

Stephen Place's Journal: A Footman's Visit to Scotland in 1832

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Stephen Place's journal is that most unusual of 'finds' – a detailed footman's diary.¹ Most journals and diaries kept before the coming of mass tourism were written by the well-to-do who had the necessary education, tools and leisure time to commit their thoughts and experiences to paper. This servant's journal was kept by a footman, one of the lower-ranking domestics. It records what must have been the adventure of a lifetime for this ordinary Londoner: a lengthy visit to Dunrobin Castle, the Scottish home of his employers, George, 2nd Marquis of Stafford, who was to become 1st Duke of Sutherland, and his wife, Elizabeth, later known as the Duchess-Countess of Sutherland. This paper explores the journal and its author, but also the links with the Sutherland family and estate records.

Stephen Place's journal begins with the bustle of departure from London and the upheaval of a great aristocratic family moving from one of their homes to another. The voyage along the east coast of Britain to Sutherland is covered in some detail, but the journal's main focus is the Stafford household's four-month visit to Dunrobin Castle in Sutherland. The narrative concentrates on the people encountered there and their customs and culture, but also the scenery and places visited. The National Library of Scotland (NLS) holds many journals of visits to Scotland but this servant's account, written with infectious enthusiasm and excitement, stands in marked contrast to the writings of the typical cultural tourist of the time attracted by stories of Dr Johnson's exploits and the poems of Walter Scott.

Stephen Place's employers, the Marquis and Marchioness of Stafford, were enormously wealthy and powerful. George, Marquis of Stafford was a politician and diplomat as well as a landowner with vast inherited estates and business interests in England. He was created Duke of Sutherland shortly before his death in 1833. His principal home was Trentham Hall in Staffordshire, but the family spent much of their time in their palatial London home, Stafford House, where the journal starts.

Dunrobin Castle, the journal's principal setting, was the most remote of the Stafford family's great houses and was Lady Stafford's ancestral home. She was born near Edinburgh in 1765 and orphaned at a year old when her father William, 18th Earl of Sutherland and his wife, Mary, died within a week of each other when taking the waters in Bath. Elizabeth was their only surviving

¹ National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Acc. 11265/1–2, Journal, 1832, of a visit to Sutherland made by Stephen Place, footman to George, 1st Duke of Sutherland.

child. The succession was disputed but was decided in her favour by the House of Lords in 1771 when she was accepted as Countess of Sutherland in her own right. The young Countess was brought up by her grandmother, Lady Alva, largely in Edinburgh and London. Her first visit to Sutherland was not until 1782. Her marriage three years later brought together two of the most powerful and influential families in Britain.

The extensive Sutherland family and estate records reflect the division of the family's power base between England and Scotland. The records of their English estates are held by Staffordshire County Record Office (SCRO)² while those of their Scottish estates are deposited in the NLS.³ Family papers of the Earls and Dukes of Sutherland post-1785 (the year of the Countess of Sutherland's marriage) are with the Sutherland Papers at SCRO. Stephen Place's journal of his visit to Sutherland was presented to the NLS in 2003 by his descendants.

Little is known of Stephen Place but it seems likely he was born in 1806, the son of John Place, a London Park Keeper. By 1829, he was employed as a footman in the Marquis of Stafford's household. The Stafford House Servants' Wages Book at SCRO records he was one of three under footmen each paid £25 4s. per annum. In comparison, the butler received £52 and the steward £105.⁴ Servants in great houses worked long hours and had wide-ranging duties but generally earned good wages and had comfortable living conditions. In return, they were expected to be loyal, discreet, respectful and defer to those in authority including the more senior or upper servants such as the steward and butler as well as their employers.⁵

Employing male servants was the mark of a wealthy household and Stephen had entered one of the grandest. Dressed in the livery of their masters and with powdered hair, they were very much status symbols, especially tall handsome footmen. Traditionally, footmen were employed to run alongside their master's carriage to look out for highwaymen and deep puddles. Later, they rode on the back of the carriage and wealthy families vied with each other as to the number of footmen in their entourage.

Footmen answered directly to the butler and also had indoor duties including cleaning and laying out silverware, cleaning and lighting the lamps. They spent much of their time waiting on their masters, serving at table, answering the door to visitors and taking messages. In large households, each servant would have his own defined role with specific duties to carry out. Stephen Place's frequent references to Lady Stafford suggest he may have been particularly assigned to serve her. Households with several footmen, as at Stafford House, might have a roster of one day carriage duty, one day 'close waiting' and a third

² Staffordshire County Record Office (hereafter SCRO), D593.

³ NLS, Dep. 313, Dep. 314, Acc. 10225, Acc. 10853, Acc. 12173, Acc. 13290.

⁴ SCRO, D593/R/4/1, Servants' Wages Book for West Hill and Stafford House, 1829–33.

⁵ S. Adams and S. Adams, *The Compleat Servant* (London, 1825).

on their other duties.⁶ Although their duties were extensive and the hours long, much of their time was spent literally waiting for orders. This may explain why footmen are often portrayed as lazy.

As was typical of aristocratic families, the then Marquis and Marchioness of Stafford spent the season in London, and divided the rest of the year between their country establishments. Each house had a core group of servants who were resident throughout the year while most of the personal servants, such as the footmen, travelled with the family. Stephen's employers were known as improving landlords, implementing new ideas in agriculture first on their English estates but, from the early 1800s, increasingly in Scotland. From this time, their visits to Sutherland became more regular providing both relaxation in the peaceful setting of Dunrobin Castle and, increasingly, the opportunity to oversee the progress of the improvements there themselves.

With its poor communications, unproductive land and poverty, Sutherland to the Staffords seemed ripe for modernisation. Vast sums of money from their English enterprises were spent on new roads, bridges, harbours and piers. Entire new fishing communities were created and sheep farms set up. James Loch, the Marquis of Stafford's chief agent, hailed him as the great benefactor of the county.⁷ However, their grand designs or 'Improvements' involved the forcible movement of large numbers of people to make way for large sheep farms and were greeted with dismay and outrage in many quarters. They became known as 'The Clearances', which to this day are associated with George, 1st Duke of Sutherland (as Lord Stafford was to become) and his wife. As Annie Tindley comments: 'although many Highland estates carried out clearances in the first half of the nineteenth century, it has been the Sutherland clearances that have come to symbolise the perceived injustice and cruelty of the policy'. This was as much due to the scale of the clearances carried out there as to the very public defence of them by James Loch and the high-profile case against their agent, Patrick Sellar, who both implemented and benefited from them.⁸

As well as modernising their estates, the Staffords were also set on acquiring even more land and when Ardross came on the market in 1832 they moved to acquire it. The Marquis was in poor health and although originally no visit to Sutherland was intended for that year, it seems their plans changed at the prospect of the purchase.

News of the visit reached Dunrobin via hurried letters from James Loch. On 5 June 1832 he wrote: 'the Marquess of Stafford has determined to visit Sutherland this summer ... Though this will give you all much surprise I am certain it will give you much pleasure.' A stream of letters followed with information and instructions: the party would leave towards the end of the month; travelling by sea being less arduous for the frail Marquis, the large

⁶ J. Williams, *The Footman's Complete Guide* (London, 1856).

⁷ J. Loch, *Memoir of the First Duke of Sutherland, K.G.* (London, 1834).

⁸ A. Tindley, *The Sutherland Estate, 1850–1920. Aristocratic Decline, Estate Management and Land Reform* (Edinburgh, 2010, Scottish Historical Review Monograph 18), 1.

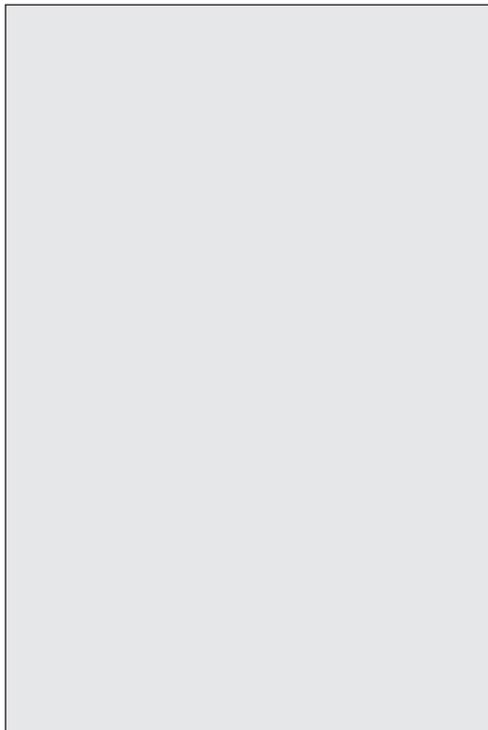


Plate 1 First page of Stephen Place's journal of his visit to Sutherland, 1832, on which he describes the party's departure from London (NLS, Acc. 11265/1).

steam packet *The Soho* had been specially chartered; and they would be 'about 20 with 12 or 13 horses and four carriages'. An elbow chair upon poles 'like an Edinr Sedan' was to be found for transporting the Marquis 'and two of your steadiest and strongest men to carry him'. Special uniforms were to be ordered for the bearers. The gardens were to be brought forward as much as possible and 'the repairs of the Castle urged on with every speed'.⁹

James Loch's excitement at the trip was matched by Stephen Place's and his journal opens with the commotion of departure from London (Plate 1):

According to my promise I now take the opportunity of writing you an account of our voyage to Dunrobin Castle Sutherland Shire – it haveing been arranged some time previous to our Departure for all the family to go by water a steam vessell was accordingly hired for the occasion and all things being arranged we left Stafford House on Saturday morning June 30th 1832 at 7 o'clock for Black

⁹ NLS, Dep. 313/1198, Letter of James Loch to Mr Davidson, 5 June 1832.

Wall the place of embarkation where the Soho steam packet was lying ready to receive us.

Stephen's opening remarks tell us he kept the journal to fulfil a promise. Later he says it was written 'for the gratification of my relatives' but also 'I have done it for my amusement but, should any of my friends and fellow servants wish to see what I have here narrated I certainly shall feel great pleasure'. There is little in the journal about Stephen or his daily routine, indicating his expected readers knew him well.

This young footman was intelligent and observant. He was also educated inasmuch as he could read and write; the discursive journal runs to over 170 pages. His style is very much stream of consciousness. He pays little or no attention to sentence structure, punctuation or paragraphs, and his spelling is somewhat erratic but typical of the time. That said, it is a very readable account written with some descriptive skill, it moves at a lively pace and is leavened with much humour, often directed at himself. Stephen modestly apologises for the lack of detail and inaccuracies, stating that the journal had been written in some haste and was his first attempt at diary writing.

Stephen's is not the only footman's diary of the time. Perhaps the best-known is William Tayler's 1837 journal.¹⁰ Tayler's motivation was to improve his writing skills and to 'give an idea of what service is like'. Earlier, John Macdonald, writing in 1790, said he learned to read and write to better himself. He was helped in this by his fellow servants and an enlightened employer who gave him time off to attend school.¹¹ Just a few years after Stephen's visit to Sutherland, another Stafford House footman known only as 'Thomas' kept a diary. Thomas wrote for the benefit of his farming relatives who knew little of domestic service and the diary is stuffed with the minutiae of his daily life. A copy of the journal is now in Staffordshire County Record Office.¹² Upper servants at least needed to keep written records of household expenditure so employers benefited if they were literate. In turn, literacy improved servants' prospects and gave personal satisfaction.

Stephen Place describes in some detail the servants' activities while they waited at Blackwall for the luggage to be loaded and the Stafford family to arrive. The steward sent most of them to a nearby inn with instructions to drink brandy in preparation for the voyage. Stephen records they were all in good spirits and their 'mirth was frequently heard at the vessell'. However, he anticipated they might soon 'be under the necessity of giving the same double distil'd as food for the fishes'. Soon they were ready for off. While the Countess

¹⁰ D. Wise (ed.), *Diary of William Tayler, Footman, 1837* (London, 1998).

¹¹ J. Macdonald, with an introduction by J. Beresford, *Memoirs of an Eighteenth Century Footman* (London, 2005).

¹² SCRO, D4177/1-2. 'A Daily Journal or Memorandum Book' by Thomas, footman to George, 2nd Duke of Sutherland, 1838-39. For a discussion of this journal see P. Sambrook, *Keeping Their Place: Domestic Service in the Country House* (Stroud, 2005).

walked on board, 'his Lordship was swung off the pier in a chair'. Three days later, after enduring rough seas, during which the Countess slept on deck in a carriage rather than venture below, they arrived at a foggy Dunrobin.

It was not to be until after 'much firing of the ship's gun and the Castle cannon [that] a small boat was sent from shore to the ship and contact was made'. Members of the Staffords' Scottish household then came aboard *The Soho*. Stephen writes: 'It was truly gratifying to see the kind manner in wich Lady Stafford received them all having shook many of them by the hand very kindly she took the most intelligent man amongst them to his lordship who very kindly did the same and they all appeared quite enraptured at seeing her Ladyship once again amongst them'.

Unlike William Tayler who, in his journal, rebukes his mistress for keeping him out late, Stephen does not question the social order and is always deferential to his masters, be they his employers or the senior servants. However, these two footmen inhabited very different worlds. While William Tayler was the lone male servant in a widow's household, Stephen was a junior servant in a grand establishment and, for him, criticism of the Staffords is unthinkable. He even attributes Lady Stafford with the ability to identify intelligence on sight. This seems remarkably naive and it may be that Stephen left much unsaid as he anticipated senior colleagues or even his employers might read his journal.

Stephen was enamoured of Dunrobin Castle from the moment he first saw it, particularly the Tower where he shared a bedroom with two other footmen:

The fog very suddenly went off and the long looked for Castle appeared to us almost instantaneously and at that time I thought it had the delightfulest appearance of anything I ever witnessed before as its appearance amongst the trees and its elevated situation is truly beautifull when seen from the water ... There are three pretty good rooms in the tower, the first of wich is used as a library where there are many old books deposited. The next above is called the chart room as it contains maps, charts and records of very ancient date. Still higher and immediately above these is a room wich is used as a bed room for the footmen in wich there are three very good beds and it is a very airy and comfortable room with a magnificent view of great extent.

Another visitor to Dunrobin, Charles Abbot, 1st Baron Colchester, who spent a week there as the guest of Lord and Lady Stafford in 1827, was more prosaic in his response to the castle describing it as 'a very comfortable house'.¹³ Although the Staffords had spent a good deal of money maintaining Dunrobin, and had added a new south range and stable block, essentially it remained the seventeenth-century harled L-plan house Lady Stafford inherited in 1766.¹⁴

¹³ NLS, MS 9816, Journal of a tour of Scotland, 1827, by Charles Abbot, 1st Baron Colchester, f. 45.

¹⁴ J. Gifford, 'The Duchess-Countess of Sutherland and Dunrobin Castle', in (ed.) I. Gow and A. Rowan, *Scottish Country Houses* (Edinburgh, 1995), 249-60.

While for Stephen, Dunrobin was a fairy-tale castle, for his employers it was basically a holiday home.

The Sutherland papers at the NLS include the Household Inventory for Dunrobin drawn up in 1833 after the death of George, 1st Duke of Sutherland and just a year after Stephen's visit.¹⁵ Then, the contents of the 'Footmen's Bedroom' included three beds each with a feather bed on top of a mattress, a bolster, two pillows and three blankets as well as a table, chairs and a looking glass, among other items in the room. Stephen was very pleased with his accommodation. Servants in country houses were usually well provided for; their accommodation was probably much better than in their family homes.

The views from the Tower were among Stephen's chief delights at Dunrobin. He compared the view from the top of the Tower as: 'just like being elevated above the earth in a balloon having a full view of every object beneath one. I have oft times gazed with astonishment around me when in this tower'. Seeing the Northern Lights was one of the high points of the entire visit:

On the 22nd of this month I witnessed a scene in the atmosphere wick surprised us all very much indeed not having seen anything so grand in the heavens before ... I could not but look ... with astonishment and surprise. At ten o'clock on this night the heavens became on a sudden quite illuminated with beautiful light clouds approaching to yellow sometimes continueing in the same state many minutes without any apparent motion after wick they break out into streams of stronger light spreading into columns and altering slowly into ten thousand different shapes and as often varying their colours and they make the most brilliant appearance all over the whole hemisphere. ... I never yet witnessed anything so magnificent in my life and ... continued looking on them until compelled to retire to bed.

Like most of the journal this passage reads as though it was written retrospectively as time permitted during the visit. The journal is written throughout in a neat hand and was probably a fair copy penned after Stephen returned to London. The Tower was one of the few places Stephen had privacy and peace; the journal was probably written there.

Within Dunrobin Castle, Stephen Place inhabited an ordered environment, a safe cocoon in which everyone knew their place and was content. But, his remarks on first encountering ordinary people in Sutherland indicate a degree of culture shock mixed with condescension:

We where all very much diverted with the rustic appearance of the people in the boats and they in return gazed upon us and our vessell with wonder and astonishment. The sailors where all very much delighted with their appearance and passed many jokes upon them.

Like all travellers, Stephen did not simply record what he saw, rather his descriptions reveal much about himself and his preconceptions as a result of his

¹⁵ NLS, Dep. 313/788, Inventory of furnishings of Dunrobin Castle, 1833.

values of class and nationality.¹⁶ Life in Scotland was at first very strange. The people wore odd clothes, many spoke no English, the food was different and it hardly got dark at night. But, there was much that delighted the Londoner, particularly the friendly people, the clean healthy air and beautiful scenery. Unusually, much of this travel journal is devoted to the author's reactions to the people he met. As Alastair Durie comments, 'It is not often in tourist accounts that the visited get so much room.'¹⁷

Stephen was fascinated by the Gaelic language: on Sunday, the family and servants attended Golspie Kirk where he 'observed a great many poor but decent looking people waiting round the church sitting in groups upon the graves and tombs'. We are told they were waiting to hear the Gaelic service which was held after the English service. Stephen notes, 'those are people who do not understand English [of] wich there are a great many here ... I am very much delighted to hear them talk the Gaelic and I have learnt a few words but I believe it is a languidge that is of no use to any person out of its own native land'.

On the beach at Dunrobin, Stephen saw women carrying their menfolk on their backs from the boats to the shore and admits to laughing heartily. The fishwives who brought baskets of fish to the castle gates he describes as: 'poor distressed looking creatures without shoes or stockings or any covereing for their heads their petticoats being quite up to their knees but they have the hardiest and robust appearance of any people'. Their homes were 'miserable looking hovels called Bothies, being composed only with a few big stones laid together with turf for the covereing [with] a hole at one end to admit the smoke to go out on'.

The poor, Stephen tells us, 'live very poor indeed – oatmeal and milk with potatoes is their chief subsistence', but he notes fish is plentiful. The people have an 'excellent method of cureing their fish – some is smoked and at the door of every poor creature may be seen fish drying in the wind and sun. I like their dried fish very much as do many of my fellow servants and we purchased a great deal to bring to England with us.'

Stephen was surprised that oatmeal cake was served daily in the Servants' Hall. At first, 'we could not imagine what they had placed before us ... by degrees we became more used to it and many of us like it very well. We were also put to our doubts as to wether or not we should like the Scotch whisky tody wich is used in the hall after the servants dinner and supper as it is the old custom of the Castle'. But, although at first it seemed strange, whisky too met with his approval.

We are not told the source of the whisky drunk in the Servants' Hall but, in the early nineteenth century, there were reports of widespread production

¹⁶ B. Hagglund, *Tourists and Travellers: Women's Non-fictional Writing about Scotland, 1770–1830* (Bristol, 2010).

¹⁷ A. Durie, *Travels in Scotland, 1788–1881: A Selection from Contemporary Tourist Accounts* (Woodbridge, 2012), 132.

of illicit whisky in Sutherland. In 1813, at the time of the Kildonan protests against the Clearances, James Loch complained that money given by Lord Stafford for poor relief was being used to buy barley to produce illegal whisky. Officially, the Sutherland Estates disapproved both of illicit distilling and drunkenness.¹⁸

Carriage duty with Lord and Lady Stafford occupied much of Stephen's time as there was seldom a day on which they did not go out for a long drive. While his employers inspected their estates, their footman riding behind them on the carriage observed the people, their customs and surroundings. On one such outing he was taken aback to see women treading linen in a tub but the surprise seems to have been mutual:

As I was passing with the Carriage one day through a little village about 5 miles from the Castle I saw two young women in a large tub having hold of each others hands and going round the tub treading the linnen. They were very shy of us seeing them for as we got nearer the house they lowered their garments and ran into the house until we where passed.

As well as observing the local people, Stephen also watched his employers. His position as a personal servant brought him into regular contact with them and there are several comments on Lady Stafford's behaviour and attitude towards to her tenants.

I have been a great deal about with her Ladyship since I have been here and she have visited almost all her cottagers in this part of the county and I have never witnessed anything so gratifying as it is to see her amongst them the freedom with wich she treats them and also the kindness she evinces towards them is beyond my simple power to describe they quite worship and adore her. ... Her Ladyship will enter their cottages shake them by the hand and make every kind enquiry after their nessesities and also after their diferent relatives. She will go from one cottage to another for several hours.

Although the Staffords' name was already synonymous with the hated 'Clearances', all this passed Stephen by. His references to his employers are respectful and affectionate. He depicts them as decent, fair people, caring and generous to servants and tenants alike. Stephen must have been aware of the great gulf between the wealth and power of the Staffords and the poverty of their people but he does not comment on it. Other visitors to Dunrobin such as Joseph Mitchell remarked on Lady Sutherland's benevolence: 'Besides the urbanity of her manner, there was much good feeling, such a sincere desire to do good and to benefit in every way her people and the country, that I was quite charmed with her generous sentiments'.¹⁹ Personally, Lady Stafford seems to have been held in high esteem, being liked, admired and even venerated by

¹⁸ E. Richards, *The Leviathan of Wealth: The Sutherland Fortune in the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1973), 181.

¹⁹ J. Mitchell, *Reminiscences of my life in the Highlands* (Chilworth and London, 1884), 147.

her servants as well as her guests. This is in marked contrast to her notoriety as one of the principal architects of the Clearances, the London society gossip concerning her reputation, and the envious attention generated by her wealth.²⁰

One carriage expedition took Stephen and his employers to the fishing town of Helmsdale to see the new pier. This visit took place before Lord Gower, the Staffords' heir and future 2nd Duke of Sutherland, arrived in Dunrobin. Lady Stafford wrote to her son:

We drove yesterday to Helmsdale, Ld S. much pleased and gratified by all he saw both of the village, the Pier and the farms in going there. ... The lots are all improved, the people appear happy and contented and are said to be so. In short nothing can be better.²¹

Stephen was more interested in the people they encountered:

On our people arriving there the people surrounded the carriage and stared with the utmost astonishment at what they saw. I was truly amused at their appearance. A great many of them looked almost naked having only a sort of petticoat or kilt put round their waist and that a considerable degree above the knee. When our noble Lord and Lady got out of their carriage they followed them in great numbers to every place they went. There is a very pretty pier here which have lately been built I believe at their suggestion and his Lordship appeared very much interested in viewing it.

In his journal of his visit to Sutherland just a few years earlier, Charles Abbot, too, tells of a carriage outing with Lady Stafford to Brora, Port Gower and Helmsdale to view the Improvements. He remarked on the new villages: 'The striking object of this day's drive is the *establishment of the Highland families along the coast*, – removed from the Mountains where they were tenants at Will and placed upon allotments of cultivated ground and stone houses well thatched, instead of turf huts on the Moors'.²² Unfortunately, while he comments on the substantial financial outlay involved in establishing the new settlements he makes no reference to the people's reactions to those who paid for them. Beriah Botfield in his journal of 1829, noted the 'flourishing fishing village of Helmsdale', but considered 'the forcible establishment of manufacturies and fisheries' as 'projects only of inconsiderate benevolence'.²³

Cholera arrived in Helmsdale in August bringing the carriage outings to a sudden halt. Stephen's words convey the near state of panic in the household: 'I cannot possibly describe the alarm and consternation that it caused at the Castle and the surrounding county, and all connections with the village was

²⁰ Richards, *The Leviathan of Wealth*, 10.

²¹ NLS, Dep. 313/760, Letter of Elizabeth, Marchioness of Stafford, to George, Earl Gower, 5 July 1832.

²² NLS, MS 9816, f. 47.

²³ B. Botfield, *Journal of a Tour Through the Highlands and Islands of Scotland During the Summer of MDCCCXXIX* (Edinburgh, 1830), xv–xvi.

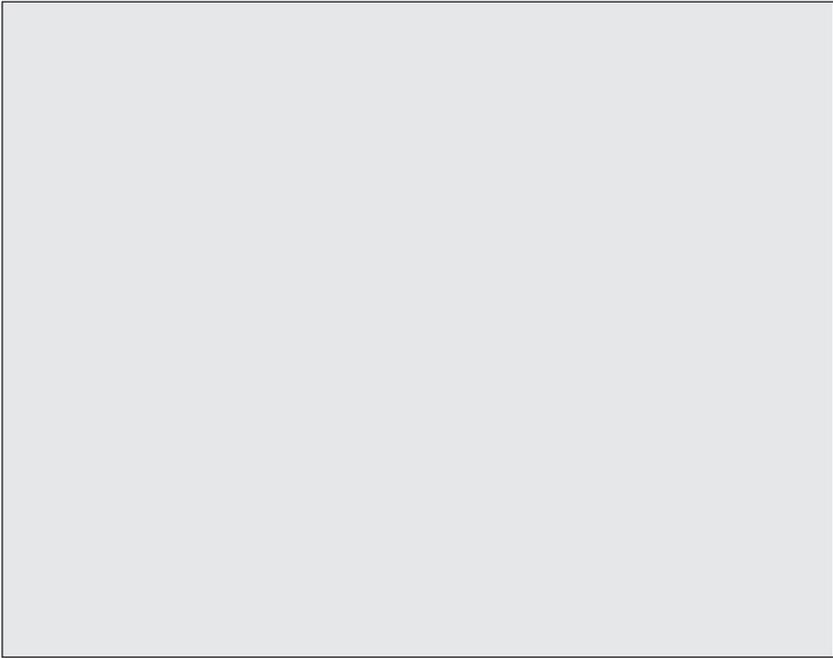


Plate 2 'Dunrobin Castle, L[ad]y Sutherland' from an album of drawings collected by Caroline, Marchioness of Queensberry, in 1833 (NLS, MS 10784, no. 18).

immediately cut off'. The Staffords and the newly arrived Lord Gower sprang into action to stop the spread of the disease. A Board of Health was set up, guards placed in the villages to prevent communication with affected places and the grand ball for the Staffords planned by the local gentlemen and farmers cancelled. Strict quarantine was maintained at the castle with no visitors from the villages admitted. Eventually the outbreak declined, due largely in Stephen's opinion to the efforts of his employers. In a sweeping statement he writes: 'the whole country resound[s] with joy and gratitude toward their noble and kind benefactors [in their] exertions in trying all in their power to stop the progress of this dreadfull malady'.

Lady Stafford was a talented amateur artist (Plate 2). While at Dunrobin, she found time to sketch outdoors. Stephen describes one such expedition when it was his turn to accompany her. As a personal servant, his position brought him into close and regular contact with his mistress but in his journal he is always mindful of the social gulf between them. Stephen writes: 'After getting out of the carriage she walked a long distance amongst the rocks taking a slight sketch of the most prominent amongst them. Her Ladyship also kindly condescended to tell me the names of many of the mountains round us and

also gave me a description of many interesting objects in her usual affable and kind manner'. A number of Lady Stafford's sketch-books and some of her published drawings are among the Sutherland papers at the NLS.²⁴

The Staffords' servants also had their free time and were 'eager to make the most of every opportunity that we could conveniently leave our duty ... to get out to view the many interesting objects everywhere to be seen, sometimes amusing ourselves by the sea and at others in the beautiful walks in the plantations'. Early on in the visit, there was an evening boat trip to Golspie with some of the Castle servants. This involved a visit 'to a little whisky shop where we had an opportunity of seeing the manners and customs of those little places of entertainment ... We were quite amused at what we saw'. While there they enjoyed the local whisky, with which they made 'what is called tody bread, 'wich is thought a very great luxury here. After partaken of this fare we returned to our boat and very merrily rowed home again being highly gratified at what we had seen'. Towards the end of the visit, there was another expedition to Golspie this time to shop for souvenirs, some 'trifling purchases of Scotch manufacture to carry to our friends in England who will think much of anything purchased here. There are some very pretty little shops in the village but as may be expected there is but little choice'.

There were also occasional servants' days out, encouraged by Lady Stafford. On an overnight visit, Lairg, Stephen and his colleagues were offered the spare carriage for an expedition to Loch Shin, Fall of Shin and Rose Hall. On their return 'her Ladyship kindly enquired whether we had been to see the county and how we were amused wich we answered that we had and where highly gratified and returned her many thanks'. Although kindly intended, Lady Stafford's gesture was at no inconvenience to her. Stephen must have known this, but the reader is left in no doubt that his sentiments were genuine, the servants enjoyed their day out and were grateful for the opportunity.

Unfortunately, such expeditions were few and far between. Although this is a travel journal, as a domestic servant, Stephen did not have the opportunities afforded to other tourists to see the country's natural wonders, art, history and architecture.²⁵

Stephen comments that: 'I have had the greatest possible desire to visit this and many other places but my duty will not enable me to leve the Castle any great distance only when with the carriage' indicates his frustration. His exasperation and annoyance at the lack of freedom is one of the rare discordant notes in the journal. Stephen's contemporary, William Tayler, compared the lot of a gentleman's servant to that of a caged bird: well fed and cared for but lacking liberty. Stephen is more restrained in his remarks, but the sentiment is much the same.

²⁴ NLS, Acc. 13290/32-43, Sketch-books and published drawings of Elizabeth, Duchess-Countess of Sutherland, undated.

²⁵ See Durie, *Travels in Scotland* for other travellers' accounts.

Indoor entertainment provided some consolation and the servants made the best of what opportunities there were. During the visit, there were three servants' dances. However, although they were very much appreciated, it is clear more were expected. Stephen explains but does not complain that this was due to the proximity of the Servants' Hall to the main family apartments. We are told: 'the hilarity of those assembled on those occasions is generally very great so that all ideas of having a dance in the hall during the time our noble Lord and Lady were in the Castle have been quite abandoned'.

The solution was to hold dances either in the Castle Laundry, which was out of earshot of the family's rooms, or when the family was away visiting their remoter estates. Stephen writes of the third dance:

We were equally divided there being as many Scotch as English. Her Ladyship's Scotch piper was in attendance ... there were two other Scotch musicians having violins who assisted occasionally ... and our own private musician. But I think the Scotch piper had the precedence of all others for the general company were for footing it to his celebrated bagpipes it being something new to many of us. The whole evening was conducted with the greatest harmony and satisfaction and the dancing continued until daylight did appear.

He comments that the steward and other upper servants were present and joined in the dancing, the implication being that it was the upper servants, acting on behalf of the Staffords, who decided when and where dances might be held.

The visit to Dunrobin ended in October 1832 when the household returned to London. It is not known if Stephen ever went back to Sutherland, although he tells us he would like to. When Lady Stafford (by then known as the Duchess-Countess of Sutherland) died in 1839, her household was broken up and her servants, including Stephen, each received a legacy of a year's salary. The list of servants at Stafford House in 1840 indicates a much larger and grander establishment.²⁶ Stephen is not included. In December 1840 when he married Mary Webb, Stephen was described as a Servant of South Street, London, but his employer is not known.

This might have been the end of the story but, a few years ago, a family member contacted NLS about a third diary.²⁷ Covering the months leading up to Stephen's death in 1871, this diary was written for his own satisfaction rather than consciously, like the Sutherland journal, for the enjoyment of friends and relatives.

Aged 65 and complaining of rheumatism and chest pains, Stephen was still working as a servant, this time at Knole House, in Kent, one of the largest private houses in England and home to the Sackville family. Stephen was employed there on a daily basis when additional help was required to wait at

²⁶ SCRO, D593/R/4/2, Servants' Wages Book for London, Trentham, Lilleshall and West Hill, 1840-49.

²⁷ NLS, Acc. 11265/3, Diary, 1871, of Stephen Place.

tables. He had an annuity and his wages, but references to a lodger suggest money was not plentiful. That said, in his final week there are visits to family in London, a letter from a son in Australia, work in his garden, evenings playing cards and even a family dance. In old age, Stephen was generally happy and settled.

Servants' writings are rare and tend to record daily life in service. Stephen Place's Sutherland journal documents an extraordinary episode in his life. It provides a glimpse behind the scenes in one of Scotland's great houses. But it is much more than this with its comments on the people of Sutherland, their customs and the places visited. All this took place at a time of great social and economic upheaval in the company of the powerful aristocrats who drove these changes. Stephen Place's journal, written by a member of the often invisible and rarely heard army of servants, adds a novel perspective to the nineteenth-century travel journal and Sutherland at the time of the Highland Clearances.