

GEORGE SUTHERLAND
OF RIARCHAR

the last of the Tacksmen.

Researched by

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“In the May 1745 he crossed the Meikle Ferry . . .”

The Rearquhar Papers (written by Col. George Sutherland, 1720-1815) were deposited by Mr A. E. MacEwen, on indefinite loan, in the Scottish Record Office in Edinburgh, where they are available for examination by researchers. Mr MacEwen himself is a direct descendant of William Taylor, who figures largely in the papers.

Rearquhar (or Riarchar as George Sutherland invariably spelt the name) is part of a strath in the south of the county of Sutherland. It stretches from Prcncy in the east to Achosnich in the west and includes the R' ver Evelix, Birichen, Fleuchary, Astle and Rearquhar.

As a child, the writer of these articles was always shown The Laird's House in the trees up the hill—but never found out who the laird was, until she read the Sutherland of Rearquhar Papers. The laird was Colonel George Sutherland, whose letters and memoranda form the Rearquhar Papers. He was tacksman of Rearquhar from 1788 until his death in 1815. The writer's great-grandfather was one of his sub-tenants. The house in which he lived, among the trees which he planted, is now her home.

“In the May, 1745 (to use his own words) he crossed the Meikle Ferry in a tartan coat and kilt with only £10 in his pocket and went in a volunteer into Major George Sutherland Midgarty's company of General Stuart's regiment of the Scots Brigade in the Dutch Service and marched with his recruits to Edinburgh.”

He was George Sutherland (generally styled of Riarchar and Elphin), 25 years of age, on his way south, he hoped, to fame and fortune. He himself would probably have said that he found neither. He served in Holland with the Scots Brigade until 1757, when he transferred to the British Regular Army, first to the 34th Regiment of Foot and then to the 14th Regiment of Foot. Dogged by illness, he finally sold out in 1763 and “settled here in Riarchar with only £1000 to begin the world, mortified at being cut out from his prospect in the Army.”

In 1761, while still serving as a regular soldier, he had been granted a wadset of Elphin in the parish of Assynt which gave him the right to vote in Parliamentary elections. It is interesting to note “that William Earl of Sutherland created seven superiorities in Assynt, so designed as to enfranchise the holders under the Provisions of the Statute of 1742 . . . which stipulated that every claimant of a vote in elections in the county of Sutherland should be infest—i.e., possessed of—£200 Scots (£16 13s 4d) at least of valued rent . . . The feu duties in the accounts represented 3/4 yearly” (quoted from Home's Survey of Assynt edited by Robin Adam). As far as can be discovered, his designation “of Elphin” was due entirely to his being given a vote in the county elections and was purely nominal.

For the next 30 years, George Sutherland was concerned with his tacks (leases) of Little Torboll and of Riarchar and the multifarious duties of his lands, as he apparently acted often at this time as his own factor and grieve.

There was a period from 1789 to 1797 during which he served with the Sutherland Fencibles (the country being then at war with France). He was away from Riarchar for seven or eight months each year stationed in different parts of Scotland, but always his interest and concern, as shown in his letters and notes, were centred in the parish of Dornoch, in Little Torboll, and, to a greater degree, in Riarchar, where he made his home, until his death as an old, old man of 95 in 1815.

It was in Riarchar that his heart lay. He wrote in 1796 to his man of affairs, William Taylor (Postmaster and Sheriff Clerk in Dornoch), "I'd rather have my bones laid in your cathedral than anywhere. My sincere wish is that I may live the remaining years of my life among you and at my exit have my eyes closed by some kind, friendly hand."

Some years before he died, he wrote an account of his family for the benefit of his nephew, George Gunn Munro of Poyntzfield, in the Black Isle, who had land in the parish of Dornoch also. George Sutherland was the fourth son of Captain John Sutherland of Little Torboll. The Presbytery records of 1717 show that John was cited to appear before the assembled divines for breaking the Sabbath. Apparently he had set off from Rogart to Loch Broom with some friends on a Sabbath morning. For this offence, he was severely censured after the lapse of a year, which was the length of time it took him to appear in person; so little presumably was he impressed by the seriousness of his crime or by the ministerial court who tried and sentenced him. By 1730, his youthful escapades must have been forgotten or forgiven, for in that year he signed the minutes of the Royal Burgh of Dornoch Council as one of its Bailies.

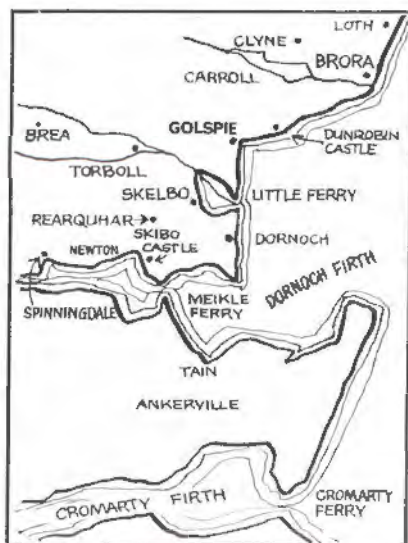
Ten years later (when his son George was 20) Captain John was invited to attend the wedding at Dunrobin of Lady Janet Sutherland and George Sinclair of Ulbster (later to be the parents of "agricultural" Sir John). Whether the festivities were too festive or the stairs too steep is not revealed. All that is known is that John Sutherland had a "fall in the old Stair of the House of Dunrobin" and died suddenly as a result.

Through his aunts (his father's sisters) George was related to the Sutherlands of Shibercross (so spelt) and of Cambusavie. Through his great-aunts, he was related to the McKemish Gunns of Killearnan in Kildonan, Chiefs of the Clan Gunn. Through his great-grandmother, he had a connection with the ancient family of Murray of Pulrossie. Bessie, second daughter of Robert Murray Pulrossie, had married George's great-grandfather—another Captain John Sutherland. This Captain John was known by a by-name, as is so often the case in the Highlands. George's description of him is worth quoting. He was "a captain in a regiment raised by one of the Earls of Sutherland who commanded it, in the then wars, in person, where the captain had several wounds and his face cut and mangled in such a manner that it gave him a wild-like look, and being a big, stout man and bandy-legged, he was notoriously known by the name of Captain Stavach."

It was Stavach's father who had settled "in Dalnamain upon the water of Carnag and having had some money, he purchased the estate of Little Torboll."

This takes us back four generations from our George Sutherland, back at least to the late 1500's. The names of many farms and crofts were known to Bishop Gilbert in 1224, to John Sutherland of Dalnamain in 1600, to George Sutherland of Riarchar in 1788, and to us today: Evelex, Achormlarie, Astle, Rearquhar, Cyderhall, Torboll, Achvaich, etc.

Within living memory, the house in which George Sutherland lived was still called The Laird's House. And although he would not know every field in his beloved Riarchar were he to return, he would still feel at home, so little has the face of his land changed.



‘Colonel Sutherland’s Country’

IN October, 1745, George Sutherland Riarchar joined his regiment, the Scots Brigade, in Holland, at Sluys. A report exists on “the dismal condition in which the Scots Regiment has been” because of sickness and death. It was as well, perhaps, for his peace of mind that George Sutherland was ignorant of this. It was undoubtedly here that the seeds of his future rheumatism were sown, the “cursed rheumatism” that was to plague him for the rest of his life.

Yet he served abroad for 12 years before his first commission was given to him in the 34th Regiment of Foot, quartered in Great Britain; and, from 1757, none of his service was abroad. Six years later he “fell into a bad state of health and, despairing of recovery,” sold out for £1000 and came home to Riarchar. He must have been a disappointed man to realise that any ambitions he had of promotion and fame in the Regular Army were gone.

The ambition of Napoleon Bonaparte on the continent of Europe made it necessary for these islands to be prepared for invasion, and a volunteer force of soldiers—called The Fencibles—was recruited. They were not regular troops and were for local internal defence only, but their pay, arms, clothing and discipline were like troops of the line. It was in the 2nd and 3rd Sutherland Fencibles that George Sutherland Riarchar found a realisation of his early dreams of a military life, progressing from captain to major and finally to colonel.

It was in February, 1779, that he was commissioned captain in the Sutherland Regiment of Fencible Men, commanded by Colonel William Wemyss of Wemyss (a nephew of the late Earl William of Sutherland). From 1779 to 1797 he served in different parts of Scotland, from Inverness to Ayr, from Fort George to Edinburgh, with only occasional leaves to visit his home, “the Old Barrack” at Riarchar, where he held a tack from Dunrobin from 1788 and may have been a tacksman of the Skelbo Estate before it was sold to the Countess.

He describes the arduous of recruiting marches in the county. Each officer—according to rank—had to raise a specified number of men—e.g., a captain had to swear in 35 men. Each recruit received bounty money (probably 3 to 5 guineas), from which he had to furnish himself with “two good white shirts at 5/3 each, one pair good shoes at 5/-, one haversack 1/-”. The bounty money and any other sums required for recruiting were paid by the Crown to the colonel of the regiment and thence to the officers, who, incidentally, might be liable to quite heavy expense if

recruiting were difficult and the cost of it exceeded the allowance. As George Sutherland once wrote, "Robert Mackay is recruiting for a company—it will cost him a round sum."

A recruit could pay "smart"—that is, money for his release—before being actually sworn in. In one of his letters George Sutherland wrote to William Taylor, sheriff clerk and postmaster of Dornoch, "If Colonel Wemyss halts in Dornoch, you should wait upon him and give him the history of John Buye (the shoemaker) and if he cannot be made a soldier of, be sure to get both my money—i.e., the bounty and smart. I will not dispense with a penny of either, and if Mr Bethune (the minister of the cathedral) will recommend W. McKenzie in Cyderhall as a good man to the colonel for an Ensignie, I will give Buye's smart money to him for the poor of the parish."

In June, 1793, the Third Sutherland Fencibles were being formed. Writing from Dunrobin, George Sutherland said, "We are all bustle and hurry, we go tomorrow to Clyne, Tuesday to Loth, Wednesday back here, Thursday to Rogart and Friday to Dornoch. We are going on successfully; a company Saturday, and another today."

His letters are full of references to his men. Some may be known to readers of this booklet. John Sutherland (Splokson), of Dornoch, "poor young Splok, Sackville's servant"; Sergeant John Mathewson; William Mackay and James Douglas of the parish of Rogart (who were to be court-martialed as deserters if they did not rejoin their regiment immediately); Neil Sutherland, of Rogart; Alexander Munro, from Dornoch; Duncan Munro, from Cambusavie; John Mackay, from Cyderhall, "a promising boy"; poor John Grant, "a worthy good servant"; Sergeant Robert Mackay, Robert Murray, of Clyne, and many others.

Among his brother officers were Dr Straith, Adam Pronsie, Captain Gordon of Carrol, Captain Braegrudie, Jack Munro, Jack Mackay, Duncan Sutherland, George Hall ("a good, well-behaved boy"), Providence Sutherland, Jack and Sandy Sutherland (Syber), Captain Kenneth Mackay Torboll, William Mackay Clibrick, Eribul, Captain Sackville Sutherland of Uppat, John Sutherland Cambusavie, Major Cluines of Crakaig, Captain Mathewson, Captain Macdonald, Lieutenant Forbes, Colonel Kinnauld, Ensign Hugh Evliks, Captain David Ross, Lieutenant George Sutherland of Brora, Sandy Quartz, etc.

When the 2nd Sutherland Fencibles were formed in 1779, George Sutherland Riarchar was aged 59. In the year 1797, when his resignation was finally accepted, he was 77 years old and still tormented by his "evil genius the rheumatism". Yet in the New Year of 1797, despite his rheumatism and his considerable age, he opened a regimental ball given "to a number of our north country ladies in the Castle (Edinburgh) by dancing down a country dance of 10 couples with Miss Ross of Anker-ville" (near Tain).

And so he ended his military career and lived another 18 years—to use his own words—in "the Old Barrack where, by all human probability, I have a chance to end my days and at last have my bones lodged in the old Cathedral amongst those of my predecessors and where, perhaps, some friendly tears may be dropped when they are laying one low."



Some crofts still exist by name.

GEORGE SUTHERLAND had two tacks (leases) of land from the Countess of Sutherland. In 1772 he was given the tack of Little Torboll with its mill, Achinael, Achterduag, Dalmore, Forsalag and Assyvreck, at an annual rent of £29 8s "for all the days, years and space of his lifetime". The Sutherland Estate put up £20 sterling to repair the "mansion house" of Little Torboll (so far as I know there is no trace remaining of this house), and George Sutherland was responsible for the upkeep of the biggings and the stone dykes.

When, in 1787, the House of Sutherland bought the estate of Skelbo, George Sutherland obtained his second tack, this time of Riarchar, "for all the days of his natural life," at an annual rent of £42 15/3. Together with Riarchar was the tack of Brea of Dalnamain (in Strath Carnag) at a rent of £6 3/8, plus his share of the school salary and fox duties.

It was to Brea (or Brae) that the horses and some of the cattle were sent in summer and where his housekeeper, Bell, spent many weeks. She was often visited here by Miny (Williamina), George Sutherland's niece, who was married to William Taylor, the postmaster and sheriff clerk in Dornoch. North of the river, up on the slope of the hill, can still be seen all that is left of the old house and the outbuildings, with the ruins of some of the smaller houses. Probably George Sutherland was perturbed about the occupants of two of these houses in 1802. He asked William Taylor to carry out removal proceedings against Mary Don in Dallagina-line, who was to be warned of her impending eviction. "That wicked old thief Mary Don in Brae," he wrote. "I indulged them to live in their barn, if they would remove their sheep, etc., to look after their crop, as they were promising every day to remove. I find they are there still and are casting peats there; I hope you can procure a warrant to eject them and prevent their cutting peats."

"Another old devil is a plague and, after getting her to remove from the habitation she occupied, when she was summoned she begged leave to put in her little furniture to an old sheepcot. She remains in that cot, in spite of me still, without door or window. I hope you will direct such measures as will relieve me from the e old devils."

It was in Riarchar, to the south of Brea and Little Torboll, that housekeeper Bell was employed for most of her time. In all his letters written during his Fencible service, George Sutherland asks for a "particular account of everything in Riarchar," and says of Bell and the lasses, "if they are not advantageously occupied I will certainly start home and dismiss the whole and shut my doors". Fortunately, this threat was never carried out, for Bell, with Isabel Murray and the rest of the lasses in the "deye" or dairy, Alexander Livall, the griever (born in 1740 to James Livall Riarchar and Catherine McCoul), with the oversight of the Riarchar Mains gardens, the beasts, the biggings and all outdoor work, laboured so conscientiously that their jobs were safe. Riarchar Mains was, in effect, the home farm and included the land from Rhidorrach (Birchwood) to the west boundary of the fence at Achuan.

The rest of the Riarchar estate was sub-let. The rents paid by the sub-tenants are listed as cash plus a specified number of pigs, eggs, cocks, hens, bolls of meal, and the wintering of a beast. If agreed, the payment in kind could be converted into a money payment. For example, in 1801,

pigs were 10s each, meal 14s a boll, eggs 1d for 20, cocks 6d each, hens 4d each and wintering was 5s.

The following were the crofts (some still exist by name, but some I am unable to trace and I should be grateful for any information about them)—Achuchosnich (Achosnich) and mill, Asdale (Astle), Culnicrock, Dalinline and Poul Vorchy, Cambusoure and Rinemore, Aire and Dow Ellam, Dal Liath (Dalaidh?), Harper or Flarper, Kessagich (Gashagaich), Flewchary (Fleuchary), Achnoine (Achuan), Inish Iaver, Aultan Riavach, John Chelsea's delvings, Alexander Sutherland's croft, George More's croft.

Typical examples of rent are Achosnich, which had a mill, and Gashagaich, which was a croft of average size. Achosnich paid 1 pig, 6 bolls, 3 firilats meal as moulter (owed by law to the laird, a proportion of the meal ground at the mill), 100 eggs, 4 cocks, 8 hens, 1 wedder, 1 beast of the laird's wintered, making a cash rent of £10 9/2. Gashagich paid 1 firilat meal, 80 eggs, 2 cocks, 4 hens, 1 wedder, and 1 beast wintered, or a cash rent of £2 12/-.

It is interesting to put the annual rent of £51 12/10 paid by the sub-tenants to George Sutherland side by side with the total annual rent of Riarchar and Brea, £48 18/11, paid by George Sutherland to the factor at Dunrobin. In one sense, he held Riarchar Mains rent free.

The names of some of the crofters appear in a day book of 1805 and are given here with a few descriptive notes. There was George Murray, the miller at Achosnich; Donald Baxter of Aire, who in 1800 paid 5/- for "the seat in the Church"; Angus Mackay, Gashagaich, and his sister, Janet, who planted alders and birches "by west the garden"; Munro of Alt an Riavach, who was dispossessed in favour of John Mackay; Alexander Mathewson of Asdale; John Ross, Dal Liath (who became grieve after Livall); Alexander Frankach and Sawny Brebirder; John Sutherland, who paid Donald Baxter £1 10/3 for a house and sheep-cot; Alexander Sutherland, who paid John Sutherland 3/6 for a stable and 2/- for a sheep-cot; George Mathewson, who rented Fricheran at £1 4/- a year; William Mathewson, who succeeded Donald McHutchen at Brea; (incidentally, George and William were "purveyors of whi-ky" at 4/- a pint); George More, of whom Colonel George said, "He must cut the hay for 4d and his dinner, and if he does not, I will get another that will be glad to get his place and work to me at anything I please at that price"; John Gray, who had rigs of potatoes in one of the fields called Corinsh; and Hugh Munro and John Mackay, both Chelsea men.

The Chelsea men were retired regular soldiers in receipt of a pension from the Royal Chelsea Hospital in London. The money ranged from 6d to 2/6d a day, according to rank, and was paid to the men personally by the bank agent in Dornoch once a quarter. "On these occasions the veterans usually turned out in vests of their old regimental tartan or red coats, on which they wore their medals" (Mackay Scobie).

What a proud sight they must have made and how Colonel George of Riarchar must have straightened his soldierly old back as his eyes followed these military veterans down the strath to the Cathedral town of Dornoch!



The overloaded Meikle Ferry in which 98 people lost their lives.

GEORGE SUTHERLAND'S letters have the names of many county notables, and some of them are still remembered.

JAMES BOOG or BOAG or BOG was a Bailie of Dornoch and Acting Chief Magistrate in the early 1800s. He divided his time between the old Castle of Skelbo (where he leased the farm) and Dornoch, where his house according to Hector Mackay in his book "Old Dornoch", was next to where the present library now is. Though his home was latterly in Dornoch parish, in his younger days he had lived at Golspietour, and it is in Golspie churchyard that he is buried.

He was a carpenter by trade and progressed from that to contractor and then to architect. The Rev. Donald Sage, in his "Memorabilia Domestica", says, "All the churches and manses in Sutherland and Easter Ross built between 1760 and 1804 were according to the plans and workmanship of James Boag."

He terrified everyone "by the violence of his temper" and his readiness to take offence. Perhaps Hector Mackay had the last word on this, for Boog had 12 daughters, "a quiverful surely enough to try the temper of any poor son of Adam."

James Boog had business dealings with George Sutherland Riarchar, not only because he had at least one horse at stud at Skelbo but also because he had a distillery where he manufactured what he himself described as "choise stuff". The bill for four pints of Best Double Whisky was 18/-.

The Rev. JOHN SUTHERLAND of TORBOLL was, from 1759 to 1777, the minister of Dornoch Cathedral. He was a member of a branch of the Sutherlands, cadets of the family of Duffus of Skelbo. For generations his family had lived at Meikle Torboll and so were neighbours of George Sutherland's people at Little Torboll. The Rev. John, as parish minister, complained to the burgh council of Dornoch about the unhygienic conditions in the Cathedral City, specifically of swine constantly roaming in the churchyard, "which is unfenced, and dig up the graves and bones of the defuncts."

He is remembered for two other reasons — his abnormal strength allowed him to putt the stone farther than any man in the parish, and it was he who introduced potatoes to the people of Dornoch.

SHERIFF McCULLOCH was town clerk of Dornoch in 1770 and Sheriff-substitute from 1801 until his tragic death by drowning in 1809 when crossing the Meikle Ferry to the market in Tain. The story is well known. The boat was overloaded. A sudden squall caused panic, and 98 people lost their lives, together with the Sheriff. Only 12 were saved.

His son, Willie, when a lad, had seen much of George Sutherland Riarchar in his quarters in Inverness, and Riarchar thought him "a fine boy".

GORDON of CARROLL, on Loch Brora, was connected by marriage with the Clunies of Cracaig and was a fellow officer of Riarchar's. In 1793 George Sutherland set out with Carroll from Ayr to Dornoch. "I will make a push," he wrote, "to be at your Bar's Fair. My journey back and

fore will cost me more than my pay so that I will be as poor as a church rat till money come round."

And going south to Stirling in the New Year, 1795, again with Carroll, he wrote, "Let Bell know that I got safe here and that I was much obliged to her for her attention in sending the brown cloak after me, which I got at Inverness and was of infinite service both to Carroll and to me in keeping our legs warm in the chaise."

SIR JOHN SINCLAIR of **ULBSTER** (1754 to 1835) was a contemporary of George Sutherland's in the Caithness Fencible Regiment. He is probably best known as the editor and part author of the First Statistical Account of Scotland, 1793.

It was at the wedding of his mother, Lady Janet Sutherland, and his father, George Sinclair of Ulbster, that Riarchar's father met his death in 1740. There is a delightful story told of Lady Janet in Mitchison's "Agricultural Sir John". Apparently, during her married life, Lady Janet was much concerned with the business of estate management and particularly the payments of rents. She had "a special box for testing eggs with a hole in the lid. If an egg passed through the hole, it was too small to count towards the rent—but it remained in the box."

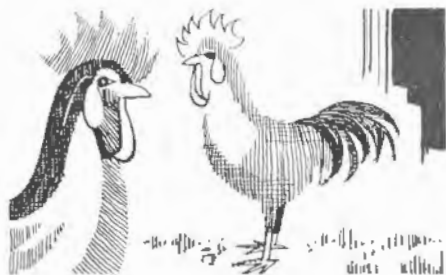
HUGH HOUSTON, of Clynelish, Brora, and later of Creich, died an old man in 1825. In a letter from Aberdeen, in 1794, George Sutherland wrote, "The great and mighty Mr Houston is hourly expected here." The Rev. Donald Sage had a good deal to say about him. He was a prosperous merchant in Brora—so prosperous indeed that he became one of the richest men in the county. Tradition has it that he dealt in foreign trade via vessels smuggling liquor from abroad. Legend also adds that he was once saved from the Revenue officers by the minister of Clyne, who made available the east gallery of the church for a cargo of gin and brandy.

Houston was a major in the Sutherland Fencibles and later purchased the property of Creich.

GEORGE DEMPSTER of **SKIBO** (1732-1818) was a friend of George Sutherland's of long standing. They visited frequently at each other's homes, and on one occasion, at Arbroath, Riarchar had his four companies on parade to welcome his friend. Dempster was so pleased with the reception that he gave each company a guinea for drinks and "after they saw the men, we retired to the inn and gave them a supper and plenty of reel dancing to the pipe."

His friend, Sir John Sinclair, admired Dempster for "the first attempt to introduce the manufacture of spinning and weaving into the Highlands." This was the establishment of cotton spinning at Spinningdale, a village he built soon after he bought the estates of Skibo and Pulrossie in 1780.

His factor was **CAPTAIN KENNETH MACKAY** (1756-1835), of Meikle Torboll, which he inherited from his mother, Esther, daughter of Kenneth Sutherland of Torboll and wife of John Mackay of Melness.



Cockfighting in the February Candlemas Festivity.

WILLIAM TAYLOR, to whom most of George Sutherland's letters in the Scottish Record Office were addressed, was a native of Tain. He made his home in Dornoch and married Williamina (Miny), a daughter of Riarchar's sister. Taylor was postmaster and town clerk of Dornoch from 1809 and sheriff-clerk until his death in 1829. He managed George Sutherland's affairs during the latter's service in the Fencibles.

Miny, his wife, was a "warm-hearted motherly person" (Sage), who died at Evelix in 1846. She was clearly a great favourite with her Uncle George, and her first two children—Justag, born in 1794, and George, born at the end of 1795—were constantly in the thoughts of their great-uncle.

The little girl, Justag, lived for only 12 months, and each letter sent to her father has some message for her or a reference to her. In fact, the deep affection George Sutherland had for them is quite touching. He sends "a blessing for little Justy"; "a frock, necklace and a pair of nice red shoes for your heiress"; "a hairy trunky with the key well corded which you will forward immediately to Mrs T. to the Brea as it contains a few small articles for her and Justag and some things for Bell."

He thanks William Taylor for "a letter from your wife and another from Miss Taylor (aged at that time seven months). You certainly are a fortunate fellow to have such a sensible wife and clever heiress and I dare say you will think me as light-headed and that I have as little to do as they themselves, when Miny will show you my answer to Justag's letter." What a pity that this reply is not in the Record Office for us to read!

From Stirling, in January, 1795, great-uncle George sent "a pretty bonnet for Justag, my dear sweet little Justag. I'm glad," he wrote, "my candy was so useful to her." Unhappily, by April of that year, little Justag was dead from measles. Poor George Sutherland wrote sadly, "I was alarmed upon the sight of your black wafer. I never was so much affected with the death of any child."

The little girl was not far from his mind even after her death, for, in September, he sent to Miny "a fashionable locket that she may use as such or as a breast pin with Justag's hair."

Soon he was to have another of Miny's bairns to cherish, for George Sutherland Taylor was born before the end of the year. And great-uncle George Sutherland Riarchar began to worry about the little boy's health. He hoped Miny "had got over her scruples about inoculating George," and he asks the father to "give me information from time to time by post, as I will be most anxious until I hear of his being out of danger." The Rev. John Bethune, minister of Dornoch from 1778 to 1816 (succeeding the Rev. John Sutherland Torboll), was an outspoken advocate of the value of inoculation, although there was considerable opposition to it among his parishioners. It could well be that the combined advice of her husband, her uncle and her minister persuaded Miny to "get over her scruples" and allow "the young Major" to be inoculated.

When her son was only a few months old, Miny was asked by her uncle "whether she will rather have a hat or a nice cape for Geordy". The old man's generosity was expressed again in a letter of 1800. "I wish

Miny could reconcile herself to allow Geordie to come here (to Riarchar) now that the weather is so good that I may get Donald Mackay (the tailor) to rig him out for the summer. I hope she is not so childish as to be affronted at my getting some of my own things made up for him, and she may be assured Bell will take the greatest care of him."

The last reference to Geordie in the letters concerns that highlight of the Dornoch year of long ago—the cock fight and the Coronation. The Rev. Donald Sage gives a vivid picture of the February Candlemas festivity.

Cocks were begged from all over the parish by the boys of the school. No lessons were given, and the court room was taken over and became the cockpit. The schoolmaster and selected friends were the judges. The most cowardly bird was claimed by the dominie. The two most successful cocks made their owners king and queen for the day. The clothes and crowns were made by the ladies of Dornoch, and a procession, led by the town drummer and fifer, preceded a ball and supper in the evening with speeches in Latin.

George Sutherland Riarchar remained in town to see "how George's cock will behave on Tuesday", a bird for which he incidentally had paid 10/-. To another George, another young relative, he "sent a coat and pantaloons to be made up for him, and my sash and a sword for his ornaments."

The youngest daughter of William and Miny Taylor, Janet Hannah, married a Mr MacEwen, and it is to a direct descendant of theirs that I am indebted. Mr A. D. MacEwen, B.L., of Edinburgh, handed over, on indefinite loan, to the Scottish Record Office the Sutherland of Rearquhar papers. He has generously consented to my using material from them.



'By May the ground was ready for sowing'.

GEORGE SUTHERLAND kept a record not only of his accounts but of much of the work on the land, and from this record selections have been made which may help to give a picture of life and work at Riarchar in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Ploughing by oxen (and less frequently by horses) was begun in April. "Began plowing at Rhidorach (Birchwood). It was badly plowed by John Gray and George More and as badly harrowed by Angus Mackay Kessagach (Gashagaich)."

By May the ground was ready for sowing. "May 1, began sowing here in Curivol with no manure excepting a very little sheep's dung on the upper part. And sowed here in Rhin, in Dialish and Corinsh, corn after potatoes without any manure."

Other essential work was carried out in the long days of late spring and early summer. "May 23, 1801—This and last year George More finished the ditch round the kiln, 110 yards at 3d a yard. Finlay cleaned out the Easter ditch in three days at 1/- a day and his victuals."

By the middle of the month the seed potatoes were in and rigs in the field given to John Ross, the new grieve, to all the mealers (rent-paying tenants) and the men-servants and to John Gray's widow.

June was the month for peat cutting. In 1793 all went well. "Thirty spades casting peats and the 9th (June) had 19 spades casting turf." By

July 30, "I began to lead the peats and had them all in stacks of 11 faces each by the 5th of August."

But in 1802 it was a different story. "Constant rain and very cold from the latter end of June. Not one white rose blown the 8th of August. It came on such heavy constant rain and fog that continued to 18th and by Saturday the 25th I got home 24 faces peats, but in very bad order, and most of my turf so bad that I got very few of them home; all which obliged me to buy 20 barrels of coals. No mortal ever remembered to have seen such a continued track of bad weather."

Not only had the peats to be got home before the end of August but the hay had to be cut. On "August 20 began to cut hay with Lival and George More, George Murray 21st, John Ross 22nd, George Mathewson 24th and ended cutting 25th. I'm glad they delayed cutting the natural grass as I hope they will now get good weather."

It was another month before the harvest could be tackled and the men were kept busy on work round the house. "17½ bolls shell bought of H. Macleod at 5d a boll which Lival burnt with a whole face of peats, the lime very fine. I had the office houses harled, the barn doors repaired, the house within and the gavel (gable) without whitewashed and the dining room chimney repaired and the wall of the little garden repaired, all by Adam Mathewson."

"On September 28 began to shear bear (a course barley), the crop green and bad, and had it all out by Wednesday, 6th October, and Tuesday 12, began to cut oats and Saturday, 30th, finished shearing and with a great deal of labour and pains and having a great deal of it put up in single sheaves, I got the last of it into the barnyard by the 13th November every sheaf upon timber. From Tuesday the 12th October to the middle of December there were hardly two days on end without rain, snow, sleet. We were obliged to turn over 2 or 3 that heated and put air holes in other of them."

For George Sutherland's own livelihood and that of his farm workers and tenants, seedtime and harvest were vitally necessary. But his cattle, horses, goats and sheep and their costs figure in his diary as equally important.

When the Lord Bishop of Ossory, Dr Pococke, journeyed in the county in 1760, he noted that "at night they house the sheep all the year." This indeed was the general custom in Scotland, in winter time, at any rate. George Sutherland was perhaps ahead of his time, for in 1795 he wrote to Lival, "I certainly wish to get a few lambs at the price you mention and the tup also, as it's only for an experiment. See that they be properly cared for and not housed." And again, "Let Lival bespeak Meikle McDonald to purchase 20 she-lambs of the best kind he can get, to be in Brea and never housed, and he must get a ram with them never to be housed."

His decision not to house his sheep caused him much worry since the weather was so bad; but he did not change his policy. "I doubt," he wrote, "my letter about the lambs came too late for this year on account of the hardness of the frost and deepness of the snow, which I never remember anything to equal it since the year 1740."

Another example of his forward thinking was in his advocacy of sowing whin seed, which was not used for animal feed in the South until the end of the eighteenth century. He himself saw possibilities in it and wrote, "I find my whin seed was sent you. I hope you will recommend to Lival to sow it with pains, somewhere it is wanted in the dyke, from the gate next the garden round to the wood, some within or above the dyke, in the hill above McKay's and, if he thinks it would answer, in the horse-park. I would like to have some of it."

The next year he was again buying sheep and at the same time being refreshingly honest about some that he wanted Lival to sell. "Send word to Muckle David McDonald to buy for me from the Sheep Farmers 20 Ewes (or year-old she-sheep) of the very best he can get. I don't wish Lival to sell any of the Brea sheep excepting such as had the pock, are old, or he thinks will not live."

The sheep were kept more for their milk and wool than for their meat. The women were responsible for spinning the wool. (In 1795 George Sutherland was surprised "how little wool was on so many sheep").

They helped with the shearing as well as with the oversight of the flock. There is a note that 2/6 was spent on winter shoes for the sheep-wife; Peggy Lival was paid 14/- for shearing; other shearers got 19/-. Janet (Mackay) Kessagach (Gashagaich) had 8/- for her work with the shears. Bell, the housekeeper, was better off. "Paid for 40 sheep bought from John Mackay was in Dalmore at 6/- each and made a present of them to Miss Bell, value £10."

In 1800, George Sutherland made up his year's books. At Brea, he had 10 wedders, 42 large sheep, 23 lambs and 2 rams. At Riarchar, he had 16 wedders, 22 sheep and 13 lambs, all of which he sold; the lambs at 2/- each, the sheep and wedders at 3/- "as they were diseased."

He had fewer goats than sheep, as was happening throughout the Highlands at this time. Miss Grant, in "Everyday Life on an Old Highland Farm, 1769 to 1782," commenting on this, writes that goats were "responsible for much deforestation and so became unpopular." In 1800 Riarchar had "16 he and she goats and 6 kids," valued at £5.



'Bell' a trusted employee.

GEORGE SUTHERLAND was fortunate in his employees. He trusted Livall ("of whose honesty I have the highest opinion") and Bell completely. It is interesting to read that "Livall cannot write" and "Bell is not over and above clever at the pen." However, their educational attainments were less important than their integrity. Yet George Sutherland took pains to be sure of their trustworthiness. When he left the county in 1793 for his service with the Fencibles, he wrote to William Taylor, "Tell Miny that I shall be very angry with her if she does not now and then go to Riarchar that she may inform herself what Bell and the lasses are doing. I expect Miny will call for anything the garden, the derrie (dairy) or henhouse afford from time to time as they can spare."

Bell certainly had her days well filled with her own work and that of her lasses. One of her tasks was "to brew the little malt she has in such time that she may have a drink of ale to give the servants with their Christmas piece." Another was to send down to Miny in Dornoch "one of the old cheeses and a ham with chickens and eggs when she can spare them. And to send her down the use of my big Bible, which I intend as part of my legacy to her."

Apart from the frequent gifts to Miny, Bell and Livall were told to sell as much as they could of anything the place could produce. "Let them not sell an ounce under 12/- for butter and 5/- for cheese the stone. Let Bell sell all the gooseberries she can."

The garden was Bell's province, although Livall and his men dealt with the upkeep of the dykes, etc. "I leave the garden," George Sutherland wrote, "and their produce to be managed and disposed of by her (Miny) and Bell according as their two wise heads may see proper, but I depend on you for information against them in case trees or bushes are broke or destroyed. And if they can make any money out of them so much the better. At the same time that I wish money to be made of everything, I empower them to have plenty for themselves and their friends."

"Tell Bell since she did not attend to take the garden seeds in time

she must now make the best of it she can, and only take such seeds as will not be too late. But let her be sure to have plenty of yellow turnips, peas and everything for the pot, coleworts and cabbages in great abundance." 650 cabbage plants were bought for 2/- and currant and goose-berry bushes were 3 dozen for 6/-.

Bell had to see to the prosperity of the garden, but she also had the responsibility of the dairy—the 'deye' or 'derrie' or 'deyey'. There was a complaint that neither William Taylor nor his wife mentioned how many milk cows the dairy had. "John Mathewson when he delivered me your letter could not inform me, any more than a child, of any of those matters, I hope you have taken care, as you have a little cash, that the deye will have sixteen milk cows. Be sure to keep the deye and boys in mind of a strict keeping of the grass in Brea and assure them I will not forgive them if they neglect taking the stirks in early and all the heifers fit for bulling that are not bulled, in time in the hill to be with the milk cows for bulling."

It is obvious from these letters that the dairy was an important part of Bell's contribution to the prosperity of Riarchar Mains. She had no deep freeze to help her with her housekeeping when she received her instructions by letter from her master.

"You will please tell Bell immediately to cause kill two or three fatt geese and to pepper and salt them well, and that she may cause Livall kill a fatt good weder so as we may have a tender bit to eat. And let her cause kill a chicken or two and have some fish in the house ready as the new kild mutton will not be so soon fit for eating."

"Tell Bell I wish her to hang two fat geese and two good pieces of the cow. Let her send a careful person with a large creel to carry over the turkeys Mrs Munro gave me for a brood."

The wages Bell was paid amounted to £5 5/- for the year, together with 18/- for shoes (shoes were always given at this time as part of a farm servant's wages), and a "deyey" gown which cost £1 1/-. Epy, Barbara and Keat (Kate), who helped her, received a year's wages in full, 7/- to Epy, £1 15/- to Barbara, 6/- to Kate and 2/6 extra for each as a New Year gift. Two other maids and a little girl received between them £3 10/- for the year and three women servants £1 4/8 each.

Dr Bethune gave the average wages in the parish of Dornoch, in 1793—for a man between 30/- and 40/- a year and for women between 20/- and 30/- a year "and both are on the rise." John Gray, who died in 1802 and was grieve after Livall, received £3 a year with 2/6 for winter shoes; and three men servants (not named) were paid £1 3/8 and 2/- each for shoe money. The looked-for rise mentioned by Dr Bethune had obviously not reached Riarchar in the seven years from 1793 to 1800.

Much of the work on the farm was done by the sub-tenants as a service required of them by law. There might be (and sometimes was) a little extra payment such as a rig of potatoes, a boll of meal or more money for shoes. But George Sutherland made it quite clear when writing in 1794 what the tenant's obligations were. "You will tell John Ross that by his tack from me he is bound to cut my hay as well as pay his rent and if he can't execute it himself that you have directions from me to order Livall to hire one at his expense to do it for him; but I know he will get his brother and some friends to assist him. And please tell John McHugh that I depend on him to assist many days this year."

More than one warning was sent to "the people"—the sub-tenants. "Livall may assure the people that my attention to them will in future be proportioned to their obedience to him and to their pointed attention to duty. Let Livall acquaint the people that are due (owing) trifles that I am very angry they have not made payment to you." A threat followed the warnings. "I send you a list of the people's names both here and in Brea that I wish you to cause warn out from their possessions (the sooner the better)."

On Christmas Day in the winter of 1806 there "blew such a hurricane never was the like remembered. Blew off the divots of most of the houses, threw down dykes, trees and several houses, such devastation never was seen or remembered."

It could not have been easy for "the people" to face such disasters and hardships. Their wages were low—their tenure of land insecure. Yet they were more fortunate than many in the county. No Riarchar crofts were merged into sheep farms, and many living today in Birichen and Rearquhar are direct descendants of George Sutherland's people.



'Fish was obviously a favourite food'.

IT is possible from the accounts which George Sutherland kept to form some idea of the food, drink and clothes which were bought or made or grown for use in the house.

Salt and sugar were a daily need. In 1794, we read, "I beg you will get me a peck or two more or less salt as we have not a grain. The pork and fish having ate it all up." And again, "I am quite run out of both salt and sugar and I must entreat you to inform how and where I can be provided. I will send you the cashy, it is powdered sugar I want." "Be so good as to send for six pounds brown sugar for me and I will send you the cash."

Sugar was 1/4d per lb., but salt was 3/-. It is not surprising that in 1796 Colonel George suggested to William Taylor, "It would be a good speculation if a few of you would join for a cargo of coals and salt from Colonel Wemyss (in Fife) who has a large quantity of both upon his hands." A barrel of coal cost 8/6d, and doubtless a considerable saving could be made if a ship loaded with both were to be chartered.

Fish was obviously a favourite food. "I green (yearn) for a bit of fish." "Much obliged to Miny for the herrings. I hope to get cod and hadys of the first that come." "The last fish she sent me was a treat." "Many thanks for her present of herrings. I was disappointed of a cask which I promised to share with her, after sending a horse and cart to New Town (Newton Point), by the gross stupidity of the fellow I sent with the cash for them."

In one year he spent £2 3/4d on fish (cod, ling and spelding). His herring cost 3/- for 400. Fresh salmon was 3d per lb. and was "so plentiful that farm servants stipulated that it should not be given them to eat more than twice a week." (Grant).

His merchants' accounts include orders for honey, onions, apples, pears, tallow for candles, soap, oil, tar, black pepper, flour of mustard, rice at 3d per lb., raisins, split peas and vinegar.

There are detailed bills from two Tain shopkeepers, James Taylor and Benjamin Ross, and from three Dornoch merchants — John McCulloch, ironmonger, with whom he spent about £4 every year; Angus Fraser, general merchant, where his bill was anything from £6 to £18 a year; and Miss Charlotte McKay, whose goods cost him on an average £7 per annum.

George Sutherland and his household drank milk from his cows and goats and sheep and also ale. "I wish you and Miny could contrive to get me to buy or borrow 2½ pounds good hops, else I can have no ale at Christmas." His hops cost him 10/-, and two dozen bottles to contain his ale cost the same amount. He had port and "cordial dram," as well as considerable annual purchases of whisky. One year he bought 14 pints at 5/1½d a pint. In 1806 he also indulged in £1 4/- worth of freight Burton ale, presumably from the South.

Tea—Hyson Green at 8/- per lb. and Suchong at 4/10—was drunk, too, as well as coffee. Coffee beans were 3/- per lb. Probably these were kept for the occasions when Miny or George Dempster and his lady paid a visit to Riarchar Mains.

The tinker McKenzie made 34 spoons for Colonel George at a cost of 5/-. These spoons were of horn and were made from a mould. There

was also a "tooting horn", made from ox horn and used for blowing. In England this might have been a hunting horn but up here it may have been a sound that the cattle could recognise and answer, or even a means of summoning the men working out of doors.

The tinman sold him a lanthorn for 2/6 and a bellows for 5/-. Two skillets were bought for 2/6, an iron for 10/-, four extinguishers for 1/-. He had a grate installed for 7/-, possibly by John McCulloch. It cost him 6/6 to have his table mended and 9/6 for two kitchen chairs.

Probably Bell made him buy the various items of crockery which are mentioned. For 4 butter boats, 4 ashods (ashets), 2 cream pots and a decanter he paid in all 18/5; for a large crock 1/6; a tureen 4/6; two large dishes for milk 2/6, and 3/6 for cups and saucers.

Each year he bought cotton to cover his arm chairs, 1½ yards for 2/9. He had 8 yards brown camlad (a woollen cloth) woven for 4/-; coarse napery woven for 23/-; 37 yards of linen worked for 14/-, and brown yarn dyed for 4/-. Bell mended his old shirts with new cambric and chose "some of the softest and finest of the wool to make winter stockings 'for him' of white, grey, or mixed colours".

George Sutherland bought each year for himself pocket handkerchiefs, muslin and yellow cotton neckcloths and had nankeen made up for his breeches. And from 1800 to 1804 his bill from Donald Mackay, the tailor, averaged £1 10/- a year.



'December 11th greatest fall of snow ever remembered'.

WHEN Dr Pococke was journeying through Sutherland in 1760, he found no roads, only footpaths or *bridle tracks* which could take no wheeled traffic. The only bridge in the county was at Brora. Thirty years later there were still no roads or bridges, and horses were used for the carriage of people, peats, grain, manure, etc. This probably accounts for the number of horses and ponies which George Sutherland owned. He does, however, refer in his account to two pairs of cart wheels for £5, so that he must have owned at least one cart, however primitive the vehicle and the roads.

"I know well," he wrote, "no horses could be sent to the hill until the labouring was over, though I gave you so early a hint to keep the exact note of their number as well as that of the cattle, specifying their kinds, he and she, their ages, etc., for a rule to pay their grass by and to prevent mistakes, which I hope you will be particular in taking it from George the Hird"—and George the Hird's accounting gave the following result:—At Brea were 3 mares, 4 horses and 1 foal, value £23 2s; at Riarchar were 1 gelding, 4 mares (among them "my own little brown mare, Miny"), 4 garrons, 4 colts and 1 pony, all of which he valued at £72 9s.

Of young and old horses and mares he had 22. Compare this with his inventory of his cattle. In Riarchar and Brea he had 2 cows with calves, 12 cows, 3 heifers in calf, 7 heifers, 9 calves, 2 bulls, 12 oxen and 4 stots. He valued this 51 head of cattle at £169 16s.

While he served away from home with the Fencibles, every letter he wrote to William Taylor had instructions for Lival about his animals.

"I refer to Livall to pitch two good fat cows for me to kill and I would sell none to the drovers without a good price, as we commonly sell them better at the winter markets."

"I hope Livall will not sell the cattle to be sold without a good price according to the times. Moreag is the largest cow in my aught (possession) and cost me four guineas."

"I wish, if possible, to be in time to see the beasts that go the 5th to the market. Let Livall be at the market with all the old and unthriving like young beasts, both to get cash which will be much wanted and to ease the burden of the straw, which by all accounts will be much needed."

"As there are such extraordinary prices and ready money, I wish him to sell every beast that's saleable, that have any infirmities or that he thinks I ought not to keep."

After he returned home for good he was able to oversee matters for himself and obviously his written instructions ceased. He kept a memorandum book which served as a diary and a work book, and it is from this that the following extracts are taken.

"1801.—Was obliged to roup about a score of my young cattle in November for want of provender. They sold very low."

"April 5th.—Violent drift of snow. Beasts could hardly go out to water."

"December 11th.—Greatest fall of snow ever remembered accompanied with drift for three days successively to such a degree that it was with the utmost difficulty that the cattle could get out to water."

"1807.—The later days of January, the whole of the month of February and to the end of March was one continued hurricane, of most dreadful drift and snow with very little interval; many days in that time no creature could go out to water, but melting snow for the beasts in the house. There was now and then some thaw, but a terrible fall of snow was in great wreaths in the garden."

"The potatoes late got up and one of them pitted and a deal of them not got out of the ground the middle of December, they were in general very wet and bad. The winter set in so early with constant drift snow and hard frost that we were forced to house every four-footed beast by the 17th November. No price for cattle; very few sold from the county this year. Provender so alarmingly scarce that I sold six of my largest cows in calf very cheap for £3 that cost me £12 (a losing game)."

In 1804, George Sutherland carefully listed and costed his gold and silver and personal possessions. His jewelled watch of gold he valued at £31 10s; his gold chain with "the Cat engraven on it" (the Sutherland emblem), £10 10s; his gold seals, one with the Cat and name cyphered and the other with the Sutherland crest of arms and motto, £6 16s 6d; there were also his gold breast huckle and sleeve buttons set with garnets; and his silver shoe buckles and knee buckles.

He details his table silver:—12 tablespoons, 2 gravy spoons, 1 large dealer (soup ladle?), 6 dessert spoons, 1 sauce spoon, 12 teaspoons, 1 sugar spoon, 4 salt shovels, 1 punch ladle, 2 wine funnels, casters with silver tops, 2 plated candlesticks and steel snuffers—all of which he valued at £26 16s 2d.

His weapons (for many of them can only be so described) show his years of Army service. There were 3 regimental fuseses, which were flintlock muskets (a later note adds "one stolen"); 2 pairs of pistols, one silver and one brass mounted; a small sword with a silver trimmed red belt; two small silver mounted cutlasses; two regimental broadswords and one Highland pistol (and another note which says "the fellow of it stole"). He priced his armoury at £43 11s 6d and included one fowling piece in the total.

He had fishing rods, hook boxes, 3 powder horns, a shot bag. His saddles, complete with girths, stirrups, bridles, bits, buckles and chains, a snaffle with plated bit and buckles, saddle-bags, whips and spurs are also in his inventory. The saddle cover was of goatskin trimmed with bearskin and was probably the "white aver's skin" he ordered Livall to dress for him in 1795. His clog-back saddle he kept in the stairhead closet, and when Bell sent it to him in Musselburgh she put in "the heart of it two small breakfast tablecloths and two fine and two coarse serviettes," for his use in camp.

The shoeing of his horses cost from 4/6 to 15/- each year, which seems very little when one realises that he had at least 16 horses at Brea and Riarchar, at one time.

For his own personal use, he had two writing stands (one from India silver-trimmed), a gold-headed small cane, and for everyday use presumably, a long brass-mounted one.

'Colonel George'

THERE is only one mention in George Sutherland's daily journal of how he spent his leisure hours. He mentions his backgammon table with men, boxes and dice. Whether he taught Bell how to play is not revealed.

In 1797, the year he finally came home, he shipped from the South various implements which he knew would be needed on the farm—spades, shovels, rakes, hoes, chisels, gimlets, scythes and vumbles (wimbles, a brace for boring). From his later notes, it is clear that each year he purchased two or three scythes at 3/- each, sometimes from Tain and sometimes from Dornoch. The most expensive items were 12 yards of winnowing sheets (for use in threshing), which cost 12/-, and a hatchet costing 12/6d.

While he was with the Fencibles he was frequently sending gifts to Miny. I quote from his letters. June, 1793—"A small parcel containing some pieces of ribbon and the hair ring I promised her." The next month—"I'm amazed to find the two necklaces were not in the parcel when I myself folded them up both in the heart of the ribbons and gloves, one of the larger and one of the smaller beads both of the same kind of which I desired Miny would keep her own choice and give the other to Bell." "A very nice worsted plaid for Miny which you will forward to her at Brea and in the heart of it you will find a very fine muslin hankerge."

In September, 1795, he went to even more trouble in sending presents. "A box I sent to Leith with commissions for my sister and Mrs Ross in which there is a muslin petticoat for Miny to match her fine gown. And there is also now lying there a 'mated' (speckled) carpet for you. They are to go North on board of The Nelly of Garnstown (Gardenstown), Mr John Loban, Master. Daily expected to arrive at Leith to take on board goods for Dornoch, Skibo, etc."

His thoughtfulness was shown to folk outside his family circle. "Buy a cheap and warm coat for poor Willie Campbell, who will be sure of an annual one from me until he can earn one." He gave 5/- to Widow Ross Skianach and £1 to John Gray's widow. With Anny, one of the lasses, he made Peggy Livall a present of 10/- on her wedding day, having first given Anny the money to give away. He bought a Bible for his god-son George Mackenzie. He spent 9d on three bords (ruffles) for a cap, probably for Bell. A larger sum of £3 5/- he paid out to Angus Mackay Gashagaich for cutting peats for his brother-in-law, Captain John Sutherland.

The Scottish Record Office has only those of his letters and diaries which were written in the latter part of his life. They leave a clear impression of the man known even today in his beloved Rearquhar as "Colonel George". His military training made him precise in the ordering of his affairs on the farm and in his dealings with his business affairs. Like a good officer, he had a strong sense of duty towards the well-being of his "people".

He had, too, a strong sense of family and (perhaps because he was an old bachelor) he needed love and affection; and these he found in his relationships with his niece Miny, her husband (William Taylor), and their children.

He makes little reference to world or national events, although more than 20 years of his life were spent away from home in the service of his country. There is no doubt that his heart and mind were firmly set on Dornoch and Riarchar.

His stone dykes, the trees he planted, his well of fresh spring water, the view across to the Struie and to the Dornoch Firth (on which he must so often have gazed) have changed little since his death in 1815.