# 5 Dingwall

A View of Dingwall in 1824 as painted by J. Clark

The Royal Burgh of Dingwall has a very long history, dating back well over a thousand years. Today this busy town and the surrounding area still holds some important historical points of reference for the family known as the Davidsons of Tulloch.

This family, in historical terms, are relative newcomers to this district as it was only in 1762 that Henry Davidson, originally from Cromarty, purchased Tulloch Castle, located on the northern edge of the town, from the Bayne family.

Six successive Davidsons from this family were lairds of Tulloch Castle until 1917. They played a prominent role in the affairs of the Burgh of Dingwall, and across the County of Ross-shire. Different generations served as Provosts of Dingwall and as MPs for the local constituency, and one was appointed a Lord Lieutenant of Ross & Cromarty in 1879.

**The Town House** with its distinctive Clock Tower, now houses the Dingwall Museum. Visit this museum to view its important local civic and military collections, including the names of the **Davidsons** who held the position of Provost of Dingwall.

Dingwall Burgh Seal

## The Davidson Provosts of Dingwall:

**Henry Davidson**
[b.1726 d.1781] ...1779

**Duncan Davidson**
[b.1733 d.1799] ...1784

**Duncan Davidson**
[b.1800 d.1881] ...1840

DINGWALL MUSEUM

The Town House

**St Clements Parish Church** was accidentally burnt down in 1799, and the Davidsons of Tulloch as chief heritors provided more than half the funds for the rebuilding. However the Davidsons at the time were in dispute with the Kirk Session, and caused the church to be built back to front with its entrance facing north to Tulloch rather than the town.

St Clements Parish Church

**St James Episcopalian Church** was built on land provided by the **Davidson of Tulloch** family in the 19th Century and includes the family memorials.

St James Church

Davidson Memorials

**Dingwall Canal** was funded and built with assistance from the Davidsons in 1815–16. Walk the former towpath and imagine the shipping scene of almost two centuries ago.

Dingwall Canal

# Some other Davidson connections with locations in the Dingwall Area:

## Strathpeffer

Hidden away on the hill above the tourist façade of this former Highland tourist spa town, is the small Kinettas graveyard which contains the grave of one of the great Highland pipers, **John ban Mackenzie 1796–1864**.

**The Davidsons of Tulloch** as was the custom among many of the landowners of the time employed their own pipers. **John ban Mackenzie** was employed by the Davidsons of Tulloch from 1821.

In 1832, the then laird, **Duncan Davidson 1800–1881**, started to pursue the young heiress Mary Mackenzie of Applecross even though he was already married with a growing family. **John ban Mackenzie** was entrusted to act as go between by Duncan to deliver his letters to the young Miss Mackenzie. However Duncan's plans for elopement with Miss Mackenzie were dramatically thwarted, when the handsome piper and the heiress eloped instead, and were married by the blacksmith at Crieff. Fortunately for John ban Mackenzie, his piping skills and renown were already well established, and he was able to gain employment with Lord Breadalbane at Taymouth Castle for the next 29 years before he retired to Munlochy, on the Black Isle.

John ban MacKenzie

John ban MacKenzie's Grave at Kinettas, Strathpeffer

## Contin

This small village is located approximately midway between Dingwall and Garves on the main road to the Ullapool in the West. Tucked away on an island site behind the main part of the village is Contin church.

The current church dates from 1796 but there has probably been a church on this site from much earlier times. There are a pair of Davidson graves from the 19th century located alongside each other, close to the entrance to the church.

We assume there must be a connection between the families behind these graves because of their proximity, but this detail is not known yet. The quality of the engraving on these headstones has survived well. These are classic examples of the sort of headstones which provide the family historians with so many valuable clues about family ancestors.

**William Davidson's** headstone is a memorial to a whole family; parents and children, one of whom died in Quebec. It is interesting to note that the name of the son Kenneth Davidson, a Spirit Merchant from Glasgow who organized this memorial is prominently engraved at the top of the headstone.

**Simon Davidson's** headstone is not so much a family memorial but it does include the details of his parents.

William Davidson

Simon Davidson