

Painting Time: The Highland Journals of John Francis Campbell of Islay

Anne MacLeod

This article examines sketches and drawings of the Highlands by John Francis Campbell of Islay (1821–85), who is now largely remembered for his contribution to folklore studies in the north-west of Scotland. An industrious polymath, with interests in archaeology, ethnology and geological science, Campbell was also widely travelled. His travels in Scotland and throughout the world were recorded in a series of journals, meticulously assembled over several decades. Crammed with cuttings, sketches, watercolours and photographs, the visual element within these volumes deserves to be more widely known. Campbell's drawing skills were frequently deployed as an aide-memoire or functional tool, designed to document his scientific observations. At the same time, we can find within the journals many pioneering and visually appealing depictions of upland and moorland scenery. A tension between documenting and illuminating the hidden beauty of the world lay at the heart of Victorian aesthetics, something the work of this gentleman amateur illustrates to the full.

Illustrated travel diaries are one of the hidden treasures of family archives and manuscript collections. They come in many shapes and forms: legible and illegible, threadbare and richly bound, often illustrated with cribbed engravings, hasty sketches or careful watercolours. Some mirror their published cousins in style and layout, and were perhaps intended for the print market; others remain no more than private or family mementoes. This paper will examine the manuscript journals of one Victorian scholar, John Francis Campbell of Islay (1821–85). Although his literary reputation rests on a four-volume collection of Gaelic folktales (1860–62), Campbell was many things besides a folklore collector. A Victorian polymath in the true sense of the term, he combined public appointments with private scholarship in an eclectic range of fields from ethnology and language studies to geology, optics and other branches of experimental science. Beyond the laboratory, Campbell met his thirst for knowledge through travel, making successive trips throughout his native Scotland and beyond: to Scandinavia, North America, Russia and, ultimately, a world tour which took in India and East Asia. Wherever he went he observed, compared, took notes and, perhaps most importantly, drew. The evidence of all this travelling and thinking is recorded in a series of journals held by the National Library of Scotland. Crammed with cuttings, sketches, watercolours and photographs, the visual element within these volumes deserves to be more widely known and studied. This paper will focus particularly on Campbell's contribution to the representation of the Highlands and Islands during the nineteenth century.

John Francis Campbell was born in Edinburgh on 29 December 1821, the son of Walter Frederick Campbell of Islay. His early years were spent on the family estate in Islay, and, despite his Lowland birthplace, he would always consider himself first and foremost a Highlander.¹ As a boy he was painted in full Highland garb by Frederick Yeates Hurlstone and took care to be photographed in later life in kilt and heavy plaid. In December 1847, the family's connection with Islay came under threat when Campbell's father's estates were repossessed due to debt. The estate was administered by trustees for the next six years before finally finding a buyer in 1853.² In the meantime, John Francis went to London, where he qualified in law in 1851. Although he did not pursue a legal career, there are some court notes and pencil sketches among his papers which suggest that he practised briefly before becoming Private Secretary to the Duke of Argyll in 1854.³ The sketches, which include portraits of prisoners, demonstrate Campbell's itch to record a situation visually as well as verbally, a habit he continued all his life.

Whether Campbell was taught to draw and paint in any formal sense remains unclear. However, art lessons were a widely accepted element of polite education during his lifetime, and it is likely that teaching of some sort honed what was clearly a natural talent. Campbell could count proficient artists among his close family circle, including his aunt, Eliza Maria, her daughter, Constance Gordon-Cumming, and Lord Archibald Campbell.⁴ During this period, an ability to draw was seen as a desirable accomplishment for both men and women of the upper classes, particularly those who travelled.⁵ In 1842, at the age of 21, Campbell embarked on his own Grand Tour of Spain, Greece, Italy and Switzerland, illustrating his journal with watercolours and sketches of the people and landscapes he encountered on his travels.⁶ The 1840s also saw him exploring and drawing scenes closer to home, from Argyllshire through Highland Perthshire to Inverness, Wester Ross, Sutherland and Caithness.⁷

¹ National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Adv.MS 50.4.6, John Francis Campbell, Journal of travels on west coast of Scotland, 1871, f. 84: 'I got to know a good deal about the ways of Highlanders by growing up as a Highlander myself'.

² NLS, *Lamplighter and Storyteller: John Francis Campbell of Islay, 1821–1885* (Edinburgh, 1985), 7.

³ NLS, Adv.MS 50.3.7, John Francis Campbell, Court notes and sketches, 1852, f. 133. Cited in NLS, *Lamplighter and Storyteller*, 24.

⁴ S. Bennett, M. Byatt, J. Main, A. Oliver and J. Trythall (ed.), *Women of Moray* (Edinburgh, 2012); S. Thurin, 'Constance Gordon-Cumming', in (ed.) B. Brothers and J. Gergits, *British Travel Writers, 1876–1909* (Detroit and London, 1997), 67–88; NLS, *Lamplighter and Storyteller*, 37.

⁵ A. Bermingham, '“An Exquisite Practice”: the Institution of Drawing as a Polite Art in Britain', in (ed.) B. Allen, *Towards a Modern Art World* (New Haven and London, 1995), 47–66 (55).

⁶ NLS, Adv.MS 50.3.4, John Francis Campbell, Journal of a Grand Tour, 1841–42.

⁷ National Galleries of Scotland (hereafter NGS), D4126, Album of drawings by John Francis Campbell, 1842–48.

The history of travel in the Highlands and Islands has an extensive literature which is worth noting to appreciate the context of Campbell's domestic journeys. With isolated exceptions, such as Martin Martin's *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (1703), this literature was frequently penned by outsiders, and was consequently marked by a quest to understand and to explain the unfamiliar and unknown. Illustrations were employed as one means of assisting this process. In his travelogue of 1754, military engineer Edward Burt expressed their value succinctly: 'Painting can ... create Ideas of Bodies, utterly unlike to any Thing that ever appear'd to our Sight'.⁸ Of the next wave of travellers to the Highlands, the Welshman Thomas Pennant made particular use of what we might call scientific images. His artists documented plants, birds, antiquities, cultural curiosities and landforms in a style which explicitly complemented and added to the text.⁹ Despite their serious purpose, these works betrayed their authors' inevitable prejudices about the nature of the region they were visiting. Primed by a post-Jacobite tendency to eulogise vernacular culture, a new enthusiasm for native archaeology and the rise of geological science, historical themes loomed large in early accounts of the Highlands and Islands. Studying the region became akin to peeling back layers of time. Nearest were the people themselves, flesh and blood, living and working in present time and yet, to the genteel traveller, still a little distant: speakers of a strange language, tellers of ancient tales, users of antiquated implements, inhabitants of primitive dwellings. Further down in the layers sat human history, from the recent ruin of Culloden and the clans to older relics still: unexplained things like the stone circles, cairns and early fortresses scattered throughout the north and west. Deepest of all lay the landscape, a crumpling, tightly rolled manuscript which the intelligentsia attempted to unravel and explain through the emerging theories of geological science. Popular images of the Highlands and Islands were thus the product of a long obsession with time and its effects on land, society and people.¹⁰

The remainder of this paper will look in more detail at how John Francis Campbell's visual output fits into three scientific disciplines which hold time at their heart: ethnology, archaeology and geology. Although awareness of his predecessors is important, Campbell followed a tradition of Highland travel illustration in which he stands out by being an insider. The people he spoke to and the landscapes he encountered were not exotic in the sense they may have seemed to southern visitors. Not only did he grow up among Highlanders with an understanding of their culture, he could also speak their language and valued traditions that were, at least to some extent, his own. How then can we

⁸ E. Burt, *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London*, II (London, 1754), 3–4.

⁹ T. Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland, 1769* (Chester, 1771); T. Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides, 1772*, 2 vols. (Chester, 1774–76).

¹⁰ For a more detailed exploration of this subject, see A. MacLeod, *From an Antique Land: Visual Representations of the Highlands and Islands, 1700–1880* (Edinburgh, 2012).

sum up the ethnological element within his work? It is impossible to answer this question without some reference to *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860–62), four volumes based on the collecting activities of Campbell and his network of Gaelic-speaking agents. This labour was partly inspired by an upsurge of interest in the folk culture of northern Europe, some proven influences being the work of the brothers Grimm in Germany and Sir George Dasent's translation of Norwegian tales collected in the 1830s.¹¹ The eighteenth-century controversy over the authenticity of Ossianic epics 'translated' from Gaelic by James Macpherson had also taken a long time to die, and was still being hotly argued over during John Francis Campbell's lifetime.¹²

Although collectors like the Grimms tended to focus on the stories rather than their source, Campbell's methodology ensured that the originators of his tales did not remain nameless or faceless. According to Francis Thompson, 'he brought to life the tellers of the tales he collected. He listed their names, their occupations, their ages, and the dates and places of the tellings. He also insisted on leaving the tales as they were told'.¹³ Given Campbell's penchant for capturing experiences in visual form, we might expect to find among his Highland journals a parallel interest in portraiture. Unlike many amateurs, he was a competent figure-drawer, at least on a small scale. His foreign travels, especially in Scandinavia, are littered with studies of people and their costumes. In the Highlands, however, drawings which could be described as figure sketches are very sparse. Given the artist's understanding of the people and their place, this at the very least is disappointing. One of the reasons he did not paint his storytellers can be simply explained by the fact that a large proportion of the tales were gathered by a network of intermediaries, including Campbell's former tutor, Hector Maclean of Ballygrant. We have occasional glimpses of the tellers when Campbell caught up with his fieldworkers, as on one occasion in Paisley, when he found Hector Maclean installed in a pub with Lachlan MacNeill, an Islay-born shoemaker. MacNeill had been keeping Maclean going for the space of a week with a tale titled 'O'Kane's Leg', which eventually amounted to around 260 pages of foolscap in Gaelic. In his own words, Campbell 'carried off the scribe, the narrator to a photographer and got two negatives made'. The results are pasted into his journal for 1870, granting a rare visual glimpse of the ongoing process of collecting.¹⁴ More vivid than the studio photograph is Campbell's own portrait of Roderick

¹¹ J. and W. Grimm, *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (Berlin, 1812); Sir G. Dasent, *Popular Tales from the Norse* (Edinburgh, 1859).

¹² Campbell's *Leabhar na Féinne: Heroic Gaelic Ballads Collected in Scotland Chiefly from 1512 to 1871* (London, 1872), was an edition of Ossianic poetry collected from tradition bearers and manuscript sources. His journals contain many references to the Ossian controversy. See also H. Gaskill (ed.), *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works* (Edinburgh, 1996).

¹³ F. Thompson, 'John Francis Campbell', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 54 (1984–86), 1–57 (26).

¹⁴ NLS, Adv:MS 50.2.2, John Francis Campbell, Journal, 1870, f. 46v.

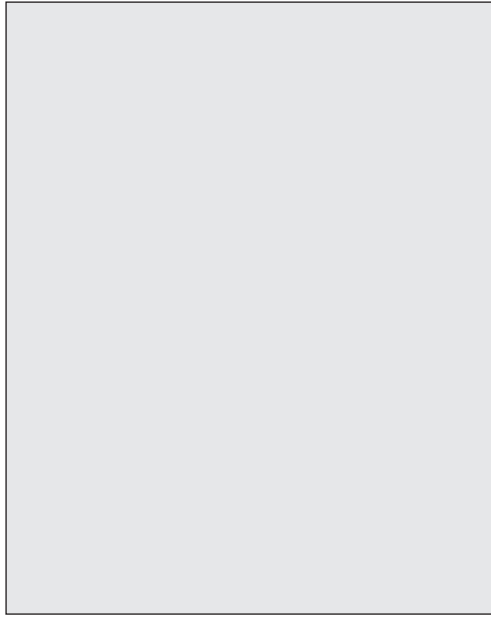


Plate 1 'Rory Rum the Story Man' by John Francis Campbell, 1871 (NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.6, f. 119).

MacNeill of Mingulay, 'Rory Rum the Story Man', who had been recorded by Hector Maclean in September 1860 (Plate 1).¹⁵ In 1871, Campbell himself visited Mingulay and met up with the taleteller, now aged around 85. On this occasion he made a small watercolour sketch which stands almost alone among nineteenth-century representations of ordinary Highlanders. Not only is the subject named, the most important thing about him is neither his costume nor the task he is employed in, but his face.¹⁶ With the exception of a woman in the west of Ireland sketched in 1863,¹⁷ we look in vain in the rest of Campbell's travels through Gaeldom for further portraits of his informants.

Although nineteenth-century artists are frequently accused of bypassing the people of the Highlands and Islands in favour of a wilderness image, we know from Campbell's notes and papers that this was not how he saw the region. On a human plane, he was pre-eminently interested in conversation; in fact, this was one of the principal purposes behind his journeys. In this he can be linked to an older tradition of travel than what we now term 'sightseeing'. According to Judith Adler, the pre-Enlightenment traveller tended to go abroad

¹⁵ NLS, Adv.MS 50.2.1, Report by Hector Maclean, 30 September 1860, f. 226.

¹⁶ NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.6, f. 119v.

¹⁷ NLS, Adv.MS 50.3.23, John Francis Campbell, Geographical Sketchbook, 1862–64, f. 24.

‘for *discourse* rather than for picturesque views or scenes. The art of travel he was urged to cultivate was in large measure one of discoursing with the living and the dead – learning foreign tongues, obtaining access to foreign courts, and conversing gracefully with eminent men’.¹⁸ In such a context, the traveller was a participant rather than an observer, and it is valid to compare Campbell’s approach to tale-gathering to the behaviour of the early modern courtier: a bringer of gifts – be these, in Campbell’s case, whisky, tobacco, or the odd half-crown – and a conversational strategist, always on the hunt for the most eminent tradition bearers in a district. It was a verbal and aural experience rather than a visual one, and on this level it is possible to understand one reason why he captured so few impressions of Highland people.

Ethnographic images in travellers’ accounts of the Highlands were generally marked by an obsession with material culture, particularly tools, clothing and furnishings that appeared older and more primitive than those current elsewhere. Campbell was not indifferent to material culture, but he was more interested in the power of the imagination to transform what an old woman in Mull described to him as ‘the tale of poverty’.¹⁹ In the frontispiece to *Popular Tales*, engraved from his own drawings, he made at least one attempt to visualise this transforming process. The image, which blends traditional symbols and mythic creatures in a dream montage emanating from a kilted figure asleep before an open fire, differs from the usual fare dished up by artists visualising Highland culture. Outsiders invariably insisted on summing up the region in a series of stock symbols: lonely ruins, tumbledown thatched houses, laborious working methods, muscular games, illicit whisky stills or the perpetual old women at their spinning wheels. Campbell included some stock symbols in the frontispiece to *Popular Tales*, but they are almost hidden or subordinated to the rich vein of fantasy evident elsewhere in the drawing. As he acknowledged in 1871, Highland life did include such humdrum tokens as ‘potatoes and milk, wooden noggins and good horn-spoons’,²⁰ but this was not all. Vernacular culture was about much more, not least an imagination which could inspire and transcend beyond its surroundings.²¹

In an oral culture, the line between what we call history and prehistory is often much more blurred than allowed for by written tradition. Despite the uncertainties of chronology, Campbell sometimes drew upon an extensive knowledge of lore and legend to inform his archaeological studies. Since the

¹⁸ J. Adler, ‘Origins of Sightseeing’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 16 (1989), 7–29 (11).

¹⁹ NLS, Adv.MS 50.2.2, f. 122.

²⁰ Paper titled ‘On Current British Mythology and Oral Traditions’, in NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.6, f. 90.

²¹ Campbell’s journals contain only a handful of what were widely viewed as typically Highland scenes. For a rough sketch of the *cas-chròm* (‘crooked foot’ or ‘foot plough’) in use in Skye, see NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.6, f. 123v; for thatched houses in Tiree, NLS, Adv. MS 50.4.6, f. 116; for a shinty match and watercolour of Highland games, NGS, D4126, ff. 11, 112.

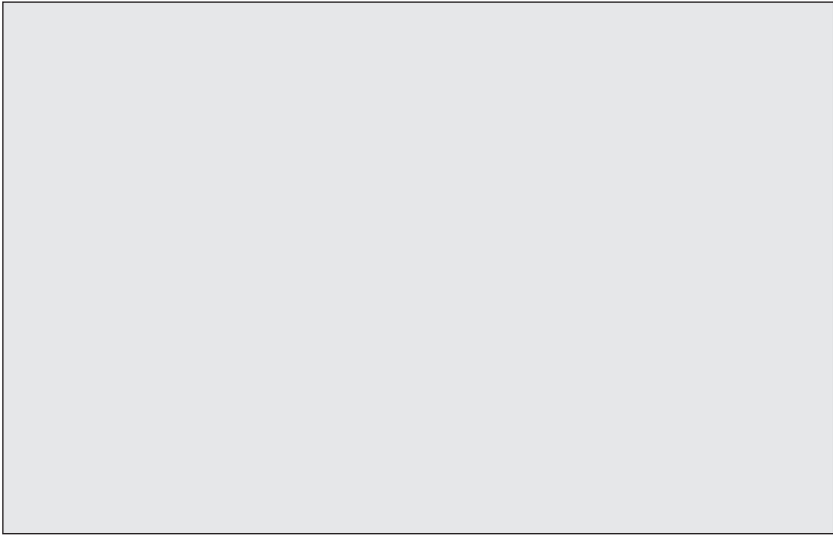


Plate 2 'Subterranean building on the Belle Ville [Balavil] estate' by John Francis Campbell, 1877 (NLS, Adv.MS 50.5.5, f. 32).

later seventeenth century, antiquities had loomed large in travellers' accounts of the Highlands. Subjects of interest ranged from prehistoric monuments to the remains of medieval chapels and fortresses, curious artefacts and forms of costume. John Francis Campbell was interested in many of these things, and illustrated several in his journals. Some of these images are incidental: passing records of sites which appealed to him because of the stories attached to them.²² In his 1877 journal, more space is given to what was termed a 'subterranean building' on the Belle Ville [Balavil] estate near Kingussie (Plate 2). This structure had a local story attached to it: known as the 'Kingussie Robbers' Cave', it had supposedly been built and excavated in a single night by a family of Macphersons with seven sons. Unlike many antiquarians who tended either to record uncritically or to reject outright the evidence of oral tradition when attempting to interpret archaeological sites, Campbell was apt to take a middle ground, concluding that the stories 'may be fragments of fact'. According to him, the so-called cave might have originated as a tomb or sepulchre, having similarities with burial chambers two-and-a-half millennia old. Thereafter, 'Robbers and smugglers may have used it and at last a Philosopher partly destroyed it in seeking to get at the meaning of the puzzle. Then all the broken

²² For example, sketches of standing stones at Carse, Argyll, in NLS, Adv MS. 50.4.6, f. 101v; also a Pictish boar stone near Inverness in NLS, Adv.MS 50.5.5, John Francis Campbell, Scrapbook, 1877–78, f. 17.

traditions got into a heap, and that is the cairn which remains'.²³ Whatever the truth of the matter, this approach is interesting because it gives oral tradition the dignity of being rooted in historical fact, even if obscured or distorted in the intervening period.²⁴ Although buried in manuscript journals, the straightforward, unexaggerated quality of Campbell's draughtsmanship also gives his antiquarian drawings a utilitarian value, preserving as they do the appearance of structures which may since have deteriorated.

Turning to more modern relics, Campbell's ability to sift and weigh evidence from a variety of sources to get at the truth of a matter can be seen in action. Despite his apparently enthusiastic adoption of Highland dress, one of the questions which continued to bother him was its authenticity. Was the kilt really a demonstrably ancient form of costume, and could the idea of ancestral setts or patterns of tartan specific to each separate clan be verified from historical evidence? The early album of sketches in the Scottish National Gallery contains a number of copies of portraits and other studies of Highland dress done at Taymouth, Inverness and Armadale.²⁵ Some of these sketches were ultimately engraved as illustrations for a chapter on dress in the fourth volume of *Popular Tales*. In this he outlined evidence for a distinctive form of Highland dress from at least the seventeenth century.²⁶ Some of Campbell's later journals, however, cast doubt on various popular misconceptions, particularly regarding the kilt and the antiquity of tartan patterns. For his researches on Highland dress, he made good use of the surviving monumental sculpture of the West Highlands. While in Arran on 22 August 1871, he copied the carved stones in Kilmory churchyard, commenting that 'the dress of the knights is well shown on figures in alto relievo [*sic*], as large as life and it is the same as at Kilbery. It is the dress described in popular tales and is not the kilt'.²⁷ A few pages later, Campbell inserted a watercolour sketch bringing one of these effigies back to life, noting that the form of the dress and arms was copied from tombstones (Plate 3). This drawing was also an attempt to visualise the description of a warrior – Murchadh MacBrian – from one of the stories recorded for *Popular Tales*. Campbell's enterprise may have been influenced to some extent by the rash of publications on clans and tartans which began to appear from the 1840s, not least James Logan and R. R. McLan's *Clans of the Scottish Highlands* (1845). All told, however, it is easier to reconcile Campbell's resuscitated warrior with the forms on medieval tombstones than McLan's illustration of a similar costume. Noting that he could find no trace of coverings on the legs, Campbell left this detail out altogether. In McLan's image for the clan MacIvor, on the other hand, imagination happily filled the gap.

²³ NLS, Adv:MS 50.5.5, ff. 32–5.

²⁴ This site is now identified as a souterrain with site reference NH70SE 3: <http://www.rcahms.gov.uk>. See also D. Brewster, 'Notice of an Artificial Cave in the Parish of Alvey', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 5 (1862–64), 119, pl. 3.

²⁵ NGS, D4126, ff. 26–8, 44v, 48v, 88.

²⁶ J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, IV (Edinburgh, 1862), 337.

²⁷ NLS, Adv:MS 50.4.6, f. 105v.

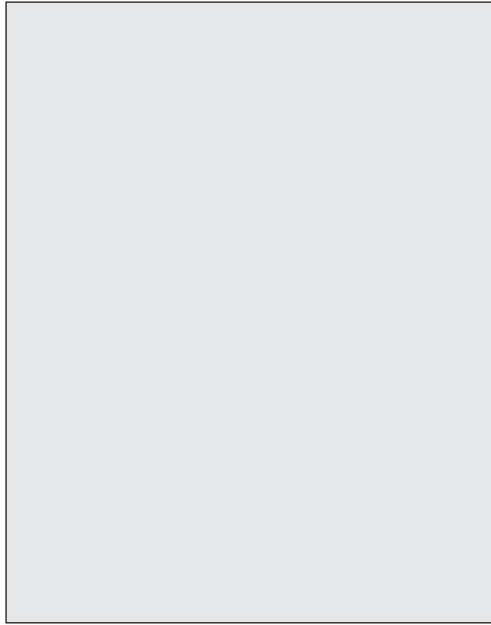


Plate 3 'A Black Knight' by John Francis Campbell, 1871 (NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.6, f. 113v).

McIan and Logan's work, which clothed most of the illustrated figures in the supposed costume of their clan, fuelled the mythology of tartan. It followed an earlier work, the *Vestiarium Scoticum* (1842), edited by John Sobieski Stuart, which claimed to be a transcript of a very old manuscript containing tartan patterns. In 1845, the author and his brother followed the *Vestiarium* with an even more elaborate volume titled *The Costume of the Clans*. It relies heavily on visual data, containing 31 plates illustrating different aspects of Highland costume, the vast majority being copies of late seventeenth- or eighteenth-century portraits. It was perhaps convenient for the Stuarts to claim that visual evidence for the greater antiquity of a distinctive Highland garb had been destroyed in the intervening period.²⁸ The remains of monumental sculpture carved in the West Highlands during medieval times – which may have contributed some inconvenient evidence – featured in only a couple of plates. John Francis Campbell was personally acquainted with the Stuart brothers and credited John with having first introduced him to Highland costume in his youth. However, his own observations caused him to take issue with the

²⁸ J. S. S. Stuart and C. E. Stuart, *The Costume of the Clans* (Edinburgh and London, 1845), xiv.

brothers' work. We can see this clearly in his journal for 1867, when he had copied the sett of tartan from a portrait of William, Earl of Sutherland, in Dunrobin Castle. On referring to his notes while writing up a paper on tartans in 1871, Campbell discovered conflicting evidence from the Stuart publications. He writes:

Charles Count d'Albanie lent me his brother's book *Vestiarium Scoticum*. In it the Sutherland tartan is quite different. It has three red stripes crossing in the middle, two white stripes crossing in the green frame ... etc. I do not see how it would be possible to *weave* this for the ends which go to make the square pattern do not appear in the greens of the frame.²⁹

He was later to state categorically that he did not believe in the authenticity of the 1842 work, or in the popular idea of tartans being specific to individual clans. Ever the pragmatist, however, Campbell was willing to concede that it was good for trade to believe in clan tartans.³⁰ While unwilling to take on the visual propaganda of the 1840s in print, his private papers nonetheless illustrate in words and pictures why he believed differently.

The images considered so far show Campbell making use of his art to record and illustrate evidence of passing concern to his antiquarian studies. However, neither archaeology nor material culture lay at the centre of his fascination with the past. Instead, his journals reveal a growing preoccupation with historical geology. John Francis Campbell was born at an interesting time for geological studies. In 1830, when he was nine years old, the first volume of Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* was published. This influential work popularised the notion of uniformitarianism: in other words, that when studying the earth's history the present can be taken as the key to the past.³¹ In 1840, a Scottish geological phenomenon – the Parallel Roads of Glen Roy – had provided Swiss geologist Louis Agassiz with key evidence for his theory of a past ice age.³² In his travels, we can see Campbell applying the principle of uniformitarianism to his own geological studies, conjecturing that the glacial processes he observed in action abroad must once have been operative in his native Scotland.³³ While Campbell adhered to an older view of marine drift – the deposit of material by migrating polar icebergs – it is clear from his journals that ice obsessed him.

²⁹ NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.2, John Francis Campbell, *Travel Journal*, 1865–68, ff. 204v–205; see also NLS, Adv.MS 50.5.5, ff. 8v–9 for further illustrations and comment on sculptured stones.

³⁰ Thompson, 'John Francis Campbell', 8–12.

³¹ See NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.2, f. 2 for a sketch of Sir Charles, initialled JFC and dated 9 February 1865, clear evidence that the two men met.

³² R. Price, *Highland Landforms* (Aberdeen, 1991 edn.), 54.

³³ NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.5, John Francis Campbell, *Journal of travels in Norway, Sweden and to the Sutherland gold fields*, 1869, f. 113: 'From all these observations I conclude that the South of Norway and the North of Scotland once were in the conditions of the South of Greenland and that Sutherland glaciers worked like glaciers elsewhere.'

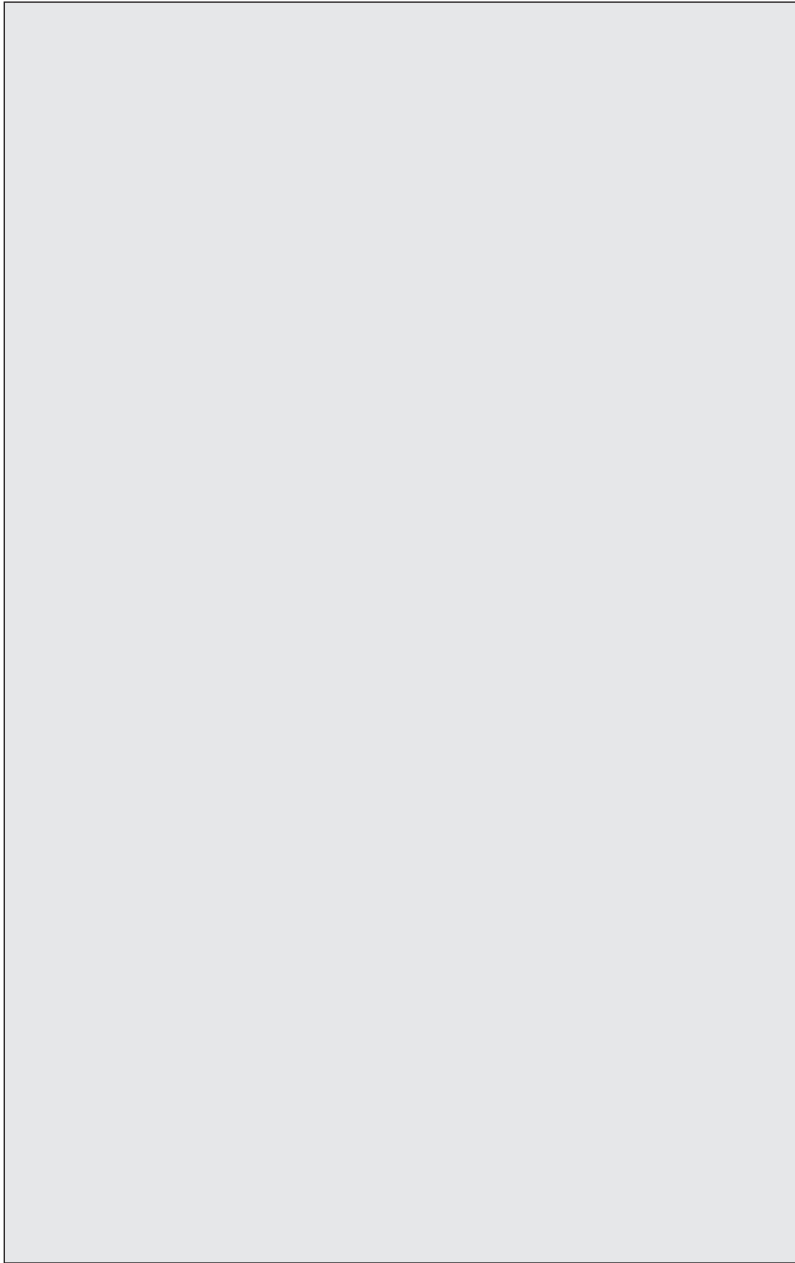


Plate 4 Diagram of glacial movement in the Strath of Kildonan, by John Francis Campbell, 1869 (NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.5, f. 103v).

The landscape of Wester Ross and Sutherland proved particularly fascinating for Campbell's glacial studies. Although sketches of this area survive among his papers from the 1840s, his interest in the geological history of Sutherland intensified following the announcement that gold had been discovered in the Suisgill and Kildonan burns in 1868. In 1869 he wrote a paper on the gold diggings then in full swing in the Strath of Kildonan, where a makeshift gold-rush village had sprung up at Baile an Or. The paper was an attempt to explain in geological terms the possible source of the gold then being panned in the Kildonan burn. According to Campbell, the source of this gold was most likely to be old Silurian rock to be found on the central plateau of Sutherland. He believed that the sandstone summits on the west coast were a clear example of denudation, or erosion. In the Straths of Brora and Helmsdale, on the other hand, where gold had been found, he could find evidence for past glacial activity. He conjectured that the gold had been carried eastward from the region around Clebrig by glaciers and deposited along with other forms of drift in the lower straths.³⁴

These conclusions were based on years of notes and observations in the field. Campbell's geological studies illustrate perhaps more than any other area of interest the versatility of his artistic repertoire. For example, his field notes from the trip to Kildonan in autumn 1869 include a diagram which incorporates a rock-rubbing with sketches of the surrounding landforms, intended to show the direction of glacial movement in the Strath of Kildonan (Plate 4).³⁵ Another image sees him imagining Sutherland with its own central 'Mer de Glace', burying the region in a sheet of ice almost to the summit of Beinn Clebrig.³⁶ In putting together such projections, Campbell made use of a wealth of visual notes. His journals are crammed with rubbings from rocks in other parts of Scotland – most of them glacial erratics which could be studied for the pattern of grooves which suggested the directional movement of the ice sheet which eventually spat them out. In 1863 his brother-in-law, Sir Kenneth MacKenzie of Gairloch, was enlisted to capture rock-rubbings from key locations on his estate, identified on a map supplied by Campbell.³⁷ A diagram similar to the Kildonan example was later employed to illustrate the movement of ice westward from central Ross-shire to the sea, based on his observations while staying with the Fowler family at Braemore, Lochbroom, in October 1869.³⁸ Still at Braemore, Campbell captured a watercolour sketch of the panorama from his hosts' dining-room window. On the surface, it appears a simple landscape drawing. However, the accompanying commentary reveals the view to be another piece of evidence to add to Campbell's glacial studies. In the picture, the Inverbroom flats – still the best farmland in the area today –

³⁴ NLS, BL 9/3.3(9), J. F. Campbell, 'Something from "the Diggings" in Sutherland', 1869.

³⁵ NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.5, f. 103v.

³⁶ NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.5, f. 112.

³⁷ NLS, Adv.MS 50.3.23, f. 74.

³⁸ NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.5, f. 129.

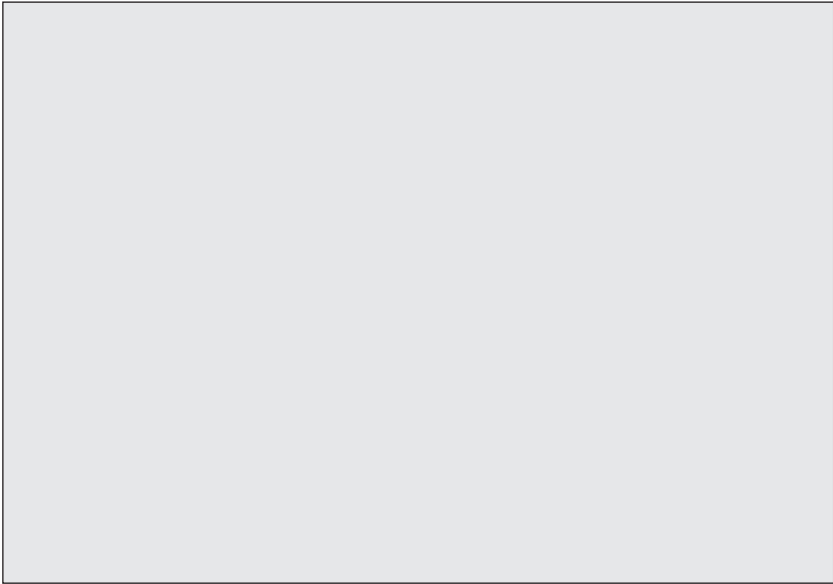


Plate 5 'Glen Affric' by John Francis Campbell, 1867 (NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.2, f. 215).

are labelled 'drift sorted by water', evidence that to Campbell a view was never simply a scenic arrangement. Even where we can see him yielding to more conventional rules of composition, as in a view of Glen Affric with its carefully placed foreground pine, there are geological comments scribbled around the margins (Plate 5).³⁹

Throughout John Francis Campbell's journals, this careful balance between text and image reveals a mind whose primary instinct was to record what could be analysed later. Although the illustrations are forms of scientific data, they also represent a Gael's attempt to sift existing models for seeing the landscape, history and culture of the Highlands. Where these were found wanting, he did not hesitate to develop visual models of his own. There is an immediacy and variety about Campbell's journals which is rivalled in few other contemporary attempts to visualise or describe the Highlands and Islands. Whether we find him on the deck of the *Loch Dunvegan*, despairing over a watercolour of the Cuillin ridge which will not dry,⁴⁰ commenting on the crofter politics of the Western Isles, or reducing to its bones a glaciated landscape, he succeeds in remaining lively company. Unafraid to strike out on a less-trodden path in seeking answers to the intellectual questions of his day, his drawing materials

³⁹ NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.2, f. 215.

⁴⁰ NLS, Adv.MS 50.4.6, f. 117v.

were a constant and reliable travelling companion. Without them, Campbell's assessment of time and its moulding of both natural and human history in the West Highlands and Islands would have been much the poorer. This paper has touched on only a handful of examples from a small section of his travel writings. It has not looked at all at one of his major interests – photography – nor has it attempted to place his Highland work in a world or European context. Campbell's legacy to scholarship was vast and various, and it is perhaps because of this that parts of it lie largely forgotten. However, any fresh look at a man to whom drawing and writing were simply parallel ways of making sense of the world cannot afford to overlook the visual dimension of his life and work. A fuller assessment of his artistic repertoire is long overdue.