



Plan of Inverness Station

THE ADVANCE TO THE NORTH

some three miles, crossing thence to the northern shore to follow the banks of the River Shin and the course of the River Fleet down to the coast, at the head of Loch Fleet.

On 29 June 1865 the Sutherland Railway was authorized from Bonar Bridge to Brora, a distance of $32\frac{3}{4}$ miles. Having crossed the kyle, the railway climbed through the hills to Lairg, at the south-eastern end of Loch Shin, whence roads radiate in several directions to the west and north coasts. Turning to the east, the line continued past the head of Loch Fleet to Golspie and Brora.

Despite a contribution of £15,000 by the Highland Railway, the promoters were unable to carry out the whole of their scheme. The works were heavy and expensive, especially the viaduct over the kyle, comprising five masonry arches and a girder span of 230 ft, and the rock cuttings near Lairg. On 13 April 1868, the 26 miles from Bonar Bridge to Golspie were opened. A service of coaches, running in connection with the trains, was established between Golspie and Wick and Thurso, and between the Mound (at the head of Loch Fleet) and Dornoch.

For some years there was no station between Bonar Bridge and Invershin, at the northern end of the bridge over the Kyle of Sutherland. The nearest road bridge was at Ardgay, and people living on the Ross-shire side of the kyle had to come into Bonar Bridge to join the train, although the railway passed almost by their doors. A great improvement was effected in 1871, when a platform was opened at Culrain, at the south end of the viaduct. For the time being, trains stopped by request to pick up or set down passengers; but by 1873 it figured in the timetables as an ordinary station. Although little more than a quarter of a mile apart, Culrain and Invershin served different districts, because of the lack of facilities for crossing the kyle. (Prior to 1 January 1917 a third-class single ticket between these stations cost one halfpenny, the lowest fare on the Highland Railway.) In contrast to this distance were the ten miles separating Lairg and Rogart.

The Sutherland Railway had stopped short at Golspie, and the next advance in the extension towards the north was made possible by the generosity of the Duke of Sutherland, the principal landowner in the county, whose seat was at Dunrobin Castle, two miles north of Golspie. Since the creation of the title in 1833, successive Dukes had done much to better conditions in the county and expended considerable sums on various improvement schemes. Large tracts of moorland were reclaimed and turned into fertile farm lands, while in the west and north of the county new roads

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