History of the Cromarty Firth* (Bristol, 1991); John R. Baldwin (ed.), *Firthlands of Ross and Sutherland* (Edinburgh, 1991); Ian R.M. Mowat, *Easter Ross 1750-1850* (Edinburgh, 2006); Richard D. Oram, et al., *Historic Tain: Archaeology and Development* (York, 2009); Charles D. Bentinck, *Dornoch Cathedral and Parish* (Inverness, 1926); Frank Foden, *Wick of the North*, (Wick, 1996). See, also, David Alston, *Ross and Cromarty: A Historical Guide* (Edinburgh, 1999); Donald Omand (ed.), *The Ross and Cromarty Book* (Golspie, 1984) and the same writer's edited volumes, *The Sutherland Book* (Golspie, 1982), *The Caithness Book* (Wick, 1972) and *The New Caithness Book* (Wick, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols., (London, 1972), I, 19.

<sup>13</sup> David Kirby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and the North Seas* (London, 2000), 58-9; Pearson, 'Littoral Society', 359.

<sup>14</sup> Sellar 'imposed no three-line whip' on contributors to his volume. See, W.D.H. Sellar (ed.), *Moray: Province and People* (Edinburgh, 1993), v; Ronald Cant, 'The Middle Ages', in Donald Omand (ed.), *The Moray Book* (Edinburgh, 1976), 125-40.

<sup>15</sup> W. F. H. Nicolaisen, 'Names in the Landscape of the Moray Firth' in Sellar (ed.), *Moray: Province and People*, 253; Julian Goodare and Michael Lynch, 'The Scottish State and its Borderlands' in Goodare and Lynch (eds), *The Reign of James VI*, (Edinburgh, 2000), 192-3.

<sup>16</sup> According to Ross, the last known reference to this legend is from James Suter, *Memorabilia of Inverness* (Inverness, 1887), 2. See, Alasdair D. Ross, 'The Province of Moray, c.1000-1230' (University of Aberdeen PhD thesis, Aberdeen, 2003), 224; Robert Gordon, *A genealogical history of the earldom of Sutherland: from its origin to the year 1630* (Edinburgh, 1813).

<sup>17</sup> *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, William Skene ed., (Edinburgh, 1872), 31-2.

<sup>18</sup> Boece, *The history and chronicles*, xxxii-xxxiii.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Peter Hume Brown, *Scotland before 1700, from contemporary documents* (Edinburgh, 1893), 142.

<sup>20</sup> Ross, 'The Province of Moray', 224.

<sup>21</sup> Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (trans.), *Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney* (London, 1978), 249.

<sup>22</sup> Gordon, *A genealogical history*, 67; Miller, *Scenes and Legends*, 124.

<sup>23</sup> Charles W. J. Withers, 'The Scottish Highlands Outlined: Cartographic Evidence for the Position of the Highland/Lowland Boundary', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 98(3), (1982), 143-157; 'Reporting, Mapping, Trusting: Making Geographical Knowledge in the Late Seventeenth Century', *Isis*, 90(3) (1999), 497-521.

<sup>24</sup> *Report by Thomas Tucker upon the settlement of the revenues of excise and customs in Scotland [1655-56]*, (Edinburgh, 1824), 36-7; John R. Barrett ed., *Mr James Allan: The Journey of a Lifetime* (Kinloss, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> P.N. Furbank, W.R. Owens and A.J. Culson (eds), *Daniel Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (London, 1991), 366.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Daniel William Kemp (ed.), *Richard Pococke, Tours in Scotland, 1747, 1750, 1760* (Edinburgh, 1887), 100-2.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland, 1769* (London, 1771), 136.

<sup>30</sup> J.B. Craven (ed.), *Journals of the episcopal visitations of the Right Rev. Robert Forbes* (London, 1923), 150.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 151-5. For later tourism around the northern edge of the firth, especially Strathpeffer and Dornoch, see, Alastair J. Durie, *Scotland for the Holidays? Tourism in Scotland c.1780-1939* (East Linton, 2003), 91-5, 126-7.

<sup>32</sup> Cordiner, *Antiquities and Scenery*, 65-6.

<sup>33</sup> Lachlan Shaw, *The History of the Province of Moray* (Glasgow, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1882) 383.

- <sup>34</sup> Shaw, *History of the Province of Moray*, 5.
- <sup>35</sup> Isaac Forsyth, *A Survey of the Province of Moray: Historical, Geographical, and Political* (Aberdeen, 1798)
- <sup>36</sup> Forsyth, *A Survey*, 92.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, ii.
- <sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Sutherland, *Lydia: Wife of Hugh Miller of Cromarty* (East Linton, 2002), 45-6, 169.
- <sup>39</sup> Charles Rampini, *A History of Moray and Nairn* (Edinburgh, 1897), 4.
- <sup>40</sup> Cuthbert Graham, *Portrait of the Moray Firth* (London, 1977), 11.
- <sup>41</sup> Ian R.M. Mowat, 'The Moray Firth Province: Trade and Family Links in the Eighteenth Century', in Baldwin (ed.), *Firthlands of Ross and Sutherland*, 69; Mowat, *Easter Ross*.
- <sup>42</sup> Mowat, 'The Moray Firth Province', 70.
- <sup>43</sup> Ash, *This Noble Harbour*.
- <sup>44</sup> Ian Hustwick, *Moray Firth Ships and Trade* (Edinburgh, 1994), vii.
- <sup>45</sup> Worthington, 'A Northern Scottish Maritime Region'.
- <sup>46</sup> James Miller, *The Gathering Stream: The Story of the Moray Firth* (Edinburgh, 2012), 222.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>48</sup> Ewen Cameron, 'Scotland's Global Impact', *Northern Scotland*, 1 (2010), 3-11.
- <sup>49</sup> John A. Burnett, *The Making of the Modern Scottish Highlands, 1939-1965: Withstanding the 'Colossus of Advancing Materialism'*, (Dublin, 2011), 17-18.
- <sup>50</sup> Ewen Cameron, 'Embracing the Past: the Highlands in Nineteenth Century Scotland', in D. E. Broun, R. J. Finlay and M. Lynch (eds), *Image and Identity: the making and re-making of Scotland through the ages* (Edinburgh, 1998), 196; Cameron, 'Congested District'.
- <sup>51</sup> Allan I. Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce, and the House of Stuart, 1603-1788* (East Linton, 1996); R.A. Dodgshon, *From Chiefs to Landlords: Social and Economic Change in the Western Highlands and Islands, c1493-1820* (Edinburgh, 1998); Allan I. Macinnes, 'Scottish Gaeldom from Clanship to Commercial Landlordism, c.1600-c.1850' in R. MacInnes, Allan I. Macinnes and S. Foster (eds), *Scottish Power Centres*, (Edinburgh, 2000), 162-85; R.A. Dodgshon, "'Pretense of blude" and "place of their dwelling": the nature of Highland clans, 1500-1745' in R. Houston and I. Whyte (eds), *Scottish Society, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 2005).
- <sup>52</sup> Cathcart cautions against assuming the existence of an, in part, externally-constructed Highland identity (leaving aside a 'Highlands and Islands' identity), this opening up other sub-national possibilities for historical study. See Alison Cathcart, *Kinship and Clientage: Highland Clanship, 1451-1609* (Leiden, 2006), 7-9.
- <sup>53</sup> Thomas Brochard, 'The "Civilizing" of the Far North of Scotland, 1560-1640' (University of Aberdeen PhD Thesis, 2012), 1.
- <sup>54</sup> Brochard, 'The "Civilizing"', 148.
- <sup>55</sup> Thomas Brochard, 'Exile and Return from the Far North of Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution', *Études écossaises*, 13 (2010), 19-39.
- <sup>56</sup> Allan Kennedy, "'A Heavy Yock Uppon Their Necks": Covenanting Government in the Northern Highlands, 1638-1651', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 30(2), (2010), 97. See, also, his 'The Urban Community in Restoration Scotland: Government, Society and Economy in Inverness, 1660-c.1688', *Northern Scotland*, 5 (2014), 26-49.
- <sup>57</sup> *The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791-1799*, 20 vols., (Wakefield, 1973-83), XI, XII; *The New Statistical Account of Scotland* [hereafter NSA], 15 vols., (Edinburgh, 1845), XIV.
- <sup>58</sup> Richard Franck, *Northern memoirs, calculated for the meridian of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1821), 205-6.
- <sup>59</sup> Loch, *An Account*, 17-19.
- <sup>60</sup> NSA, XVI, 422.
- <sup>61</sup> C.H. Herford (ed.), *Robert Southey, Journal of a Tour in Scotland in 1819*, (London, 1929), 129.
- <sup>62</sup> Craven (ed.), *Journals*, 151.
- <sup>63</sup> Loch, *An Account*, 17-19.
- <sup>64</sup> Herford (ed.), *Robert Southey*, 121.
- <sup>65</sup> Craven (ed.), *Journals*, 167.
- <sup>66</sup> Isaac Forsyth, *A Survey of the Province of Moray: Historical, Geographical, and Political* (Aberdeen, 1798), 338-9.
- <sup>67</sup> Philip Pomper, 'Historians and Individual Agency', *History and Theory*, 35(3) (1996), 281-308; Rod Aya, 'The Third Man; or, Agency in History; or, Rationality in Revolution', *History and Theory*, 40(4), (2001), 143-152; Walter Johnson, 'On Agency', *Journal of Social History*, 37(1) (2003), 113-124.
- <sup>68</sup> Martin Carver, 'An Iona of the East: the early-medieval monastery at Portmahomack, Tarbat Ness', *Medieval Archaeology*, 48 (2004), 11, 29. Carver and his team's conclusions drew on those of a handful of earlier archaeologists.

See, for example, John Higgitt, 'The Pictish Latin Inscription at Tarbat in Ross-shire', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 112 (1982), 300–321.

<sup>69</sup> Martin Carver, *Post-Pictish Problems: The Moray Firthlands in the 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Rosemarkie, 2008), 16. See, also, the same author's book, *Portmahomack: Monastery of the Picts* (Edinburgh, 2008).

<sup>70</sup> Alex Woolf, 'Dún Nechtain, Fortriu and the Geography of the Picts', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 85 (220) (2006), pp. 182-201.

<sup>71</sup> Carver, *Portmahomack*, 144; James Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795* (Edinburgh, 2009), 12, 50, 106.

<sup>72</sup> Charles Cordiner, *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland, in a Series of Letters to Thomas Pennant* (s.n., 1780), 65-6.

<sup>73</sup> Carver, 'An Iona of The East', 25

<sup>74</sup> Crawford, *The Northern Earldoms*, 95, 155; James Hunter, *Last of the Free* (Edinburgh, 1999), 82. Portmahomack had various names in early modern times, but only developed significantly as a commercial port on becoming a burgh of barony in 1678. See, Alexander Fraser, *Tarbat, Easter Ross: A Historical Sketch* (Evanton, 1988), 117; Anson, *Fishing Boats and Fisher Folk*, 241-2.

<sup>75</sup> For a post-Reformation account emphasising the part of St Boniface at Rosemarkie, see John Leslie, *The Historie of Scotland, from the Death of King James I in the Year 1436 to 1561*, 2 vols., (Edinburgh, 1571; reprint, Edinburgh, 1888), I, 42.

<sup>76</sup> Barbara Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester, 1987), 96; Crawford, *The Northern Earldoms*, 155.

<sup>77</sup> Barbara Crawford, *Earl and Mormaer: Norse-Pictish relationships in Northern Scotland*, (Rosemarkie, 1995), 19.

<sup>78</sup> Norse Dingwall, all but made invisible by later architecture, is being studied seriously today by historians and archaeologists through a wider project on 'Thing' sites. See, <http://www.thingsites.com/thing-site-profiles/dingwall-scotland>

<sup>79</sup> The development of Fortrose on the Black Isle is of major significance here too. For the church and diocese of medieval Ross, see Alexander Grant, 'The Province of Ross and the Kingdom of Alba', in E.J. Cowan and R.A. MacDonald (eds), *Alba: Celtic Scotland in the Medieval Era*, (East Linton, 2000), 88-126.

<sup>80</sup> Oram, et al., *Historic Tain*, 28-9. See, also, Tom Turpie, 'Our Friend in the North: The Origins, Evolution and Appeal of the Cult of St Duthac of Tain in the Later Middle Ages', *Scottish Historical Review*, 93 (2014), 1-28; 'The many lives of St Duthac of Tain: tracing the origins of a late medieval Scottish saint', *Northern Studies*, 44, (2013), 3-20; David Ditchburn, 'The "McRoberts thesis" and patterns of sanctity in late medieval Scotland', in Steve Boardman and Eila Williamson (eds), *The Cult of Saints and the Virgin Mary in Medieval Scotland*, (Woodbridge, 2010), 177-94.

<sup>81</sup> Norman MacDougall, *James IV* (Edinburgh, 1990), 100, 135, 197; Alston, *Ross and Cromarty*, 174; Geoffrey Stell, 'Architecture and Society in Easter Ross before 1707', in Baldwin (ed.), *Firthlands of Ross and Sutherland*, 99.

<sup>82</sup> Hector Boece, *The history and chronicles of Scotland* (trans. John Bellenden), I, (Edinburgh, 1821), xxxii-xxxiii; Leslie, *The Historie of Scotland*, I, 41.

<sup>83</sup> Worthington, 'A Northern Scottish Maritime Region', 193-4. In the seventeenth century, the Reverends James Fraser and James Allan, offer an episcopal and presbyterian take, respectively, on the ferries of the region. During the eighteenth century, travellers such as Richard Franck, both Bishops Forbes and Pocock, John Campbell, Charles Cordiner, John Knox, J.A. Haldane and Robert Heron, made space to comment on the sea crossings in the area too, in Cordiner's case very favourably. The ferries of the region continued to be distinctive into the twentieth century. See, for an early nineteenth century account, C.H. Herford (ed.), *Robert Southey, Journal of a Tour in Scotland in 1819*, (London, 1929). For later ferries in the firth region, see Marie Weir, *Ferries in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1988); Mowat, *Easter Ross*, 82-5; Alston, *My Little Town*, 213. For the latest summary of salmon-fishing on a Scotland-wide basis, see David W. Summers, 'Salmon Fishing' in James R Coull, Alexander Fenton and Kenneth Veitch (eds), *Boats, Fishing and the Sea*, Scottish Life and Society, Vol. 4 (Edinburgh, 2008), 330-52; Kenneth Veitch and Anne Gordon, 'Traditional Ferries', in Kenneth Veitch (ed.), *Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology – Volume 8 – Transport and Communications* (Edinburgh, 2009), 217-20.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Gordon to his nephew and heir to the earldom of Sutherland, c.1620 in William Fraser, (ed.), *The Sutherland Book*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1892) II, 359; Alston, *My Little Town of Cromarty*, 41.

<sup>85</sup> For a current Brora community archaeology partnership between the Clyne Heritage Society and the SCAPE Trust which is exploring the salt pans, see: <http://www.shorewatch.co.uk/brora/>.

<sup>86</sup> Gordon, *A genealogical history*, 6; Bentinck, *Dornoch Cathedral and Parish*, 162-3, 232.

<sup>87</sup> Bentinck, *Dornoch Cathedral*, 217; T.C. Smout, Alan R. MacDonald and Fiona Watson, *A history of the native woodlands of Scotland, 1500-1920* (Edinburgh, 2007), 319-39; Elizabeth Beaton, 'Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth

Century Estate Girnals in Easter Ross and South-East Sutherland in Baldwin (ed.), *Firthlands of Ross and Sutherland*, 133-45.

<sup>88</sup> Jane Thomas, 'The Craftsmen of Elgin, 1540-1660' in Terry Brotherstone and David Ditchburn (eds), *Freedom and Authority: Scotland, c.1050 - c.1650: Historical and Historiographical Essays presented to Grant G. Simpson* (East Linton, 2000), 153-54; William Cramond (ed.), *The Records of Elgin*, 2 vols., (Aberdeen, 1903), I, 238, 358. More of Dornoch's early modern social and cultural development should become apparent as a consequence of Wade Cormack's current PhD research at the University of the Highlands and Islands' Centre for History, which will also provide a perspective on sport as another characteristic of the Moray Firth region's early modern past. For a blog, coordinated by Elizabeth Ritchie of the Centre and staff at Historylinks Museum in the town, and which publishes short articles on Dornoch and its vicinity, see <http://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/>

<sup>89</sup> Foden, *Wick of the North*, 118. The Reverend James Fraser referred to Wick as a town in 1587. See, William Mackay (ed.), *Chronicles of the Frasers: the Wardlaw manuscript entitled 'Polichronicon seu policratia temporum' or 'The true genealogy of the Frasers', 916-1674* (Edinburgh, 1905), 209. Further analysis of the records of Wick Burgh and of the Caithness Commissary Court records could prove invaluable for its early history. See also, John E. Donaldson, *Caithness in the eighteenth century* (Edinburgh, 1938), 181, 190. For a reference to hides being customed at Wick in 1428-9, see George Burnett ed., *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland (1406-1436)* (Edinburgh, 1880), 479.

<sup>90</sup> Cramond (ed.), *The Records of Elgin*, I, 238, 263-7, and his *The Annals of Cullen: 961-1904* (Buckie, 1904), 44. See, for further references to Wick-Moray trade from the early eighteenth century, William Mackay (ed.), *The Letterbook of Bailie John Stewart (1715-1752)*, (Edinburgh, 1915).

<sup>91</sup> 25 March 1793, Report by John Rennie proposing a harbour and settlement at Wick, National Archives of Scotland (hereafter NAS), G9/259.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.; Jean Dunlop, *The British Fisheries Society, 1786-1893* (Edinburgh, 1978), 166.

<sup>93</sup> Hunter, *Last of the Free*, 292. See, also, James R Coull, 'Crofter-fishermen', in Coull, Fenton and Veitch (eds), *Boats, Fishing and the Sea*, 313-15 and the same author's 'Seasonal Migration in the Caithness Herring Fishery', *Northern Scotland*, 22, (2002), 77-97.

<sup>94</sup> Foden, *Wick of the North*, x.

<sup>95</sup> The major secondary sources here, all with comments to make on the Beaully-Wick fringe, include Annie Tindley, *The Sutherland Estate, 1850-1920*, (Edinburgh, 2010); Ewen Cameron, *Land for the People: The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c.1880-1930* (East Linton, 1996); Ewen Cameron, 'Congested District to Objective One: the Scottish Highlands in the Twentieth Century', in T. M. Devine and R. J. Finlay (eds), *Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 1996), 153-69.

<sup>96</sup> 10 March 1812, Leith, Captain J.W. Gourlay to the magistrates of Inverness, NAS, GD23/6/495.

<sup>97</sup> Alston's *My Little Town of Cromarty* provides excellent coverage of the town's history in this period and more widely, the most comprehensive historical work that is available to date on a town along the coastal fringe in question here. An analysis of the London Morayshire Club and other Moray-focused scholarly societies would surely provide further material of relevance here. See, also Lester Borley (ed.), *Hugh Miller in Context* (Cromarty, 2002).

<sup>98</sup> See for example, 'Cromarty, County of Ross and Cromarty' in Sir John Sinclair (ed.), *The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791-1799*, 20 vols., (Wakefield, 1973-83.), XII, 253; 'Rosskeen, County of Ross and Cromarty', in *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, 15 vols., (Edinburgh, 1845.), XIV, 263.

<sup>99</sup> Hugh Miller, *Scenes and Legends from the North of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1869), 281, 461-2. See, also, Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters, Or, The Story of My Education* (Boston, 1857); Michael A. Taylor, *Hugh Miller: Stonemason, Geologist, Writer* (Edinburgh, 2007), 49.

<sup>100</sup> For tourism, see Alastair J. Durie, *Travels in Scotland, 1788-1881: A Selection from Contemporary Tourist Journals*, (Edinburgh, 2012), 148-9; *Scotland for the Holidays?*, 91-5, 126-7. In terms of banking, the Caledonian Banking Company, founded in Inverness in 1838, had branches along the Beaully to Wick coastline. See Richard Saville, *The Bank of Scotland: A History 1695-1995* (Edinburgh, 1996), 371, 439, 473; S.G. Checkland, *Scottish Banking: A History, 1695-1973*, (Glasgow, 1975), 507-8. This is also the research theme of Kenneth MacLeod, a postgraduate research student at the University of the Highlands and Islands. For post-1786 fishing in Easter Ross, Sutherland and Caithness, and some references to boatbuilding, including variations on the 'scaffie', see Dunlop, *The British Fisheries Society*; Malcolm Gray, *The Fishing Industries of Scotland, 1790-1914: A Study in Regional Adaptation* (Oxford, 1978). Cameron, 'Congested District', 164. For the period since 1880, Ewen Cameron's *The Highlands and Islands since 1880* (Edinburgh, forthcoming) will be a contribution of major importance.

<sup>101</sup> Andrew Perchard and Niall Mackenzie, "'Too much on the Highlands?'" Recasting the Economic History of the Highlands and Islands', *Northern Scotland*, 4 (2013), 12.

<sup>102</sup> Perchard and Mackenzie, "'Too much on the Highlands?'" , 9-10.

<sup>103</sup> *Highlands and Islands Development Board: First Report*, (Inverness, 1967), 4. For Nigg parish history, see Highland Archive Centre, CH2/1438, Records of Old Nigg Kirk Session (from 1705); CH2/350 Records of Tarbat Kirk Session (from 1750); CH2/348 Records of Presbytery of Tain 1713-1801. See also Mowat, *Easter Ross*, 44, 57, 68-9, 83, 119, 183, 243; Alston, *My Little Town*, 21, 118, 121-3, 206-7, 217, 277, 313, 317, 319.

<sup>104</sup> John S. Smith, 'The Invergordon Aluminium Smelter - Growth Policy Gone Wrong? A Note', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 98(2), (1982), 115-18; J. T. Hughes, 'HIDB Development Policy: A Response', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 99(2), (1983), 121-124.

<sup>105</sup> Michael Lynch (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*, (Oxford, 2011), 302; Cameron, 'Congested District', 173.

<sup>106</sup> Hunter, *Last of the Free*, 357.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

<sup>108</sup> Sue Jane Taylor, 'Launch of Turbine One', in Sue Jane Taylor (ed.), *BeatriceWorks* (Aberdeen, 2013), 17

<sup>109</sup> James Hunter, 'The Far North: An Artistic Perspective', in Taylor (ed.), *BeatriceWorks*, 5, 8.

<sup>110</sup> Mowat, 'The Moray Firth Province', 85.

<sup>111</sup> N. Nicolaysen (ed.), *Bergens Borgerbog 1550-1751* (Oslo, 1878), 59.

<sup>112</sup> 16 June 1752, Wick, Patrick Doull to Thomas Baikie, NAS, GD31/268. See also T.A. Fischer, *The Scots in Germany*, 31, 241-2; Francis Nevile Reid, *The Earls of Ross and their Descendants* (Edinburgh, 1894), 22; David Worthington, "'Men of noe credit"? Scottish Highlanders in Poland-Lithuania, c. 1500-1800' in T.M. Devine and David Hesse, (eds), *Scotland and Poland: Historical Encounters, 1500-2010* (Edinburgh, 2011), 93, 96; Steve Murdoch, 'More than just "Mackay's" and Mercenaries: Gaelic Influences in Scandinavia, 1580-1707', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 60 (1997), 161-185; James Hunter, *Scottish Exodus: Travels in Search of a Worldwide Clan* (Edinburgh, 2007).

<sup>113</sup> For later emigration, all the following works give significant coverage to settlements from Beaully to Wick. See, Marjory Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles* (London, 2004); Marjory Harper, *Scotland No More? The Scots who left Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2013); Andrew MacKillop, 'The Highlands and the Returning Nabob: Sir Hector Munro of Novar, 1760-1807' in Marjory Harper (ed.), *Emigrant Homecomings: The Return Movement of Emigrants, 1600-2000*, (Manchester, 2005), 233-61; David Alston, 'Very rapid and splendid fortunes'? Highland Scots in Berbice (Guyana) in the early nineteenth century', in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 63, (2006), 208-36; David Alston, 'A Forgotten Diaspora: The Children of Enslaved and "Free Coloured" Women and Highland Scots in Guyana Before Emancipation', *Northern Scotland*, 6(1), 49-69; Cameron, 'Scotland's Global Impact'.

<sup>114</sup> Jill de Fresnes, 'Image and Identity - the Lives of the Scots Herring Girls, 1900- 1950' (University of the Highlands and Islands PhD Thesis, 2010). One relevant oral history project is 'Down to the Sea', currently being researched in the Seaboard Villages of Easter Ross. See <http://seaboardhistory.com/>. Another, on Invergordon aluminium smelter, is currently being carried out by Norman Newton and Emma Wood.

<sup>115</sup> Edward Meldrum, *Inverness* (Inverness, 1982); Norman Newton, *The Life and Times of Inverness* (Edinburgh, 1996); James Miller, *Inverness* (Edinburgh, 2004).

<sup>116</sup> Nancy C. Dorian, *East Sutherland Gaelic* (Dublin, 1978). For Easter Ross and Black Isle Gaelic, see, Seosamh Watson, 'Saoghal Bana-Mharaiche: Oral Accounts of Life in an Easter Ross Fisher Community (Part 1)', *Béaloideas*, 71 (2003), 75-97, 99-215; Charles W.J. Withers, "'The shifting frontier": the Gaelic-English boundary in the Black Isle, 1698-1881', *Northern Scotland*, 6 (1985), 133-56. For a history of the Scots language in northern Scotland that refers to many settlements on the Beaully-Wick fringe, see Robert McColl Millar, *Northern and Insular Scots* (Edinburgh, c2007), ch. 7.

<sup>117</sup> Neil M. Gunn, *The Silver Darlings*, (Edinburgh, 1941); Jessie Kesson, *Another Time, Another Place*, (Edinburgh, 1983); Iain Banks, *The Wasp Factory*, (London, 1984).

<sup>118</sup> James R. Coull and Alexander Fenton, 'Fishermen's Clothing and Equipment' in Coull, Fenton and Veitch (eds), *Boats, Fishing and the Sea*, 462-3.