

PAPERS ON  
SUTHERLAND  
ESTATE MANAGEMENT  
1802-1816

*edited by R. J. Adam, M.A.*

Volume 2



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1802-1807

LETTERS

RELATING TO THE FACTORY OF DAVID CAMPBELL

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Colin Mackenzie to Countess of Sutherland

Tongue, 14 September 1799

AS I CONCLUDE that Your Ladyship will be desirous to know the result of my journey to Assint which I have now left, I take the opportunity of the first Place from which the Post goes to the South to address these lines to you for your and Lord Gower's information.

The people had been summoned to meet us at the Manse and most of the old men attended; *few* of the Sons. There was plainly a Combination fostered by the hope that if they adhered together any threats would be frustrated. All we got in two days was 4 Recruits. In these two days however we proceeded regularly to Call on the people of each farm progressively and thus showed them that none of the refractory would be overlooked. Having gone so far it seemed absolutely necessary not to stop there, and the Plan fixed was that General Wemyss should return to Dunrobin with Fraser<sup>1</sup> while I went thro' the farms in Assint making every demonstration of a decided purpose to punish the disobedient, and I am happy to say I think the plan has fully succeeded. I resolved not to seek Recruits but to show as if the die was Cast and preparations for a new arrangement were in forwardness. I let it be understood that I was Come to form an acquaintance with the farms

<sup>1</sup> John Fraser, factor of Sutherland Estate, 1791-1802.

and their Value, and accordingly got 2 or 3 of the people on each to answer my questions and put the answers on paper. I then on each farm Concluded with a question that Could not but Come home to their minds and speak more strongly to their feelings than any address of mine. It was 'What rent would this farm fetch if in the hands of one Tenant?' This rough Survey I inclose in the exact Shape in which I made it, for, tho' (taken in this hurried manner)

Names of farms	Rent	Number of Cows	Number of Sheep	Quantity of arable land	Number of families	Number of persons
1. Badidarroch	£11	80	40	very little	8	50
2. Achmalvich	£28	200	50	Do.	23	180
3. Clachtole	£31 10s.	250	50	a good deal	24	140
4. Store	£21 2s. 6d.	100	none	Do. but in patches	13	65
5. Balchladich	£9 7s. 6d.	50	40	a great deal	6	30
6. Clashmore	£32	180	60	Do.	15	75
7. Achnacarnan including Durlan	£19	50	40	some not much	11	55
8. Culkein Achnacarnan	£19	50	40	a good deal arable and improvable	13	65
9. Clashnessie	£29	120	30	a good deal	18	90
10. Culkein Drumbeg	£23 6s. 8d.	200	40	Do.	16	80
11. Nedd	£22	100	60	Do.	11	60
Unaple Drumbeg Glenleraig	I did not visit I had no occasion to go to as that farm furnished all that was required Do.					

it Cannot be *Accurate*, yet it is in some of its points very near Accuracy and is somewhat Curious. I walked over all these farms, being on the point of Store, and had the Satisfaction to observe that the people Universally admitted the justice of the proceeding and as I assured them every where that it would only affect the refractory and disobedient I was told that my Visit was a very welcome and acceptable one. Before Coming away from Assint I saw the operation

General Nature	Comparison with other farms	Rent which one tenant could give	Incidental remarks
1. rocky with little patches of grass and arable	better than Bracklach	£13	might Suit Joplin if his road is to come to Lochinvar – good harbour etc.
2. rock and sweet grass		£36	well adapted for Sheep – good Station for Cod fishing – Harbour – Sea Ware etc.
3. Do. besides arable	much better than Achmalvich	£42	well adapted either for Sheep or Cattle – Sea Ware on the Coast.
4. rock with patches chiefly arable	the worst bargain on this point	£42	More arable land in these two than in Clachtole but no Sea Ware.
5. Chiefly arable			Balchladich is a fine sloping bank.
6. Excellent			
7. middling; part arable; part poor grass	Achnacarnan has best grass, Culkein best arable – value equal	£48	The Houses Scattered thro' the arable land should be moved to the height and put in regular Stances. The people will have no objection to this arrangement.
8. part middling grass; part tolerable arable			
9. very fine			
10. good arable good grass	same Value with Drumbeg	£40 £63 for Drumbeg and Culkein	Same remark as on Clashmore. Do.
11. hilly but good grass	dear in Comparison with the other farms	£30 if let to Joplin	Would Suit Joplin if his road is to Come to Loch Nedd – good Harbour.

of these Measures. Several of the people who had been quite obstinate at the Manse followed me after I had quitted their farms and offered the Young Men that were wanted. I got in this way Six Recruits, fine Young Men, and might have got more but that my policy required I should seem indifferent about them. I have no doubt, now the Combination is broken, that all the Men will be got that are demanded, and am Satisfied by all I learnt that the Country in its present State will be the better of the drain.

It is not easy to analyse the principles with Certainty on Which this opposition has been founded but I flatter myself and am Convinced, as far as my observation goes, that thus Curbed, it has no tendency to endanger ultimately or Seriously Your Ladyship's power and authority in the Country. I imagine that the Men of the late Fencible Regiment who came home were the root of the business. Some of them I believe had imbibed in the South, particularly at Glasgow and also perhaps in Ireland, Crude and undigested Notions quite inapplicable to a Country like Sutherland which I dare say tainted some of their Neighbours here; and many or Most of the Old Regiment (I mean the last) had Conceived a foolish and absurd prejudice against General Wemyss of which I believe they are now ashamed; those reasons made the recruiting slow and heavy at first and Highlanders when they form an idea are obstinate to a great degree perhaps especially when it is an absurd one. This is I think a Summary of what Can be stated as the Meaning of this opposition, and if I am right, there is only to be regretted the delay; for when the business gets fairly a beginning in a district it goes on rapidly, the people Seeming to me not to have lost any of their Martial Spirit or profound attachment to Your family.

As Your Ladyship may not have heard of the prejudice against General Wemyss to which I allude, and as any thing touching the Regiment is I know interesting to you I may mention what it was. In the Course of a March in Ireland<sup>1</sup> the Column of which the Sutherlands were a part met a little Stream. The Regiments in front marched thro' in perfect order. The Sutherlands who were

<sup>1</sup> The 3rd Sutherland Fencible Regiment (1793-8) served in Ireland during the rising of 1798.



about the Centre broke their ranks to take Stepping Stones and the rear of the Column was thereby much retarded. If the Enemy had been near very bad Consequences would have ensued. The Officers were Certainly to blame, and General Wemyss who was in front when it happened was so incensed that when the Column Came to another River over which there was a bridge he made the Sutherlands wade while the rest took the bridge. Such is the Story on which the first objections were founded. The Soldiers however found so little Encouragement in this Complaint and were so laughed at for their delicacy that they now never mention it.

There is one observation I ought to make on the inclosed Survey. Lord Gower will be Surprised at the vast number of Cattle. So was I and thought the rent truly far too low Considering that Circumstance; but the truth is the Cattle are absolutely starved and this is a matter which will hereafter deserve to be Considered in the view of adopting Means for regulating the quantities which would serve the poor people themselves and make their farms more productive.

Finding such prospect of good Consequence ensuing from my trip thro' Assint I resolved to Carry the same Measures into effect in Strathnaver and, having walked over Lord Reay's forest to this place where his Mother and Sisters now reside, I proceed tomorrow to Clerkhill, and so on to Clibrig and Shiness and back to Dunrobin.

I ought to mention that I received very active assistance in this trip from John Scobie at Ardvare and also from my namesake Murdo Mackenzie at Stronchrubie.

Colin Mackenzie to Countess of Sutherland

Tore, Ross-shire, 1 October 1799

Just as I was leaving Sutherland I was honor'd by receiving Your Ladyship's letter of 17th ult. which I would have answered sooner, but being reluctant to trouble Your Ladyship often I waited to be enabled to transmit to you some papers regarding the Estate not then signed by the Parties in the Country tho' settled with them. I directed that they should follow me and they are now inclosed.

They are 1st Two Duplicates of Mr Pope's Contract of Wadset<sup>1</sup> with a Note of the Calculation by which the Wadset Sum is fixed; 2dly Two Duplicates of his Tack of Navidale; 3dly Two Duplicates of Siberscross's Tack; and lastly Two Duplicates of James Gordon's liferent Tack of Old Rhives; all of which are Settled according to Lord Gower's directions. After they are Signed in usual form I beg that Pope's *Wadset* and *Tack* may be sent to me to Edinburgh; The others to Mr Fraser.

I have also the honor to inclose the following Proposals or Memorials to each of which I have annexed a Report for Your Ladyship's and Lord Gower's Consideration. 1st one from the Minister of Loth relative to an augmentation of Stipend. 2dly one from the Minister of Golspy about a New Manse and Glebe etc. 3dly one from Captain Kenneth Mckay for a prolongation of his Tack and a Wadset – and lastly one for Mrs McLean relative to her Tack of Craigton of which a Draft is adjusted as to every particular except what is mentioned in the Memorial which is drawn up by Major Alexander Sutherland.

In the last letter which I did myself the honor to address to Your Ladyship I faintly sketched as they appeared to me the Causes which led to the apparent disaffection of the People on Your Estate. After the date of that letter I passed thro' Strathnaver and after spending nearly a week at Dunrobin in adjusting the several papers inclosed etc., left Sutherland and am now on my way to Edinburgh where I shall be in Eight or ten days. In the Course of my journey my mind was chiefly bent upon the Subject of Your Ladyship's enquiries, and tho' it is one on which an observer whose time was so short must be very liable to error, I think I am not mistaken in the leading points of my opinion.

I take it upon me to say decidedly that it is neither any actual oppression nor any idea or pretence of oppression on which the opposition has proceeded. Your Managers do assuredly avoid any imputation of that kind. I myself heard the people Confess that on occasions when a Year of Scarcity or any particular accidental distress reduced them to temporary difficulties Your Ladyship's Granaries afforded them Support; and none of them denied

<sup>1</sup> Robert Pope, tacksman of Navidale, received a wadset of Gartymore, Achintou and Liriboll on 27 September 1799.

their being treated with not merely justice but kindness and tenderness.

To a *Certain* extent the *Novelty* of a Regiment of the line has I believe operated but I cannot think that goes deep, because when the young men did enlist neither they nor their friends showed any dislike of the Service but on the Contrary every mark of Chearfulness and Spirit.

I do imagine that in addition to the Causes I stated in my last I must state a relaxation more or less of the Ancient Spirit of Clan-ship and Vassalage, and this I state with the more Confidence that I discovered in Strathnaver, where the intermixture of large farms held by *Tacksmen* tends to weaken those ancient ideas, a great inferiority to the People of Assint (whose farms in general lie distinct from those of the Tacksmen) in point of Candour and openness. Thus in Strathnaver my questions about the farms were so artfully evaded that I could not make any Survey there worth Sending to Lord Gower. I cannot help adding that the Tacksmen there seemed not half so hearty and zealous as those of Assint in general. These Considerations which indeed apply to many of the Tacksmen induced me to resolve on writing a Circular letter of which I inclose a Copy. The reasons why I was led to hope it would be of benefit will I think appear obvious. I trust it will have the double effect to gratify those who are zealous by the display of their zeal and to spur the lukewarm by fear of the issue of a Comparison.

As to what Your Ladyship observes on the Subject of rewards and punishments the ideas entertained by your Agents with regard to the latter were already formed on the principles you express. A few examples will be requisite but a few will suffice. Indeed I think the repentance will be so general that few objects of punishment will remain. I did think from what I saw of the Golspy people between the Burn and the Little Ferry that some of them would be very fit objects, and that a larger farm might with advantage be made out of their possessions, but there was scarcely one left in that quarter who Continued obstinate when I came away. As to rewards a certain degree is requisite according to the old fashion which in truth resolves into this that the tenants still hold their lands by a Sort of Military tenure. A Man who furnishes a Soldier or has been

a Soldier and behaved well enjoys a preferable Claim to be Accommodated, and this is one of the strongest proofs of the Continuance of the old feudal System by which the tribute to the Lord was personal Service in War and the link between the Parties and the reward from the Lord was the possession of land which he bestowed.

I beg to suggest that in future the *tenants* (not meaning Tacksmen who Can improve their farms) should never get a Certain hold for any length of time. It may be well to promise that the rents shall not for a Certain term (say 7 years) be raised, but they should be left, I think, individually dependent for the Continuance of their possession on the Landlord's Sense of their Merits. This seems to me the most effectual way of still fostering the Highland Spirit which in the greater part of the North is nearly extinct. When the last leases were granted the tenants promised great things in the way of Meliorating their farms but they have totally failed. The Highland Spirit must no doubt decline when Civilization and the Spirit of improvement advance, but the object is to preserve the former till the Substitute exists. Indeed in my humble opinion the extinction of the one before the birth of the other would leave a Chasm highly dangerous, the passions of Men especially in a remote Country, requiring either the strong Curb which the Highland Subordination provides, or the Cool and regular Superintendence of the law for which only Men in a More Civilized State of Society are adapted.

These hints which have occurred to my Mind I humbly submit to Lord Gower whose Superior judgment will extract what it approves and reject what it deems amiss.

Whenever General Wemyss makes up 400 which I think will be very Soon he means to go to London and adjust the Nominations of Officers and procure the aid of some of them in the Completion of the Regiment from the Highland parishes.

I think I can safely Venture to assure Your Ladyship of the Absolute Security of the County in a political view.

I saw Joplin and the Specimens of Marble in Assint. As Fraser has not been able to find the Correspondence on that Subject I defer saying more on it than that I am strongly persuaded the Search will be Successful, but I think some attention must be paid to any

lease or Contract to be made with Joplin. The inland situation is a great drawback.

I saw Bethune who Seemed very thankful for Your Ladyship's attention. I inclose a Memorandum about his Son. Your Ladyship will observe What he wants is *not* an appointment as Writer tho' he flatters himself the thing wanted may eventually lead to it. Young Bethune was in some way smuggled out to Ceylon, but if he Could be put on the same list with the 4 Young Men mentioned in the letter his object is gained. They were put on the Ceylon Establishment as Clerks to Mr North or something of that kind with an allowance of £100 a Year. Perhaps he might be Named *Supernumerary Clerk*.

Colin Mackenzie to the Tacksmen of the Estate of Sutherland

Dunrobin Castle, 23 September 1799

You are no strangers to the wishes which are entertained by the Countess of Sutherland and Earl Gower in respect to the Regiment of Loyal Sutherland Highlanders now raising by General Wemyss, nor to the unexpected and unaccountable delays and difficulties by which the recruiting has hitherto been obstructed in some parts of the Estate of Sutherland. You are also I imagine pretty generally acquainted with the Instructions under which I among others have lately proceeded in forwarding the completion of the Regiment.

I have now in part executed, in part directed such measures as to enable the Countess to judge accurately of the Merits and demerits of her own immediate tenants; and now that time has been afforded them for reflection, I am happy in being enabled to flatter myself that the number of those whose failure in spirit and loyalty must subject them to be removed from the Estate will be found very small.

The object of my present address to you is not to point out or enforce the justice of the Countess's expectations that the Tacksmen on her Estate under whom another class of Persons possess as subtenants, will exert the same means of urging them to perform what is required of them by loyalty and regard to the character of the county, I am fully persuaded that would be quite superfluous, and that you are actuated by the same principle which animates the

noble proprietors. But having done so much in the way of ascertaining *correctly* the persons whose situation peculiarly calls on them to enlist in the Sutherland Regiment, I am desirous to make it compleat, and have therefore to request that you will with your earliest convenience transmit to Mr Fraser a list of the names of all persons on your Farm whether Subtenants or members of their Families, whose age and size qualify them to be soldiers – distinguishing 1st those whom any peculiar circumstance seems to you to afford them grounds for exemption, and to each of these names I beg of you to annex the precise circumstance on which you ground your opinion; 2dly those who have already enlisted; and 3dly the remainder; being persons who have hitherto declined to enlist tho' in your own opinion they are called on to come forward in the service of their Country.

As to those in the last class I know I need not enforce the propriety of your making them feel and understand that unless they immediately alter their course they are not to expect any favor or indulgence or be permitted to remain on the Sutherland Estate any more than the Countess's own immediate tenants who are in the same predicament.

You cannot fail to observe that this arrangement will testify to Lady Sutherland and Lord Gower the degree of zeal with which their Tacksmen interest themselves in the promotion of their wishes. I am confident you will be far from regretting this. For myself I doubt not it will prove that in that spirit you are unanimous. But should it be otherwise it is but just that the exceptions should be known.

Colin Mackenzie to John Fraser

Edinburgh, 30 November 1801

I have had a Conference with Culcairn and Colonel Ross when we broke off for the time in Consequence of my finding a Most Material error in Your Summation, no less than £130. The present rent (exclusive of Corrynafearn) appeared to be £274 2s. 3d. whereas it is £404 2s. 3d. They had made an offer which I thought inadequate and I told them I would not stir a step unless their offer came up to £600 which I Calculated thus:

For Corrynafearn		£45
For Shiness, Coloble and Achfrish		
present rent	£85 10s.	160
For Wester Lairg	52 1s. 9d.	60
For the rest of I took		
the present rent to be	136 10s. 6d.	335
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£274 2s. 3d.	£600

but when I found that the rest instead of £136 10s. 6d. was £266 10s. 6d. I raised my demand to £900, being £635 for the £266 10s. 6d. I rather think they will make such an offer so pray turn your thoughts to the Subject and say whether you Conceive the increase of rent is sufficient. Their object will be to take the farms subject to the Current leases where these exist and of Course to pay the increased rent at their entry. Can any thing be done for the 25 tenants whom this plan would remove? I mean the tenants independently of the tacksmen etc. If we enter on the Scheme at all my plan will be to offer Captain Matheson a 19 Years lease<sup>1</sup> at a fair rent, and I would send my letter to you with a private hint to yourself as to the rent which it would be necessary for him to offer. Pray do you think that taking his farm from him if he will not give the proper rent would give dissatisfaction or alarm to our other Wadsetters? Do you think Robert Gordon Rhine would be much touched by our taking Achness from his father?

I have moreover to beg answers to the following queries.  
 1. There is a place called Dalnessie as Colonel Ross says possessed by one Mckew at the top of Strathbrora close to Leadclinesaid. Is it included in your Rental sent me and under what head?  
 2. There are two small places called Auldnabae and Auldnaluard which Colonel Ross supposes to be Pendicles of Achness. Is this so?  
 3. There is a place called by you Auldriach. Is it the same with one which Colonel Ross mentions called Auldnahara?  
 4. There is a small pendicle between Torroboll and Auchinduich that pays between 30s. and 40s. rent and supposed to be a Pendicle of Auchinduich. Is this so?

They wish to have also the South half of Mudale which is

<sup>1</sup> Of Shiness.

possessed by Eriboll. Tell me the rent, endurance of lease etc., and what you think as to adding it? What rent etc?

I observe they put no Value on the forest of Clibrig saying it is all possessed as Shealings and so Comprehended in your rental, and they say no part of Binhormin is within the bounds they propose. Inform me as to these points.

Petition of Donald McDonald

July 1802

Unto the Right Honourable Elizabeth Countess of Sutherland and Earl Gower her Husband The Petition of Donald McDonald tenante in Torrobul Parish of Lairg Most Humbly Sheweth That your Petitioners at the time of raising the 93rd Regiment took upon him the Charge of a Family on Account of a Nephew of his, one Serjeant Alexander McDonald who left his mothers family in your Petitioners family, as he Serjeant Alexander McDonald at the time of his Entry as a Serjeant in the 93rd Regiment got Mr Fraser's Letter oblidging him to procure his mother a place at Whitsunday Last in Torrobul, but which is no ways fulfilled altho the place which was Promised Serjeant McDonald's Mother was Vacant, as the man who Possessed it left the Country; Your Petitioner Immediately applied for the Place but would not get it, but it is now sett on another by Captain Gordon.

Your Petitioner is therefore at a loss what to do, as he is not only Deprived of the place promised to Serjeant Alexander McDonald's Mother but is Summoned by Captain Gordon to remove out of his own present Possession from General Wemyss for the deceased Serjeant Samuel McDonald<sup>1</sup> Entering to the Regiment who was your Petitioners near relation; and this being the only favour Serjeant Samuel McDonald wanted in Sutherland, to Continue the Petitioner in his present Possession. Your Petitioner and his forefathers were Possessors in his present Possession which is presently Possessed by himself and his Brother, and of which Captain Gordon is now Wadsetter; the Petitioner as the rest of the Tenants in the Place of Torrobul had a *lease* of fourteen years and of which

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated 'Big Sam' (for whom see R. H. Burgoyne, *Historical Records of the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders* (London, 1883), xii, 5).



five is to Expire but in which lease there was an *Option*; but Mr Fraser's obligatory Letter bears to continue the Petitioner in his Present Possession during the Currency of the Lease. Your Petitioner makes the Present Application to Lady Sutherland and Earl Gower in hopes they will be pleased to Continue him and his Brother in his present Possession without coming under Captain Gordon's Subjection no more than paying him the Rents Regularly, as he is now more at a loss if Captain Gordon prevails in the Removing of him. Serjeant McDonald's Mother who with a family has no more to depend upon except what your Petitioner dreads of Lady Sutherland and Earl Gower will not order their Factor and Commissioner to Settle the matter before they Leave Sutherland that he will be turned out by Captain Gordon without any mercy.

In hops that the above will be taken into due Consideration  
Your Petitioner will Ever Pray for your health and  
Everlasting Hapiness.

Alexander Murray to David Campbell

Sallachtown, 11 August 1802

I hope your honour will look to do Justice for I Alexander Murray soldier from the 93rd Regiment served them nine years both myself and my Brother, and when we went away we got a small bit of Land, and Mr Fraser throw out my wife and family before we got one crop of it in the midst of this summer and we did not leave the house yet, and I hope now you will keep us in, as I came home myself since a week very ill in health, and I am willing and able to pay my Debt and Mr Fraser will not take it, but always saying that Major Campbell has the books.

I hope your honour will look now to my steate, for none of them that got the Land never went to the be [*sic*] a soldier to Lady Sutherland, and they did not allow my wife to Clean the potatoes, but they Comprised the Crop at half price.

And I hope your honour will take notice of what was made on me, for there was never a man of Lady Sutherland's Heritance that was guided as I was. And I hope now that you be so good as to give me leave to keep my Grass and Clean my potatoes, for them that hath it is in Doubts of it yet, and they are eating my Grass as fast

as they are able and keeping their own. And I hope your honour look my Condition in time for they are going to Draw the Custom pets<sup>1</sup> next week and they are thinking they will Draw them, though it was me that Cut them, and the very Day that I came home they brought my horses out of the hill and sold them, and the neighbouring horses did not come home yet.

456/6 Duncan Munro of Culcairn and John Ross to Earl Gower

Lairg, 10 September 1802

In compliance with Your Lordships Suggestion, in a conversation with Culcairn the last time he was at Dunrobin, we herewith transmit the Names of the places which join Wester Lairg and that Appear to us capable of forming a Sheep Farm of any consideration sufficient to lay claim to a share of our attention, and if Your Lordship and Lady Sutherland has no objection we will be very happy to become your Tenants on such terms as shall appear to be advantageous to both parties.

Last year we gave in very explicit proposals to Mr Colin McKenzie for a much more extensive Farm, and after some correspondence on the subject the whole matter was to be laid before Your Lordship and Lady Sutherland, but we have never been informed of that having taken place or the result. However as Your Lordship is on the Spot we are now well convinced the present proposals will be taken in consideration.

In the event of our getting the Farm we would immediately adopt a system perfectly different from that hitherto followed on the Estate of Sutherland. In the first instance we would stock wholly with Sheep. In the second we would prepare land for commencing the Turnip Husbandry, clear and lay down all the Fields in high Order with Barly and Grass seeds, thereby improve the land and increass the Pasture.

The Next object would be, to improve the Moor of Colaboll and Achfrish, if it appeared adviseable, by Burning and Pearing and laying on Lime from Shiness, where it is to be had thoattended with many difficulties particularly from the wetness of the climate and the want of roads.

<sup>1</sup> Peats supplied to Dunrobin Castle as part of rent (see above, i, pp. 118-20).

Taking all the circumstances into consideration we would beg leave to propose that Your Lordship would grant Twenty one Years Lease of the whole from the term on which the present leases expire, or 24 Years from Whitsunday next.

We shall do ourselves the honor to wait of Your Lordship on Monday and will very willingly give any further explanation in our power on this subject.

Names of Places proposed for a Sheep Farm in the Parish of Lairg: Strath Terry including Talich and Dalnacopie; Colable and Achfrish, meant to be improved; Dallchork; Aulderbreack; Savil; Easter Lairg; Mulinchlaran; Wester Lairg already possessed by Culcairn.

NB Tho Achinduich is not in the Parish of Lairg it would be an Acquisition to the Farm and we therefore propose to add it - also an uninterrupted access to the water carriage at Invershin.

Robert Gordon to Earl Gower (later Marquis of Stafford)

Achness, 11 September 1802

Since I wrote an Answer to a Letter I had from Mr Colin McKenzie, regarding my present Tack, I had Letters from my Sons, Robert Gordon in Baberton, and John in London, Desiring me to acquaint your Lordship, that from Native Attachment, they have a Desire Jointly, with their Brother Alexander of the 93d Foot, to take a Lease of my Farm, Coirnafarn, and the Hill of Clibrigg, including a small Grasing belonging to Achoul called Ballachcuisny a little to the West of a pendicle of my present Possession called Auldnabau (all which places Major Campbell saw, when he was here) in order to carry on both Sheep and black Cattle Farming and my son of the 93d would manage the whole for their mutual Interest, but that without Coirnafarn they cannot execute the Plan of having this extensive Ground, partly under Sheep and partly under black Cattle, which they wish, not knowing which of the two kinds may Answer best in this Northern Cold Climate, or which of them in Course of years may turn out most Saleable. If this proposition meets with your Lordship's Approbation, I begg after consulting Major Campbell who saw the whole Bounds,

that I may be Acquainted what yearly Rent is Asked for Coirnafarn, what Rent for the Forrest of Clibrigg, and what yearly Rent for the Grasing of Ballachcuisny, together with the Additional Rent for the places I have already in Tack that I may acquaint my Sons accordingly.

I begg Leave to observe to your Lordship, that since Whitsunday 1764, when the late Earl of Sutherland of Amiable and illustrious Memory executed a general Sett of his Estate, I paid £20 Sterling of yearly Rent for Coirnafarn untill the 1793, when it was taken from me at a Deduction only of £15 Sterling. No doubt it is worth much more this day, from the Advanced price on every highland Commodity, still the Farmer must be allowed to live by his Industry, otherwise, he must in a Course of years diminish his own private Funds.

I begg Leave further to observe, That if it is found more Eligible for your Lordship's Interest to continue the Hill of Clibrigg as a Deer Forrest, my Sons will take Coirnafarn, and the other Places abovementioned, without it. I say they will take Coirnafarn at Whitsunday next, and give a Suitable Rent, because the local Situation makes that Grasing more convenient to the Farm I now possess, than to any other one whatever.

Let me further observe that if the Hill of Clibrigg is Let, the little place of Rhihalvigg should be Sett on the Same Tenent at it's value, because that place marches with the Forrest for about 2 measured miles. As to the Tack of Clibrigg it will Sett with, or without a Connection with the foresaid Forrest, in Regard, Strath-bausty<sup>1</sup> the principal part of it is much detached, or at a distance from the Forrest which Major Campbell has seen. It is to be wished the Major Saw the whole Estate, especially the Highlands, and in particular the Strath of Naver, as I am persuaded he is capable of forming a Judicious Idea of the whole.

If I live to Martinmas next, I pay the 49th Rent, as I begann young; All this time, I had the Happiness to live on the most Friendly Terms, with the family of Sutherland and their Managers, which I desire and hope will be the Case in my day, and it will be my Request to my Sons to cultivate and mantain the Same Attachment, which my Predecessors mantained for some Hundred years under various Tenures from the Same Noble Family.

<sup>1</sup> Strath Vagastie.

That my hands are locked up, from an immediate Resignation of my Tack, in order to enter on a New one, was not my Fault. I was importuned, to give the Letter of Sub-sett mentioned in my last to Mr McKenzie. It was a Measure I never approved of, nor did I see a precedent of such till last Sett, tho' I am a Man Advanced in years. And I must be allowed to say, that I saw as good a Master, as good a Land Lord, at the Head of the Sutherland Family granting Tacks as Great Britain can produce, or Could at that Period. Your Lordship will forgive me to say, that the Man who cannot be trusted with a few Subtenents, without such Back Bonds is not worthy of geting a Lease, because Void of the right principle . . . [compliments to Countess and family].

Colin Mackenzie to David Campbell

Edinburgh, 22 November 1802

I have a letter from Murdoch Mckenzie in Stronchrubie, Assint, which chiefly occasions my troubling you now. What I gather from his letter is that prior to the Sett made last April the farm of Bracklach was possessed in part by a John McLeod, whose Share was by that Sett diminished for the purpose of making room for his brother Roderick McLeod than a Subtenant of Mckenzie's in the farm of Duchlash, and the Minutes of Sett accordingly Conferred on Roderick ten Merks pay of Bracklach. Notwithstanding this it would appear that John (from what Motives is immaterial) refused access to his brother. A Summons of Removing had been used previous to the Sett and I suppose the Decree extracted and a Precept of Ejection issued by the Sheriff, for it is stated that a party was sent to eject John from the Share of Bracklach Set to his brother. The Party it is said met with resistance but effected their purpose and placed Roderick's Cattle on the ground and cleared his house for him, and tho' Roderick was not present himself his Sons and Servants took possession, in which however they were disturbed and molested. Roderick I imagine had such a hold of his possession in Duchlash that Mckenzie Could not turn him out without his own Consent, which I take to have been given in Consideration of his getting a Situation in Bracklach. It is therefore not much to be Wondered at that he Complained, and as far as I Can See, the

Sheriff proceeded on his Complaint to award Damages and Expences against Mckenzie. *This* is a question with which you as factor have no immediate Concern but the resistance of John McLeod in Bracklach to Roderick's possession of the Share given by the Minutes of Sett is a Matter which if I am rightly informed of the fact deserves Serious attention, for an acquiescence in Such Conduct would introduce among the people a belief that they are not removable by law when they chuse to offer Violent opposition. You will therefore I doubt not make immediate enquiry into the business and if the fact be as represented cause eject John from the Share Set to Roderick, and if opposition or resistance is offered, give in a Complaint to the Sheriff for Contempt and have the Party punished or if any Violence appear, suggest to the Procurator fiscal to prosecute Criminally all concerned in it. I am told Roderick is very Willing to take his possession, tho' for this *first* year it is probably lost to him. But whether he be or no, due authority must be maintained, and he must be told when the place is open that it is his business to take and keep possession, and that he is thereafter liable for the rent whether or no. Very probably this was made so Confused a Story to you that you did not understand it. Indeed it Cost me some difficulty to get at what was meant, but I am much persuaded my Statement is pretty Correct. Perhaps your best way will be to send for Roderick and John and speak to them, and if that fail, to use strong measures.

I have been thinking of how the Wadsetters rents are to be Collected now. For this year I think Adam Bannerman must act for John Fraser<sup>1</sup> but hereafter my plan would be that if you got a smart clever Young Man to act as your Clerk I would recommend *him* to the Several Wadsetters and their allowances would go a good way towards making up a Salary for him as your Clerk. You may think of this. You can learn from Bannerman the amount of the allowances. Lord Hermand appoints Captain Kenneth Mckay his factor but I think the rest will listen to any recommendation of Mine. I dare say this year the tenants will pay Bannerman without special authority. If any other mode of Collection for this year can be pointed out for the good of poor Fraser's family I would certainly wish it adopted.

<sup>1</sup> John Fraser died early in November 1802.

John McDiarmid and Alexander McCallum to David Campbell

Culgrain,<sup>1</sup> 10 December 1802

Having understood that Lady Sutherland and Lord Gower intend converting the following Small Farms into one Sheep tenement viz. Blarich with all its Pendicles Grasings and Shealings as contained in Captain McDonald's last Lease (excepting the Miln of Blarich and the Ground presently annexed thereto), Captain McDonald's Whole Wadset Lands of Moy etc., the Farm of Rhine with all its Pendicles and Grasings (the Shealing of Coryvachnich excepted), Also the Farms of Incheap Dalmore and Rovycraig with all their Shealings and Grasings, And finding that Blarich and Captain McDonald's wadset lands (except a small part of the Wadset lands which is sett to Captain Gordon at Rhine and is not open sooner than at Whitsunday 1807) are out of Lease and open at Whitsunday first 1803, We the undersigned beg leave to offer for the said Lands that are open at Whitsunday first a Yearly Rent of One Hundred and seventy five Pounds Sterling, and when put in possession of the Lands above mentioned, the Lease of which does not expire before Whitsunday 1807, an Additional Rent of One Hundred and seventy five Pounds making in all an Annual Rent of Three hundred and Fifty Pounds Sterling.

A lease to be granted for twenty four years from the time we are put in possession of the last part of the Tenement, say Whitsunday 1807. Provided also that the Sum of £300 Sterling be granted without Interest to be laid out in building a Dwelling house of stone and Lime and Slated, and Office houses sufficiently built of dry stone and covered with Thatch at the term of Whitsunday 1807 when possession is got of said Farm of Rovycraig being the situation most convenient to build on. We oblidgeing ourselves to keep the said dwelling house and offices (to be built at Rovycraig) in proper order during the lease and to deliver them at the expiry of the lease in value equal to said £300 or pay the deficiency, said value to be ascertained by valuation, also to take the Dwelling house of Blarich and Rhine by Valuation at our entry to the said Farms and deliver them in like good condition at our Removal or pay the defficiency, giving if required satisfactory Security

<sup>1</sup> Probably Culrain, Ross-shire.

for the fulfilling of this as well as for the punctual payment of the Rent.

Colin Mackenzie to David Campbell

Edinburgh, 18 January 1803

I received yesterday yours of the 11th. Your Remittance will be very acceptable and the sooner the better.

As Culcairn and Colonel Ross are Content at present with a possession from year to year of Corrynafearn I think it will be very beneficial (seeing it is not wanted for the Dunrobin farm) to let them have it, getting an adequate rent for it; unless in one View perhaps which is this and you will judge of it. It is not impossible that Robert Gordon may still give up Achness at the Suggestion of his Son who resides near Edinburgh. Now if Corrynafearn would be useful for a Sheep farm in that quarter, it would be right to temporise a little till I am off or on with Gordon which will be soon. If Corrynafearn is of no Consequence to Achness's farm, then you may proceed to make a bargain with Culcairn and Colonel Ross at £40 if you can or as near it as possible.

I have maturely Considered what you lay before me in regard to the farms of Mui, Blairich etc., and the result is that the immediate bargain would be very disadvantageous. It would stand thus:

The lands on which alone we would get a rise of rent before 1807 are the Wadset of Mui (excluding a small part held in lease by Captain Gordon till 1807) and the lands of Blairich and the Miln.

According to the offer which you transmit we would receive for the Sheep farm £175, besides your Valuation of the Miln rent, £10, and the rent of Captain Gordon's pendicle of the Wadset, £5 os. 7½d.: £190 os. 7½d.

The present rent is for the Wadset 5 per Cent on £1291, the Wadset Money, £64 11s., Blairich and the Miln, £56 6s.: £120 17s.: difference £69 3s. 7½d., but this difference we are required to purchase by paying Mrs McDonald £200 for the lease of Blairich of which 4 years are to run. Now I observe by Calculation that £244 would be the full purchase money of an annuity of £69 for 4 years; but not half the rise of £69 is attributable to her



lease. In short the sooner you let Mrs Macdonald know that her demand is deemed quite extravagant and inadmissible I think it will be the better. If she should lower her tone it will be then time enough to Consider what it might be prudent to give her, Certainly it would be foolish to give above half (at the utmost) of her demand. The Anecdote however is worth remembering and quoting to show that 4 years of a lease on the Sutherland Estate seem to be held worth nearly 4 years purchase of the Tack duty.

The offer by McDiarmed and McCallum however on which the preceding Calculation is founded seems to me to be quite inadequate and in other respects unreasonable.

The Rent after the whole is open they offer to pay is £350, add the Miln what you state, £10, and Corryveaknach, £10: £370.

Now the present rent is Wadset of Muy, £64 11s.; Blairich (including Miln), £56 6s.; Rhine, £27 19s. 2d.; Corryveaknach, £4 13s. 9½d.; Dalmore, £10 2s. 4<sup>8</sup>d.; Rovic Craigtown, £10 12s. 4<sup>8</sup>d.; Incheap, £15 17s. 7<sup>4</sup>d.: £190 2s. 4d.

Now I incline to think that when so great a range is thrown into one farm, and the System of Management is Changed from Black Cattle to Sheep, there ought to be a rise beyond double rent. 2dly, The length of lease proposed (24 years after 1807) is excessive. I would not desire a Sheep-farmer to introduce a Stock on a New farm with a Shorter lease than 19 years, but I even think 19 from the *Commencement* of the *experiment* should suffice. 3dly, I think the tenant should be Content with an allowance of Melioration at the issue of the lease according to the Common Custom in the Highlands.

On the whole it is my opinion that we can never safely give a lease of a Sheep farm without previous Advertisement so as to afford opportunity for Several Sheep farmers to see the ground and make offers. But I apprehend that without having both Blairich and Muy open it would be in vain to advertise, and therefore unless Mrs McDonald immediately come round the letting of this farm must be postponed. Perhaps before another year her notions may undergo a considerable alteration and her lease will be one fourth less valuable than now.

Major Houston has never intimated to me any unwillingness on the part of his nephew to renounce the Wadset and take a Lease, but

the Contrary. Pray take an opportunity of convincing the Major how foolish as well as improper it would be to show such dispositions. The late Lieutenant Houston purchased the Wadset in 1798 and at that time intimated his hope that he would have a prorogation for 9 years, but on my stating the point to Lord Gower his Lordship disapproved and no prorogation was ever executed. Any opposition to his Lordship's plans would come particularly ill at this time from that quarter, considering that Lord Gower has very recently agreed to Mr Houston (the Nephew) being appointed Collector of Cess, an office for which he may perhaps know there were other applications. I am Sure Major Houston must feel the force of what I say.

As to the New Wadsets you will observe by recurring to my letter of 3 November last that I am already possessed of the Valued rents of them and that my enquiry went to other points, on which as soon as Convenient I should like to have your opinion, tho' perhaps you cannot positively give it till the Season enables you to see the Country.

With regard to Sheriff McCulloch's charge of 5 Guineas you must look into Mr Fraser's accounts to see if it was a Customary Article. If so it must be continued. I have written to McCulloch to this effect.

Isaac Jopling to Colin Mackenzie

Gateshead, 25 January 1803

I received your Letter last night inclosing Major Campbell's Account of Rents due by me, But as he has given me no Credit on account of Lauchlan Mackenzie and Donald McLeod<sup>1</sup> two Soldiers upon Reincreigh I suppose the transactions between Mr Fraser and me Concerning these Men have not come to his knowledge. These two men had each a promise of Ten Merks Land at the old rent<sup>2</sup> signed by General Wemyss Yourself and Mr Fraser, and at Mr Fraser's request I suffered them to come upon Reincreigh for 1801 he promising to provide for them elsewhere the year

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 23-24, 50-51.

<sup>2</sup> For 'old rent' in *Assynt* see *John Home's Survey of Assynt*, ed. R. J. Adam (Scottish History Society, 1960), 64-6.

following. One of them paid his rent quietly, the other (Donald McLeod) took it into his head to carry his rent to Dornoch and pay it to the Sherriff where I suppose it still remains. Mr Fraser offended at this Man's refractory behaviour dispossessed him of his Ten Merks and he was provided for by Captain Mackenzie, but having no place yet for Lachlan prevailed upon me to allow him and a William McLeod upon five Merks each for one year longer and he would allow me Donald McLeod's rent (which was paid to the Sherriff) and the difference of Lachlan's rent at our first reckoning, and take both Lachlan and William McLeod from me at the year's end. Thus stood the case between Mr Fraser and me and I hope Major Campbell and yourself will find no difficulty in doing for me what Mr Fraser meant to do. The Money to be deducted will be Rent due me by Donald McLeod for 1801 and paid the Sherriff, £3 os. 8½d., and difference between old and new rent of Lachlan's 5 Merks, 1802, £1, and which taken from the £64 ss. 3d. in your Letter will leave the sum Sixty Pounds 4s. 6½d., which if you please you may draw upon me for at 40 days, and when you advise me I beg you will inform me what was the Minister of Assint's Answer concerning the half of Coulin which I so much need and which you wrote to him about while I was with you at Edinburgh.

Colin Mackenzie to Isaac Jopling

Edinburgh, 4 February 1803

I received yours of the 25th ult. authorising me to draw on you at 40 days for £60 4s. 6½d., instead of the sum I stated. There are points in you Letter quite new to me and I dare say also to Major Campbell which will require some consideration, and in the interim I drew on you at 40 days on the 27th for £60 8s. 8d. being the sum stated by Major Campbell and only 4s. 1½d. beyond what you direct. This will keep my Account square with Major Campbell which would otherwise get into Confusion. In future you will settle your rents with him for it is not quite correct for me to receive Martinmas rents in the end of January by Bill at 40 days.

I have sent a Copy of your Letter to Major Campbell who will enquire about Donald McLeod's rent of £3 os. 8½d. As to Lachlan's

£1, if we get you soon rid of him, you may I think all considered and especially as I gave up a good deal to you at settling the Lease, make that sacrifice. The giving you the allowance would occasion a Confused Entry in Major Campbell's Accounts and would I know be highly disagreeable to Lord Gower who was far from pleased at some of the transactions about Soldiers etc. All this however you can adjust with Major Campbell in future. Meantime I hope my Bill has met due honour.

Colin Mackenzie to David Campbell

Edinburgh, 28 February 1803

I inclose a letter I have about our Cursed Recruiting business. I remember I got a former one in Sutherland but Fraser gave some reason against it which I now forget. Pray make some enquiry about it and let me know how it Stands or why this promise was not attended to along with the rest.

Pray who is Collecting the Wadset rents? I have heard of none recovered except Navidale. Mr Houston undertakes mine. I hope the others are not forgotten.

I also inclose a letter from Messrs Arbuthnot for your perusal. I do not think there is any part of Assint out of Lease sooner than 1807. I would be very much disposed to encourage such a plan as this.

Arthur Cooper to Colin Mackenzie

Inverness, 25 February 1803

Prefixed I beg to hand you a Copy of a missive granted by you and the other Gentlemen whose signatures are adhibited thereto. The Father of the young man Donald Sutherland lately Applied to me for the purpose of writing you on the subject to which the letter relates. From it, you will Observe that Sutherland has it in his power to make choice of either of the four possessions on Amat and Dalbrick or the half of the farm of Crislich. The *latter* he seems most partial to, and now makes his Claim for obtaining possession thereof at Whitsunday next, and therefor gives you this timeous intimation that you may have it in your power to remove the present possessors of Crislich 'ere next term.

On this subject I took the liberty of writing you at Dunrobin Castle in Autumn last, but never received an answer. I shall now expect to be favoured by hearing from you on this subject soon.

Colin Mackenzie, John Fraser, and General Wemyss to  
Donald Sutherland, Riniscane

Dunrobin Castle, 21 September 1799

As you have voluntarily enlisted your self in the Sutherland Highland Regiment now raising by General Wemyss, we as agent and Factor for the Right Honourable Earl Gower and Countess of Sutherland do hereby agree how soon the present lease of the Davybeg of Strathbrora expires to put you, or your Father in your name in possession of any of the four possessions on Amat and Dalbreack that you or your Father may fix on; that you shall continue thereon for Seven years after your entry, at such rent as shall be made thereto by two, or four Men mutually choosen; or if you prefer, we shall put your Father in possession at Whitsunday next, of that half of Crislich presently possessed by the Widow of Alexander Clyne, and William her Son, and to Continue thereon for seven years at the present rent after Whitsunday next which you may rely.

John Scobie to David Campbell

Ardvare, 2 May 1803

Mr Hugh Clarke shewed me your Letter anent the Lands in Glenlerag and Drumbag from which the Men are to Emigrate. Mr Clarke and them who got the Labouring from George MacKenzie Inishdamp, given to him by John MacKenzie, late Tenant in Glenlerag, and also the people from Drumbag, who got the Labouring from the man that emigrates from there, were all here this day. I gave what Lands were taken fast Sett from the People at Glenlerag back again to themselves, and I gave Two and half Merks, to another man there in addition to what he had before, for a Certain Reason, and for which he had General Wemyss's Colin Mackenzie's and John Fraser's Letters, for one of his Sons going to the Sutherland Regiment which I shall further explain

to you at meeting. There are other Seven Merks and one half of John McKenzie's Lands, which George McLenzie gave to other four of the Tenants of Glenlerag from whom no Lands were taken, at the Last Sett, which I thought illible to be given Mr Clarke, but after Canvassing the business with them for a long time, they would not agree to give them up, 'till they would see you, and I therefore gave them this Letter to give you a fair state of the whole, and on thier Return I shall give these Seven and  $\frac{1}{2}$  Merks to Mr Clarke or the Tenants as you direct. Mr Clarke says, he will not put a Man from his Farm to any of Lady Sutherland's, but for whom he will be Responsible; as to the Drumbag people, I think, getting a Schoolmaster to that part of the Country, is very proper and needfull, and as Mr Clarke is to provide for him, at Culkin, that he ought to have the five Merks at Drumbag, to accomodate another of his people or else that these five Merks in Drumbag shall be given for the accomodation of the Schoolmaster, but I could not settle that Business either. I also Received your Letter, from the Inverkirkag man, and wrote John MacKenzie inclosing him it, with my advice, and I have no doubt of his adhering to what you suggest. You may depend, that I will wait of you as Soon as possibly I can.

How soon the matter is settled, Mr Clarke or I will send you the Names of the people who get the Lands, what Old Rent they posses, and what Rent they pay.

George McKenzie to David Campbell

no date

John McKenzie who possessed twelve Merks pay at Glenlerag and gave me the possession which I wrote to you at the same time and you may remember that you wrote me an answer that you woud give it to those who had most need of it in the Town, and on receiving your Answer I gave it to those who had less lands in the Town Murdo Morison and Norman Munro and I hope that your generosity will not deprive them of it as they have most need of any in the Town. They have the labouring already and got possession when I was favoured with your letter. They came this way today and told me that Captain Scobie gives it to Hugh

Clarke at Oldney. This I hope you will not allow and the present poor tenants of the Town in so much need and want of lands it will be great sin to take it from them and to give it to men from other Towns who might get plenty of lands where they are as Hugh Clarke has a Town which he got possession of last year where he may accomodate a number of tenants without doing himself any injury. Captain Scobie has given a part of these lands that John McKenzie gave over to tenants in the Town of Glenlerag who had most lands of the tenants in this Town which is not doing justice to the rest of the tenants who have less pay, so I hope your goodness will consider the situation of these poor Men and continue them without bringing Men from other places. They will tell more about this business as they are going to Dunrobin purposely on this Occation. They will also tell how Hugh Clarke uses men in thier neighbourhood, and I have nothing to say but that I regret very much how they are used if tenants from other Towns are allowed to get their possessions.

Colin Mackenzie to David Campbell

Edinburgh, 6 January 1804

I have at present several topics upon which to trouble you.

It will be proper to ascertain the exact State of Accounts between our Constituents and John Frasers Estate.<sup>1</sup> Your Statement sent me in May last appears to be sufficiently Correct, except that you say that exclusive of the balance (£683 10s. 8d.) Sundry of the persons given up as in Arrear pleaded Compensation by debts due by Fraser to them. So far as they hold Receipts from him or Settled Accounts debiting them with the Rent said to be in Arrear their plea will be good and a State of the amount should be made up to be added to the balance. Where all they can State is some extraneous transaction whereby Fraser was their debtor that plea will not avail them. They must pay their Arrear and we have no claim for Such Sums against Frasers Estate.

I have next to advert to the State of the Rental; which is still

<sup>1</sup> John Fraser died insolvent, with his affairs in confusion. A final settlement with his creditors did not take place until 1816 (William Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford, 11 July 1816).

in a very Confused State. That which you gave Lord Stafford was full of missummations. Neither it, nor a Correct Summation of it Correspond with what you sent me last September.

Your Rental 1802 given Lord Stafford amounted to 1,359.0.0.0 bolls, £5,122 6s. 10<sup>3</sup>d.: by my Summation of it, it was 1,378.3.0.2 bolls, £5,110 13s. 4<sup>9</sup>d.: The Abstract sent me in September for 1802 is 1,359.0.0.0 bolls, £5,105 12s. 11<sup>6</sup>d.

It will therefore be indispensably necessary for you to make out a *Correct* Rental for 1802 to be referred to in your first Account. In your Account you will charge yourself with Rent 1801 as charged against John Fraser in his last Account and the *additions* which you will specify as in the State Sent me; and also you will refer to a particular Rental as Corresponding with the Sum total. Let your Clerk be very Careful and accurate in this to give a Specimen of his talents in that department. When I am quite Satisfied of the accuracy of the Rental I shall send a Copy of it to Lord Stafford. I am Convinced it is easier to make a new one than to Correct the old. You know it will Contain the Names of all the tenants. When I know that it is ready I shall ask Mr Kerr for permission to Send it to me under his Cover.

I imagine it will be as well to postpone redeeming Mrs Macdonald's Wadset till 1807 when the neighbouring farms (indeed almost all the Estate) will be out of lease. You are I doubt not looking forward to that period with Views of New Arrangements that will be beneficial to the Estate and the Country at large – nor must the augmentation of Rent be allowed to be lost. The great part of Lord Stafford's fortune goes to his Second Son, I mean the Bridgewater Succession<sup>1</sup>; and a great part of the late Marquis's fortune did not descend to this Lord but to his brother.<sup>2</sup> Independently however of these Views I am persuaded the Country never will be improved or Civilized till totally New Systems are introduced. Our Constituents were always tender of the people and will not be less so now but it will be a blessing to a great proportion of them to be taught a new and improved application of their industry and labour.

I like in this View the plan as to Rhives as it opens a Spot excellently calculated for little Settlers on the Coast. Something more

<sup>1</sup> See above, i, p. xxxi. <sup>2</sup> Granville Leveson-Gower (1773-1846), later Earl Granville.



extensive of this kind however Should be planned; and the idea of it *Cautiously* scattered among the little tenants. This kind of Management I am Sure you understand and will not fail to practise.

I expect a Remittance Soon. For a year or two Lord Stafford will not be quite at ease from a Variety of Expenses incident to Such Successions. So the Rents will be acceptable.

I wish you of Course to Collect the Navidale Rent and remit it by itself. Pray explain to me how the Account of the last year's Victual Rent of Navidale Stands? I only got the money rent and I gather indistinctly that the Victual had been somehow interfered with by Fraser but I do not know how. See whether Mr Pope has a Receipt for it and learn what became of it. That Wadset will not be redeemed I think during General Grants life which however cannot be of very long duration.

As to Rhives I do not exactly understand the Statement. Mr Fraser's tack Comprehends Rhives - including the *Fisher's boll* together with the part of Golspymore possessed by William and Donald Mcpherson; the Pendicles of Achlundy, Inchlair, Leadriach, Loanmore and Coirghrein and the rents of the *whole* by the Lease is £51.

His Wadset Comprehended Drumuy - rent £4 11s. 2d. besides 3s. Cruives and 55 bolls; Rhives - no mention of the fisher's boll or Golspymore and the Rent of it was Calculated in Setting his Wadset at £34 15s. 7d., besides 2s. 10<sup>d</sup>. for Cruives; Achlundy £1 10s.; Inchlair £1 10s.; Leadriachs £1 5s.; Coirgrain £1, but not Loanmore.

The Wadset further Comprised Croick and Longhuish £1; Strathlundy £1 8s. 6d.; Inchlair 14s.; Badravan £1 5s. From these facts you Can make out probably the exact present Rent of what Mackay wants. You had better let me understand at some time the present State of possession of all the other parts both of the Tack and Wadset, i.e. What was in Fraser's own hands and what Subset.

I am a little puzzled what to do for redeeming Fraser's Wadset in the Complicated State of his affairs but something must soon be done. Is there a Chance of the Creditors taking a Composition so as to leave some small Reversion and enable young Fraser to enter heir and Renounce?

On getting your answer I shall write to Lord Stafford about Rhives. I have also mentioned the plan with approbation.

Is any thing doing about Mr Gordon's<sup>1</sup> farm of Lothmore?

Andrew Campbell to David Campbell (at Linlithgow with Sutherland Volunteers)

Dunrobin, 23 March 1804

I was duly favor'd with Your letters dated 2d, 5th, and 12th Current. Agreeable to Your desire I caused intimation to be Given at Golspy, Clyne, Rogart, Lairg and Dornoch Church Yards respecting the Setting of Killean Since Mr Robert Murray, Hartfield, Ross-shire and Mr Hugh McPherson, Merchant, Brora has given in their Proposals. The former offers for a Nineteen Years lease £90 Yearly rent to enter at Martinmas next, buy 600 of Your Sheep at a comprised Value and to pay £400 of the Price at Martinmas, the balance to be Paid at the next Whitsunday. The latter desires me Acquaint You that in the event You intend Setting Killean for Nineteen Years he will take the whole Stock on the Farm on comprisement, and Pay up the full value, and a fore-hand Rent of Ninety Pounds Sterling a Year at the term of Martinmas Next after entery upon having the Farm cleared of any followers (as is now the Case) and having a Consideration for Putting the House in a Tenantable repair. He also mentions that as he is not desirous of depending upon another for warrantice for the due Payment of Rents that he will Satisfy you Anent this how Soon you come to the Country. As the above Gentlemen expects to hear from You on receipt be so good as let me know what Answer I'm to make them.

John Gunn Tenant in this Parish is offering £31 for old Rhives and George Munro Blarich Parish of Rogart has given in his offer for said Farm £32 Sterling Yearly Rent and proper Security for Payment of the Same. Immediately on receipt of Your Letters I wrote Mr Leslie anent raising summons of removal Against the old Man at Rhives and the McPhersons at Golspymore. Alexander Murray's wife at Sallach has Paid her Arrears soon after Your departure from here. Since my last I only received from the Parish

<sup>1</sup> Rev. George Gordon, minister of Loth.

of Kildonan exclusive of the Wadsets £3 11s. 11d.; From Captain Hugh McKay Clibrigg his draft on London for £38, from same draft Robert McKay on Doctor McKenzie Bath for £10, from same Captain Matheson's Promissory Note indorsed by Captain McKay and payable 1st June next at Tain for £30, and 4s. in Silver, together £78 4s. being in full of his arrears; From Parish of Rogart £1 4s. 5d.; From Assint John Robertson Knockans Bill payable at Inverness 27/30 April for £30 15s. deducting therefrom 8s. 4d. for discharge and postage remains £30 6s. 8d. being the amount of his Rent; Victual Arrears also received £3 11s. 6d., together amounting to £116 18s. 6d. As Captain McKays Bill for £38 and Robertsons bill for £30 15s. cannot be negotiated at Tain in Your Absence I send them both inclosed. Clibriggs other Bills for £10 and £30 with Miss Frasers Bill on Edinburgh (formerly mentioned) for £20 I Shall send immediately to Mr Innes<sup>1</sup> with what Cash I have. I delivered Your Letter to Mr Bookless, he seems to say that he will leave the Place against Whitsunday. One of the Pease Stacks was Put in before receipt of Your last two Letters. Since I caused a Stack of Oats to be Put in at Clayside and a Stack of Bear at the Mains both which were Proofed<sup>2</sup> by George McLeod who I directed not to leave the barn till he Saw the Little Proof threshed, dressed, and Measured, and which he Accordingly did. There is only about half a Cut of the Hay Stack at the East Side of the Barn Yard remaining. From the extravagant rate Your Servants were allowed to use the Hay I'm obliged to take charge of it myself and see a Necessary Quantity of hay regularly twice a day given out to Your Cows rather than See the Key Given up by Mr Bookless<sup>3</sup> to the dairymaid and Alexander McKay Herd as the half Cut wide will be soon done. Please let me know if its the old Hay that is next to be used for the Cows. Having now only the Straw of 2 Stacks for Your Cattle, I particularly requested of the dairymaid and McKay to Give a reasonable quantity of Straw to such of Your Cows as has not Yet calved and a Pretty Good Share of the Straw to such as has calved, which

<sup>1</sup> James Innes, agent of Bank of Scotland in Tain.

<sup>2</sup> A sample of the grain was taken out and threshed to estimate the yield of the stack.

<sup>3</sup> John Bookless managed Dunrobin Home Farm between 1787 and 1802, and continued as overseer when David Campbell took over the management personally in 1802.

with near about  $\frac{1}{4}$  Stone of Hay to each of the latter morning and (if necessary) evening together with Turnip middle of the day should be Sufficient. This with what Straw is proper to be Given to Your outwinterers (to be regulated according to the weather) I mentioned as a rule to all Your herds and Such of Your Servants as feeds Your Cattle. Still I am sorry to say Mr Bookless does not encourage Your Servants to give much attention to anything I consider my duty to mention Anent Your interest. This Place truly requires a Steady honest Farm Servant. There is at Present in all 35 of your Cows Calved, who with their calves are doing very well. Your Calves agreeable to Your desire are kept clean and comfortable. Alexander McBeath and Donald Cadeach are very attentive to their charge. The Stirks are looking extremely well, Your Heifers within and without are looking very well, as also the fattening Cattle and Your Stotts as well as can be expected. Your Horses are Getting Pease Straw, and looking very well. The 2 Stacks of Bear formerly mentioned as Put in by Mr Bookless is not fully dressed as yet so that I cannot say at present what Quantity they may Produce. The Pease Mr Bookless tells me measured 13 bolls  $2\frac{1}{2}$  pecks. Since I received Your last letter I have Given out Precepts on Mr Bookless for  $11\frac{3}{4}$  Bolls Bear and 1 Boll Pease all Sold for ready money at 24s. per Boll excepting the [ ]<sup>1</sup> Boll Pease which was Given to Donald Grant weaver Golspy and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  Bolls Bear Given the Fox Hunter in part of his maintainance. The Tenants are daily Swarming here from all Quarters and are much disappointed for not Getting Precepts as usual. Andrew Ross at Golspy is Preparing for Getting the Store House repaired immediately. William Hutton has Got his Firs to hand a few days ago. The Gardiner with his lads are daily bussy in the Garden. The dairymaid wants to be looking out for a Girl to assist her with Katherine Ross. Please Say if She is to have one of her own choice or not. The Thirty Five one half Bolls Oats mentioned in my last produced 27 bolls 2 firlots  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pecks meal and which was Proportioned among Your Servants. Please let me know how they are to Get their Barley meal for Winter and Spring cost.

Roderick Keith Grieve at Rhives was here yesterday wishing to know if You'l require one in his way against whitsunday. In the

<sup>1</sup> MS. torn.

event You did he would avoid engaging with any other Master. I sold on the 14th Current 18 Stones and on the 21st 187 Stones Hay, at 1s. 2d. per Stone ready money, excepting 21 Stones Given Mrs Duncan Sutherland of Eiden. On examining Mr Bookless's weights the other day I find that the weights with which he weighed 3 Stones at a time, Weighs 79 lb. English in place of 72 lb. English. The above 187 Stones was weighed with weights I got from Golspy, and I gave exactly 24 lb. English to the Stone.

Should any of the Tenants be allowed to Cut whins within the Parks. I caused intimation be given at the church yard against it, Still they cannot be kept out.

Andrew Campbell to David Campbell (at Linlithgow with Sutherland Volunteers)

Dunrobin, 4 April 1804

I was duly favord with both Your letters of the 26th and 28th ult. and agreeable to Your desire I shall hereafter regularly write You once every eight days. Having wrote Mr Hugh McPherson Brora on receipt of your last letter I just now received his Answer wherein he mentions that he will extend his former offer to the Hundred Pounds Yearly Rent with the Growing Stock (of Ewes, Hogs or all under two Years exclusive the Ewes) at a fair Valuation, but expects You'll take away the Wedders bordering on an overstocking, and also mentions that respecting the duration of the lease it may be as much his interest as the Proprietors and that in case he or his shall not be Continued beyond Ten Years the Proprietor will have to take the Stocking of the alike kinds (now to be taken) at their fair value then, on the Same Principles. Together with this Says that he hopes You'll see a Propriety as well as a necessity for extending the Sum for Repairs of Houses and that on a qualified footing. What he meant by followers I understand is Major Houstoun and Mr Ross's 60 Sheep each, and what he finds now he must agree to. I sent to Mr Innes as mentioned in my last, Bills and Cash to the amount of £100, for which I hold his receipt. Since I only received Twenty Shillings Victual Arrears and just now I also received Donald McKay Drover Badinlochs Bill on Alexander Gunn and Angus McKay Drover in Syre, Payable at

Tain 3 months after date for £135 Sterling, on Account of Captain William McKay Skail and Lieutenant Robert Gordon Langdale, both in the Parish of Farr. The formers Rent is £40 18s. 0<sup>d</sup>., the latters £90 7s. 4<sup>d</sup>. and if Mr Innes discounts said Bill the Balance is to be returned to Donald McKay Badinloch. The man You wish James Fleeming<sup>1</sup> to acquaint You of is in Fifeshire, his address is James Duncan<sup>2</sup>, South Parks of Leslie, by Falkland. As the Post is just Passing I have only time to Mention that the Seed Oats Captain Sutherland Promised to accommodate You with is to Come from Uppat where Mr Bookless was Seeing it the other day, and Says there is Thirty Bolls ready for coming here how Soon its required.

Your Cattle are all looking very well.

Andrew Campbell to David Campbell (at Linlithgow with Sutherland Volunteers)

Dunrobin, 7 April 1804

I wrote You of the 4th to which refers. Since I'm favored with Your letter (which I think would leave Linlithgow on the 2d) dated 26th ult. Agreeable to Your desire I gave up Your order to Mr Bookless anent the ditch at Clayside which shall be Particularly attended to. Robert Grant Golspy Tower, James Sutherland Golspymore and Adam Bannerman intends Gowing to America this Season. Anderson the Smith at Golspy is Preparing Robert Grants Farm for laying down the seed and which I thought him hitherto Safe to do so being Robert Grants Cautioner for the Rent, but since receipt of Your Letter to Captain Grant I told him he was only to have One Crop of it. Still Anderson has the Assurance to Say he will hold the Farm for both this and the next Years Crop, but this I suppose You will Settle in Your next letter. There is a Young Man from Rogart wanting James Sutherlands Farm and Captain Kenneth McKay Torboll to be his Cautioner for 3 Years. I also find that James Bain Golspy Tower inclines to take James Sutherlands Farm in the event You wish to Give his Farm also to Captain Grant who I find wishes much to have both it and

<sup>1</sup> Gardener at Dunrobin Castle.

<sup>2</sup> James Duncan succeeded Bookless as grieve at Dunrobin Home Farm, and subsequently became the first inn-keeper of the present Sutherland Arms Hotel at Golspie (see below, pp. 80-81).

Roberts if agreeable to You. Hugh McLeod Clyne milntown has Given in an offer of £15 Yearly Rent for Adam Bannermans Farm. George McLeod Ground Officer also wishes to have it and desires me to Acquaint You that in the event You'll let him have it he will build a Sufficient Barn and Byre on the Farm and Give a higher Rent than any other Tenant. Mr McPherson at Brora also wants it for his Brother William and Mr Taylor Dornoch would wish to have it for Donald Mann Sclater. Messrs Donald and James Sutherland Loanmore is offering £40 Yearly Rent for old Rhives or £35 Sterling and to inclose the Farm with Sufficient dykes and find Proper Security for the Rent. The old Man was summoned out by Mr Leslie 10 days ago.

Your Plowing Commenced here about eight days ago. Three of Your Plows are regularly Going on in the Shore Park. The last of Your Barley together with the 2d Pease Stack was Put in about 8 days ago and yesterday the last of the Oats at Clayside and Proof'd as usual by George McLeod. As the Straw is now Scarse for Your Cattle and the weather continuing cold I'm giving Hay to Your Cows these 8 days Past and that of the new Hay as the Straw on the Top and Bottom will answer the Cattle without.

Your dairymaid has Brought a Cow here some time past and is allowed to be in the Parks by Miss McIntyre<sup>1</sup> and Mr Bookless orders. Your Six Quarter Olds will be Particularly attended to according to Your desire. The number of Your Cows now calved amounts to 52 and all with their calves doing extremely well. The Cattle without are also looking very well. As Alexander McKay Herd has to Count all the Cattle without every Day together with Cleaning the Byre etc. I directed Katherine Ross to Herd Your Cows. The Sown Grass is attended to with all the care in my Power, Still I cannot Get Katherine Ross to Herd the Cows with the Attention necessary in Spite of what I can Say to her but Should I be obliged to employ another Herd every care Possible will be taken to preserve the Sown Grass. Please let me know on receipt if Your own Potatoes are to be used for Seed or if You are to Send any from the South along with the Meal. In the event You do James Fleeming says the long Kidney or Pinks with white eyes is the best, if agreeable to You.

<sup>1</sup> Housekeeper to David Campbell (see below, p. 40)

The Tenants sent no Victual to the Feryoons this Season. Alexander Rose Cyderhall has received Some and Promises to Send in an Account thereof in a day or two. I find Major Houstoun Sells his Victual at 25s. per Boll, Captain Kenneth McKay Torboll 26s., and in the Parish of Loth from 26s. to 28s. per Boll. I fear there will not be above 20 or 24 Bolls Oats in the 3 last Stacks of Oats at Clayside, the mise<sup>1</sup> has allmost destroyed two thirds of them. I sold 97 Stones Hay on the 28th ult. and 150 Stones on the 4th Current the Greatest part of which for ready money.

As there will be little or no Straw here in 14 days time Please direct how the out Cattle are to be attended to, and if You wish to Give them any Hay, and also in order to preserve Your Grass in time Please Point out what Parks Your Cattle are to be in hereafter.

Tenants of Truderscaig to David Campbell

3 April 1805

We are the tenents of the weaster End of trudaskagg hops of your Clemency to look on our maters. We have to aquante your honour that we and Colenal Ross does not agree about his Sheeps as his Servent keeps them on our Grass at tuagarfe our only Sumer Gras and we took hold of Great number of them Last Sumer and the overseer of the Sheeps Cam to us and he told us that he would agree on Reasonable terms and Bids us to mind the number would See on our Gras of his Sheeps from time to time and when ther lims were drawing Nearer to take ther Sheeps home. Last winter very little thanks he would Give us. Now we begs as a favour of your honour to inform us what we Shall do to them this year and what ye allows us to Get for the Last Sumer and we are take your derection and your helpe to take our part.

John Ross to David Campbell

Castlecraig, 18 May 1805

Your letter respecting the Grass in Ben Armine I have received. I want nothing more in my own and Culcairns Account farther than what your letter points out. I was extremely averse to give you

<sup>1</sup> Mice.



any trouble on this head for it certainly was unnecessary on the part of the people in question to have compelled me to it. The Complaint they now make was acknowledged last season as an advantage for they confessed they never saw so few strays Cattle come to the ground, and of this there can be no better proof when I tell you that one Horse was all that my people could Poind all the Season. I made it a condition with the Man that he was not to molest their Stocking and that if he came out of the Mossie Flat of the Hill every Beast that was caught either by me or the Tenants of Ugershay<sup>1</sup> would be kept untill he paid 5s. a head, and I sent my Servant to explain this to him. As to grass for grass I offered them that last year, they refused it but demanded £5 in Cash and that they would not come there any more.

My man offered £3 if you said they had a right by their Tack and so stands the thing, and to testify to you how much I wish to live in peace and to give you no trouble, if you desire it I shall give even £5 and be free of them and I shall pay it to you with the rents. Let me therefore entreat of you, as the greatest favour you can do Culcairn and my self, to settle the matter that we may be free of them, not to trouble you on any such grounds and to give all possible ease to our Minds. Pray settle it by Tuesday and order them down to do it by that time. The Lambing has been good this Season and if the Sheep are not disturbed there is a chance of their making up in some degree the severe loss we have sustained.

John Ross to David Campbell

Castlecraig, 23 May 1805

I am extremely sorry to be so troublesome to you respecting Mr McKays subtenants but on my return here from Dornoch, I found a letter from Lairg stating that these men on Mr Mackays return from you came to Mr Gordons Bowman and told that now they had the Factors directions to Poind all Culcairn and Colonel Ross's Stock, that they came on purpose to tell him so that he might inform these Gentlemen and their herds of the liberty they had got and that they were now fully resolved to put the leave they had got

<sup>1</sup> Truderscaig.

into execution. Tho' I do not affix and indeed cannot affix any credit to what they say as coming from you, it is clear they are determined to persevere and I should imagine are under some mistake of your Sentiments, and it is therefore the more necessary that you be so good as take immediate measures to prevent so unjust, so barbarous and so prejudicial a treatment of our Stock. Tho' by your letters and verball Communications it is as clear as that the sun is in the Firmament the whole of the ground is in our Agreement, and that it is not expressed in the Tack granted by the Family of Sutherland to Mr McKay to belong to Ugershay,<sup>1</sup> yet for the sake of peace we have proposed to say nothing about the matter if the people will but let our Stock move on the ground we pay rent for unmolested, and either to permit thier Cattle to come to the place as before, give the range of the whole Hill from end to end, give them a space to be determined on, or to make an allowance in Cash for withdrawing intirely so as to prevent provoking a discussion on the Subject with any Quarter. They made choice of the Factor to determine the point and we have cordially agreed, and still after it is thought the matter is set at rest by that Gentleman to whom the matter is mutually referred to, it is again improperly, and in direct contradiction to what that Gentleman directs, opened up and the same improper steps as formerly determined upon.

Probably you might have said to these people, at least that is to McKay, that they might Poind the Black Cattle and Horses that trespassed upon them from the Flat Mossie part of the Hill. On this score they needed not give you trouble for they were told that any beasts that came from that Quarter were not only lyable to be Poinded but that each beast by a particular paction was to pay from 2s. 6d. to 5s. a head for such tresspass. Now the grass Meal of each is not more than 1s. 6d. so the hird would be [ ]<sup>2</sup> out of Pocket by allowing his Cattle to come either in on Corrynafarn or on the part these men grass their Cattle on. My good Sir the power is in your hands, these people are fools and very unreasonable, you will therefore settle the matter I hope on receipt to prevent any damage to us who wish to injure no one or encroach on their rights, for it would be extremely painfull to Culcairn and me to tell you we are

<sup>1</sup> Truderscaig.<sup>2</sup> Ms. torn.

obliged to make a legal question of this or any other matter wherein you could be mentioned, for our ideas of all Country matters are so decidedly with yours that between ourselves not a difference in opinion can exist. Therefore let me again intreat of you to settle the matter and put a Stop to ententions so injurious to order and justice.

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 15 July 1805

Dont expect a Letter of business yet, for matters are not yet ripe for that. But Colin and William Mackenzie are closeted every morning with Campbell and though they complain bitterly that it is impossible to make him exact in his writings yet they hope to get a Rental made up for me to carry to you. The estate will increase very considerably next year besides the fishery addition, which it is proposed to effect with a proper degree of firmness, at the same time not to disband the People, but to raise all the Farms in proper proportions and to let a good many of the lower People remain without leases because by such means you can get rid of them in case of bad conduct individually, and then they are ready to settle in another part of the Country where we conceive Fisheries will speedily increase. *D'ailleurs* so much work is awaiting them in the way of Canals roads and Bridges, that we foresee in spite of Lord Selkirk that in a few years this Country will be benefited by preserving its people to a reasonable degree; we are however going to lay out one or two Sheep Farms, and altogether we say that you must reflect with great satisfaction on the lenient and liberal measures you have always adopted with regard to the People which is talked of by every body and of which I hear they are very sensible themselves, which is in fact pleasanter than having driven them to the wall for a little more money, and now we imagine so much money is brought into the Country by the Volunteers (£3,000 per annum) and the army in general that with that and the flourishing state in which they are themselves they will willingly and cheerfully pay a very considerable increase and preserve their attachment. NB. The People all enquire after you with the greatest affection.

As to Campbell he does very well out of Doors, the Cattle are said to be *very fine* and they really look well, but of that I cannot judge. He does better out of Doors than within, where I understand except when he wishes to shew off to a visitor he lives *à la mode* of Sir William Pulteney, and I have experienced some instances of that, for till today, when I sent for the Dornoch Cook who is really a tolerable one, there was nothing but a dirty highland maid in the Kitchen which appeared rather too plainly. The Butter used for the Kitchen was so atrocious that upon investigation I found it to be some old Salt Butter (a year old) which had been sold and returned as unfit for use. I thought it rather extraordinary he should chuse me for the Instrument to devour this Butter and told him so this Morning, upon which he ordered fresh to be used. Mackenzie told him we did not mean to live at his expence and desired the milk etc. used to be kept on account, for the first day he did not let Captain Carmichael<sup>1</sup> have milk for his supper, but we have now taken it into our own hands and do as we please and live very well with our Dornoch *Cuisinier*. He has an old Devil of a scotch sort of Euphemia a Miss Macintire, like a Sybil, who is his housekeeper and torments ours. It is quite necessary we should have one of our own otherwise the house would soon be quite dirtied, but ours has persevered hitherto and by force kept it clean, but they plague her *promisciously*. Indeed Mackenzie says he thinks he will make an arrangement for Campbell and his Miss Macintire to live at Melaig where they will be happier than in this house, and leave this quiet with a Housekeeper to air it . . . [proposed alterations to Summerhouse in Dunrobin Garden].

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 16 July 1805

By what I find from the consultations that are going on, the future scheme for letting the Farms is upon the principle on which you set out at first, of taking the lower People out of the hands of the Tacksmen, by not allowing the latter to subset, but on the contrary for the little parcels of land allotted to the small Tennents

<sup>1</sup> The Marchioness came north from Edinburgh on the Revenue ship 'Royal George', commanded by Captain Carmichael.

they will pay to us what they now pay to these Taxmen which is lost to us, or if they pay still less, the estate will yet be increased by a third or fourth proportion of the whole and the People happy and contented. Some very sensible respectable looking People (under Tennants) came down today complaining of barbarous usage from Mackay of Morness who also came to defend himself, and he was enjoined not to repeat the same behavior. I find the lower people here have a great opinion of you and your favor for them, and they all seem to think they are sure of justice from you and talk with a sort of regret of your not being here to listen to them that makes me rather jealous. It is the *ton* in the society here to vote that you are excessively fond of the country, and when they think anything worthy of remark is overlooked by us, they say 'Weel but I'm sure this would please the Marquis'.

I dont think Campbell at all a bad sort of man, but I find upon enquiry that he is most ridiculously stingy. The history of his not knowing anything of the Post, Colin tells me, is that the Post was forbid to call at the House because he *would* expect something. His intention was that our servants should live upon Oat Cake and Whisky, and we were obliged to go without Bread ourselves at Dinner the day after we came because it was Sunday and he had only provided one Loaf, so we sent express to Tain for Bread, in short it is wonderfull how far that passion goes. He has starved his own horses so that they are hardly able to go, I told you of his refusing Milk to Captain Carmichael for supper, and the other traits of a like nature are quite comical. He never eats anything by himself but sour whey and Oat Cake to Dinner they say, and his housekeeper Miss Macintire is the strangest old Skeleton you ever saw. Indeed I beleive old Polkemmet himself could not be more oeconomical or I am sorry to say less *soigné* in his person. His turn is entirely Cattle, and with a degree of good sense this stingy disposition overcomes everything, and breaks out in his conversation constantly – *ce n'est pas un homme de société*; I am angry with him for not having filled the icehouse, he says he does not care for ice, but letting it remain empty gives a chance for spoiling it. He promises to fill it this winter. Mackenzie etc. and I amuse ourselves much with him, he is grown like the *Tuteur trompé* in

manner and dress as he is grown thin, *le menton pointu* and wears a short Jacket. I hope he will not open my Letter and read all this.

The Gardiner is a pleasing, aimiable creature and rears excellent Strawberries, he complains a little that he is not allowed Garden seeds, and half the Garden is at present full of barley, but the remaining part is full of very good garden stuff. We propose to make a little plantation of Plane and ash Trees (if oo please)<sup>1</sup> on the outside of the Wall by the old Pavillion, he says for a shelter from the north, and I shall *stake* it out to go on – a small, narrow, irregular slip – if I hear nothing to forbid it. I think you will approve. They have not thinned (I think) any part of the Ladies' Walk, but I will see it done myself. I have been drawing all day, making a book for you of sea views done from the Ship, very small, of the coast which I shall continue on my intended expedition which will be more worth looking at, because their may be some rugged promontories.

I really dont think this Letter worth sending you. It is a parcel of nonsense and illnatured to Campbell, but it is merely by way of talking to you that I sit down to write a few Lines while they are at Supper below, and that swells to an enormous length and becomes a Pamphlet, and just about the time you will receive it, there is Long to talk to you instead of my *bavardage*.

Mr Keith dined here today, his wig like an old uncombed sheep's fleece. *A propos* of Sheep, there are some of 6 years old for our use here, and yesterday when one was wanted there were none to be found, they had all fled nobody knew where. At last to Campbell's great joy they were discovered this evening, he says on the face of the rock of Carrol. This is a plentiful year here, very fine weather, and the People all looking happy and comfortable, I think more so than I ever saw them, they seem occupied and not lying about and better drest. There is a smart new house building in Golspy by a Man called Monro, rather too tall and that is because his wife would have it a foot and half higher than the house at Rhives. She was determined it should be so, she said if she were to dye for it . . . [proposed visit to Orkney].

<sup>1</sup> The Marchioness' letters contain occasional words and phrases of 'nursery-talk'; this is presumably 'if you please'.

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 17 July 1805

. . . [local politics].

Old Colonel Sutherland and Mr Houston added themselves to our society this day, and we entertained them by taking them after Dinner to the Links below Golspy, leaving Sutherland to rest at Keith's least he should take another Fit similar to that after his walk with you. We are busy laying out a plan for a village, thought of by you when you were last here. The scene of our project is the street of the Fishertown of Golspy to be distributed into Houses 50 feet by 20 with each a Croft of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre, some particulars to be settled of the terms and sent for your orders. The idea is that this should be one of these fishing villages to be established on the coast under a sort of Treaty with *Pope*<sup>1</sup> (not the Pope) who like Macdonald in Assynt should carry on a fishing concern similar to that which now answers so well that the people can already pay double rent, and many are coming down from the Hills to settle in this way, which object will also be gained here. The people are to build the Houses on 99 Years leases with the croft let annually, and the cow pasture allotted to be in common will repay more than the ground would do in any other way. We all think this will be a useful and satisfactory improvement. You know you desired some such thing to be set agoing at Dornoch, and even without the attraction of being benefitted by any trade there, nine new houses are now building, and two quite finished. The country really seems disposed to improve and it will do so when these methods are pointed out.

There are also plans on foot for introducing a few sheep farms. When you receive this letter we shall be returned from travelling to the Orkneys etc. I am so stupified by Colonel Sutherland's conversation which you know is more aimiable than instructive that I have not an idea left. George and I were just talking over our present situation and saying we should be glad to be returned from Assynt, and he said, 'and then you will say you wish to be at Trentham', and indeed there is some truth in that, though I am very happy to be here. You did a very good thing in building the

<sup>1</sup> William Pope (see above, i, p. xxxii).

new wing here, the appartement in it is so comfortable, and your old green Bed so Good, and I according to my wish am always so thoroughly tired when I go to my room that I sleep without ever waking or recollecting where I am. It is sometimes rather a dreary idea to think that one is quite at ones own hand, and that you are not there to order one to do anything, and indeed now I have all things quite in my own way I find I care less about particular things than I used to do. *Gare les Poux* – there has been a sort of allarm – but I believe it was wholly from an accident of sitting on a wall near the sea where I conjecture some fishing women had been, and from which I inclose some stone cross.

I wish Mrs Mackenzie would go to Bed, she is sitting at the table reading, and I would rather she went away, but she is a very agreeable quiet creature for all that. *Bon soir*. I beleive she read my Letter for she is gone – and I am just *falling off* myself and my handwriting becoming illegible and dwindling away into a state of Ractun<sup>1</sup>. . . .

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 27 July 1805

George and Mr Mackenzie set off this morning for Invershin on their way to Assynt, attended by their servants, Sandy Noe and Adam Mackay. They propose to go tomorrow to Leadbeg – Monday Loch Inver – Tuesday Ardvaour – and then to return after seeing the country thoroughly on Friday. I am pleased with the manner George undertook this Journey. He would have preferred staying here quietly, but he thought it right to do it, and that he might learn something respecting the country which would be of service so he set off, with a prospect of rainy weather, but without hesitation. Since they departed the rain is gone off, and I hope they will be fortunate enough to escape the frequent fate of Assynt Travellers, to get wet every day.

Colin has at last brought Campbell and his accounts to a satisfactory conclusion, and they will be ready Farm and all next week. I really think that Campbell with his Faults, and Faults there certainly are, will, with the inspection he undergoes manage the

<sup>1</sup> Nursery-talk; this is presumably a version of 'reaction'.



*sett* and do very well for a few years. Though he is unpopular among the Gentlemen, he understands managing the common People, and with all his neglects and procrastination the *People* and *things* seem to flourish and to be happy and contented. He wishes to be allowed for various reasons which indeed seem to be very good ones to have two small rooms added to the House of Melaig by the People now at work here on the Garden Wall, and we think (if you please) it will be much better this should be done. No housekeeper of ours will stay here with his People, and his daughter plagues him in this house I beleive, wanting to *live beyond what he likes*. His stingy way will do better there than it does here, and as all entertaining in this House during our absence will be at an end, the expence of a quiet reasonable woman to take care of the House and Linnen will be the same it is now and the House kept clean and regularly aired. He will continue with the Garden and everything on the footing it is now. The Gardiner does extremely well. I beleive he must also undertake the care of the Plantations as Hutton is *doited* and worse than doited. This is the only point of alteration worth writing to you about. All Parties here, viz. George, myself, Campbell and Colin are anxious you should agree on seeing the Plans and estimate for Melaig to give it your sanction. Indeed if you do not we shall be all nonplus'd.

The next thing we are going to do in the course of next week, going upon your desire when you were last here to have a proper landing place for Boats, near the house, in which nothing was done according to Custom. Tomorrow we order at the Church Door an information that 40 men are wanted at 1 shilling a day, for the next week here, and they are to make up with the Stones on the Beech a proper and safe landing place or little pier which will cost £20 but will be an infinite advantage and safety as the Shore is so bad at present from the Violence of the Tides that a Boat sometimes cannot get near for the rocks. This is to be done under the auspices of Mr William Pope, who I think we shall find an excellent and usefull man; he is now here with his Brother, and we have a great scheme *en l'air* that he should undertake a fishing establishment at Midgarty (when Mrs Gray's farm is out of lease next Year) which will employ numbers of People, establish them, and bring riches

and industry into the Country. It is proposed to make a safe Place there for Vessels of 80 Tuns burden, for about £200. He will take their Fish at a regulated Price and begin a Trade in that way; I regret that you cannot partake of the conversation relating to this scheme, though you will of the execution of it. He seems quite satisfied that we should take the *better* offer for the Salmon fishing<sup>1</sup>, and that he should employ his activity and industry in this way.

Next comes a history relating to the Marches with Sir John Sinclair at the Ord, which we agreed to refer to Mr Trail's arbitration and which Sir John delays, knowing we have most undoubted evidence for us, in hopes that evidence may die before it is called for. Campbell wishes this matter to be referred to the Court of Session as it is so clear, but having offered Sir John to settle it by submission, we must not be the Party to be off. I therefore have directed William Mackenzie to write to Sir John, that if he chuses the submission to Mr Trail it may be done immediately, but that he must decide and return an answer *in course*.<sup>2</sup> If he does not determine after this warning we will proceed to legal measures, for his shabbiness is intolerable. Something of the same sort must be done with regard to Dempster who is as bad.

These with some question about the fishing at Invershin are the only knotty points left undetermined with regard to the Estate. George and I think our coming here has been very useful in bringing little and great matters to a conclusion. It certainly has been so I think. We have broke open the Charter Room, and are arranging and cleaning it and have found, and hope still to find some curious old Letters from Lord Lovat<sup>3</sup> etc. and the famous Letter from Lord Dundee<sup>4</sup>, which I shall bring with me that they may be arranged . . . [family news and Volunteer business].

<sup>1</sup> Pope had made an offer to lease the salmon fishings on the estate, but was outbid by the Berwick firm of Landles and Redpath (see above i, pp. 114-15).

<sup>2</sup> This dispute appears to have dragged on; in 1828 the Marquis and Marchioness made an agreement on these marches with James Horne, Sir John Sinclair's successor in the estate of Langwell (see R. Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John* (Edinburgh, 1962), 229).

<sup>3</sup> See Sir W. Fraser, *The Sutherland Book* (Edinburgh, 1892), ii, 205-7, 210-13, 221-3.

<sup>4</sup> See Fraser, *The Sutherland Book*, ii, 42.

Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland) to Marquis  
of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 4 August 1805

I returned yesterday from Assint where Mr Mackenzie and I were sent by the higher powers, and there we should have gone of our own accords if we had not been sent, however glad we may be to have our expedition over, and to have seen the inhabitants, who I must say are a dirty set, and no very prepossessing Specimens of the Lords of the creation; we have been absent from Dunrobin Castle just a week, and if you please I will tell you how we have past it. On Saturday the 27 of July we set off on Colonel Campbell's two mares and slept at Invershin, at Mr Gilbert Mckenzie's, whom and whose you know. On Sunday we proceeded to Ledbeg, who supposing naturally enough that we should take the best road to his house from Invershin advanced about 8 miles on the way to meet us, but on hearing that we had been led by Sandy Noe by another, returned to his house and there found us tired enough of the very bad road and the wet day, and just preparing to go to bed. The next day accompanied by him and all the Gentry whose estates were near that road we travelled by Joplin's Marble road to Unapool, by the way seeing Joplin, his Marble quarries (at which he has very few men employed but has a good many blocks prepared for embarkation) and drinking a glass of wine at every house on the road. At Unapool we took boat to Ardvar, Captain Scobie's, whose father old Kenneth Scobie aetat: 74 with Ledbeg, and Stronghubie accompanied us the whole of our Stay in Assint. From thence on Tuesday we proceeded by boat, looking in at the harbours etc. on the coast, round the Stour point, where, for the two minutes we were passing it, the tide was rather rougher than it should have been, to Mr Macdonald the Herring Fisher at Loch Inver, who seems a clean sensible comparatively superior sort of person. He is at present occupied by Cod fishing, as no Herring have yet appeared. He is building a comfortable house, and is an example for his neighbours, who seem to like him much better than they did. Wednesday was a rainy disagreeable day which we spent as well as we could in fishing etc. at Loch Inver, from whence on Thursday we walked to Loch Assint and rowed up the Loch, which is

surrounded by high hills, and has some wood on its banks. On a peninsula are the remains of a Castle<sup>1</sup> formerly belonging to the Macleods where Montrose was confined; and dining with Inchnadamf, an old man of 90 who danced to the bagpipe (for we carried the Piper with us) and gave a most *hospitable* dinner, the room being so crowded there was no room to stir, and the quantity of wine drunk rather more than we wished. After this dinner we went on to Ledbeg, having concluded our round of visits and having been very well received, and treated every where as well as we could wish. The Gentlemens houses are no better than they should be, and they are as I said before a dirty set themselves. The Minister<sup>2</sup> seems quite a fool, and there is no road in the country except Joplin's, which leads you ups and downs, what no person in his senses ever will in a Carriage be [ ]<sup>3</sup> up and down, and where one wonders that no accidents happen to his marble waggons (which may partly be accounted for from their going loaded downhill to the Sea, and having no weight to bring back up the hill again). By the by did you ever hear of his marriage with Lord Armadale's Sister, which took place two years ago?

We returned to Dunrobin Castle by Invershin and were not sorry to come to our own again; nor shall we be so at the end of August. [Enclosed is a sketch of a boat's crew taking soundings, with captions.]

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 7 August 1805

At last here is the Golspy Plan – the Houses to be built in the terms I mentioned, which you settled three years ago, the Gardens without any lease. This Morning Colin, Colonel Campbell, George and myself set off in a Boat to view the Harbour of Kilgour, and a very promising Harbour it is. Captain Baigrie, Mr Pope etc. met us there, and Pope is now drawing up a scheme for the village etc. which he offers to do in the most liberal terms, and in a manner you would like, being willing to agree (he says) to whatever you and these you consult think reasonable and proper for both. We think the *Braes* of Kilgour, above the Harbour rather to the south, the

<sup>1</sup> Ardvreck castle.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. William Mackenzie.

<sup>3</sup> MS. torn.

proper place for the village, and a number of Caithness People will settle there and begin the fishery, Pope dealing with Selby and Co. in London who have already the whole concerns in that way from Caithness. He will be a middle man between the Villagers and the Traders, and for seven or ten years will undertake a sort of Monopoly of the Firth, which will set the thing agoing, and then either he or the People themselves will continue it as is done in Caithness, only you will have the advantage of this Harbour which you will do for about £400, and the Anchorage will soon reimburse you. It is judged by all much more beneficial and desirable that you (if you see it in the same light) should do this and then it will be exclusively yours without any interference from others with the Anchorage, which to a *moral certainty* will be very great, perhaps greater than even we suppose. The Harbour is pointed out in the clearest manner by nature, and only requires the removal of a few stones internally, and heaping up about 75 foot in length (I think and so does Mr Pope 100) in this manner to form the Pier: [Here follows a sketch of proposed harbour.] This you will understand as well as I can explain it. The People here say the Marquis was very fond of the Spot, and they have no doubt he will take great pleasure in it, indeed they assure me of it, as if they meant to insinuate that if I did not, you would, marry come up! I am sure if you saw Mr James Mackay of Lothbeg it would diminish your pleasure in the Braes of Kilgour, for he is mad at times, and at no time reasonable, and quite a monster. With regard to this Pier (and if you approve) it is proposed to advertize for Engineers to give in their proposals and estimates for undertaking its execution, and being answerable for the success – and that it should be begun next Spring, because the village may be portioned out according to proposers before the *sett* is arranged, and the Pier being ready will be everything, for then People will settle there. Enough of the Farm of Kilgour will remain for Pope after the Crofts for the village is taken off. The Pier here is almost finished. It will be a safety and convenience for all the Golspy Boats besides the advantage for this House. It looks very pretty, and has not been the worse for a very high tide and rough sea it has already encountered. In the bottom there appears a blueish Clay which Baigrie took home some of, has analyzed it and finds it to be Marl he says of a very high quality, and that

he had no doubt when it is known it will be carried off in quantities by People from Moray who require it there. Of this I knew nothing.

I will bring a drawing of the pier and a specimen of the Marl . . . [travel arrangements].

#### Petition of Donald McLeod

14 August 1805

Unto the Right Honourable Marchioness of Stafford The Petition of Donald McLeod in Lyne Parish of Assint Most Humbly Sheweth That about six years ago Mr Fraser Your Ladyship's Factor and Colin McKenzie Esquire, Edinburgh, were pleased to grant a letter of obligation extended upon stamp paper to your Petitioner promising him ten Merks Old Rent of the lands of Ryancraich on account of your Petitioner's Brother going to the 93rd Regiment. Notwithstanding of all this your Petitioner was driven away in the 1803 by Mr Isaac Jopling Marble Cutter Assint as he got the Tack of Ryancraich, hoping he might safely continue on account of said Obligation. Mr Jopling brought officers from Dornoch who not only discovered your Petitioner's house but also drove a way your Petitioner's Cattle, so that your Petitioner being destitute of said lands has been mostly ruined in regard of his Effects having no settled habitation where he may pasture his Cattle. Besides the above Soldier for the 93rd your Petitioner and his Brother served your Ladyship in the late Fencibles and after all your Petitioner is treated as is above said:

May it therefore please your Ladyship to Consider the premisses and grant such redress to your Petitioner as to you shall seem proper and if it be not Convenient for your Ladyship to relieve your Petitioner at this period your Petitioner expects that your Ladyship shall be pleased to tell your Petitioner that your Ladyship shall grant him redress again the next Sett, and your Petitioner shall ever Pray.

*Enclosed*: Obligation by John Fraser, attested by Colin Mackenzie, to Donald McLeod: Dunrobin Castle, 24 July 1799

I Factor for the Right Honourable Earl Gower and Countess of Sutherland Considering that William Macleod your brother has voluntarily enlisted himself as a Soldier in the Sutherland Highlanders now raising by General Wemyss Do therefore as Factor aforesaid Bind and Oblige myself to putt Donald McLeod brother to William in possession of ten Merks pay of Old Rent of the lands of Rhincreach and that at the term of Whitsunday next Eighteen hundred and to continue you therein for Seven years thereafter at the present rent. The part to be given you is the  $7\frac{1}{2}$  Merks possessed by Donald Mackenzie and to add  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Merks more to it. I also agree to continue your Father in his present possession of 10 Merks old rent of Leadmore during the continuance of the present lease thereof, at the present rent, And to implement this Obligation to you under the penalty of paying the rent of ten Merks of Rhincreach yearly till it is implemented. In witness whereof I have written and subscribed this.

William Pope to Colin Mackenzie

Navidale, 11 September 1805

After fully considering the plan which you was so good as submit to my perusal at Dunrobin for establishing Fishing Villages and making Harbours on this Coast at the several stations of Helmsdale Kilgour and Golspy I beg to acquaint you that I am not only desirous but ambitious to Embark in the undertaking as general superintendant of the two Northern stations of Helmsdale and Kilgour. The Station of Golspy as proposed in the plan to be made under the more immediate management of Colonel Campbell.

I beg also to assure you that I am deeply impressed with a full sense of my obligation to the Noble Proprietors and to yourself and your brother for the preference given to me, and deeming me qualified to promote a scheme which promises to be a permanent advantage to the County of Sutherland, and if persevering diligence and a faithful discharge of every duty that may be entrusted to my care can forward the real interest of the undertaking I Pledge myself with confidence that they will be faithfully exerted.

Upon perusing your sketch of the scheme the evening before you left Dunrobin I perceived at once that I could not engage then to do

Justice to the various objects which the plan embraced with my own funds alone. It became necessary therefore that I should consult with my brother to know how far he could assist me in the undertaking and from the friendly manner in which he has come forward, being equally zealous with myself to promote any scheme that promises to improve the County of Sutherland I have no doubt but I will be able with his aid to command sufficient funds to meet the principal objects of the plan – vizt. to provide a proper supply of Salt and casks etc., To engage qualified people at the different stations to cure the Fish and to be prepared at all times to purchase the fish with ready money from the Fishermen and perhaps I may find it necessary to supply many of the Fishermen with hooks and lines and some articles of Canvass and small cordage at prime cost, Charging them legal interest till they could repay the debt with Fish. I am fully aware that much will depend in the infancy of such establishments upon granting the Settlers little aids of this kind and being punctual in taking their Fish off their hands at all times with ready money and therefore it will be absolutely necessary that I should reserve the principal part of my funds for that purpose to guard against any disappointment to them or any check to their industry whatever difficulties I may be opposed to myself before I can find a regular favourable market for my fish.

After making a fair estimate for all these objects and for the expence of stocking a farm my advances will fall so heavy that it will not be in my power to undertake to build storehouses at Kilgour and Helmsdale nor do I think that a store house will be necessary at present as all the fish must be cured in the Sun and open air and after it is fully cured it will be brought to the centre station to prepare it finally for market.

As to the Farm of Kilgour and the Highland Place of Sheeskill that is attached to it all that I know is, that it is not intended to grant longer leases than Nineteen years. If to that a Life rent can be added with the Highland place of Kinbrace with Shuskill it is all that I would beg to propose on that head Only, that I am afraid that building the intended village upon the Farm of Kilgour will circumscribe it too much, particularly as you propose that some of the settlers should have Grass lands for cows.

Considering the scheme in the most favorable point of view as to



myself it is evident that it cannot become an object of profit to me for a long time. Indeed for some years I will be perfectly satisfied if I can guard against a loss, because my advances must be accumulating daily according to the success of the fishings and the villagers will be advancing to prosperity when my returns from the Produce of the Fishings must be extremely precarious and uncertain. Nevertheless I am willing to engage in it and to make it the Principal object of my future industry. Trusting with confidence that the Noble proprietors and yourself will at all times be ready to afford me Protection and support in every measure which may appear necessary to promote the prosperity of the undertaking.

Colin McKenzie to David Campbell

Edinburgh, 21 October 1805

I have written to Lady Stafford about the Church business and after receiving her Ladyship's answer shall write to you upon it.

I inclose a letter for Carrol on Roads etc., which you can consider and forward to him.

It is necessary for us to bring our Village business to a speedy point. I have therefore desired Mr William Pope go to Dunrobin and Converse with you and I wish you to adjust what may be Satisfactory to him (as near your own ideas as may be) with regard to a farm So as I may have a Report from you on that head as soon as possible. All the rest I think is plain. With regard to a farm I think that a Sufficient *low* farm is in every View better than any hill disjoined from the Coast. You mention Wester Garty. In what situation is it? If easily accessible I would rather add to Culgower in that way than by giving Suisgill or Kinbrace. A full reservation must be made for Villagers for houses and Crofts and if Pope gets the low ground both of Culgower and Wester Garty the reservation will apply to what may be needed out of both or either for that purpose.

On the whole Lord and Lady Stafford wish much to have this experiment fairly tried and we must not lose Pope if he Can be settled with on terms within any limit of reason. That is easier in Conversation than writing so I refer him to you. Let me know then what land will Satisfy Mr Pope. Specify the present situation

of each parcel in point of Rent, and Number and quality of possessors etc., and annex what you and Mr Pope jointly or separately think ought to be the rent payable by him. Add to the whole any observations that have occurred to you. I shall then forward the whole to the Marquis and Marchioness for their decision. Pray lose no time about this.

Colin Mackenzie to David Campbell

Edinburgh, 7 November 1805

I have just returned from a hurried expedition to Aberdeen Shire and find yours of 31st ult. with Mr Pope's Memorandum. I am glad to find that a low Country farm satisfies him and I dare say we shall now have no difficulty in settling. I observe you could not fix a Rent because the space wanted for the Village was not ascertained; but I wonder it did not occur to either of you to think that you Could fix a Rent for the whole, out of which a deduction should be given at a Certain rate for what might be needed for the Village. The deduction may be either fixed at so much per acre, distinguishing a rate for arable, another for pasture etc., and in this way alone Can it be settled for we shall not take ground (to lie waste) till the Settlers are prepared to occupy it. I wish Mr Cuming when drawing the plan of the Coasts for Mr Telford in the View of the harbour had been desired to plan a Village. It is not intended that the settlers shall have more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre each. Endeavour still to settle with Mr Pope as to a Rent and rate of deduction in the way now Suggested and I shall in the Meantime be ripening the rest of the plan for his and your farther Consideration as well as for the decision of the Marquis and Marchioness.

You have not told me who is or are in possession of West Garty? I knew it was Houston's Wadset and Contiguous to Kilgower but when I enquired as to its present situation I alluded to the *possessors*, who they were, as I presume it is not in Houston's own hands. Inform us as to this and learn the present Rent. As to Houston he must have a proper farm under Lease and his Wadset will be redeemed. By the bye he is not the eldest Son of Lewis Houston so I must know who and where he is that I may prepare for the Redemption against Whitsunday.

Pray suggest how the land required for the furnisher of Milk and leader of Peats is to be furnished, whether out of the low grounds or by our Cutting out small possessions from the Skirt of the hill?

You must still give the boatmen Sir William Forbes's Guinea as a *present from him*, for he is anxious they should get it.

The person I recommended for a Commission (an Ensigncy) in the Militia (supposing George McKenzie to get Clarks Lieutenancy) was Alexander McKenzie Son to Stronchrubie and Son in law to Ledbeg. I have recommended Ledbeg's Son Kenneth to General Fraser who will I am persuaded get him into his Regiment if an opening happen soon.

I wish by any opportunity that may occur between and March to purchase from Sutherland a real good Milch Cow for myself, that will Calve about March. I have taken a Country house in Peebles Shire.<sup>1</sup> Will you execute this Commission for me and get the Cow sent by any body that is coming between this and March.

Marchioness of Stafford to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Trentham, 21 November 1805

I inclose Dearest George a Letter I received this morning from Mackenzie relating to the change we talked of making at Dunrobin. Lord Stafford desires me to do about it as I like, and as I hope you will be still more personally interested in the consequences of these arrangements than I shall be, I wish to know what you think about it. Campbell has certainly many faults and I daresay the other will do better. If Campbell has any thoughts of giving up, it is all easy to settle, but if not yet, I wish Fawkener<sup>2</sup> had delayed another year asking the Question. Pray tell me what you think and feel about it. I also inclose a Letter from Campbell relating to Regimentals etc. You will receive the commission<sup>3</sup> with this, I was obliged to write it over as he had misspelt it and *miscalled* the giver and receiver of the commission as usual in his, talking besides of a *Seall* and articles of *Warr*. I am glad you wrote to Lady Alva

<sup>1</sup> Possibly Portmore.

<sup>2</sup> Cosmo Falconer.

<sup>3</sup> As Colonel of Sutherland Volunteers.

which Charlotte has also done tonight. The Papers say Addington is going to Lisbon (I mean Lord Sydmouth). I see by the Papers that Lord Nelson has left Lady Hamilton [ ]<sup>1</sup> and £500 a year for Life. I am glad of it, as she I am convinced will be most miserable from his death, and Government are disposed to behave very illiberally to her. She had great merit originally in obtaining for him provisions and expediting the sailing of his fleet from thence for Egypt at the beginning of his successes, and he always said if it had not been for her and Sir William Hamilton he never would nor could have done what he did, so certainly the country owed her something, let her have been *anything*. . . .

Marchioness of Stafford to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Trentham, 1 December 1805

Pray is it next Thursday senight we may expect you? A Pye went this morning by the Liverpool Dilligence to Oxford.<sup>2</sup> I have written to Colin saying that the only difficulty we could possibly feel with regard to not eating Fawkener up voraciously was a regard to Campbell's feelings, and therefore stating to him that, as from the conversations that had past he could best know how to do it, I thought he had better sound Campbell, how long he meant to stay, saying he had understood that would not be very long, and that an opportunity offered which could not easily be replaced – but not to do anything violent. As to all those applications which they will be ready to make to you in Sutherland for Volunteer commissions you had better refer them all to Colonel Campbell, and at the same time write to him requesting him to let the recommendations go on as usual through him to Lord Stafford which will avoid circuitous correspondence and save you 1,000 improper applications. Also he will require an authority from you to sign to give the power to him of receiving and dispensing of the contingencies etc. When you are asked about your Regiment it is 1,150 strong. You need be in no hurry about asking for Fort George for permanent duty, all that sort of thing for next year will be very uncertain for a long time.

<sup>1</sup> MS. torn.

<sup>2</sup> Earl Gower was at this time an undergraduate at Christ Church, Oxford.

Indeed any how the commissions and appointments must go to Lord Stafford, so it will be a good answer to say you do not interfere in the promotions but refer them to Campbell or whoever is the *Factor* who ought to be the best judge from constant *Haabits* with the People.

Colin Mackenzie to David Campbell

Edinburgh, 7 December 1805

Peruse and forward the two inclosures. Send me notice without delay about the Wadset of West Garty.

I am tempted by what you told me at Dunrobin of your Views of soon quitting that Situation to Consult you on a point which has recently cast up. I am Certain that both the Marquis and Marchioness have a due Sense of the Zeal and Sincerity of your attention to their Interests and you cannot doubt my entertaining decidedly the same opinion. But having accidentally heard of a person whom I shall in Confidence mention to you hereafter who I think would suit the situation uncommonly well, after you have put it on a good train, I feel it my duty not entirely to lose sight of Such an opportunity of supplying the loss which your retirement will occasion. The person I allude to will be disengaged at Whitsunday 1807. If your Views are, as I gathered from you, to quit Sutherland about that time, I shall lose no time in Securing a Successor who would better than any one I know fill up the blank you would leave. But I shall of Course take no Measures without hearing further from you and I have again to repeat that at whatever time you quit Sutherland you will leave many Regrets behind you, tho' it would be unfair and unjust in us to expect what it would be unwise in you to do, namely to give your time to the Estate of Sutherland when you could with more Comfort and perfect advantage dedicate it to your own Estate.

Colin Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 10 January 1806

Your Ladyship's letters of 26th and 27th ult. followed me to Fleurs where I was engaged for a week decyphering old charters and I have been occupied on the same subject since my return till now.

I am very happy to learn the Marquis's liberal determination with regard to the harbour from which I augur the happiest results.

It might perhaps be worth while to show the plan and mention your intentions to Mr Greville by whose means some Contribution towards the expense might be obtained from the Society for British fisheries of which he is an active Member.

I am sorry to say the Village Scheme must wait for a year owing to Mrs Gray's unwillingness to leave her farm. I inclose her letters with a Copy of my Reply. Poor Creature, she is an object of pity altho her folly is most provoking. It is impossible I think to *accept* her relinquishment of her Lease on a footing which would represent an act of pure beneficence as an inadequate Compensation forced upon Mrs Gray. I shall write to Mr Pope and keep him patient; and perhaps it may be not amiss to allow the idea to be disseminated and take root for a year before commencing operations. In this View I would adjust Mr Pope's Lease to Commence at Whitsunday 1807, and advertise the plan of the Village in every possible way in the Interim.

I am persuaded that we Could have no advice as to the plan equal to Telford's, and what occurs to me as proper is to advertise for Estimates from persons willing to undertake the business. In this View it will be requisite that the Plan should be here to be shown to enquirers. Will you Ladyship have the goodness then to send it back soon.

I now inclose the Advertisement of Roschall<sup>1</sup> for Sale. The Rental is stated at a higher amount than by Lord Reay's note. Your Ladyship will remember that, tho unknown to him, *his* Agent Mr Tait was employed by me to treat for the purchase and I shall thro' that Channel Continue the endeavour to accomplish a fair purchase – but I think we must not be pressing or urgent, since a Roup is advertised, and I humbly differ from Lord Reay, as to the prudence of Lord Stafford's offering in his own name. It might bring forward fictitious bidding to raise the price and could not do good, as other fair Competitors would still bid to the extent of their Notions of the Value. But I think it extremely probably we may be able to close by private bargain. When I understood (what indeed was once resolved tho' now the intention is changed) that it was in view to keep the Estate but sell the timber etc., I

<sup>1</sup> The estate of Roschall, formerly owned by the family of Baillie, was in fact purchased by Richard Dunning, 2nd Lord Ashburton.

tampered with the Agent thro' another Channel, for there Mr Taitt was not the fittest to employ, to buy the Superiority as yielding two votes, not for you, for if vested in you, the *Votes* would have belonged to the *property* but intending one for John Forbes whom it would suit better than a Wadset and who authorised me to make the purchase in his behalf, and proposing to keep the other myself. The idea was listened to, and I think it possible that that mode of treaty may be still proposed which I presume Your Ladyship and the Marquis will have no objection to. I even think, if it should not, that if the Estate be bought entire it would be an advisable Measure that it should be bought, with the View of the property being yours and the Superiority ours, for which Mr Forbes and I would be willing to pay £500 of the total price, £250 each, restricting our quit rent to a Shilling a Year. I shall be glad to know what Your Ladyship thinks of this.

I am entirely of the opinion expressed by Your Ladyship that it is impossible to be too Cautious in letting farms under a long (i.e. 19 years) Lease, and I am also persuaded that Colonel Campbell has seen too little of the Estate to judge accurately of it – and I not only conceive that what Your Ladyship suggests will be a wise measure but I would propose another which I think will be highly material. I have in my eye two men both very worthy of trust in point of integrity and also Skill whom I would try to persuade to make the journey – one, a Mr Stewart a Peebles Shire farmer, the other Mr Gillespie who pays Glengarry £1,000 a year and is the most intelligent Sheep farmer in the north. Summer is the proper time for this and in the interim as soon as the Season will permit I would advise getting a survey and plan of that immense Central range, of which Clibrig and Benormine are the Centre. The eye of the most Skilful Shepherd would be aided by a plan and in Calculating the *Value* there must be either a Survey or Conjecture of the Number of Acres.

I have not a doubt that the Sutherland Estate if let to the utmost immediate advantage would yield £20,000 a year; but this is evidently impossible without sweeping away what *at present* is a *Superfluous* population but which when our roads, Villages, and harbour are made, and a little time allowed for enabling example to operate, will become the Means of enhancing the Value far even

above £20,000 a year. I confess I think Lord Reay's sentiments are a little too rapid. A great proportion of his and still more of your population is totally ignorant of the means of gaining Subsistence in a Village and this ignorance if Construed into Contumacy would be punished by leaving them only an option between Starving and Emigration, which last if adopted from voluntary choice I would certainly not restrain but can never Consider it as otherwise than impolitic as well as cruel if forced upon the people by prematurely requiring of them to change suddenly all the habits of their lives. In my humble opinion the end in View will be attained by patient and steady Measure *gradually* brought to maturity, while any attempt at an instantaneous change would fail and only involve the bulk of the people in misery and Ruin. One other remark occurs to me, that the change will be easier in Lord Reay's Country and Assint than in your immense tract of Country lying in the Center between the opposite Coasts, till roads shall Convey into the interior some better ideas of Industry and improvement.

But I am decidedly of opinion that the poor Tenantry should have no Lease whatever but possess at will so that partial arrangements may be made when most Convenient, and under this disadvantage as in point of Rent I expect that the increase will stand nearly follows.

The Set which is to take place next Autumn includes about half the Estate. The total rent 1804 is 1,320 Bolls and £5,867, that part out of Lease in 1807 is about 870 Bolls and £2,700.

The increase of Rent besides the Salmon fishings will be about £2,000 and then the total will be Worth about 10,000 Guineas a year besides the Wadsets or say about £12,000 or better in all. Adding a similar rise on the half still under Lease the actual rent will be not much if any thing short of £15,000 a year; while an immense portion will be under a tenure from year to year waiting the period when by turning the people into different Channels they may be increased in rent up to their full actual Value.

William Mackenzie to David Campbell

Edinburgh, 14 July 1806

Inclosed I send you D. Mackenzie's Plan and Elevation of the new Inn at Golspie with his Estimate of the expence thereof amount-



ing to £586 10s. 6d. I also send you a Plan of the same Inn made out by my Brother Colin which he has transmitted to the Marchioness of Stafford and has been returned approved by her and the Marquis. This new Plan makes more accomodation and Convenience on a smaller Scale and is in every respect Superior to Mackenzie's. You will therefore please on receipt send for Mackenzie and give him the new Plan with an instruction to copy it out on Paper with a suitable Elevation and to make a new Estimate of the Expence. We suppose that the expence of this new Inn will be considerably less than that planed by Mackenzie. And as soon as you receive from Mackenzie this new Plan and Estimate you will be good enough to transmit them to me so as we may have them examined and finally approved of. The new Inn to be built will as you proposed be situated on the side of the road with its front pointing North to Rhives and having on the east side of the road leading from Rhives Gate to the Shore the little Stream which would be a great Convenience to the Inn.<sup>1</sup>

I send inclosed a Letter which we received yesterday from the Minister and parishioners of Assint as to the repairs on the Church with a Copy of my Answer thereto which I beg You will attend to and write to some of them on the subject.<sup>2</sup>

I inclose a Memorandum relative to the Sutherland Set whereby You will observe that The Marchioness and Marquis have resolved to defer for a Year the General Sett of the Estate and that no part will be let this Year except the Sheep farms and the lands to Messrs Landles & Co. You will of course read the Memorandum and be immediately engaged in forming the Lists desired and giving us such other information as You judge fit. Colin is to write to-day or tomorrow to Glengarry to get Gillespie to go immediately to Sutherland to value the Sheep farms and give us the proper lines of boundary. You may let it be generally known in Sutherland that there will be no Leases granted this Year except to the Sheep farmers and Mr Pope and that the tenants whose Leases expire at Whitsunday 1807 will be allowed to continue another Year in possession at the same rent. I hope to be in Sutherland by the end

<sup>1</sup> This proposed inn is to be distinguished from that actually built in 1808 (see below, pp. 80-81).

<sup>2</sup> These letters have not survived.

of August when we shall Consider the list of the persons to be removed from the Estate, adjust the lease with Mr Pope and the Sheep farmers.

You can make up the list of persons to be removed with a Column mentioning the cause of their dismissal. Of course You will include in this list all disorderly and troublesome people and poachers.

Lord Reay is here – he goes North in a few days.

1807-1811

LETTERS

RELATING TO THE FACTORY OF COSMO FALCONER

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Cosmo Falconer to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 11 April 1807

I HAD THE HONOR of duly receiving your Ladyship's Letter of the 4th Inst. but it was not till last day that I obtained an Interview with Lord Webb Seymour who most freely talked over Improvements in general and the different particulars connected with your Ladyship's Estate, and I have great satisfaction in saying that your plans met with his full approbation. The additional year given the people to provide themselves in Houses and to turn their small stocks of Cattle to account, seem'd to obviate the Chief difficulty and Hardship which he had conceived in the case of the Sutherland people, and upon my stating how much your Ladyship had their Wellfare at heart and how desirous you was for any Information on so interesting a subject, and particularly from his Lordship who had turned his attention so much to matters of this kind, he seemed to have great pleasure in the Communication of his Ideas. His Lordship approved of the system of turning the interior tracts of the Country into sheep Walks as a natural and prudent mean of Improvement and was fully satisfied that what your Ladyship proposed with regard to the people was liberal and to the full extent of any reasonable persons wishes taking an Interest in them. But he was aware, as we all are, of the difficulty that in such cases exists of altering the views and habits of the people and reconciling

them to other situations. And perhaps an effectual change in this respect could only be gradually accomplished with satisfaction, by taking along with it the proper effect of Example to the rest. However as matters stand it is obvious so long as real hardship can be avoided that without such example the people must be made to yield, or, having full freedom, may look about them elsewhere for more desirable accommodation. Indeed Lord Webb Seymour went the length of asserting that emigration itself to America ought to be encouraged by your Ladyship and that it w'd be a proper thing in you to endeavour to facilitate their passage abroad. As his Lordship said he would be in London in the course of a few weeks and would probably see Your Ladyship, I shall take the liberty to refer you to himself for the reasons which he entertains for promoting what hitherto has been considered sound policy to restrain, but upon which certainly a diversity of opinion has existed. One thing strikes me very forcibly, as the people in general hold out a threat of Emigration for accomplishing their purposes, much good might arise as tending to quiet them the more, were your Ladyship to forward their wishes even in this by offering to take an Interest in seeing that the proper Means were attended to in regard to a comfortable passage – and it might be said that every pains would be taken to get them recommended for small situations connected with Industry, in other parts of the Country, if they continued dissatisfied with the Accommodation you had for them. Under all these Circumstances it is impossible for any thinking or Iudicious person to talk of Hardships to your people or for anyone possessed of the smallest discernment amongst themselves to reflect upon your Ladyship for doing what was for their own Interest as well as yours.

I had just got this length when I received Your Ladyship's Letter of the 8th with an anonymous Letter dated at Inverness.<sup>1</sup> It is the coarsest production I ever read and in my opinion entitled to no regard or Consideration. Tho' the writer says 'he has not the least interest in your Ladyship or Tenantry' he evidently has some improper motive, and tho' dated at Inverness and put into the post office at Perth in all probability has been wrote on your own Estate, and I hope the handwrite may yet discover something of its

<sup>1</sup> This letter has not survived.

origin. I do not think it is the diction of the writer himself but of an ignorant low ill designing person to give your Ladyship uneasiness for the better accomplishing his own purposes, and I assure your Ladyship nothing has given me more pleasure than the resolution you have discovered to pursue a steady conduct as to the plans which may be devised for their accommodation, and tho' I feel *really* very inexperienced for the present task, the Confidence your Ladyship is pleased to honor me with will certainly lead me to do with cheerfulness everything in my power and to spare no pains to collect the Ideas of others more experienced in which I can have confidence.

I find that wood fit for ordinary country purposes can be had at reasonable rates from this side of the Murrayfirth but nothing can be done with propriety till things are a little matured – and the new mode of roofing Houses I formerly hinted at can then be more particularly considered about which I have got particular information.

I received also your Ladyship's Note by the Lairg Courier<sup>1</sup> with whom I had some conversation but tho' he wished to extract some favorable concession in regard to himself I avoided all particulars. I was absent when Mr McCulloch passed thro' Edinburgh. Mr William McKenzie is not yet arrived I believe, with whom I shall fully converse about different things.

William Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 20 April 1807

I have had a very full Conversation with Mr Falconer on the subject of the Management of the Sutherland Estate and particularly on those points requiring immediate attention.

Mr Falconer goes North in about ten days or a fortnight hence and what first demands his active Exertion is to satisfy himself personally as to the possibility of carrying into effect the plans devised for the Accomodation of the tenantry of Lairg included on the Sheep range, and on this important Matter he is possessed of the fullest information.

<sup>1</sup> Presumably the 'Lairg ambassador', sent to the Marchioness by the tenants proposed to be removed to make way for Atkinson and Marshall's 'Great Sheep Tenement' (see below, pp. 82, 147).

The next thing he is to attend to is the institution of the Villages on the Coast especially at Port Gower and he will make proper Arrangements with Mr William Pope.

I had the pleasure of seeing Mr Telford here on his way to the North. He will be in Sutherland next Month when he is to mark out the exact line of Road from Golspie to the Ord So as Contractors may be immediately advertised for and employment in this way given to the people. Mr Telford also informs me that Mr Simson or Mr Cargill employed at the Caledonian Canal will immediately make an Offer for building the Pier at Port Gower.

Mr Falconer doubts exceedingly whether he could even with the assistance of Mr Brown in so Short a time vizt. from May to July or August make so complete a tour and inspection of the parts of the Estate out of Lease to give him such a knowledge of their Value as to be able to advise Your Ladyship and the Marquis to grant a lease even for a Short period of time. Mr Falconer proposes if Your Ladyship approve to make along with Mr Brown a Survey merely of the Coast farms, the farms in Strathfleet and those adjoining to the Sheep range and to let these next Autumn, leaving Assint, Strathnaver and the Wadset lands for another Year. In this way he is of Opinion the Estate will be let more to advantage and the Changes to be effected more easily and more pleasantly made. He is also of Opinion that in the present State of the Country it would be imprudent to give even the Tacksmen a longer lease than 5 or 7 Years unless on very good Conditions with some prospect of the farm being improved. By such a plan as this when the whole Estate would be out of lease say about 1813 or 1814 the Change of System, the introduction of roads, the institution of Villages and other Consequent improvements would render Sutherland so very different a Country from what it is now that Your Ladyship might reasonably expect a very handsome Augmentation to the Rent Roll.

Colin Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Lympstone, Devonshire, 6 June 1807

I had the honor to receive yesterday Your Ladyship's letter of the 3d inclosing the proposal for building the harbour at Culgower and desiring my opinion on that subject.

The amount of the New Estimate is Certainly very high, almost double Mr Telford's original Calculation of £1,600; which has been sufficiently proved to be too low from the opinions of those who have since looked at it Confirmed by his own Conviction of his mistake. But there is little reason to doubt of obtaining from the Commissioners for Highland Roads a Contribution equal to one half out of the forfeited Estates Money now under their Management.<sup>1</sup> In this View the Marquis's outlay would be 1,500 Guineas.

If the Stability of the Work when Completed be at all doubtful, such a sum would be very ill bestowed upon it; but in the many Conversations I have had with Mr Telford about it I never understood him to entertain any apprehensions on that head; and the expressions in his letter to William, about 'promising best to withstand that boisterous Sea' seem to me chiefly meant as part of his Apology for the great addition to his original Estimate. But I shall write to Mr Telford and desire of him to be explicit on this point. As to every other he is I know sanguine in his expectations of great benefit from a harbour on that part of the Coast.

Any attempt at forming a Mere haven for fishing boats would be Very unpromising, considering the great strength of bulwark which is Calculated upon as requisite for enabling the harbour to resist the Violence of the Waves; and the system of drawing the boats ashore (which for want of harbours is in general Use on the East Coast of Caithness) renders it necessary to build the vessels on so small a scale as to abridge greatly their Utility, preventing the fishermen from Venturing out to those fishing grounds where the excellent Herrings of that Coast annually abound, except in the Calmest Sea and for a Very short trip. In this View the advantage of a harbour to afford Shelter to large boats is very great, and even if your own people should obstinately persist in rejecting every overture towards the improvement of their Condition, this temptation would attract many Strangers from the Coasts of Caithness and Moray, whose success must in time offer irresistible motives to the natives of Sutherland to follow the example. But I am persuaded that it is not at all impossible to overcome the

<sup>1</sup> But see below, pp. 71-74, and A. R. B. Haldane, *New Ways through the Glens* (Edinburgh, 1962), 115-17.

prejudices of the People when Schemes of rational improvement are set a going and when the requisite Measures are steadily and dispassionately pursued for Accomplishing them as they will I trust be under Mr Falconer's active and judicious Superintendence. The benefits of this harbour too are by no means confined to the establishment of a fishing Village; but on the Contrary the intercourse which will thus be opened will give encouragement and facility to any sort of industry which may be best adapted to the talents, dispositions, and resources of those who reside within reach of it. If these Considerations should appear to be well founded it is important to reflect on the importance of not losing perhaps by delay the Co-operation of the Commissioners, whose fund for improvements of this sort is limited to the residue of the forfeited Estates Money which may be exhausted by Contributions to other harbours, Canals etc.; and then we must, if the Undertaking should be found to be decidedly beneficial, either pay the whole Cost or forego the advantage.

My humble opinion therefore is that tho' the sum required is large (£1,575) it would be at once a popular, a beneficent, and a wise application of it to Carry on the Work in question, unless there be serious doubts of its Stability. I shall keep the Estimate till I have the honor to learn from Your Ladyship the final resolution adopted. If in favour of the Undertaking I shall set in train the Negotiation with the Comissioners thro' their Secretary Mr Rickman.

Colin Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Lympstone, 4 July 1807

I had the honor to receive on Thursday Your Ladyship's letter of the 30th enclosing Lord Webb Seymour's Note which I return.<sup>1</sup> Knowing as I do how well his Lordship has employed every opportunity of Cultivating his mind and storing it with information I feel myself bound to pay much deference when I venture to dissent from him on a point to which he has paid particular attention. Yet I confess I cannot Calculate on the Subject of Emigration in the way that he does. If indeed he be right in Supposing it impracticable

<sup>1</sup> Lord Webb Seymour wrote to the Marchioness on 29 June 1807, reporting on a conversation with Lord Selkirk, and urging her to support emigration.



to Change the habits and dispositions of Highlanders, so as to overcome their present idle and slovenly mode of life I have nothing to say; for undoubtedly, whatever feelings might attend the Act of their departure they would be better, both for themselves and their Country, industrious else where, in a British Colony, than idle at home. This however tho' I understand Lord Webb to state it as clearly admitted all over the Highlands (the impracticability of improving their habits at home) appears to me with great Submission to be asserted without sufficient foundation. I own that Highland tenants left undisturbed in possession of a tolerable grazing at a low rent, and in a State of exclusion from the rest of the World will never alter those habits which have existed from old times all around them. But when these Circumstances undergo a Change the natural energy of the human mind will in a Highlander like any other British Subject (and in proportion to their Superior acuteness more rapidly) operate to produce new ideas, new views, new exertions. This Course of things has I am assured given rise to Considerable improvement in Argyle, where the Vicinity to Civilisation facilitated the formation of points of Contact. But indeed what is the Highlander to do in America? He must labour, and under greater difficulties than at home, in order to bring land into Cultivation, so that after emigrating he must encounter that very change of habits and dispositions which is deemed impracticable at home. I confess I never could understand such reasoning as this. I humbly think that producing the *necessity* for the Change will give birth to it whether in America or the Highlands. I cannot see a doubt that some such plan as was Concerted for the people at Lairg must produce the result, either of inducing them to become Cultivators of the Waste ground in their Neighbourhood at home, or of leading them to resolve on Emigration, if they Conceive that this latter Measure is more for their advantage. Now in this alternative I have not an idea of wishing to sway the operation of their own free Will. Every man who feels it impossible for him to resolve on becoming an industrious improver at home may well be spared. He is a burden to the Estate on which he lives. But my belief is that a large proportion of the people, when the option is fairly before them, will be disposed to remain, and make at home those exertions which would await them in America.

Considering the immense Spaces of Unimproved ground in Sutherland Capable of Cultivation I am satisfied that if the Inhabitants Could be brought to engage in that Work it would be found that the Country is far from being overstocked – and it is indisputable that the Wealth and prosperity of a district are like those of a State augmented by the increase of its population, *if the people are industrious*. As to the idea of an imported population this is never Very easy but would be peculiarly difficult when the Northern latitude, the remote situation, and the backwardness in improvement were taken into Consideration. And after a good many new settlers had arrived, who must be tempted by advantages to come, several Generations must elapse before their increase Could make it seem an inhabited Country. The idea of your taking some Charge of the Emigration for the good of the poor people I should think highly desirable and benevolent and useful, were I come to the point of wishing to see the event. But farther, if a partial Emigration should occur in Consequence of the resolution of any among the people to prefer that Course to the acceptance of your proposals, Such interference on Your Ladyship's part would be of great Value to the people; and if the numbers were likely to be Considerable it would be highly expedient to think of obtaining a grant of lands and forming a Sutherland Country in America. I differ with Lord Webb in thinking that *you* will find it necessary to *bid* your people emigrate. In every other point I Cordially agree with his Lordship. The measures at Lairg were *too Comprehensive* owing to misinformation as to the number of people involved in the Arrangement; yet after all I think they would have answered and am still more of opinion that they may be accomplished against another year. At any rate if these plans are totally rejected by the people; and if Emigration be resorted to by their Choice, that Circumstance will relieve Your Ladyship's mind from the uneasiness that would be excited by the distress of those who finally resolved to quit their native Country; for altho' I have forborne to enlarge on this View, knowing how tender your feelings are upon it, and anxious to treat it as a question of Calculation merely, yet it is impossible to doubt that there would be loud wailings and lamentations when thousands of Highlanders were about to bid a final adieu to their native hills.

The Case of Mr Maclean of Coll is not very applicable;<sup>1</sup> at least if I am right in my Views. The struggle to preserve the population will I think only protract a little the utmost productiveness and in the issue render it far Superior to what it ever can be with a smaller population. A private Individual of small income may find it oppressively inconvenient to submit to the temporary privation. Besides on so small a property the means may be wanting of furnishing an outlet for industry – it may answer either for Sheep or for tenants, but not for both as I think the Sutherland Estate is amply adequate to do.

In the Course of reading Dickson's *Modern Agriculture*,<sup>2</sup> a new work, I met with a Chapter on paring and burning which removed from my mind the only anxiety I had about the plan of Cultivating Waste grounds, arising from the want of Manure to begin with. I am persuaded that most of the grounds in question are of the sort of soil best Calculated for that operation which would entirely Supersede the Necessity of Manure at the outset.

Colin Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Lympstone, 6 July, 1807

I promised to write on the Subject of the harbour; but yesterday was occupied by the accusation on the Subject of the Sheriffships.<sup>3</sup> I now inclose two letters about the harbour. That from Mr Rickman shows that there is a difficulty as to the Commissioners recovering the Money which was supposed to be forthcoming on account of the forfeited Estates. But this I would fain hope is only a temporary obstruction to our Wishes. You will observe I have the promise of a farther Communication. It strikes me that possibly this difficulty might be overcome if the Commissioners think well (as I apprehend they must) of the Undertaking; by their obtaining the Authority of Parliament to apply, in the Interim, till the forfeited Estates Money be recovered, so much as may be requisite of the Money belonging to the Roads and Bridges of which there is I

<sup>1</sup> Lord Webb Seymour had commented on Mr Maclean of Coll's plans to organise emigration from Rhum.

<sup>2</sup> Probably R. W. Dickson, *Practical Agriculture* (London, 1805).

<sup>3</sup> The sheriffdoms of Caithness and Sutherland were separated in 1806.

believe a Considerable Sum lying Unapplied in their hands. Perhaps Your Ladyship will state this matter to Mr Dundas that he may do what he can with the Board.

The other letter is from Mr Telford in answer to mine enquiring about the absolute Stability of the Work. The reply is not in such positive terms as might have been wished; but it seems to me to Mean Merely that it is impossible to answer More decidedly for any harbour Constructed on an exposed Coast. I should think it would be necessary to require of the Undertaker to Uphold the Work thro' a Whole Winter after its Completion. If he engaged for such a degree of resistance I should think the attempt sufficiently safe. If otherwise the risk must appear to him to be of such amount that the outlay would be Unwise. If Mr Telford is still in London it occurs to me that *his* opinion might be better ascertained in Conversation than by Correspondence; and if Your Ladyship would take the trouble to Converse with him you would find him a Well informed Man, Zealous for the improvement of the Highlands, and he is very obliging and would be ready to do anything he might find to be Your Ladyship's Wish. You will observe from his letter he puts up at the Salopian Coffee house, Charing Cross.

Thomas Telford to Colin Mackenzie

Shrewsbury, 28 June 1807

My wandering life has prevented me from sooner attending to yours of the 15th respecting the stability of the proposed Pier at Kilgower. The Coast of Sutherland is certainly very much exposed, and this very circumstance renders a Harbour necessary – no person can give an absolute assurance of the durability of a work in such a situation, but in forming the Plan and Specification I have taken much pains to guard against the effects to be dreaded from the violence of the Sea in Stormy Weather. The prices are such as to enable the Contractor to contend with some interruptions during the Execution of the work, and when compleated in the manner which I am sure Mr Simpson will be disposed to do, if he undertakes it, I have little apprehension of its being afterwards destroyed; at least I think it ought to be, even at some risque, attempted for the accomodation of that district of Country.

Tomorrow I set out for London, where I shall remain only a week or ten days, and then return to Sutherland; when in London I am always at the Salopian Coffee House, Charing Cross, and shall be glad to hear from you on this or any other subject.

John Rickman to Colin Mackenzie

New Palace Yard, 19 June 1807

I have received your Letter of the 15 Inst. inclosing an Estimate of the Expence of making a Harbour at Culgowr. I am sorry for the occasion of your being in Devonshire, and the more, because your presence in the North would have been favourable to the progress of the Dunrobin Road, and all other Improvements. The subject of Culgowr Harbour is not entirely new to me, being (as you observe) mentioned in the Report of the Committee respecting the forfeited Estates.<sup>1</sup> I cannot however give you any lively hopes that the intentions of that Committee are likely to be soon fulfilled, as We have not been able to find half the Sum, which they refer to the management of the Commissioners for the Roads and Bridges.

I will however lay your letter before them as soon as opportunity occurs. I have great confidence that the Estimate of Simpson and Cargill is correct; they being considerate Men, and of much experience; indeed their Estimate proves this.

Wishing for the speedy restoration of your health.

Colin Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Lympstone, 21 September 1807

I had the honor to receive two days ago Your Ladyship's letter inclosing William's Account of proceedings at Dunrobin.<sup>2</sup> I have also heard from him to the same effect; and I flatter myself the plans in agitation will be fully successful. He has sent me a Copy of the Regulations which are Calculated among other things to embrace the idea of the lesser tenants introducing the System of labour for

<sup>1</sup> *Scottish Forfeited Estates Papers*, ed. A. H. Millar (Scottish History Society, 1909), 363.

<sup>2</sup> This paper has not survived.

hire. The Scheme adopted is likely to render this palatable to the people and Convenient for the farmers of a higher order; and when such a *practice* is once recognised it may after a Very short period of interference be left to regulate itself. The only danger was that the Abolition of Subtenantry might deprive the farmers entirely of Labourers for a Certain period. That hazard is I think effectually prevented by the terms of the Set. The allowance of land which is proposed for Crofters under the Ulterior Arrangement Certainly appears small; but yet I am inclined to think it may suffice. I was satisfied that the 12 Acres of Coarse improveable land in the Muir afforded ample Means of decent Subsistence and 5 or 6 acres of improved land will furnish a produce not very far inferior. But it is better that it should be limited, provided there be a Sufficiency for the *Maintenance* of the Crofter and his family which may tend to this desirable result that the opportunity of obtaining a *larger* portion of land and on more beneficial terms may tempt many of the Crofters after trial of 5 or 6 acres of improved land to remove to a possession of 10 or 12 in the Uncultivated Muirs. In Considering the Value of the possession Your Ladyship will remember that the Scotch Acre is larger than the English – 5 Scotch acres are about  $6\frac{1}{4}$  English.

The portion proposed for labourers is Comparatively ample and when the trade of a labourer Comes to be Well understood ought to be lessened. I am satisfied that where Milk can be had for purchase a labourer should not have more land than a Sixth or Eighth of an acre for Potatoes Cabbages etc. But it would be too rapid a Change to attempt this at once in Sutherland.

I am glad to see What is stated by Mr Telford about the Passage of the Bonar and the Pier at Culgower. I have got a Copy of the last Report of the Commissioners for Roads etc. in which it is mentioned that they postpone agreeing to any harbours till the funds be better ascertained etc. In fact a great Share of the fund is Vested *on Bond* in the Crinan Canal and Leith harbour from neither of which can payment soon be expected; and some of our Scotch Members were much to blame in allowing Sir John Sinclair get £7,500 for Wick in the *first* instance as he did.<sup>1</sup> But I think it

<sup>1</sup> See R. Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John* (Edinburgh, 1962), 195-9.

may be possible by Correspondence with the Board to get a tolerable prospect of ultimate *reimbursement* to Lord Stafford of half of the expence of the Pier.

William Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 20 February 1808

I had the honor to receive Your Ladyships letter of the 11th and in consequence of the permission given me have drawn on Messrs Drummonds & Co. for £5,450. I paid the debt on Rearquhar being £2,257 8s. 7d.<sup>1</sup> and General Wemyss the £3,000,<sup>2</sup> and the Bond being a Scotch one I keep it in my possession.

I enclose such a Note as you desire relative to Skelbo.

Mr Falconer arrived here two days ago. We have had some Conversation among other subjects on that of Your Ladyships proposed jaunt to Sutherland. Mr Falconer and I propose that the Set this Year should be a very limited one, namely the parishes of Dornoch and Golspie. By letting a small part of the Country only each Year we shall be able by limiting our Attention to it to know what we are doing, to have a knowledge of the value of the farms and to settle Minute points of Arrangement on an improved System. We also think that such partial Set had better take place in Autumn than in Spring, but still that this need not incomode Your Ladyship as the Sett need not take place until Your departure. Besides the letting of the whole Estate will take Years, and the applications this Year will be even I should think fewer than afterwards. Your Ladyships presence and Authority in encouraging improvement would Certainly be of advantage, for I am convinced the people of Sutherland never will fully believe that the change of System is to be effected until they hear it from Yourself or Lord Gower. There are Several Matters too requiring Your own decision on the spot especially some alterations near the Castle plantations and subordinate affairs wherein the factor is diffculted.

Mr Falconer and I are to have a Meeting to-morrow to talk over several Matters on some of which it may be necessary to trouble Your Ladyship.

<sup>1</sup> Part of the outstanding claims on the Skelbo Estate (see above, i, pp. xi-xii).

<sup>2</sup> A loan against heritable security.

William Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 8 March 1808

Among the other matters of Arrangement concerted between Mr Falconer and Me we settled as to the particular quantity and Shipment of Meal, Potatoe and Pease seed for Sutherland, and by the nearest guess we can make the prices will be as under:

At Berwick	500 bolls Oatmeal at 27s.	£675
	200 do. do. at 26s. 6d.	265
	Shipping Charges and Commission at Berwick	32 1s. 8d.
At Kelso	210 bolls Seed Oats at 29s.	304 10s.
	Granary rent shipping Charges and Commission	23 12s. 6d.
At Leith	50 bolls Potatoes at 16s.	40
	30 bolls Pease at 36s.	54
	Freight of a Vessel from Berwick and Leith to the Little Ferry about	60
At Newburgh	500 bolls Oatmeal at 29s.	725
(near Peterhead)	Freight Meal from Newburgh to Little Ferry	25
	Commission to Brokers on the purchase about	52
Mr Falconer wishes Scales Weights and Measures for Dunrobin which will cost about		8 8s.

£2,264 12s. 2d.

or say in round figures £2,270. This purchase is always made in ready Money. Mr Falconer will by the sales to the people receive the Money and remit the same to me, but some part must unavoidably be irrecoverable as the people standing most in need of assistance are the least able to pay and at any rate it will be a considerable time before any great part of the Money can be remitted. In these Circumstances I propose to open in my Books a separate Account entitled 'Meal etc. for Sutherland' and if Lord Stafford would permit me to draw on Drummonds and Co. for £2,270 I shall enter that Sum to the Credit of the Account, pay all the Charges and price (which otherwise bear interest) and credit the Account with the remittances from Mr Falconer, and when the whole is received shall advise your Ladyship and remit the same to Drummonds and Co. on the Marquis's Account.

When Mr Falconer left Sutherland, he had not received anything like the Amount of the rents, but I have prepared Your Ladyship hardly to look for a remittance from this Year. The demands this



Year are unusually great, for one Article about £2,500 for Road Money. The property tax also cuts deep and the repairs of Manses and Kirks. I shall however in May receive the half year fishing rent which will enable me to remit and by that time Mr Falconer will be able to say whether he can spare me any Money from Sutherland.

I delay for a few days making up the precise note of the balance on Skelbo, in the hope of settling with Mr Gilchrists Agent the mode of legally discharging his debt<sup>1</sup>. At the same time I send such note, I shall send for signature the deed altering the destination of the property.

William Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 16 March 1808

I had the honor yesterday to write to Your Ladyship in answer to Your Letter of 11th Current.

I wrote Your Ladyship last Autumn from Dunrobin Castle that Mr Falconer and I had subject to your approbation come to an understanding with Captain Matheson relative to his Sheep which was to include his Wadset lands and Considerable additional grasings in the parish of Lairg. He was to receive a Tack for the same duration with that to be given Atkinson and Marshall – to contain a break in his option at the end of 8 years – to pay £400 for the first 8 years and £500 a year for the remainder of the lease – the first year Rent to be allowed for Meliorations. Captain Gordons Grasings lying in the heart of his range it was agreed that until the redemption of that Wadset in 1810 he should be allowed a Corresponding deduction from his rent. Captain Matheson at the Conference expressed great anxiety to keep his Wadset and that he would pay if possible the additional Wadset Sum. I then told him I was much afraid that he could not Manage this in an unexceptionable Manner, but that he might Consider of it and let me know in time to take Your opinion. The Captain however never wrote me on the subject, and seeing that the time approached for the Whitsunday Arrangements I wrote to Mr Falconer to talk with

<sup>1</sup> Part of the outstanding claims on the Skelbo Estate (see above, i, pp. xi-xii).

him and endeavour to bring him to a point. Mr Falconer however did not Completely succeed in this, the Captain put him off by saying he would write to me. After Mr Falconer and I had a Meeting here on the subject I wrote to him 25 ult. immediately to come to a decision. I pointed out to him at the same time that it would be impossible for him from the State of his funds to pay the additional Wadset Money which might be about £5,000 and at the same time fully to stock his lands. His son who is here is quite convinced that it would be folly in his father to attempt it and besides I saw a very great difficulty in the way of Continuing the Wadset in a form not to admit of question. And I know Your Ladyship would disapprove of any Wadset being granted which could be questioned in a Court of law thereby to a certain extent endangering the others. Captain Matheson has at length written me. I send his letter which I shall be obliged to Your Ladyship to return with Your decision. Mr Falconer and I were both of opinion that the Arrangement should not be deferred beyond Whitsunday next – already a Year has been lost. The removals will easily be made in Shiness in proportion to those already effected in the other parts of the parish. At any rate I submit that we must not slacken the exertions at this time. Mr Falconer has sufficient Accomodation for these people in the Muir of Dornoch and in the Village of Golspie – besides they will get abundance of employment on the roads. The best plan will be for Mr Falconer and Captain Matheson making together the proper Arrangements with the people where they are to go.

The Wadset Money due to Captain Matheson on his granting a discharge of the Wadset is £1,388, which I know he is anxious You would with some addition keep in Your Ladyships hands at Interest. Your Ladyship is aware that if you agree to this the loan must be in the shape of a Mortgage over Skelbo which I suppose you would be now unwilling to grant.

Your Ladyship will observe by his letter that in terms of my advice he has given the Notices of Removal to the people. I was happy to hear yesterday by a letter from Ross Shire that the people are beginning to get a sale for their Cattle on prettty tolerable terms considering their starved Condition. We have fine spring Weather here.

Colin Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Bath, 17 April 1808

I send Your Ladyship a letter I have just received from Mr Telford on the Subject of the harbour. From the reduced size of the pier and lower amount of Estimate I should humbly think it will answer the purpose in View both as involving less probable risk (if any) to the Work when Completed, and as embarking a much smaller sum in the undertaking.

You will observe that £1,332 being the Estimate; £666, or one half is as much as we can well expect, and supposing the expenses a little to exceed the Estimate tho' this is not very likely as Mr Telford makes it I know a rule to be Cautious of that error the outlay on the Marquis's side must be under £700.

Supposing it probable that his Lordship will approve of the plan of proceeding on this Estimate I have written a letter which I inclose so as it may if his Lordship is satisfied with it be forwarded to Mr Rickman. Perhaps however it may be desirable in the first instance to see the plan which will at once be procured on a Message from you or Lord Stafford to Mr Rickman. The time mentioned by the Commissioners for receiving proposals does not expire till the 1st of May.

Should you wish about this time to write to me on this or any other Subject I shall be at Liverpool on the 22d and 23d and a letter addressed to the Post Office there will reach me safely.

Thomas Telford to Colin Mackenzie

London, 9 April 1808

In consequence of a letter from your brother dated the 4th Inst. I have made a Plan for Port Gower upon a smaller Scale than the former one.

By this Plan the length of the Pier, from High Water mark, is 200 feet and I have estimated the Expense at £1,332.

In order to save trouble I have left the Plan with Mr Rickman, and by writing him, it may, if necessary, be transmitted to you. But it will be a simpler way, in your letter to the Board, to state the length of the Pier and the Amount of the Expense, and refer to a Plan made out and signed by me on the 9th of April 1808, which is in the hands of Mr Rickman.

I am just about to leave London, and shall soon be at Edinburgh, where I shall of course see your brother, and shall be glad through him to hear of your welfare.

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Edinburgh, 14 July 1808

. . . [Edinburgh and travel news].

I have had a long conversation with Mackenzie about Sutherland matters and find my presence will be really necessary to carry on not only roads which are to be settled in a few days, but also Farms etc. The state of the country is such that many lives would have been lost if Falconer had not adopted the measures he has, which have been that of getting more corn at Peterhead to the amount I think of £1,600. Mackenzie says all this will be repaid he has not the least doubt, or nearly so during the next Season, but he was sorry to find it had been necessary. In the state of the country we think it would not be safe to make anything like a final *set* this year, because if the People undertook to give the proper rents, they could not pay them and the corn too, and therefore we must do the best we can and try to attract some new settlers, getting rid of all single People and these able to do elsewhere and settling these who deserve it on the coasts, but of all this I shall see more hereafter. He says the assessments for roads etc. this year have come to £3,000, because they are these of two years, the new Sheep Farm augmentations were not in force till Martinmass and this with the Election expenses and say  $\frac{1}{2}$  years nearly account together with the distress which has been excessive for the defalcations, and the bad season has been equally felt all over the Highlands and in the more exposed parts of the South; this year promises so well that I trust all will come round. . . . [travel arrangements].

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 27 July 1808

We set out this morning to perambulate the southern part of the new road, which is almost complete to Golspy – a Bridge at the Mill near finished, the Inn almost quite finished, some rooms habitable and an excellent House. Duncan is to keep it, who was

greive here. He seems an intelligent man, and has a good looking wife to take care of it. It is placed so: [Here follows a sketch of the old bridge of Golspie and the original part of the present Sutherland Arms Hotel].

It was well we took the walk as we prevented some errors in digging ground for the road, which continues in this direction: [Here follows a sketch of the line of the road from Golspie to Brora, between the Sutherland Arms Hotel and the present Stable Entrance to Dunrobin Castle policies.]

By a line I describe the old boundary wall of the Park, which Campbell has let go shamefully out of repair, and which I have directed Falconer to put in proper order till its junction with the new Garden wall, both from appearance and utility a proper measure, as it prevents the sand invading the Fields, and prevents them from being a perfect common open to all the People and cattle in the village, which Falconer says is the greatest detriment to the Farm. Campbell never made the least repair and the Place was really going to ruin in all these respects. The common People talk of it with regret, and say he destroyed all My Lord's fences and pleasure grounds, which is perfectly true, however we shall soon have them restored to proper order. George is also very anxious about it. He ploughed up your new road across the lower field from Golspy. We mean to have an entrance still by the Shore through the *new Towers* as the private road from Golspy to the House, is already made, and the Shore will be secured from the publick by a short wall across the Beech to the sea, with a Gate at Golspy so: [Here follows a sketch of the proposed wall.]

The lower or Pidgeon House Field is all in Turnips, to be laid down in grass next year. The crops look promising, the Hay not yet got in. I have only surveyed this quarter of the Farm which took us the whole morning, so I cannot yet describe the rest. We all wish you were here, as it is really more necessary than can be supposed to be on the Spot sometimes to give spirit and make things go on. These roads will advance the country more than can be imagined, one almost sees a good effect from what is done already. I saw Joseph Gordon this morning who says it will be incalculable.

We are going immediately to settle the line of the southern road, about which I will write to you particularly. Have you thought of

any scheme for coming here? I have been maturing all the detail of it in my own mind and will send you a plan of the Journey for every day if I receive any encouragement. My Leeches are come quite safe.

We have as yet had no petitions, and they say we are likely to have few or none as the People are all satisfied with being in our own hands. All those dismist from Lairg are already settled, and we are going to make allottments immediately for these who are to be removed to form a Sheep Farm at Muy. They wish to be placed on the Loan More, and on the ground near Skelbo. Falconer says the People are in the best disposition to do whatever we like, and he is sure will come into any place gradually as they get to understand and have it explained to them what they ought to do to improve the ground. The Lairg Ambassador etc. are going on very well in their new restricted situations in Strathnaver.

All the new arrangements for the next Sheep Farm will be made while I am here, with Falconer. William Mackenzie I think does not understand the subject, but is a mere machine who repeats what the last Person said only in a stupider way than the Person who spoke last, but he takes a great deal of pains and acts as a sort of hammer to beat the nails proposed to be driven into their places . . . [Volunteer arrangements].

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 29 July 1808

Yesterday we walked across the Farm on the new road to the north (east as they call it). It crosses the farm in a strait line from the little wood I marked where it takes a turn to Golspy, in one end of the Farm, to the gate in Clayside that goes out to the Strathsteven road in the other, and looks very handsome. Government allow for the fences for inclosing the places through which they pass, at a certain rate, sufficient to build stone dykes, and the agent of each property may receive this money and lay it out according to the fancy of the proprietor. Falconer therefore is going to employ a man in the neighbourhood to inclose immediately before the road is opened to the public, that the Farm may not be

exposed, and I want to know in what manner you would have this inclosed. Two staring dykes would look ugly running paralel across that extent. We therefore think that it must be done according to the ground, in some places wall, in other sunk fence faced, which is but little more expensive where the ground will admit of it, or it could be done so altogether and Hedges on the top, but that would perhaps cost too much. In short we must see and desire you *will cause write* your opinion. It will be a very fine *rodd* altogether, and the People work very well at it. I heard that the three hundred People sent from Lairg to Strathnaver go on very well with the assistance of their Friends and neighbours there. They will contribute to cultivate the Land on which they are settled which will pay rent accordingly, so there is that benefit besides what is received from the Sheep Farm they leave. We must I think give some encouragement either by way of example or assistance to the Settlers who are to begin on Skelbo, the Loan More etc., perhaps giving them a certain quantity of Tools or something of that sort and shewing them the way of beginning. Falconer says they will he makes no doubt do what they are desired and will be more eager when they find their benefit in it, he says the People in general here have no other wish than to do as we desire, a means being afforded them of executing a system laid down, but that the former managers Fraser and Campbell used to order them not to build with Fail<sup>1</sup> and things of that sort without telling them how to find a substitute for it, and that it is impossible to expect People to comprehend or execute orders in that way unless they are part of a new System, which we are going to *bother* over, to set them all to work in a proper way.

I inclose a sketch of one of 4 roads alluded to in a statement of Telfords which Mackenzie is going to copy for you – the low road proposed – begins in a strait line from Dingwall to the Ferry which is opposite Creich, and will be narrow there. He proposes for the landing place of this Ferry to execute two Piers. He is not sure if a Bark with a rope will answer there, but in all events we can have a ferry like that at Dunkeld. Then the road will come by Ospisdale, Skibo etc. *aboove* Dornoch, and so to the little Ferry which will still be a ferry but with good Piers or landing places to render

<sup>1</sup> Turf.

Boating easy. This lengthens the way but will in fact save time, as the Ferrys which are now uncertain will be regular and the road good.

These 4 roads have all different Estimates, from £9,000 to £5,000, and this proposed is the lowest of these. Provost Brown's road is a *central* sort of road, but would be destroyed by Snow and impossible in winter. The same objection occurs to all the others, so that I should think the last decidedly the best, unless you have some other idea about it, which you will write. A county meeting is called the 18th of August to execute officially what we settle respecting it . . . [arrangements for Newcastle-under-Lyme races].

By this Line of road at Clayside we get the old road by the sea, and a little piece of ground which went out like a Cape, and has a very clear stoney Beach: [Here follows a sketch of proposed line of road.] You will recollect the place perfectly (I once found a dead Sea Parrot there), and Falconer has an idea that this little point of Land having a nice little bay for fishing Boats, would be a good place to settle half a dozen Families of fishers with an acre or half an acre to each. It is sheltered and secure, and a good beach for drying fish, and Morison, a man who is coming to settle at Golspy, would take the Fish off their hands. Besides it would establish a competition, as the Golspy Fishers behave abominably in point of idleness and dearness. Perhaps it is tiresome to you to read all these details upon subjects that appear more important here than at a distance, if so pray skip them. I will finish my Letter, having no news. I hope for a Letter by the Post on Friday, tomorrow is no post day . . . [family news].

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 4 August 1808

Miss Lloyd's Letter having called for my immediate acknowledgements prevented my writing this morning. We had a charming day yesterday, sat in the Garden all morning. James Macdonald said 'I should think this is the sort of Place Lord Stafford would like very much'. So he does said I, marry come up. Indeed the objection to it i point of society is removed very much. There are



not above one or two bores remaining, and these for only the time they are invited – no General Rosses. And as for Petitions all that sort of trouble seems to be done away. Any that have petitions are desired to bring them on a Tuesday, and they go to Falconer at Rhives for the answer the Tuesday after. All goes on like Clock work, and even William Mackenzie is opening his mind and becoming more active and intelligent. He is now eager about Mr Brown coming for the Kelp, and I have written to Lord Seaforth for him In consequence of my conversation with Mrs Colonel Hamilton at Edinburgh about improving Highland Estates, she sent me a Letter from a Mr Anderson at Closeburn<sup>1</sup> offering employment during six harvest weeks for 100 Sheavers if they could be got, by way of giving them a taste for foreign parts, and encouragement to settle there if they like it. Accordingly we read a proclamation at the Church Doors, about 300 volunteered, all eager to go. This morning we dispatched 108 of these least wanted at home, with Letters to Mr Anderson, to be there the 22d of this month, selected in proportions from the different Parishes. The Cattle also set out on their long march, I saw them as far as Golspy on their way. Today it rained. Lady Hood walked to the Burn of Golspy to see the Cascade which is in high beauty, the Trees much grown over your Walks. She met three or four Bulls by the way, but they were occupied by their own society, however one had a bad Cough and rather frightened the Party. The Inn is now ready for Sir John Sinclair, but after all he does not *come north* this season, and *pourquoi*? As I said before he has not sixpence so embarrassed are his affairs from mismanagement.

Mr and Mrs Hay Mackenzie of Tarbat (an uncle of Lord Tweeddale) sent me a civil message about a visit, which I decline by another civil message on account of the size of the House being such as to prevent me receiving them properly as it is always full with Sutherland People, so this is a reply to these offers from the County of Ross, which would be endless and a very useless plague, and better to be understood from the beginning, which will put an end to the sort of idea. Indeed I might as well have Lord Polkemmet at once as to fill the House and take up my own time with such nonsense. I beleive I shall escape Lady Seaforth, he will

<sup>1</sup> Dumfriesshire.

probably come for a day, he is really very kind and friendly to us. As for Cadboll he comes for a night from the County meeting the 18th. He *affiche's* a great attachment for you, and says you conferred an incredible favor by the last militia Lieutenancy you gave to a friend of his. The Gordon boy set out with the Cattle and his Father who is a decent man, a ground officer here, expresses great satisfaction in having his Sons *about us* in England. I saw an old Soldier this morning who was wounded at Minden. We mean to give him what he asks for his life, which is to continue in some place from which we never meant to remove him – an Irish favor.

Pray make Charlotte write me a minute account of *Room* and all that is said and done at Trentham in return for the minute information I give of all our doings here. We are repairing the Balls on the Top of the old garden door. The *Ducket*<sup>1</sup> wants a little repair, but we mean to employ the Golspy Mason for that not to run into expense, and part of the Peat yard must be employed for a drying ground when we can get Posts, to avoid having the entrance covered with old Petticoats, stockings and worse. Mr Bethune came today from Dornoch, looking just the same. He says Soper Dempster is much disliked, and makes no secret of his dislike to the country and every thing and Person in it. He affects great *state* and *formality*, and does not associate with anybody . . . [travel arrangements and family news].

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 7 August 1808

. . . [family news and travel arrangements]. We got rid of all our company this morning, and were alone today, tomorrow we vote ourselves too old to make a fuss about our Birthday,<sup>2</sup> and therefore we have asked nobody, indeed there is nobody to come, so I reserve myself for Cadboll and any body that may be going about, for the 18th after the County meeting at Dornoch, when they will come here. I shall then have also a good deal of business to do with Falconer who will not have his business ready to report till after that time. Till then I shall go about and *dissipere in loco*

<sup>1</sup> This doocot still stands in Dunrobin Castle gardens.

<sup>2</sup> Earl Gower was born on 8 August 1786.

with Lord Reay, and make excursions about. The shooting will soon begin which will give George some exercise, they say it promises well. Our Gamekeeper and Dogs came in three days from London by sea, we found them arrived here all well. Macdonald has also two Dogs and they promise themselves much *sport*.

Though I fear it is a forelorn hope, yet I cannot think of beginning to mark trees till I hear something about you. I am now able to go up and down Hills without feeling that I *breathe* which is a great improvement in my domestic Oeconomy. We shall probably have something to do with the Volunteers about the end of the month, but we have not yet had time to hear from all of them, though they will all offer regularly for this local militia. The floods were so great yesterday that they gave a little *push* to the new Bridge at Loth, which it is better should happen now than afterwards, as the contractors hold them good for three years, and a man comes to review them all before they are taken off their hands as sufficient, by Government.

What a Moon on the sea! Quite delightful.

Monday Evening – *Business* ye idle ones!

On talking over matters of planting with Mr Falconer, he agrees that it is a pity this place should not have the benefit of the Plantations that are to be made in this quarter, as well for utility as for beauty. We therefore traversed the Melaig and Clayside part of the Farm in that view this morning. He says the Farm will be benefited by these plantations as a shelter also, and that the idea of keeping rough ground for winter pasture, he thinks a barbarous and uncertain provision, and prefers having a sufficient quantity of Hay made to relieve the Cattle if necessary. Therefore we propose, to continue a Plantation along the lower part of the shaggy ground of Clayside, not going high up the Hill so as to plant on bad ground, or where it is too much exposed, but to continue the plantation on some excellent ground from *Sir Hector Monro's*<sup>1</sup> cottage, sloping along the side – in all about 20 acres. This is to be good for Forrest Trees as well as Firs. Secondly there is a Knob of the Skirt in continuation of the Ladies' Walk, already half inclosed, a Fence at

<sup>1</sup> One Hector Monro lived at Clayside during the eighteenth century; the knighthood appears to be a nickname. But it should be noted that Gen. Sir Hector Monro of Novar (1727-1805) held a wadset in Golspie parish in 1772-3.

Top will complete it, this plantation will be about three acres, and is good ground for it. This with the plantations towards Golspy will come gradually on as the Fences made in conformity with the new road proceed, and all will come together into good order. It is he observes a pity not to plant here where the Trees grow so well when the Fences are kept up. Some of those Firs you planted at the end of the Ladies' Walk have grown upwards of five feet in the last three years. I began thinning today, we marked 100 Trees in that part only, mostly Larch. Berry<sup>1</sup> being a scientific man has a marker like yours, but he improves upon your way, as in marking he numbers each Tree with it, till he comes to fifty, then beginning at one, in this manner:

1: a single cut. 2: two cuts and so on. 10: x. 20: xx. 30: xxx etc. For example 38: xxxviii. 39: xxxix. 50: xxxxx. So that you know how many you mark.

Berry's duties are for the future to be defined as follows. He is to make regular rounds over the Woods of the Estate to oversee the growth, thinnings, and enclosures. He plants, makes Nurserys, and oversees all the Fences here. He is to report the progress of his works once a fortnight in a sort of diary to Falconer, who will transmit it regularly to you in London. He is a very necessary Person and seems to be fit for the Place in every respect.

If Campbell had remained the whole Fences would have been destroyed, as he entirely neglected them, and turned the Cattle into the plantations which they have half ruined already by barking all the younger Trees in Winter. The Ladies' Walk has suffered much, but is beginning now to recover by having been reinclosed since I ordered it to be so when last here. You would be much pleased if you could see the new Nurserys which look extremely neat and healthy. The Duke of Athole plants about 1,000 acres a year, and wood is now more productive than ever; we are also going to reform the old injudicious way of planting on high bad ground which is quite thrown away.

The Farm is covered with weeds, quite a Dunghill and the work-people have got such a habit of idleness and running loose over the Farm that we are obliged to be very strict with them, and mean to try to get one or two farm labourers from Aberdeenshire, who will

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Berry, forester at Dunrobin Castle.

do twice as much work as twice the number here, and will make the others exert themselves and render fewer necessary. Berry has already put the Fences where the Cattle broke in above Melaig in good order, and you would be surprized to see what a wood of Forrest trees there is there; I have ordered them to be thinned. I think Sir Hector Monro's House should be taken away, it is now a ruin inhabited by one of the Herds, who with his Family had better be out of the Plantation somewhere lower near the Shore, as they spoil what is near them.

I was quite happy this morning to receive Charlotte's<sup>1</sup> Letter dated August 1st with Elizabeth's<sup>1</sup> inclosure, and to hear so good an account of Pyes,<sup>2</sup> of Francis,<sup>1</sup> and of many things I am anxious about. I do not repent of my Journey here, as I think it will be of great use, so many things are to be done and heard of on the Spot, that would never be thought of and go to the Dogs otherwise; I am convinced we shall effect essential improvements in a *mercenary* view. We let a farm to the Fishers today, raising the rent from £20 to £50, but then it is upon Lord Hermand's wadset and he reaps the benefit. This led me to enquire about wadsets, and I am glad to find his is the only one on that footing, it having been (I suppose in my minority) given him for life, so he reaps the benefit of the increase, which is very provoking but there is no help for it. I cannot conceive that we were Geese enough to give him this wadset, Mackenzie says it was before his time. It is the only one so circumstanced, the arrangments for the others being so made as to give us the advantage of increase upon them.

We hoped to be alone today, and Gilchrist arrived, which was a Bore, but we have sent him to Supper (10 Oclock) and from thence to Bed. Lord Reay comes tomorrow, Macdonald sets off to Orkney, a tolerable day. It is quite amusing to see George's dislike to have his birthday mentioned, quite like *other People's* which Macdonald remarking, we settled a fine project of celebrating the 9th of January next year.<sup>3</sup> We have gone on very well today, no drinking of health's or anything of that sort.

We think it would raise the value of Land in the neighbourhood

<sup>1</sup> Her younger children.

<sup>2</sup> Nursery-talk; the Marquis suffered from weak eyesight.

<sup>3</sup> The reason for celebrating on this date is not clear.

of Dornoch greatly, if we could get some Aberdeen People to set up a Stocking mill there, and Ferry Unes would do for the Port. By the by we have begun an experiment upon the Fishery there (Ferry Unes) to try what it will produce. We have agreed that the Fishing Company are to have it for three years, they and a man of our's keeping a regular account of the Fish caught and profits, of which we are to have a quarter, these years of trial, they paying expenses. We shall thus appreciate the value fairly, and let it accordingly. Pray do all these histories bore you? Or do you find it possible to get through them with any degree of Interest? *Bonsoir*. You will be sorry to hear that the little Manufactory of Spinnadale was burnt down and utterly destroyed last year, a great loss to that neighbourhood<sup>1</sup> . . . [family news, botanical and literary remarks].

Marchioness of Stafford to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Woolmers, Hertfordshire, 27 June 1809

We arrived here yesterday, leaving the society of London diminishing very fast. On arriving here I found a packet from Mr Falconer, which leads me to fear you will be pestered with petitions owing to the new improvements, but which I am more and more convinced are very necessary, as the People of the lower class in general appear so unwilling to come into any plan for bettering the general condition. He tells me what I am glad to hear that about 60 have emigrated, as they would not come into the plans laid down for being Cottars at home, it is much better they should do so. The fact is they will not repay us for the ground as they used to do by enlisting when they were called upon but are more ready to go with others if they are not bribed by us, and if they will not adopt the other means of improvement for the country universally done elsewhere they must quit it to enable others to come to it. I hope however a number of the better disposed sort will remain, and we can well spare all the idle ones. There is a very advantageous offer in the way of improvement and a new system for Salloch etc., but which will make it necessary to *bribe* Sandy Sutherland to give up

<sup>1</sup> David Dale and other Glasgow merchants joined with Sutherland proprietors in 1790 to found a cotton mill at Spinningdale.

Culmaly which we would be willing to do and to give him every advantage he can desire for his life if he will be accomodating. The People in Assynt have been destroying the Kelp to prevent our getting it. I hope Falconer will go to law about it which he talks of, and that *Lead Beg* who is the principal instigator of it will be turned out when the new Lease comes, because I see if we do not act in a positive manner with these sort of Gentlemen they absolutely wish to plunder us and to put a stop to every kind of improvement. One should at the same time give every possible indulgence to those who are industrious and really behave well. You will mention any of these you think ought to have such indulgence and encouragement and perhaps it is well for you that you have not the entire arrangement of the matter as they would plague you without mercy. But enough on this subject of which I daresay you are already tired and do not require any additional information from me at this distance. Dunrobin must be delightful at present. I could not help thinking last night you might be walking in the Ladies' Walk, and envying you, I hope in time it will all be settled and comfortable there . . . [political and personal remarks].

William Young and Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Elgin, 5 July 1809

We had the very great pleasure of being in Sutherland in the beginning of last month and of admiring the beauty of that part of the Country next the Sea Coast, which far exceeded our most Sanguine expectations. We were deputed there by the Burghead Gentlemen to settle definitively with your Ladyship's factor concerning the packet; a business which was soon concluded to the satisfaction of all parties, and now forms the basis of a further improvement by opening a Road across this County to the mouth of the Avon, along the Bank of that river to Braemar and from thence to Perth.

In conversing with Mr Falconer concerning the advantages most likely to arise to Sutherland from the packets we were led to leave an offer with him (in Mr Sellar's name) for one of your Ladyship's farms - Culmalie etc., measuring about 300 acres. Our offer was one fourth part higher per acre than the rent paid for the Same

quality of Soil by Mr Mackid on the West<sup>1</sup>, and one fifth more than Captain Sutherland's on the East<sup>2</sup>, and we could not venture farther.

Your Ladyship will be pleased to observe that Mr MacKid's and Captain Sutherland's are new leases commencing Martinmas next.

Our plan was to Settle as many of the present tennants as might chuse to make themselves usefull, in neat Cottages at the bottom of the farm near the road and to inclose the rest of the farm and put it into an approved mode of Culture. It was a thought that occurred to us at the moment; We promised ourselves a fair profit; that we Should be the means of Shewing some little example where example was so necessary; have it more in our power to attend to the result of the packet System, and reap a great deal of pleasure by introducing other improvers from our side to Sutherland, and the inhabitants of that Country to learn new modes of husbandry and manufactures here.

Mr Falconer declared himself satisfied with every one particular and engaged to Communicate the matter to you Ladyship by the next post; but the route is circuitous (altho' we hope to live to See it Shortened), We have not heard of the result, and it being on many accounts material to us to know whether we are to have the honour of being your Ladyship's tennants we have presumed to address you on the subject.

Marchioness of Stafford to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Trentham, 13 July 1809

. . . [Volunteer business and Staffordshire politics].

I inclose a note to Falconer, which I wish you would talk over with him. If we could by any means get Colonel Alexander Sutherland to give up Culmaly on any tolerably reasonable terms it would be of the greatest advantage to get these people (Young and Sellers) settled there, and I wish you to talk about it to Falconer and see if you can devise any method to get rid of Sutherland there and give him a place on the coast somewhere else. You may write

<sup>1</sup> Kirkton.

<sup>2</sup> Drummuie.



any thing you please and read it to him as a message from me in a Letter to you, and [ ]<sup>1</sup> him by an offer of £50 a year or a place very low rented, or in short anything that will persuade him. If after all he will not do it with tolerable good humour, see if Falconer cannot settle it with the promise from us of that part which he now has falling into their lease at his demise. I will inclose a few words to him which you may read over with Falconer and if you think it safe to do without quarelling with him you can give it him – if not put it in the fire, but sound him first for fear of making him sulky and disagreeable to you at present. I had a Letter from Macpherson Grant, recommending these People strongly as the greatest advantage to the carrying on our future plans of improvement, getting settlers from Moray, and settling our own People as villagers, in short upon getting them as Tennents hangs a great prospect of improvement for the country. I also inclose a Letter I received from them . . . [Trentham arrangements].

William Young and Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Elgin, 3 August 1809

We cannot apologise sufficiently to your Ladyship for the very great freedom we take, in addressing a second letter to you concerning Sallichtown farm etc.

We beg leave to explain the causes which induce us to give your Ladyship this trouble. The first is, that the season is expiring, during which we proposed, after having bargained with the tennants, to have inclosed one fifth part, or 60 acres, and to have prepared it for fallow and Green Crops next Summer as also to have built the house for our threshing mill and some small part of the offices. The other is that we observe your Ladyship in your letter to Mr MacPherson Grant (and wherein you are pleased to talk of us in terms we can never forget) seems to labour under a Small mistake concerning the nature of Colonel Sutherlands tenure. The Colonel is not a liferenter nor does he possess the farm altogether which it is your Ladyship's pleasure to Set to us. He holds merely under an expired wadset; and only forty odd acres; which lye however in the Centre of the farm, and in Such a position that your Ladyship's

<sup>1</sup> MS. torn.

circumjacent 260 acres cannot be improven without them. These 40 acres the Colonel has set out, excepting what small patch may be in his own hands, to a parcel of poor people, from whom the Sub-rents he draws must be extracted with great difficulty; as they are not in a Condition to bestirr themselves while perplexed with agricultural Cares to which they are altogether inadequate.

We expected too to have immediately ascertained what part of the present tennants were best adapted to be usefull on the farm, and to mix with a few labourers from this Country; and to have got a few Cottages prepared for them, to be entered to at Whitsunday next.

From the time which has elapsed since your Ladyship's letter was delivered to Colonel Sutherland we presume the Colonel is in Correspondence with your Ladyship, and it occurred to us that your Ladyship might the more readily obviate any objections started by the Colonel that you were made acquainted with the facts above stated, and with this further Circumstance that Mr Falconer offers to Continue the Colonel in his wadset and to Give him the rents, and that we have no objections to Give him the house *for a time*, If he thinks two houses necessary for his happiness.

We are emboldened to intrude ourselves with these observations to your Ladyship, from the very great honour you do us in your Ladyship's letters to Mr MacPherson Grant and to Mr Falconer; and we seek nothing more evidently than to contribute in any small degree in our power to the liberal and patriotic views which your Ladyship entertains towards your Country.

We have the pleasure to inform you, that the packet, which we ordered out on Tuesday (notwithstanding the Embargo) to bring Lord Gower South, carried with her thirteen passengers besides Giggs, horses, Cattle Goods etc., and for this first Voyage She will fully pay; a circumstance which augurs well of her Success when the Communication Shall be better known.

Cosmo Falconer to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Rhives, 4 September 1809

I have the honor of your Lordships Letters of the 14 and 25 August in regard to the farm of Culgower and other important

matters and have also your several Letters on the subject of the approaching Election And it is with much pleasure that I observe the Interest your Lordship takes in promoting the happiness of the People on this Estate.

Culgower and Wester Garty will therefore as your Lordship Requests be entered in the rental as your Lordships under a Lease for 19 years upon the ordinary Conditions from Whitsunday last. The highest rent hitherto offered is £180 but others may appear before the 10th Inst., the time fixed for determining tho' I am satisfied the £180 is a fair one and may be considered that which your Lordship should pay. It must now be considered what is the best way of proceeding to save your Lordship in the meantime from losing any part of this rent if possible. Wester Garty is presently possessed by the Old tenants who paid Mr Pope £12 12s. in money and 37½ bolls of meal, and the Tenants made an offer to your Lordship when here of 2 Guineas more for permission to remain Tenants of the family. In this way Westergarty may easily be managed as an appendage of Culgower from year to year till your Lordship finds it Convenient to encroach upon the present system of things there. But with regard to Culgower itself something must now be done, In the first place to save the House from going to decay and in the next to make the most of the grass of the place preserved since Whitsunday and of the Straw of the Crop which belongs to the Incoming Tenant when threshed out; and then again in Spring the Land will be to plough for a Crop which must be seeded by your Lordship, for what will be required for the purposes of the Village the first year or even for some years will be but Triffling. If your Lordship has any Ideas or Wishes to Offer they will be attended to or if your Lordship leaves it to me I will consider and Consult what would be best to do for the first year to save the rent and preserve matters in a state to be subservient to the plans you Lordship has in View.

It is true as Lady Stafford supposes that a farm was set apart, Achavandra vizt. now advertised, for accommodating the people of this and Dornoch parishes (who might be removed) in Crofts; But none of them would accept of the offer and I had much difficulty to arrange a temporary accommodation for some upon the places set to proper tenants and provide others in small possessions upon a

system of Improvement in their own limited way. And except perhaps half a Dozen (some of whom not deserving) I accomplished what I thought once was impossible, a tolerable accommodation for the whole and now again Messrs Young and Sellar will endeavour to accommodate the bulk of the small Tenants upon the farms they have taken for a few years and endeavour to force them into work, for if they are encouraged to hold small possessions (which is their object and wish) and to live in a manner Idle they will never betake themselves to Industry, and it is only a determined plan which will drive them to a Change and you cannot help it if they leave the Estate, nor should it in my opinion be regretted, if they obstinately resist every endeavour to connect them with work. Your Lordship will from what I have said, see that few or none of the people who were removed last Whitsunday went to America. It was another set who took a *freak* in their heads to leave the Country because they saw that they had no chance of possessions did they remain, and there was a sort of discontent amongst them and also a stirring up by some disaffected persons which led to the Embarcation your Lordship has heard of.

Lord and Lady Stafford did agree to give the small Tenants some assistance towards promoting the building of Houses on the Cottage system but there seem'd to be wood enough at their Command by removing from their Old Houses to enable them to make the Experiment and I was averse to encourage the Importation of wood from a distance when it rose to so unprecedented a price. I certainly do think that the building of a few Houses upon a particular plan to be rented with an acre or two of ground is the most certain way to secure a beginning either at Culgower or any other place and being once begun and the Comforts and advantages proved, there seems every probability that the system would go on, if not by Lady Staffords people, by others seeing the advantages of the situation for fishing, just as has been the case at Inverugie. But such a change cannot be expected to be the work of a year. However, being begun less could be said for the people if they allowed their prejudices to carry them away from the Estate. And should Lord and Lady Stafford wish, as your Lordship mentions, to postpone all removings on the Estate till Experiments in this way are made, they will have an opportunity of Judging when I submit any offers

which may come forward before the 1st January to their Consideration, For it would be attended with unfavourable Consequences to withdraw the present advertisement of the Estate.

Messrs Young and Sellar are to be over by the first packet when a Meeting will take place with the Colonel and I hope everything will be got adjusted about the farm, Mr Young will then accompany me to Culgower and I will write afterwards what farther may occur.

I attend to all your Lordship has said in regard to the approaching Election in respect to which I see no reason to apprehend any opposition.<sup>1</sup>

William Young and Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Elgin, 20 September 1809

After ten days residence in Sutherland in that part of your Ladyships estates between Culgower and Skelbo we have returned to Moray, pleased beyond measure, with the beauty of the Country; its susceptibility of improvement and the disposition of the *common* people to get forward.

It is matter of regret only that their industry at present should be in a tract, so little calculated to produce Good. The poor people without education, skill, or capital, and who should be the tradesmen, manufacturers and labourers of the Country, being entrusted (except in very few cases) with the cultivation of the soil, other countries are paid for every piece of mechanism or manufacture wanted, nothing is exported by them to exchange for the wealth of other countries, and they cannot raise provisions for their consumption: so much that they must have perished but for your Ladyships bounty. Their unavailing efforts to perform that for which they *are not fitted* has damped and depressed their industry; Your Ladyships bounty has lulled asleep their care; and, unless a few of those whose emulation has been somewhat awakened at the Dunrobin Road, they are sunk into despondent Security. We were told that the Country was too populous. But this with great deference, must be a mistake, For, England, altho less fruitfull and more populous is richer than Spain; and it is so, *only because* it is

<sup>1</sup> George Macpherson Grant of Ballindalloch was returned as M.P. for Sutherland on 29 September 1809.

more populous, and because every nation pays tribute, to the well directed industry of its people.

By directing the population of your Ladyship's domains to the same industry, your Ladyship cannot fail, under the British constitution, to have the same result. The Country it is true may not produce Gold or Silver or wine or oil, But if it produce industry all these things will be added unto it. If your Ladyship can lead the people from destroying the Soil, and from starving every Creature on it, to settle in villages; If you can introduce a few mechanics and manufacturers among them; Induce farmers to the Cultivation of flax; Set a woollen manufacture such as we have at Elgin, agoing; and Get the sons and daughters of the present generation into the employment of those who can teach them industry; and which, considering the pliability, and the acuteness too, of the people, seems no very Herculeian undertaking, the present Enchantment which keeps them down will be broken, and Sutherland may enjoy as many Comforts and pay as fair rents as any of her neighbours.

Mr Young writes Lord Gower proposing the establishment of a village at Achavandra; a place situated at the best haven in the Country; at the point of Communication with the South, at the mouth of the fertile valley of Strathfleet; adjoining the fine waterfall of Skelbo, and in a position where four roads meet; from Dunrobin; from Strathfleet; from the Kyle; and from Dornoch. The fishers who Should be planted here and the fertile Soil of Achavandra would provide food for the *first* Settlers, and the extensive moors behind, which court to be planted and improved, will afford them employment while they bring forward their families.

Such a tedious number of years is not required to shew the advantages of this kind of Settlements as is generally beleived. Mr Young in four years has settled nearly 300 Souls on a Spot at Inverugie; which, when he began, was perfectly barren; and a considerable tract of Ground near the village, is, in consequence of their industry (in a great measure) risen in rent from something like 2s. 6d. to nearly £3 per acre. The business just requires that the person who conducts it, *be always* on the alert to push the execution of his plans, to discriminate the merits of the *people* under his management, to obviate the difficulties and to advance the interests of the concern, as they open to his observations.

At Culmaily we Soon settled (at Mr Falconers sight) the marches of your Ladyships farm set to us; the Lott of Land retained by Colonel Sutherland; and the plan of our offices. We took the necessary measures too for building one wing of our offices and draining the Wester marsh this Season. Mr McKid having expressed Some alarm lest, by bringing Culmaily burn to his march, we might endanger his land, we have resolved, to keep it in its present direction. We find it necessary to deepen the channell very considerably in order to Get the necessary waterfall, indeed nearly to the level of the Sea; and we find it no difficult matter to bring the sea at high water up the burn to our offices. By this, we Shall have it in our power to transport the Shelly manure in Little Ferry Bay, by water, to our fields; an object of more importance, that it can only be wrought at low water, when the Stuff is Saturated with Salt water and too weighty for land Carriage. A flat bottomed boat filled with broken Shells at low water will float up to the middle of our farm with the flow of Tide; and after being emptied there recede again with the Ebb and wait a fresh cargo. We have a further view in this, which we shall likewise explain to your Ladyship. Upon exploring the fertile valley of Strathfleet we saw the Country admirably adapted for the Growth of Flax. Any trifling quantity raised there at present is carried to be dressed to Tarlogie mill above Tain. But if the proper facilities are given it must of necessity be brought in preference to Culmaily. In that case a boat could bring it down to the mill with the Ebbing Tide and float the dressed flax up the country at an ensuing flow; and when the proper Crops are cultivated in this Strath, the traffick must pay.

Messrs Miln Cruden & Co. of Aberdeen with whom we have had business thro' our interest in Burghead would readily take off any quantity of dressed flax or yarn from the Country; but we would rather see it woven and bleached there. At present these Gentlemen send their lint over all your Ladyships Estate in Sutherland to be spun into yarn, which they manufacture at Aberdeen; but, this trade, your Ladyship will observe gives the profits of Growth to one Country and the Sweets of manufacture to another, leaving nothing to your people but the drudgery of Spinning at 4d. per day.

This valley of Strathfleet is very nearly on the level of the Sea. It is exposed to the south, with high reverberating cliffs on each

Side; and no person can doubt its climate who has Seen the crops of Beans, wheat, and clover raised at Dingwall in nearly the same latitude and in a much more inland and elevated Situation. The farm of Morvich which we walked over, may be mentioned to your Ladyship, as *one* instance of what could be effected in this country, and what we ourselves would have *readily* undertaken had we been so fortunate as to have lived on your Ladyships domains. It consists of 79 acres arable and 100 of pasture and moss; the pasture a Salt marsh; the moss incumbent on a rich Clay; and was sett last year in liferent at £30 of rent. The farm now is well worth £60 as it Stands; When a few hundred pounds are laid out on improving the moss and pasture, and for which the tennant could afford to 6 per cent interest, It will be a great bargain at £120; and at the expiry of a 21 years lease, for a renewal of that term we Should not Scruple £240, or eight times the present rent. The quantity of flax and of corn which might be raised in this Strath for the employment and maintenance of the people is very Great; for the Ground is rich and fertile beyond expression, and it has carried oats and beer in succession beyond memory of man.

Colonel Sutherland by retaining the water dam, meal mill, and part of the Easter marsh prevents us, for the present, from proceeding with our lint mill or draining this Easter marsh. The prolongation of our lease during 21 years after his removal is to be sure ample and sufficient compensation to us; but the measure causes your Ladyship pay, too dearly, for the whim of this old Gentleman, and we ourselves wish nothing more anxiously than to come to the beginning of the 21 years how Soon your Ladyship can bring us to it with propriety. The period, that is the active period of our life, is Short, nor, is it profitable to deferr enjoyment to a distant time, which, we may not live to See . . . [merino sheep for Moray Farmers' Club].

William Young to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Inverugie, 21 September 1809

Your Lordships letter of 25th ult. reached me in due course and the confidence you are pleased to repose will ever induce me to



point out freely whatever measures appear most likely to promote your Lordships laudable views for the prosperity of Sutherland.

I have with Mr Sellar returned from that quarter after devoting eight days to such matters about Culmally as required our immediate attention. I have seen Culgower, Achavandra and its adjacent moors, the moor of Balblair, which we found unfit for cultivation although well adapted for planting. We went up Strathfleet which for beauty of scenery and fertility of soil exceeded our most sanguine expectations. Indeed before seeing Sutherland I had not conceived the most favorable Idea of its fertility but my opinion is completely changed both as to soil and climate and I am sure if the present Inhabitants were mixed with strangers of agricultural and manufacturing skill all properly led on Sutherland might soon compete with any of the Northern districts.

I was aided by my Brother in a minute survey of Kilgower and Wester Garty. After that mature consideration which a matter of such importance merits we cannot recommend it as suited to your Lordships views for a Fishing and agricultural Village. The Coast is open, to build a Harbour would be attended with an improper waste of money, and I do not know that the necessary lodging ground for Bait can be found. The building situation is too elevated and at too great a distance from the shore. For Labourers the soil is *too good*. The Country is narrow and without moors fitt for cultivation on which to extend their industry, nor could I find sufficient quantity of building stone. I therefore in a paragraph to a letter written by Mr Falconer ventured to dissuade your Lordship from embarking with this place.

It seems Achavandra and Knockglass on the South west Bank of the Little Ferry are out of Lease, they hold out the finest field in Sutherland for your Lordships exertions and if to these Skelbo with its waterfall could be added, Fishing, Manufacturing, and Agricultural pursuits might all combine, while the *improveable* moors behind hold furth a lasting fund for employment to the people and of emolument to the Estate. At a proper distance from Dunrobin and to be seen from its windows, open to all travelers by the great roads to Caithness, Strathfleet, and the Kyle, this place if once fairly begun and properly nursed for some years would I am sure afford your Lordship much satisfaction. The tenants have

another Crop of the grounds; at all events no operations could be entered on this Season, but early in Spring. Houses might be built for a Crew or two of good Fishermen, these I consider a most necessary appendage. They will afford Fish to the settlers and act as Pilots; for if the Country is to get on in Agriculture and manufactures so must Shipping frequent the Ferry; without active Seamen to conduct them in and out an insurmountable barr woud be put to both. I do not say that the Ferry is a superior Port, it is by no means so, but it is the best and most central on the Sutherland Estate, and by it a considerable inland navigation through a valuable Strath may be opened up. Fishermen must therefore meet with encouragement.

For this description of people as well as a few labourers and Shopkeepers the Village of Golspie is well adapted and I think it might be easily laid off to beautify the Country and make it a convenience to that neighbourhood, but this is a small inconsiderable thing without field for those extensive and alluring improvements which will give substantial employment to the people and profit to the Proprietor.

We have given distant hints to some Woolen manufacturers here of what may be done in Sutherland. They seem to think well of the Country but we could not venture to speak of terms and with these and other settlers there will be much but I hope nothing impossible to arrange. However much it may astonish the present Inhabitants I know that Wheat may be cultivated, and that advantageously on the very moors of Achavandra although on the finest soils in Sutherland I scarcely see a Boll. This is the Grain which woud enrich the Country and from which money, not intoxicating Liquors is to be got.

I have brought the Plan of Achavandra, Knockglass and Skelbo here with me and have been studying how a Village for Manufacturers and Fishermen could be most advantageously laid out upon it, the moor ground for labourers, the arable for a Farm to your Lordship, and long before the term of entry I shall endeavour to have everything arranged and ready to lay before your Lordship. In the meantime the only thing I wish to impress on your Lordship is the proper direction of the Road from Little Ferry to the Kyle and when I hear that you have thoughts of entering seriously into

the concern I shall most readily cross over and give you my assistance to line it off in the manner that may appear most advantageous, and to the prosperity of the settlers.

I have got a hundred Copies of Franklines 'Way to Wealth'<sup>1</sup> printed off to be distributed among the Sutherland people. I hope from it they will learn something to spurr up their industry.

Benefit Societys woud also be very usefull, you'l see many of them through England and in this Country there is at least a dozen. The advantages to the lower Class of people are immense.

William Young and Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Elgin, 2 November 1809

We have now, the honour to submitt to your Ladyship, what further has occurred to us concerning the improvement of the *East Coast* of your domains in Sutherland. Being sensible of your Ladyship's intelligence on every subject, and of the Communication you must have had, with men of more abilities than us, we write with diffidence, and, with an anxious desire to learn from your Ladyship, and to be corrected wherein our ideas are erroneous. We use the great freedom to crave your Ladyship's correction, because (so far as our private affairs will allow) we feel zealous to obey your Ladyship's commands, in any thing conducive to the prosperity of the thousands of our fellow creatures under your dominion.

In our former letter, we explained to your Ladyship, that, in our humble opinion, the poverty of the people was occasioned by the misapplication of their labour, and the mismanagement of the Soil. We shall now particularise the misapplication in some most essential matters, with its immediate consequences; and the methods by which, we think, the Country may be brought to a level with its neighbours.

In an improving Country, a carefull man manages 50 arable acres with one pair of horses. His winters feuel is the business of a day.

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Franklin's celebrated *The Way to Wealth* was first published at Boston in 1758, and was reprinted in numerous editions. It was published in a Gaelic translation by Robert Macfarlan in Donald Macintosh's *Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Familiar Phrases*, 1785. It is not clear whether Young's printing was in English or Gaelic.

He spends a fifth part of his time and uses a fifth part of his land in raising turnips for his cattle; and, with the price of his corn and Cattle he buys in ready money the necessities of life and the comforts too, at a fair price. Thus, his farm labour Costs, in provender, only the maintenance of two horses; He has with his turnips plenty of food for his Cattle *at all Seasons*; His time is Solely applied to the Cultivation of the Soil; What he wants he buys with his ready money, Cheaply; His children are engaged in *usefull* employment from their infancy; and all about him are happy and full of vigour. In Sutherland, a farmer of 50 acres, employs the three best months of the year casting, winning, and bringing home his peats; He keeps from 15 to 20 horses to perform the last part of this labour; He has no time to Cultivate turnips; The season is Spent in the moss; His horses eats up all his provender; of his Cattle a considerable part perish in bad Seasons; the survivors are stinted in their growth; The man is depressed by his bad fortunes; The very horses, starved in winter, want Strength effectually to till the Soil in Spring; His erroneous System deprives him of manure; Crops are defective; Meal is a monopoly; The merchants sells their goods to him, on credit, at from 100 to 150 per Cent above the *Elgin price*; and his children are a dead weight upon him, till taken off by the Recruiting Serjeant.

This is literally the state of things; and while it continues, the people must continue to be miserable, and your Ladyship to receive but a fourth part of what your property should produce. This is quite plain, and we elucidated it to your Ladyship, in the case of Morvich; which the surveyor values at £20; which rents at £30; but which is now worth £60 (i.e. in improved management of the arable) and how soon it is improvén should afford £120.

The first great bar to the amelioration of the people is, as your Ladyship will readily believe, the tennant's necessity of spending so much, of *his time* in providing winter feuel, and of *his provender* in maintaining an overstock of horses. Let him be Supplied with Coals at a fair price and Enticed to the use of them? We were astonished that Coals had not been more frequently imported at the Little Ferry; which, *within*, seemed a fine natural harbour; but, our astonishment Ceased, altogether, when we learnt from the Captain of the packet, and from all Seafaring people frequenting it,

that by reason of the moveable banks of Sand at the mouth of this Frith, the rapidity of the Tides forcing vessels against the banks, and its Embayed situation which occasions it to be So frequently windbound, it cannot be used with safety; nor can any trade be carried on at it with regularity or dispatch. So there is, in fact, no harbour in Sutherland, at least West of Culgower, which is all of the Country we have seen. We are convinced how fully your Ladyship comprehends this subject by the pains you have taken at Culgower etc.

Messrs Hughes and Meredith, and our Burghead architect, are quite clear that Golspie point is the place where any thing Should be done in this way. The point below Dunrobin covers it on the East, Embo point on the West, and there is a fine bay between where vessels can Tack when the wind blows into the harbour. In short, we send your Ladyship a plan, Section and Estimate of the work. We likewise inclose a plan Shewing the Interior of Strathfleet, of which this harbour would become the mouth, that you may Judge of the extent of Country to be benefited on that Side. The East Country communicating by the Dunrobin road your Ladyship knows well. This expence staggered us at first; but upon questioning Mr Hay we found he had Calculated sixty feet of pier more than the Trade of the Country will for many years employ; we found too that he had estimated the expence of horses keep, at £20 per month of each 4 horses, not thinking that your Ladyship could maintain them at no expence on Dunrobin farm. Indeed our Burghead Piers built by the day cost only 10s. in place of his 15s. per yard, and we are satisfied a very Snugg port could be completed under £3,000. Mr Young viewed the East Country minutely; Mr Sellar, accompanied by Mr Hughes, explored Strathfleet; and on comparing notes, we are certain the undertaking should pay well. Mr Hughes, on seeing the Fleet navigable up to the Farm of Uden, and down by our Small Cut, along Culmally Burn, projected a Canal for the accommodation of the Strath between Culmally burn and the harbour Suggested at Golspie point. We send your Ladyship a plan and Section of this canal by Mr Hughes; But we by no means think the Country ripe for Such an undertaking altho we hope to live to See it advance to that degree of prosperity.

Beside the harbour, a road is necessary up the Banks of the Fleet

(the road to be made with the commutation money of the country). When these are executed, introduce Coals among the people. Intermix strangers among them to prove to them the Superiority of the new method. Push the Cottage system after the manner proposed at Achavandra and Skelbo water. Introduce a woollen manufacture there, and another in some other position; possibly somewhere up the Fleet or Brora, wherever people abound. Your Ladyship will See *progress* made; a town rise adjoining the harbour, and every part of the Country supported by the exuberance of its industry. Merchants will buy up this superabundance with meal, Goods and whatever may be wanted. The harbour, and independence of the Town, will bring competition; Competition will reduce the price to a fair profit; and the people no longer taken the advantage of, will find fresh vigour in their application to industry.

These things are said in a breath; but they require unabating zeal, patient vigilance, conciliating conduct, and continued alacrity in your Ladyship's man or men of business to accomplish them. Yet, they apply only to a small portion of your extensive domains. The Confidence with which your Ladyship has honoured us emboldens us to speak out the verity. And we, Candidly, assure you, that we no more See how these things are to be carried thro' under the present management, than, how 'a Camel is to go thro' the Eye of a needle'. We, of course, write your Ladyship *in confidence*. We should be sorry to have any person think us inimical; for we are far from being so, tho' in *saying so much*, the execution of which may be attempted, it becomes a duty to dissemble nothing from your Ladyship.

Your Ladyship will See, by a Glance at the map, with what beauty the Golspie Ground might be cut up for a Town – What a fine Crescent along the Shore – How the Ground is watered, and what advantage might be made of the Mill Seat. We have not had time to digest a plan for such a thing, nor are we perhaps so capable of doing so as many others. If the harbour be built, and a town Set agoing the lower part of Rhives will be necessary to the Settlers. The factors house might, in that case be on any of the fine Situations East of Dunrobin; and the presbytery might, with your Ladyship's approbation, give Mr Keith his Manse and Glebe at the house of

Rhives; leaving the whole ground along the Bay from 60 to 80 acres (and which might be extended westward to any length) Clear for the execution of such plan as your Ladyship approves of. The policies of Dunrobin, along the Sea (which is the best approach to the Castle), would not be enjoyed the less, for their vicinity to a fine bustling Sea port Town.

The inhabitants of the valley of Strathfleet pursue the ruinous System above pointed out. They have done so from father to Son thro' all generations. People wedded to such immemorial Custom are with difficulty led into a new Track. They must See to beleive. In running over the Sketch of this valley your Ladyship will observe Morvich at the bottom of it, and the only road in or out of the Country *going thro'* this farm. Every person living in the valley must, of necessity, several times in the year see whatever improvement is made at Morvich and carry home Some reflections on the Subject. An improving tennant is, therefore, by all means to be Settled at Morvich. We hand your Ladyship a Sketch of this farm, from which you will See that it contains the quantity of land we formerly mentioned; with this difference only, against the tennant, that Acres 38.1.34 of pasture which we at first thought had been included in the measure below the road, turns out to be unimprovable rocky pasture. If your Ladyship has no different arrangement we shall undertake this farm and pay the rent of which we wrote you. That is double the present rent at our Entry; Quadruple it when our improvement is made and we have tasted Somewhat of benefit from it, Say in ten years, and pay Eight rents when we have benefited still further, Say in other 10 years. Thus £60 for the first period of 10 years, £120 for the second 10 years, and £240 for the third period - Thirty years in all. We should profit more by this farm than any other tennant, for we calculate that the tennants in the interior Seeing our flax growing, and floating down to Culmaily miln, and having the profit explained to them, would immediately follow our example; and our Miln would, in that Case, pay beyond calculation. All we require of your Ladyship is to build for us a Sett of offices and a Cottage. We shall build the Embankment at our own Expences, and Content ourselves with two thirds meliorations at the Expiry of the Tack. If your Ladyship approves of this idea, you may fix our entry at Whitsunday 1811

or 1812 if your Ladyship would prefer that to removing Mrs McLeod Sooner; Altho certainly in point of prudence the Sooner the better. In the meantime on your expressing your approval one of us will Cross over first packet and take measures to Check the further depredations of the Sea. If your Ladyship disapprove, you should write Mr Falconer to secure the Soil; for every Storm, washes away a portion of it, and has we are Sure reduced the marsh in Size very much, in the lapse of ages.

William Young to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Inverugie by Elgin, 23 November 1809

Your Lordships letters of 10th and 11th to Mr Sellar and myself reached this when I was in Sutherland settling our first Servant, and arranging an embankment at Loch Lundy to correct the water from further injuring the low lands of Culmaily where it has already done too much mischief, and we also begin our Canal immediately.

Be assured My Lord that no apology is necessary for what I have done or may undertake for your Lordship.

As to Achavandra I am aware your Lordship could only have one motive for thinking of it – the comfort of the people. It is with that view only that I have so much recommended it, but your Lordship will perceive by the plans sent that it is on the adjoining Moors where I propose settlements for the Cottagers. On these, abundant scope will be found for their industry while an establishment of Servants and Horses on the Farm may be of infinite use to the new Colony in carrying Lime, Coals, timber etc. from the Ferry.

I do not think that any instructions for Mr Falconer are at all requisite Just now about laying in materials, for nothing can be done untill Spring, neither is it necessary to send any implements from the South. Few will be wanted and they can be got here.

I can easily get plenty of Grieves, but I must endeavour to find a person with qualifications beyond the ordinary, for under proper directions he must not only assist in laying out ground for the Cottagers but in seeing it trenched and manured agreeable to Contract, in having a watchfull eye over their conduct, encouraging the industrious and stigmatizing the Sloven!



Your Lordship may rest satisfied that nothing in my power to promote your views will be neglected, but I cannot too much express my anxious wish that Lady Stafford and your Lordship may make it convenient to be North early next Season, for although it may occasion some short delay I would be better pleased to postpone any operations untill her Ladyship and your Lordship are on the Spot, we could discuss many things in conversation which cannot be so well comprehended in correspondence and have a better chance of coming near to perfection. Mr Sellar and I wrote Lady Stafford by this post concerning Morvich and I am glad to inform your Lordship that there is no obstacle to our plans there. I mean the proposed trade to Strathfleet, and I hope we shall soon shew the people of that Country flax growing and Coals burning there and the advantage of both; while they go on spending the best part of the Season in Mosses, improvement is out of the question.

A harbour at Golspie I view as a most necessary improvement for the prosperity of Sutherland, and as a preferable situation to Helmsdale or Brora, although I have only seen the latter place. But perhaps we are not at one as to Harbours. Extensive works or much depth of water are not wanted for pushing Agriculture and Manufactures, as Vessels of 60 Tons or under and ten feet water are quite sufficient for the export of Grain, the import of Coals, Salt and other bulky articles, while the Manufactured and lighter goods of which one Cargo may not be wanted in a Season will come more properly by the London, Leith and Aberdeen traders to Burghead, and over periodically by the Packet. I have brought over a Parish of Lairg man with me who never before had crossed the Muckel Ferry, he at one time occupied a small Farm but is now turned stone dyke builder. I have given him ground to trench along with my own people, and hope to make him usefull in the Achavandra Moors, he is quite delighted with the work going on here, and the comfort which my Villagers seem to live in. I have hinted at your Lordships intentions, he likes the plan, talks of becoming a settler, and thinks the people will be more comfortable than on small Farms; I have offered him piece work and said that he may bring over a dozen more of the Sutherland men to work under him during winter.

I will have all Estimates for the Achavandra Houses, the Cottages, and every probable expence attending the settlement made up for your Lordships inspection before you come North, with the Rents and returns to be looked for.

William Young and Patrick Sellar to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Inverugie, 12 January 1810

Mr Sellar is now returned from Sutherland, after having pointed out to Mr Falconer every thing formerly suggested concerning Achavandra, and done all in his power to get some immediate footing in Strathfleet.

The operations in Achavandra only wait your Lordship's answer to Mr Young's last letter; The site proposed for the offices being a Bank of natural pasture to which immediate access can be got; and Mr Falconer having engaged to purchase the tennants right to 15 or 20 acres adjoining for turnips. Near the proposed Site there is a small eminence, on which a Small lodge or vista from Dunrobin might be built with good effect. On the South is a very decent tennants house, to which your Lordship Should get access at Whitsunday to accommodate your Servant with his horses while the offices are building. Mr Young will engage a servant and purchase one pair of horses for Achavandra as Soon as possible; and, we hope, when your Lordship comes to the Country, you will find every thing in progress.

Mr Sellar found our operations and the proposed extension of them to Strathfleet not at all agreeable to the Gentlemen resident there. Colonel Sutherland on the part of Mrs McLeod did nothing favourable, and Mr Gordon of Embo's factor who has a great many subtenants, the price of whose labour must be increased by the system, co-operated with the Colonel. Kinnauld however agreed to give access to at least twenty acres nearest Morvich on Mr Falconer's giving an equivalent pasture at a fair rent in a different place. By turning to the Sketch of Morvich formerly sent you, your Lordship will perceive that this portion of Kinnauld enables us to straighten the mouth of the Fleet, an operation of great consequence in Shortening the navigation and saving the banks on

either Side. We are of opinion that Mrs McLeods Lease will not endure till Martinmas, as the Lady is in very bad health. We are certain that how Soon it is known that Lady Stafford has let Morvich (after Mrs McLeods lease) to us we Shall Strike a bargain with her friends for access to the Banks, which is all we want for the present, and on knowing her Ladyship's determination on this Subject, we Shall furthwith Contract for the mills and provide Barrows plank and Shovels for the undertaking.

We have the great Satisfaction to inform your Lordship, that we have now employed on Culmaily, thirty labourers on higher wages than was hitherto known in Sutherland and fed on Morayshire meal 3s. 6d. per Boll under Colonel Sutherlands price at Culmaily mill. By the month of August we hope to have Meredith on the head of a hundred on the Same terms; and we have no doubt of the whole paying well for our trouble.

Not having had a very long experience of Mr Meredith, Mr Young thinks it better that Lady Stafford do not *permanently* engage Meredith till her Ladyship come to the Country. Some land Surveying or other Jobs might in the meantime be contrived to detain him in the Country, untill his talents and good conduct are fully ascertained.

William Young to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Inverugie, 11 February 1810

I had the honor to receive your Lordships letter of 31st ult. and have waited untill now in the hopes of receiving the amended Lease of Morvich from Mr Falconer; the moment it reaches us Your Lordship may believe it will be forwarded. I want words to express my sense of your Lordships attention and trouble in this matter. I have advertised for Estimates for the Office Houses at Achavandra agreeable to the plan sent Your Lordship, but on which I will yet make some small and I think advantageous alterations. I wrote Mr Falconer to endeavour to bargain with the people for 15 or 20 acres of ground to be put in green Crop for the Cattle against next winter but in this it seems he cannot succeed. I also wished to know from him if a quantity of the Balblair timber could be got for Cottages, as I wanted instantly to have had a few

erected on a plan much approved of here, and according to which they can be built durable, equally comfortable and in every respect as neat (by using about twelve dozen of Firr timber for each), as Houses of similar dimensions of Stone, and at one fourth of the expence. Mr Falconers answer is: 'I do not find that there is any chance of getting any of the Crop lands from the numerous tribe of tenants at Achavandra who are little more than Crofters being so numerous, and they say as well part with the whole as a share of the too little they have, and I really believe they could not well want the crop without destroying them afterwards, in short I am not likely to make any thing of them. I have seen the woodkeeper who says that the wood of Balblair near Mr MacKids is already so very thin that very little more could be taken from it without destroying it. The largest trees there are not above sufficient for Joisting or Couples of 16 Feet long and the bulk not any thing like up to this but the wood is excellent quality and *full grown*. There is a considerable wood upon the Estate of Cyderhall 2 miles west of Dornoch fully as high but not so old or so great as the Balblair wood from which the quantity you mention might be got, perhaps, but the land carriage could not be managed any way I can see. I wish this scarcity of wood may not interfere with your plan.'

But the tenants of Culmaily gave up 40 acres *for money* without inconvenience having been supplied with work on wages, in place of work on Land; and as to the timber it being as he says *full grown* certainly should be used for the Estate, there is plenty of vacant Ground in Sutherland for raising timber and the site of this wood on the Shores of the Little Ferry Bay should undoubtedly produce Grass and corn. Possibly Mr Falconer intends to take this on his way South and if I cannot persuade him to my opinion I shall trouble Your Lordship with another, tho' a very short letter on this subject, for we must get forward with the cottages, and I cannot think of allowing the Season to pass over in fruitless and unavailing efforts.

I have had the good fortune to meet with a decent young man of this Country, a mill wright of the name of Mitchell who had been under the best Masters in the South of Scotland, is fully up to his business and wishes to settle at Golspie Mills where he proposes to set carding and spinning Mills agoing, and if he can find a partner

in the woollen manufactory woud add to that a good Meal Mill. I am convinced it will be of the greatest importance to get him to the Country for he is a lad of abilities and integrity; the method and terms are to be discussed, in the meantime I have bargained with him for Your Lordships threshing Mill. If it can at all forward the above plan Mr Sellar and I will readily give up the Meal Mill at Culmaily, the person building another in his stead at Golspy to serve the Country on fair terms. I have likewise had a good deal of conversation with Mr Hughes of the Caledonian Canal concerning the Coal and Limestone of Sutherland which he has seen and approves much of. He is a superior Man, has a thorough knowledge of mining and I put great confidence in him, he promises to Survey these things when the Family come north and give his Ideas of them; 'till then I beg leave to suggest that these Golspie Mills, the Coals and Lime, shoud remain perfectly free and disengaged. I beg a thousand pardons for occupying so much of your Lordships time which is I am happy to see engaged at present in business of great consequence to the Country.

William Young and Patrick Sellar to Earl Gower (later  
2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Inverugie, 16 April 1810

We are Just returned from Sutherland and presume to intrude upon your Lordship with the inclosed Census of the inhabitants of Culmaily containing 253 persons, 40 of whom we shall accomodate and the balance will require to be Settled, some in the proposed village at Golspie and others in Cottages adjoining Achavandra and Skelbo. After every reflection, we can entertain no doubt of the treasure contained in the numbers of these people and the advantage to be derived from exporting their industry, *how Soon that industry is put into a proper Channell*. We have further to assure your Lordship that a keen spirit of industry does already appear among them; in greater evidence of which they have drawn from us, during the Short time we have known them, Some hundred pounds in payment of their labour. We have explained to them the beneficent intentions of the family towards them; told them they should remain in their present dwellings untill these

intentions were Carried into effect, and we left them fully satisfied, in Great spirits, and prepared to Embark with us in any thing pointed out by your Lordship.

Mr Mathieson of Shiness expresses his willingness to treat for Skelbo, but no treaty has as yet been concluded between him and Mr Falconer, and we were obliged after ten days Stay to return without putting the arrangements on the West Bank of the Little Ferry into a proper Train. Mr Young holds himself in readiness to return to the Country how Soon it is made possible for him to act with effect, and in the meantime the business of Tillage, the Kyle Road, and our work at Cuilmaily furnish sufficient Employment to the people of *this district*.

Agreeably to what Mr McPherson Grant writes Mr Young, any plan or Estimate of Golspy pier is deferred till the family are on the Spot.

Mr Young anxiously looks forward to the time when he is to bring people of Experience in the Frith etc. to attend Lord Stafford, Lady Stafford and your Lordship on this Subject; for the Country, he fears, cannot get forward untill this facility be given to the introduction of manufactures and Trade, and the Exportation of the industry of the people.

The fever which has raged during more than two months in the Country has been, under providence, a Severe visitation on the people and has consequently occasioned much loss to the proprietor. Fewer deaths have occurred in Golspie parish than in the interior where the people are we understand worse provided for, yet several persons died there during our short Stay, and the Wright on Culmaily told us he had Just finished his 63d or 64th Coffin. Where nature cannot provide food for the numbers she sometimes Suits the numbers to the food. The inhabitants who formerly occupied the Extensive Sheep walks in the interior are Crammed, we understand, into hamlets there, *without any new track being pointed out for their industry* and wanting, we fear, the full Supply they formerly Enjoyed on their boundless pastures. Depression, debility, sloth, filth etc. are the consequence. Disease follows; contagion spreads; and where all are predestinarians careless of precaution, and little medical aid is to be procured, it is not wonderful that much mischief is done. Mr Falconer has, however, sent for

medical assistance, and we hope your Lordship may soon hear that health is generally restored.

Mr Sellar went to Morvich to take measures with regard to Kinnauld pendicle Set to us. He found Captain Sutherland just recovering from the fever, and learned that no fewer than five Corpses were then in neighbouring houses. The melancholy State of that quarter, and the difficulty of procuring from Captain MacKay Torbol access to Straighten the Fleet, determine us to defer any operation there untill the family Come to the Country. A word from your Lordship will then easily settle that matter, we paying Captain MacKay the *full value* of the small point of land which is to be cut thro' and we shall then get forward with the operation.

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Inverurie, 7 July 1810

I cannot help writing a few words tonight to be read at leisure (so put it in your pocket if you are just arrived). In the first place I hope and trust you are now safe at Preston. Secondly I must tell you how curiously and I think usefully we have been employed today. We have got acquainted with Mr Young, a grave sensible intelligent man, and I think one of wonderfull ability. I wish you could see the farms he has reclaimed from Deserts – the fishing village in which he has settled the Inhabitants – the little Peir he has made in a little rock for Fishing Vessels – the admirable neatness of the Cottages and of his own House – in short much too long to relate. I cannot call him an Enthusiast for he is a grave man; but his mind seems totally wrapt up in carrying the same system into Sutherland. He says he cannot see without wonder and sorrow the state of that country, and that instead of yielding £24,000 per Annum which under a proper system it ought in 10 years, to hear from Falconer that he hardly remits anything. He tells me confidentially, what I also hear from other People, that Falconer is very honest and well meaning but getting fat and lazy, and though a good accountant being bred up in a counter, he knows nothing of country affairs and has no head for general arrangements further than keeping his accounts exact, and that he could not as it is go

on without a Boy he has who does all his business, but that is but little. He says Falconer is making money, but giving himself little trouble or exertion. I heard today that he had offered £5,000, already for an Estate near Elgin. In short he says that the People dont pay, and Falconer dont make them, but wastes your money uselessly though honestly for want of knowing better, and that in the present state of things till you see how they are going on, he would by all means advise giving no more leases, for the Farms are let to People under the old System in which they find even the present rents too high and cannot pay, whereas they ought under a different management to be able to pay three times as much and that the roads being made and a pier somewhere in a central situation, and coal by that means introduced, the new operations will begin. In two years the farms out of lease will let for three times what they will let for at present, the usefull People settled, Houses fewed, but no gardens except at will, which gives the command over the Inhabitants should they be troublesome, and a permanent improvement introduced. We take him with us tomorrow to go to Achavandra etc. on Monday as George will be at liberty that day, and we mean to pick his brains and I will write down what he says to read to you when you come, and he will return either about the beginning of August when George returns, or whenever you please to talk to you. I think you will like him very much, there is so much decency and propriety with such a *connaissance de cause* about him. He knows the *Carte du Pais à point nommée* and has been all his life at this work, having enriched himself and the People about him from having begun with a fond of £80. He says there is a sort of tide in these matters which none but a person watching it closely can understand, and that mere men of business often know nothing about it, in short he is a mine of knowledge and practice. He showed a manufactory he has established near Elgin with the whole process of preparing Wool, some of which he imports in the Packet from Sutherland, and of weaving it into broad Cloth, dying it etc., and the People of the country are all perspiring under it, for it is strong and heavy and excellent Cloth. The uniform of the Farmers' Club is made of it. I wish you could have seen all this but you may imagine it. We saw the Loch of Spinie which they are draining by a large Canal. We also saw Gordonstone, the seat of



my old Enemy Sir Robert Gordon<sup>1</sup> – in short what have we not seen? Marry come up!

We had some neighbouring Country Gentlemen to Dinner, intelligent People – Dr Coull as deaf as a Post but very knowing in liver disorders when his patients can make him hear which is only by bellowing into his ear, so he would not do for consumptive complaints. Miss Young (sister to Mr Young) is a usefull assistant in training the People of the village and a very sensible woman. Every body near this place as clean and active as in England. The only fault I find with him is that he does not care for old Houses, does not admire Dornoch, and wants to make Golspy a flourishing place of trade, which will turn all things upside down, but he says the people will be no disturbance and will put a vast deal of money in our pockets. He has no great respect for the abilities of Houston or Clunes, and says he thinks Captain Robert Sutherland the best new Tennant we have got . . . [travel arrangements].

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 8 July 1810

We walked to the Packet this morning from Inverugie 2 Miles, and embarked at 11 Oclock in a fine rain, sat on deck in the rain, and arrived under the Store-House on the little Ferry in three hours and a half – 10 Leagues! Not sick. We got out and there being no preparations for our approach as Falconer though he saw the Packet thought it was not the Packet, we walked in the rain here; I had prepared a fine scold for Falconer but he disarmed me by meeting me at the Gate of Rhives under an umbrella, and by telling me he was very sorry to meet me so wet, but also very glad to meet me so wet, as it was so much wanted in the Country both to see me and the rain, so I was doubly welcome.

Mr Young came with us. I was pleased to see the Fences, nurserys etc., all finished and working well – the very Gate Posts growing into Trees, which Falconer is very proud of, and if Young had not been there I should have asked if they would have sprouted

<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun was a claimant in the celebrated Sutherland Peerage Case of 1766-71.

equally if they had been planted the head downwards, as they are Trees cut from the plantations and thought to make exquisite Gate Posts, though a little *à l'Ecossaise*, but Young being *homo gravis et serius* I try to look wise and grave also and not to appear childish and trifling, the more so as he said afterwards 'I saw your Ladyship was pleased with the dykes and Fences, though they are not the solid and general improvements we wish for but so far they are very well'. The Lodges look well, the House very nearly finished in the roofing and well done, Potts<sup>1</sup> etc. busy within. Mrs Mitchell<sup>2</sup> and Jannet prepared a very good dinner at a short warning. Being wet I borrowed Mrs Mitchell's petticoats till my own arrived, and we were all happy to be here.

Much serious conversation about improvements and much digested to be talked over with you. They say that this country is so little known that before any great thing is done it would be well to have the estate viewed by an intelligent man who could give an idea of the value of the different parts under a proper management, but that till that is done we shall labour pease meal and in the dark. There is such a Man, a Mr Lowe<sup>3</sup> who under the same circumstances surveyed the Duke of Gordon's estates previous to the set. The Duke of Gordon thought he undervalued it and applied afterwards to Provost Brown who pleased the Duke by putting too high a value upon which he went, and has been obliged to come down from failures to the other, but still an immense rise. Falconer knows nothing of Strathnaver nor indeed of anything but this Parish, and cannot say from his own knowledge, so it is to be ascertained without saying anything of the *constituents* what Lowe charges for his inspections, and if you should approve the *exposée* made to you of the circumstances, that he should give his opinion and that it should be considered by you and the knowing ones you chuse to consult, and by having the best advices that you should arrange your general plans from such a knowledge acquired, for future years.

Telford the Engineer is to be at Elgin for the Dock there, and

<sup>1</sup> Household servant from Trentham.

<sup>2</sup> Housekeeper at Dunrobin Castle.

<sup>3</sup> For Alexander Low see *S.R.O. Descriptive List of Plans*, ed. I. H. Adams, ii (Edinburgh, 1970), xiv.

after you arrive will meet Young here to inspect the coast at Golspy and Government roads etc., and the little Ferry and report respecting the most eligible place for a Boat Pier. When that Pier is fixed, you by fewing stations for Houses will found a village which will have coal brought to it and commerce and industry introduced. The People begin to be disposed to *do* if they know how and what, and till this sort of foundation is made they say all our pains will be thrown away and not produce any certain permanent advantage. Indeed one sees by the example of the neighbouring coasts the effect of similar operations. I give you a sketch of our ideas. The Canal and improvements at Culmaly have already made a great progress, and Robert Sutherland's House etc. look well. This place very well as far as the rain would let one see. The new arrangement of the fields is very fine - new dairy - Trees much grown and the blanks of the thinning already filled up - House perfectly nice, except a dirty staircase and where we are at work, but that will be put in order by the time you come as we work hard. The new Game Keeper is an excellent Carpenter, Potts says. Potts saw us with Tears in his eyes from seeing us, and from having escaped the dangers of sea sickness from which he suffered severely. All things come safe . . . [travel arrangements for Marquis' journey north].

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 9 July 1810

. . . I will not describe all I have been seeing today, because I wish you to be agreeably surprized, and think you will say you never saw the place in such order, that to be sure is not difficult as it never was in any sort of good order before, but now it might be any place any where, and it looks gay and chearful.

We went this morning all over Skelbo and Achavandra and saw specimens of good ploughing, very fine clover and the assurance of an extremely profitable farm; at Culmaly, a canal is cut and the burn running quietly in it, and coals to be brought there by a canal and a road making, the poor people there to be supplied with coal instead of Peat, and their grain dried in a new sort of

Kiln heated entirely by the Chaff which used to be thrown away, and which is a great oeconomy. We think you will approve of having Mr Lowe mentioned in my last, as they say nobody now lets Land without such previous information as he gives, as the value is so much altered that all the estates in the neighbourhood have risen four fold.

You must not expect see the House quite perfect for a few days after your arrival as we are very busy at work, but we take time and do things in order. The Garden and Nurserys are models of perfection. We dined at 6 O'clock and then walked all over Melaig by the new road and settled that we should not have known Melaig had we been dropt there unawares. The sea calm and beautiful as it will be when you cross it. Falconer says Mr Young is a calm sensible steady man 'deed is he', and Young wishes Falconer had a little more energy and thinks he knows but little of Turnips or Mankind. However if Falconer is tolerably active we may go on very well, and Young will turn his whole attention to the general improvement and give all the advice he can. He says what I always thought, that you cannot turn poor People however industrious into a bare field and desire them to build Houses and settle there, but that you must bring the ground into cultivation, build cottages and make them pay a proper rent for such allottments on the skirts of every farm. They will then be paid as Labourers and enabled to gain their livelyhood and pay their rent properly, and the idle who do not chuse to do so must go elsewhere, but that certain widows and old helpless Persons must be suffered to dye out, which occasions the necessity for the change being more gradual; but that going on letting Farms much on the old System for a small advance will retard improvement, and therefore he advises letting the Farms now out of lease rather remain on the present terms till some knowledge of what can best be done in each case be ascertained by an investigation and consultation of those who understand the land, and then he has no doubt People who understand farming will take and improve them. I have desired Falconer to suspend his advertisement of Midgarthy etc. till you come; George will take this Letter to Dornoch tomorrow - so Adieu, I shall probably not have an opportunity of writing again while you are on the road.

William Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 14 August 1810

I have just now the honor to receive Your Ladyships letter of the 11th with Mr Falconer's (which I return after having kept a Copy to be sent to Colin) and your former letters on the same subject I received, and On the whole have had a full Conversation with Colin and we are of One and the same opinion on that the Change proposed is wise and necessary, and that Falconer has from his inactivity merited a dismissal from his Situation which was given him *merely* on his promise of bringing forth the energies of the people of the Estate by his own exertion. And I shall undertake when he writes me to Open to him the Views now entertained and that his remaining is utterly inconsistent with such etc. and on this point I may have to trouble you further. Of his successors Young and Sellar I entertain the best opinion and they unite together every thing calculated to ensure your unqualified Approbation. I think it unnecessary to say more at present as Colin wrote your Ladyship.

I should mention in relation to *Wadsets* that tho' if granted for one year they might be good, yet still with the prejudice against them in Courts of law it would be extremely unwise to do any thing to give them the Appearance much less the reality of *Nominality* as a Freehold, for evidently the wadsetter must so situated be quite dependent on the reverser and I have always been taught scrupulously to avoid advising any measure in any one instance which might afford an Argument against Wadsets in general.

I send a letter which Came here in my absence from Telford. I shall think what can be done for Mrs Gray. Your Ladyship has not sent me which you thought you had done the Council of Dornoch<sup>1</sup>. It might be well to adopt Mr Young or Mr Sellar or perhaps both. These I had not in view in making up the list.

The *road* papers I had sent Your Ladyship the very day the Bank agreed to discount the bills. I hope Mr Dempster will send all to me in due time so as the business may be finally settled on the 25th.

<sup>1</sup> I.e. a list of those she wished to be elected to the Burgh Council.

William Mackenzie to Cosmo Falconer

Edinburgh, 16 August 1810

I am desired to state to you the sentiments of the Marchioness and Marquis of Stafford in regard to a change of management on their Estate which they are fully resolved to effect at Whitsunday next.

Colonel Campbell, from a conviction of his own inability to discharge the efficient duty of his important Situation asked permission to retire, and then it was, you was selected to be his successor for which your known accuracy and experience in business, your integrity, your preference to a country life, your love of agricultural pursuits, your time of Life, and the general knowledge you possessed, seemed eminently to qualify you to promote and effect those improvements, which had been contemplated and so far begun in an extensive district of country before entirely neglected. Previous to your appointment my brother fully explained to you that the great defect of Colonel Campbell was his inactivity (partly occasioned by bodily infirmity) and his inattention to the minute details of any plan and above all having limited his attention to the farm and neighbourhood of Dunrobin and to his own personal concerns added to a degree of shabbiness about trifles unworthy of his situation, in place of enquiring into the localities and capabilities of the more distant parts of the estate and into the particular circumstances of the Tenantry.

The respectability and the emoluments of the Sutherland Factory (greater than any I know in Scotland) were held out as an honourable encouragement, and the pleasure a good mind must derive from witnessing how much the comfort and happiness of a numerous Tenantry, as well as the advantage of the Proprietor (interests inseparably connected) could be essentially promoted by the unremitting and well directed exertions of one man, and it was fully understood you were willing to lay your account with several years of indefatigable labour to accomplish so desirable an object.

I am fully aware that on your entrance into office your labour was great, and acknowledge that you displayed Zeal, especially in arranging the accommodation for the Tenants dispossessed by the

great Sheep Tenement, and in adjusting these differences at first occasioned among the people by the happy change of the abolition of Sub Tenantry, and in the accurate manner in which you made up the Rental, your factory accounts, and every other Statement, and in the aid you gave in improving the police of the Country, our noble Constituents are fully aware.

The Marchioness and Marquis and Lord Gower went this summer to Dunrobin Castle with the pleasing idea not only of projecting some new improvements, and of witnessing those of a public nature carried on by the Commissioners for Highland Roads and the County, but also of observing, and by their presence giving countenance and support to the happy alterations which they were led to expect had been effected from a change of management, and those plans which had been devised to bring forth the natural resources of the Country, and the energies of the people. In this last however they confess their disappointment which they are inclined chiefly if not altogether to the want of an active and well directed mind to set the whole in motion, sedulously applying itself not only to improvements on a larger scale, but likewise by a judicious classification of the people and an accurate knowledge of the characters, pecuniary and mental abilities and habits of each, as well as by forming correct estimates of the value, division, and disposal of each farm, proceeding regularly as far as could be by districts to bring out and encourage the industry of the people, each according to the best likelihood of success as farmers, mechanics, labourers, or fishermen, and as in other Countries so to place and arrange them, thereby obtaining a proper return for the lands to be leased.

The Marchioness and Marquis from past experience, are now of opinion that the Sutherland Estate is by much too great a concern for one person, and that its management requires the best and united activity and attention of two at least. Under this impression they have made a most judicious selection in Mr Young of Inverugie and Mr Sellar of Elgin of whom I need to you say nothing, as I am sensible you will justly appreciate their talents and abilities to discharge the duties of the honourable situation to which they have been elected. They are named joint Chamberlains on the Estate after Whitsunday next, and I know you too well to suppose that

after this intimation of such their appointment, you could think of remaining in a subaltern situation, even if it were compatible with other arrangements, or will hesitate to offer to Lord and Lady Stafford a resignation of your service from that time.

I am at same time directed to inform you that they are fully sensible not only of your perfect integrity and accuracy in all business matters with them but also of your desire since you became their factor to manage their estate in the manner which appeared to you beneficial for them, and that they continue to feel interested in your welfare and prosperity; tho' they do conceive your abilities to be much better calculated to ensure success and advantage to yourself in the way of general business or in the management of a South Country Estate than in executing and bringing forth into maturity a system calculated for the permanent benefit of such an Estate as theirs. They wish you fully to understand that their resolution is alone formed on the general outline I have endeavoured to delineate, and by no means as loosening the tie of good understanding which has uniformly subsisted between you and them. I know from what you have said to myself that you will leave with feelings of peculiar regret the place of Rhives, but I must explain to you, so far to do this away that it would have been required at any rate for the accommodation of the Minister of Golspie, and for the glebe, the present Manse and Glebe forming part of the grounds destined for the newly projected Harbour of Golspie, and the lower grounds of the Farm are to be used in extending the Village ground.

I am fully authorized to settle at the proper time finally all accounts, and close every transaction between you and my noble Constituents, and this we can best and more easily do when you return here.

To conclude, I assure you from myself, it is my earnest wish that no circumstance may ever lessen the good footing on which we always have been with each other, and that it may still continue.

Cosmo Falconer to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 23 August 1810

On my arrival last night from Dornoch I found Mr McKenzies Letter communicating that it had been the pleasure of your Ladyship



and Lord Stafford to supercede me in the management of this Estate by the appointment of Messrs Young and Seller as joint Chamberlains after Whitsunday next when it was expected I would resign the Charge to them. However much I may feel under this determination in the particular circumstances in which I now stand, I should be sorry, if I cannot accelerate, to impede for a moment the operations of the Estate which I have been as solicitous to forward as any who can follow me, tho' times and Circumstances were very unpropitious for the task and it was certainly your Ladyship and Lord Staffords good pleasure that the change which was in View should only be gradual. Had a Contrary Idea been even hinted it assuredly would have been attended to even amidst the vast load of casual operations and the severe distress which overwhelmed the people for threefourths of the whole time I have been on the Estate - a Circumstance which your Ladyship and every person must admit operated to retard and load me with a task which I hope will never fall to the Lot of another Factor upon the Estate. It is therefore only at the very moment I had an opportunity of acting, And before I had any new hint or resolution communicated, that I am superceded; not, I have the Consolation to think, for any fault, but that men have appeared who are supposed to possess more than ordinary abilities for accomplishing the undertaking. I sincerely hope your Ladyship and Lord Stafford will not be disappointed. Tho' Mr Young is eminently qualified to give advice and assistance in agricultural matters and direct the employment of the people after a change in their sentiments has been effected, and certainly might have rendered essential services in this way, Still it appears to me to be a matter of some solicitude how far Gentlemen overpowered with business of their own, residing at a distance and strangers to the management of a Highland Estate, are exactly the persons who are to realize the Family Expectations on the Extensive Estates of Sutherland and promote and maintain a vigilant police. I have too high an opinion of your Ladyship and Lord Stafford to suppose that I run the risk of giving offence by stating thus candidly the honest sentiments of my mind.

It is only necessary for me to add that no attention or Exertion in my power will be wanting in the discharge of duty while I

remain here and that it will give me pleasure to forward your Ladyship and Lord Staffords wishes by affording every Information or assistance I can give the Gentlemen who are to succeed me and that I have some Consolation in being assured that I possess the Confidence and good wishes of the Family, in whose welfare I shall ever rejoice whatever may be my own Lot as I am perfectly convinced that their Conduct upon this occasion is dictated from the purest motives for the prosperity of the Estate and its numerous Inhabitants.

Cosmo Falconer to Marquis of Stafford

Rhives, 25 August 1810

Tho' I wrote Lady Stafford on receiving Mr Mackenzies Letter intimating that Messrs Young and Sellar were to have the management of this Estate, I cannot avoid expressing to your Lordship the deep regret which I feel in separating from a family to whom none on Earth was more sincerely attached, and in which I fondly as it were recognized a Father and a mother.

The more I reflect on what has happened the more I dread (and the tears which have dropt since I took up the pen witness the sincerity of my heart) that there is an Infatuation attending both myself and the Estate by a Change of management and the Introduction of Strangers amongst the people, at the very moment the exertions made began their happy effects. Had I known but a little earlier that your Lordship was disappointed in your expectations, I could, I am confident, have satisfactorily explained that the moment was not just arrived from particular Circumstances not altogether unknown to your Lordship and Lady Stafford, for realizing these expectations and that matters were in as favorable a train as it was possible with a due regard to everything which had fallen out. After the Commotions occasioned by the formation of the large sheep tenement had been got over and the Individual Interests and pretensions of so many small subtenants as were immediately after taken from the principal Tenants, had been adjusted, a severe Calamity afflicted the Estate by the failure of the Crop and the death of near half the bestial, which only operated in its full force the year after, particularly amongst the numerous

tribes which had just been taken on the Family rental. It was settled to avoid manifest distress, that only certain parts of the Estate should be advertised and a gradual change brought about by Letting the Coast side Farms to people of capital and Enterprize, and thus lead a part of the hitherto indulged and Indolent Inhabitants to look for Comforts in Active Exertions and Industry and to prepare the rest under this Judicious Example for a similar change; and having so far succeeded that the most biggoted were obliged to acknowledge that a spirit of Industry was manifested in all ranks which had never before been known, I obtained the approbation of Lady Stafford to call in the aid of one of the most judicious and Experienced Sheep farmers in the Country acquainted with the proper Classification of such Lands to accompany me in a minute survey of the Estate which was advertised in a way which I thought calculated to meet a more particular notification to the public of the Farms thereafter to be Let. Things were on this footing when Lady Stafford arrived and as her Ladyship took the very first opportunity to request that I would stop the advertisement and also suspend any appointment with the gentleman I was in Correspondence with, as your Lordship had some arrangements in view, I waited in a state of Inactivity and suspense till it should suit your Lordships commencing to signify you pleasure in these matters.

As I cannot in my Conscience believe that there is real cause to blame my Conduct or for seriously supposing that I was deficient of zeal and a fair and honest Exertion to bring order out of the Confusion which prevailed in the Country, now happily over, I trust I have only to appeal to the goodness and greatness of your Lordship's Mind for that apology which is so justly due for the liberty I now take and to the opinion and report of the highest to the lowest upon your Estate, who I am certain can also bear ample testimony of the distresses and difficulties I had to encounter since I came amongst them, as to which your Lordship, not being resident can form no Estimate without seeing my accounts, nor of the pains which I have taken by frequent excursions over every part and farm almost on the Estate, to come at a proper knowledge of Circumstances to enable me to act with effect and do justice to that Confidence which I with pride saw placed in me.

With regard to my successors they have shewn themselves to be men of Enterprize in their own Concerns and one of them I am sure had disinterestedly shown zeal for the Improvement of the Country and would for a time have continued for a discretionary remuneration to have given all the assistance which was necessary or Circumstances required for calling forth the Energies and promoting the Industry of the Country. The other a raw inexperienced young man could, with great submission, have no claim to the honor your Lordship and Family have conferred but from the casual connection with the other in an adventure in this Country in which self Interest as in the other side of the water stimulates zeal. I must certainly ask your Lordship's pardon for this diggression and liberty tho' it comes from the best of motives, in doubting how far your Lordship and Lady Stafford have acted with all the Consideration essential for the prosperity of the Country by placing the sole direction of it in the hands of persons whose opportunities give neither of them a decided preference to the management of Extensive highland Estates, and ever nearer the shore the tide will flow but cannot be forced tho' with the command of an open purse much certainly can be done.

It is besides but too clear that these Gentlemen's Exertions independent of their Sutherland Undertakings must be clogged with their own distant Concerns for a time and at a time too when this Estate claims a most serious attention. Whenever matters are matured by the Set of the Farms the difficultys which your Lordship now feels and I have seriously felt will be over and these Gentlemen will then if not before be just as one person in the Management should their fortunes not have lulled them into complete inactivity as to the general Interests of the Country and the Estate.

In making my own arrangements for Whitsunday may I ask your Lordship if circumstances have entirely precluded an assylum as a private Gentleman upon the Estate, for at present, having relinquished my profession I see no prospects but in retirement, as my feelings and the Ideas which would attach to so speedy a return seem to preclude my going to Edinburgh, where most probably I might only spend the little fortune I honorably acquired by Exertion before I left it. . . .

William Young to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Inverugie, 17 September 1810

I wrote Mr Hughes from Tain urging the necessity of his going immediately to Brora with the boring Irons, and I went yesterday to Pritchard an Englishman at the Loch of Spynie Canal who I knew Mr Hughes intended to bring with him to Sutherland. I was happy to learn that he had orders, and has gone to Inverness this day to see every thing ready for the Sutherland expedition, and I have no doubt of meeting both him and Hughes there on Tuesday se'night, so that Lord Stafford may expect to see the work fairly begun before the Family go South. I dispatch a man this evening for the Suffolk Horses<sup>1</sup>; as there is no immediate Vessel from Burghead he goes by Land to Aberdeen, and I have written a friend concerned in the London Smacks to get him an immediate passage to Harwich, but I have resolved to let him bring the Horses by land, for Sea hazard at this Season is really not to be risked. I see an Advertisement in the Aberdeen news paper from a Manufacturing House in Glasgow<sup>2</sup> offering Work and Lodging to Familys from the North. I have written them for an explanation and that as I know where numbers can be got it might be some object for one of the Partners to come here on or before Tuesday se'night and accompany me to the Country.

Please write me what exact arrangements Lady Stafford wishes in regard to post Horses that no inconvenience may occur on this side. I have written Colonel Stewart of the 8th West India Regiment anent an Ensigncy to Mr Gordon Dalharn and I will also find out if there is any vacant Commission in the Morayshire Militia; although Forsyth the Mason still promises to have the Achavandra Cottages finished before Winter not a hand can be found in this Country in addition to what we already have in Sutherland.

<sup>1</sup> A Suffolk stallion and some mares were bought in East Anglia and brought to Skelbo to improve the native breed; they arrived in November 1810 (William Young to Earl Gower, 7 November 1810).

<sup>2</sup> The house concerned was that of Messrs Owen and Atkinson, the New Lanark Twist Co. They sent a representative, a clergyman named Macmillan, to recruit in Sutherland (William Young to Owen and Atkinson, 6 October 1810), and Earl Gower later visited Owen at New Lanark (William Young to Earl Gower, 28 October 1810).

Since writing the above I have the honor of your Lordships letter. Ross<sup>1</sup> was growling to me about the inferiority of the soil on his Lott, because he sees better in other places, but there is no plan that I can devise by which a few Cottages will show off so well. He does not depend so much on the ground as many others, and from the way he is turning it over he will gain when £10 an acre is allowed him; if the Book case had come to Burghead Davidson woud certainly have forwarded it. I wish I cou'd have been at the Castle while Mr Mcpherson Grant is there. Your Lordship might have accompanied him and me over several parts of the Estate and we wou'd have had some discussion on future improvements, I will yet make a push to get over before Mr Grant leaves Sutherland.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 29 November 1810

Since my letter of 23d I have had the honor to receive your Ladyships of 21st. I wish it was in my power to give Lord Stafford satisfactory accounts of the Coal. Pritchard who is sanguine of ultimate success was down 115 feet on the 26th still in the same blue soft rock which he began with. I cannot better describe its nature than to say that in place of blunting it sharps and brings the Jumper with which they cut to a fine edge.

I have written Hughes who shoud have been here last week (but craved a few days delay) to come down instantly that I may be able to furnish His Lordship with an accurate Journal.

I beg to have Mr Colin MacKenzies plans of the Crofts and allotments. If they are too bulky for the post, any of the Inverness Ship Captains woud leave them directed to me at Burghead. If it was possible I daresay Your Ladyship woud wish and certainly I shoud like to see every contented creature settled on the Estate in one way or other. I was up through Rogart yesterday and cannot describe the many snug situations to be found there especially near the Kirk. I saw a beautifull meadow perhaps 15 or 20 acres destroyed by water which for a mere trifle can be made six times its present value, its exactly the old Lady Lochs improvement in miniature; blow up a small rock across the burn and off goes the water, but

<sup>1</sup> One of the settlers on Achavandra moor.

I see it is in vain to struggle with these surveys in the interior untill Spring and I may find this locked up and under Lease to the *King of Sweden*<sup>1</sup>. I have today a Brick and Tyle maker inspecting the Kinnauld and Morvich Clay, if it answers his purpose there never was a finer situation for these works. Boats can be brought to the door and he may have his choice of Moss or Coal, while we woud get all the Cottages cheaply thatched. I dare not medle with Straw even for Berrys House unless Your Ladyship is partial to it, after buying a sufficiency in Moray I find on calculating every thing it will cost nearly double the price of Tyles.

I have just parted with a Larg Lad who has been waiter in McGregors No 8 Princes Street for some years where I recollect him a sober decent servant. He came North to take an Inn at Inverness and called on me about some small place to his Father. Wishing to have some of his *savings brought to Sutherland* and seeing the risk he ran in laying them out at Inverness I think I have put him off the plan, and expect that he will offer for a Farm or Inn among ourselves, in the meantime he keeps his old place untill Whitsunday.

I am glad to find Lord Reay is so accomodating about the Land. I shou'd be happy to serve him or any person who Your Ladyship thinks I could be of use to. I never grudge travel and when a person chooses, there is time to do a great deal, but really it does not answer to interfere with peoples Factors, unless they are desirous of information which every honest man ought. I believe His Lordship was much imposed on at first, but Mr Anderson who he has now got may be more capable than myself to advise him about the House and Place of Tongue. How would it answer to try Sellar with it and some management of His Lordships matters, at same time to let him collect the Assint and Strathnaver Rents, he is quite a bustler and woud do remarkably well among the Fishermen and Kelp makers during the busy Season; and altho' no Agriculturist, abilities in that way are not wanted. In these places he woud be quite in the Center of all, and after the Farms are laid out he woud only have to improve the Shores which I believe suits his turn exactly. In winter nothing cou'd be done and he could return to the coast side or to Elgin if he pleases. This thought has Just struck me, but I will not take the most distant notice of it. If Your

<sup>1</sup> An unidentifiable nickname.

Ladyship and Lord Stafford thinks proper Lord Reay might be sounded and a letter written to me as if the thing had originate in London.

Your Ladyships attention about these Commissions astonishes me, the Young Men and their parents ought to be very grateful indeed. I have yet no answer from the West Indies about Dalharns Son. If my application is successfull Your Ladyship may think of some other person supposing Gordon is appointed. I shall be glad that Mr Kennedy gets Crieck.<sup>1</sup> I have been teased with letters about a Mr McGillivray (not the Achness man)<sup>2</sup> who has Charles Grant the M.P.s interest, but I told the person who wrote me that I woud never trouble Your Ladyship about any thing of the sort.

I observe some fine trees in Megs burn likely to be undermined by the water, a trifle will save them and it shoud be laid out.

Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Dunrobin, 11 December 1810

In consequence of the change which the inspection of the country wrought on Mr Young's sentiments, and my finding it unpleasant to him that I should touch upon his ideas, I thought it prudent to refrain from the proposed Census of the people of Strathnaver, and to limit myself to the letter of your Ladyship's instructions; which, so far as concern me, relate to the assortment of the family papers and the preservation of the Game.

I venture to intrude upon your Ladyship with a short report on these two Subjects; begging to assure your Ladyship that in taking a Census or in any other operation suited to my humble capacity I am ready at all times and at a moment's notice to obey your Commands. First, I have, in a cursory way, gone over the writings. Since the time of Mr Gilchrist<sup>3</sup> there seems to have been nothing like arrangement or method; and, I am astonished, how the factors,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. George Rainy, minister of Creich, died in 1810, and was succeeded by Rev. Murdo Cameron.

<sup>2</sup> There was a mission church at Achness in upper Strathnaver.

<sup>3</sup> Dugald Gilchrist of Lothbeg, factor of Sutherland Estate, 1742-69, and of Skelbo Estate, 1756-86. He held a wadset of Lothbeg, 1772-87, and was tenant of the farm until his death in 1797.



with their papers in such barbarous confusion, Saw light to find their way, in the questions concerning disputed marches, the division of Commons etc. which must have occurred. There is a great deal of curious research too, I observe, which might have tempted them somewhat to do their duty, and I anticipate much pleasure in what awaits me . . . [proposed arrangement of papers].

Second, as to the Game. There has been such a long track of cunning and management in this Country, that I do not expect any thing like effect in this or whatever concerns the police untill officers are appointed, who, like me, are independent and indifferent to every consideration other than the Good opinion of the family. I beg your Ladyship's pardon for the observation but I am satisfied by considering of the families Servants connected with the Estate and the people of it; that their education has been to get on by intrigue, and address, rather than by industry which is more profitable. It is all a Smuggle; and of these smugglers, the officers who have been in the practice of hoodwinking the factors and laying the tennants under obligations, are the Chief. At the apprising of Culmally houses etc. this MacLeod for instance, who broke his neck t'other day, wished to be in league with me, or with the tennants etc. to do us favours, in return for favours to be done him. The most vigilant person cannot be in all places at once or execute all things himself. He must have faithfull people about him and Shew them that nothing else will in the Smallest degree be tolerated. On this account I humbly venture to request of your Ladyship the power to recommend a Steady fellow to this vacancy. With such, I will pledge myself. Meantime I inclose a list of the names of those persons in this neighbourhood who have as I understand, been killing Game this winter, with Robert Sutherlands letter<sup>1</sup> on the Subject in answer to mine; and I wait your Ladyship's Commands. I further inclose an advertisement, which, if approven of, I Shall publish, and I Shall render any names given up of Consequence, and wait your pleasure concerning them . . . [old coins found].

The persons who by my information Kill Game are Captain Grant, Dornoch; Captain McCulloch, Cyderhall; Mr McKid, Kirkton; Doctor Ross, Cambusmore; George, Hector and William Munro, sons of Captain Munro, Dornoch.

<sup>1</sup> This letter has not survived.

## Proposed advertisement

The Game on the Estate of Sutherland having been, of late years, very much destroyed during the winter, Lord and Lady Stafford request that no Gentleman may shoot or Course there this Season, and they warn all poachers and persons in the practice of Killing Game without licence or the proprietors' permission, that their names Shall be sent to the Stamp office for prosecution, and the most prompt and effectual measures followed to bring them to punishment.

The Ground officers and tennants will give up the names of every person trespassing on the Grounds under their charge to Mr Sellar Dunrobin who is authorised to pay the informants one Guinea\* of reward for each person convicted, and he will conceal their names if Required.

\* I have always found the fines fully equal to the Expence of rewarding informants.

Patrick Sellar to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Dunrobin, 6 February 1811

Mr Young returned from Skelbo etc. late last night and he went to Helmsdale this morning early. On coming down Stairs I found, that, concerning this proposed plantation<sup>1</sup>, he had left out for my perusal a copy of his letter to Your Lordship, which had been brought here in his luggage after us from the Little Ferry. If there be nothing further than this proposal by Mr Young and your Lordship's letter to Mr Stronach we are clearly wrong. Mr Young's proposal relates to a particular Spot, His communication to me and our Draft, to a general right over the Ground Sett to us. Nothing is more insupportable than the period between the discovery of Error and the frank avowal of it, and I therefore immediately sitt down to say to your Lordship that this is my impression of the fact, and I think it must be Mr Young's when he reflects upon the Case.

<sup>1</sup> Young and Mackid had proposed to carry out planting on the moors at Culmaily and Kirkton (William Young to Marchioness of Stafford, 13 November 1810; Patrick Sellar to Earl Gower, 5 February 1811). Alexander Stronach appears to have been Young's clerk and cashier at Inverugie.

We all have our failings. Mr Young is volatile, sanguine, and keen in his conceptions. As he paid for 30 Crops of the Ground, he would think it no loss to the family that he preferred Timber to heath or pasture; more especially Since Timber was much wanted in the Country, and Lord Stafford did not think it prudent to venture it on his own Account. I can easily See how, with this impression on his mind a man of his rapidity of thought would take up your Lordships permission concerning this Spot, as a licence to adventure, wherever the Ground we rented invited to the Speculation.

The blame of framing the papers<sup>1</sup> at Elgin and sending them *directly* forward for the Family's revisal rests a good deal with me. Indeed I pressed the measure on Mr Young, for the Sake of dispatch, and I think it proper to Explain the Causes that Induced me. Two of which were public, one private.

1. Mr Young had been baffled in his attempt when here alone, to correct the Erroneous mode of Collection and application of the Commutation Road money. Every movement to bring in an account of the persons liable in payment, the Sums collected, or the application of the money had been in vain; preparatory to the first April meeting, it seemed necessary thoroughly to investigate this and every Branch of it, preparatory to the deliberations of that day. It therefore behoved us either to bring matters discreetly, but firmly to an immediate Explanation with Messrs McKid etc., or to lose a Season of improvement in this most essential point of Roads, and a Certain proportion of the funds of Course.

2. By the Law of this Country any act of homologation of a Tack by a proprietor (which delay to Challenge is) constitutes that a Tack which otherwise perhaps would have been none. By the Same Law there must be 48 days legal warning before Whitsunday of the proprietors intention to Remove a tennant. Where the family intimated to Mr Young their intention to Quarrell Some of Mr Falconers Leases, and their reliance on Mr Young to attend on this extensive property, or rather province, to the Whitsunday arrangements, I was extremely anxious that in these two things which also pertained to my department an immediate Expiscation of the facts and prompt measures might Ensue, Two things which without powers I could not Effect.

<sup>1</sup> See above, i, p.xvii.

Lastly The truth is, that in our private affairs, owing to my having So much less ability than Mr. Young, I could not follow the Quick succession of his ideas; and as it was my resolution to Settle in the Country, which, by my fathers connexion with Burghead, and the progress to be expected in the Establishment of Intercourse thro that port, seemed to me like a continuation of Moray, I was desirous how Soon the rent of Aberscross etc. was arranged, and if possible before Whitsunday to bring (with every good humour) our agricultural concerns to a division. When Mr Young wrote me first (in November I think) that Mr McKid and he had adventured in this Timber Speculation, and which Seemed to me to be in part agreed on, in confidence on the future approbation of the family, I wrote him declining the adventure *in hoc statu* and begging of Mr Young to take Culmaily to himself, and give me Morvich which at least the body of it would wait perhaps for a year untill I had more Capital and Experience. Mr Young in Reply Releived me of all consequences attending the timber Speculation and pressed our Continuing Joint in the farm. I rejoined, also in writing, that, it gave me so much pain to differ in opinion in little trifles occurring in the Concern, and which was occasioned by my weakness and ignorance, that I trusted to his kindness to releive me of it; That if he took Culmaily I would keep his farm accounts; If he declined it I would adventure on it alone, and Give him Morvich, relying on his friendship to point out where I might Err in my management; by which means our departments under the family and our whole concerns being distinct, such harmony and Joint cooperation would go thro' every part of our business that every Step we moved would have effect. The next communication I received was your Lordship's letter to Mr Stronach, which brought a letter from me most readily agreeing to Mr Youngs plan with Mr McKid. In which State matters were when I Pressed on my friend the immediate preparation of the papers above mentioned.

I regret to trouble your Lordship with So long a detail and cannot Sufficiently apologise for the freedom I take in intruding it upon you. My father who is a factor of long Standing has two maxims—The first that an Agent when Constituted Should never after treat or bargain with his Constituent, The other that on the

occurrence of any Error or misunderstanding an immediate Explanation of the *whole facts pro and con* and an invitation to full investigation is furthwith to be submitted. The first occasiond my anxiety to Settle every thing before the family left the Country and to fix the day (a Wednesday I recollect) for the meeting of the two Referrees, the last now impells to the very unwarrantable liberty I take at present; and which is the last time I shall intrude upon your Lordship untill I have the honour to Receive your future Commands.

Mrs Mitchell poor woman is very Low this morning. Mr Young has sent an express to Tain for Doctor Robertson of that place and expect his being here tonight.

1811—1816

LETTERS

RELATING TO FACTORY OF WILLIAM YOUNG

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William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 12 April 1811

REFERING TO MY LETTER regarding the Pier<sup>1</sup> and a few lines written yesterday accompanying a Sketch of Houses for small Farms on the Estate I have now to own receipt of your Ladyships letter of 2d Instant.

It afford me pleasure to find that the articles<sup>2</sup> intended for the generality of Leases to be granted give satisfaction. I claim very little merit in the production, they seem to have been drawn up by a Legal adviser and shou'd therefore stand the test.

I think of having 50 or 100 Copies printed and ready for the consideration of intending offerers previous to the sett, and as it will be stipulated that reference will be made to them, the Tacks may be very short. I am hostile to what is here called 'forehand rent and taking security; the one can be no object to Your Ladyship while it empties the tenants pocket, the other is too often a source for Law suits; and I woud not willingly give land to any person who could not be trusted untill his Crop is reaped.

With regard to article 12th my wish is that after the Multures are converted, Mills may be like shops that every man may go

<sup>1</sup> At Dunrobin Castle.

<sup>2</sup> On 26 March 1811 Young sent the Marchioness a copy of the regulations in force on Sir James Grant's Strathspey estates. These have not survived, but may have been used as a basis for the Rogart Regulations (see above, i. pp. 120-6).

where he is best served and if not exactly to this effect I will make it so it run thus: 'The tenants and possessors whose Leases shall bear reference to these articles shall in time coming pay no Mill Multure to the Heritor but as to work and service; they shall continue thirled to the Mills to which they were in time past astricted or shall go to *such other Mill* as the heritor shall appoint'; Perhaps this would authorise the Heritor to say go where you please within the Estate and still enable him to keep a little reasonable authority.

If we do not get on with something usefull and convenient Lord Gower will *carry off all the Meal* trade for I have been today laying the foundation of a Mill and Kiln at Skelbo which without exaggeration will do more business than any six which I have seen in Sutherland. These trifling things waste the peoples time and destroy many a good acre containing water for them. If I did not fear that your Ladyship might think I wanted *grist to my own Mill* I woud almost say that the Golspie one shou'd be rooted out and all to the Bridge brought into Dunrobin policy. At any rate the Mill and these buildings might be sent to Anderson the Blacksmiths for as the willows will beautify below so shoud we embellish a little the ground above the Bridge; at present the access is difficult, at same time an inlett to stragglers. However we have plenty to do at present and this change requires some consideration.

Duncans Garden<sup>1</sup> is pretty well on and will be a neat looking thing. One day or other I may perhaps to get authority to plant all to the Church Yard when we get some considerable increase of rent. I am anxious to see the Branchill grasing and attempted going up on Saturday, but the day was dreadfully bad and I was driven home by snow from John Pollicies<sup>2</sup> after making some remarks on that neighbourhood. Ross of Navidale came to Carrols after I had gone up Strathbrora, but woud not wait my return, nor will he give up Four shabby acres for the Fishing Village at a *fair price* although I will convince any reasonable Man that it woud benefit him £50 yearly. Believe me I will not lose sight of this rational and advantageous scheme but allow me if your Ladyship pleases a little time to consider what is now to be done for I am bound up with the hopes of Coal at Brora which will entirely alter our ideas.

<sup>1</sup> At Golspie Inn.

<sup>2</sup> John Macdonald, tenant at Polly in Strathbrora.

The Salmon Fishers are come over and begin their operations at the Ferry tomorrow.

I am proud indeed that Lord Stafford should express the most distant wish to see me at Trentham, to suppose that His Lordship would accompany me to the Iron works is more than I can expect. I wish my Journey may compensate the Family either in England or Scotland, it is doing me a very great honor indeed. If equally agreeable August would in all probability answer me best as before then I will have everything arranged in the low Country as well as Assint, and I will have had another Nephew (not the planer) a little trained to Agriculture who can give in his reports and assist Mr Sellar. I wish him (but not at your Ladyships expence) to keep a watchfull eye over the Servants and Labourers both here and at Skelbo when I am otherwise engaged, and to be much among the work people of every description that their time and accounts may be properly kept. The Planer had caught a fever at Inverness and after coming here I was obliged to send him by a Boat to Morayshire and am again working away with Meredith and a Lad which my Brother sent over.

I annex a List of all the Farms to sett this Season, more might have been done but as my plans are new to the people I do not think it right to carry them too far at once. I fix the 15 or 16th of May for the business and have no fear of good tenants or of accomodating all those who may be dispossessed. The Achavandra people are taking Lotts, indeed battling about the Moor, and I will in every parish lay off places of the same sort with which the people will I think be perfectly satisfied and ten times more comfortable, for such a Mass of confusion as these Lands are in at present I never witnessed. Lord Gower will see it when he honors me with his Company over the Estate. I was along the Skibo Marches yesterday and all about Evelicks and Riarcher, we will have a field to work on soon in that quarter. I did not see the old Man<sup>1</sup> but am told hes very weak.

Lands to be sett on Leases of 19 Years at Whitsunday 1811

1st Dremdivian and Loan side—here the Marches are to be streightened and irregular Corners cutt off and let by the Year untill the Dornoch Croft Lands are divided.

<sup>1</sup> Colonel George Sutherland of Rearquhar.



- 2d Achlean to be laid off by Pitgrudy March on the North and West Embo on the East and Poyntzfields<sup>1</sup> land on the South. Some acres of Achinchanter will be added to make a compact Farm.
- 3d Achinchanter exclusive of the above deduction and some moor Ground adjacent to be added to Croft mattock.
- 4 Croft mattock and above moor ground.  
NB John Barclay may probably be considered of when it is seen what additional rent this Ground setts at.
- 5 Achurach and Michael wells bounded by the Burns in all directions. This may either be advertised or given to Mr Bethune at a rent corresponding to the other Lands of equal quality in the neighbourhood.
- 6 The Links after being regularly Lotted off.
- 7 Evelicks and Cyderhall moors to be lotted out among dispossessed tenants.
- 8 Teachleb Dalvey and Alexander Ross land except what of these Lands lye north of the burn which ought to go in with the Moor Ground, some allar bushes of no value in point of ornament or use, woud here make excellent Land for the new settlers, and to make this Farm as well as Cyderhall more convenient some small exchanges of Land is necessary. There is likewise a Croft to be reserved for the Woodkeeper.
- 9 Proncy Croy with the exception of Moor Ground.
- 10 Lower Proncey with same exception.
- 11 Balvraid as now laid off in two Farms 60 acres each and one of 30 acres.
- 12 Kentraid and Davochbeg to be Joined. I suspect Donald MacKenzie must get preference to this or a Farm of similar size for having yielded Pitfure.
- 13 Pittentrail and Cory Sheep Cott to be divided into two convenient Farms.
- 14 Little Rogart to be Lotted off for village ground and the Lands of Muckle Rogart to remain as formerly for this Season as I am to drain about 20 acres of Marsh Land immediately which shoud increase their value greatly.

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Innes Gun Munro (d. 1815), 3rd laird of Poyntzfield (formerly Ardoch), Resolis par. Ross-shire, proprietor of Gruids and a small property in Dornoch.

- 15 Achnegarrow to be sett in one Farm.
- 16 Golspie Tower Lands to be put into one or two Farms or Lotted out in small parks as offerers incline.
- 17 Golspie Village Lands to be Lotted out and valued.
- 18 Midgarty.
- 19 Mrs Forbes Farm at Doll to be given to James Ross at Craigtown at will untill proper arrangements are made in Clyne parish.
- 20 Kinnonovv. I have the Planer at work here and devote next week to Lairg parish.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 17 April 1811

I beg reference to my respects of 14th. On my way to Lairg on Monday morning I was honored with Your Ladyships letter of 9th Instant and am happy to find that the plan of the Pier is approved of. George Alexander begins immediately to cut timber for it and I have written our Burghead builder to come and execute the Stone work, for admiting I had equal knowledge which is not the case, it is impossible for me to be constantly on the Spot, and in him I have every confidence as to the sufficiency of the work; he can get the House occupied last Summer by Gray, but from which I removed him at Martinmas to the Mains.

As the money Bond for the Iron Bridge<sup>1</sup> is to be signed, that work will of course instantly go on. Mr Telford is an excellent Man; in the North we owe him much, but I could not help remarking (indeed it was my duty to do so) that while Mr MacKenzie believed the work might be impeded for want of the Bonds, we had reason to suppose here that Contractors had been agreed with.

I have fixed on a beautifull situation for a Village at Pittentrail through which the Fleet runs; with a Bridge of one arch we shall have part of it on each side the water, and a great command of fine land for the settlers. I have been equally fortunate at the Kirk of Lairg along the Banks of Lochshin, close on the great road, near the Mill, and a twelve mile stage from the Iron Bridge; perhaps in Britain there is not finer situations for inland Villages and *untill*

<sup>1</sup> At Bonar Bridge.

*we get Coals* I am not sure how far the Country and its inhabitants are not better calculated for these than maritime situations, for I am not without hopes of getting Andrew Sutherland who is wealthy to begin a woolen work at Pittentrail and something similar may be sett agoing at Lairg.

I have behind both Villages and beyond the *eye of a Critic*, found and marked out places for *incurables* where they may end their days in peace, I mean old helpless people whose friends will build hutts for them near the Moss and Church for their present, and after comfort, while in the Villages I would tolerate nothing but neat Cottages perhaps similar to those I sent a sketch of for little Farmers. I have chalked out a nice snug Farm for an Inn at Lairg, and really there should be one built, now that the line of road is fixed and accomodation will be wanted while the operations are going on. I think the Lairg waiter<sup>1</sup> at McGregors Hotel woud be a very fit person for this station. I woud not have a large expensive House at first but such as might afterwards be added to.

I cannot describe the pleasure I feel in hopes of seeing all these pleasant and profitable improvements coming rapidly forward. I wish June was come that Lord Gower might participate as I expect he will in the scene. I have arranged Kinnonovv and Tomich into neat little Farms to suit industrious tenants, and the Minister of Lairg says *he is satisfied with the plan*; I had written him that I woud be up, and to assure the people that their teasing me untill I had all my plans matured woud answer no purpose, the consequence was that in place of idling their time following me about I had scarcely a single application. I believe these people shoud not be removed untill Whitsunday 1812 then I shall with Your Ladyships permission have the Village ground ready to give off with two acres a garden and Cows Grass to each settler. I feel confident that it will answer, and at Shiness there is abundance of lime close by the Loch which can be brought in Boats to the Village, both for building and land.

Mr Mathieson makes nothing by the concern and the Man who burns it demands an exorbitant price. I shall certainly turn him out and bring over a confidential Lime burner of my own, for the cheaper the people are supplied so much the more rapidly will

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 131.

improvements come on, and in every little department the true plan is to have faithfull active servants. Will Your Ladyship agree to give 99 years Leases of this Village and garden ground, each settler to have  $\frac{1}{8}$ th of an acre leaving him tenant at will for the two acres and his Cows Grass, or perhaps the first settlers might get 15 years Leases for their encouragement to improve and Lime; indeed my Idea is that all the Lairg Leases and perhaps part of Rogart connected with that District should be made to terminate with Marshall and Atkinsons Lease. I hope the *tenant of Achavandra* and Baillie Boogs old Grieve will soon meet at Skelbo as they did lately on Highgate Hill.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 5 May 1811

The unpleasant Journey which I had to make to Morayshire, attendance at Dornoch for three days after my return, and my being since occupied untill late every evening laying off ground at Evelicks and other places for tenants who may be dispossessed must I am afraid plead my apology for being so remiss in replying to your Ladyships letters of 17th, 18th, 21st and 26th ult.

With respect to Dunrobin Pier I hourly expect our Burghead builder to begin work, but the weather has been extremely cross and our operations in different ways sadly retarded.

I am much obliged by Lord Staffords liberality but woud fain hope that the additional hundred pounds will not be wanted.

Balvraid tenants were here and said they woud write Your Ladyship with a request to be continued in their possessions; in arranging this Farm I have reserved Houses for most of the old infirm people. I will provide for all of them, the others are quite unfit to occupy Farms with advantage to the Estate or any degree of comfort to themselves, but they are good labourers and now gaining 12s. a week ditching and dyking at Skelbo, often we cannot get them to work at all, and like every other little Farmer on the Estate their time is most unprofitably wasted. I know and expect to convince all such people that according to their management, if the Land was given for nothing (and in many instances it does not pay half rent) they could not decently exist. I have told them that

in place of miserable Farmers, Your Ladyship is to make them Lairds (alluding to the Village system) and that such as are honest and industrious will meet with every encouragement, I believe they begin to see that I am no enemy to their welfare, they will soon be brought forward. Alexander Murray an active fine fellow one of Lord Gowers soldiers who resides at Dremdevian has taken about 20 acres of Evelicks moor and is not only to build a neat Cottage, but begs that your Ladyship will accept of £50 at interest from him. Perhaps small sums should be received from the tenants in this way as it keeps their little earnings out of bad hands, and it might be re-lent to such as are needy, but disposed to settle and build in the Villages on 99 years Leases, taking security over the Houses. This would be a strong inducement to industry as the next object would be to labour untill the debt is repaid. A thousand little things crowd on my mind when the subject of improvement is started and which I will better explain to Lord Gower when we meet than by troubling Your Ladyship with long letters, and what we accord in will then be forwarded for your Ladyships consideration.

The Young Man who I employed to plan Kinnonov, Mulcham, Torrobol and the intended Village grounds at lower Lairg has finished the field work and is now making out a plan here agreeable to the divisions which I marked off, but as our schemes are new in that part of the Country I have agreed to let the people have another crop, and I hope by that time to see a good road from Golspie to the Inn at Lairg.

I have had this line planed and estimated by our resident Surveyor here who makes the whole cost including the various Bridges £2,790 19s. 10d. Having had occasion to write Mr Telford at any rate, I took an opportunity to notice the great utility of this Road and expressed my hopes that on his representation the Commissioners would be induced to pay half the expence of it. If for the other half, two thirds of the parish Funds of Golspie, Rogart Lairg, and part of Dornoch could be assigned to this road for seven years as the Act<sup>1</sup> allows, and in the meantime advanced by Your

<sup>1</sup> 45 George III, cap. 26: an Act to assess proprietors in the county of Sutherland to make and support roads built by the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges; to make a turnpike road from Portinleik (Invershin) to the Ord of Caithness; and to convert the Statute Labour of the county.

Ladyship, perhaps there woud not be £500 more money sunk, while the Country woud be improved beyond any ordinary calculation. Or probably the County woud agree to assess themselves for a few hundreds; although with the Tongue road and Iron Bridge the Funds to be raised in this way will be long locked up and after all one half paid by your Ladyship. I think Mr Telford will soon call at Cleveland House, if he does not a message to the Salopian Coffee house desiring to see him might do no harm.

A wiser or more patriotic measure cannot be brought forward than relief from the salt Laws as they affect the Highlanders, I sincerely hope that Lord Gower will be able to bring down the repeal in his pocket. I may be mistaken, but at present have no fear of emigration from any part of your Ladyships domains, some discontented restless fools may and woud go off do what we will, but the people in general have sense enough to see what is for their interest, and with every reluctance to labour will at last follow our plans.

John Barclay is quite ready to accept of an annuity but untill croft mattock is sett and your Ladyships pleasure known I have defered hinting at the sum.

Kenneth Mackay seems to have taken guilt as to his bargains with Mr Falconer which I believe neither your Ladyship nor so far as I know any one connected with the Estate charged him with, but by all means if you please hold his offer to submit the whole conditions of his *Lease and lands* to me as if *no writing had existed*. I have already been over the whole, hill and dale, although perhaps he is not aware of it, and will point out to Lord Gower my objections to the arrangements made. The Captain seems to be in terror about his publick offices to which he has been voted in for another year and it may be well to keep him in suspence untill we get the Farm affairs settled. The whole of these publick offices seem to scramble for money; if there was only one or two in place of three or four a lesser sum woud pay handsomely and the bussiness woud be better done, but it is not pleasant to remove people if they woud do their duty tolerably, and be content.

Mr Gregorys petition<sup>1</sup> for aid to keep the Highland road clear of snow was laid before the meeting but the Gentlemen say what is

<sup>1</sup> This petition has not survived.

very true that the County assessments being now considerable they did not feel warranted to vote away money for such a purpose especially as the proposal was unaccompanied with any estimate of the probable outlay.

Mr Telfords plan of the Little Ferry Piers although odds of £1,300 was approved of. At same time I got powers to cause Mr Hughes give us an estimate of what a Mound from Craigtown to Torbol, or from the Storehouse<sup>1</sup> to Skelbo woud cost. If the difference of expence is not very considerable I think the County woud go into it and then I shall not despair to see all the grounds (except a Channel for the Fleet) from Craigtown to Morvich under the plough, but this we must *take no notice of at present*.

I saw the Lairg Ambassador and know his place although I was not over the ground, he is comfortably set down and with a reasonable allowance for a house to be paid at the expiry of his Lease requires nothing more in my opinion.

Without delivering Your Ladyships letter I told Mr Falconer its contents. He is to leave Rhives and now talks of Midgarty for which he says an offer has been sent to your Ladyship. I told him that in all probability a 30 years Lease woud not be consented to as the deed of Entail did not warrant such and that I Supposed he woud hear from Cleveland house before the day of set as without instructions I could only deal with the highest offerer if an unexceptionable person.

With respect to myself I beg Your Ladyship will not for a moment think what is to become of me. I shall in the meantime take Rhives without a Lease as any thing larger will not correspond with the bussiness of the Estate if my duty is properly attended to and which no personal consideration shall induce me to neglect. In place of wishing for more land I am resolved to close every Farming concern at Inverugie as the Ground is got improved, and I will endeavour to get rid of my Lime work at the close of this Season. I have again offered Culmailly to Mr Sellar who untill now has been anxious for Farming concerns and has plenty of time to attend to them; if from any plans which I am a stranger to he declines it, and still insists on Morvich, I will with your Ladyships approbation offer it to sett for 19 years, and if the surplus rent

<sup>1</sup> At Little Ferry (the house now called 'The Girnels').

indemnify my advances I will at once renounce the additional 11 years to the Family, for although as your Ladyship remarks there is little risk of challenge from your successors admitting what I sincerely hope will not happen that the Estate is then in other hands, still it may not be pleasant to have any incorrect deed hanging over.

George McLeods<sup>1</sup> widow died in winter. The children will soon be destitute if their friends attempt to continue them in Morness. Perhaps I may find out some small place for them, and that poor wretch Martin their Uncle who with all his inattention about Benevragie is with his wife and six children objects of charity. Probably your Ladyship would allow me to do something for him; at present he remains in his old possession. The story here is that he was constantly in Mr Falconers employ and in place of looking after the wood was making Hay at Rhives when the fire happened.

William Taylor at Dornoch has been here soliciting to be made Clerk of Lieutenancy. I told him that I never interfered in these matters but would write to Lord Stafford; Your Ladyship will know that Christie who now leaves the Country is the present Clerk. I have this day written to Alexander Stronach at Inverugie to send Lord Stafford a Bank Bill for the amount of Craigtown wadsett which will I hope reach London by the 15th when my Bill becomes due.

I am very much obliged by Your Ladyship and Lord Gowers attention to Messrs. Gilchrist and Cathcart. They are good sort of people and we will I hope now that there is every chance of a Coal trade be able to distribute some of their Bank paper to advantage in this quarter. Pritchard has been quite unlucky with the boring implements brought down from Inverness which have again broke and I will not for a day or two be able to give your Ladyship satisfactory information as to the depth of Strata; he says that Hughes and Nimmo of the Acadamey were much pleased with the specimen which he carried to Inverness.

While writing this Mr Falconer has come in. I have given him Your Ladyships letter about Rhives and he has shewn me his offer for Midgarty anent which he expects to hear from you about

<sup>1</sup> George McLeod, ground-officer of Golspie, was killed by a fall from his horse in November 1810 (William Young to Marchioness of Stafford, 22 November 1810).



Saturday next. Dudgeon<sup>1</sup> has offered to give up Morvich for £500 and written Mr Falconer to that effect a letter which I advised him to forward to Your Ladyship. But he ought not to be indulged in such an unreasonable demand, neither is the place an object on any terms unless Mrs McLeod and her daughters were to leave it entirely; such people should be in the Village of Pittentrail. I have advised Colonel Clunes to send her sister at Kintraid there as her Farm is now to be sett. Kenneth MacKays letter to your Ladyship and one which he has written to me with Copy of my answer are sent in a frank apart.

Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 25 June 1811

I am Just returned from Strathnaver etc. where I have been endeavouring to find some money to answer Mr Young's demands but with very little success, as the tennants have not yet Sold their Cattle and it is to no purpose to distress them. Excepting Mr McDonald Tanera, who I am told, pays in Edinburgh and who is now in Ireland, Mr Mathieson of Shiness who compensates a very heavy arrear by a Claim for damages, and Colonel Munro Pointzfield who has indulgence from your Ladyship amount £1,097, I hope to get every tennant Settled with by the first September; concerning these three I shall correspond with Mr McKenzie.

In the Course of my Journey out and home, which I varied as much as possible I made some few remarks on the Country; what relates to Mr Youngs department I communicated to him; on what Concerns the woods and the Fishings etc. I am going to beg your Ladyship's instructions.

1. I find in every place the woods going rapidly to ruin. Excepting at Towgarrom wood<sup>2</sup> in Farr, and Kildonan wood near the Kirk, there are no keepers. Mr Berry has not for many years Seen these places, or any others at a distance; and as no person has taken any Charge, every tennant Cutt and peeled what his wants required,

<sup>1</sup> Archibald Dudgeon from East Lothian, farmer at Arbol, Tarbat par., Ross-shire, acted for Mrs McLeod in the negotiations and subsequent lawsuit over the termination of her tack (see above, i, p. 90); the tack was granted in 1809 for 19 years.

<sup>2</sup> Torgarbh wood lay on the shores of Loch a' Bhealaich, and Loch Coire.

without Controul. I beg your Ladyship's permission to settle a Careful keeper at Craggy wood in Kildonan, a place of some miles extent and abounding with Black Game, one in Strathbrora near Sciberscross, and a third at Scale in Strathnaver where, and at Skelpick and Ravigill in the Close vicinity of Scale, there is a considerable quantity of thriving Birch were it tolerably preserved. I would suggest a dyke round Kildonan wood to keep out Mr Houston's Sheep which destroy it in winter, and that Mr Sages Goats, which ruin the East End be banished. Mr Young will write your Ladyship concerning the dyke I propose when he has seen the place, the other I shall cause Mr Sage correct, if your Ladyship dont disapprove of my meddling with him. I also beg leave to Charge the tennants a trifle for what timber they require, to defray the expence of the Keepers and lead the people to use the wood with discretion.

2. There is a General Talk on every River on your Ladyship's property over which I have been, of the rapid decrease or rather extirpation of the Salmon, which is in great measure occasioned, I understand, by Landles and Redpaths Cruive hecks<sup>1</sup> being more narrow than the Law directs, and by their Continuing them in the rivers after forbidden time, thereby preventing the fish from ascending to Spawn, and diminishing the Brood of each river. Landles and Redpath are particularly situated, they have a bad bargain and it is unpleasant to deal harshly by them. At Same time it merits consideration how far they should be allowed to mislabour a farm, which they may in a few years throw on the proprietor's hand in a very bad State. I wait your Ladyship's instructions on this subject.

I use the freedom to trouble your Ladyship with a copy of my Journal; from which it occurs to me that any excerpt relative to the situation of any particular place may be set down by Mr Henney<sup>2</sup> in the State I sent Lord Gower concerning the interest of Landlord and tennant, and that these may be of some little use when reference to it is necessary.

<sup>1</sup> By an Act of 1489 the necks, or moveable slats closing the entrances to salmon cruives, were to be five inches (later held to be a mistranscription for three inches) apart; the hecks had to be raised to the height of one ell between six o'clock on Saturday evening and sunrise on Monday ('the Saturday slap'); salmon fishing was prohibited between 15 August and 30 November.

<sup>2</sup> Clerk at Trentham.

I find considerable defect in the Ground officers, who are poorly paid and who are more fearfull, I find, of disobliging their neighbours than of neglecting their duty. I do not propose to increase their Salaries, for money may make against, as well as for us; but that in each parish there should be a pretty comfortable residence for the officer, in which he may know, that while he discharges his duty with diligence and fidelity, he will sit as Ground officer independent of any neighbour. I mean, that these servants should be independent of every person except your Ladyship, in whom alone the power of Removing should be vested, on proof of their malversation or neglect. If your Ladyship approve of this I shall send you a draft of such a writing as might be given to each.

I have now brought the Suit with Mrs McLeod to a Close, and Can put your Ladyship into possession of the farm within six days after I have the honour of any Commands on the Subject. Mr Young has given me your Ladyship's letter of the 10th. I am satisfied with what you direct, and with the lease on Culmaily which is liberal and more than a tennant of my humble merit could ask. The price of the planting I will apply to the Credit of my factory accounts. I am infinitely obliged by your Ladyships proposing to 'assist in removing my objections to any particular article so as to make Culmaily suitable to me.' These articles are two: 1st a deficiency of Stock to purchase nearly 200 Cattle at from £6 to £8 each, carry thro' the husbandry and pay the rents as they fall due; and 2d a Sense of the impropriety of my bargaining and huckstering with the tenants, annually, in the purchase of this Stock, and a foresight, that in such a multiplicity of transactions my conduct and intentions would be misconstrued, and might appear ambiguous. I adventured on the undertaking without the least prospect that I should have the honour of being your Ladyship's servant, and on the faith of Mr Youngs Skill and Capital being Joined to my own. On calculating every thing, I think the first objection would be obviated, were it convenient for your Ladyship and Lord Stafford to allow the three first years rents *and interest* to be proportioned upon the remaining 27. The ameliorations and Stocking on the farm and the Bond Granted by my sureties would prevent the possibility of loss, but I am not the less sensible of the presumption which it is in me to propose this to your Ladyship. I unfortunately cannot

otherwise, comply with your Ladyship's commands *except* by becoming dependent on other people, a thing which I have always avoided and which is ruinous to a man of my profession. To obviate the Second I shall raise my own Cattle, and for that End perhaps your Ladyship would have no objections to there being added to my lease, some Grass Farm of from £30 to £60 rent in the interior, at such fair rent as might be agreed on, or determined by an indifferent party as your Ladyship Chose.

A professional friend in Edinburgh to whom I had introduced Mr Young some years ago, writes me since my return from the North, that he had prepared a Commission to Mr Young<sup>1</sup>, that went in a great measure to supercede my factory. Mr Young is at present in Lairg, to which he set out before I received this hint; but I pay no attention to it, being satisfied by the Great kindness which I have experienced from the family that I shall be put under no controul to marr the business entrusted to me; and that I have nothing to fear while I discharge my duty with effect.

My Clerk has not got the Journal finished for the post of this day, but it will be sent to-morrow.

Marchioness of Stafford to Earl Gower (later  
2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Trentham, 20 July 1811

The King no better, but they talk of less danger of life. This Letter will I think find you returning from Assynt. I received a large Packet of Letters this morning from Young and Sellar which I was answering when I received your's of the 13th. I try to write so as to dispose Sellar to return to his former habits of communication with Mr Young, as the correspondence convinced me more and more that they will quarrel, just as you say. Sellar has no sense and perhaps we may be as well without him; it is quite ridiculous that from a jealousy which I see he entertains of Young's nephew that he should go on in this manner. But the real state of the case is this, that Young is the important person, the other is nothing without him and would never have been there but for him, and

<sup>1</sup> On 23 June 1811 Young sent the Marchioness a copy of an unidentified draft commission, drawn up by 'an eminent lawyer in Edinburgh', James Robertson.

that if he is not to act in concert with him, but to be going on in a correspondence with me contrary to Young's ideas and without his acquiescence, there will be no end of it. Therefore if this goes on Sellar had better retire with his Farm of Culmaily, and he may perhaps take the branch of the Bank<sup>1</sup> proposed, and his place Young may get a good Clerk for £100 per Annum, instead of £225 and we be all of us as well off. I take Sellar to be tolerably keen about his own interest.

I think Sellar seems to be a clever writer and accountant, and very zealous, but I should think perhaps at times too much so without direction. Perhaps if you were to get Macpherson Grant as his friend to tell him at once that we consider him in fact as only subordinate to Young and not an independent Factor, that might be of use in making him keep within bounds.

As Sellar wrote to me about Marches he can tell you what I answered, but I write to him understanding that he communicates the business part to Young. He cannot show my Letter as part is an answer to his about Young's nephew etc. and recommending to him to cooperate with Mr Young. You will do about all this and everything else as you see best.

It is very good Gilchrist going to Law with Dempster<sup>2</sup>—just what the Child<sup>3</sup> said, 'That Gilchrist will put himself forward and take the expence and trouble of the Lawsuit etc.' He has exactly done it like an angel. Lord Stafford's eyes are getting quite well. I inclose the Premiums<sup>4</sup> for Mr Young to you.

If I write anything to these People you dont approve you have *full powers* to correct it and say so.

I have written to Sellar as follows.

'I shall be glad to see a continuation of your Journals etc, and have no doubt you will put every thing in your department in excellent order. I perfectly understand your wish to have your own department defined; at the same time as we have the fullest confidence in Mr Young's abilities and judgement in the general management of our affairs, I must beg you to communicate what is

<sup>1</sup> Attempts were being made to persuade the British Linen Company to open a branch in Golspie.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning marches between Ospisdale and Skibo (see also below, p. 156).

<sup>3</sup> From other references, apparently the Marquis himself.

<sup>4</sup> Crop premiums offered by the Board of Agriculture.

going on under your management to him, as unless he cooperates and is acquainted with all these things there will be constant mistakes from our want of knowledge of the subjects alluded to, as well as from the time necessary for correspondence in our absence from the Country. I therefore trust to your making him acquainted with all these subjects. He is so very conversant in them, and is such a first rate authority in such matters that we rely on his superintendence. And whatever little circumstances may have arisen in his own Family which may have made a partnership in the Farms unpleasant to you, I am sure from his candour of disposition and friendship for you, there will be no reason for any reserve between you.' I send this incase it should be proper for you to tell Young that I have written it.

Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Culmaily, 29 July 1811

I beg your Ladyship pardon for the trouble I am Going to Give you of reading this letter in Reply to your Ladyship's of the 20th; which, having been missent to Clyne for Culmaily, is now brought to me.

It is, humbly, to entreat and beseech your Ladyship to authorise Mr Young, Mr McKenzie and as many more as may seem proper, scrupulously to inquire into every part of my duty as I get on; to limitt my duty to whatever particulars your Ladyship pleases; but not, by constituting me the servant of Mr Young in place of that of your Ladyship, and by placing us in a predicament, which, by giving me the odium of whatever may (and at times must) be unpleasant in my department, while I cannot use my own discretion in such matters, will marr your Ladyship's business, and bring me, certainly, to disgrace.

When Lord Stafford proposed to Mr Young to take the General management of your Ladyship's Estates, and Mr Young wished me to Join him in this undertaking, I explained to Mr Young that I could not come to the Country as his Clerk, but under a precise line of duty for which I should be responsible.

Accordingly in his Answer to My Lord he chalked out a distinct department which he proposed to 'devote' to me. I beg to refer to the minute which Mr Young sent your Ladyship from Inverugie

on the 11 August 1810 for a specification of the duty. 'He recommended to the family the said Patrick Sellar to collect the rents, keep accounts of the Expenditure, pay attention to the various rights of the tennants, to the fullfillment of the conditions in their Tacks, to the Enforcing the Laws for preserving the plantations and the Game, transactions with ministers and Schoolmasters and framing tacks and other writings.' 'Therefore the said William Young and Patrick Sellar Bind and oblige themselves conjunctly and severally to conduct and manage the said Estate upon the plan above mentioned; it being expressly understood, however, that the *Special duty* of the said William Young is the conducting of the said improvements, in the discharge of which he may call in "so and so," and also he is to Conduct and manage the public business of the County; and that the *Special duty* of the said Patrick Sellar is the Factorial business before detailed etc.'

Of same date Mr Young and I entered into a private Minute thus; 'The parties, having of this date transmitted to the Marquis of Stafford an agreement between them and the noble Family, wherein their respective duties are detailed, do further, in order to prevent the possibility of any difference or misunderstanding agree upon the following terms. First, Each party's first attention shall be to his own department, his Second to assist *his partner in his*, when his advice is asked or his assistance required, but not otherwise. Second, a moderate Sized house and writing office is to be built at Culmaily. The house and a Garden to be Mr Youngs and maintained by Mr Young, the writing office Mr Sellars, and Mr Sellar to live with Mr Young, and his Clerk with the Grieve at Culmaily free of expence etc.'

Your Ladyship sees clearly the misunderstanding on which I have acted, and in fullfillment of my part of which, I have denied myself every pleasure, excepting only, that of Carrying thro' my business; in which my most anxious prayers and wishes have been, to act with effect, and to merit your Ladyship's good opinion, and Ensure Mr Young's co-operation. My anxiety to Give full details to your Ladyship, has I fear been even troublesome to you, and I have given, in conversations with Mr Young full explanations as I went on. We are on Good terms, and I fail not to profit by his advice, but I know the danger of giving another the direction, while I take the odium and responsibility; and your Ladyship sees

we Guarded against it in our bargain. Your Ladyship knows the predicament into which I was brought by want of a distinct understanding concerning the planting Clause proposed to be inserted in our leases. Major Gilchrist incited Mr Young to such a degree that I had his instructions to interrupt the Skibo tenants *brevi manu* and to Cutt their turff. What a Scrape Should I have been in had I adhered to this? Further, in the matter concerning Golspie Kirk (which is also in my department) Mr Young had, without my knowledge, intimated a day for dividing the Seats, a day on which the people must have been of necessity absent at the permanent duty<sup>1</sup>. He wrote me a note, which I inclose desiring my attendance. But, in the meantime the ferment occasioned by such a precipitate innovation in the religious arrangements was such, that Mr Young did not attend, and I had, with the assistance of the Sheriff and the parson, to assure the people that nothing would be done but under your Ladyship's Sanction and upon each party being heard for his interest before the Sheriff. By a Similar commixtion of duties so far as concerns Mr Berry, that is, by orders concerning Timber required by George Alexander etc. being *verbal* from Mr Young, or at Alexander's discretion, and not passing with method thro' the factor's hands and Stated in account by him, I cannot Give such distinct account of your Ladyship's timber, as I conceive it behoves a Factor to do. I don't know what may or may not have been Embezzled; altho I have now put matters in such a train of management (*vide* my letter to Berry) as must Ensure accuracy in future. I state these things to your Ladyship in order to prove merely to your Ladyship that the arrangement, upon the faith of which I have acted is, with every submission, most Expedient for the Correctly carrying thro' of the affairs of the Estate, That I have acted on the faith of it, And, that, unless I have acted improperly, there may be hardship in cutting me, in my very outset, out of the prospect of acting with Effect. With the benefit of your Ladyship's commands, and of Mr Young's advice, to which I am always ready to listen, I know I can put *my own department into proper train*. If I am subjected to receiving your orders at *Second hand*, or to precipitate and fluctuating directions, my business will be marred, my intentions defeated, and my actions misconstrued

<sup>1</sup> Militia service.



by those with whom I have to transact. I therefore beseech your Ladyship to Save me from this disgrace; and beg to declare to you that in whatever concerns the discharge of my duty I have nothing to Conceal much less to deny to Mr Youngs inspection; that he has a perfect opportunity of making himself acquainted with all my motions; that where I am diffculted I call in his assistance agreeably to our minute, and that I have no interference with his people or his duty, but where I am desired, or it appears to me, agreeable to him.

The draft lease sent your Ladyship has been appoven of by Mr Young and the tennants, and in case your Ladyship has no corrections to it, I presume I may Extend the deeds by this form.

I want your Ladyship's commands concerning the transaction relative to Golspie Kirk; and a Communication from Mr McKenzie respecting the marches.

The weather continues Steadily dry, wind at South West and I trust Earl Gower finds every thing Comfortable.

Marchioness of Stafford to Earl Gower (later  
2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Trentham, 17 August 1811

I have three Letters of your's to answer which I received at Lilleshall from whence we returned last night. I say all I have to say to you which will save Mr Young the trouble of a Letter from me, as you will tell him what you see proper.

We have had infinite satisfaction in your reports, of the opinion which Young entertains of Assynt, and also in having such great accounts of the settlements on the moors and the progress making every where. The water being turned in the Farm at Dunrobin appears to be a great improvement, and I am glad to hear of Balblair and of the Whins and Broom succeeding and being so promising.

I have in return to tell you a piece of very good news relating to the Coal. Bradshaw<sup>1</sup> took some of it to have it thoroughly examined by the Coal overseers at Worsley. He and they thought from the appearance of the Specimen on merely looking at it that

<sup>1</sup> The formidable Robert Haldane Bradshaw, superintendent of the Bridgewater Trust; for whom see F. G. Mather, *After the Canal Duke* (Oxford, 1970).

it was not promising. However on a trial after a scientific method their Opinion changed. They found it to be Coal of a good quality, though of the soddering kind, and therefore said they should by all means advise sinking a Shaft for such Coal. This has given Lord Stafford great satisfaction and he foresees a probability, if the Pitts also afford Iron Stone, of establishing an Iron work, and it makes him the more anxious that Mr Young should come as early as possible in October to see the Lilleshall Iron and Coal works, which are to the extent of 20 or 30,000 £ per annum; and after seeing the processes there, Bradshaw wishes to see Mr Young and you at Liverpool etc., where he will let you into some of his secrets and make you fully acquainted with these very extensive affairs—Coal to the amount of perhaps £25,000 per annum etc. I foresee when Manufactures are established at Pittentrail, that a navigation may be carried there by the water of Strathflete and so on perhaps to Lairg and by Loch Shin to the interior of the Country. It will be well to keep the idea suggested by Pointzfield, in view of purchasing the Barony of Gruids, if he will listen to any tolerable price.

As to the Fisheries I shall say nothing till we see what Mr Young thinks from his correspondence with Forbes.<sup>1</sup> Lord Stafford desires you to suggest to him that if the Coal work is established at Brora, it may save a great deal of trouble and expence to let the coal water at once run off by the River even though the Brora Salmon fishing should be spoilt by it, but that in this case it might be well beforehand to know and settle what deduction should be made from the Fishing rent, did such a circumstance take place; and therefore he thinks this ought to be in view in a new Tack, that the whole concern may not be again thrown open by it. If the fishing of Brora could be separately valued, and in that event by deducting it the affair would go on, and perhaps some of the Fish driven from thence would resort to the other rivers and make them more plentiful. This is all that occurs to him on this affair.

Before I received your Letters, we had signed and sent Sellar's Lease<sup>2</sup> as made out by Mackenzie. I daresay it will all do very well, the planting then cannot be an object of very great consequence. . . . [family news and gossip].

<sup>1</sup> Messrs Forbes of Aberdeen, former tenants of the Sutherland salmon fishings.

<sup>2</sup> Of Culmally.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 22 December 1811

I had the honor to write your Ladyship hurriedly from Golspy Inn on Thursday and have now the pleasure to inclose an account of our treatys<sup>1</sup> with the Assynt Gentlemen and others. I am satisfied that while the utmost in my power has been done for Lord Staffords interest the people have fair bargains and that with proper management they may live comfortably. I am really gratified in having secured Mr McDonald, and without any pecuniary sacrifice as he is a Man of such enterprize and will now combine the business of a Shepherd with that of a Fisher, and be exemplary in both ways; it is the more pleasing as I have reason to believe that he had pressing offers from Lord McDonald to Sky. I could make nothing (but cautionary for others which was pretty well) of Lord Gowers acquaintance the Laird of Leckmillem who is the most obstinate Mule I ever saw and would not on any conditions give us a stance for an Inn at Inchdamff; he was the only old tenant I did not treat with except Kirkaig and had he got his Lot I should have lost perhaps £100 yearly. This Man has in the meantime been put into Little Assynt and Altnachy for a year, which is perhaps equal to his capital, and as a Land Surveyor may yet be wanted at Lochinver your Ladyship will probably have the goodness to keep him in view.

I will easily accomodate every man in the Country, as in settling with Mr McDonald I took his promise to give up the Inver Lot which he says Colin McKenzie gave him a promise of along with his Roustore grounds, and your Ladyship will by looking at the Map see what a tract of Country is yet to dispose of. I will also settle every Man in Lairg; and the Rogart people who have been with me declare themselves satisfied with the arrangements made for them, while I have laid off a beautifull Farm in that district for which various offers of triple rent have been made.

You will see that I have got Major Gilchrist for a tenant to Rhine, it was amusing to see Achany and him competing for this Lot; by the bye Your Ladyship may be informed that Anderson at Invershin who last year *swindled* the Lairg and Rogart people out of money for their Cattle offered £281 for this place but I thought

<sup>1</sup> These have not survived.

it woud have been disgracefull to countenance such a Man, even backed by Lord Reays Factor who he said woud be his Cautioner, and having no such other offer as the Major gave I closed with him.

I expect Achany here tomorrow to Make me an offer of Uppat. I believe he is quite serious to sell, but having no other residence he speaks of asking a Lease on Skelbo which perhaps Lord Gower will not object to as a temporary interest at a fair rent shoud be no obstacle to the treaty, and we might probably get Carrol by a similar transaction as to Crakaig which the poor old Colonel is ten times tired of, and I imagine his Son William cares very little about it. Gilchrist was at me this morning about Uppat, I told him to write Achany that while a fair price woud be given it woud be in vain to expect more, and that Achany had better make up his mind to ask in moderation and not risk the Familys leaving it on his hand by talking of one pound more than its worth; the Major wrote him to this effect, the answer is that he is to see me in the morning. I will attend to your Ladyships orders about the Bath and shall see What Nash says as to the Sutherland Seals which Mr Smith writes about,<sup>1</sup> but he is off to the Mountains in search of Game which we wish to send regular supplys of to Cleveland House every fortnight and I have arranged with the Burghead Wharfinger that they are either to be sent by Sea or Land as circumstances warrant. Out door work is now completely at a stand I cannot get on at all and if the weather continues long bad we shall be sadly behind with planting and road making.

I shall be quite ashamed of our Bill at Golspy Inn on this occasion but the Assynt people say that they only come down once in 19 years, and as they treated Lord Gower extremely well I could not be shabby to them. 5 per Cent of Mr Scobies rent will pay the *Skaith*.

William MacKenzie to William Young

Edinburgh, 5 February 1812

I was duly favored with yours of 22d ult. I applied a considerable time ago to Lord Armadale for the information you suggested but this cannot be obtained untill Mr Robert Brown (who has the

<sup>1</sup> Young reported to the Marchioness on 5 January 1812 that Nash, gamekeeper at Dunrobin, had been unable to find seals in Sutherland carrying fur of the kind sent by William Smith.

plan of the Estate) reports on the values which probably may not be 'till the beginning of March or April; Mr Brown will wait on you and such conference may simplify very materially the business here, so at present we must lay on our Oars.

I quite agree with you that we should finish this matter with Mrs McLeod. I called on Mr Smith and found he had no discretionary powers therefore it was needless to talk to him of terms of compromise. He gave me Mr Dudgeon's letter to him with the Memoir, a Copy of which you have enclosed and have to request you will send me your observations and then not a day will be lost on our waiting on Dr Coventry<sup>1</sup> and having the claim finally adjusted, 'tho it appears to me the doctor will require to be accurately informed of the Nature of the soils and some other particulars to enable him to say what rotation should be taken.

Messrs Atkinson and Marshall have paid up their arrear of rent which will save you the writing to Lady Stafford in answer to a letter of hers on the supposition of their being unable to pay. Mr Atkinson is now equally desirous with us to settle the value of the reserved ground at Achenduich, in the course of conversation I told him he must not put an extravagant value on the ground (which from the very first he was told could not be included in the Sheep range) otherwise it might force us in self defence to submit to Lady Stafford the propriety of questioning some of the large Subsets which in the face of the Lease we understood had been granted of large tracts of Country quite useless to him for Sheep but which for Cattle and the people was very valuable. He said that at the treaty at the Commencement of his Lease he had at Mr Falconers desire and mine acting for Lady Stafford given subsets of small places to accomodate the people who otherwise would be removed. Of course I explained to him that these we did and could not complain of. He agreed however that Mr Marshall and he will give you an accurate account of all the subsets and rents received for them and will continue only those which you approve of.

When this arrangement is gone into it will be well that you should give him a letter approving of the specified subsets and let the others be done away with.

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Coventry (1764-1832), professor of agriculture at Edinburgh University, 1790-1831.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 19th February 1812

I had the honor to write your Ladyship on the 16th Instant with Copy of a letter from, and my reply to Sir John Sinclair.

I have now the pleasure to say that whether from the name or Local situation of Port Gower it promises to become a large place. At one meeting I have set no less than 24 Fewes (House and Garden ground) to the natives all of whom are to build neat Cottages; small Farmers, Fishers, Shoemakers, Taylors, and weavers, and I have laid out ground for Houses to 14 Fishermen who I have no fear of getting from Buchan when the buildings are ready for their reception, and I have written to Simpson the Midgarty tenant who is now in Banff to ride east to Peterhead to purchase Tyles for the Houses and to go through all the Fishing Villages to see about the Men as it will be of the utmost consequence to get two industrious Crews to settle in Port Gower. With proper example I think all the Villagers will at last take to the Sea and whoever lives twenty years will see all the eastern shores filled with an industrious Seafaring population, fortunately in four or five years Gartymore will come in for accomodating such people and perhaps it cannot be more advantageously applied; perhaps Lord Stafford woud not object to let me build an Inn and Stable on a small Scale at Port Gower and in such a way that it coud afterwards be enlarged, the situation is centrical for the public, to the Villagers and strangers coming to transact about their Fish it would be of the utmost consequence. On this subject have the goodness to let me hear from Your Ladyship.

If as I said in my last it is only to impress a *certain* sum that Lord Stafford proposes to treat for Strathy, I really think that Sir Johns Estate, if Berrydale and Langwell is added would be the more desirable purchase, as this His Lordship coud see any day and it gives a pretty range of Coast, but probably the one will not be a bar to the other, nor to Carrol.

George Alexander having found Golspy Tower an unsuitable concern for him has set it to Mr Duncan the Innkeeper who will make a better Farmer; as George cannot longer remain at the Castle and with Your Ladyships permission I am resolved, that

in future there shall be as little *day* work as possible, he wishes to settle in Golspy and to pay 6½ per Cent for a hundred pounds to be laid out in building accomodation for him. Shall I agree to this?

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 2 April 1812

I had the honor to write your Ladyship anent Carrol and the Fishing and to mention my Drafts for the price of Uppat. I have now received Mr Rickmans communication<sup>1</sup> anent the Mound and roads which really is a disappointment beyond what I can express; to see useful and advantageous improvements carried forward on this estate is my greatest pleasure, I had counted on these and am quite grieved at the thoughts of losing them, (the Mound in particular) and I fear if the Strathcarnock road does not go on, neither will the new line to Tongue, absolutely I do not think with the increased distance that we could expect it. Who in the name of wonder could have put this idea about Lands to be gained into the Commissioners view. I certainly agree with Lord Stafford that improvements such as the Mound may afford, are hazardous and seldom come to peoples expectations, but with the Mound something may be attempted at a future period, without it nothing ever can, at least of consequence, and Strathfleet the finest valley of its extent in the North must remain in ruins, indeed much of it will be lost as constant encroachments by the Sea may be counted on. With the greatest submission to Lord Stafford, and His Lordship will pardon me for giving my opinion, I cannot think that a grant from Government would be necessary; it is perfectly evident that this Bay has originally been land, I can show it under the Sand, I think Lord Gower saw it near the Torbol rock. Of course it must have been a meadow the property of your Ladyships ancestors, so are the Mussil skelps below, of course the ground they stand on. If the Mound is lost, we cannot I am afraid have a road from the east side of the ferry to Strathfleet, the line is too circuitous for the Bay runs part Culmailly Moor; if an attempt is made by the west,

<sup>1</sup> John Rickman, Secretary, wrote to Earl Gower on 25 March 1812, enclosing a minute of the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges of 19 March 1812 (see above, i, p. lxxv).

the Rock of Torbol is an insuperable bar. I have written a letter to Lord Gower which perhaps His Lordship will lay before the Commissioners, at any rate it may be the ground work for a more able paper on the subject. I would be very Glad to have an accurate account of Lord Castlereagh's plan of boring for Coals. We cannot have too much information, but there is no immediate hurry, we could do nothing with it until a second Strata comes to be tried for. Pritchard has been kept back by the Clyne men who refuse to work on Sunday, after getting them to agree they are again off, and we must send some where else for people with consciences less tender. I should be very glad to see Sir John's Sutherland report<sup>1</sup> but perhaps it is not yet printed. I read a Book on sheep the other day written by 'Hogg the Ettrick Shepherd'<sup>2</sup> which concludes with an address to the Highland Society on the best means of providing for the lower class of Highlanders; it holds forth a most rational plan, but perhaps I am the more partial as it is much the same although not quite so liberal as Lord Stafford and your Ladyships for the people of Sutherland.

We have had very bad weather, no corn has yet been sown and I dread a backward Season. Grain gets extremely high in England and the South of Scotland. Here there is plenty at present but bearing that prices may get out of all bounds in summer I have in addition to 600 bolls of Meal bought when at Trentham sent my Nephew to secure 800 Bolls more in Caithness and I have got 170 Bolls besides the Farms at the Ferry.

If the Mound can possibly be got on with I pledge myself not to trouble Lord Stafford with any speculation about the Sands. . . . [possible political intervention in Elgin].

William Young to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Rhives, 11 April 1812

Referring to my letter of 5th I have now had the honor to receive Your Lordships letter of 3d.

<sup>1</sup> John Henderson, *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sutherland* (1812): one of the county surveys prepared for the Board of Agriculture.

<sup>2</sup> James Hogg, *The Shepherd's Guide* (Edinburgh, 1807).



Mr Telford has not written in relation to the road Surveys and as I must set out for Assynt early tomorrow morning I carry George Reach that he may have my Ideas on the Subject, and I have written Mr Telfords principle Man at Inverness where I will be found, in case he should receive any instructions. As to the Mound I have little to say in addition to my former remarks. To give up the land or admit that it belongs to the public is out of the question, but that any extra expence which may be essential towards the recovery of it without being necessary and connected with public convenience should be defrayed by Lord Stafford I should think but fair. There must be some mistake in supposing that the Strathcarnoch road is to cost anything like £10,000. The original estimate may have reached from Golspy round by Kinnauld and a Bridge across the Fleet but now the distance will be greatly shortened; and from Golspy to the Mound cannot exceed 500 at most £600 and Surely from there to Bonar Bridge cannot come within thousands of what the Commissioners state.

I have given the Pincaster<sup>1</sup> seed with Your Lordships instructions to Fleming who will attend to them.

The warnings to remove include Assynt at least I suppose so. I hope to finish that District before my return and to provide for all the people. I have also settled the Men of Rogart, but it is not a little extraordinary that altho' I offered them, as well as the Lairg people, allowance for Houses on a Lease of 19 years to be built on a regular plan they reject the proposal but promise to build neat cottages (*without* remuneration) of Stone pinned and harled with Lime if they are permitted to do so in any situation which they please and I must give way to thier unaccountable prejudices. Although the Strathnaver, Kildonan and Clyne people have got notice to quit it would not in my opinion be prudent to make any *material* change in these districts at the first term but to have the whole or as much as possible properly arranged and maturely deliberated on during the summer as we did with regard to Assynt and to have a set in Autumn, and probably your Lordship would make an excursion with me through some of these grounds. As to the addition which Mr Sellar wants I see Your Lordship has already given your own answer and I am glad it is out of my hands.

<sup>1</sup> A species of pine.

My plan with Duncan Sutherlands grazing and many others would be to lay off such grounds in a manner so complete as to make them an object for competition to people who may wish moderate siezed Farms. In every case but where I am instructed to the contrary my wish is to bring all Lands into public view, unless where dispossessed tenants are to be accomodated with new or Village ground, and I do not think that the Captains liberality as to Rhemusack entitles him to any extraordinary degree of favor for he will not part with an inch of it. To bring this Estate to its highest pitch of improvement there ought in my opinion to be three classes of occupants: Sheep and Corn Farmers paying 200 to £600 of rent, others to pay as low as £30 such as those in Kin-nonovie, and a third set (the present little tenants) to have a Horse and Cows grass with new ground to improve and to trust to labour and Fishing for thier support. This last description of people shoud have the most liberal terms and every reasonable indulgence, they are a usefull race or will be so. The ground in general they occupy is worth nothing, they will make it of some value and they will I expect acquire habits of industry. Joseph Gordon seems to have made himself so sure of Lord Staffords acquiescing in his proposals for the sale of Carrol that he has written to Mr Sherrieff from whom I have just received a letter on the subject, to which I have send that I have got no orders to agree.

William MacKenzie writes me that he never heard the smallest surmise against the stability of Landles and Redpath and that he is sure their Cautioner Mr Morton is an undoubted good Man. Lord Reays Factor writes me for permission to let his Lordships servant at Lairg cut a parcel of Brush wood to pin on thatch for the Cottage, pray may I give it.

Suffolk and his female friends are all well, he is a very pretty usefull Horse but people are guided by very many prejudices as to Stallions that it is impossible to get them all of one mind be the qualifications never so great. It is curious that almost the whole of the Mares which he served last season *except his own relations* are in Foal.

I continue miserably anxious about the Mound and Roads. Government can have no claim on the recovered Ground, in England the Clergy might.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 22nd April 1812

I returned from Assynt at two o'clock this morning after having had the satisfaction to settle with I believe every person rich and poor in the Country but it was indeed an arduous task, and if any complaints are sent against me may I beg permission to answer them. In general I think the lower class of people are well satisfied, what of them I placed at the Shores are particularly so, but I now, as I ever did, dread the success of those in the hights where the climate is not so favorable to the production of Grain and as they have not the same resources; I expect however that many of those who would not listen to a seaside settlement will at last take to Lochinver Village the success of which as well as that of the people rests in a great measure on roads being made to the Country. I have set 12 Fews to different people one of them to a young man from Coigach who has got a mercantile education in Glasgow. I have promised them an Inn and a post office if possible.

I have settled a number of usefull Fishermen and Kelp makers at Culkein on Leases of 9 years because then the whole of Roustore will be open, and so I expect will the old Parsons Liferent holdings, as well as Mrs McKay of Ouldnys, and if a communication by roads is opened up betwixt these North side settlements and Lochinver the comfort of the people and the value of the property would be greatly promoted. If in the meantime Mrs MacKay should write your Ladyship for a renewal of Ouldny to her Daughter Mrs Clark, refer her if you please to me; she is now tenant of Culkein and although we might have removed her at this term I thought your Ladyship would not object to indulge her for one year which is all I can advise at present. Ledbeg was very glad to get back his Lot at the [ ]<sup>1</sup> rent and although there was a dozen of Candidates I let him have it. Now the Country is all arranged under Leases of 19 and 9 years with the exception of these two Liferents, Joplings for eight years, Lochinver House and Garden grounds for 99, and Inver which joins the Village and is given to Mr McDonald as tenant at will. He has accomodated 25 settlers on his Sheep Lot and on this account pleads hard for a certainty of Inver untill it is

<sup>1</sup> Text illegible.

wanted for settlers, but I gave him no promise and your Ladyship may perhaps see it proper to write me that it is unnecessary to come under any engagement at present, as you are so soon to be in the Country. I am now satisfied that Assynt will exceed my valuation of £5,000 it will perhaps be nearer Six.

Carrol had come to the Country in my absence, I meet him on the grounds tomorrow and the result shall be submitted to Lord Stafford. I shou'd now wish to take ten days or a fortnight in Kildonan and Strathnaver with a view to the arrangement of these districts and a set in Autumn, as in this way I can have an opportunity to submit my plans to Lord Stafford and it will lessen any unpleasant applications from the people while you are in the Country, but as Roy has engaged to plan for the Duke of Gordon this summer and as we have no measurement of Kildonan so far as I know might I put off the set of it for another year and confine our bussiness to Strathnaver for the present or will I employ another Land Surveyor if one can be got to my mind?

I have received Mr Browns report of Armadale from William MacKenzie which makes the property of nearly double the value of what Gabriel Reed states it at and although William McKenzie holds Mr Brown infallible, perhaps both him and Mr Reed may have erred.

I shall when in Strathnaver endeavour to make a minute Survey of the whole for Lord Staffords consideration but I will not as Mr McKenzie desires send him my opinion unless Your Ladyship orders me. I will give the Master of the Packet pointed orders for Lord Staffords accomodation on board, perhaps His Lordship woud feel more comfort and better air in a hammockslung low than in bed; having entirely dismantled Inverugie of furniture I am very sorry that I cannot ask the Family to any comfortable accomodation there, but Your Ladyship will please say if I shall meet Lord Stafford at Burghead or Elgin.

The Servants to come by Sea had better be sent by one of the Inverness Smacks with positive orders for the Captain to land them at Burghead. This is the surest way I can think of. I am afraid it will be impossible to get on with the new stables this season, perhaps at any rate it may be better to defer fixing on a plan untill Lord Stafford comes North although of all other places I think the

New Lodges the best. I shall be very glad to receive the communications which Lady Charlotte is taking the trouble to write out.

Patrick Sellar to the ministers on Sutherland Estate

Culmaily, 4 May 1812

On Comparing the Number of Bolls of meal which can be, in any likelihood, brought into the Country, with the number of mouths to be fed with it, betwixt and harvest, Mr Young and I find that there is the Most alarming appearance of Scarcity—A Scarcity which we could have easily prevented had the people with whom we conversed on the Subject in the latter end of last year and who were most likely to know the fact, allowed that there was any deficiency, but which can now only be mitigated, by the most carefull Oeconomy in every Family, the total suppression of illegal distillation, and each person planting as many potatoes as possible, in order to provide an early supply of food should a late and of consequence a precarious harvest happen. We therefore concerted that I should immediately write each Clergyman requesting of him to impress on the people the necessity there is for the measures above mentioned being strictly adhered to; and to assure them that the Justices of the peace will in the Most exemplary manner punish and Lady Stafford remove from her property any person convicted of illicit distillation after this date.

Patrick Sellar to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Culmaily, 5 May 1812

I have the honour to receive your Lordship's letter of date the 27th ult.

Your Lordship knows, that so far as relates to Cash matters, I am the organ merely, by which the Family's rents are brought in, and paid away by *the decision of others*. By the diminution of the arrear your Lordship will See I have been attentive to the first. By the payments of £5,580 to Mr Young, and £3,954 with Mr McKenzie, besides the Customary debursements to ministers etc. here, you

must be satisfied that I have withheld nothing of the last. Indeed I run from £700 to £800 into advance before I could think of troubling the Family. I am truly vexed that I erred in this respect and now that I know the wishes of Lord Stafford I shall take Care that they be attended to in future. Previous to each term I shall send his Lordship a Sketch of the sums to be collected; of the Customary payments made here; and shewing the free balance which remains to wait the Family or Mr Youngs drafts as soon as the Cash can be collected. Indeed the matter might be rendered more Simple Still did Lord and Lady Stafford think it proper to entrust me, as I expected, with the Collection of the whole rents (for which I have found Security). I should then be enabled (without any additional expence) for I bargained to Collect the whole in consideration of the Salary Charged. It would then be in my power to Report to the family before they leave the Country this Summer thus—

The familys Rental to be collected Martinmas 1812

Whitsunday 1813 is

£—

The Taxes, Road Assessments, ministers Stipends  
etc. payable here as follows etc.

£—

and there remains to wait the familys instructions  
in favour of Mr McKenzie or in favour of Mr  
Young

£—

I should then receive instructions how to dispose of this balance as it Came in; and the family should hear no more from me on the Subject of money untill next year when I would Report a Correct Simple debit and Credit Account and vouchers for the past and a Scheme similar to the above for the future.

By this or whatever other plan the Family wish me to proceed they will find me discharge my duty Correctly.

In two parts I shall Send your your Lordship a Sort of view of what is to occur in Cash transactions betwixt and Martinmas and Lord Stafford can then take such measures as appear prudent.

It was delicacy which made me State the price of the prints and I sent the voucher to Mr McKenzie. Not having heard of the prints being returned, I feared it might be presumption in me not to State the Bill. I Correct this Error, and Shall Say to Mrs Mitchell that I had omitted to Get the prints Sooner.

I think of Sending your Lordship a Copy of my Report to the County meeting Concerning the road funds. The former Collectors yet deficient are Summoned to the 25th Current when they will be brought to a point, and Collectors are then to be appointed on the other Estates in the County on the Same footing as I am on Lady Stafford's. This Cutts out the former poundage, which was an Excessive burden on the fund. I do not venture to trouble your Lordship with any more figures at this time.

Landles and Redpath's people at Brora tell me that their masters Erroneous illiberal way of fishing the rivers has been of the Greatest detriment to them. Mr Sidy at Brora says that he last year privately and in opposition to his masters wish opened the hecks occasionally in the night, and that he knows a difference in the appearance of the River already. After a Review of their whole conduct from first to last I am convinced they are weak men and that they must be Sharply looked to. If I see any remissness In future I shall commence an immediate prosecution, and I will turn off any of the officers who fail to Report to me.

By the way I set out on a Tour on Friday and shall See all their Cruives before I return. I am to accompany Mr Marshalls manager over all his farm in the Course of my Journey.

Mr Young tells me Mrs Jopling is now in London and we Suspect She may be Teazing the family concerning her husbands matters in Assynt, on which account I trouble your Lordship with our further correspondence<sup>1</sup> concerning his holdings in that Country.

If your Lordship does not read the farmers Journal perhaps you may think the accompanying Excerpt from the last paper on the merino Subject not uninteresting. The more I think of the matter the more certain It appears, that the Speculation is a proper one on *this* Estate; and as I shall by August have been 16 months Closely here, I will then certainly request a few weeks leave of absence that I may see Merino Stock where they are bred on a proper Scale, and Converse with their Shepherds. Mr Tollet<sup>2</sup> is So obliging that I trouble him with a letter inclosed on the Subject.

We have really most alarming winterly weather here at present.

<sup>1</sup> For Jopling, see above, i, pp. 49, 127-8, and ii, pp. 47-8; also Henderson, *Sutherland*, 33, 197-203.

<sup>2</sup> A Staffordshire correspondent with Young and Sellar on agricultural matters.

Mr Marshall's manager who left me Just now tells me they Shall lose at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  of their Crop of Lambs. The highlands and even Benivraggie are Still Covered with Snow, and we dread a late and precarious harvest. It is the Custom of highlandmen that they will not admitt any thing like want untill hunger Stare them in the face. At the Sett in December and at the Collections Mr Young and I questioned the most Judicious people in each parish but they would not admitt that they had not plenty of food to Serve them till harvest. It is only within these last few weeks that they Confess the Contrary and of Consequence we have sent Circular letters to the Clergymen as inclosed<sup>1</sup> and I have this morning Lotted out 30 acres I intended for pease and Barley to give Such Cottagers as Chuse for potatoe Ground.

Marchioness of Stafford to Earl Gower (later  
2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Edinburgh, 8 October 1812

Here we arrived last night after a very wet Journey, leaving all things at Dunrobin most comfortably settled, the details of which I reserve till we meet. We got your Letter and one from Vernon<sup>2</sup> on arriving here and are happy to find you have been in time to prevent any mishap and that all is likely to go well in both places. We found the Macdonalds<sup>3</sup> here which answers very well as he need not go to Sutherland for Gilchrist and those who could be doubtful were all ascertained to be certain before we left it. I have a great deal to tell of different things and so little time to tell it that I will renounce the idea of writing comfortably till I get to Castle Howard. For here has Mr Adam<sup>4</sup> been here and we have settled what appears to be a very clear and satisfactory arrangement with Loch; he explained to us the system he proposes for accounts,

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> George Granville Vernon-Harcourt (1785-1861), M.P. for Lichfield, 1806-31; he was the eldest son of Edward Venables Vernon-Harcourt (1757-1841), Archbishop of York, 1807-41, and Anne, sister of the Marquis of Stafford.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Archibald Macdonald (1746-1826), Chief Baron of Exchequer, 1793-1813, and his wife Louisa, sister of the Marquis of Stafford; their son James was elected M.P. for Sutherland in 1812.

<sup>4</sup> William Adam (1751-1839), auditor to Duke of Bedford and Chief Commissioner of Jury Court; he was James Loch's uncle.



affairs etc. which brings everything under ones eye quite in a different way from what has hitherto been and prevents the possibility of being checked as the details go through so many checks and comparisons with each other, and Loch reports upon the whole with his *documents* as Adam does to the Duke of Bedford. I also like his sentiments upon not letting shabby Scotch Farmers interfere too much but putting the old Tenantry in a right footing. Loch is to be at Trentham the 22d when I hope you will be there to be *au courant* of his manoeuvres. We shall be there the 20 or 21st . . . [travel arrangements and Edinburgh news].

The Child is very well, and so thoroughly come into the way of settling the People that when Young gave him the project about Strathnaver he said, 'Well but have you reserved enough for the lots?' and agreed that in case not Dalharn should be kept in reserve for more.

Young, Gilchrist and company accompanied us to the other side the Ferry and we parted with mutual tears. I saw Lord Polkemmet's<sup>1</sup> looking glass the ornament of Dalwhinnie, which requires something to welcome it.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 30 December 1812

Our set is now over and Such of the tenants as are dispossessed will have allotments given off on the Helmsdale which resembles Strathfleet and seems equally well adapted for the purpose. The whole Country (even Major Gilchrist who wanted it) seem to applaud Lord Staffords plan of giving Muie to the people, and they promise to do whatever I point out both as to building and cropping.

Setting Scotary to a shepherded was with me totally out of the question and I have reserved Dunrobin Glen which with the Rogart park will I think serve the Mains Cattle. I have done nothing in Strathnaver nor the hights of Kildonan for with the chance of better times, the certainty of roads, and a prospect of Lord Reays ground east of the Torrisdale, with Armadale and Strathy, it woud in my opinion been imprudent to lock up these Lands at

<sup>1</sup> The eccentric William Baillie, Lord Polkemmet (*d.* 1816), was a frequent subject of comment in the Marchioness' letters.

present; on the whole we have done little as Your Ladyship will see by the inclosed Sketch, but I believe the rents obtained are fair and perhaps there will be no loss by the delay. Lord Stafford will please tell me what I shall do with Pollys Lot and the other mentioned in the Memorandum, they are tolerably well adapted for Settlers and Pollie can only find so and so Security for five years while the tenants are respectable in their station.

I have Just received Your Ladyships letter of 24th instant and am glad to find that Lord Stafford thinks to purchase Strathy. I still regret having happened to leave Cleveland House before Mr Browns offer came up; it was however quite impossible to foresee the circumstance and I did not like to *haver* about London after finishing my business, but I have got so uneasy about that affair and apprehensive that either too much may be given or the purchase lost by offering too little that I almost think to Start tomorrow morning for Edinburgh to see the transaction finished. I have besides heard of some disagreeable Leases lately granted by Lord Armidale. They require explanation and ten to one if Mr McKenzie will be told untill it is too late. In short the expence of this Journey is nothing compared to the chance of saving Lord Stafford a thousand or two perhaps much more; it can be soon accomplished and I shoud forever blame myself if by any neglect on my part a mistake shou'd happen. I shall besides when in Edinburgh probably learn if peace or war is to follow these reverses experienced by Bonoparte and act accordingly in the purchase of Grain, as I see the wants of the people will be very great and they have in general paid honestly and seem Grateful for last years supply. I am happy to find that Lord Francis is well and that Lady Elizabeth has escaped the infection.

Inverness, Friday 1 January 1813

I am now here with Messrs Hughes and Mitchell threatening them to get on with the Coals, they are both to be east on Monday and assure me that not an hour has been lost. Hughes says he now knows that the whole Country is full of Coals and expects that the concern will give great satisfaction. I go off to Edinburgh by the Coach which carries this.

The After Mentioned Farms on the Sutherland Estate were set on the 29th December 1812 as follows:

First Bracachy, Achnamoin and Garnsary to Thomas Gordon, Donald McPherson and Thomas Gordon presently on these bounds for Fifteen Years £105

Second Reask, to William Sutherland in Gailable and Alexander Murray in Aultendow for Six Years £63

Third Knockinachalich to Alexander McKay in Ironhill for Six Years £40

Fourth Muimore, to James McKay and John Ross at present on the Farm for Six Years £33

Achumore though advertised was not set, and the present Tenant produced a Letter of Lease granted by Mr Munro Achany for five Years longer continuance which was not before known of.

The Lot of Pollyour, Lubeag, part of Dalbreak and part of Cuper- naposaig, and also the Lot consisting of Fenofaul, Dalegan, Tomich and Ferronich were not set, as although proper offers were made it is left to Lord Stafford to determine who shall be the successful candidates.

Those for the Pollyour Lot being John McDonald (commonly called John Polly) who can only find security for five Years, Against the remaining four present Tenants who offer undoubted security during the whole period. For the Fenofaul Lot Gabriel Reid offers £90, Captain Robert Sutherland £75, Four of the present Tenants £80, The first two for a *Nineteen* the others a *Six* Years Lease.

The Muie Lot, in Strath Fleet, Parish of Rogart, is left to be arranged into small Arable Farms.

Achnaluachrach, Achtomliny, Teecraig, Coruterkin, the Blairich Grazing and sundrie other small Farms in Strath Brora are to be arranged and Set through the Spring as small Cattle Grazings with Entry at Whitsunday first.

Mid Baden Loch is given to three of the dispossessed Kildonan Tenants at whatever Rent Mr Young puts upon it after again traversing the Ground.

I have not concluded with Major Clunes for the Lot in Kildonan which he was to have in return for Toury and Glen Loth. We are not at one about the value but I will make another Survey with people of Skill.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 3 February 1813

I wrote your Ladyship and Lord Gower the other day and have now had the honor to receive your Ladyships letter of the 27th ult., enclosing a petition from the Kildonan people; in my letter to Lord Gower I mentioned that a deputation had come down in consequence of a message sent them, and led me to expect that the whole wou'd sign a Bond to keep the peace.

I explained to the Men that it was intended to Lot out the low grounds of Armadale for them as there the climate was good, the crops certain and the Sea at hand, one of them seemed to think that this wou'd answer especially if immediate possession was given; this depended on Mr Reid and I promised to speak to him on the subject. Believing that all woud now be settled, the Sherriff, Messrs Sellar, Taylor and Thomas Houston went yesterday to the School House of Kildonan to receive the Bond. They were met by perhaps 150 Men who told them that they woud give no Such Bond; on asking the reason one Man said to Mr Sellar that they had emnity at heart to the Mr Reids and considered it improper to sign any thing of the sort, that Armadale woud not suit them, and the many promises which had been made, and letters given in consequence of having furnished men for the 93d Regiment entitled them to their own land. Mr Sellar on seeing these letters found that the obligation which they contained had expired in the 1808 and told them so, their answer was it may be so but we will hold the land until the men are delivered to us again; in short the Gentlemen found all argument in vain, the people woud sign no Bond and they have come home after the Sherriff had granted warrant to arrest and bring down four of the ringleaders in the Mob. Officers have gone for them but whether a rescue will be attempted there is no saying; in point of Form it is usual in such Cases for the Sherriff to grant warrant as has been already done for arrest of the ringleaders, if this is completed punishment will follow. In case the officers of the Law are deforced the Sherriff reports the fact to the Lord Lieutenant and demands military aid, and it is for His Lordship to consider whither he will employ the Local Militia or report to the Commander in Chief, for Scotland. In the latter event men are ordered from the nearest Militia or Regiment of the line, and as yet it is

pretty certain that there is nothing to be apprehended from any other quarter except Kildonan, 300 men woud be quite sufficient. A riot happened at Braemar some years since; the people woud not ballot for the Militia, they abused the Deputy Lieutenants, 500 Military were quartered in the Country untill it was brought to order which was very speedily effected without bloodshed as the people had their eyes at once opened that lawless violence woud not be tolerated. I am satisfied that the whole population coud have been more comfortably settled than that of any other district on the Estate. The Men of any property woud have been set down on the Shores of Armadale, the aged and infirm on village ground near the Manse of Kildonan, but this woud have obliged them to work and they coud not have carried on that banefull trafic in whisky for which this district has been so long famous. And how the matter may from [*sic*] what has already happened I suspect it woud now be unwise to leave on the Estate several of the Familys who have shewn such a disposition, strangers woud be detered from settling in the Country and indeed there is no calculating what acts of revenge they might pursue against peoples lives or their effects.

Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Culmaily, 4 February 1813

I returned on Tuesday night, from the parish of Kildonan, where I am sorry to say we did not succeed in our endeavours to make peace with the rioters. That is to say, the most daring fellows being entirely hostile, the people refused to sign a Bond retracting their threats and obliging themselves to keep the peace, and their orators declared that they were entitled to keep possession of *their* Grounds and would allow no Shepherd to come to the Country. 'How could they sign a Bond of Lawburrows with respect to men who would ruin them and their families, and against whom they therefore entertained enmity in their hearts.' We did not lose our Journey, however, as I thereby ascertained two very important points, the first that the rioters do not exceed 50 desperadoes with about 100 deluded men who walk trembling, and Secondly that of the last 100 a great many wish to Court our forgiveness if they dare avow it, the Upper end of the parish, under

Mr McGillavrays<sup>1</sup> Charge Standing neutral. This is the real State of the business, I believe. At same time the Eyes of the people of the other parishes are watching us. The Gentlemen of the Country know that at present bargains of land are not as formerly to be Got. There are several people who pretend business with us in order to take a Copy of our Countenances. We find Spies hanging about our dwellings from Lairg, Rogart and from Assynt; and could there be any hope of success in so desperate a project or a Chance that it might induce a Change of Mr Young for some Corpulent Good natured Gentlemen<sup>2</sup> who would stay at home, and take things, as formerly, by Report, I am satisfied, that the rioters would find friends in every Quarter, and that much distress would be brought on the Country.

In this position, it appears necessary that to Every Candour and frankness we Should add firmness; and, with firmness, that we should not lose sight of the means most likely to dissipate this confederacy and to diminish the numbers of the rioters. I entertain Strong hopes that the most respectable men in the upper End of Kildonan and Farr will bring the people there to Come down in a body and swear themselves in to maintain the Laws and the peace of the Country. I have, with Mr Young's consent seen Adam Gordon in Grimachkary on the subject, and he agrees in opinion with me. I have written Parson McGillavray, and Thomas Gordon Bracachy conform to the inclosed Copies, and there is Good reason to think that the matter Shall be brought to evaporate in Smoke. But Should this faill, then there is no time to be lost; and, we know too much of your Ladyship's decision and firmness of mind, to fear that the next Step will alarm you. I mean, the bringing a few Companies of the Scots Fusiliers from Fort George and Quartering them in the Country untill we Get the Ringleaders brought to punishment. The presence of the military will at once, and without Bloodshed, extinguish to the last Spark, a flame, which *if Suffered to remain must increase*; and by the damage threatened to property, the Jeopardy into which mens lives are put, not perhaps, by open attack, but by assassination, and the natural timidity of the Shepherds, cannot fail to frighten men from embarking their property in the Country, and thus essentially retard the improvement of the Estate.

Mr Reid is with us at present, and he is under very Great, tho' I trust,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Duncan MacGillivray, missionary at Achness and later minister of Assynt.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to Cosmo Falconer.

in part, Groundless alarm for his personal Safety. He is at the Castle as a place of Safety and So are Mr Young and Miss Young during the night. What I see most reason to fear is the destruction of his Sheep, and he cannot farm in Safety unless many of the Lawless families be put out of the Country.

Some mischief from these Smugglers of Kildonan was always to be apprehended. It is fortunate that it broke out when the family were not in the Country; and, when it has once been extinguished, there will (as Assynt is arranged) be no Chance of any repetition of the offence.

Mr Young will no doubt write your Ladyship, advising you from time to time how we Got forward.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 11 February 1813

I had the honor to write your Ladyship on the 8th Instant. We then supposed that the disturbances in Kildonan were confined to the lower end of the Parish where the people who are to be removed for Mr Reid reside, and we believed that those in the upper end were perfectly loyal and woud of their own accord sign a Bond to keep the peace. They were applied to by Thomas Gordon of Breakachy, he called them together but has told us today that he could not find a dozen of men disposed to this measure. He even added that from every part of the Parish they had been extremely active enlisting adherents to the rioters, and I am sorry to say that this is corroborated by an event which happened yesterday and but for every prudence on our part must have ended in bloodshed. In a word the proceedings of the Sherriff Court at Golspy Inn were impeded by a body of men from Kildonan and Clyne armed with Sticks, and the matter is now come to such point that either Lord Stafford and your Ladyship are to renounce every title to dispose of your property as you see proper, or an Armed force is to support the Laws of the Country. I send herewith Copys of the remainder of the prooff<sup>1</sup> so far as it has been allowed to proceed, the Sherriff is to forward the original to Mr Cranston and we wait the determination of the Family and of the Kings Counsel on the subject. Mr McKid has written to Mr Cranston to delay laying

<sup>1</sup> See above, i, pp. 135-42.

the evidence before the Crown Lawyers untill Mr Cranston hear Lord Stafford and your Ladyships pleasure on the subject, and perhaps you will see it proper either to write to him or to Mr William MacKenzie in due course. Your Ladyship will no doubt be aware that it is impossible to proceed with any business in the present State of the Country but I hope matters will be got speedily settled and that we shall soon be able to make up our Leeway; in the meantime Mr Sellar is going on with Summond's of removal but whither the officer will be permitted to serve them is uncertain.

Lord Stafford will no doubt consider that this would be a very unpleasant duty for the Local Militia and that they could not act.

Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Culmaily, 13 February 1813

Mr Young having written your Ladyship concerning the late unpleasant disturbances I fear it may be an intrusion in me to add what little has occurred to me on the subject. Perhaps it may somewhat aid your Ladyship in forming a correct opinion of the business.

In the first place, having mingled among the rioters at the New Inn before Mr McKid came from the Castle (where he and Mr Young were with some armed men) I ascertained their numbers and their purpose. They Consisted of 131 of the men of Kildonan whom we had Seen at the School house on the 2d Current. Their then purpose was to prevent the arrest of the ringleaders, for whom the Sheriff had sent, the day previous; and, they were determined they Said to Stand as one man, in defence of their land and their property. On my endeavouring to point out the Folly of a handfull of men pretending to fight against the Laws and strength of the British Constitution and against Common Sense, They said they were *Loyal* men whose brothers and Sons were now fighting Buonaparte and they would allow no Sheep to Come into the Country.

They touched no person but returned home after deforcing the Sheriff officers, who went to arrest the ring leaders at the Inn door.

My opinion is, that they are misled by men of better Sense than they possess; who See that they can Get no good old fashioned bargains upon the Estate; provided Strangers, who know how, by better management, to take more value from the Soil are permitted to Com-



pete with them. Not one Gentleman in the Country has offered us the least assistance. Even Tom Houston has left the Country on *pressing* business, Captain Robert<sup>1</sup> is tormented by a Severe Cold, and Major Clunas is Confined to Bed by a fitt of the Ague which has lasted now for nearly three weeks!

In the Second place I have seen Mr McGillavray, Mr Gordon Brachy and Grimachkary, and by different observers employed by us, or the Mr Reids, have ascertained that the whole population feel desirous of Success to the rioters; knowing, that they have one common interest in the Exclusion of Strangers; and, even the people of Arma-dale, finding that our purpose is to cram that property full of people, make common cause with the rioters, and have their communications with the people of Kildonan.

These who have not the folly to expect success to the insurgents, see a probability that the Family may be shaken from their plans; and, whether Greater firmness at the beginning might or might not have kept down the Spirit which has arisen, it is plain that nothing but the appearance of armed men will now bring the people to their Senses.

As we muster 140 south Country men we could have Speedily brought the 131 who came down, into Submission. But your Ladyship will be aware that by such a measure Lives would have been endangered and, a *Judicial investigation followed*, more unpleasant than any thing at present before us; for, with regard to the two Questions, first whether it is most Expedient that this Country import Grain for the maintenance of idle Smugglers, or export food and Raiment towards the support of the British Empire, and second Whether these foolish men *can* be brought to order, there is, with Great deference, room for but one opinion; and, it may be proven, to the Satisfaction of every liberal and unprejudiced mind, that the removal of these men from Kildonan to Strathy, and the Growth of wool and mutton on the mountains of Kildonan, are measures calculated to add to the Comfort of the people and the Strength of the Country.

\* James Loch to William Young

4 New Boswell Court, London, 15 February 1813

I received yours of the 7th this morning. Lord and Lady Stafford

<sup>1</sup> Robert Sutherland of Drummuie.

have from the beginning communicated to me the very disagreeable business you have had to contend with in respect of the people of Kildonan. I am sure it will give you very sincere satisfaction to know that I never saw anything more cordial than their approbation of everything you have done and of their feelings towards you in the very difficult and delicate Situation you are placed in. Upon such an occasion I should feel myself most unjustifiable if I stated to you anything but the bare and naked fact, and which I can state to you perhaps more fully than Lord and Lady Stafford themselves could do as you are well aware how much more easy it is to express these things to a third person than between the parties themselves.

They desire me to say that the reason they did not sooner answer any of your letters upon the subject was by my advice, as I thought, in which they agreed, that it was better to wait a day or two in order to have the full case before them before they gave you their final opinion on the subject. I have this day written a private Letter to Mr Cranstoun with whom I am acquainted pressing on him in the strongest manner the necessity of his immediately going to Sutherland. His presence will give authority and respect to the measures which it may be found necessary to adopt and give assurance to the higher classes. Lady Stafford begs you to have accommodation prepared for him at the Castle and I have mentioned this to him.

Lord and Lady Stafford desire me to assure you in the strongest manner that they will give their Authority and approbation to any measure you may hereafter find it necessary to adopt to carry your proposed arrangements into full and complete effect. They are of opinion that if the management is abandoned in the least the future improvement of the Estate must be abandoned. They are therefore determined to persevere in it to the utmost, fully sensible of its propriety and of the very fair just and liberal arrangement which you proposed for the Settlement of the people in Armadale. And which arrangement they beg you may have again fully and distinctly explained to them, before you have recourse to the last extremity of forcing them to submission.

If the Aid of the Military should unfortunately be required you have full power from the Commission as Vice Lieutenant to act in this as circumstances and your judgement may require and it does not appear to Lord Stafford that he can give you any fuller authority on this head

than you already possess, and he will be fully satisfied with whatever you may do on this as on every other part of this business. Perhaps if the Sheriff comes it will be right to wait as to calling in the Military till then. I have desired him to write to you or his Substitute without loss of time.

I am desired also by his Lordship to say that he requests you will from time to time act in this matter as occasion may require, as it is impossible at such a distance and in such an Emergency to give anything like directions. I have endeavoured to express to you as nearly as I can the substance of a long conversation which I have had this morning with Lord and Lady Stafford and was desired by them to convey as much of it to you as I could, and I am sure it will be a great comfort to you in your present situation to find you are so cordially supported and what you have done is so much to their satisfaction.

I find that your appointment of Forsyth is fully approved of and if you were to think it necessary hereafter in carrying your plans into effect that more assistance of that sort was required to you, it would be readily granted. I mention this for your guidance thinking you would like to know it. I will talk to Walker about Mitchell.<sup>1</sup>

William Young to George Cranstoun

Rhives, 28 February 1813

I have often explained to the Inhabitants of Kildonan and Clyne who are to be dispossessed at the Ensuing Term what Lord Staffords intentions were for their after residence and accommodation, and I beg leave to state them to you that neither the people themselves nor the Country in General may have it in their power to say that oppressive measures were used.

The Lands which these people occupy are not adapted for raising Grain consequently quite unsuitable for Crofting. The situation is bleak and cold, the Grain and Potatoe Crops are attacked either by early frost or land floods almost every third year. In these cases (and they are but too frequent) the people are reduced to the utmost distress both for provision to themselves and their Cattle; and Such Land

<sup>1</sup> Young had asked for Mitchell the millwright to be sent back from work on Earl Gower's Dayhouse Farm in Shropshire, of which Robert Walker was manager; Mitchell was employed in Sutherland on the Golspie mills and the Brora colliery.

is only adapted for rearing of Sheep from the Wool of which our Manufacturers find employment and an addition of food is sent into the Kingdom. But with this beneficial change of Stock it never was Lord Staffords intention to turn a single Individual out of the Sutherland Estate; fortunately it admits of giving the whole (numerous as the population is) situations wherein by Industry and Labour they can earn a decent Subsistence and in all the Arrangements hitherto made it is not believed that 40 Families have left the Country.

In the parish of Assynt one of the most populous in the Country not an Individual has migrated although it has been almost entirely new modelled and put under Sheep Stock, but there the People are Sober and industrious, their Morals are not Corrupted by an illicit Traffic in Whisky, they are either Fishers, Kelp makers or Labourers in all of which pursuits they obtain ample remuneration for their Services and live in comfort with about two acres of Arable land each and a Sufficiency of Pasture for two Cows and the same number of Young Cattle for which they pay moderate rents.

Lord Staffords plan with the people of Kildonan was to remove them to the Estates of Armadale and Strathy in the adjoining parish of Farr, Coast Side Lands where the Crops ripen to a Certainty, where Sea-ware may be had in abundance for manure, and where such of the Young Men as choose to adventure in fishing may have it in their power to do so and would have met with every encouragement to rouse their activity. Each settler would have had three acres of Arable land with a Sufficiency of pasture to maintain two Cows and the same number of Young Cattle. Leases for 19 years would have been given and it would only have been expected that houses of dry Stone to be afterwards pinned and harled with Lime would have been built for the people for which meliorations would have been allowed at the expiry of their Leases; and in the meantime £10 at 5 per Cent interest either in money or timber would have been given to each Settler when the walls of his house were finished towards its completion. And as in this as in every other Highland District there are many old and infirm People unfit to move to another quarter of the Country altho not remote from their present residence, Lord Stafford has ordered about 150 Acres of the earliest arable Land near the Church of Kildonan to be reserved for this description of persons, which with a little pasture adjoining was to be lotted out among them; and such

Tradesmen as may choose to settle there and who may have it in their power during the Summer to take to Herring and Cod fishing on the Shores of Port Gower where adventurers are this Season to prosecute that advantageous branch of business, or they may have full Employment and good wages at road making, ditching and other works. As besides the money annually contributed by Government for roads in the Northern Counties, Lord Stafford is laying out the whole rents of the Estate of Sutherland about £15,000 annually in improvements and which is almost solely paid out for Labour, and I have besides got several Thousand Pounds of his Lordships money for similar purposes.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Dornoch, 4 March 1813

I have had the honor to receive your Ladyships letter of 23d ult. A more provoking lawless set of people than many of the Kildonaners never inhabited a civilized Country. The very day and hour that one party were with me signing a penitential paper to be sent to Lord Stafford, were the bulk of the people signing two Petitions at home, one to His Lordship containing I am told the most gross and calumnious untruths ever framed. I have not seen it but am told that they accuse me of saying that Spitsbergen is too good for them and that either Mr Sellar, or I and the Sherrieff (MacKid) said they were *instantly* to be removed; ere now I suppose that infamous vagabond McDonald<sup>1</sup> may be in London if he does not drink his senses away on the road. I am told he offered his services and has been for weeks among the people who have given him £20 to pay his way. Really Mr Loch should speak to Mr Adam not only to prevent his getting access to the Prince Regent but also to get his pension of I believe 22d. per day taken from him which it seems General Weymss obtained last year from the Duke of York. I cannot now calculate what steps the people will next take when their Petitions to Lord Stafford and The Prince are rejected but it will not be McDonalds fault if a rebellion does not follow. Was it a case of my own but I do not venture to advise Lord Stafford or Your Ladyship I would certainly accomodate

<sup>1</sup> William Macdonald, formerly recruiting sergeant in the 93rd Highlanders, acted as emissary for the Kildonan petitioners (see below, pp. 188-93 *passim*).

the well behaved which I am sorry to say are the fewest number, to others I woud perhaps give the last years rent of their present possessions and let them go where they please, the very worst I woud turn away without any compensation whatever, and let the Sherriff and Lord Advocate do with them as they see proper. Mr Cranstoun is trying conciliatory measures at present. He was at Helmsdale on Tuesday where only the Parson of Kildonan and a very few met him; I believe they hesitated at first to allow the proof go on but after he had agreed to finish at Helmsdale what was begun at Golspy they consented. He knows best but I am not sure how far they were entitled to this indulgence, for I know from the manner they have treated myself that the more consessions which are made the worse they are, and it will be a pity if the flame is only smothered. I will be with him this afternoon and if he is not then prepared to tell me what his plans are he will at all events on Saturday when he is to dine at Rhives. This disturbance will soon terminate, it makes an awfull noise at present but like the tale of a dog will soon die away.

I really feel perfectly indifferent as to aid from the people which Mr Sellar alludes. I never expected any and am not disappointed; with Lord Stafford and your Ladyships support every thing will yet go on to our wishes, and in any operations carrying forward they are not competent to advise, I feel quite independent of all sort of aid in getting through when once you have both willed the measures.

I came here today about the repairs of the old Castle which are going briskly forward. The drain which is nearly finished at a mere trifle, for Forsyth and his Strathnaver gang get on with wonderfull activity, and I have after a world of battling got [ ]<sup>1</sup> the writer to let the new Street be proceeded with from the West end the Town to the Castlesquare, but still I am far behind with many things owing to these Kildonan riots which besides deranging my plans have at least occupied my time for five weeks and I shall be quite ashamed not to have more to show Lord Stafford in June.

George Cranstoun to James Loch

Kirktown near Golspie, 12 March 1813

I had the pleasure of your letter this morning and am sorry to say

<sup>1</sup> MS. torn.

that notwithstanding every conciliatory measure which I have used, and I was bound to omit no prudent measure of that nature, the disturbances in the parish of Kildonan still continue. I have been under the disagreeable necessity therefore of making a requisition for troops to the Commanding Officer at Fort George and in consequence of a previous arrangement with General Wynyard at Edinburgh and General Leslie at Aberdeen I expect 230 rank and file of the 21 Regiment at Dornoch on Wednesday. I have requested two companies of Militia from Aberdeen in addition but these I am not certain of obtaining. However with the detachment of the 21st and such peace officers as I can collect, I have no doubt of being able to restore tranquillity and to bring the Kildonaners under subjection. The Crown officers are furnished with materials to commence some prosecutions and will soon receive a further supply, and a few indictments at the next Inverness circuit I apprehend will finish the business. At present indeed we have threats of resistance and there is certainly a very extensive and well organized combination among the tenantry, and I fear (as you conjecture) that persons of a better sort may be implicated, but a little prudence and firmness cannot fail to put an end to the evil and to prevent its recurrence.

May I request that you will return my thanks to Lord and Lady Stafford for their obliging offer of accommodating me at Dunrobin Castle during my stay in the county. I did not avail myself of their kindness as it would have rendered me less useful. The constant artifice of the Ringleaders of the mischief is to hold out the Sheriff a mere manager for these noble persons in arranging the treaty between them and their tenants, and to persuade the people that the public have no interest in the matter. Many of them have not, or pretend that they have not the idea of an independant judge and magistrate who has no object but to administer justice, preserve the public peace and bring the guilty to punishment.

The Petitions to the Prince Regent and Lord and Lady Stafford have been one of the principal means of delusions, as the people hold out till they get an answer. It is desirable that a decided one should soon be returned.

I have been much indebted to Mr Young for his assistance.

\* James Loch to William Young

4 New Boswell Court, London, 16 March 1813

I saw the ambassador this day at General Wemesss and read him your letter to the Kildonan people, and desired him to tell them that the projected arrangements must now be carried into full effect and that those who returned to the obedience of the lands, would be treated in the way contained in your letter, but if they continued in disobedience to the Laws that they must expect the Law to take its course. I added that I had fully explained by letter to Lord Sidmouth their smuggling character. He said a great many things and promised to do as I desired, and added that Mr Young was a Gentleman who had the respect of all the Country because he listened to reason and treated them as a Gentleman, but their complaint was against Sellar and Dornoch Law. The inclosed receipt I send at Lady Staffords desire, it was sent up by the people, as a proof of what they principally complained of, and I have to beg your attention to the charge of 11s. Expences, and to write to her Ladyship or to me a full account of how this arose and whither it is all legal expences and how far in your judgement this charge is proper. You see they alledge that this money goes into Sellars pocket. I state to you confidentially every thing that is said, without giving Credit to every thing the people state. Macdonald does not know that I have transmitted this to you; he took many opportunities of speaking in handsome terms of you and of your conduct, which I was particularly desired by Lady Stafford to mention to you. Her Ladyship also says she wishes you to mention to her what you mean to do with the people from the time they are turned of their Holdings until their new houses are fit to receive them and whither they can all be provided with new Houses during the ensuing Summer. I hope you will excuse the haste in which I write as the post time presses.

\* Wiilliam Young to James Loch

Inverugie, 27 March 1813

I have received Lady Staffords letter of the 15th and yours of 16th Instant.

You woud observe by what I formerly mentioned that Mr Crans-



toun like myself had been foiled in adjusting matters quietly with the Kildonan people and that Military aid became absolutely necessary; having been in Ireland and aware of the consequences they became perfectly submissive, the Soldiers were marched off and Mr Cranstoun after concluding a tedious examination had made a complete discovery of the ringleaders as well as those who had been deluded, and the Men who took no part in the riots, all of whom when he furnishes me with their names I woud have recommended to Lord and Lady Stafford according to their respective merits. I made a run over with Mr Cranstoun on Wednesday evening and am to return early tomorrow (Sunday morning) and as the people will have got a few days to ponder on thier bye past conduct I expected that they woud have come to Rhives about Tuesday or Wednesday to be *can-did at last* with respect to thier intentions, for as Lady Stafford very properly recommended the business was done; and I believe so well that we never shoud again have had occasion to bring Military to the Country or our plans called in question. But I am now much afraid that your interview with McDonald will induce him to return with a hundred storys to the people which never had an existence and I cannot but regret that either you or General Weymess shoud have seen him at all unless to threaten him with the loss of his pension unless he left London immediately and under an express obligation that he was never to be seen in Sutherland. My apprehension may be groundless and I sincerely wish it may so turn out but it woud not surprise me if the people shoud again become equally turbulent as ever when McDonald goes among them. I shall in the meantime send our Land Surveyor off on Monday morning to measure Strathy and Armadale and I will follow him when he says that his Survey is complete, as by that time I shall have ascertained how the people are disposed and will have got Lord Staffords instructions about Bighouse which without the Proprietors knowledge I have already a tolerable idea of. As to the accomodation for the people if they do go to Strathy they might very well have had Houses begun already as there is a profusion of stone and I see nothing to prevent all of them if they are in earnest to have up the Walls in a month as I stipulate only for dry Stone to be afterwards pinned, and harled with Lime unless Lord Stafford desires better, and I coud easily send some small Cargoes of timber to be landed at their doors and a few Carpenters to bind the rooffs, and I

would have got Mr Reed to give them *this* crop of the grounds in return for what they now occupy.

With respect to Sellar I know him well and cannot allow myself to think for a moment that he could be capable to extract a single shilling improperly from the people far less to put it in his own pocket. I have formerly had occasion to ask him about similar charges and allways got a satisfactory reply. Without saying by what means I obtained this receipt I showed it to him. His answer was (but I shall afterwards send it in writing) that this man had been repeatedly craved but like many others would not pay, and that he had to obtain Decreet and send a party to poind which occasioned the charge in question. As to *Dornoch Law* I really believe it is now administered with as much Justice as in any County in Scotland, it would be a reflection on all of us if it was otherwise. I do not hear of MacKids decreets being reversed by the Court of Session, Mr Cranstouns abilities are well known and he is I should suppose open to every complaint which may be brought against his Substitute.

As to my popularity I assure you it is the reverse of what McDonald alledges. I am accused and certainly with Justice of all these changes and supposed hardships while Mr Sellar has only to collect the rents which (moderate as I know they still are) I have the *cruelty* to impose. I have allways kept McDonald at Bay and he only wishes that these fine accounts of me may be known in hopes that it may induce me to do some thing for him.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 30 March 1813

I wrote your Ladyship from Inverugie and have now had the honor to receive your letters of 20th and 22d Instant. I am indeed at a loss to say what the Kildonan people may now propose to do, they have not come near me and perhaps will not untill Macdonalds return but Mr Reid is to send his Shepherds over the grounds in a few days which will in so far put them to the test, and Mr Cranstoun on closing the examination found it necessary to advise the Lord Advocate to prosecute a few of the ringleaders before the Justiciary Court at Inverness on the 1st of May. The annals of History do not afford prooff of any Proprietor of a Highland Estate having done so much for a tenantry

and I cannot explain our plans better than by troubling your Ladyship with the inclosed Copy of a letter written to an old friend of mine who resides near Inverness and who was vexed to hear our plans so much talked of, perhaps it may be of some use to Sir Humfrey Davie<sup>1</sup> who has so obligingly taken the cause in hand in case he shou'd have to write more on the subject. Such fellows as the two Brothers<sup>2</sup> your Ladyship alludes to are not worth thinking of and I do not see how any Gentleman can keep Company with the one here after the anonymous letter written to Mr Cranstoun.

I am glad to find that Government have determined to do away the Volunteers. If it were not for fear of offence to the officers I should be apt to say that the Local Militia could be well dispensed with also, certainly they have not answered the expectations of Government in proving a nursery for the Army; while it makes the Ballot for the permanent militia bear hard on a few individuals it materially injures the Agricultural interest and enables men to avoid the Militia who have not the smallest intention to become Soldiers. A few thousands added to the Standing Militia would surely answer a better purpose. From it the Men of Scotland are sent to England and Ireland, we receive the Natives of these Countries in return, a knowledge of each Country is thereby formed by the Natives of all, and the best possible result is to be expected, while the Men are usefull in the meantime.

I have carefully considered of the conversation which your Ladyship has had with Lord Selkirk<sup>3</sup> and should have been happy indeed if it had suited His Lordship to send some confidential Agent to offer an *immediate* settlement to the Kildonan people in America where I know they would have made excellent Labourers. Our road maker Forsyth says that in Aberdeenshire he would give a Sutherland Man sixpence a day more than a Native of that Country while at home he cannot get many of them to work at all. I cannot however see how it is possible to keep them on for some years; the Lands which they now occupy are set and certainly it would not answer to let others for their accomodation on which Houses must be built for a shorter period than nineteen years. Indeed if the people are once set down

<sup>1</sup> Sir Humfrey Davy visited Sutherland in 1812 and studied its geology. He became a friend of the Leveson-Gower family, and wrote to the press in support of their policies.

<sup>2</sup> John Sutherland of Sciberscross and his brother Alexander.

<sup>3</sup> See above, i, pp. 142-4.

no inducement will again make them remove. I have great doubts of their agreeing to enlist unless allotments of Land are given and the service limited to Canada and a certain number of years, in that case and that thier wives are left at home a proportion of pay woud have to be secured in Britain for their maintenance, although the chance is that one and all woud embark with their Husbands; but of all things I woud recommend it to Lord Selkirk to offer a settlement to a few of them on his own property, in that case his Agent cannot come too soon to the Country. Since this letter was begun one of the Men has been here and tells me that some of the Caithness Lairds have been offering situations for at least Fifty familys.

Your Ladyship will recollect what passed with Captain MacKay about the Collectorship<sup>1</sup> and that you thought of naming Major Gilchrist for his Successor. If Lord Stafford wishes the Major to be put into the situation I will expect instructions previous to the 30th of next month.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 15 April 1813

I have the honor to receive your Ladyships letters of 7th and 9th Instant. I had fixed to set out for Armadale on Tuesday, the people having got notice of my intentions that they might let me know who were or not willing to settle there; on Monday I got about a dozen names, it seems the others are all enlisting under Macdonalds banners. He is come back with proposals from Lord Selkirk which they all agree to and I am told he had last night 580 names on his list. I went to Helmsdale expecting that at least a few might still wish to remain in the Country but finding them determined on the contrary it was to no purpose to think of loting out Armadale as I had formerly intended and I therefore returned home where I have plenty to do without wasting my time in making arrangements for Men who do not seem disposed to avail themselves of the trouble we are taking.

Macdonald I understand gives out that he has authority from Lord Sidmouth to bargain with the Men for going to America but the only

<sup>1</sup> Captain Kenneth Mackay of Torboll had written to the Marchioness on 11 September 1812 that he was obliged to resign as Collector of Cess for Sutherland, as his Army half-pay was stopped as long as he held office. He was succeeded in 1813 by Major Gilchrist of Ospisdale.

paper which I have been able to find out is one of which I send a Copy<sup>1</sup> and which does not really seem at all satisfactory although in the present temper of the people it would be in vain for me to advise them to obtain better Security before they embark. Macdonald tells them further that a Colonel McLean is to be down immediately among them. In short they are quite in the clouds and some of them will not take the trouble to lay down their crops. If any of them remain at home and *I dread* that the present delusion will so far subside as to induce in any to retract from their engagement with Macdonald, I shall certainly as Lord Stafford desires it mark the Men who were the most guilty, although one and all of them are less or more implicated. It is really quite provoking to see the whole Kingdom so much taken up about the affairs of a Set of Fellows the very outcasts of the Country, for had they been industrious sober people this commotion would not have happened, they would have been most thankful for the offers made, and satisfied that the places offered were better than they ever had before; the poor people about Armadale who are hard working laborious Fishermen are alarmed at the thoughts of getting such a banditti placed among them and almost resolve on leaving the place if they come, so that we should have made a very bad exchange and I wish to God these Kildonan Gentry may continue determined to go to America for if 40 or 50 Families only remain at home I can provide for them on the Lands reserved in the Strath.

I am quite delighted with the Brora works and only regret that a hundred different pursuits does not enable me to be often there, it is so pleasant to see the bustle and appearance of industry; we have cut a very neat road from the Pit to the Bridge which will in the meantime do for Carts and afterwards for a railway although we now begin to think that if the work is likely to pay, Lord Stafford will prefer taking the Coals down in a small Canal on the same level with the water run and load the Vessells at the Bridge where they could always be afloat, but of this there is plenty of time to consider. We think to begin Sales of the Coal at 12s. per ton which is about 2s. higher than the Firth of Forth prices and I have engaged an Agent at Elgin a very active honest fellow who deals largely in Coal, and expects that he will get all the Lime burners in Banffshire to take their supplies from

<sup>1</sup> This paper contains questions by Macdonald on conditions offered to emigrants, with answers by Lord Selkirk.

us and its astonishing the quantities they require. It will perhaps be a month or more before we can begin to load Vessels as the Miners have roads to drive from the pit mouth, and it will take some time to complete the water pit. The Wheels work to a miracle and must in the end be a great saving compared to a steam engine. The Fiorin grass<sup>1</sup> is arrived and so has a box with paper for Dunrobin. I will have the Fiorin put into the Moss of Morvich after it is properly prepared, as the quantity is small we had better have it at hand preserved as a nursery to plant on a larger scale from. I hope soon to hear from Lord Gower about the Mound and roads.

\* William Young to James Loch

Rhives, 11 July 1813

I have your favor of 25th ult. and am happy to find that we are so soon to see you in this Northern region. Lord and Lady Stafford have been with us for some time and Lord Gower arrived last evening. I shall make no comment on what has been done on thier domains since I had any concern but leave it to themselves to tell you. Still you will see few things perfect for we are only *blocking* out and many are the sad *blockheads* I have to contend with. We cannot even place a pious Clergyman but some of these Mountain savages contend with us and it was ten to one that lives were not lost on a recent occasion in the Highlands.<sup>2</sup> The Clergy and myself were all driven home, and the people had a quarrell among themselves because those who were sent after me had failed in bringing me back handcuffed and to be sent in that state to Sea in an open Boat; the Sherrieff Substitute is taking a prooff of these lawless proceedings which if not effectually stop't must end in the loss of all authority. The Kildonan riots were a mere nothing to this and the people had some shadow of excuse. I have sent your Bill of Lading to the shoremaster at Burghead who will attend to your trunk and I enclose a letter from William Taylor which does not say much for the emoluments of the Sutherland Clerk of the Peace.

<sup>1</sup> Fiorin grass (*Agrostis stolonifera* L.) or creeping bent was in vogue as an improving grass for poor acid soils (I am indebted to Dr R. M. Crawford for this information). Young's experiments with it do not appear to have had any success.

<sup>2</sup> The occasion of the riot in Assynt at the induction of Rev. Duncan MacGillivray (see below, pp. 282-3).

I am told that the Barons of Exchequer at Edinburgh have it in contemplation to appoint two Surveyors<sup>1</sup> which may account for the delay of that Commission but I have written Mr Innes<sup>2</sup> to know.

William Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 13 July 1813

In reference to my letter of last night I have to mention to Your Ladyship that I have been with Mr Cranstoun this Afternoon but neither he or I have had any further information from Sutherland. He desires me to Mention to Your Ladyship that the Moment he receives from Mackid the precognitions he will bestow on them his Most deliberate Attention and will then lay them before the Lord Advocate and Solicitor General and be by them directed as to the Course of proceeding for bringing the rioters to Summary punishment, and with their Concurrence he will procure from the Court of Justiciary the proper Criminal Warrants for their Committal. He seems to go into the idea of proceeding by Sea to Assint in a Kings Ship with troops and bringing away the delinquents with him here which Certainly will be much easier than sending them to Dornoch or Tain. He declared however he could not make up his Mind further until he saw the Character and Complexion of the precognition, but it is evident to me by the whole tenor and strain of his Conversation that he will go to Sutherland and superintend the suppression of this riot and this at any loss and inconvenience to himself if the Military are to be called, and therefore we are at present to view his opinion of the former night as expressed before the deliberate Consideration which he has now bestowed on the subject, and from a Conversation I had today with one of the Judges to whom Mr Cranstoun had been talking on this distressing business it is quite clear that he will not for any Sacrifice Yield a point of what he conceives to be his public duty.

I have written Mr Young that he will get the Contract of the whole road North and South<sup>3</sup> as he wishes and I am satisfied it will then be executed in a Masterly and sufficient Manner which with the ordinary run of road Contractors is much otherwise.

<sup>1</sup> Young was pressing for a customs officer to be placed at Brora to deal with coal exports.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Innes of Lochalsh, M.P.

<sup>3</sup> The approach roads to the Fleet Mound.

William Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 4 August 1813

I have now to Mention to Your Ladyship that 160 of the 1st or West Norfolk Militia with all their equipment and provisions were embarked at Leith early this Morning and ready to Sail when the Admiral made the Signal for re-embarkation and accordingly they returned to the Castle this Afternoon.

General Wynyard sent me a message today at 1 O'clock to beg I would Call for him at the Adjutant Generals Office, which I did, when he mentioned that just as the Cutter was about to sail he received a letter from the Lord Advocate to express his surprise that such proceedings were adopted without directions from him and that he did not Wish the troops to go at all. The General answered that he was merely executing the Orders which had been transmitted to him to that effect from the Horse Guards. The Lord Advocate replied that Mr Cranstoun had gone some time ago to Sutherland but previously told him (the Advocate) it would be unnecessary to send troops there until he wrote his Lordship what was the real extent of the evil and that no such letter had ever Come; that Mr Solicitor General had after reading the precognitions transmitted by the Sheriff Substitute of Sutherland without Consulting with him (the Advocate) written to the Duke of Yorks Secretary for troops to be sent to Sutherland which proceeding of the Solicitor he Considered perfectly uncalled for; that at any rate if Soldiers were to be sent, there was No Occasion for sending them so long a Voyage and it would be sufficient to give the proper instructions to the Governor of Fort George. The General then told me that in consequence of these directions from the first Law Officer of the Crown he considered it his duty to Order an immediate recal of the detachment, and that he would write this Night to the Governor of Fort George to have in Constant and immediate readiness 150 or 160 Men properly Officered and with Camp equipage to proceed to Assint on the requisition of the Sheriff of Sutherland to that Effect, and the General concluded by wishing me to explain all this both to Lord Stafford and Mr Cranstoun. Your Ladyship will therefore have the goodness to forward by express this second letter to Mr Cranstoun explaining this sudden Alteration. The Admiral was very well pleased to give the Counter Order as he was



apprehensive of Capture from having heard this day of the Capture of a Sloop of War off Cape Wrath by Admiral Rogers.<sup>1</sup> I have had a full Conversation with Mr Mackenzie of Cromartie as to the Conduct of Kennedy the Assistant<sup>2</sup> in Consequence of which he wrote him last night that if he discovered that he had the least Concern in this business he and Mrs Mackenzie would be done of him forever.

The box not having arrived by any of the Coaches today I have written to Chapman at Trentham to say I cant at all trace it from Manchester.

William Mackenzie to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 5 September 1813

I had the honor Yesterday to receive Your Ladyships letter concluded on the 1st.

It gave me particular Satisfaction to obtain Your directions to prepare the Wadset right of Kirkatomy in favor of Mr Loch and by a letter which I enclose for him left open for Your perusal You will observe I have not lost a day in settling the preliminaries. Your Ladyship and he may with Mr Sellar's aid decide whether my Statement in figures be Correct and inform me 1st whether the Wadset Money will be the precise £520 or £500. The former Wadset Sum was £670, but Sutherland<sup>3</sup> lost Money by it in consequence of the Stipend being augmented after the Constituted<sup>4</sup>, now it cannot be. 2nd whether the Wadset right should be made for 3 or 4 years from last Whitsunday, it cannot well be shorter. To answer this, will be to guess when the place will be relet. 3rd whether my idea of Mr Loch giving his Note of hand will suffice, to do so will save expence. If however a Bond should be thought preferable he can grant it with a Conveyance of an Annuity of £200 to which he is entitled, so that 2½ years of the Annuity will pay off the debt. When I have the Answer to these 3

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated American sailor John Rogers.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. John Kennedy, assistant minister in Assynt, later minister of Killearnan.

<sup>3</sup> Sutherland Mackenzie, brother of William Mackenzie, surrendered his wadset of Kirkatomy, which he had held since 1805, in May 1813; a new wadset was given to James Loch in September 1813.

<sup>4</sup> Wadsetters were considered to be heritable proprietors and liable to pay stipend on the valued rent of their wadsets. By an Act of 48 George III the right of a minister to apply for a process of augmentation was restricted by the imposition of a 20-year interval between augmentations.

questions the deeds will be filled up here and sent instantly for signature with directions to Mr Sellar to take and record the infeftment on or before 1 October which will answer every object. I shall in a proper Manner inform the Commodore and I entirely agree with Your Ladyship in Your ideas on this point, it is much better not to make more Wadsets than is necessary. I expect Colin in town tomorrow and will show him what you say as to himself.

I suppose Your Ladyship had by mistake forgot to enclose Kennedys letter to Mr MacGillivray, I should like to have it to show to Mr Hay Mackenzie. I met on the Street Yesterday the Clerk of the Court of Justiciary and was enquiring who was to act as Depute Advocate at Inverness Circuit. He said Mr William Boswell. He then told me what is really Most vexatious and improper. I mentioned to You that the Crown Agent had sent Mackid the Indictment in order to fill up the designations of some of the Offenders<sup>1</sup> among whom was Murdo Mackenzie, in doing so Mackid had merely to act as directed and not a step further but most extraordinary to tell he has struck out the name of Murdo Mackenzie altogether and substituted in his place John Mackenzie who was a witness and whom still he leaves as a witness. The effect of this will be not only that Murdo escapes altogether for the present Circuit and so will John for he is both an offender and witness which is utterly inconsistent but the evidence of John will be lost against the others and the general chain of evidence weakened if not defective. I am told the Crown Counsel are out of all temper at the thing, not only that any Sheriff should presume to pass by an Offender whom the Advocate thought deserving of punishment, but to substitute a person whom they did not wish to try and losing him as an evidence. I shall tomorrow see the Crown Agent and know all the particulars of this extraordinary history. In a few Minutes after I met Mr Cranstoun and told him, who expressed both his Surprise and indignation. Mr Cranstoun then told me how much annoyed he had been by my first letter stating the intended Sailing of the troops and that the people of Assint had yielded ready obedience to his Substitute whenever he went there etc. He added that he was sorry to think there still existed Considerable irritation in the Minds of the people generally in Sutherland and thought the outset of this business very injudiciously Managed by making a parade

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the prosecution following the Assynt riots.

of the strength of the Civil power (he alluded to a great body of Constables being marched up the Country from Dornoch in files) when it was evidently as he Concurred unnecessary and rather betraying weakness than otherwise. He expressed regret that as he was engaged with a party at Roschall he could not go to Dunrobin for he could not Carry them with him and he could not leave them behind. This is the substance of what he observed, but it was that sort of Conversation which being hurried did not embrace much. I shall however see him again soon. If it shall prove that Mackid has Committed the gross error mentioned so particularly by the Clerk of Justiciary I should be the first to urge on Mr Cranstoun the necessity of his dismissal. I shall write tomorrow as to this.

I am much pleased with the satisfactory report brought by Mr Loch and Mr Young from Kirkwall. *Our* interest there will be strengthened by Carrying thro' the Arrangement in the Customs I mentioned and it goes on well, for Yesterday the Board sent the Treasury a recommendation to agree to Riddochs Memorial.<sup>1</sup>

The sequel of Mr Weber's<sup>2</sup> history is indeed most amusing and will make Colin laugh well as it did me. Mrs Mathieson is a woman of sense evidently. Lord Hermand should see her when he goes to see her Wadset lands and hear her Story.

In answer to Your Ladyships kind enquiries I am happy to say Mrs Mackenzie is making as good a recovery as her friends can desire and the infant is thriving.

James Loch to Marquis of Stafford

Bridgeton, 21 September 1813

... [Proposed sale of Government stock; financial demands in Staffordshire].

I only mention these things to point out to your Lordship that if there should be any excess that it has not arisen out of the amounts immediately under my Controul, being at the same time most anxious and fully sensible of the propriety of restraining it within bounds I

<sup>1</sup> Kirkwall formed part of the Northern Burghs parliamentary seat, and the Sutherland family maintained an interest there. The Marchioness herself visited the town in July 1805 (finding it 'a mixture of an old French Town and part of Edinburgh') and met the local dignitaries, including Malcolm Laing, the historian.

<sup>2</sup> For Weber see Fraser, *The Sutherland Book*, ii, 317.

have written to Butt and Walker to lessen the expenditure until our present difficulties are surmounted. At the same time it will be for Your Lordships determination to say (if a permanent reduction of expenditure is required) whether it should be all on the English estates or partly on both English and Scotch. If the purchases and election expenses are excluded such a measure would be required on neither, but I thought it my duty to lay the whole before your Lordship.

I hope Sellar will be soon able to furnish me with a Copy of the Sutherland Rental for 1814, as he promised, with an account of the outgoings. I will add that to a similar statement of Your Lordships English Estates, and the whole income arising from these funds for the ensuing year having been laid before Your Lordship, the expenses to be incurred can then be also settled, beyond which we are not to exceed, and in this view perhaps the rents of the Sutherland Estate will be equal to the demands on it, the Coal excepted. When I have the honor of meeting Your Lordship at Trentham I am in hopes, that I shall be able to lay before Your Lordship a plan of Accounts to be made out monthly from the three different departments of the Trentham and Newcastle, the Lilleshall and Wolverhampton, and the Sutherland estates, by which Your Lordship will not only see the actual expenditure of the last but the probable expenditure of the next month, a measure which I trust will be satisfactory to your Lordship and prevent the Accumulation of any balance such as has taken place at Dunrobin just now. I mentioned this to Mr Young and I can manage it easily with his Clerk and it will tend as much to his comfort as to Your Lordships advantage. It is a thing however which I should have had the greatest difficulty in advising, if it had the appearance of any interference with Mr Young, but the very gentlemanlike and Confidential way in which he has behaved towards me, has I am sure so fully made us known to each other as to remove any feeling of that sort from his mind and to convince him that my only motive and wish in the plan is, having constantly before our Eyes the objects of expenditure and the funds applicable to them, a regular and sufficient plan may be adopted to enable Your Lordship, without difficulty to yourself and without injustice to any branch of your family, to carry on the best improvements, which are in the North as well as in the South. At present I am not aware that I can add any thing further, but

upon Your Lordships return to England I shall then be better prepared upon the subject and also to advise with your Lordship, Lady Stafford and Lord Gower as to the particulars of the proposed arrangement stated to me by her Ladyship, as to the Brora Coal, Skelbo and the Dayhouse.

Upon the Subject of the Brora Coal I cannot help feeling that Your Lordship, when the arrangement is concluded, should be more efficiently served than you are likely to be by Prichard, and I cannot help thinking that we could find upon Your Lordships English estates some person fully qualified for the task of superintending it, and I must confess to your Lordship that so important does this appear to me, that I am almost prepared to recommend to your Lordship, in case no other person can be found, to send Burgess the Clerk at Muirheath there. He would be a great loss *to me*, but as Mr Suther is himself a good Collier, he could in that Country soon find another, and from habits of correctness to which he has been Accustomed, I think he would be a most invaluable servant to your Lordship at Brora. He would be the better of being accompanied by an experienced underground Bailiff, as he could not go below every day. All this should be perhaps submitted to Young first. I however should not like to part with Burgess if I could find his equal for Brora, and perhaps from Ketley being full of faults a man from that part of the Country would be better for Brora. I have a letter from Butt, he is looking out with Glover's assistance for a Brick and Tile Maker to meet me when Your Lordship is at Trentham, for the purpose of his going North.

. . . [Trentham management business].

I took the liberty while at Dunrobin Castle of suggesting to Lord Gower that not only from what I saw of the state of the Sutherland roads, but from my intimate knowledge of the manner of managing the repairs of roads in Scotland in general, that I was fully persuaded that the roads in Sutherland would speedily get into a state of disrepair unless his Lordship would take the trouble from time to time to ride along them and desire the person to whom their superintendence is committed to remedy the effects which may strike him. From the attention which I was enabled to give the subject, the defects which are to be struggled against are the following, to which I believe I must prefix their insufficient construction originally. 1st. The Nature of the Materials between the little ferry and Clyne which consist of

rounded gravel mixed with a little sand without any binding substance being contained in it. The remedy which I would suggest for this is that in filling up the ruts and holes all the stones should be broken with a hammer so that their sharp angles may fix themselves in the firm part of the road. An attention to this I have seen do wonders and after the Coal is worked for sale if this is not attended to I am afraid the heavy Carriages will roll many of the round stones out of their places. Where a hole is to be filled up a pick should be used to loosen the edges round, the Material then laid in covered with some loam or the debris of a stone quarry and beat down. By this means the old and the new incorporate into one. If the stones are merely fitted into the hole they do not incorporate with the road but are pushed out by the first wheel that passes over them. It ought to be made a point to have some old Men allways upon the road attending to these things to prevent the necessity of what they so much delight in, in Scotland, a thorough repair which is the most ingenious device possible to keep a road allways bad, by having it either full of holes or in the state of one newly made. The propriety also of laying down in Autumn stones on the sides of the road for their repair during winter as under the present mode of repairing roads in Scotland one of two evils allways happens, the one is that to avoid the damage done by the Carts carrying the materials the roads are not repaired till Spring, or if they are repaired the Carts carrying the Materials actually do as much damage as they repair. The Stones should be so near each other that a wheelbarrow may be used in the winter repairs. To attend to these things is not yet part of a Scotchmans Creed and that is why I called Lord Gowers particular attention to it and it has occurred to me that there is no man so likely to attend to these little details as Sellar. Young has no time, and I think if Sellar was to be appointed surveyor of the highways (without a Salary) from the one end of the Country to the other with an under surveyor under him the whole would be put upon the best footing the thing is at present capable of, and in this capacity he would be fully under Young who from time to time could give him such directions as he thought proper as a Trustee. This Appointment should in the view I have taken the liberty of suggesting should be confined to the repair of the roads already made. To it however I certainly would recommend, that the management of the Collection of the Tolls should be added. And my reason

for this is, that I suspected I saw in the Country so general a feeling of their never having been very productive that no pains will be taken to render them so, something of this feeling may also arise from a wish that they should not be collected. A Man of Sellar's sharpness and accuracy would however make them pay well, and by enforcing the law strictly from the beginning much future plague and trouble is avoided. Major Clunes has to look after the Helmsdale bar, but I have no faith in any highland Laird being very active on this score unless he has Money lent upon the Credit of the tolls. May I point out to Your Lordship that the finishing every Job before another is begun is an essential in which all our Countrymen fail. I would instance here the want of many little things about the coping stones on the Mains Farm offices. These are minute things and though necessary for the safety as well as the look of the buildings are most apt to be put off from day to day and at last entirely forgot. I do not know how far I am justified in troubling Your Lordship with such details but my anxiety to see every thing as perfect as possible made me presume to do so. If it were to be Your Lordships wish I could state them to Mr Young whose good sense would make him see their propriety though he might call them *English niceities*. I believe I could extend my remarks to him.

There is just one other thing upon which I will venture to intrude my opinion, which is to beg of Your Lordship if it should not interfere with any of Your Lordship's plans, is before much more Money is expended at Brora Harbour to Call in the advice of Telford or some other experienced Engineer. I should fail in my duty if I did not state, that in all cases where so large an expenditure is about to be incurred, it appears to me to be the only safe way of proceeding. My first step would be to have an accurate survey of the River from the Bridge to Low Water Mark laid down upon a large Scale with the Soundings at low Springs, mentioning the rise of the Tide, the Course of the Currants, the Manner in which the tide flow's and ebb's, together with the prevailing winds, and marking on the plan also the proposed improvements. With these steps an able Engineer would be able in a little time to say whether the plan would be effectual and would also be able to make it the *part* of a greater one if a more extended commerce should hereafter require it, and in this as in the execution of the Mound Your Lordship cannot press to strongly the propriety of

a rigid adherence to the Engineer's specifications and a complete reliance on and deference to his authority. I trust Your Lordship will not think that I have gone too far in thus laying before you what has occurred to me upon these points, but the Manner in which Your Lordship has been pleased to honour me with from time to time asking my opinion and Young having often discussed the Matteer with me, induced me to state them for Your Lordships Consideration. It is a work of vast extent and in all work's connected with the Sea the least mistake or deviation from a plan may produce the most serious Consequences.

I must have done or your Lordship will think I have been bit by Sellar and am possessed with the same love of penmanship.

Is it Your Lordships wish that I should audit his Accounts? I could do them now with much ease and he could forward them in the Mail from Elgin. He proposed instead to come with them himself.

Will it be too much to ask Your Lordship to desire Young to send me the heads for the Memorial for a Tidewaiter at Brora and the particulars of the price for raising the Coals at Brora and I will send him speedy answers to both . . . [travel plans].

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 19 December 1813

Refering to my letter of 16th I have since had the honor to receive Your Ladyships of 11th Instant. We were all peace and quiet at the Set on Wednesday and the Strathnaver Men who were dispossessed from the Lot which Mr Sellar gets seemed satisfied so far as I could discover, not only as he promised to accomodate a good many of them for three years, but in the meantime as I mark off Lotts for them in the lower end of the Strath where certainly their Children if not themselves will soon take to Fishing. I heard of an attempt in the evening to way lay a poor Northumberland Man John Cleugh who took the Polly Lot but they did not fall in with him; the Association<sup>1</sup> are however to investigate the matter tomorrow with a view to check

<sup>1</sup> For the Sutherland Association for the Protection of Property see James Loch, *An account of the improvements on the estates of the Marquis of Stafford* (London, 1820), Appendix III. Loch states that the Association was founded in 1815, but this appears to be an error.



such proceedings in the outset. These Macdonalds<sup>1</sup> are a worthless set and many acts of trespass could be brought home to them, we shall however I expect now get clear of them and such characters. I wish Government would think of peopling the Cape of Good Hope, of all other places it seems the best adapted for such a purpose and should not be given back to the Dutch. I have written Geanies<sup>2</sup> about the Light House at Portmahomack and may be able to get something done about it at Leith where the Local situation is better understood than at London, and being in the way of a Naval station, (Cromarty) Government should give aid. I still continue resolved to set out on Monday Se'night especially if Barclay and Craig get home this week, I think they must be wind bound at Colonsy.

Your Ladyships offer to Clerkhill<sup>3</sup> is most handsome and must be far beyond his expectations, he is a weak indolent Man and did not come to the set. If his Strathspey friends act equally liberal he should with his half pay be very comfortable. We have fine open weather and are about closing all buildings for a Season except Pritchards Cottage which will employ three or four Masons for some time. I shall have them at a Steaming House and Piggery at the Mains tomorrow. The Lime work here continues excellent and is wrought at less expence than any I ever saw, it will be most fortunate if the rock holds out; I only regret that we had not made this discovery before the Marquis left Dunrobin as I am sure he would have been pleased to see us at work. I wish to God we had matters on as good a train at Brora; the more I think of that concern the greater does it appear necessary to get a resident Agent there. Hughes writes me, but has never yet come near us, and until I receive instructions from The Marquis at Edinburgh and make myself completely master of the business I am determined not to follow any more of Hughes plans.

I will expect to have letters from your Ladyship either at No. 18 Princes Street or at William MacKenzies and perhaps Reynolds Man may also meet me.

<sup>1</sup> Former tenants of Polly in Strathbrora.

<sup>2</sup> At the instance of Donald Macleod of Geanies an application had been made to the Commissioners of Northern Lights for a lighthouse on Tarbat Ness; the Commissioners decided that their funds were inadequate (John Marjoribanks to Loch, 21 Jan. 1814).

<sup>3</sup> Captain William Gordon of Clerkhill surrendered his farm in 1814. His land was divided amongst tenants removed from upper Strathnaver (see above, i, p. lx).

Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Culmally, 10 January 1814

This morning, just as the people were collecting with their rents, Mr Nash brought me an information against Mr McKid for poaching, and I took the liberty to write your Ladyship a hurried note with it. I have had no return from McKid to my note, and I fain hope that the information may have been in some degree, incorrect; for nothing could be more mean than for a Gentleman to kill a proprietor's Game in the Snow, and without being Qualified by License or leave of the Landlord. However, the informant, who is one of our police, has been here tonight offering his affidavit, and Claiming his Guinea; and I suspect Mr McKid has been so very foolish as to run his head into this Scrape.

I shall do nothing untill I have the honour to know your Ladyship's commands on the Subject. I have received your Ladyship's letter of the 4th Current this evening. I shall keep Nash and our other people on the alert as to Young Mr Ross,<sup>1</sup> whose father I am convinced, has too much pride to have permitted any trespass of the Sort, had he been aware of it. From one of the most biting frosts this morning I ever felt, the weather has turned to Thaw from the South East and I trust the Game may in 48 hours be beyond the Reach of those who dont use dogs.

Mr Young had the honour to receive your Ladyship's letter accepting Gunn's<sup>2</sup> offer before he went South, and he furthwith advised the Seller of the Circumstance. His having touched the premium by retaining his rent was an *interventus rei*, as Lawyers express it, which must, I presume, make the bargain quite Secure; and the evidence of Mr Reid and me, both of whom can swear to his expressing his bargain of the farm *to be a losing one*, must shew every person that the bargain with us was advantageous to him. That he did not discern how much his Lease was an *annoyance* to Your Ladyship's arrangements, and how much more he might, on this account have *Squeezed* from us, is nothing to the purpose. If the north Side of the Ellig be

<sup>1</sup> Son of the minister of Clyne.

<sup>2</sup> Lieut. William Gunn, tenant of Achnahow, Achneakin, Shunachy and Kinbrace, had offered to resign his farms, but had subsequently changed his mind. He is entered as having resigned in the Rental for 1815-16 (see above, i, pp. xlvi, 103-4).

Judged more proper for Sheep than Cattle, then there is nothing in that Quarter for which Mr Gunn is fitt. If on the other hand the necessities of the Loth villagers etc. require that a piece of hill Grass be laid off for them there, then, Achnachow and Corrish might be offered him at its value, and his mouth be shutt; but, of this, Mr Young is best Judge. Gunn is a Complete blunderbuss and will never be a farmer.

I take the liberty to inclose a letter I have from Mr Young from Aberdeen. Your Ladyship will be Glad to See that we Get on apace with our measures for the formation of the Mound. I trust we shall surprise Earl Gower with a Considerable profit on the Job when his Lordship returns from Holland, and, if we do, *then*, as we are not Engineers by profession and must of Course labour under disadvantages, it must be pretty plain that this Job, was meant for a friend and not for us. It certainly had a curious appearance that Mr Telford attempted to add some hundred pounds of more work to us than was comprehended in the Estimate *submitted for competition*. Time certainly will Shew, if we keep our health.

Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Culmaily, 2 February 1814

Mr McKid has, at length, struck his colours. I understand that by this days past he sends your Ladyship a penitential letter; and he confesses the act of poaching to be as detailed by our informant. Thinking that this Confession so far changes the circumstances of the Case a little, I defer the prosecution untill I can again hear from your Ladyship. If your Ladyship think a prosecution necessary it Shall be promptly followed; or if you think it more proper to procure a State of the Case from Nash to lay, with McKid's letter, before Mr Cranstoun this shall be sent forward without any delay. The idea which occurs to me, and which I venture to submit to Lord Stafford and your Ladyship, *with every deference*, is briefly this. McKid is a Clever man without Sense or principle; if the Country were Clear of him and a moderate honest man in his Shoes it would be well. But unfortunately Mr Cranstoun (and I think Mr McKenzie) dont See him as we do; and altho he has evidently not only trespassed against the Law, but, *by poaching*, acted in a manner unbecoming a Judge or a Gentleman,

to the Senses of those who are accustomed to the opinions of Country Gentlemen there is no Saying whether Mr Cranston may not Consider the thing more venial than we do, and might not Still continue him in his berth. Now, in this Case, if we made a *desperate* attack on him and failed, he would have it in his power, in Elections, and in contests which may and must occur with tenants, and perhaps with conterminous proprietors, to take revenge on us by breaches, certainly, of trust, in which he could keep within the letter of the Law and do us much annoyance and it were a pity to risk this. Whereas by our act of Generosity (altho doubtless he has little Call on your Ladyship's Generosity) he might be bound to our interest. From his appealing to your Ladyship, he would Seem to be ignorant of your late Correspondence with Mr Cranstoun. So that, it is now fully in your Ladyship's power to take whichever Course you think most proper. Whether any friend at Edinburgh could sound Mr Cranstoun on the Subject. One difficulty in his way would be the Choice of a Successor. Perhaps Mr Cranstoun's first or Second Clerk, being unconnected here, if a Steady honest man might be eligible, or Mr Cranstoun might be led to think of some friend of his own needing such a Situation. In a word your Ladyship might indirectly know Mr Cranstoun's sentiments before deciding; and take your Ground accordingly.

As it is necessary for me, in your Ladyship's business, I am, without the Smallest intimacy or pretension to friendship, on no bad terms with Mr McKid; and he does not know that I am in correspondence with your Ladyship on the subject.

Since I began to write this I have a letter advising that *Ledbeg* is dead.

We have a continuation of intense frost and Since last night a foot of more Snow has fallen.

Mr Tollett, being no anti-fiorinist, will be much Gratified with the enclosed advertisement. I fain hope I have one or two meadows of natural fiorin at Rhimsdale, and shall certainly make some small experiment on the improvement of them next season; for Hay and Turnips in this Climate and Country are *the only* foundations of Good farming, as this Season has proven. I have my merinos Still on Benivragie, where the wind has blown the Snow from the heather in the South Steep ascent. They get nothing but a Bundle of Hay every morning, and Seem noways injured by the Cold.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 26 March 1814

Since my letter of 21st I have had the honor to receive your Ladyships of 17th Instant, and have now the pleasure to send Mr Balds report in 5 different covers. He began on Monday morning and completed the whole last night in a manner which I hope will be satisfactory and I will suspend any more sinking until the Marquis tells me that he desires it. Mr Bald is immediately on getting home to send four steady Colliers and a Brickmaker and I am to send him a Box of our Clay to find if it corresponds with the report given by the Peterhead people as to its sufficiency for Tyle and to prepare for the ensuing Season. He is also after Seeing Mr Suthers and my Aberdeen plan of a Salt House to give me his Ideas on the Subject and to get two pans with furnaces and a person to put them up. We have fixed the situation a little west of the Fishermens Houses at Brora where the expence will be comparatively moderate and a railway carried on at a much smaller expence than if farther from the river, and Mr Bald apprehends no inconvenience from the fresh water; but at any rate he says what is very true that pipes could be carried on the shore for far less money than a railway. He thinks we should continue John Pritchard as under ground Agent and seems much pleased with his conduct hitherto. I have therefore offered John a two Guineas per week, his House, a Cow, Coal and Candle subject to the Marquis' approval and Mr Bald promises to get a Steady Man to see the Coals weighed and shipped and to keep a running account with the Colliers, but he says all the particular accounts ought to be kept at the office here and fitted regularly once a fortnight. The Marquis will observe that Mr Bald is against extending the Harbour to the Bridge. At any rate there can be no hurry on this expensive work and if His Lordship pleases Mr Hughes contract may cease when the breastwork is finished. I am really delighted with Mr Balds knowledge, and it is certainly fortunate that we happened to get him North as now we shall have help at hand on every emergency. I am pushing on the Lime work here and shall have the Kiln ready on Wednesday first. I expect the Vessell bot in the South Firth home about the end of the week, and my correspondents insist on it that she will be found a great bargain; if she answers to land Coals at Golspy I think it will be

best to load her back with raw Limestone to Brora and burn the Lime wanted there in place of putting hot shells on board and this saves the carriage of Coals also. Mr Bald has given us much useful information as to our Mound operations and that work is not neglecting. We have begun work with about Sixty Rogart and Strathnaver Lads.

\* James Loch to William Young

London, 14 May 1814

. . . [rent collection arrangements on Staffordshire estates].

I have now more than half a mind to recommend this to your attention and consideration that you may instruct Sellar to be peremptory in the collection of his rents at the different Audits. I think you would find it a vast relief to yourself. To him it would be incalculably so, and I am convinced it would be a real advantage to the Tenant, for it is no favour to let them get in arrear and run up what they can never hope to pay.

I received your letter about money when I was at Trentham and sent it to his Lordship which you know. The object that Lord and Lady Stafford had in view in asking for the abstract you have made out was among other things to know what money would be wanted under the different heads during the Summer and if you could make a sketch of this; it would be a very necessary thing to have, in order that his Lordship may provide for any extra expenditure otherwise a sudden demand for a considerable sum is always inconvenient and may sometimes be disadvantageous. For example, if his Lordship should invest a sum of money in the Stocks at a high price and should be obliged to sell at a lower it would be better not to have bought or perhaps only to put it in exchequer Bills. In the Abstract too that you have sent it does not appear quite clear whether the money Lord Stafford gave you just as he was leaving the Country is included in the £17,000, and some odd hundred pounds stated to be received from Sellar. The first item of the charge too I am not very certain if I understand it and the £9,000 of discharge to Contractors. Could Mr Grant<sup>1</sup> make out the same account in this way:

<sup>1</sup> William Grant, Young's cashier.

Dr		Cr	
To received from Lord Stafford	£9,000	Balance of last Settled Account	£10,000
			£9,000
			£1,000
To received from Mr Sellar	£—	By paid on Account of —	£—
To received from —	£—	By ditto	£—
To received from Cash Account	£—		

What Lord and Lady Stafford wish to see is 1st the balance remaining in your favour after the payment his Lordship made you last year before leaving the country and 2nd the different receipts on the one side and the payments on the other since that period like an account Current and not as stated in your Ledger and the Debitor and Creditor side of the account opposite each other on the same sheet of paper. You see in this way what you have paid for Stock on Armadale etc. which stand as a payment only.

Then on another Sheet could be put down any money you expect to receive during the course of the summer, either from Rent, Sale of Stock, Meal, Lime or any other Article, and in the other can be put down under all the different heads of expenditure a guess of what you may want during the summer specifying dates to the times you expect payment and must make payments. I am sorry to make you read so long a letter, but if you will hand it over to Mr Grant I think from the fog we had together last year he will readily understand what is aimed at. This being accomplished will not only be a gratification to Lord and Lady Stafford but it will really be an ease to you in getting the money, as for example in order to pay old outstanding debts; no new work has been doing with us at all, our Audits are the end of June. If I saw your wants before that time I could perhaps so arrange the payment of the remainder of these demands as to provide enough for the family living at Trentham and all other expences during the summer or nearly so, in which case his Lordship would have other funds at his command.

Do not mix Lord Gower's money with Lord Stafford's. I confess I rejoice more in your lime discovery than in anything else. I think that will tend directly and immediately to the improvement of the estate, unless however you have an inexhaustible quantity I would sell none off the estate. I do not know what your ideas are, and I may be mistaken but I have no idea of Lord Stafford's becoming a trader, and

unless a rock is a very extensive thing it is of no consequence as a matter of profit to such an estate and a vast thing to preserve the germs of improvement which this is, because it is only from the Kiln the *bodies* can get little *pickles* to suit their pendicles and means. It is a large farm alone that can venture upon importing a cargo. Pray turn this in your mind, for the want of Lime in the country as a manure and for building always appeared to me the great obstacle in the way of the Settlers improving their land and building their Cottages with Lime which they never could import not only because the quantity is too large but because they never could get the necessary credit.

Let me know how William Walklate<sup>1</sup> goes on. I am much interested in his success. There never was a man set out with a more ardent ambition to Brew good Ale and make good bread than he did but I doubt whether your people have taste enough to like either.

\* William Young to James Loch

Rhives, 24 May 1814

Your favor of 14th Instant has only reached me this morning having only gone from London on the 18th. I have written Mr Archibald Dunbar to remit you £10 and when you tell me what I owe for newspapers it will be immediately sent. Edinburgh and Inverness is quite sufficient now *a'days*, and will convey the Moneteur in plain English.

My Clerk has promised to make out a similar account as the one you Balanced with us last year, which of course you will surely understand, and will I think find that the money wanted by me to carry on with, will exactly stand as stated on the foot of the one lately sent, but I shall continue to borrow on untill you either say hold, or order some of the works to be Stopped unless the Banker as I suspect decline to advance more money.

The Security of a Scotch Bank is very good and as they allow 4 per Cent interest perhaps the Marquis might find it no great loss to invest a pretty large Sum of money in Edinburgh at this rate, but as to the propriety of this measure you are better Judges in London; but to me one thing is quite evident that without Funds improvement must cease. The Sums wanted are immense to carry on with. My own little

<sup>1</sup> A Staffordshire inn-keeper, brought north by the Marchioness to set up an inn at Brora.



property stands on my Books for as much more as it originally cost me but the rent is 3 times as much; however as at present the fault is entirely mine for not having sent such State of accounts as you require I will rectify the error if possible in 3 weeks or so, but our present hurry is beyond what any person who is not on the Spot can form an idea of, and I shall for the next 14 days be all together in Strath's Naver and Brora where we have at least 430 familys to arrange in different allotments, to double their present rents, and put them in a more industrious way of Life. If to this you'll add our new Colliery, Lime, Brick and Salt, for which *men and material* are to be brought from many different quarters besides the large Farming concerns, and on which new Servants are to be at this term, and our Road and Mound works, you will not be surprised that I should have no great will to pore over accounts but which at the same I know are kep't with every care and accuracy. It is very right to make your Staffordshire people pay to a day, if you did not I suspect the money would go to the Alehouse and Butcher; but before a poor Sutherland Man can pay he must often sell his Cow, his wife and daughter must Spin and his Son go to the roads or some distant quarter to gain it by his Labour. Thus situated could one say to this Man sell your Cow at half her worth or I will point your Horse and turn you out of doors; besides it had been too much (in my opinion) the practise to make the people pay fore'hand rent, that is, if a Man enters to his possession at Whitsunday he pays for the ensuing 12 Months at Martinmas. Now I would only have him to pay either at the expiry of 12 Months or rather at Martinmas after, and then he will have reaped his little crop, sold a Cow and earned his Summers wages. But the fact is that no rule can be given, all must rest on the discretion and good sense of the Factor and while blackguards and idlers should be strictly looked after so ought the industrious and diligent be nursed like children. One would not quarrell with a child because it could not read the first time a Book is put into its hand. Give them a thorough knowledge of right and wrong, show them that they must earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, hunt down all vagabonds and the thing will come round. The changes already brought about are wonderfull, and the Kildonan men of last year are now industrious Herring Fishers; but after this long epistle I am for once going to drown my cares in drinking Lady Staffords and the Duke of Wellingtons healths at Dornoch after an

adjourned County meeting and a Presbytery about Kirk and Manse repairs.

As Mr William MacKenzie is now in London you should consult with him as to this punctuality in the payment of rents. He knows the State of the Country well and can tell you if my notions are right or wrong. In case absolute punctuality is required Mr Sellar should be immediately instructed to enforce it and I am sure he will act up to the orders given, and for Gods sake do not be directed by or take it amiss that I give an opinion to the contrary.

Mr Grant says it will be a Month from this day before the whole accounts of the Season can be completely finished and sent.

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 4 July 1814  
rainy morning, fine evening

We went to Brora this morning. In going there we saw first in the farm a very fine field of Wheat where the Flax was last year, then one or two other fields in remarkably good order. The new greive, Young says, declares war upon weeds. There is in fact not one to be seen, and the fields really look in uncommonly good order. That where the lower Pictish Tower stands is drilled for turnips, the next above the Echo has a very good crop of Hay.<sup>1</sup> The Clayside plantation is surprizing from the strength and appearance of the new planting.

We proceeded to see the new Coal at Uppat. It is in a little sort of cave near the old Strathstevan cave, and I suppose upon a Level with it, and should conjecture (as far as one can conjecture in so large a field, but where there probably are faults) that it is the same vein which is now working at Brora, the more probably as there is the same sort of stony substance for about 6 or 7 Inches in depth found in the middle of that vein, as well as in the Brora one. You will recollect that either Telford or Farey<sup>2</sup> (perhaps both) said there was such a substance which was common enough in veins and which

<sup>1</sup> The Pictish Tower is Carn Liath broch, between Dunrobin Castle and Strathstevan. The Echo is unidentifiable.

<sup>2</sup> There is no written report by Telford on the Brora coal; for John Farey's visit to Sutherland in 1812, see above, i, p. lxiii.

ought always to be picked out before the delivery of the Coal. It runs thus throughout: [here follows a sketch]. This it appears prevails in both veins and makes more difficulty in the working. But the vein which sinks so low at Brora, appears here in the surface, and that may occasion a question if it would not be well to bore at Uppat rather than at Brora deeper, to judge of the strata that may lye lower, as all these strata at Uppat will of course lye so much nearer the surface, and there the Boring can be done at a trifling expence, for example £100, or 150£. Query do any of Farey's observations lead him to suppose there is coal at Uppat? I beleive he did not examine that neighbourhood, but am not sure. He did look at the coast there.

We looked at the new Plantation at Uppat which is well inclosed, the plants of last year very visible from the road, these of this year looking as the others did the last. The Stone Cottage there has got two Chimneys and looks well.

We went down to the Inn at Brora, which looks very well, and is clean and comfortable, Mrs Walklate dressing the dinner for the Coal overseers and all looking very comfortable. We went on to the Coal. Three vessels are lying in the Harbour, which with the rail way are complete and as neat as possible. The Harbour is not as large as Hughes would have had it, but every way large enough and *to boot*. At the Colliery we found the Coal coming up very fast and the waggons ready to receive it, and some going along the rail way to finish loading a 20 Tun vessel from Cromarty, and one lying of 40 Tun from Aberdeen, but the Colliers below are finishing a cross cut to unite two passages and till that is done (which will be in a few days) they cannot work at piece work, consequently they probably do not bring up all they might, and only fetch about 20 Tun a day, so these People's vessels are not loaded so quickly as they ought. There is an underground surveyor below of the name of Rammage, who we did not see, but we saw a Young man called Miller employed as Clerk and upper surveyor recommended by Mr Bald and who comes from a very flourishing Colliery near Glasgow of a Mr Dickson's. This man seems, though young, to be very intelligent and remarkably fair and candid in all he says. He told us that the nature of the vein, with this substance in the heart of it, occasions more delay in the working and reduces the vein in fact

from 3 foot 4 Inches to 2 foot 8 Inches, therefore it would be highly desirable before more expense is incurred to see if there are more under veins, and that for that purpose he has already bored some depth at the bottom of the Pit, but has come into a softer substance which prevents his being able to guess what may succeed to this change of the metals. He says the field of Coal is undoubtedly very large, but that he has already come to a trifling hitch ten days ago and that there is probably another near, as the coal evidently goes so up from Brora towards Cline, also up towards Uppat, that therefore he would incline to try the experiment of boring at Uppat, to see nearer the surface and more easily what veins lay lower. I therefore write all this in detail to receive your directions upon it, if this boring should take place or not. In mentioning this hitch he called it a trifling one, and that by turning and working in a different direction the coal would equally go on, but I shall have a more full account of it tomorrow. In the mean time Gower and I thought it right to direct Young to stop all works not absolutely necessary to the immediate working of the Coal, for fear of doing anything to render a removal of the work inconvenient, not that we see any reason to apprehend this from what we have already heard, but because we thought it prudent to do so. Anything that has been done is not thrown away in the worst event, the Cottages built for work people at Brora are even necessary in future and will let so as to return a  $6\frac{1}{2}$  Interest on the outlay, and the overseer's House will do for a farm. The rail ways etc. could be removed to Uppat, and the Harbour at Brora is an affair of the first importance in all Events to the Country in consideration of the other sources of improvement that are opened. We therefore desire orders from you, if our measures should be persevered in or not, as for the present we have told him not to engage for the prosecution of the salt work there. There is already an excellent Brick work begun that is to say 20,000 Bricks are made. The first few hundreds were not well burnt, but they have built a good Cottage with noggin.<sup>1</sup> The rest are good, but as the man who makes them is a drunken fellow, we can discharge him if it appears proper and Young need not engage another. In short it appears both to this overseer and to ourselves that the most prudent way is to give this Coal a trial for a year, we shall then judge of its

<sup>1</sup> Brickwork built up between wooden quarters or framing (O.E.D.).

real value, have time to ascertain the situation of the Coal (of its extent there appears no doubt), and you will be able to judge by what is produced of the fair return to be expected. The works are in high order and very neat, quite compact, the lower people have taken to burning Coal, inshort there is nothing wanting but to ascertain the particulars I allude to, of care of working and continuance of finding it at a cost which can afford a sale fitted to what the People who buy it can give. There is a great eagerness to obtain it on all the coast, Inverness, Cromarty, Aberdeen etc. Pray send us Instructions, I am glad we came here to see clearly how it is.

I asked Young to tell me the sum total you have expended on Coal works and the Cottages and buildings belonging to the concern. He is to give me the detail, but he says it is within 14,000£ and from what we hear we conclude at the worst 10 per Cent will be got from the money. Now pray observe that we are representing all this in the *least* favourable possible view but we thought it right to let you know every thing exactly as we heard and saw it, and *me voici au fond de l'encrier*. We shall go again to Brora tomorrow morning to expiscate further unless it is very fine and we are tempted to go to Morwich.

Sellar has been paying the publick burthens out of the Whitsuntide rents, and 1,000£ to Young. I am to have a day with him soon on accounts, rentals etc. This Estate will produce this year £10,000 clear, the rental about £20,000. The improvements beginning to repay, and nothing more but what is very trifling in that way now remaining, this rental will be increased after the present year. The improvements really are astonishing both with regard to appearance and the disposition of the People in the neighbourhood of them. There are still five or six of the steady Sutherland People working at the Coal. Pray make Charlotte read this letter over to you if you want to hear it more than once, to save Pies, which I hope are now quite restored. I have not sneezed once.

I wish Farey's Map and observations could be sent here. Miller wishes to see them. They can come by the *Brough Head* by sea.

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 7 July 1814: windy but rather fine

After Church I expected Sellar with his accounts, but he puts me off till tomorrow, so I have been labouring all morning at Young's accounts which are much detailed but appear very correct. I wish you may find my abstract easy to understand but it was the best I could do and in the articles is correct. I could not detail further, and wish to know if you would have me bring the account to you, or take it first with the Vouchers to be audited by Mackenzie. The Ballance stated as at present due to Young is £9,053. He will require before the Year concludes £2,000 more for completions and then instead of paying more you will receive the regular rents. I mean to make out an exact state with him before I go of every little as well as great expence required, and to have all in *black and white* that can be proposed, and his future march regularly laid down, so that there can be no expence unforeseen or not known of. Hughes is arrived and gone with Young to Rives, and then I shall hear what is proposed. I shall send you the exact documents and statements on all sides respecting the Coal and then you will have time to decide what is best to be done in the future proceedings with regard to it. The whole estate is now arranged the particulars of which I am to get from Sellar. The Strathnaver People are well satisfied with their double rent, the others are quiet and going on well. The thing that remains to be done is to get them all into a regular habit of paying, and to keep them to Industry which will exercise Young some time longer. I am very glad we came here as we shall get them into regular order and prevent flying on with schemes without knowing exactly how they are to turn out. The agricultural ones by what I hear will answer well, and though the People here are sanguine about the Coal and confirmed in that opinion by Bald, yet I think from Miller's conversation that it would be infinitely preferable for you to let the concern, as Young cannot be constantly there and is no Collier himself after all, and now it is set agoing it will be done more to the advantage of all Parties by a man who will afford to pay a reasonable rent and who can be the better able to do so by attending to it as his own concern. This I beleive is also your opinion so I need not bother any farther by enlarging upon it. But I shall have

to send you some long reports upon it, and will have it all in writing.

Evening. Young saw Hughes, and is come here to report what passed. Hughes said his opinion of the Coal was the same as ever whatever Mr Miller might think who had come from a very rich colliery of Dickson's which produces £10,000 per annum. He said he knew of the hitches and Dykes as well as Miller, and of the stone, but thought it a good concern in spite of all. Young then told him that as you could not of course oversee it yourself you had a sort of idea of letting it and wished to mention it first to him, in words as I stated to you we proposed to do. Hughes said he had an intention at present of engaging with a lead work in Galloway or Gallway, but after some conversation Young said 'Well Mr Hughes if I were to take half the concern myself would you undertake it with me?' Hughes said he would in that case, so Young thinks the best way will be for him and Hughes jointly to make an offer and there is an Elgin man of the name of Jack who Young thinks will perhaps undertake a part and reside as manager which he thinks will be necessary. Young says he likes the sort of active speculation, that he thinks the carrying on this coal of infinite importance to the north and that with his opinion of it he has no scruple in risking a considerable Capital and that he will keep Hughes to work and take care that you are paid whatever is agreed on regularly; in short he seems quite alive with the idea, but you will hear more particularly in a few Posts. He says that if it were his own concern he would be confident of success, but that in case of accident he would not take it upon him to advise you to do so. I really think this scheme would do very well. Young says the length of lease must be considered. If of 21 years a natural break might be at the end of 14, but many other points must be considered, of new boring, and where they are to have the power of sinking etc. They will also require to take a farm. He also wishes to know *in limine* if you have any objection to his being concerned in it, also if you would chuse to take a Share yourself. With Young's Capital I should think it will go on well. The People of the Country will say he has taken us in if it answers, but that must not be minded having previously considered of a bargain. This is all as yet.

Young said that he should think after the great press of business is

over he ought to have a smaller Sallary, which appears very fair but for another year I do not think it would be well to alter it as he certainly is as busy as possible and will continue so for that time at least in putting all things on their established footing.

Friday morning: fine day, rather windy.

I was very glad to receive Charlotte's of the 2d last night, and to hear how all was going on at Richmond and of Vernons and Macdonalds. You will begin to hate the sight of my Letters, they must be so tiresome with all this Coal.

1st. I have had a *Tete à Tete* with Sellar this morning and have read his rentals – all perfection like Bradshaw's, and as neat. I inclose an abstract and shall bring the rest with me. I had some private conversation with him respecting the real state of the Coal. His idea is that the Coal in the hands of Persons who are used to coal and have an interest in it, and are fitted to undertake the management themselves will turn out well, and afford a good rent to the proprietor and a profit to the managers, but that where it is under the proprietor he does not think it possible to get the overseers to turn it to the same account. He said he thought if Hughes, aided by Young's Capital undertook it, it would be very desirable provided the offer appeared reasonable. Young is just gone down with Hughes to Brora and Sellar with him. Young wants to get his offer and then he will send over in the packet to a Mr Jack a Salter who Young says would manage the Salt work, for they must have a salt work to enrich the concern as they say they would look to greater profit from Salt than Coal. Sellar says that when Bald came and gave his report, he said Pritchards men were not doing half what the Alloa Colliers would do; now the Alloa Colliers are here it appears they do not half what was expected, and he says if he were placed in the Pit as Overseer he should not know how to direct so as to remedy this. Sellar has not himself been employed or consulted in the Coal, so what he says is merely from his own observation. He therefore says he thinks that by getting Hughes who is very indefatigable engaged in the concern by his own Interest being engaged in it, it will go on very differently. He says he can answer for it no zeals or pains was wanting in Young, for he was as if his whole substance was engaged in it all along, but not being a Collier himself, he could not personally direct these People. I will send you Miller's



report along with Hughes's offer when I get it, perhaps by the next Post. I must put the abstracts of accounts in another Cover.

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 11 July 1814: very fine day, two Showers

I will put my coal narrative in a separte Paper and talk a little of other things. I am very happy to receive Charlotte's and Elizabeth's little notes respecting affairs at Richmond, and trust Pies are forgotten as they have not been mentioned the last two days. We walked over the farm this evening. It was delightful – the fields, cattle and young planting in the greatest beauty, the wheat a very rich crop, the roses blowing, the Pinks blown. All things in excellent order, the Stables look very well, finished to nearly the top of the Walls. We went to see how the new wood has thinned at Uppat, and think very judiciously. The Firs are amazingly thick and fine Trees in places we never saw – little Villiers full of them. Sandy Urquhart and his Crew had already purchased the cut Timber for their herring fishing in Caithness, for which they sail on Saturday. We past all yesterday in examing Colliers and were at Brora the greatest part of this morning. We are in great want of Staunton or a judicious Shropshire man to set the Colliery on the proper footing. The Fifeshire People have gone all wrong, though the men are well disposed and might do well under good direction, but these overseers will not do. I had a Letter tonight from Castle Howard where they are arrived and well but say the foliage does not exist on the trees. It is very odd it should be so luxuriant here, and the pruned Trees exceed our expectations. The young firs at Uppat etc. this year too large to be inclosed in a Letter. Frederick Howard was arrived at Paris with his Regiment and found the Sloanes. This article for Charlotte. I am glad to hear of the Bronze for Lord Wellington, much better than a Dinner. *Petit Cheval, gentil Cheval* etc.

I have read Malthus on population. He might have said it all in one page. He longs to drown Children but proves that the population, do what you will, will take care of itself. George and I have had a terrible week of anxiety about this Coal. He is a sensible well

behaved Creature, I think I never saw anybody so right in their ways and with less fuss and affectation. He is very quiet and single hearted *à ce qui me semble*. He is anxious that you should know any item that happens and I make him sometimes read my reports, but this he will not read as I must finish it tonight for the post. A letter from Shiberscross complaining of not being heard. It is very singular that two days ago I found in your Secretaire a Copy in your own writing of your Letter to him last August offering to hear him. This is *à point nommé* for my reply. An invitation to go to Wemyss. One of the Colliers from thence told us his Colliery produces clear of expence Coal for his own use and to give away, but his profit of last year was only from the Salt works £3,000. I cannot stay to receive an answer to this here so we must act on our own judgement upon the immediate points of the coal as you will see in my supplement. William Walklate and I have delayed the Brewery for this year till he ascertains about Malt.

I have enquired about Lime. The proposal from Hughes and Young etc. offers to supply this Country at 4s. per Sutherland Boll. The Morayshire Lime is 5s. but of an inferior quality. The Sutherland also 5s. but the measure about a quarter smaller, the Lime much better than the Morayshire.

About Salt. The building etc. of two Salt Pans costs about 2,000£. The Fife people are supposed to be more uneasy about our Salt than any thing else, as the demand for it would probably be about one third of their business, being the supply north of Peterhead. The Queries about Salt cannot probably be so well answered by a Shropshire Man. Staunton (Loch will be able to know) may know something of it. That will rest with other things for your decision.

The Collier I have mentioned in my supplement inclosed, David Allen, says he has heard his grandfather worked under Williams<sup>1</sup> at Brora, that the scheme then failed from Williams having been bribed (that is also said here) and that he could not help thinking there was something of the same sort now, but whether this is so or

<sup>1</sup> For John Williams (1730-95), author of *Natural History of the Mineral Kingdom* (Edinburgh, 1789), see J. F. Daubuisson, trans. P. Neill, *An Account of the Basalts of Saxony* (Edinburgh, 1814), 255 (I am indebted to Dr Charles Waterston for this information). According to Farey's report (see above, i, p. lxiii) Williams mined coal at Brora between 1764 and 1769.

not we cannot guess. If it is I should think Rammage must be the Person acted upon, as Young says his language and manner has changed so much since his return from Fife.

Bald stopt the boring, saying he was quite content with this vein of Coal and thought it sufficient. Now you see we think it better to go on boring to see if there is really any more or not. Wemyss's coal or rather the Dysert coal lies 360 feet below the surface, ours 240, so if we find some 30 foot or 100 foot deeper we are still less deep than they. Pritchard had already sunk a little way and found two veins of six inches each below the present. Sellar went down today. He says the undulation appears very trifling to look at and he thinks they make a pretence of it which makes him altogether very anxious for good authority, but we have not said (indeed we do not know) that you mean to send a surveyor.

Pritchard was dismissed for being too indolent and probably was so, and we would not take him again and a new under ground manager must be found. One man fit for the purpose will do both as upper and under ground manager.

It being supposed that the new Managers from Fife had influenced the Colliers and were trying to depreciate the Coal, they have been examined, together with six of the Colliers, two from Fife, four of the former Sutherland Colliers. These men agree that Rammage had changed the mode of working, contrary to their opinions, and these two have since agreed to work in the former way cutting under the Coal, letting it fall, and without Props. The four Sutherland men have also agreed to do so at 16 pence per square yard. The reasons the managers gave for this was, that this Coal could not be worked to advantage in that way, but they did not give satisfactory reasons for this, and Rammage's manner altogether was such and so unsatisfactory in his explanation that, from the appearance he showed of dislike to listen to any argument or to give his reasons further than by saying he disliked the coal, we have been determined to dismiss him. The other promises to give it a fair trial but we do not place much confidence in him. The report of the Colliers having taken an Oath appears to be true, and we thought at first it was connected with a demand for more pay, but it turns out to be probably only a sort of association to assist each other, not unusual among Colliers it is said, but what is in general discouraged by the

managers, or ought to be so. At least so one of them said who had refused to take it.

The other Fifeshire Collier, says he has a good opinion of the Coal but differed from the managers in the way they had adopted of working it, as occasioning loss of time. He and the first man agreed to work it in the former way. The Managers report that the stone has increased in one part of the Coal, and that they have come to a part which is not a hitch but an undulation. They hope to get over this in a day or so, and then it will be seen what is beyond. In order to prepare the Coal for inspection (but without giving that reason) we have directed them to follow a plan of Balds, of driving two levels 150 yards (I think) each to right and left, thereby showing if that extention can be depended on. If it turns out well, it proves a large field without interruption. This they recommend as a secure measure. The Colliers and managers both say that an inferior Strata is very probably to be found near, that it is almost constantly succeeding such a Vein, and of a superior quality, that it would be well to bore at the bottom of the Pit. We have therefore directed this to be done as soon as possible, as by doing so every possible means is taken to ascertain the whole. The boring tools are ready. Miller said at first he had men who could bore, he now says he has not. Therefore we have written to Hughes who also recommends this to send two men from Inverness immediately, so that the Person sent to report will have every possible means afforded of judging as to the prospect of a Colliery.

How you must abominate the sight of my Letters! Not more than I dislike the prevailing subject of them myself, but it is better these matters should be fully expiscated though it has cost me some Jactitations. Young and Sellar were at Brora all day and are here at 11 at night wet through in a violent Shower and are to ride home and be at Brora again tomorrow at 7 oClock via Gordon Bush. If it is fair we go to Port Gower, if foul Sellar will return here to look over his accounts and ellucidate. He would have had us in the Coal Pit today if he could, but it appeared to us that we could not have done much, and sinking down in a trough is not pleasant.

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 18 July 1814: fine grey day

We have been holding a *Lit de Justice* and have done it extremely well. Turned out two Assynt rioters who came down to be pardoned, but as they say turning out one or two makes more impression than anything else, I thought it right that they should not be restored, so they are denuded. Some old People applying for Lots, all well settled.

Sellar tells me he has great suspicions of Miller though now he is brought to act fairly. He spread disadvantageous reports of the Coal. He set the men a working in the most expensive and destructive way. He tried to prove the expence of working it to be above what it would afford. He now puts the best face upon it, and seeing it must be done he lets them work as we found the best method enjoined by Bald, and followed also by Pritchard. He follows and adopts Bald's plan which was certainly a good one of proving the Coal and driving the levels, but with all this he is evidently discouraging the man (David Allen) who first offered to work at 4s. per day. He encourages the men (tacitly) to ask higher wages, and did not punish them for attacking the men who work at the fair rate. In short Sellar says he is convinced his heart is not with our Coal work. They cut Allen's coat to pieces when he was in bed. The four Sutherland men, Allen and two or three others behave well and work as they ought, but they are evidently not favourites of Miller. Our opinion of the coal rises with all we hear and observe. It is thought the Lime work will be very productive, the quality excellent. All this renders it the more necessary to consider before any answer is given to Hughes' proposal. I tell you all this that you may as much as possible know things as if you were here. The impression here is that these Fifeshire People wished to do everything to give us an unfavourable impression of the Coal and to induce us if possible not to carry it on. You ought therefore to know all that is said on both sides, though a bore. I find a man will fairly hole three square yards of Coal a day, that is a Tun and a half. Going this morning to revise Uppat, to see the planting at Clayside and Sellar's farm. The new Leases are to be added to the rental I mentioned yesterday to show what it will be in 1815, £18,700. The

Apartment in the Castle at Dornoch we propose to let (perhaps for an Inn) with the Garden.

4 oClock. A shower came on, it was too wet for Uppat etc. so we went to Mr Sellars. He is busy making hay and to have it in a large Hayrick in a fortnight. We see his farm in excellent order. He has taken in 24 acres of the large green nobby field above his House, the taking the large stones out cost £80. He does the other half next year. He made £500 profit last year of his Cattle. The Sheep we are to hear more of as we had not time to go back to see the wool. The black Houses are levelled, making manure. The plain is really a very fine sight.

On coming home we observed a number of black Spots in the sea. What are these? said Mrs Dixon – little whales? On looking through the telescope we discovered 29 fishing boats *apud* Herring, two large vessels at a distance, one and a Boat in the harbour. There were little things running fast in the sand below the Pier with men pushing them, evidently not dogs but something like them. They also puzzled Mrs Dixon, but turn out to be Herring barrels for Angus Ross rolling down to embark in his boat. We are *monsus* hungry and dinner will not be ready this hour.

Messrs Young and Sellar dine here and in the evening we are to digest *à travail* on the Rampart with some labourers to settle what is to be done to ensure our safety by taking some of it away, and to take Jottings on many other subjects of which Young has got a Pocket book full tied round with a String.

There is a fine new county and government road made from Tain to the Iron Bridge,<sup>1</sup> to be opened in September next. Also, the County of Ross are to build an Inn about a Mile from the Iron Bridge and to endow it with a Farm. We saw part of the road near Tain. The road from Alness to the Iron Bridge will not be made for a year or two after the appointed time, owing to the Bankruptcy of the Contractor, Mackenzie the old mason.

The people begin to be ashamed of Embo. They say it looks so unlike the rest of the Coast.

I should think with the new Rossshire Inn, a cottage to water Horses merely will be sufficient at Spinningdale between the Iron Bridge and Golspy, and that Gilchrist may endow.

<sup>1</sup> Bonar Bridge.

7 oClock. What a beautiful Evening – a ray of Sun on the Tips of the trees, Pier and sea, Angus Ross's boat (the barrels all shining) going out, the People on the Pier talking to the men in the Boat – 'youth at the prow and pleasure at the Helm'. It really is very pretty, and from the boat and rocks one of the most picturesque things I ever saw. Nuss<sup>1</sup> at her window seeing it, George below in the dining room with Young and Sellar.

Currie and Greenslade<sup>2</sup> have been this morning to see William Walklate at Brora, and what do you think? Rammage is still there, feasting the Colliers and making them drink and quarrel. Mrs Walklate told Greenslade of this, who said she could not help telling it me. I sent for Young. He said he was aware of it. Sellar also knew it. It is almost certain there is something to be found out, and in consequence of the ill treatment Allen and the Colliers who hole under the Parrot<sup>3</sup> at former wages have received and the want of protection Miller etc. have given them, we are almost sure this man is operating upon them. There is to be a justice of peace examination to take place tomorrow. Young said Rammage did not go in the Packet the night we thought he did, staying to receive a ballance of his wages. He was to have sailed in the *Malvina* for Aberdeen. It is not likely he would feast them upon his own money.

Hughes writes that he has sent two borers, they are first to sink about 4 yards for conveniency. They will then be through the clay vein, and he thinks in new metals. He says if the men do not hole under the Parrot he must withdraw from his offer as it will ruin the character of the Coal. Young thinks Millar is ignorant, and misled by Rammage but any how very cold and indifferent. An Aberdeen Ship carried out 50 Tun of Coal this morning. She wished for 80. Another from Banff wishing to ballast her vessel went away without any. The Captain promised the Servants he would wait till Saturday, but while they went to the Pit he went off in spite of all they had said. This delay is very provoking. Young has sent a Letter to the Inverness Paper to explain it.

<sup>1</sup> Nursery-talk: the Marchioness is referring to herself.

<sup>2</sup> House-steward and lady's maid, who had accompanied the Marchioness to Sutherland.

<sup>3</sup> The Brora coal-seam contained a narrow bituminous band of 'parrot' or 'cannel' coal (see above, i, p. 147). The main body of miners were refusing to dig out this band.

Monday night, 12 oClock. Delightful! The post came in just as I was going to bed and has brought your's of the 12th with Charlotte's and Elizabeth's. You have got my first regular coal information, and your opinion is come quite in time for boring at Uppat provided there should no unforeseen obstacle arise, in which case the boring will not take place till you give further orders. If Hughes had renewed his former offer it would have done well, but as it is your having a third with him and Young is I think better than his having it entirely. Sellar is proceeding to find out the source and cause of all this confusion and quarelling at Brora and if we can *prove* anything against Rammage. We really dont know what to think of Miller. At one moment his reports appear fair and true, then his conduct with the men makes us beleive he has a bias against us and that he wants to prove the working too high for the price. We think we have got near to a proof that we can get the Coal to the Pit mouth at 3s. per Tun. If so there will be a considerable profit, but if at 5s. per Tun there will be profit, though the great profit is to be looked for from Salt and Lime. Query is allowing you 5 per Cent for your works sufficient? Answer, you have also a third of the Profit. I dont know how all this is. Farey's affairs will arrive in time for Staunton if you send him as we hope.

I suspect George and I have felt much more anxiety about all this than you do or I hope ever will do. We have gone over the rentals tonight with Young and Sellar taking notes of all that is to be done, of which I shall bring a Copy. I go over the particular directions about place and Farm etc. with Young besides. Sellar is an excellent man of business but has not enlarged views, and plagues people about trifles. Young has a much better general head, great zeal, and I beleive perfect honesty, but he is not so correct a writer and accountant. He has however a good Clerk. Young has also a good deal of feeling, and I beleive I have made him suffer a little in reprimands about expence etc. lately, but I consulted George who thought it quite right, when I did so. Well, I shall soon be able to talk to you about all these things (what a bore I shall be!). I think we may get to Trentham the 28th. I hope Elizabeth will not reprimand me for not being a person of my word in coming a day too late. I will attend to what you say about the rail, etc. I wish you were here about the Rampart. We shall do as little as



possible, Young is unwilling to let them do anything, but the wall is too dangerous. They begin tomorrow morning at 6 o'clock so we shall see it done. We go to Dornoch tomorrow to look at the Castle etc. and to Skelbo, and dine afterwards at Young's. Miss Young will subscribe to the Bronze. . . . [health details].

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 20 July 1814: fine day

After winding up our Coal concerns yesterday at Brora, the result is a calculation of labour and other expences which will give us a profit of 3s. per Tun which Miller says is more than the produce of most Scotch Collierys. The Hitch was very trifling and the coal has improved since they got through it. Miller says it turns out better the further they drive the level, the stone rather diminished. Young recommends it as highly necessary that Staunton or a man of that sort be sent not only to direct and advise but to give a fair Opinion and see Farrey's and all the other opinions before you settle about the offer. He says till that is done he will watch the Coal every day and do all he can, but he cannot trust to Miller who is evidently an idle Fellow and who by his own confession is afraid of being out of favor with the Coal Masters if he does not get for the men the highest wages he can here. In short not at all in our Interest; honest enough however in saying 'he will do what he can for us though against his own Interest'. This proves that we cannot think of keeping him after we have found another fit to undertake the work.

The more I see and hear of Sellar the more I am convinced he is not fit to be trusted further than he is at present. He is so exceedingly greedy and harsh with the people, there are very heavy complaints against him from Strathnaver in taking possession of his farm, not allowing the indulgence others have always done the first half year, etc., etc. This is to be examined and I believe it will be necessary to bring him before Cranstoun. He is full of law Quirks and with a good natured appearance is too much the reverse in conduct, besides having no judgement or discrimination. Young's own idea is that his own Sallary ought to be much reduced when the arrangements are over, about Martinmas. If he has the share in the Coal he will take Rhives at a full rent, perhaps Uppat if you see it expedient

to let it as a farm. You can allow him two or three hundred a Year instead of £1,000, he will act as Vice Lieutenant and general overseer of the Estate which Sellar I am convinced would not do well, and without raising eternal riots and complaints. Besides Young in this situation will be a good *locum tenens* and director of all things in our absence and manage the Dunrobin Farm accounts. So I think we may reform in all events £600 a year in the expences of management.

I have got a note of the addition to the rental for 1815. It is £1,800, so with the 17,200£ already given in the whole in 1815 will amount to £19,000, about 50£ more or less. We are now impatient to be gone, and should go tomorrow if we could get horses, but we shall not be able to have them all ready and our Servants and Trunks by the Packet till Friday, so we shall certainly set off the 22d, and that I hope will bring us to Trentham on Thursday night. If we should arrive late from any unforeseen affair Forrester may as well have the north end room ready for me that I may not make a noise and disturb the Family for I think we shall probably come from Burton and considering these roads it may be late.

James Loch to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Trentham, 5 September 1814

. . . [Staffordshire politics].

I wish to add an Account of the Brora works as reported on by Daniel<sup>1</sup> and my observations are the substance of a long letter to Young<sup>2</sup> which I wrote at Lord and Lady Staffords desire. From Daniels Account it would appear that the underground operations have been conducted from the beginning upon the most erroneous principles. They display the greatest ignorance of the Colliery, and do not seem to have been conducted without some degree of roguery on the part of the Colliers. The Gob or small coal is actually on fire both below and above ground. None of the levels are decently driven even as far as they were carried and none of these were carried far enough. Daniel left a plan for working, which Mr

<sup>1</sup> William Daniel, bailiff at the Marquis' mine at Lane End, Staffs., was sent to inspect the Brora workings in the summer of 1814.

<sup>2</sup> Written on 31 August 1814\*.

Young was already for departing from on the report of the Scotch Colliers that the same thing could be effected in a cheaper way. Lady Stafford has stopped the alteration, and a first rate Collier of the name of John German was engaged by me yesterday at £120 per annum, house, Coal and Cows Grass, who leaves this upon Thursday to take the management of the Coal Work. I have written to Mr Young that he is to be on the same footing at Brora as Burgess is here, that is that the detail of the underground work is to be as much out of his controul at Brora as it is out of mine at Meirheath, but that all accounts, extra Works, mens wages etc. are to be subject to his Approval and revision. Under this management I hope matters will go better, and I have endeavoured to impress upon the Mans mind not to think of putting out Coal until his mine is quite ready for it, and in this I was happy to find I was strongly supported by Lord Stafford. I have also stated to Mr Young, what appear to Suther and Burgess to be, from Daniels report, the future prospects of Brora, which in a few words is that it will return under very good management a decent profit for the outlay, but that it never will be a fortune to the family. If it should be otherwise so much the better. If they could put out 100 Tons a day for example, which I am afraid they cannot, the profit may be about £1,200 per annum. The extent of Coal which can be brought out by the present pit is from side to side 150 yards and to the rise of the coal 100 out of which space of 30,000 Square Yards 20,000 Ton of Coal will be got. They are supposed to sell for 9s. a Ton. They will cost 5s. a Ton to put them out, which leaves upon the whole quantity a profit of £4,000, out of which is to be deducted management, loss upon the hill, expence of Shipping etc. besides the interest of the outlay which we may call £15,000. Your Lordship will think that I am giving but a gloomy account of this, but I really only state what the best opinions are. And at the same time I must state that I think the works properly conducted as they now will be, will be productive of very great collateral advantages to the estate and family by the increased industry Activity and spirit of improvement to which they will undoubtedly give rise. If Rhives lime becomes a work of any extent, this alone will be of incalculable advantage in furthering the improvement of the surface of the estate, the chief object in my view of the question to be considered. Besides it will

afford the means to the little tenants and settlers to build their Cottages with lime which they have scarcely the means of now doing, and I cannot help urging whenever this question is under consideration the propriety of husbanding this lime for the use of the estate in place of endeavouring to sell it to Strangers. It never will produce an annual income of itself worth consideration, but will as the means of improvement if kept for the use of the tenants, be productive of the most material consequences to the Estate of Sutherland. If I were permitted to say what appeared to me to be the Object which should engage the attention of the Marquis it would be the construction of means of Communication through the estate. I do not say roads lest I should be thought to mean carriage roads, but ways just wide enough for their highland Carts, made in the rudest fashion, by removing the large stones, making some side cutting on the side of the hills, and making the Morasses passable. This I would recommend being done by the Statute Labour being at one half of the outlay, the proprietor at the other. On the road through the Crask,<sup>1</sup> up Kildonan and down Strathnaver, I would recommend a little more care as it would be both a satisfaction and a pleasure and a prodigious addition to the enjoyment of Dunrobin Castle to be able to drive to Clarke Hill<sup>2</sup> for a day or two occasionally. Bridges could be done without at least in the first instance and the outlay should be gradual. Such roads would increase the value of the estate very much, and the more so as I cannot help considering one part of the value of an estate consists in the possibility of the proprietor being able to move about and see it. I must however leave these lucubrations and give your Lordship some account of our proceedings here, which are more moderate at present. . . . [Trentham management details].

\* James Loch to Marchioness of Stafford

Richmond Park, 29 September 1814

Owing to the carelessness of the Richmond Coachman I had not the honour to receive the packet containing the plan of the lands

<sup>1</sup> The Crask of Glen Loth, to be distinguished from the pass of the same name between Lairg and Altnaharra.

<sup>2</sup> Clerkhill, par. Farr.

near Brora with your Ladyships letters until last night. Your Ladyship may depend upon my doing what your Ladyship and Lord Stafford desires upon this subject and that without loss of time.

I regret that your Ladyship should have thought it necessary to write on the subject of the *Kirk* which although I thought it incumbent on me to forward, I did not think I could ask your Ladyship to answer, especially as I thought it an *oddish* request.<sup>1</sup>

Your Ladyship will have the goodness to give the letter<sup>2</sup> from Young which I received by yesterdays post, and as I was writing to your Ladyship I thought it would be as well to mention the subject of money in this letter as to trouble his Lordship with a separate one upon the subject. From Young's letter it is apparent that he had not received mine of the 14th ult. desiring him to draw upon Messrs Child and Company for £4,000, which with his former bill which became due upon the 27th makes £9,000. I am sorry to see however that he has still acceptances to further account of at least £2,000 from Ross's letter<sup>3</sup> which is enclosed in Youngs. I also fear the Cash Credit for £5,000 (for which I think it was) is also exhausted which must be replaced at the end of the year. I have twice begged him to let me know how this was, as I see from the state of the Scotch rents that will also have to be remitted from hence, which was not the understanding nor the intended use of granting this cash credit. This will make the debt in Scotland still to be liquidated from this £7,000, but I fear it may be more as there must be there, as everywhere, outstanding current expences. Your Ladyship however will see that this state depends upon the situation of the Cash credit which I only guess at. I lament that your Ladyship cannot get an exact account of all that is owing or is likely to be owing on the estate of Sutherland so as to enable me to lay before his Lordship a plan for its liquidation and future payment, from the funds arising here as far as they will go or his Lordship may approve of. Supposing Youngs bill for £4,000 paid, the balance at Childs will be £6,887 11s. 4d. out of which we shall have to pay the half

<sup>1</sup> Lord Keith had approached Loch seeking the Marchioness' patronage for an unidentified clerical nominee. The Marchioness replied on 25 September 1814\* through Loch declining to present anyone with whom she was not personally acquainted.

<sup>2</sup> Written to the Marquis on 22 September 1814\*.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Ross, British Linen Company bank agent in Tain.

yearly interests and quarterly annuities payable there, the Trentham fortnightly bills which are now heavy, the half yearly Straw Accounts and other bills payable at Trentham. The only old debts (for there are none within my time) yet unpaid are the following, the balance of Kynnersleys Account, £666 2s. 6½d., with an old account of Lowndes's, an Account of Hinckleys, and an account for the repair of a house at Lichfield done several years ago. Upon this last a per Centage is to be paid. These being paid I shall have liquidated all the debts owing here, except Mr Smiths Newcastle repairing bills which I will both postpone and curtail. I believe these items I have mentioned to his Lordship more than once both by letter and in conversation. I mention them again here to shew that from Childs I do not think any assistance can be got for Young beyond the £9,000. If his Lordship expects any money from Bradshaw soon, perhaps he could give some money from Drummonds if he thinks that proper. By the accounts your Ladyship brought up from Sellar it would appear that the arrears amount for this year to £2,000 or thereabouts which when paid will not amount to much. These papers I locked up at Trentham in order to return them to your Ladyship. Would it not be proper then with your Ladyships leave to know how the expences are to be paid until any new rents are due in Sutherland.

From these papers I made out that the Rent in 1813 was (con-  
vetting the Victual and Kind Rents into money)

		£15,703 10s. 4½d.
for 1814		£18,181 1s. 1½d.
The outgoings for 1813 were as paid by Sellar		
Annuities and Salaries		£294 7s. 6d.
Road Assessments		2,120 10s. 9½d.
Dornoch disbursements		6 10s.
Taxes: Cess and County	£335 10s. 10d.	
Assessed	94 5s. 4d.	
Property Tax 1812	1,368 14s. 10½d.	
1813	1,364 16s. 1d.	3,163 7s. 1½d.
Ground officers and Woodkeepers		176 2s. 7½d.
Stipends		965 13s. 2½d.
Schoolmasters		158 12s. 2d.
		£6,885 3s. 4½d.

Of this sum your Ladyship will see £1,368 14s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. was for the property Tax of the year preceding.

... [expenditure on English estates].

This letter has insensibly got to be a letter as much connected with his Lordships estate in England as with the Sutherland Estate but I was desirous of giving his Lordship and you what appeared to me a view of the present state of his Lordships money concerns and what should with his Lordships approbation be our next years work. The late Lord left the buildings here in a most dilapidated state and from the leasehold tenants not being called upon to perform their repairing covenants much loss and unnecessary loss has been incurred by the family. By degrees partly at his Lordships expence where the tenants are at Rack rent, at the tenants expence where they are Leasehold, the buildings must be put into repair or they will be a most serious load to the estate.

I agree perfectly well with your Ladyship in the propriety of pushing the sale of Coal to the utmost as soon as the works are fit for it at Brora, but your Ladyship will see without another pit, a hundred tons of Coal cannot be put out a day. It is my opinion and I believe it is Suthers that for Lime burning, it will go as far south as Aberdeen, but that for economical purposes the Newcastle coal will be preferred in all the considerable towns. I found my opinion on two grounds, the first is from the Newcastle coal being used in Edinburgh and in Fife in preference to the Midlothian and Fife Coals, the other is that Mr Adams factor at Blair Adam told me that upon Calculation he was certain he could burn Newcastle coal cheaper there than purchase it at Kelty within one Mile of his house. I mention this to shew what for my opinion (which however I only mention to hint for consideration) should be the markets to push for. What I mentioned as to the Lime proceeded upon the quantity at Rhives being only a small nucleus, and that with submission to his Lordship and your Ladyship I would recommend its extent to be ascertained before any great expence being laid out upon it. I should certainly apologise most extremely for the liberty I thus take, but I have in Scotland both in my own family and connections and among my acquaintances especially Sir Robert Preston,<sup>1</sup> seen so much money laid out without a return that I am timid perhaps too

<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert Preston (1740-1834), 6th Bart., of Valleyfield.

much. In Mr Adams case I have lately, upon being consulted where he has an excellent and extensive lime rock, given similar advice. I hope your Ladyship will not attribute nor that his Lordship will attribute what I have said, to any wish that the money should be expended in England rather than in Scotland, that would be on my part a piece of impertinence, which I am sure your Ladyship will not think me capable of, but in roads, small piers, assisting the fishermen perhaps with small premiums in their first adventures all appear to me worthy of much consideration. His Lordships territories are a kingdom and ought to be considered in this light by those he employs, by submitting from time to time for his and your Ladyships consideration what occurs to them, so that nothing wrong may be adopted nor any thing beneficial passed over.

Patrick Sellar to Earl Gower (later 2nd Duke of Sutherland)

Culmaily, 16 February 1815

I have this day the honour to receive your Lordship's letter of the 8th Instant mentioning that a new complaint is given in against me by the tenants who were removed from my farm in Strathnaver, and that it is the wish of the noble Family that the matter be canvassed before the Sheriff depute of the County. Your Lordship referring to the Complaint in the hands of Mr Young I waited on him and have got a copy of it; by which I see that there are three new Charges preferred against me, the first that I caused the death of a woman whose house was burned, the second that I caused the miscarriage of another woman, and the third that my sheep have eaten the people's corn. That no one woman of the removed tenants has died or miscarried betwixt Whitsunday and Martinmas 1814 I will not pretend to affirm or to know. But I am sure that no *cruelty* of mine occasioned any such event; and, if my sheep trespassed on the people's corn thro' any negligence of my shepherds, had they complained to me I should have remedied and redressed the Evil without any delay. I have not the least objection to meet their accusation before Mr Cranstoun, who I am fully satisfied will do Justice to all parties.

But, as it is, a most vexing thing to me, that the noble Family should have this new trouble concerning me, I hope your Lordship



will permitt me to mention, that after I had sent forward the affidavits of the officers etc. to Lady Stafford I went to Strathnaver purposely almost, to conciliate the people and see Justice done betwixt them and my Lads in harvest. To the people of Ravigill and part of Rhiphail I Gave the straw at about half the value, we made Good friends and understood that what was past on either Side should be forgotten. To the rest I proposed, and we agreed, that every difference should be referred to Mr Gordon of Langdale and one Charles Gordon in Ravigill whom some of the people named along with him, and I expected nothing less than that any ill nature existed on their part. I have written my Shepherds this day mentioning the complaint as to the Sheep injuring their corn; and I can do nothing further in the matter untill I receive Mr Cranstouns commands which I shall readily obey.

There are two ideas, My Lord, which occur to me, and which I cannot refrain on this occasion from mentioning to you. The first is that I fear I have been bred to too much precision, and possess too much keenness of temper to be so usefull in my office as I ought and as I sincerely wish to be. A man less anxious might better suit the situation and the nature of the people. The other is, that I have now so completely snugged the business of my department, that Mr Young ought really to find no difficulty in carrying thro' both, and by these means a considerable saving in the management should happen. This is the fifth year of my collection. I will, with the noble Family's leave conclude it in good style, and I hope my accounts may do me no discredit when referred to by my successors. Lord and Lady Stafford and your Lordship will perhaps then permitt me to resign my office, altho not my humble claim on your good opinion. The want of the emolument is, as I formerly took the liberty to mention to her Ladyship no injury or dissatisfaction to one of my disposition, and, altho' it may carry the air of affectation, I do assure your Lordship from the bottom of my heart that I esteem the great kindness and attention shown me by the Noble family more than the profits of any office, that I shall not cease to remember it while I live, and that my being in or out of their pay will make no difference to the zeal with which I should Gladly co-operate or do any thing to forward their business, wherever their doers thought that my taking any trouble could be of service.

I had ordered Mr Young's people at Inverness to send your Lordship a newspaper of to-morrows date, wherein our premiums are detailed. It will Shew your Lordship that the committee of the association proceed vigorously with their labours.

Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Culmaily, 18 February 1815

I have this day the honour to receive your Ladyship's letters of dates the 10th and 13th Current.

The letters etc. for Gordon of Dalvighouse I shall forward first opportunity and I should not have troubled your Ladyship, but that I think I have so far unriddled the Strathnaver petition; and from the great kindness your Ladyship has condescended to Shew me I know you will be desirous to learn any thing particular concerning it.

It was my intention, in consequence of your Ladyship's and Lord Stafford's permission to have Competed for the Langdale farm, not the one I happened to Get. Mr Gordon the tenant of it, who is a good natured man, having seen my shepherd traversing the Ground and taken some suspicion that I would bid on him, came here the day before the Sett, took his *lodging with me*, and imparted his Suspicions, as well as his fears that I should outbid him. He went down to Rhives to Breakfast, told some pitifull Story to Miss Young, who, when I Got down to Rhives on my way to Golspie Inn, Jeered me, a little, that I surely could not think of bidding on my Guest Langdale, etc.; and, before I had Got into the room at the Inn, where Mr Young and Mr Roy were by this time seated, I had begun to hesitate. When, presently, a competition began betwixt Paterson (Mr Innes<sup>1</sup> Shepherd) and the people of Rossal farm, in which Paterson beat them, and, as I knew that the Great part of the Ground in question would pay more by Sheep than people, and that Paterson was a good Judge, I instantly Struck in, brought him £60 a year I think, beyond where he and the people had Stopped, and to my own Surprise as well as that of Mr Young and Roy, found myself tacksman of Grounds of which I knew little or nothing except that the upper half of it was a perfect morass of

<sup>1</sup> Proprietor of Sandside in Caithness.

which I could make no use untill some hundred pounds had been expended in drainage. Mr Young therefore had no difficulty in causing me promise the poor people then in attendance, that I would accommodate as many of them as possible for a year or two untill they could make their arrangements. Accordingly the people *Soon* thereafter (15 January) met me in Kildonan, and I fixed on those tenants who were to be accommodated (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  the number I suppose) and told any of the others present that Mr Young would provide them with Lotts; and they must prepare to give access to my sheep on 26th May; a notice which by the bye was legally repeated to them in March and May following.

At this meeting in January a very curious story was told me of a Tinker or Gipseý who some years ago had intruded himself into Strathnaver, had carried from the Strathnaver a woman of that Country to the midst of the morass above mentioned, had taken up his residence there, had brought Cattle and horses to it nobody knew how; and was suspected of Stealing sheep and Cattle from all his neighbours. That in the autumn 1813, his first wife (who was still alive) had Come to his fastnesse with a banditti; had threatened him with a Gunn, and that he had given them part of his Cattle etc. to make off. The people in Short agreed that I must turn him out from the ground *they were to possess*. On my arriving in Strathnaver at Whitsunday I sent notice to this Tinker to be off. And the last thing I directed the Constables do was to see that he was off. They went there on a Monday morning, and by the time I passed in the middle of the day a crowd of the tenants and the officers had removed all his Stuff into a Small hutt and were unroofing and demolishing his houses. I told the fellow he must quitt the Country otherwise I should have him taken up, and with regard to the woman who lived with him, the people agreed, as I understood, to take her, into the Strath and build a hutt for her. I then caused two men value the timber of the hutts which had been pulled down, paid Chisholm the tinker the appreciated price and the people collected them and burned them by my order. I never doubted, that he had on this made off, but since receipt of Earl Gowers letter I learn that he brought away timber which I had given the removed tenantry of Rhimsdale, Built a new hutt in the morass where he Still lives, and that an old woman (the mother of the woman who he

protects) who had been removed from the dwelling house into the other house above mentioned before I Came up, had, during the course of the Summer, died of old-age and been buried after the manner of the Country. This is the murder of which I am accused!

The alledged miscarriage I can make nothing of.

I understand from a person from Strathnaver who called here with Rent on Saturday, that the dykes of the Corn yard of Ravigill adjoining one of the Barns left there had been insufficient to keep out my sheep during winter. That as I had given the people the Straw they threshed the Grain out *only* as they required the Straw which they husband for these months yet to come; and that my Ewes had gone among the Stacks during the Snow and done Some damage, the people refusing to wattle the dyke to keep out the Sheep; and my Shepherd (who is an independent Cheviot man) refusing as positively to take any trouble in what he considered their affair. The Corn is now nearly as I learn all threshed; however I have sent notice to my Shepherd that he must immediately repair their dyke (for, it is to happen once only during my lease) and, if it appear that my Sheep have done any damage I shall certainly pay the loss with pleasure. I will not have any of them feel that I am Sharp or contentious about trifles. Here is the head and front of my offendings. I shall, by and bye, find out how it has come that this fresh trouble is given to the noble Family; I shall suspend any measures at my instance untill a little more light dawn upon me. In the meantime, your Ladyship may trust, that I entertain no bad passion against the poor men, on account of the trouble which they occasion to me; I am satisfied that I shall be abundantly popular with them when circumstances permitt me to be so, and that your Ladyship will find me to have been as Just and Correct a servant as any that has had the honour of your employment.

William Grant to William Young

Rhives, 22 March 1815

John Munro deputed by the rest of Mr Sellar's *friends* in Strathnaver has just now called to say that they unanimously agree to adopt legal procedure against Mr Sellar *rather than to enter into a Submission*, and he insinuated that as Mr Sellar had dealt with them

so harshly they now wish the case to be made as public as possible. I mentioned that it was all the same to you, but that it occurred to you at the time that a Submission was the shortest and cheapest mode for all parties, that the Lawyers in order to make a job of it would endeavour to spin out the pleadings to an unreasonable length and that it might be a year or two before they might look for a final decision. I understood however that they had been consulting some person of the Law and that their motive for a regular action may be, that provided the decision of the Sheriff Depute would not satisfy they could have it in their power to carry the action before the Court of Session as Munro dwelt on the point that both parties were so firmly bound by the Submission to the *final sentence* of the Arbiter.

He owned he was aware that by the Submission the arbiter was enabled to take the same proof and award the same damages that he was as Sheriff in a regular action, that for his own part he would prefer a Submission but as for the rest they would not. I gave him copy of the original Petition which he wanted and he desired me to tell you that his principal errand down, was to request of you to write to Mr Cranstown when he would be prepared to hear their Petition craving a precognition and when he could attend personally to take the proof which they are to lead and therefore expect your answer after hearing from him.

Next day after writing and sending off the above Munro called back to say that since talking with me he had thought it proper to write the Sheriff Depute himself seeing that Mr Young was not at home and repeated that in consequence of Mr Sellar's harsh treatment to him and the rest of the Tenants that were ejected at Whitsunday last he thought no time should be lost in having him punished, or in similar words to the same purport.

Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Dornoch, 31 May 1815

Little did I think when I last had the honour to address your Ladyship that my next letter should be from Dornoch prison. My Lord Gower is so Good as say on the Strathnaver peoples petition 'that proper Steps be taken for laying the business before the

Sheriff *depute* that a *full hearing* may be given to all parties, the petitioners will therefore be assisted by him if they desire it in having a precognition taken before him.' Instead of which Mr McKid my personal Enemy takes a *partial* case from the complainers, which I doubt not he has inflamed with all the art in his power, and he has straightway committed me to prison without allowing me to speak, or to See *the face of a magistrate*! His hope is to Concuss me, to ruin my character by Clamour and to derange my affairs.

I have written to my man of business in Edinburgh to apply there for redress. I have sent for my father who is a man of business of 30 years practice under the Duke of Gordon, the Grant Family, Lord Moray and others, to take Charge at Culmaily untill that redress be got, and as I have all my matters correct as a Clock and my father who has an Estate of a thousand a year, my Uncle worth I Suppose £20,000 and Mr Young are my Sureties, I trust Lord Stafford and Your Ladyship will be satisfied that your interest be fully attended to.

Nothing is more unsuccessfull than Clamour against a Judge, if redress be Expedited from another Judge, therefore I complain with modesty but not without firmness, and I think I will yet convince Mr McKid that he has Sadly oppressed me.

I am so overpowered that I can add no more. I know what Lord Stafford, Earl Gower and your Ladyship feel for me, How convinced you must be of my honesty in all my dealings, and that whatever is in your power will be done to procure me liberty and a fair hearing. My Agent is James Robertson w.s. doer for the duke of Gordon.

I formerly mentioned to your Ladyship the powerful opposition I had in Leiths case,<sup>1</sup> and, the inference I drew. I beg to remind your Ladyship of the papers sent you in 1811 on this business. Perhaps you will be so kind as Send them to me in Course of post, as they are material for my Case. I beg your Ladyship's pardon for this intrusion.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Leith, tenant of Culgower, claimed to hold a lease of the east coast kelp shores from Hugh Houston, tacksman (see above, i, pp. 96-97). Sellar attempted to restrict his operations, and Leith brought an unsuccessful action against him in the Court of Session for damages. Cosmo Falconer acted as Leith's agent, and Sellar suspected that William Mackenzie was a party to this (Sellar to Marchioness, 3 July 1815).

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Edinburgh, 7 June 1815

Your Ladyship will be aware of the unpleasant situation in which I was placed on finding Mr Sellar committed to Jail and that no bail would be accepted of. I asked MacKid what he really supposed would be the issue of this business; with a demure face he told me that Sellar must be hanged or at any rate sent to Botany Bay and advised me not to have any communication with him. I told him that no man dared to suppose that I had participated in any guilt which might be laid to his charge. I left him and accompanied Mr Sellar to Dornoch escorted by two officers and five or six Constables. This was on the Tuesday, I saw him twice in Jail after. On Friday I found that MacKid had suspended him from acting before the Court, that no rents could be collected and the whole affairs of the Estate under Mr Sellars management were completely at a stand. Supposing that MacKid would not be mad enough to commit Sellar if there was a chance of his release at Edinburgh I considered the most prompt measures necessary and without telling any creature in Sutherland except my Sister and the Clerk I got a Golspy Boat at ten on Saturday forenoon and reached this on Monday at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 11 in the forenoon. On seeing Mr William MacKenzie I learnt that an order for Sellars release had been sent North and that he would be out last night but whether a criminal prosecution may be determined on is yet uncertain or if Sellar (altho' I think he will) may be allowed an exculpatory prooff. In the meantime I shall know this evening and Mr MacKenzie will write Your Ladyship for I shall set out in the Coach tomorrow and reach Rhives on Saturday so that I shall only be a week from home. I have been at Prestonpans with Mr MacKenzie and seen a very neat Pottery work. The Proprietor who I once saw in Sutherland with a Gentleman buying stock for Lord Wemyss was most attentive to, and showed us every part of the process, and he is to give the Sutherland Clay (a box of which is now on the way to Leith) a fair trial and I expect he will then send his operative Man to the Country to see the strata and consider what is best to be done. I should wish this inspection to be when Your Ladyship is in the North and will try to fix it accordingly. Mr MacKenzie and I were both agreeing that Your Ladyship

would have liked to have been at Prestonpans with us for besides the Pottery we saw a Salt work newly erected (indeed it was not quite finished) on a new construction. I believe the Man has got a patent for it and expects to make Fishery Salt, I will therefore (altho' The Marquis ordered it) venture to delay erecting more Pans at Brora untill it is seen how this new work succeeds and perhaps if a day can be spared in coming North Your Ladyship and Lord Gower might be. . . .<sup>1</sup>

\* James Loch to William Adam

106 Great Russell Street, London, 10 June 1815

There has taken place a very distressing circumstance as connected with the management of the Sutherland estate which may create some conversation in Edinburgh and indeed lead to a more serious result of the true nature of which I wish you fully to be aware. You may remember your asking me lately how the Kildonan people were going on and my telling you that tho' they were now quite quiet that I was afraid that Mr Sellar who is Factor under Mr Young had been proceeding a little hastily in ejecting some Old Tenants from a district which he had taken as a Sheep Farm in Strathnaver, as I learned from Lady Stafford that she had had many complaints upon the subject when at Dunrobin last year. These complaints were that Sellar had not given them legal or sufficient notice before he ejected them And that he had turned them out in a way unnecessarily harsh. Her Ladyship said that if that was the case it was far from her wish to screen Mr Sellar in doing any illegal Act and that they would be considered doing nothing hostile to the interest of the family if they chose to seek their remedy by an Action. Their complaint did not go to the removal but to the time and manner of its execution. Upon this the People proceeded, but in some way from a civil process for damages, the proceeding has turned into a criminal prosecution for all manner of atrocious acts. Mr Cranstoun instead of taking the precognition himself or putting it off to a period when he could do so sent his substitute Mackid up into Strathnaver to take the evidence of what Sellar had committed and been guilty of. He took a pre-

<sup>1</sup> Letter incomplete.



cognition and committed Mr Sellar to Jail upon a bailable offence, Sellar immediately offered sufficient bail which Mackid refused. I mention this fact to shew you the temper of mind with which Mackid executed this duty and I do so because I can from my own knowledge of what I saw of him when at Dunrobin say to you that a more unfit man to be deputed to take such a precognition in such a Case could not be selected. He has no courage, has local prejudices in favor of the people and against the system of improvement adopted by Lord and Lady Stafford quite to unfit him to be a judge where the Agent and people are parties. Many personal reasons such as quarrels about game, the Idea that Sellar wished to have his place etc. all tend to the same conclusion. While I mention this as to Mackid I must on the other hand state that Sellar is extremely unpopular both from the situation he holds and his manner of executing it. A clever keen Scotch writer with more than their usual share of active exertions and which activity has necessarily been often called for to enforce very disagreeable but very necessary acts of vigour, added to which he has a quick sneering biting way of saying good things in the execution of his duty which I do not think has made him popular with any body whether in the management of the affairs or otherwise.

Having detained you so long on this I must request you if you can get the precognition to do so and read it attentively, making such allowances as the above explanation will enable you to do. You will also observe that the precognition is taken by a hostile judge and through the medium of an interpreter chosen by that Judge and the witnesses a set of people whose education and rank of life entitle them to little credit unsupported by other evidence. While I state this I am far from thinking that Sellar has not acted hastily and unadvisedly, but that he has been guilty of the crimes (even that of murder) which are insinuated rather than alledged by Mackid against him I totally disbelieve and I look upon them as the pure offspring of Jealousy and ill nature. I enclose you Sellars statement which he transmitted to the Lord Advocate<sup>1</sup> which gives a clear detail of the facts. The thing however to which I wish you particularly to direct your consideration is the way Mackid may endeavour to affect Lady Stafford and Lord Gower in this matter in order to

<sup>1</sup> See above, i, pp. 155-61.

protect himself if he can. In a letter he has written to Lord Stafford,<sup>1</sup> such a one as Judge should not have written, he very cunningly endeavours to make the communication made by her Ladyship to the Strathnaver people and which pointed merely at a *civil* remedy for a *civil* loss as an approval and encouragement to the criminal process which he has instituted. With the feeling in the people's minds that this process is approved of by her Ladyship and that the effect of their succeeding in their attempt against Mr Sellar will reinstate them in their possessions there is no length in point of swearing to which they will not go. I am not aware that I could be of any use in coming down but I have mentioned to her Ladyship that I shall be ready to do so if you think from your knowledge of what is passing in Edinburgh I can be of any use in clearing up any statement or in being the bearer of any communication which should not be committed to paper. It is a very distressing event to have happened and peculiarly hard upon Lord and Lady Stafford who to my own knowledge have constantly desired that these changes might be done with the utmost regard to the feelings and prejudice of the people and that the most ample time should be given to enable them to get to their new settlements and that the nature of what they were to have in lieu of that which they were quitting should be fully explained to them. After the Kildonan and Assynt affairs too, it is much to be regretted and in such a case Mr Cranstoun ought not to have let an inferior officer full of local prejudice take the precognition. I am afraid his professional practice is quite incompatible with his County Business. Whatever the result as to Sellar I am sure you can have no doubt as to the propriety of removing Mackid who has shown himself so unfit for his situation, committing upon a general therefore illegal warrant and then absolutely refusing bail and forcing the person committed to apply to the Lords of Justiciary in Edinburgh who immediately bailed him. Will you be so good as to write to me generally what you hear and think upon the subject and send it open under cover to Lord Stafford that his Lordship may see your opinion before I get it.

I leave this for Trentham on Monday. I shall be at York upon the

<sup>1</sup> For this important letter (printed in T. Sellar, *The Sutherland Evictions of 1814* (London, 1883), appendix, xxvii-xxix) see also below, pp. 257-8, 279-80.

16th of July where Moysey joins me. After my business there is over we come to Edinburgh together unless you advise me to come sooner which however I see no reason to think you will.

You will I am sure fully appreciate the delicacy of Lord and Lady Staffords situation. If they were to communicate any thing which might be construed in favor of Sellar it would be said they were using undue influence in attempting to protect their factor in acts of oppression and a breach of the Law. If they on the other hand let it go abroad as insinuated by Mackid that they approve of and support the prosecution there will not be a man in Strathnaver who from some motive or other will not swear the worst crime against him. I have prevailed on Lady Stafford going down as soon as the Arundel fete is over and she has said she should like to meet me there so I may come down directly from Trentham. Lord Stafford himself mentioned to Mr Cranstoun that Mackid and Sellar were on bad terms and Mr Sellar and Mr Cranstoun themselves were at variance on account of Sellars manner, not that I for a moment suppose that could influence him, it is only another proof of Sellars unpopularity.

Marchioness of Stafford to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 14 August 1815

I hope you are not too much sunk in the Luxury of Trentham (I dont know if this is a proper expression) to value the merit of a very well designed road from the Colliery to Gordon Bush; we went half way there this morning and it really was very pleasant, passing first over the moor of Clyne covered with peat moss, then hills with innumerable Granite stones thrown loosely over them, then through the *cidevant* wood of Killin, then by the Lake opposite to a tract of ground which I am informed Mackenzie<sup>1</sup> inserted into Houston's tack contrary to old Gilchrist's<sup>2</sup> advice, then the rain came on and we returned, but this makes a very pretty drive. We left Young and Loch at the Coal, having previously ordered a quantity of Tyle to be made for Mr Dempster. They had delayed this rather foolishly in order to try the english flat Tyle new in the

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Mackenzie, w.s., father of Colin and William Mackenzie, and Sutherland law-agent, 1771-1802.

<sup>2</sup> Dugald Gilchrist of Lothbeg.

Furnace as an experiment. Loch ordered two Kilns more to be constructed directly to supply these who are impatient for the Scotch Tyle which will answer amazingly, as it will be so much cheaper for the Moray coast etc. than that from Peterhead, and the old Kiln may go on with the experiment of the English Tyle with which Alexander is going to roof a House at Brora. This is a very promising branch of manufacture, there will be a great demand for it and it will consume our dross which we want to get rid of. Dempster is to have 10,000 Tyles in less than a month at about £4 per thousand. Our going there was of service in this respect because dispatch in this matter is of real consequence and will be productive immediately. There is a good deal of brick made and ready for the Furnaces, partitions, flooring etc. German appears to be a sensible man and going on very well, but the sending Stanton to inspect will cost very little and Loch thinks will be highly proper. But I go into too much detail and there will be no end of it. From thence we went to order the additional Salt pans which will not cost half the price of the others, *reçervoirs*, pipes etc. answering for both, also the workers who appear to be very decent people. Saw the new Houses building in Gower Street and the Brewhouse in Stafford Street. One of the Houses is I think in Francis's Street. Saw the School going on very well; then came home having been four hours at work, and dined, Dr Bethune, Ross of Clyne, Young and Sellar, and Mackenzie of Far, a very good looking young man, something like Lord Aberdeen. In the evening we are to *entrer en matière* with these Parsons, to get Mackenzie to report upon the State of his parish in answer to the libels. It is really disgusting to see the old ways going on, on the old Leases here, but we shall be rid of them as follows - Cyderhall in 1817, Kintradwell, and both of Shyberscross's farms and Craigtoun in 1818, Houston's immense farm in 1820. I cannot help thinking by what I have heard that old Mackenzie must have been bribed to give Houston so much more than he wanted. Besides this there are many lesser farms at will, that we shall probably alter, according to what may occur, and we will give no more leases except to new people seeing how unworthy the old are of any favor.

Monday night. The Evening past in conversation chiefly with the Minister of Far, who is sensible, intelligent and gentlemanlike and would please you so much that upon Keith's death I think you

will promote him to Golspy. He gives an account of his parish with much tact, information, and *connaissance de cause*. His manners are so civil and unaffected that he has more the appearance of a travelled person than a Minister. He was prudent in not saying anything of his own guesses and suspicions and stated only the facts he knew as if upon a sort of evidence, but from his manner one could see what he thought. He says the people in Strathnaver are excellent people if not misled by those to whom they look up, and that he finds it very necessary to preach to them to pay due attention to the nature of an Oath. He says they are all settled comfortably and much to their advantage on their new Crofts, and quite satisfied, and that this affair is much more thought of out of the country than in it, and that they are ready and willing to pay due attention to their rulers, but are misled and enticed to think we are on their side in this instance, which makes it the more necessary for us to let the real state of the case be known to them as far as possible without what is called tampering with them. He is ready to contradict the false statements in the papers from his own knowledge and the method is to be settled tomorrow morning.<sup>1</sup> I think this man a great acquisition in this Country, where there are few good sort of people that are not imbecile, and now the country is really becoming good for something the people must be improved in order to suit it. By the by there are 30 Waggon at work at the mound instead of 18. 30 Yards done today.

*Note of business settled*

The result of the conversation and information received from the ministers is, that the Parish of Strathnaver is going on exceedingly well. The People all settled and contented and applying to fishing on the coasts of Sutherland and Caithness; very well disposed. Not one has emigrated. The *census* of numbers to be finished on the 17th.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rev. David Mackenzie wrote to the *Star* on 21 Aug. 1815, contradicting a report of emigration from Farr and challenging the editor to name a single emigrant family. He wrote to Young on 25 Aug. that he was only prepared to testify on emigration, and that only from his own parish.

<sup>2</sup> These census returns have not survived, but in a letter of 21 November 1816\* to Loch, Sellar quoted figures which may be drawn from them. These are: Assynt, 2,745 inhabitants; Rogart, 1,685; Creich and Lairg, 795; Dornoch, 1,706; Golspie, 1,360; Clyne, 1,727; Loth, 1,295; Kildonan, 1,400; Farr, 2,520; Reay, 189. These figures relate to the Sutherland Estate only (see also Loch, *Improvements* (1815 ed.), 13).

When that is done and proved the minister will be able to sign it with an answer to the unfounded reports in the Papers. These reports were written by Alexander Sutherland from material sent him by his Brother assisted by a set here who we take at different occasions to be, Gilchrist, perhaps Clunes, Kenneth Mackay and Carrol. Mackid and Shiberscross do not appear to be on good terms. Alexander Sutherland is in the King's bench. He has a place in Jamaica of £900 per annum but his creditors prevent him going there so he only receives 500£ from it and gets money by writing for newspapers. He rather compliments us personally in the libels, attacking chiefly our Agents.

Our determination to support the agents and carry on our own business firmly it is thought will have a very essential effect, and an end of favours and *douceurs* to Gentlemen. All this confirmed by the conversations we have had this morning.

The Coal is in a very fair train. It is proposed to place Grant, Mr Young's present Clerk a very active and honest Creature, with a small Sallary as overseer in general at Brora, and of the Salt which German cannot undertake, also of Brick and Tyle and Farm. *Stronach* another good accountant but not equal to this from want of activity in out of doors business to succeed as Clerk to Young.

A decent and good Bailiff to be got for this farm, and Loch to advise Young not to enter too much into detail but to content himself by seeing that the man in general does right and that his accounts are correct and the produce what it ought to be. Staunton to view the Coal to see if German conducts it properly, of which Young cannot judge, and we think from over zeal attends too much to the tittle tattle of the English Colliers who may be jealous of German. German is much pleased with the Sutherland Colliers, the English also are good and well behaved and he has brought them all to be quiet and decent and everything going on in an orderly manner, quite different from what it was before.

The Strathnaver wood destroyers to be brought here by a deputation of three, to be made answerable by being turned out incase of any more trespasses. Only one case of poaching has occurred from the good police introduced. No favour to be allowed to struggling Officers and half pay people without Licences in shooting, and in general to get rid of people of that sort from the Estate.

Achanney, Coul, Duncan Sutherland of Kinnauld, and Mrs Mackenzie of Kintraid are deep in arrear, their respective cases to be settled according to the best methods to be devised. I have directed that William Pope's rent of £5 per annum should be remitted to him in future, he is in distress, very ill, and has always behaved well and deserves to be allowed his Croft rent free.

German and the two English Colliers say they like this country quite as well as their own. The two latter and the Brickmaker have married drabs in the Doll.

A great deal of Herring fishing going on among the natives at Helmsdale and Kilgour etc. and some from Golspy.

No more outlays, but we shall be obliged to make a fence on each side the avenue if you do not object to keep the road from the Stables free from these wild Cows, and to protect the Stables. It will be no great matter and I will send a plan of it.

James Loch to Marquis of Stafford

Dunrobin Castle, 14 August 1815

I arrived here two days ago, and found her Ladyship and Lord Gower in perfect health. Their presence here was absolutely necessary and will effectually check every attempt which has been made to interrupt the great career of improvement which has at last begun to spread itself over the whole face of the country. Their presence also will most effectually prevent any similar attempt being again made. I only wish that it could have suited your Lordship's convenience to have been here also on every account, but as much because I think your Lordship would have been highly gratified with the visible change upon every thing for the better.

The first thing that struck me was the very improved appearance of the Moor on your left hand after you enter upon the estate of Sutherland from the South. The patches of cultivated land near the cottages have very considerably increased and in several instances I was happy to observe some turnips had been sown. The cottages themselves are vastly more substantial and neater and I do not think that your Lordship will be able to describe the boundary of this property as commencing with bad cottages, any longer. The exertions of these people are very praiseworthy.

Skelbo I have not been over but its appearance is now very perfect and no farm, wherever its situation, can be more beautiful as it is seen from the road. The road to the mound on the South Side so far as I saw it is very well done. Morvich makes a conspicuous figure from the road.

The trees in the young plantation on your left hand as you go from the Little Ferry towards Dunrobin are thriving to a wish, and the improved appearance of the village of Golspie is very gratifying and the Stake net fishing in the sea beyond it, makes an additional step of advancement, very much to our advantage in producing some very fine salmon for dinner. The Mains are also improved materially. The field lying above that field which was hay when your Lordship was last here is now all in cultivation and the field to the Westward of it, is mostly in potatoes and will next year be fully in corn. The turnips are not better here than in the South, that is indifferent, the best I have seen were in Northumberland, Berwickshire and Strathmore, the latter excellent. I went to see Uppat with her Ladyship and was very much surprised with the very handsome enclosures both grass and arable and pretty wooded banks, both natural and planted which lie behind the house there, but I believe her Ladyship has written to your Lordship an account of this. If I may be permitted to add I would say that I think it is to be regretted that the woodlands upon this estate are not better protected. Of their extreme value in a sheep country I would adduce the practise upon Marshall and Atkinsons farm here and the excellent essays upon the subject in Sinclairs General Report,<sup>1</sup> of the ease in protecting them from mountain sheep. I would adduce the immense forests of Braemar, Deeside, Cullen and Tarnaway which I have just seen, and which are dayly extending themselves over the mountains. It would add so much also to the value of this estate having timber for all purposes, and the encouragement of the natural woods would be advantageous also in producing port wood for Brora.

The great work however is the mound but after her Ladyship's most accurate sketch of it<sup>2</sup> any description is superfluous. The progress they have made is very great and that which they have

<sup>1</sup> *General Report of the agricultural state, and political circumstances of Scotland* (1814), drawn up for the Board of Agriculture under the direction of Sir John Sinclair, Bt.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter of 11 August 1815, accompanied by an ink sketch.



finished is done in the most substantial manner possible. They have been peculiarly lucky in finding material. An immense hill of Gravelly Sand full of large round Stones upon the North end of it forms the principal supply. The Sandy Gravel becomes most wonderfully compact and firm when saturated with water and the large stones are exactly what were wanted to face the bank towards the sea. Young says the hill must have been made on purpose to construct a mound of, a proof of a particular providence I suppose not before found out.

I have had all Sellars business very fully over both with himself and Young. It is perfectly clear to me, that the people themselves are merely instruments in the hands of a few designing tacksmen, and that the run which they commenced against Sellar would have then been applied to Young with the view of entirely doing away with the general system of improvement which has been adopted; so much for the advantage of the proprietor, so much for the happiness of the people and lastly so much for the general prosperity of the country – So little however for the advantage of that class of half pay officers and half gentlemen who have so long lived upon the family and considered the estate as their own. They thought they saw an opening for their machinations to succeed, and they were neither deficient in inclination nor ingenuity to make the most of what they considered as an advantage which they had obtained, and nothing which interested cunning and ill nature could supply was wanting to carry their object into effect. The firmness however with which this has been met by your Lordship and Lady Stafford has completely defeated their intention and their object, and as soon as it is fully understood in the country that the system which has been adopted is to be persevered in, and that those who have been employed in carrying these improvements into effect, are to be supported, All the poor people who have hitherto come forward against Sellar as the Tools of Mackid and Company will immediately turn round and will completely change the complexion of the story they have been telling. They have done what they have done in the full idea that their conduct was agreeable to the wishes of the family and they were to be rewarded accordingly.

The herring fishing is by all Accounts most successful in the

Firth, And Helmsdale has been very particularly successful. Many of the Kildonan Settlers are employed in the boats, what an unanswerable proof of the advantage of the new arrangement? Perhaps a few rewards to be annually distributed among the most successful and adventurous fishermen would be attended with the best effects. I must however now finish this letter and trespass a little further upon your Lordships time with some Staffordshire business which however I think had better be reserved for a separate dispatch.

I forgot to mention the growth of the Young trees upon the hill on the left hand of the road leading to Brora. They are now distinctly to be seen from the Castle. The Inn, the old Stables and the Saddlers house are all much improved.

18 August. Your Lordship will observe that I have not been able to send off my letter when it was written. I have since the date of the first part of it been all along the coast to Helmsdale, up Kildonan and over the Crask. I have the most satisfactory Accounts to give your Lordship upon the Appearance of improvement which the whole coast presents, especially at West Garthy by McKenzie<sup>1</sup> (since a Bankrupt), at MidGarthy by Simpson and particularly by the settlers at Port Gower who have really done wonders upon their allotments. I can describe their improvements in no other terms. At Helmsdale I was witness to the most gratifying Sight imaginable, 48 Boats manned by Highlanders, in number 350 of whom 100 are from Kildonan, preparing for the evening herring fishing, And this where there was no fishing this time two years and carried on by men who were up to that period indolent and lazy individuals without energy in any thing but illegal distillation. Simpson of MidGarthy is the person who has the mind of setting all this agoing. It would be a most important thing indeed to get possession of Helmsdale at present, as all the people from Baden Loch and the lower part of Kildonan which is at present unarranged could be brought down and Settled on the Helmsdale lands and immediately set to the fishing. Another advantage would be derived from this, that it would make the adventurous independent of strangers. Some premiums to Sutherland Boats could have a very great effect.

The Coal appears to me to be going on very well. German has pursued strictly the plan that was chalked out for him. He may be a

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Mackenzie, merchant, and tenant of West Garty.

little slow but I think he understands his business well and is attentive. I do not say from my own knowledge that he is slow and underground work is not capable of the same sort of management as what is carried on above ground. The Salt works and Tile Works present another interesting instance of what has been done for this country and it is through these establishments and the advantages they hold forth, in forwarding the civilization of the country, that your Lordship will in part be paid for the expence which the Brora concern has cost, and most amply will they repay your Lordship.

I have also rode up Kildonan and can report to your Lordship that I see a very visible improvement in the cultivation of the allotments there. We returned by the Crask road which is made (with the exception of one place of little extent) from Lothbeg all the way to Kildonan. It is done with the Statute Labour, 10 feet wide and is a model for a highland road, not too wide or fine, Capable of permitting a carriage to pass along it. The only thing that it requires is that the Gutters dug on the sides of the mountains should be made a little deeper. There has been a similar one made to Gordon bush, if advantage could be taken to continue this last with the aid of Parliament up Strathbrora and down Strathnaver it would add much to the value of all the estate and open a ready means of getting coals, Tiles and Salt up into that country as it leads directly up from Brora Bridge and would increase the consumption of these articles.

In order to see whether all has been doing well at Brora and to chalk out the further Workings I strongly recommend to Lady Stafford and Lord Gower that they would let me write to Stainton to come down from Carron where I expect he now is. I hope your Lordship will think this right. I have told him if possible to come this ensuing week.

\* Patrick Sellar to James Loch

Culmaily, 14 September 1815

I had an audience of Mr Cranstoun on Wednesday night. I was mistaken as to McKid's being admitted into the room; but, I was not mistaken as to his being in the Inn all day and yesterday among the witnesses; nor as to Cranstoun's errand here being merely to 'verify' the precognition. He spoke to Mr Young and me as follows.

'I am not entitled to examine the witnesses suggested by Mr Sellar in his Notes to the Lord Advocate etc. My errand here is simply to *verify* the precognition. A surmise went abroad that my substitute, for whom I am responsible, had not taken down what was told by the informants correctly. Hence, I feel it a duty to call them before me, to read over their former declarations and to know whether such be correct. If Mr Sellar will suggest any thing to be asked at these witnesses, any additional matter, I shall put the Queries and I shall communicate Mr Sellar's suggestions to the Lord advocate.' I said I had already explained every thing so far as the accusations had been made known to me; and if he would oblige me by telling me what further was to Say against me I should Set up all night to prepare an additional note on these subjects. He gave me a detailed account of the additional points of accusation, and you will find each Stated with my answer in the inclosed note which I yesterday morning laid before Mr Cranstoun.<sup>1</sup>

He added to his observations. 'A precognition is but *one Side* of the Story. I have nothing to do with an exculpatory proof. I have no right to meddle with it. If there be two informants to a fact amounting in the Lord Advocate's Eyes to a crime he must prosecute without regard to what you have to State in Exculpation'.

I said nothing, but I thought it strange that my several averments and defences should be encouraged by the Lord Advocate to *lay them open*, and that nothing to prove the verity of that defence Should be competent. The law books I have Seen,<sup>2</sup> express it differently. But Mr Cranstoun went on to talk of the noise which these libels had made, of the necessity of their being publicly put down etc., which Shewed me why he wished nothing to prevent the Lord Advocate from bringing me to Trial, if circumstances Should render that Expedient; and I am of opinion that if the questions of the libels be not brought before an English Jury and the facts brought to issue there he will bring me before a Scotch Jury, That it may not be said or published that he let me Escape, in consequence of influence used with him, And perhaps, with some Slight intention of Shielding McKid, which any Trial of me must go far to do.

<sup>1</sup> See above, i, pp. 163-7.

<sup>2</sup> Sellar did not quote his authorities, but Loch (see below, p. 259) took an opposite view.

I had a second audience of him last night. He has closed his *verification*, But he has at Same time removed McKid's Suspension of me from acting as a procurator; Expressing to me in a very handsome manner, that he was [ ]<sup>1</sup> such a Step Should have been taken.

I consider it my duty to communicate all this frankly (as I have done all things) to you, Mr Robertson and my father, and to wait your and their kind advice which I will implicitly obey to the utmost of my power. I have done no wrong and have nothing to Conceal.

I trust I may have the pleasure of corresponding with you at future time on more pleasant Subjects.

Pray keep the inclosed note very private, only communicate it to our Noble Constituents or particular friends, as, in the event of my being tried, too much Caution cannot be employed. I presume you can favour me with a Copy of the letter Mr McKid wrote Lord Stafford. I am now advising as to Steps against him and will be obliged by a Copy.

My merino Sheep came on Wednesday all Except one Tup and one Ewe which were obliged to be left behind. A great many of them are very improved Stock and I am well pleased with my bargain.

\* James Loch to Patrick Sellar

106 Great Russell Street, London, 26 October 1815

Your Letter of the 16th directed to Blair Adam reached me this Morning and nothing that has occurred has made any alteration of the Opinion which I entertain and have already expressed to you as to the impropriety and therefore impossibility of furnishing you with a Copy of Mackid's letter to Lord Stafford. My Opinion is now fortified and confirmed by his Lordship, to whom I read your letter. You should also be aware that it is quite out of the question doing by indirect means that which as to direct is improper and wrong. And you must see how wrong it would be to found any publick proceeding upon the publication and use of a private letter. To found your proceedings upon such a document or to use it at

<sup>1</sup> M.S. torn.

all would also in point of prudence I conceive be objectionable betraying as it would upon the face of it, the weakness of your case. If your case against Mackid must be supported by the production of a letter the very existence of which is unknown to fewer than 10 persons you had better never think of extending one step farther. I extend my observation to Sutherland's letter to Mr Ross of Clyne<sup>1</sup> which is also a mere private document, and I must confess contains no proof of a conspiracy whatever as far as I can see. I cannot help feeling that your extreme and natural anxiety to justify your conduct and clear your character has in some measure led you astray and made you see things in a light third parties cannot go along with you in. And do not search into private confidential correspondence for the purpose of discovering proofs of plots against you individually or the system of management generally. No man in a responsible situation can expect to please all or escape abuse, he will hear enough of it without seeking after it, but believe me the true wisdom is to despise it, it will then die away of itself. You will of course see that I apply these observations generally not to the libels published accusing you of murder or as to your Action against Mackid for wrongous imprisonment. These are your own affairs, my observations go to your Conduct as factor on the Sutherland Estate in which respect alone I am entitled to interfere.

Having got rather imperceptibly upon this Subject, I must beg your attention to an Observation which I used the freedom of enforcing perhaps rather strongly while I was at Dunrobin but as I had no example to give you at the time I could not illustrate it as I wished. It was carefully to avoid a certain Ironical mode of expression, which does you more mischief than you are aware of. Look back to the Copies of all your letters respecting Mr Cranstoun and you must be aware that though there is nothing in them if expressed directly which I might not show him and ask his Opinion on, yet as you have expressed yourself no Man could for a moment submit to the insinuations they contain. The same is the case when you speak of the Highlanders both of the better and the lower

<sup>1</sup> Captain Alexander Sutherland wrote a long letter to Rev. Walter Ross, minister of Clyne, from London 20 July 1815, accusing him personally of partiality against John Sutherland of Sciberscross, and the Sutherland clergy in general of failure to protest against the new sheep-farms. Sellar believed that this letter proved the existence of a conspiracy behind the Kildonan and Assynt disturbances (see below, p. 282).

ranks. You say you are aware you have made many enemies by doing your duty. Believe me the number of enemies a man makes by doing his duty steadily and honestly are very few, the mode of doing it may however make the case very different. For your own Comfort and respectability as well as for the sake of the management with which you are intrusted have the goodness to reflect on this. When I mentioned this subject to you before you begged I might not hesitate to remark it if I saw it again. In doing so I am sure you will fully appreciate my motives and I beg you to believe that what I have stated is neither the result of my own fancy nor the suggestions of persons having the least ill will towards you. Before I finish I must also add that you are mistaken entirely in the nature of a precognition which upon enquiry I found admitted of no exculpatory proof but is merely an investigation for the purpose of discovering whether there are sufficient grounds to put a person on his trial. I understand that two credible witnesses stating a fact amounting to a crime is all that is required and that in point of fact the Accused person not only does not in general but ought always refuse to enter into his case, as by so doing he discovers to the publick prosecutor the weak parts of his case and enables him to frame his Indictment accordingly. This Information I received from a professional Gentleman who was utterly unacquainted with you or the County of Sutherland. I mention this to be an ease to your mind that you may not fancy you have met with less Justice than shewn in other Cases. It is not for me to give you any advice as to how your case should be conducted but this much I will observe that you must reflect coolly and deliberately without passion on the whole circumstances of the case and submit nothing to your Counsel but that which you can fully and distinctly prove. Distrust your own judgement in every thing and depend upon the Evidence of no Man, unless he has been examined by an Agent on your behalf in your absence though under your instructions. I would rely with but little confidence in what such men could prove if their depositions are taken by the party and not by his Agent.

\* James Loch to William Young

106 Great Russell Street, London, 29 November 1815

The reason I wrote to you to suspend sinking the new pit until I saw Lord and Lady Stafford was, that by a letter I saw from Hulme<sup>1</sup> his butty in Staffordshire, it appeared that there was so much coal upon the hill at Brora, that German was thinking of letting his men work a little less constantly. But I was also induced to write to you to suspend this, because Burgess in a long conversation which I had with him was of opinion that there was the greatest danger when a new pit was opened, by which the circulation of the Air is increased, that the gob which is now burning would communicate to the roof and from that to the Coal and thus destroy every thing. This gave me great uneasiness and I asked Suther afterwards, who had heard what Burgess said, what his real and deliberate opinion was and what his advice would be. He told me that he was very seriously afraid of the same thing happening that Burgess was, that it was not a [serious] thing to happen in Scotch coal where there was any quantity of sulphur in the Coal and that the fire arose spontaneously from the Gob when it got a little damp, and when there was a free circulation of air that it burnt so as to fill the pit with Smoke which drove the men out and then got to the Coal itself. He therefore advised that the present pit should be used as much as possible before any New pit should be sunk. Upon this I sent for the 2 Staffordshire men and questioned them, and I rather found them backward at first on the subject, but they mentioned this was not only what they feared, but that German was also of the same opinion. You will see that this is very serious and can only be prevented by every precaution and even then there is in the opinion of all these practical men the chances against it. It becomes then in my mind most adviseable first of all to continue with the present pit as long as possible and in the 2nd place to sink the New one when it becomes necessary to sink one in the spot which will be least expensive and at the same time to be at as little an expence as possible upon every thing dependant for their success upon the Coal. I think you had better speak to German upon the subject and tell him to write his opinion to Burgess. I have again written to

<sup>1</sup> A Staffordshire miner employed at Brora.



Suther about Meiklejohn. I have also finished a short account of the Sutherland improvements, which his Lordship has corrected and it is now preparing for the press.<sup>1</sup> It is intended to send it to Constable for the farmers magazine and at the same time to have some Copies thrown off here for distribution. Before I finish I cannot help adding that I trust you are not moving the people to Helmsdale in a way to create any real or alledged hardships. What I have alway heard especially in Edinburgh on the subject is that you have never given the people sufficient time to remove and to sell their Cattle, except at a loss. You answer they would not be more willing if they had more time, but then that at all events you would be in the right and they would be in the wrong, besides Lord Reay ascribes the great success which has attended his removals to this measure and to giving small allowances to two or three small middlemen. You may depend upon it that it is this sudden removal that has made with men of sense, the impression against the Sutherland changes, that exists, and many of those are people approving most highly of the measure itself who are among this number. Both Lord and Lady Stafford believe that the Grazings<sup>2</sup> you reserve (and which Sellar wanted to have) are reserved for the people who are to come to Helmsdale. Now pray be sure that they have enough for all *their present stock* of Cattle that they may have the whole summer to dispose of them. Now I beg of you sincerely to consider these things well: for if another set of complaints should occur, believe me it will make a most serious impression on the public mind even in the minds of those most interested in the improvements and I am also firmly of opinion that it would be noticed in parliament. I have seen Stewart your new bailiff several times and have had some long discussions with him. He appears a well informed sensible decent man, he is quite upon a superior scale to all your former Bailiffs and is not only quite capable of taking the entire management of the farm and every thing connected with it as you wished, but I do not believe he would consent to take the situation but on these terms . . . [Staffordshire farm arrangements].

<sup>1</sup> *An Account of the Improvements on the Estate of Sutherland belonging to the Marquis and Marchioness of Stafford*, published anonymously in 1815. This is the first edition of Loch's *Improvements*, revised and expanded in 1820.

<sup>2</sup> Elig and Arichliny, par. Kildonan.

\* James Loch to William Young

106 Great Russell Street, London, 1 December 1815

I wrote to you yesterday and in the evening I received yours of the 23d. You have done quite right in sending German's letter to Burgess respecting your tile maker to her Ladyship, as it is necessary that she and Lord Stafford should determine what is to be done with him. Of his merits of course I cannot be in the least a judge and it can as little be my wish that you should be burthened with a useless and idle hand. But either on the morning of my leaving Trentham or the day before there was a letter from him put into my hand complaining of being hardly treated by German in dismissing him contrary to the bargain that was made with him. Not being a party to the bargain that was made with him, I gave the letter to Suther, who said he thought him very hardly used. I desired him therefore to write to Burgess to say to German, that it would be better not to dismiss him until Lord and Lady Staffords opinion on this subject was first taken, which there can be no delay or difficulty in now getting.

I regret that there should have been any misunderstanding as to the payment of the Cattle<sup>1</sup> and especially that it should have run you into any breach of promise to your bank, but I must in my justification say, that I cannot in the least feel myself liable to the imputation of being accessory to your being obliged to break your promise to the Banker, of which this is the first time so far as I recollect I ever heard. When I was going over the accounts with Grant, I was surprised to see the Cattle sent to Trentham was not paid for, as my recollection was that the farm there had been debited with their value. It appeared that those sent the year before had not been paid for. I desired Grant to write to Suther on the subject and to desire payment, having formerly spoken to him on the subject, but in doing this I had not either the most distant idea that the price of all the cattle was to be asked for and I expected that the value would have amounted to a sum which could have been paid, as it

<sup>1</sup> From 1803 onwards droves of cattle were sent in most summers to Trentham, where beasts were sold to Staffordshire farmers. The Sutherland factors took credit for these cattle in their accounts, but money did not apparently pass. Young appears to have been claiming a cash payment to offset his persistent bank indebtedness (see above, i, p.lxxxix).

ought to have been, out of the proceeds of the Trentham farm, like any other article purchased for the use of the farm. When Suther sent me your account exceeding considerably £3,000 and going back to a period before I was connected with his Lordships affairs, I could do for the payment of such a sum, I never did nor could undertake nothing else than lay them before his Lordship as it then exceeded a mere arrangement of Accounts, which was all I contemplated. I must add that his Lordship, though he objected to paying for these cattle as I mentioned to you, he was for sending the Money directly and it was owing to me that the delay was made until the settlement of the accounts. You never mentioned as far as I can recollect until now any undertaking you had with your Banker, besides the Money you stated as coming from Sellar was much more than sufficient to cover these Advances.

I must add that you seem not yet to have fully comprehended my two letters on the subject of your Accounts, Lord and Lady Staffords wish being not only to have an Account of *how* the Money which is spent, has been spent, but they wish to have an estimate of every thing that is proposed to be done during the year 1816.

The use of this I will thus illustrate. You transmit a proposition from German about the manufacture of bricks and that a certain outlay is recommended. His Lordship may approve at the end of the year. His Lordship says there has been too much money laid out. You reply that there is nothing done but what has been approved of by his Lordship. Very true, but if his Lordship had a general idea of the total probable expence to be incurred within the year, his Lordship would have it in his power to suspend such a work or substitute it for some other operation, nay you yourself would be better able to advise his Lordship when any new proposition is made.

I shall be at Cleveland House tomorrow and intend to talk all these Matters over and write to you the result. I can assure you it is for the sake of all and the prosperity of the Sutherland Estate improvements that I have at any time [written] more upon the Settlement of these Accounts than perhaps you may think I ought.

As a proof that I never undertook to pay any such sum as £3,000, for the Cattle, I knew Suther never had such a sum in his hands.

\* William Young to James Loch

Rhives, 8 December 1815

I have received yours of 29th ult. and 1st Instant. The contents require a deliberate reply but I shall be as brief as possible. With respect to money matters I never asked, and you'll see my letters say so all the money (£3,000) for Cattle sent to Trentham but only for what have gone since Suther went there. You say you ordered Grant to write him to pay the parcels of this and the preceeding year, he either could or would not and here the matter rests. Having admitted this and seen my situation it was hard to prevent The Marquis from remitting what you had formerly desired to be paid.

As to Bloor<sup>1</sup> in place of ordering him back to his work on any letter which he might have written it might perhaps have been better to send it for German or me to report on as has been Lady Staffords uniform practice. If on hearing us on the Subject we had acted wrong we ought to have been made liable for his wages during the time he was laid aside, but you cannot conceive what a victory such people obtain by getting the better of a manager, how it diminishes his consequence in the eyes of the people and breeds discontent. Bloor got so and so we will complain also. In all cases relative to *this Country* it is well to hear both sides of the question.

With respect to the Coal and what Hulm writes about fire etc. I refer you in part to Germans letter inclosed. The underground work as you know well I am no Judge of, and to tell you the plain truth German seems to have no great reliance on Burgess skill, why he says was not William Daniel consulted who knows the nature of the Coal and was sent as a practical man to examine and report on the work. Germans motive for not keeping a large stock on the hill is its being a brittle article and liable to be injured by the weather. He thinks it more prudent at this Season to regulate the quantity by the demand, for during winter the consumption will always be confined to home Sale and the Salt work. The reason is obvious. This is a Coal which will never be generally used in private familys, you even see the Forth Coal greatly superseded by the New Castle. Here the demand will be for Lime burning and other Summer

<sup>1</sup> A Staffordshire brick-maker employed at Brora. Young had dismissed him, on which Bloor had petitioned the Marchioness (see above, p. 262).

works at home in Moray and Banffshires, besides our Coasting Vessells are all unrigged and laid aside for the winter and do not take out untill March. 'Till lately you know the levels were not finished, last Season was therefore lost but the work both Coal and Salt should be pushed with vigour in Spring, and now is the time to prepare, not when the demand comes. This can only be done by a resident Agent of sense and activity, without such ruin can only be looked for, often and again have I begged for such. I have long got reason to expect Meiklejohn<sup>1</sup> but it now seems doubtfull if he may yet be depended on. All I can say that in this as in every thing relative to the improvement of the Estate my best endeavours have not been wanting but I pretend to no sort of knowledge in Coal works and cannot therefore be responsible for errors altho' in the worst of times I was ready to embark in the concern. At one time we were told of faults and hitches to undo the work, now we are threat'ned with *fire everlasting*. The one was imputed to design by the Fife men, I hope in the other your Staffordshire friends altho' they can have no sinister motive will be equally mistaken, but once for all I woud advise you to hear William Daniel and not mind what Hulm writes or Burgess who never saw the work, for really if the Marquis and Lady Stafford are on all occasions to be alarmed by what I sincerely hope will prove imagainary evils better that the Coal had remained dormant in the ground. It has allways been a favorite idea with me (I do not mention it from any wish to embark in the concern for now I woud not think of it) that works of this sort like Farms improved by the Proprietor turn out to better account in the hands of tenants and afford rent beyond any profit which the Heritor can derive. Experience proves this in almost every instance, the one depends on his own the other on the conduct of Servants, but if The Marquis has no such wish in this case let me conjure you not to delay to send a Manager.

Now as to what Lord Reay and the Edinburgh people say of my conduct and want of management among the tenants and the risk of its being noticed in Parliament, I have to remark in His Lordships case that *almost* the whole of his small tenants were formerly on the Coast side accustomed to fishing and Kelp making, it was

<sup>1</sup> John Meiklejohn, who had been approached to become manager of the Brora coal-mine, eventually declined 20 Dec. 1815.

easy to adjust matters with them, he had no *fire brands* to contend with and his Country is quite Maritime, but it is very hard that altho' I am told and from pretty good authority that his Lots cost the people almost a third more than in Strathnaver that I should be held out as an oppressor and blazened in the public prints. The Strathnaver people certainly got too short notice and should have had longer time to move off. I admit it, but the fault was none of mine and had Roy the Land Surveyors advice been listened to the thing would not have happened. The fact is that all Sheep Farmers in making offers should shape them so as to expect little benefit the first Summer and our friend Sellar ought to have known this, but dearly has he paid for his rashness. You employ him to give plans which I never saw and what this number 22 of Kildonan is I have no idea of. It is rather hard to implicate me in these damnable publications for no poor Highlander ever charged me with cruelty or oppression. The truth is at least I have strong *presumptive proof* that the whole of these writings are concocted by MacKid, it is shameful to see such a man our first *resident* Law giver, and if Mr Cranstoun will not part with him, he should himself reside four months in the Country as the act decrees. If a respectable Sherrieff did so it would make all the difference imaginable. Come of me what will the Heritors ought to consider this. I hear Mr Soper Dempster is determined on it and merits support. For my own part I would not think it safe to reside where such a character is vested with similar authority. As to the people sustaining loss by an early sale of Cattle it is positively the first time I ever heard it. I had it allways in my power to furnish grass had any individual made a complaint, and you know the Kildonan riots began in December notwithstanding every offer on the Strathy shores and Kildonan Strath, in short it was a premeditated design to remain among the mountains in spite of every reasonable proposal to the contrary. But take my situation all in all, consider what I have had to encounter in every arrangement great and small among 15,000 people most of them hostile to change, to industry and advance of rent, see what has been effected in the short space of four years and tell me if the like was ever done in Britain. From the unfortunate 92nd promises,<sup>1</sup> old residents, and dependents on this as there has

<sup>1</sup> For promises to recruits in the (*rectius*) 93rd Regiment, see above, i, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

been on the Families of every Highland Chieftan and the indulgence given it is only matter of Surprise (considering the people who have aided and abetted the clamour) that I got through so well and without committing greater errors. It can only be imputed to The Marquis and Lady Staffords determined support. To one thing I plead guilty, the want of economy, altho no spendthrift I never could take care of my own or other peoples money as most others do, neither having once completed an improvement can I follow out the business in detail. My favorite object through life has been to drain marshes and improve wastes, then to let them off to another most usefull description of persons whose views are more limited, with patience to sit down contented in drawing a moderate yearly return, and as this ought to be the sole and only motive for expending money except on planting and building for profit pleasure or convenience, I really think I have discharged my trust tolerably well and that The Marquis and Lady Stafford woud in future find me a most unprofitable and useless Servant now that the improvements are about finished. I am really aware of it and say so from no earthly motive but their interest and comfort which I shall ever have at heart.

\* James Loch to William Young

106 Great Russell Street, London, 18 December 1815

I have received your letters of the 8th and 11th this Morning and lay aside some important business to answer them as they have disappointed me considerably by your having so completely misapprehended their object, by drawing inferences and coupling together conclusions which they could in no way authorize. I thought you were sufficiently aware of my motives in writing to you, and what is of more consequence that you were sufficiently aware how much Lord and Lady Stafford approved of your conduct to suppose for one moment, that what I wrote to you a matter of information advice and caution was meant for blame and a wish to take away from you your merits or the value of the works which have been carried on. Let me once again but I beg it may be for the last time beg of you to banish this feeling from your mind and then you will see that my letters were dictated by a most anxious

desire that the works which have been established be not carried on in a way to hurt them and that a fit and well considered and properly regulated economy in their execution should be observed and that an outlay be never undertaken until it is clearly seen how it is to answer. If it fails the same money would have been better applied to other purposes. I now proceed to answer your letter in detail.

1st. As to the money for the Cattle that being settled by your receiving the Amount it is unnecessary for me to revive the discussion until I meet you when I will shew you distinctly that my Statement is correct and is even supported by what is contained in yours of the 8th.

2nd. As to Bloor. If you refer to my September letters and her Ladyships of the same date I think you will find I did no more than was there agreed upon to refer this matter to Lord and Lady Stafford, besides if a bargain was broken recollect that in Staffordshire people can complain as well as with you, but this also is at an end by the decision which has been come to.

3d. As to the Coal. How can you for one moment suppose that that which has been written in the way of caution arising from the sincere desire to see this work flourish was done so for the purpose of undervaluing or hurting it. I have ever had but one opinion of it which I here repeat and for its consistency I beg to refer you to my long letter written to you from Trentham when I first heard of the Gob being on fire. I there stated that I was certain it never would make a large return in the way of general Sale: that the limeworks in and out of the Country and the industry which it would create in the country were the objects which would create the demand and would repay the outlay, that in short the returns would be [ ]<sup>1</sup> and not direct. This letter I wrote because I thought you were rather sanguine in your expectations. This letter I showed his Lordship. You combated my reasons in a very long answer but I am happy to think we are now both at one mind about it and the outlay you have since that time recommended has been regulated accordingly. In the same spirit I wrote to you the information I received respecting the chance of fire when another pit should be opened. I recommended caution and begged that it might not be sunk until we were

<sup>1</sup> Gap in MS.



all in the Country next year and could get some Engineer along with us. I enforced this by shewing that you could put out a very considerable quantity for sale which I proved from Hulmes letter. I never meant to blame German for raising fewer coals. I have too good an opinion of his skill and having full confidence in his judgement would never interfere with his management. I only quoted this fact as an illustration of my argument for not making a pit till next Season. Further, I did not learn the fact of the fire from Hulmes letter. I did not state that I did and if Hulme has been spoken to on the Subject, this ought to be explained to him. I learnt it from Burgess who *shewed me a very long letter from German to him wishing his advice as to the place where to sink the new pit.* In explaining to Burgess and Suther my view of the matter, this matter came out and I understand that it was also Daniels opinion but of this I am not certain but shall enquire. Suther himself is an excellent collier and the Staffordshire men were of the same opinion and they said it was also Germans. Germans letter on the Land is very satisfactory and it shall be sent to Trentham and Burgess, Daniel, the Staffordshire colliers with Suther shall all be consulted and their opinion sent down. I need not say that it will give me sincere pleasure to find that there is no danger, but I do not think I should have been fulfilling my duty either to Lord Stafford or to yourself if I had concealed my information from you and I think there is yet enough in Germans letter to make all care be adopted. I must add that as to Lord and Lady Stafford being alarmed with imaginary evils they are not very likely to be so and really in prudence how could a fact so serious in itself so seriously stated to me be kept from them. Besides Coal works are daily subjected to such things and nothing but the greatest care and caution can prevent the most serious accidents. As to your opinion of it being better to conduct improvements by a tenant rather than at the expence of a Landlord generally speaking no one agrees more thoroughly with you than I do, and was it not for this reason thought your numerous establishments at Morvich, Dunrobin, Uppat and the Doll at Brora much too expensive and ought to be got rid of in order that the improvements might be carried on by the tenants. But how could any tenant have done to the Coal work what his Lordship has done and now that he has done it and so many minor works depend upon it I am very doubtful

as to letting it. Why may it not be conducted as the Lane End Colliery and as it is intended.

You will hear of Meiklejohn. A mistake was made about him which I regret much for your sake and that of the work. You say 'as to what Lord Reay and other people say of my conduct and want of management etc.' I beg you will again read my letter and you will see you have coupled Lord Reays name with another observation from what I did. I only said that Lord Reay ascribed his success to giving his people plenty of time and in the next sentence I said that it was this sudden removal that made men of sense averse to the Sutherland removals. They both went to illustrate the same observation but I am anxious to keep the two things distinct as Lord Reay made no observations whatever on the Sutherland removals and I meant you to understand this. But I must really assure you that many people of the greatest authority in both countries are of opinion that time enough was not given to the people. Observe I can not, whether truly or falsely so, and therefore it is of the utmost consequence that full time should be allowed the people who are to go to Helmsdale. What you say about Strathnaver is quite true but even if the people had had all the time you meant them to have I think it was not enough. The complaint respecting the Cattle I have had made again and again and by many of the most sensible highland and lowland lairds and upon the Kildonan business particularly I recollect this being objected when it was stated how long the people had to remove. Now I again beg to say that I mention other things to put you on your guard for I repeat If another disturbance takes place at Helmsdale you may depend upon it becoming a subject for Parliamentary enquiry and that I do not mention them with any less pure motive. Your letter then contains this paragraph which I do not understand, 'You employ him (speaking of Sellar) to give you plans which I never saw and what this number 22 of Kildonan is, I have no idea of, it is rather hard to implicate me in these damnable publications for no poor highlander ever charged me with cruelty or oppression'. I must confess that you ought not to have conveyed the insinuation which is here intended that I have got Sellar to give me plans unknown to you and kept such information from you and for the purpose of implicating you in blame. As to the plan it is this, when

I took Sellar to the Bridge of Alness to speak to him about his own business and to serve me as guide by the new road, I asked him to give me a list of the principal tenants and their farms that I might write them in my memorandum book for that in London if Lord and Lady Stafford ever spoke to me on the subject of Sutherland I constantly mistook one for the other. He did so but he added that he would make a sketch of the Estate with the number of the farms and refer to a paper on which should be marked the name of the farm, the tenant and the duration of the lease. This he did also and Lady Stafford found it so useful that I have given her a copy of it and you shall see it the first time we meet but you should not have thought I was concealing anything from you. Upon referring to it I see Ellig is marked 22 and I suppose her Ladyship must have in some of her letters referred to this. If it would be of use to you I will have it copied and sent to you.

Need I again say no one ever accused you of cruelty. Read my letter dated 9th November. Cranstoun told me distinctly that nothing could be more attentive to the feelings of the people than you were and that you were liked by the people. Still My Dear Sir believe me that the thing that is complained of is not giving them time and there are so many bad passions afloat which would lead to a motion on the subject and vex you much though all untruths, and it is from friendship alone as I hope you will now believe I ever mentioned the Subject and a sincere feeling of duty to Lord Stafford and the measure itself. You really must distinguish two things, the existence of a report and the truth of it. The former is I am sorry to say enough for the publick and too often also enough for a motion in Parliament. I know three minutes personal communication would have more impression with you than all this long tedious ill written Letter. I should write it over again but I am desirous of setting myself right with you and if you will let me add setting you right with yourself. I therefore do not wish to lose a post.

Do let me again urge another thing. Send up a sort of rough estimate of your outlay for 1816. It would please very much. Let me detain you another minute. No man who has had so arduous a task to perform as you have had can expect to escape some share of vulgar abuse. Such stuff believe me only gets consistency and consequence from notice. Such I conceive are Sutherland attacks,

despise them therefore if you please. When similar or more serious attacks come from a higher set they must be then differently met and every thing that is likely to contribute to these reports should be avoided. The publick mind or rather a portion of it has been lately a good deal turned to the subject of emigration by the Government advertisement on that subject and I have had little hints which convince me of the truth of that what I have more than once said that as the question generally will come before the house any new disturbance in the north would not fail to be noticed. I have done, except to beg you to believe that you have mistaken the purport of my letters.

In keeping back the money I only acted as I think you would have done by me in a similar case and you have done your duty.

★ Patrick Sellar to James Loch

Culmaily, 6 March 1816

I avail myself of the opportunity of Mr McPherson Grant to send you herewith the population lists<sup>1</sup> mentioned in my former letter agreeably to the accompanying Inventory, as it appears proper that you should possess them along with the other vouchers of the Statement.

I have the pleasure of receiving your letter of the 25th ult. accompanying two Copies of the Statement one of which I shall, in a week or So, interleave and return you, with what poor observations may betwixt and then, occur to me; but I think they will be very short as the Subject seems, for the present, to be *Got pretty much to the bottom of*. Whatever has been the cause, the effect is plain, viz. that Government established an office and *advertised for Emigrants*, and, Since the publication of the pamphlets they have completely changed their opinion. I am doubtful however whether the giving *every facility* to Emigration be not the surest road to increase a Strength of population. The more an article is in request the more it is increased, the more the market is *loaded with it*, the more it *diminishes*. Keep people at home untill it becomes difficult to get children well off, and untill the number come up to the existing means of Sub-

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 249.

sistence – the thing stops of itself, the *spring* of industry ceases with the *chance or hope of Success*. I think this is all proven by *Experience in the Table of the northern Counties annexed to my last*; and I draw this consequence from the premisses, that it signifies not one pinch of Snuff to Lord and Lady Stafford, what number of Whisky Smugglers chuse to be off; for, their place must of course be presently filled up by men, who *by industry increase the subsistence*, and, of course, *the numbers* of the people. A truth which we may certainly know and comprehend, without giving battle to every man, that chuses to Shut his Eyes against light.

Mr Young has Communicated to me, a Letter from Earl Gower and another from you on the Subject of the Mound and we anxiously wait the more particular information which you are so Good as promise. It was at Earl Gower's instance, and doubtless, stimulated by the hope of gain, that I embarked in this undertaking, but I never could discover the purpose for which his Lordship and Mr Young and I took up the *Job*. The only effects to be expected were a limited contractors profit, the puzzling our brains in carrying thro' *another man's trade*, and the driving that tradesman,<sup>1</sup> who is a most ingenious creature, and who had the Sole merit of the ingenious mechanism at the Coal pitt, out of this Country. It was certainly with deference erroneous; and it is not of much consequence, provided, we get well out of the Scrape, and keep, in our own Sphere, in time to come.

As I have anxiously attended to the progress of the thing, as much as my last years misfortunes permitted I will detail to you briefly my observations, in case they may be of any service in enabling you to procure us *solid advice*.

The bed of the firth of Little Ferry from Morvich marsh to the Sea consists of Sea Sand and Gravel. Where the Bay extends, and the water flows and Ebbs *Stilly*, the Frith is Shallow only a few feet deep. At the neck of the bottle, where it fills and Empties *rapidly* and where it is narrowed by the *Sea beach* it runs *Several fathoms deep*. Up to the date of my arrest, in the latter end of May, our operations, altho' they extended about 180 yards into the Frith occasioned no apparent change or current. On my Return from Edinburgh in July there was a pretty Strong current, and a baring

<sup>1</sup> William Hughes.

of the beach opposite the Mound head, the Sand being washed away there by the increasing velocity of the water. The rounder pebbles, left on the bottom, gave it the appearance of a hard bottom and Mr Telford was delighted to See this appearance which nobody imputed to the true Cause. I was confined at home in bringing up my lee way, presuming every thing to go on well after this untill next Spring tide, which undeceived all parties, by washing away (by its increased velocity) this appearance of hardness, and Excavating a hole several fathoms deep; which to fill up by the waggons or from the distance of the Bank appeared tedious and Expensive. On this account a Strength of horses and Carts as you will remember, was mustered, the depth filled up from the beachy Stuff mixed with brushwood, and *paved over with Stones*. You remember I got this finished at the time of Some exceedingly Stormy weather, by which time the next Stream tide occurred. It did not remove the paving, but threatened to Cutt at the further end of it, which it certainly must have done as we Succeeded in narrowing the Channell; and, as it was by this time the latter end of August and one third only of the length was executed, it was plain that we could not, with all these difficulties, execute, in one month, viz. September, *twice as much* as we had done during the preceding *five*, that to persist longer during that Season was only increasing the chance of damage in winter, and we resolved to head it out and secure it to Stand the winter; *and consider what was to be done against the Ensuing Season*.

The ensuing Season is now come in, and the Mound remains as we left it. That is, the weight of paving over the bottom being greater than the present Strength of the Current it has not washed the stones away but has ebbd and flowed over them and along the Stone facing of the Mound, *without doing any damage*.

From the experience heretofore it seems plain that the more we narrow the channel the more we increase the velocity, and that, of consequence what we take from the width we add to the depth. There is a third consequence, not in the least an alleviation of the other two. The higher the level of the bottom the less the influx of the Sea and the less the Strength of the tide. The more depth the water Cutts out, the more *the Sea gets in*; untill the bay, instead of being above, comes to be considerably below low water mark, and the work rendered, so much the more difficult. The great point

seems to be to avoid this velocity and Cutting, and we propose to do so, by the following means. The whole length being 900 yards whereof 300 is executed; there remains 600; 200 of which at the west Side is in very Shoal water and 400 in the middle of greater depth say from 8 to 3 feet of Stream tides. We have prepared two rows of Strong piles spurrs and planking for 400 yards long, each pile one yard asunder. While one party of men pile these 400 yards by a driving engine and run an apron of plank along the bottom on the Ground surface, another party form the said 200 yards of Earthen mound on the west Side, and the 400 yards piled and aproned Space intervene betwixt the two mounds as rudely represented in the annexed Eye Sketch.<sup>1</sup> Our planks are by this time all laying on the Shores ready dressed and bored for nailing on. We calculate what length running measure of plank one man can nail on during the absence of the Sea, Say three hours. At the first neap Ebb of tide we have all in readiness, and have the distance planked over *before the expiration of the time*; So that, by the time the tide returns, it finds the valves on the Bridges *and a wall extending the whole length; along which*, it may amuse itself as it pleases, while men and horses without intermission fill up the 400 Yards with earth at the *back*, untill the thing be completed. It occurs to my weak Judgment, that provided the piles be of *Sufficient length and Strength* (and they are trees from 13 to 18 feet long, and the planking two Inches Thick) the men properly drilled, and the work carried on with Steadiness and dispatch, we have a good prospect of Success. But unless there be greater oeconomy than has yet appeared in laying out our funds the concern must be attended with loss, and it is the last thing of the kind ever I Shall engage in.

\* James Loch to William Young

London, 7 March 1816

I received your Letter of the 26th ult. two days back. I now write to say 1st that Lord and Lady Stafford think the Account had much better be *kept out* of the papers as it evidently would lead to a paper

<sup>1</sup> This sketch gives a profile of the Mound workings, showing the gap intervening between the embankments built out from the two shores of Loch Fleet.

War.<sup>1</sup> 2ndly that I have seen two eminent Engineers here, one<sup>2</sup> of whom constructed a mound across the Avon at Bristol where the tide rises 30 feet perpendicular, and have got the written opinion of a Mr Jardine of Edinburgh recommended by professor Playfair<sup>3</sup> and of three eminent practical men in the fens. They all with one exception coincide wonderfully in their opinion, the exception is one of the fen men and I ought to add that he has failed in executing an embankment estimated at £17,000 and which has already cost £50,000. The paper I distributed contained a reduced sketch of your plan with an explanation and queries whether it ought to be closed in the middle or on the South Side. The answer of 5 out of 6 is at neither place. The force of the tide encreases in an inverse rate to the smallness of the opening through which it has to run untill it will gain such force as to become quite irresistable. They all recommend: 1. That the Gates should be immediately hung on the Upper side of the bridge to keep the tide from flowing back, through the bridge, first of all to save the bridge from being carried away, secondly to keep as much water above the Mound as possible.

2. That the hole at the end of the Mound should be filled up with Stones and Sloped off to a very great extent so that the tide may run round it without cutting a new hole and to prevent it acting on the end of the Mound itself. 3. That all the inequalities in the Surface of the Sands between the end of the Mound and the South Shore should be filled up and trampled down with horses when this can be done. [Here follows a sketch of proposed plan.] a,c,b shews the bluff end of the Mound, a,g,b the Slope intended, a,e,f the uniform surface to which the same ought in the 1st instance to be brought. I may here say that they all agree that you must carry on the work the whole width of the Mound. 4. The Mound must then be carried on from end to end *regularly*, progressively, and *Simultaneously* permitting the Sea to flow over it every tide until it is brought up above high water mark. The necessity of preventing the Water flowing through the bridge now becomes apparent, and

<sup>1</sup> Young had suggested that Loch's *Account of the Improvements* should be published in the *Inverness Journal*.

<sup>2</sup> Jessop, for whose views see above, i, p. lxxviii.

<sup>3</sup> James Jardine (1766-1858), engineer, was the constructor of the Union Canal (see D.N.B., xxix, 250-1). John Playfair (1748-1819) was professor of natural philosophy in Edinburgh University (see D.N.B., xlv, 413-14).



the necessity of keeping the space above the Mound as full of Water as possible until the Mound is finished and this for 2 very obvious reasons, the one that the weight of Water above the Mound during the execution of the work act as a counterpoise to the weight and action of the tide below, and the other and principal reason to preserve the back of the Mound from being acted upon and cut into hollows by the tide as it would be if the tide were to flow over it like the Weir of a Dam. [Here follows sketch.] The red parallel lines shew the gradual but Simultaneous progress by which the different additions to the height must be managed and carried on. They all agree in these opinions and you will observe that they unanimously reject both your way and mine of finishing this Mound, that is by closing it either in the middle or at the South Shore. Though these 2 questions alone were submitted to them, their opinion is founded upon great scientific skill backed by the most extensive experience. Their reasoning I confess carries conviction to my mind. They all say that it is a very ticklish and will be a most expensive work and I must most earnestly press upon you the propriety of surrendering your opinion to their experience. Mr Jardine has seen the Sections of the Mound and is fully of opinion that the work cannot be done for the Money. Lord Gower is so fully impressed with this also that he is determined to have his advice upon the Subject and I have written to him by his Lordships desire accordingly by to days post to go down to you as soon as he can. He has had great experience in the fens and is a *Scotchman* so you need not be afraid of him. His Lordship also wishes you in the mean time to be preparing every thing for the commencement of the Work by the time he arrives and he desired me most particularly to request you and Mr Sellar to give every attention to his opinion and Suggestions. There is an absolute necessity not to go on adding to the Mound as it is considered that even that which is done has added to the difficulty of finishing the work and some even say that you will have to take down some work already done. Maddox's great embankment<sup>1</sup> failed by attempting to close it in the Middle.

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated embankment across the mouth of the Glaslyn river at Tremadoc, Caernarvonshire, built by W. A. Madocks, M.P., in 1807. Young had visited this with Earl Gower in autumn 1811.

Lord Gower has desired me also to write to Mr Sellar to see this letter.

\* Charles Adam to James Loch

Edinburgh, 24 April 1816

I was in hopes to have heard from you about Jardines report and have most idly put off writing to you, having been dissipating with Jamie Dalrymple at North Berwick.

When Jardine first came to town I did not see him as he went almost immediately to Callender. I have since seen him twice and he has read me the report he wrote on the Mound, which I suppose Young has sent to Lord Gower. Young asked him to leave the report with him, that before any thing was done about it he might endeavour to get Hughes to take the contract off their hands, which he had some hopes of doing, and which Jardine said it would be well worth their while to give £1,000 apiece to effect. I doubt if that sum will be sufficient. Young was much *taken aback* at Jardines report. They had already begun to throw in materials on the Cambusmore side, which Jardine recommended to be put a stop to but Young was very averse to do so, the labourers being engaged, as it would have a bad effect in the Country. One can readily imagine he would be most averse to anything that was likely to create an impression against them. As to poor Sellar Jardine says he is by no means in a state of mind to give his attention to the concern.

In case you have not yet seen Jardines report I may mention that he found they had sunk a lighter and a boat and thrown a quantity of stones into the breach all of which has had a very bad effect. The boat they cant find but the lighter is there in 14 feet water instead of six that she was sunk in. Jardine seems quite of opinion that it will be impossible to fill up the breach by the present plan. And even if by a lucky chance of weather and all circumstances combining in favour of it, it were to be effected by the application of great strength, there is no small chance that the bottom which is Sand would fail and the whole work be blown up. It appears to me therefore most essential that Young should stop his proceedings at once.

It is impossible for me to go into a detailed account of Jardine's plan for the construction of the Mound, but I may mention some

particulars. In the first place the lighter must be weighed and the Stones taken out if possible, then sheet Piles must be driven both above and below the Mound, the foundation must be made as solid as possible by the materials best adapted in the neighbourhood and then the Earth from the Mound thrown in to bring it gradually to a level. The Sluice gates must be altered in the mean time to let the Water flow in as was mentioned before. Jardine doubts very much if all the preparations will be made in time to undertake any thing of consequence this Season, Especially as Sellar cannot give his attention to it and Young has so much to do elsewhere.

Jardine did not send you the report as Young begg'd it might be left with him, but he is extremely anxious to hear from you what is thought of his report and what determination is come to accordingly. I have no doubt that you will recommend that his plan should be followed. Jardine tells me he went to Brora and gave them some advice about the Coal and also about the harbour which it seems was damaged in the Winter. . . . [Difficulties of Caledonian Canal construction; family news].

George Macpherson Grant to Marchioness of Stafford

Cairnfield, 27 April 1816

Referring to the letter I had the Honor of addressing Your Ladyship on the 25th I have now to state that I found Mr Gordon of Craig<sup>1</sup> here yesterday and that he has given me the most satisfactory Account of the result of Sellar's Trial the whole of which was calculated to display the arrangements on the Sutherland Estate and Sellars own conduct for moderation and humanity in the removal of the people in the most favorable light.

His Counsel on their progress North discovered that there was such a strong prejudice against Sellar that they thought it proper to submit it to him and his father whether they would not make a push to get the trial removed to Edinburgh but Sellar resolved that he should prefer its proceeding at Inverness. Mr Mackid's letter<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Senior counsel for Sellar at his trial.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 246. The letter was made available to Sellar (Loch to Sellar, 8 Apr. 1816) after Macpherson Grant had discovered that Mackid had shown a copy of it to Young.

to Lord Stafford was submitted to the Counsel and they first thought that probably no opportunity might be afforded of alluding to it but when the Crown adduced him as their first Witness Mr Sellar's Counsel said they had some questions to put to him before he was examined; they then made him admit the letter to Lord Stafford and asked whether he had never expressed himself as an enemy to Sellar and that Botany Bay would be too good for him etc. All this he denied, they then brought Witness to prove his having uttered the most malevolent expressions And objected to him as a Witness. The Judge thought that the Malice proved was not exactly of that extent which would incapacitate him as a Witness altogether but advised that the Jury should take his Testimony *cum nota* and said that he would recommend to the Crown Lawyer to dispense with his Evidence after the Exhibition he had made. This Mr Drummond immediately said he would do. They failed in every point against Sellar except the burning of the Barns but his Counsel argued that although by the practice of the Country they were entitled to retain possession of their Barns yet that it had been decided that the practice of a Country was not to be considered as Law.

The Jury were unanimous in acquitting him of every Charge and the Judge said that although he was not in the habit of making any observations on the Verdicts of Juries yet he owed it to the Character of this much injured Gentleman to express his fullest approbation of their Verdict on this occasion and the Crown Lawyer immediately expressed his concurrence and stated that although some of his Witnesses had not been present, yet he was satisfied that had they all been examined the result must have been exactly what it was.

In short nothing can be more complete than Sellars exculpation and Mackid is made as black as possible. The trial has had an amazing effect in changing the Current of prejudice which ran against Sellar and has turned out a fortunate Circumstance for him contrary to the most sanguine expectations of his best friends. It lasted 14 hours. Sellar bore up very well but when the Verdict of Acquittal was pronounced, he burst into tears which had a great effect on the Audience.

I trust Your Ladyship will excuse this hurried scrawl.

\* Patrick Sellar to James Loch

Culmaily, 7 May 1816

I am quite overpowered with the sympathy and kindness of my friends, from Lord and Lady Stafford Earl Gower, Lady Surrey<sup>1</sup> and yourself, the Agent of this illustrious house down to the recognisances of some of my old Classfellows, who had lost sight of me, and express no common surprise at the circumstances which restore me to their acquaintance. These sensations banish all recollection of my *past* sufferings; but I confess I am not without foreboding concerning the *future*, that is, if our noble Constituents do not fully avail themselves of the present *sense which the public entertain* of the late most dangerous conspiracy and place their Country on a footing of *permanent peace and security*. If they, in their wisdom do so, the new colony planted here (thro' whom alone, I trust it is not vanity to Say that the permanent improvement of the Estate is to be expected), will flourish and get forward beyond *any thing I can figure in the north of Scotland*. If not, the *repetition of these* dangerous and atrocious attacks *will ruin us*, and we shall be forced, at length, to quitt our concerns to the highland Captains and sergeants at what they please to give us. *This I assure you is no dream*. It is a conclusion too well supported by facts. Lord and Lady Stafford once observed to me that our rents were lower than Lord Reays, but the truth is they are higher, we paying not only the rent due to the proprietor *by Law*, but the rent in mutton and wool exacted by the *proprietor by Custom*, who surrounds *each farm* at all quarters, and damages the tenant what suits his conveniences or his caprice, while Lord Reay marches *farm by farm* and has his people *permanently drawn from the mountains* (where like exactly to the wild Irish, they lived by illicit distillation and acts of aggression against Society), to the Coast where they *See and are seen*, where they cannot live by stealth but by industry, and whence they come to *assist and be assisted* by their Southern brethren.

The *public opinion* at present is that Lord and Lady Stafford will, as in former cases, leave the Country to Settle by its own weight,

<sup>1</sup> Lady Charlotte Leveson-Gower, eldest daughter of the Marquis and Marchioness, married in 1814 Henry Howard (1791-1856), Earl of Surrey, later 13th Duke of Norfolk.

and that we *Shall be ruined*. I have letters from several of my friends in Edinburgh pressing on me the danger of this; and I think it my duty, *confidentially*, and with no view I assure you that you should intrude my ideas on Lord and Lady Stafford, but that *you* may *cooly consider them yourself* in Judging what it is proper for the Noble family to do at this crisis.

In autumn 1812 I Got several dark hints of a conspiracy existing here, instigated I was told by Gentlemen who I had had the honour to meet at Lord and Lady Stafford's table, who were partly I thought in their Confidence. I Gave no Ear to Such nonsense; but, the Story reaching me in many different shapes I at length sent advice to Mr Young who was then in England, and I hinted distantly, something of the matter to her Ladyship. By the time Mr Young returned, the Shepherds had been already hunted over the mountains from Kildonan to Bighouse, and a day was appointed for driving every South Countryman out of the Country. Mrs Reed's accouchement was then approaching; and among matters brought us, was that of a message, Sent by the rioters to her family, that if she bore a boy it Should be killed. If a Girl they would Save it because its mother was a highlander.<sup>1</sup> The inclosed note<sup>2</sup> will Shew you how we Stood in March 1813. The military mentioned by Mr McKenzie, certainly quelled the disturbance. I saw six of the ringleaders feasted in Rhives parlour, Mr Young drawing ale for them. They were managed, were Comfortably Settled. The thing as Lord Gower is so kind as express to me concerning this affair was 'settled and Settled in a manner completely satisfactory'. All was forgotten. Even *Sutherland*<sup>3</sup> closed his writings in the *Starr*, which had accompanied the Riots. I do not exaggerate the matter when I say, that during the Riots no minister settled by the *patronage of the proprietors* in Sutherland Stirred one Inch to Support the law. One poor body, a missionary preacher of the name of McGillivray, from Nairnshire, alone, ventured to exhort his flock to peace, and to commune with us. He was soon after promoted to Assynt. What was the consequence? Read *Sutherlands letter to Parson Ross*? The Kildonaners had communicated *their plan* says he, to McGillivray,

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Reid was a daughter of Mrs Mackay of Bighouse.

<sup>2</sup> This note has not survived.

<sup>3</sup> Captain Alexander Sutherland.

he leagued with the factors, and the Assynt men disdaining the visitor and the treason turned him wife family Children adrift out of the parish. They began the attack on the manse about Sunset. They gutted it of every thing before morning and they transported man, wife, and Child, cradles, Blankets, beds, Chairs, and all Et Ceteras, to a heath near Glen Cool in Edrachylis, about ten miles distance and left them there. Mr Young escaped by miracle. On coming to a Limestone rock on this Side of Ledmore the path turns South of the rock, but there is also a Smaller path to the north. Being accompanied in his flight by one Parson Cameron<sup>1</sup> a very *Stupid* man, he advised him to the wrong path, and they lost themselves and got to this Country by a track not common. In the right path, however, in front of the limestone rock, there were six Assynt men Stationed, carrying with them a cloth Smeared with blood which *they alledged* to have been Shed by Mr Young in the Riot ! And when they missed him they made Sure he must have Slept in Assynt, to which they directly returned and turned Parson Kennedy<sup>2</sup> and others out of their beds in Searching the houses for him. They only proposed to Tie him hand and foot and launch him in a boat from the Stoer of Assynt. Well, one or two of the rioters were tried. They could not fight the military or the Justiciary Court, these men were given up to punishment. They were sumptuously feasted during their imprisonment by presents from their friends, and they now live Comfortably in Assynt. However, the matter *was Settled*, and we began our Course of new.

The *very next* arrangement happened during the Assynt mens imprisonment. It was *Settled* on the 24th of last month. The people I must say did not proceed by *riot* nor in *defiance* of Law, no. They took a different plan. They conspired *by Law* and *by perjury* to take away the Life of the other Agent on the Estate who happened here to be entering tenant. They got him committed, to the astonishment of all the world, for murder ! Bail was out of the question because he was to be hanged ! Their faithfull Achates Sutherland appears in the same conspicuous post as in the two former cases. Subscriptions are called in. The public mind is agitated. The agent is brought to Trial and he is acquitted. In consequence of what?

<sup>1</sup> Presumably Rev. Murdoch Cameron, minister of Creich, 1811-53.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. John Kennedy, assistant minister in Assynt

The men relented did they and did not Swear against him? No such thing, they Swore plump in the face of fact, reason, and common sense, but their Story *being fabricated they Swore in each others teeth*, and the agent most fortunately had had the precaution to keep, while doing his duty, six men in attendance, whose *connected depositions* convinced the Jury, and he was not hanged or Sent to Botay bay.

Now, my Good Sir, the consequence I expect from this settlement of this last conspiracy, is Just what succeeded the Kildonan Conspiracy in 1812 and the Assynt conspiracy in 1813. That is, not a repetition of the *same* attack but of an attack of a different nature; unless the family do in their wisdom, *mature* such decisive measures as may convince the *people* that it is dangerous for them to engage in such atrocious measures, and the persons obeying the Law, from the Agents on the Estate to the parish officers, and from the Stockmasters to the Shepherds boy, that it is *not* dangerous for *them* to do *their duty*.

I Continue with sincere regard, and with my earnest thanks for your kind Congratulations.

No word yet of Mr Young from Moray or Mr Hughes. I shall write how Soon we have them face to face at the Mound.

\* James Loch to George Macpherson Grant

106 Great Russell Street, London, 31 May 1816

Your letter of the 26th reached me this Morning and I was glad to find Mr Young had spoken to you on the subject of the management of the Sutherland Estate, and also that you will find it convenient to meet me there. It is the very thing I meant to propose, and I find it to be most acceptable to Lord and Lady Stafford. I enclose you two letters I wrote lately to Sellar<sup>1</sup> and which will put you in possession to a certain extent of my ideas on the Subject. The thing I wish to do if possible for the family is this, to put the future operations in Sutherland upon some sort of general well digested plan so that what is done may not have the appearance as well as the effect of occasional shifts, the one overturning the other and one being abandoned before it is finished, to adopt another

<sup>1</sup> Written on 15\* and 25 May 1816\*.



without their utility or practicability and still less their capability of paying being well considered. At first I do not believe it was possible to lay down, far less to act upon such a plan. I see however no difficulty now in that being adopted. No person is more aware of Mr Young's merits than I am, but I regret his defects which arises from an impatience of delay and an eternal fidget to be moving. This prevents him duly considering his plan before hand and prevents him too from following it out when begun. It also leads him to a desire to do every thing himself in place of trusting to others and confining his attention to a superintendence of their actions by which means he never has a confidential person under him fit for any thing, added to which if he happens to have been born and bred *out of Moray*, he is in his opinion not to be attended to. Lord Stafford after much trouble procured a very excellent and superior person<sup>1</sup> to undertake the management of the Dunrobin farm. Young professed that he wished nothing so much as to be relieved of all management of the details of this farm. It was proper that he should, and so it was fully arranged with Stewart, but already I have a letter from Stewart saying he cannot carry on the business of the farm by Mr Young employing the horses always on some *foolish* Job or another. The expence of the cultivation of Skelbo and Dunrobin has been *extravagant*. The Mound was constructed to gain some part of the frith as arable land. It is a deep Sea Sand and if the road had been carried up to the mouth of the river, a slight bridge made there, all the expence would have been avoided and the Country better served. See my sketch on the other side – present road by Mound a,m,c; my line a,b,c which might have communicated with the present road at d, or if the thing had been properly done the road to Dornoch should have been b,c. [Here follows the sketch.] You see how well these things should be considered before hand, and how necessary to lay down a general plan. Lord Reay and I have had much talk upon the Subject of roads in Sutherland and we are to meet Mr Young etc. on the Subject in August and I must beg your aid. I will state the things to you he has submitted to our consideration. 1st. You are aware that the only two roads in the County are the Dunrobin road and the Tongue road, the former you know, the latter branches off from Bonar bridge to the upper end of Loch

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Stewart, recommended to the Marchioness by Lord Somerville.

Naver then to Tongue. Mrs Mackay of Bighouse who has contributed to these two roads is not nearer home by them than Tongue on the one hand or Thurso on the other, a case of very great hardship, and one which must be attended to. I had conceived that the better way would be to make a road by Kildonan into Strathnaver to Far and then to Thurso. The means of doing this I proposed was to have been borne in moieties by Lord Stafford and the public as far as the Sutherland estate goes, and by Mrs Mackay or the County afterwards. I will explain to you hereafter how I meant to try to manage this. Lord Reay says this is not the best way. Make says he at the expence in equal moieties by the County and the public the road from Tongue to Thurso. This is the shortest and best way from Caithness to the South. For the convenience of Strathnaver, prolong the present road, then, which is a tolerable one up the side of Loch Naver to the upper end where the Tongue road joins it, and then construct at his and Lord Stafford's expence a road from this same point at the end of Loch Naver, a road Westward to the Lime Country of Loch Eribol and eastward to Brora coal, each individual to be at the expence through his Estate.

3. Inns. An Inn at Bonar is indispensable. It was proposed to build it by subscription at the North end of the Bridge and in order to relieve the amount it was further proposed that it should also serve the purpose of a Toll house and that the County should contribute to its erection from its funds accordingly. Lord Stafford objects to this as it would lay the road trustees at the mercy of the Innkeeper, and he and Lord Reay both wish the Inn on the South side. We have communicated with Lady Mary Ross and the rest of the Balnagowan trustees<sup>1</sup> upon the subject who are very desirous indeed to have it upon their estate in order to secure a continuance of the monopoly of the Kyle Market custom etc., and I believe they will themselves build an Inn. This therefore unless Young succeeds in his opposition to this plan I consider as settled. Golspie will do as the next especially if the road through the hills to Torboll is made. Then upon the Tongue road two small Inns will be wanted one at Larg and another at Loch Naver, to both of which Lord

<sup>1</sup> The land on the south side of the Bonar Bridge was part of the estate of Balnagown. General Sir Charles Ross of Balnagown died on 8 February 1814, leaving an heir two years old.

Reay very handsomely offers to contribute £100 though upon the Sutherland Estate. You will therefore see how much there is to consider and that well, before another sixpence is expended on this Estate. And I need not say to you but it is what we must impress strongly on the minds of all in Sutherland that the consideration and adoption of a great and extended plan such as I sketch out does not necessarily suppose its immediate or rapid execution. The propriety of considering well such matters before hand is to secure that every sixpence when it is laid out is such laid out and will contribute its share to the general result and not be thrown away upon partial and insulated and ill considered jobs which will never lead to any general advantage or benefit. To a man of your thorough knowledge and acquirements it is an infinite satisfaction to state these outlines which will suggest to you a thousand others that you will think right to have arranged. And I must again add that I received your letter today for these reasons with infinite satisfaction and relying as I do upon your friendship and kindness I hope for much success in getting a system laid down such as appears to me proper. What I have further to suggest to you upon this point is this, that I trust Lord and Lady Stafford will not upon Youngs suggestion [begin] any extensive new plan of improvement before we get there. I know it is their wish not to do so and I believe they are aware we have no feeling in Advising them but a real and unfeigned attachment to them and a desire to put their affairs in the best possible train but you know Youngs eagerness. Now that Sellar is acquitted besides the [ ]<sup>1</sup> Jealousy will reappear, and Sellar has not shewn my long letter to him,<sup>2</sup> and of which you have a Copy sent, to Young which will also force me to write him another. Sellar has also applied, without Youngs knowledge, for *Mckids* farm. The moment I learned of this I remonstrated against it both by letter and verbally in the strongest manner and I hope Lady Stafford has written to him to say he cannot have it. In every point of view this would have been quite ruinous to the Estate and its future management and I begged her Ladyship if she had any difficulty in giving Sellar a refusal to lay it upon my back. I hope you agree with me? If you do pray write to me that you do. Of Course

<sup>1</sup> Gap in MS.

<sup>2</sup> Written on 15 May 1816\*.

you see the propriety of keeping this a profound secret for it would if known lead to Young's resignation, which would not easily be repaired, for though he has a few inconsistencies he has eminent qualifications. As to the libels in the Military Journal I consider them as of moment only as they keep up the irritation in the Country. At my desire her Ladyship wrote two very excellent letters one to the Minster of Far and the other to the Minister of Kildonan which I trust will have some effect in opening the peoples eyes. But I am quite clear if after a case has been laid before Counsel they advise proceeding here that there should be no time lost. I must refer to My second letter to Sellar on the Subject.

What I should like to do is this, to come to you on my way North. If I *can get* to you across the Hills by Craig Ellachie so much the better and then that we should proceed to Dunrobin together. I leave it much to you to keep all quiet till we get down.

\* Patrick Sellar to Marchioness of Stafford

Culmaily, 5 June 1816, 7 a.m.

Before proceeding to give your Ladyship a Brief detail of our operations yesterday, I must explain to you that our efforts failed of *complete* Success. I reached the Mound a little past 5 during a complete tempest. I was to meet Mr Young at Forsyth's (where he promised to be all night) to make the necessary arrangements. But instead of being there, Mr Young was at Cambusmore. It was plain that by reason of the violence of the night, the waggons had made little or no progress in narrowing the Gulph at (A)<sup>1</sup>; and, when the water receded to the Gulph this was more manifest; and, the weather blowing a perfect tempest, I concluded that our operations would be *limited to the Gulph for that day*, untill I saw the men on the opposite side fall to, as the water receded; form in their Squads, and begin to wheel the Stuff to the piling, to which the Carpenters began at Same time to nail the planks. No communication was possible. After they had wrought about an hour we got across from this Side. In this Stage, of proces, nothing was for it but to fall on with heart and hand. The quantity of Staff calculated on was *far outdone*, the hole

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the sketch sent to Loch on 6 March 1816 (see above, p. 275).

was planked (not piled) across and wheeled full of Stuff, the sea was completely Excluded, not the *Slightest Symptom* of blowing up from side to Side. But as the hole contained 9 to 10 feet perpendicular depth at Low water 5 feet flowings made *15 feet perpendicular to be filled*, it required the greatest exertions to keep pace with the Tide. However, we did keep pace with her. *About 10 minutes before high water* - 7 o Clock - the upper Sheeting opposite this 15 perpendicular feet, bent with the pressure. It broke off. It plainly appeared that 15 perpendicular feet of soft Sand could not withstand the pressure. It burst at (A), and the Tide came in to the Gulph with a velocity more easily conceived than Expressed.

Had my bargain with Mr Young been implemented, or after it failed, had we filled the 10 feet Gulph with hard Stuff in place of Sand, or had we secured it with piles properly drove in in place of trusting to the Sand and a Sheeting of a few deals nailed to the braces the thing could not have failed. There was not the least blowing up or leakage from Side to Side, *so that the thing was perfectly practicable*, but no plan or System was adhered to, and failure was the *necessary consequence*.

The whole operation on the West Side Stands, as does the main Mound on this Side. The Gulph at (A) very much enlarged remains open.

I was directing my Squad on the West Side pouring Stuff into the Site of the Gulph when the *effect followed the Cause*, and the Sea came in. We were of consequence cutt off from communication with this Side, and did not Get across untill ten o Clock at night: and being from 5 in the morning untill that time in the wet my hand Shakes so much I fear your Ladyship will scarcely make me out.

We meet this day at Nine to inspect the damage and determine what is to be done, and whatever it may be, I am determined it Shall be Expressed in writing, a plan formed, and followed up. If that be done we *cant fail of Success*. If that be not done we *cant hope Success*. Flights, and Starts, and whipping and Spurring without Judgement are all vain Shew and nonsense.

\* George Macpherson Grant to James Loch

Ballindalloch, 10 June 1816

I assure you it will afford me the greatest satisfaction if I can be of the smallest service in aiding your views for an arrangement of a General and fixed Plan of Operations in the Improvement and Management of the Sutherland Estate and I have only to regret that I am not more capable of assisting in so Interesting an object. Our joint endeavours will however have this advantage that we are guided by the same disinterested anxiety of promoting the Interests and Improvement of the Country in the most judicious manner that suggests itself to us.

The rapidity with which Improvement has been pushed, on the Sutherland Estate during the last six years has attracted my astonishment by its magnitude but I confess it has frequently appeared to me that too much rapidity was aimed at and that the Expensive scale of Expenditure on the Coast side farms was more calculated to shew what money could effect, than to hold out an example of that gradual Improvement which a Tenantry might hope to imitate. I early hinted this to Mr Young whose answer was that my observation might be just but that he was not entitled to contemplate a continuance of his situation and that he felt it his Duty to do the most for the interest of his Constituents with the least delay; And no one, I am confident, could in so short a time have effected so much. My view of the subject however is, that enough has been done to establish the capability of the soil and Climate and that every attention should now be turned to promote that progressive Improvement which may be effected by stimulating and encouraging the exertions of the most capable and Intelligent of the native Peasantry.

I confess I am too ignorant of the Country to give any opinion how this is to be done and I certainly have the greatest desire to take a journey through the Estate if you and I could accomplish it, this summer, and when you come here I think you will not dislike the Appearance of my small tenantry gradually encouraged to Improvement by stimulating their own exertions.

1. The Next great object or rather the first step to Improvement is the opening the best communications by Roads and it is here that

I think Expence should be least considered if judiciously expended. The County has certainly been put to very considerable expence from the want of due Consideration of the Lines in the first Instance but this was much owing to the various views suggested by Mr Telford. The original proposition of the Creich Ferry caused a great deal of this. When Bonar Bridge was fixed upon a road by Torboll was certainly the most beneficial to the County and the Mound has certainly thrown a great Burden on the County but if it is successfully executed I do not think that Lord Stafford has any cause to regret its adoption as it connects his property in a most desirable manner.

2. The situation of Mrs Mackay of Bighouse's Property imperiously calls for consideration, and, in ignorance of the Country, from a Consideration of the Map I feel strongly inclined to concur in Lord Reay's opinion that the continuation of the Tongue Road to Thurso and a Road from Brora to join the Tongue Road at the upper end of Loch Naver should be the first object. These great Lines being established the next consideration is a judicious expenditure of the Commutation Road money and aids from the Proprietor to repair the present roads connecting with them.

3. But I have serious Apprehensions that the consideration of these measures has been too long delayed and that we may not be able to make the Bounty of Government available for their execution; as I understand that the Parliamentary Commissioners have come to the Resolution of *not contributing to any Road for which they are not already committed* even in those Counties which have procured a Bill for Assessing themselves. And this point you must establish from Mr Rickman before you leave London.

4. Inns. Without these your Roads are comparatively nothing. The one at Bonar I consider as on the best possible footing in the way you suggest. The idea of conjoining an Inn and Toll house always met my reprobation. The two on the Tongue Road seem judiciously suggested and Lord Reay's Subscription to them is handsome tho' certainly only what should have been expected as he is more materially interested in their erection than Lord Stafford and no profit can be expected in the way of Rent.

I am quite aware of what strikes you in regard to Mr Young but he is invaluable in his situation and without him I conceive that all

would be lost. In his situation it is likewise of the greatest consequence that the fullest appearance of confidence should subsist. The Jealousies to which you allude<sup>1</sup> are I know becoming very open, and on this Account, I regret (although you perfectly explain it in your letter as intended for their joint Consideration) that your letter on the subject of a General arrangement<sup>2</sup> should have been addressed to Sellar instead of Mr Young. Young will feel it, and on the footing on which they stand, he may infer that the measure has been suggested by some reflections of Sellars in the letters to which you reply. You will contrive to get this done away and I think Mr Young's usefulness may be much promoted by restricting that Expenditure in Buildings and Improvements so congenial to his habits and by diverting that expenditure to other Channels where a General Superintendence rather than a detail one will be required from him.

I perfectly agree with you that acceding to Sellars proposal for taking Mr Mackid's farm<sup>3</sup> would have the very worst effect in the present state of affairs, although as a Farmer no one is certainly more entitled to preference, and I think the refusal should be put on that footing. It would inevitably lead to this, that it would be a foundation for insinuating that Mackid was sacrificed to Sellars accomodation and the present impression of Mackid's undermining *him* would revert upon himself; besides it is an extension of that system which I have set out with objecting to, of throwing the Coast Land Farms into too great a scale, And I question whether it would not be more desirable to see Mackidd's farm, Craigtown and Ironhill occupied by three Tenants who, tho' not at first perhaps exhibiting such a perfect mode of Farming as their Neighbour, would gradually take lessons from him, than to see them thrown into one large Farm. I am aware this idea is liable to argument and I only throw out the suggestion for that purpose.

The Expenditure upon the Farms of Dunrobin, Skelbo, Uppat and Morvich come under the head of the first view I have suggested of the Sutherland Improvements and I conceive are calculated rather

<sup>1</sup> Between Young and Sellar.

<sup>2</sup> Written on 15 May 1816\*.

<sup>3</sup> Sellar had proposed to rent Kirkton and to work it in conjunction with the adjacent Culmaily. Despite Loch's opposition, he was offered a lease in autumn 1816, but failed to agree on terms (See also above, p. 287).



to impress the Natives with an idea that Improvement is beyond their attainment than to hold out any encouragement to them to attempt it. The Improvements in the Parish of Loth are most to my mind and the manner in which they have been effected may lead to some useful result.

I have hastily stated what occurs to me on the subject of your confidential Correspondence and when we meet we shall be able to discuss each subject more minutely. Let me know when I am to expect you and Lord Francis.<sup>1</sup> Your best way of coming here is either by the Highland Road from Aviemore by Grantown or by the Aberdeen Road from Keith from whence there is a Turnpike Road here; on this last line you pass within sight of the Craig Elachie Bridge and we can proceed to Dunrobin either by Craig Elachie Bridge to Elgin or by the Highland Road by Grantown to Inverness.

Your second letter to Sellar<sup>2</sup> placed the subject of the Military Register *exactly* upon the footing on which I should have wished to see it and I hope he has sense enough to act up entirely to your views without comment or enquiry.

\* Patrick Sellar to James Loch

Culmally, 19 June 1816, 10 a.m.

I wrote Lady Stafford yesterday morning to say that a second attempt was to be made to Close the Mound. We began yesterday at 10 o'clock a.m., spent the day very prudently in filling the Gulph with hard Stuff and paving a new Course for the river to *prevent her cutting* a new Gulph, rested five hours, renewed the attack at 11 night, wrought upon a singular system all night, and I am this moment returned after seeing the water Completely Shutt out, and neptune *retire to his dominions* leaving us from two to three feet above his flowings. We rest 5 hours and then begin again to force the Stuff further beyond his reach. The filling of the hole with hard

<sup>1</sup> Lord Francis Leveson-Gower (1800-57), second son of the Marquis and Marchioness, later 1st Earl of Ellesmere, and inheritor of the Bridgewater fortune (see above, i, p. xxxi).

<sup>2</sup> Written on 25 May 1816\*. In it Loch recommended Sellar to lay a case before English counsel with a view to prosecuting the *Military Register*.

Stuff is only about 20 feet broad, but the Mound being five times that breadth this *pounds hard*, will be annealed on all Sides with puddle. In fact it already is so much so, that blowing up is out of the question; and the whole thing from side to Side looks extremely well.

I am not to presume to dictate what is to be done concerning the *Military Register*; But I am of course always ready to do my duty.

I shall be happy to commune with you further when we meet concerning the subject of the Essay<sup>1</sup> I mentioned to send you. It was the only means of discharging my duty in Replying to your long letter competent to me, Mr Young declining to make any written communication at present on the Subject, and if fit for nothing else, it may answer to light your fire.

Having been nearly 24 hours on my legs very earnestly and [actively] Employed I can scarcely write intelligible but I hope you will make me out. We shall not be fully safe for Seven days; but, if the unremitting Exertion do not Exhaust us I confidently hope we shall be safe and I trust when you Come north you Shall ride along the Fleet Mound in place of Donalds Ferry.

\* James Loch to George Macpherson Grant

London, 1 July 1816

In considering the subject of our late correspondence there is one branch of the general Management of Sutherland, which I forgot to touch upon, and which I am determined once again to bring into mature and thorough consideration when we are in Sutherland, and that is Brora and all its ramifications. You will observe that the whole expenditure here, has been incurred to the amount of between 30 and £40,000 without any steps having ever been taken to ascertain the extent of the field of coal. When I first went to Dunrobin the most extravagant calculations were exhibited to Lord and Lady Stafford of the direct and immediate revenue which this and the Salt pans were to produce. I found it then necessary to counteract as far as I could these sanguine expectations, arising from an ignorance of the trade and an under calculation of the expenses

<sup>1</sup> See above, i, pp. 175-87.

in every way. I however did not succeed. The year before last, things looked less well and I was applied to by Young to send a Manager from England. I engaged one and he twice gave him the Slip, at last he was obliged to ask for the assistance of Lord Staffords coal bailiff here and upon his report the present bailiff<sup>1</sup> was sent down. At first he would make a Gentleman of him and spoiled him, and last year he quarrelled with him and would have dismissed him but I absolutely made a point to keep him. The information upon which he was proceeding, he obtained from his own men a very wrong thing to do. By a little manoeuver he got me to see those men after I had positively refused. I ascertained from them that he was in every respect a faithful and diligent servant. However this state of things enabled me again to represent that this concern never would pay directly but only indirectly in a thousand ways which I need not state to you. I was for husbanding the Coal, the extent of which cannot be great, in order that it might continue to be the groundwork of a vast industry arising in that Country. After much difficulty I shewed Young and got him to acknowledge that he never could make a direct profit of it, but yet his great object is to drive a *little trade*. This is the sort of thing in which he was brought up and which he likes, and in following which I think he has committed the great mistake in his management of the Sutherland Estate. A property of a great English Nobleman must be managed on the same principles of a little kingdom and not like the affairs of a little Merchant. The *future* and *lasting* interest and honor of the family as well as their immediate income must be kept in view, while a merchant thinks only of his daily profit and his own immediate life interest. In no affairs is this principle so much to be kept in view as Lord Staffords. The nature, the extent and the remoteness of the Sutherland Estate, the sort of improvement it requires, the extent and nature of his English property giving him the greatest free income of any Nobleman, this income not descending with the Sutherland Estate, all render the adoption of the principle of management and improvement, so well explained by you in your letter and hinted at here peculiarly necessary. The great sinews of improvement should be Lord Staffords Object, the minor features can be filled up by Lord Gower and his tenants. If the

<sup>1</sup> John Jermyn (for whose ultimate dismissal see above, i, p. lxxiii).

contrary system is persevered in there will have been an immense expenditure without any adequate return. To the Coal this observation particularly applies, and I should be glad to know if that is exhausted what becomes of all the money which has been expended upon Brick, Salt and pottery works, and why endanger all this for a little Dirty temporary trade. I have I think fully possessed Lord Gower with these views and I trust also we shall be able to do the same with Lord and Lady Stafford.

I can assure you it would give you much distress, if with all the activity that is displayed you were to see the unsteady and shifting plan that is pursued, leading to expence and bringing nothing to a finish. I audited the last years Accounts, Grant came up with them, the Amount of £33,000 and hardly ten Stamp receipts, the Vouchers made up of Accounts current in which many other people unconnected with the Estate had transactions, the workmens Accounts in the same way, money paid upon Account, after the whole had been done the bargain was made and the Accounts brought all up from memory. When at Dunrobin last year Mr Young stated to me several times that he would this year remit money, I knew and told him this was impossible, he persisted. Except two new Salt pans I know of no great expenditure and he wrote me the other day saying he was in great debt. I wrote four letters to him begging him to state what he thought the amount of the years expenditure would be (a guess of course) so that we might either provide the means, or if that were not possible to enable Lord and Lady Stafford to reduce what they thought right. This he never did. Now if I saw the expenditure proceeding upon any grand and general principle I am sure I would never think of saying one word even if in the details I saw things I could not approve of, but I must confess that looking through things as I have been and as you will be enabled to do, and seeing no fixed principle upon which things are advised but rather a capricious selection of objects followed by a lavish expenditure without the prospect of any adequate return to the Estate I must endeavour to set it right. In doing so I shall have performed my duty and no man can do more.

I utter all these things in confidence to you alone as from your advice and friendship and knowledge of the Country and people I expect to be able to do things in a more satisfactory train. And my

maxims throughout life has been always to look forward and to make the best of all things and never to look back with regret or blame. This part of the island is at present in a most dismal state. They have not in London business for more than  $\frac{2}{3}$ ds of the Clerks of the Custom house. The stamps have fallen off prodigiously also. The Clothiers of Wilts, York, the Iron and Coal Countries of Stafford and Salop, the potteries, Manchester etc. are literally without work and if the price of grain rises before the new grain comes into market and which I have no doubt it will do I really apprehend very serious consequences. They have established a permanent staff at Lichfield to look after Birmingham and Staffordshire.<sup>1</sup> . . . [Travel arrangements].

\* William Young to William Mackenzie

Rhives, 22 July 1816

With the most unfeigned sense of your friendship and being perfectly satisfied that what I write you will go no farther for I have not consulted another person on the subject I shall candidly tell you what I have had in contemplation for some months and what I am the better enabled to state to The Marquis and Lady Stafford now that the Mound is about finished.

I have in the short period of five years got all their Lands arranged so far as the existing Leases admit of it and bad as the times are I am not aware that altho' many require delay in payment there are any who need a deduction of rent except one man and that only to the extent of £20. I have seen peace and quiet restored and many of the poor people who were led on by knaves ashamed of their conduct. We now only want a resident Sherrieff with proper officers in different parts of the Country to keep all right. The Brora Coal and Salt Works are on such a train as that a Local manager of Sense and activity (and indeed I think Robertson the Man) is only wanted to bring all the returns which can be expected from a business of this description while in the hands of a Nobleman, for it is in vain to expect that in agricultural pursuits, trade or manufactures the same gain will ever be obtained as by operative people. I have got the Fishery wonderfully brought forward and seen men from the

<sup>1</sup> Presumably a reference to military arrangements in case of disturbances.

Mountains of Kildonan employed at and really pleased with this new occupation.

We can look for no more Parliamentary aid to roads and Bridges so that however much it is to be regretted little more can be done in this way. I shall have the Mound if not finished at least ready for inspection by the 10th of September and any person of ordinary capacity can improve the Land gained which may be about 500 acres. In short except to settle my accounts when Mr Loch comes North I really see that my Salary or a great part of it may be saved to the Marquis. My departure from the Country will be no loss to him, but satisfactory to others. I indeed hinted the same thing to Lady Stafford in general terms some months ago,<sup>1</sup> then Her Ladyship would not listen to it but may now think differently.

Knowing me however as you do you'll easily see I cannot be idle; through Life I have been engaged in some active pursuits mostly all of which have turned out both for others as well as myself pretty well. But now there is no field to work on in Morayshire, my property there will be completely finished off this Autumn but it has left me very bare admitting some feasible speculation was to come in the way. However I hear of some monied people coming to the Country and I think it would sell. In that case and from your knowledge of the place can you tell me what sort of purchase Lady Hood MacKenzies Morvich<sup>2</sup> would make and about what price it might be sold for. I have heard that there is a large tract of land which could be gained from the Sea, in short that it is very improvable, but I am quite a stranger to the place, its Local situation, roads etc. all of which with the existing Leases require consideration. Pray write me at your convenience.

No accounts of our Brora Custom House officer. He is sadly wanted.

William Young to Marchioness of Stafford

Rhives, 24 August 1816

From a letter which I had the honor to write your Ladyship on the 15th of last November I beg leave to quote the following passage.

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> In Kintail.

'Matters are now on a good train at Brora which only wants a superintendant, the new town is fairly set agoing and when I have the satisfaction to say that six new Houses are now on foot I have no fear but more building ground will soon be called for. The Herring Fishing is most promising that of Cod and Ling will soon follow however adverse at first the people may be to adventure in it. Dunrobin Mains Farm with the exception of a few fences is completely finished, Skelbo entirely so. All the Lands which access can be had to for some years will be Lotted out and the people put into possession at Whitsunday. Matters on the whole are on such a train that a Collector of rents, a resident Agent at Brora, with a proper Bailiff at Dunrobin all to render regular and frequent accounts to Mr Loch seem only necessary and at Whitsunday I am confident that I can be well and profitably spared. A Salary far more than any advantages to be derived and an outlay of money which I candidly confess it is not my nature to avoid will be saved and immediate returns will be the consequence.'

In answer to the above your Ladyship wrote me on the 23d of same month as follows. 'Mr Loch expects every day that you will see Meiklejohn arrive. He cannot conceive what retards him. I also wrote yesterday to Lord Somerville, Lord Stafford is reading your letter and general *view*. He is much pleased with it and says it is a well written letter and by a person of an extended mind. We must however keep in measure about the further extra outlays till the present objects in hand are perfected. What you say about retiring is *nonsense* to which we shall not pay the smallest attention.'

Having now in addition to all former works, almost completed the Mound and being fully aware of how little use I can be to The Marquis and your Ladyship while a considerable saving by my removal will be certain I again beg to offer my resignation. While I do so I trust that your Ladyship will be assured that the future prosperity of the Estate and the many improvements which I have been the humble instrument to conduct under The Marquis and Your Ladyship will be looked to with pleasure and that they may prosper to the utmost will be my earnest wish and prayer.

Marchioness of Stafford to William Young

Dunrobin Castle, 25 August 1816

I recollect the correspondence of last November to which you allude, and if any difference has taken place in the sentiments I then exprest, it is not from any change of my opinion with regard to your Talent, activity and Zeal, of which Lord Stafford and I are fully sensible, but from thinking that the expense attending the outlays which it has now become necessary to retrench, together with the other regulations we propose should be adopted, may render such an employment as the management here, no longer an Object which could occupy sufficiently the abilities of which you have given such proof as in the improvements effected by your skill and attention in this Country. I can very truly assure you of the esteem and regard Lord Stafford and I entertain for you, and of our sense of the kind and friendly expressions in your letter, and however painful it may be to me to receive the intimation of the intentions you express of retiring from your present employment I shall always look with much satisfaction to the continuance of your friendship; upon which I shall depend and which I shall truly value.

James Loch to Francis Suther

Stonehaven, 30 August 1816

I left Dunrobin upon Monday forenoon, after having passed as severe a three weeks work as I ever did in my life and I trust for the material and permanent advantage of all matters connected with the management of the estate of Sutherland. I mentioned to you in one of my last letters that the expenditure had exceeded all reasonable bounds and that it required to be put upon a footing similar to that which is pursued at Trentham. I mentioned to her Ladyship the necessity there was to have the thing so arranged and that I should have authority to do so. This was very willingly granted and I drew out a set of instructions for the head of every department including Mr Young. In addition to this two resident factors were appointed one for the estate of Assynt, the other for the district of Strathnaver and the estate of Armadale, their salaries amounting to £120 per annum each to be deducted from Mr Young. The consequence of



these arrangements has been Mr Youngs resignation which takes place at Martinmas and will be followed by Mr Sellars removal at Whitsunday. It is proposed for the future to curtail the great outlay and to confine the expenditure within reasonable bounds. It is also proposed to have only one factor on the coast side, to whom the general superintendence of the estate is to be committed. He will have the assistance of two clerks one to keep the books, the other the rental and if one of them especially the latter had a little knowledge of land surveying it would be a vast thing; besides this he will have the assistance of the local factors before mentioned, who are to be under his direction, together with the farm bailiff and the Coal and Salt Manager. Lord and Lady Stafford have desired me to offer this situation to you and although for every reason I shall regret your removal from Trentham where you have done so much and so well, I cannot allow any selfish reason of the sort to stand in your way and prevent you getting this situation and I trust that you will not refuse it, though I must beg of you to believe that it is left to your free option and determination. Your Salary will be £400 per annum and house free and a small farm attached to it, for which I believe a small rent is paid, the permanent improvements being done by Lord Stafford. If you should accept I will then communicate very fully with you upon the matter but I cannot part with you at Trentham before Whitsunday, as whoever we find to succeed you must be with you there sometime before you leave. I should be glad to have some person recommended by yourself, but in case you have none in view I have written to Mr Thomson and Mr Stuart upon the subject. Will you answer this letter as soon as you can directed for me at Blair Adam. If you accept I propose being with you next summer for a sufficient time to put things in a regular train and to explain to you the subjects to which to turn your attention in the first instance.

\* James Loch to William Mackenzie

Richmond Park, 23 October 1816

I received your letter of the 19th last night and I return you many thanks for it, especially for the very liberal and candid manner in which you state your opinion respecting the management of the

estate of Sutherland, the more so, as I think a very short explanation will shew you, how much more our ideas on that subject are in unison than you think they are.

Ever since my opinion was asked respecting the general Measures pursuing at Dunrobin, I have uniformly and invariably in many written statements pressed upon Lord and Lady Stafford, Lord Gower and Mr Young, the propriety of having some general system of management, laid down after maturely considering every subject connected with the estate and its localities. I was of opinion that it should have been considered generally what part of the estate should be ultimately allotted to sheep, what to small hill tenants, what to fishers and settlers and what to arable farms; that with the rental in our hand, some general action should have been adopted as to when and where the people should be moved and settled, the whole being well arranged beforehand, sufficient time should be given the people gradually to adapt their means to the proposed change in their circumstances, to dispose of their stock and build their new houses which were too little attended to; that this would depend much on the term at which the respective leases expired; that whenever the people were obliged to be moved it should be *done once for all*, so that the people should never be twice moved; that Lord Stafford having an income such as an Earl of Sutherland may never again have, his money as long as he chose to expend it there, should be laid out on such great improvements, as a proprietor with more limited means or a tenant could not undertake. I particularly pointed out a road up by Kildonan by the Naver to Farr, one up Loch Naver to the Tongue new road, from Strathfleet to Larg, and from Torboll towards Bonar. These to be gradually done and with or without such aid from the Statute labour as circumstances would make advisable, that these and other similar great works being done the minor parts could be done by a less wealthy proprietor and his tenantry. It was besides beginning the improvement at the right end and carrying the people of the country along with you, whereas as the improvements have been conducted they have been done entirely by strangers and quicker than the people of the country could go along with who have not benefitted as they ought considering the expenditure. In place or being satisfied of the propriety of what has been done, they ascribe

their success (and in some cases with reason) to the strength of Lord Staffords purse. After this more general plan was settled I proposed that every year a written statement should have been submitted to Lord and Lady Stafford of the proposed operations for the ensuing year, with a rough estimate of the probable expence and the amount of the money required. This I was aware could only be an approximation to the truth, and such I always stated it to be. I have given a general idea of the same sort for the Trentham estates, and annually present a similar report to Lord Stafford. These two combined would have given him a general view of the whole affairs and the proposed expenditure for the whole year and enabled him to controul what he did not wish to execute or to provide money to execute them all, without the Scotch and English establishments getting foul of each other. In place of this Young carried on every thing from day to day, as the fancy struck him without any fixed general plan, proposing them as they occurred by letter to Lady Stafford who when not on the spot had little time to consider of their propriety, their fitness with her general plans or their expence. I again and again represented to Young that his indulging in his plans and borrowing money without his Lordships controul would tire Lord Stafford out, and as I was most sincerely anxious that the Sutherland improvements should not cease, I begged of him to make a communication before hand of his intended operations.

The beginning of last year I wrote to him two very long letters<sup>1</sup> at Lord and Lady Staffords desire, begging to know what he proposed executing in the course of the year, with the probable amount of the expenditure and how much money he expected from Sellar. I mentioned that the reason for wishing to know this, was that I was arranging the amount of expenditure for the ensuing year at Trentham, Newcastle and Lilleshall, and that his Lordship had to pay for several considerable purchases, which made it necessary to know whether he would require any money from England and how much. To these letters I received *no answer*. We made no provision for Scotland, and when I was at Dunrobin I was obliged to provide £18,000 to Martinmas and to disappoint a gentleman in £5,000. I need not say one word to shew you how detrimental this is to a great noblemans affairs and character. This brings me to the Monthly

<sup>1</sup> Only one of these, written on 14 February 1815\*, has survived.

reports, and when I mention to you they are merely Monthly abstracts of *Cash proceedings* for enabling me to know how his Lordships money stands and whether any will be required, you will see how much they have been mistaken.

No man is more convinced of the impossibility of conducting the detail of the Sutherland estate by written reports than I am and my whole advice has been to put it upon a system of management to do away with this where it existed. I saw at Dunrobin that if I staid I should get entangled with the details and I stated that to Lady Stafford<sup>1</sup> as one of my reasons for coming away. I could not engage with them. From Ballindalloch I wrote most strongly to her Ladyship<sup>2</sup> that next year should be one of *consideration* merely and that the new management should be started fairly upon a well digested and regular system. From this detail you will see how much we agree in our views, and by a communication of our ideas I hope we shall be able to start Suther in a way which will be equally beneficial to the *honour* and *interests* of the proprietors and which will not be prejudicial to the interests and as little offensive as possible to the feelings of the people. I am most happy in having had it in my power to make this explanation.

I regret as much as you do that Sellar was continued as he has been. It was (I fairly own it) my fault and I must be answerable for the consequences. But I was applied to, to do it by Macpherson Grant, just as I was going away and I spoke to Lady Stafford without sufficient reflection. I have however told every body that it is only a temporary measure. It is all Sellar deserves at Lord and Lady Staffords hand for much injury he has done them in disposing the minds of the people against all reasonable change. From the kindness they have shewn me, there is nothing they ask I would not do for them, except engage in the same management and embark my character in the same vessell as him. If any body blames this, lay it upon me.

In reference to what I said about our English reports, the magnitude of the establishment, the many ways they have of making perquisites makes a minuteness necessary that nothing but experience would make you believe to be so.

<sup>1</sup> In a letter written on 26 August 1816.

<sup>2</sup> Written on 28 August 1816.

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1970-1971

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the Honorary Secretary or the Honorary Treasurer  
whose addresses are given overleaf.*

## SCOTTISH HISTORY SOCIETY

### REPORT

#### of the 84th Annual Meeting

The 84th Annual Meeting of the Scottish History Society was held in the Rooms of the Royal Society, George Street, Edinburgh, on Saturday 12 December 1970, at 11.15 a.m., Professor Gordon Donaldson, President, was in the Chair.

The Report of the Council was as follows:

The sixth volume of the Fourth Series, *The Dundee Textile Industry: 1790-1885: from the papers of Peter Carmichael of Arthurstone*, edited by Mrs Enid Gauldie, was issued during the year. The Council is pleased to note that this volume has been extremely popular with members, and has aroused considerable interest outside the Society. The next volume, *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome: 1428-1432*, edited by Dr Annie I. Dunlop, is, in spite of unavoidable delays, in an advanced state of publication and will be issued to members early in the New Year. Mrs Dunlop is the Society's senior editor, having since 1927 edited or assisted in editing no fewer than five important volumes, and contributed to several miscellany volumes; this volume, her sixth and the third in the *Supplication* series, will be a fitting climax to a significant career as an editor of Scottish documents.

The publication to be issued to members for 1971 will be *Papers on Sutherland Estate Management: 1780-1820*, edited by R. J. Adam and A. V. Cole. These papers, from the archives of the Countess of Sutherland, give a detailed picture of the finances and management of this estate over an economically significant period, a period including the Sutherland 'clearances'. This extensive edition will, through the generosity of the Leverhulme Trust, be produced in two volumes.

Editorial work at present in active progress will ensure a series of attractive and varied publications for the next decade, and while during the past year no further volumes have been accepted for publication, the Council is always ready to consider proposals for possible future editions both from members of the Society and from other scholars interested in the documentation of Scottish History.

The Kraus Reprint Corporation has intimated to the Council that the response to their extensive advertising over the last two years, of the proposed reprinting of the Society's First Series, has been insufficient to

justify an immediate fulfilment of their contract with the Society. The Council has this matter under review.

Members of Council who retire in rotation at this time are Mrs Marjorie O. Anderson, Mr Stuart Maxwell, and Mr Ronald G. Cant (elected last year for one year *vice* the Rt Rev. Monsignor David McRoberts). The following will be proposed to the Annual General Meeting for election to the Council: Mr Cant, Mr John Dunbar, and Mr D. J. Withrington.

During the past year eight members have died, six have resigned, and five have been removed from membership for non-payment of subscription. Twenty-three new members have joined. The total membership, including 218 libraries, is now 706, compared with 702 in 1969. The Council notes that membership remains stable, but a further increase in membership is desirable to counteract the continually rising costs of producing the Society's publications.

In presenting the Annual Report, Monsignor David McRoberts, Chairman of Council, commented on the favourable reception of *The Dundee Textile Industry*, and emphasised that Council intended to maintain the high quality of the volumes issued to members. He expressed Council's appreciation of the editorial work done for the Society by Dr Dunlop, and indicated that appropriate recognition of this would be made to her on the publication of the Society's next volume. The Hon. Treasurer, in presenting his Report, said that, although the present accounts showed a comfortable balance, he envisaged that, in view of the rapidly increasing costs of printing and administration, raising of the subscription was inevitable in the near future.

Mr Ian Grant, seconded by Dr Rosalind Marshall, moved the adoption of the Annual Report, which was approved.

Dr D. E. R. Watt, seconded by Mr Edward Cowan, nominated for election as ordinary members of Council Mr Ronald G. Cant, Mr John G. Dunbar, and Mr Donald J. Withrington; and they were duly elected.

The President gave an address entitled 'The Queen's Party, 1568-1573'. The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the President proposed by the Rev. Dr Duncan Shaw.

ABSTRACT ACCOUNT OF CHARGE AND DISCHARGE OF THE  
INTROMISSIONS OF THE HONORARY TREASURER for the  
year 1 November 1969 to 31 October 1970.

I. GENERAL ACCOUNT

CHARGE

I. Cash in Bank at 1 November 1969:		
1. Sum at credit of Savings Account with Bank of Scotland	£1,755	3 8
2. Sum at credit of Current Account with Bank of Scotland	76	15 10
3. Sum at credit of Savings Account with Edinburgh Savings Bank	55	4 3
4. Sum at credit of Special Investment Account with Edinburgh Savings Bank	780	16 10
	<u>£2,668</u>	0 7
II. Subscriptions received	1,476	16 11
III. Past publications sold (including postages recovered from purchasers)	156	2 6
IV. Interest on Savings Accounts with Bank of Scotland and Edinburgh Savings Bank	124	18 9
V. Grant from Carnegie Trust	250	0 0
VI. Refund		16 8
VII. Sums drawn from Bank Current Account	<u>£3,411</u>	19 11
VIII. Sums drawn from Bank Savings Account	<u>£1,500</u>	0 0
	<u>£4,676</u>	15 5

## DISCHARGE

I. Cost of publications during year ( <i>Dundee Textile Industry</i> )	£1,448 5 6
Postage of Volumes	71 18 6
Maps ( <i>Dundee Textile Industry</i> )	76 0 0
Cost of printing Annual Report, Notices and Printers' postages, etc.	88 13 8
	<hr/> £1,684 17 8
II. Brochures	24 10 0
III. Miscellaneous Payments and refunds of subscriptions	102 12 3
IV. Sums lodged in Bank Current Account	<u>£3,460 11 11</u>
V. Sums lodged in Bank Savings Account	<u>£4,316 3 6</u>
VI. Funds at close of this account:	
1. Balance at credit of Savings Account with Bank of Scotland	£1,929 0 5
2. Balance at credit of Current Account with Bank of Scotland	48 12 0
3. Balance at credit of Savings Account with Edinburgh Savings Bank	56 11 9
4. Balance at credit of Special Investment Account with Edinburgh Savings Bank (Leverhulme Trust Fund)	<u>830 11 4</u>
	<hr/> 2,864 15 6
	<hr/> <u>£4,676 15 5</u>

## II. DR ANNIE I. DUNLOP SPECIAL FUND ACCOUNT

### CHARGE

#### I. Cash in Bank at 1 November 1969:

1. Sum at credit of Savings Account with Bank of Scotland £847 0 6
2. Sum at credit of Current Account with Bank of Scotland 19 6 0

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£866 6 6

#### II. Interest on Savings Account with Bank of Scotland

42 14 4

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£909 0 10

### DISCHARGE

#### I. Sums lodged in Bank Savings Account

£42 14 4

#### II. Funds at close of this Account:

1. Balance at credit of Savings Account with Bank of Scotland

£889 14 10

2. Balance at credit of Current Account with Bank of Scotland

19 6 0

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£909 0 10

EDINBURGH, 12 November 1970. I have examined the General Account and Dr Annie I. Dunlop Special Fund Account of the Honorary Treasurer of the Scottish History Society for the year from 1 November 1969 to 31 October 1970 and I find the same to be correctly stated and sufficiently vouched.

C. T. MCINNES  
Auditor