

THE SUTHERLAND BOOK: AN OVERLOOKED RESOURCE?

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INTRODUCTION

The *Sutherland Book* in three volumes, quarto with illustrations, by Sir William Fraser, K.C.B., LL.D. of 32 Castle Street, Edinburgh, was published in Edinburgh in 1892 in an impression of one hundred copies. It was one of a series of privately printed family histories written over forty years in the Victorian era by Sir William Fraser (1816 – 98), Deputy Keeper of the Records.¹ Copy No. 42 was presented to The Library of St. Andrews University by the fourth Duke of Sutherland in 1894. In 2005 this copy, in a searchable text edition, was published by TannerRitchie Publishing of Burlington, Ontario, Canada and the University of St Andrews; this searchable edition has been accessed through *The Internet Archive* and is the copy used in the preparation of this article.²

BACKGROUND

It appears that *The Sutherland Book* has received little critical attention although there is evidence that it has been accessed and cited including very recently.³ The President of the Clan Sutherland Society in Scotland and Genealogist of Clan Scotland, Mark Sutherland-Fisher Esq. O.St.J, has advised that:

I am sorry to have to advise you that I cannot help you. I have only ever looked at Fraser on a few occasions. There is a copy held by the Highland Archive in Inverness but I am unaware of any other copies. There will be one almost certainly at Dunrobin but I cannot say I have ever spotted it. I know there was a copy in the Estate Factor's Office ... I am not aware of anyone living who has actually read Fraser let alone written a critique upon it. To be frank I think it would only be of interest to we Sutherlands and due to its scarcity, few will have access to a copy. It may be one of many antiquarian books which American Universities have copied and put online, taking advantage of expired copyright.⁴

Author's acknowledgement: I live on country the traditional custodians of which are the Ngunawal, Ngunawal and Ngambri People; I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging. I support the creation of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

¹ Other works include: *Memorials of the Montgomeries Earls of Eglinton; The Chiefs of Colquhoun and Their Country; The Earls of Cromartie, Their Kindred, County and Correspondence*; and *The Douglas Book*.

² Hereafter *The Sutherland Book*. At: <https://archive.org/search.php>.

³ As examples, an entry in Wikipedia for William de Moravia, third Earl of Sutherland, records that *The Sutherland Book* was accessed by a Wikipedia contributor on 23 January 2021 with the entry being last edited on 1 November 2022. It was also cited by David Allan, 'Ane Ornament to Yow and Your Famelie: Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun and the *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*', *The Scottish Historical Review*, LXXX, no. 209 (April 2001), pp. 24-44.

⁴ Email of 5 January 2023 from Mark Sutherland-Fisher to the author. I am deeply indebted to Mr Sutherland-Fisher for extensive comments on and additions to a draft of this article.

Moreover, the Reference Services Assistant, Access Department of the National Library of Scotland, has advised that “like yourself, [I] could not locate any journal resources.”⁵ However, when it comes to an understanding of the actual creation of the book, we do know that the “aristocracy played a leading part, financing a series of privately printed family histories written by Sir William Fraser (1816–98) over 40 Victorian years” which may help to explain why works such as *The Sutherland Book* have tended to remain largely within the libraries of aristocratic families and those of the collectors of rare books.⁶ Sir James Balfour Paul, Lord Lyon King of Arms (in that role 1890 – 1926) was the author of the nine-volume encyclopaedia of the aristocracy of Scotland, *The Scots Peerage* (1904). He dedicated his encyclopaedia “To the Memory of Sir William Fraser, K.C.B. whose labours and munificence have made it possible” by leaving a legacy which funded *The Scots Peerage*, but complained that Fraser “seems afraid of wounding the susceptibilities of his noble employers by narrating any but smooth and pleasant things about the family”. He also complained that the volumes were too heavy for comfortable reading.⁷ This last comment is easily borne out by considering the three volumes of *The Sutherland Book*: Volume I consists of 604 pages; Volume II of 430 pages; and Volume III of 431 pages, making a total count of 1,465 pages, or almost three reams of printer paper to convert the electronic files into a physical item. Covers and bindings would add to the weight.

THE VOLUMES AND THEIR CONTENTS

Notwithstanding the reservations and limitations expressed by Sir James Balfour Paul and more recently by Mark Sutherland-Fisher, the work does contain a large amount of primary source historical information and it is an investigation of much of this material which forms the thrust of this article. It is clear that Sir William Fraser intended that his work should become a source of reference, for at the end of Volume III he included both an Index of Persons (taking ninety-six pages) and an Index of Places (a further thirty-nine pages). Each volume contains a number of illustrations, and each contains a number of “woodcut signatures”, while Volumes I and III also contain a number of woodcut seals. Volume I concerns itself with Memoirs; Volume II with correspondence; and Volume III with Charters, some in Latin and others in English and some written in both Latin and English.⁸ Volume II starts with a useful Abstract of the correspondence, while Volume III starts with abstracts of all the charters, again providing a useful summary for those of us whose study of Latin finished at a very junior level in high school, more than sixty years ago.

⁵ Email of 10 January 2023 from Gemma Kelly to the author. Note “the Library’s enquiry policy, namely that the Library will help conduct ‘research that requires no more than one hour of staff time per individual enquiry’. This means that I did not find any journal articles relating to your enquiry within the hour of work time allocated. It may be possible that there are articles, but that I didn’t find them. It is always my hope that I have provided the enquirer with enough resources to find what they need, even if I have not.” (Email of 2 February 2023). The full text of this very helpful advice is at Attachment A.

⁶ David Moody, *Scottish Family History* (London: Batsford, 1988).

⁷ Quoted by David Moody, see above. *The Scots Peerage: Founded on Wood’s ed. of Sir Robert Douglas’s Peerage of Scotland; containing an historical and genealogical account of the nobility of that kingdom*. At: https://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/scots_peerage.htm.

⁸ Charter #52 includes “... sequitur in wlgari:” followed by a paragraph in English before the Latin continues. *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. III, p. 50. Almost certainly in manuscript this would have been written as “uulgari” – i.e., “vulgari” and provides another example of how our English language developed the “double u” – “w” – letter.

It is not difficult to understand why Balfour Paul commented that Fraser had avoided “wounding the susceptibilities of his noble employers”, apart from the obvious matter of financial support for compilation and printing. Under a page headed “Extensive Improvements in Sutherland” we find the following: “The Sutherland estates have always been administered with great liberality towards the tenants and other dependants, and, as is well known, the Duke of Sutherland has vied with his predecessors in taking measures for the welfare of the people.”⁹ Actions of the first Duke in respect of his tenants are well known and will continue to be the subject of heated discussion well into the future. The second Duke’s actions in support of his tenantry are probably to what Fraser was referring and were described in detail by James Loch MP during debate on 12 June 1845 on the Bill which led to the 1845 New Poor Law for Scotland.¹⁰

VOLUME I: MEMOIRS

The volume contains an extensive introduction which details the various manuscripts consulted by Fraser. This includes a history written by Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun, completed in 1630 but which remained in manuscript until 1813 when it was published in one large folio volume under the auspices of the Sutherland family. Unfortunately, as Fraser concedes, in his manuscript Sir Robert Gordon — following the fashion of the period — claimed as ancestors Thanes and Earls of Sutherland “who never had any existence.”¹¹ That manuscript had been entrusted to a printer in 1806 but it had taken until 1813 for publication. Fraser notes, and apparently consulted, various copies of this history including one which includes a “Short Discourse” on the precedence of the Earl of Sutherland over the Earl of Caithness. A further manuscript history of the Earls of Sutherland had been written in Latin by Alexander Ross but the manuscript was incomplete, beginning with page 31. This does serve to illustrate some of the difficulties faced by an historian trying to compile what should have been a straightforward history from extensive documentary sources.

Fraser relates the allegation that the Sutherland Muniments were burnt by George, Earl of Caithness who had purchased the right of guardianship over Alexander the eleventh Earl of Sutherland during the Earl’s minority; the Earl of Caithness had resided for some time with his family at Dunrobin. He had burnt the Muniments because these “semed to advance the honor and profite of that familie.”¹² This intention had been to some extent thwarted by the tenth Earl of Sutherland who had deposited his principal charters in the keeping of his friend, the Laird

⁹ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, xxxvii.

¹⁰ It might be noted that prior to 1845, in addition to a large amount of relief provided by the Duke, he had contributed £6 annually to the poor funds in each of the parishes in which he had an interest. See the full debate on Hansard for 12 June 1845. At: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1845-06-12/debates/4260677a-c3b9-4802-bc83-95193ab018dd/PoorLaws\(Scotland\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1845-06-12/debates/4260677a-c3b9-4802-bc83-95193ab018dd/PoorLaws(Scotland)). After implementation of the 1845 new Poor Law for Scotland, an enrolled pauper might receive annually up to £6 her/himself. See Graham Hannaford, ‘The 1845 New Poor Law for Scotland: A Fundamental Change’, *Journal of the Sydney Society for Scottish History* XVII (2018), p. 57. Hansard for that day also reported the speech by Sharman Crawford MP describing the use of Croick Church as a refuge for evicted tenants, which was the speech to which Loch was responding. The Lord Advocate also commented on the eviction of those tenants.

¹¹ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, xxiv. In a later comment on an Earl shown to be fictitious, Fraser reports that “[a]s usual, Sir Robert Gordon makes his Gordon ancestors figure very gallantly throughout all the great battles fought during this period.” *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, p. 48.

¹² *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, xxxviii.

of Carnegie.¹³ Subsequent to the death of the twelfth Earl, the Sutherland Muniments were removed to Kildrummie Castle in Mar, then in the possession of Lord Elphinstone, the brother-in-law of the deceased twelfth Earl, and subsequently to Lord Elphinstone's house in Stirlingshire.¹⁴ More recently, "the Highlanders under the Earl of Cromartie occupied Dunrobin Castle ... in March and April 1746 ... and among other things carried away a number of charters and papers of importance, one of which, a sasine of 1573" came into the hands of the minister of Alness, Ross-shire, and was restored subsequently to the Earl of Sutherland. "Probably other writs also were scattered abroad, and [some were] restored in a similar manner."¹⁵ Amazingly, despite everything, "the contents of the Sutherland Charter-chest are, as regards the older writs, practically the same as when Sir Robert Gordon was tutor of Sutherland."¹⁶ It is a selection of these much travelled and often endangered documents, with an abstract in English, which comprises Volume III of *The Sutherland Book*.

After the extensive Introduction, Volume I relates the history of the Earls and Earldom of Sutherland. Fraser notes that among those who never existed but were reported by Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun were Alan, Thane of Sutherland who was said to have been killed by Macbeth, and a Walter, Earl of Sutherland, created by Malcolm Canmore. It is likely that Sir Robert was trying for some unexplained reason to connect the family in some way to the character of Macbeth portrayed by Shakespeare in his eponymous play which had premiered in London c.1606 during the reign of James VI/I. The family history, according to Fraser, really starts with Freskin (c.1130 – c.1153) who is claimed to be the first known ancestor of the family and who held the barony of Strabrock in West Lothian, with Duffus and other lands in Morayshire. The first known owner of the territory of Sutherland is said to be Hugh Freskin (c.1171 – c.1214) although it is possible that Hugh may "not have been the first of his family to hold land in Sutherland, although [he is] the first on record."¹⁷ Fraser reports various activities of Norwegian Earls in "Sudrland" and gives us a glimpse of the colonising and intermarrying activities including those of Earl Sigurd "The Stout." Hugh Freskin is said to have been succeeded by his son William (c.1214 – c.1248); these dates are the dates when William was head of the family. The Earldom of Sutherland was created by King Alexander II of Scotland only in c.1235. It is important to note that the ordering of the Earls and Countesses of Sutherland in this article is based on that provided by Fraser and is not always consistent with that provided by later genealogists. Nor are other details provided by Fraser consistent with later studies but have been retained for the purposes of this article. Readers interested in an accurate study of the family history would be well advised to seek modern scholarly work.¹⁸

William, second Earl of Sutherland (1248–c.1307), did homage personally to Edward I of England and does not appear to have joined the army of the northern Earls to revolt in 1296 against Edward's tyranny; Sir Robert Gordon claims he "was at the battle of Bannockburn, and manfully assisted Bruce in his brilliant victory" although this is disproved by contemporary evidence.¹⁹ As often happened, William was succeeded by an under-age son, another William

¹³ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, xxxix.

¹⁴ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, xxxix – xl.

¹⁵ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, xli.

¹⁶ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, xli.

¹⁷ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, p. 8.

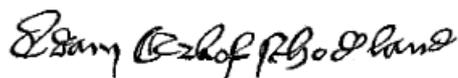
¹⁸ At: <https://www.clansutherland.org.uk>.

¹⁹ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, p. 20.

(1307–1327 or 1330) who, in 1320, and having attained his majority, was one of those who signed the Declaration of Arbroath. He was succeeded by his brother Kenneth (1330–1333). Kenneth was killed in the Second War of Scottish Independence at the battle of Halidon Hill with the Earl of Ross while leading their men against the wing of the English army which Edward Baliol commanded.

Yet another William became the fifth Earl (1333–1370). Married to Margaret, sister of King David Bruce, William was active in the endeavours to drive the English from Scotland. The marriage of William and Margaret followed a papal dispensation from Clement VI; the dispensation was necessary because they were related to each other “in the fourth degree of consanguinity”. The text of the dispensation, a translation of which is included, gives a window into the political machinations and church/state relations of the period.²⁰ As an ally of King David, William was active in the wars against England, was captured with his King at the battle of Neville’s Cross, and having been ransomed or escaped, eventually returned to England as one of the hostages for David’s release to Scotland in 1357; he remained there for more than ten years. William and Margaret had one son, John (b. 1344 – d.1361) who predeceased his father and died without issue; the direct Sutherland link to the Kings of Scotland died with him and William was eventually succeeded by his son Robert, from the Earl’s second marriage to Lady Margaret Stewart, daughter of the Earl of Buchan. Fraser’s account of John, however, gives us a detailed account of the exchange of hostages given for the release of King David and his status as a nephew of the King ensured that, although only a minor, he was included in the group of nobles held hostage in England.

The narrative continues through the aforementioned Robert, sixth Earl; John, seventh Earl; John, eighth Earl; and John, ninth Earl. The activities, relationships and land holdings of each are recorded in greater or lesser detail and again allow readers to trace some elements of the politics of fifteenth century Scotland. It is reported that a “brieve of idiocy was issued by King James the Fourth [sic] in 1494” against John, the eighth Earl; his son, John the ninth Earl (1508 – 1514) inherited “his father’s mental malady.”²¹ As John the ninth Earl was the only legitimate male heir of his father, on his death without issue, the line passed to his older sister Elizabeth who became in her own right Countess of Sutherland (1514 – 1538). Her signature, copied here from Fraser’s summary of her life, shows some of the challenges for a modern reader looking at handwriting of the sixteenth century.



The succession of Elizabeth was contested by Alexander, an apparently illegitimate son of the eighth Earl, but the matter was resolved in her favour in the Sheriff Court in Inverness on 3 October 1514. Given that Alexander had not contested the right of John to succeed their father and only sought to claim the Earldom in preference to Elizabeth, we must assume he held a degree of sexism or an aversion to Elizabeth’s husband becoming the next Earl or most probably, a desire to install himself and his heirs in the earldom and its possessions. In 1500, Elizabeth had married Adam Gordon of Aboyne and on Elizabeth’s succeeding as heir to her brother, Adam Gordon took the courtesy title of Earl of Sutherland.

At this juncture in the narrative of the family’s progression, when the Earldom had passed through the female line for the first time, it might be useful to digress and consider the

²⁰ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, p. 30.

²¹ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, pp. 65, 70.

arms of the Earls and Dukes of Sutherland. When Elizabeth Sutherland became the 10th Countess of Sutherland on the death in 1514 of her brother, her husband Adam Gordon became the Earl of Sutherland, and joined his family's arms to the Sutherland arms. Normally one would expect the husband's arms to appear in quarters 1 and 4, and the arms of the heiress wife's father to appear in quarters 2 and 3. But in this instance, as they relate to the title of the Earldom of Sutherland, the more important Sutherland arms appear in quarters 1 and 4. The Gordon arms are relegated to quarters 2 and 3. See Attachment B.

The record of Elizabeth as Countess runs to some sixteen pages of narrative. It includes the re-emergence of Alexander's claim to the Earldom and his possession of Dunrobin (twice) from where he was ejected. It details conflict with Alexander, and conflict involving the Earl of Caithness, also involving the Mackay's. Elizabeth resigned the Earldom on 9 November 1527 in favour of her eldest son, another Alexander, who however predeceased her. From this point on, the history or Memoirs becomes increasingly detailed and extensive, and it would be prudent to advance to the main theme of this article, viz that *The Sutherland Book* may be an overlooked resource. Before doing so, however, another digression is warranted to allow consideration of Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun, Tutor of John the thirteenth Earl, and compiler of the Sutherland history which Fraser consulted and errors in which he highlighted.

Sir Robert was the fourth, but second surviving son, of Alexander, the eleventh Earl of Sutherland. He has been described as "one of the most fascinating yet elusive Scottish courtiers of the reigns of James VI and Charles I."²² The Gordon family is described as having *seized* (emphasis added) the title in 1514 (i.e., from the marriage of Adam and the accession of Elizabeth). Robert is described as "inordinately proud of his pedigree ... [being] ... dedicated unswervingly to the defence of his kinsmen's grip on the Sutherland Earldom (a tenaciousness enhanced by the knowledge that some still remembered them as scheming usurpers)". However, this does appear to be a perhaps wilful take on the legitimacy of the succession from Elizabeth and her descendants.²³ Robert was knighted by King James VI/I in 1609. While studying in France, Robert, together with his younger brother Alexander, had "spent time at the celebrated Protestant academy at Saumur on the Loire, where the many Scottish connections around this time included Robert Boyd (professor of divinity, later Principal of Glasgow University), John Cameron (professor of theology and subsequently Principal) and Mark Duncan (professor of logic)."²⁴ By 1641 Robert was still in the service of King Charles I, but because of the ongoing conflicts between the King and Parliament, retired from the court to estates in Morayshire and had joined the Covenanters by 1642. As Tutor to his nephew, the young John, thirteenth Earl, Sir Robert compiled his 'Letter of advice' to his nephew, outlining his version of the genealogy of the Sutherland Earls (of which Fraser is often dismissive), and included this admonition to ensure that the record would be kept carefully: "Ther is a historie of your descent and genealogie wrytten in Englishe by one that loveth and favours you and your house. ... It is ane ornament to yow and your famelie to hawe your actions so truelie and lairglie descrywed."²⁵ It is without doubt in my mind that Sir Robert's strong Presbyterian faith and adherence to the beliefs of the Covenanters would have influenced his nephew, who came to be known as the Covenanting Earl.

²² Allan, 'Ane Ornament to Yow and Your Famelie', p. 25.

²³ Allan, 'Ane Ornament to Yow and Your Famelie', p. 25.

²⁴ Allan, 'Ane Ornament to Yow and Your Famelie', p. 26.

²⁵ Allan, 'Ane Ornament to Yow and Your Famelie', p. 37, citing Fraser, *The Sutherland Book*, pp. 365-356. The "historie" is included in Vol. II of *The Sutherland Book*, pp. 337 – 368.

John, the thirteenth Earl, succeeded to the title in 1615, shortly before the age of seven, and died in 1679, an unusually long tenure of the title. Fraser's history of this Earl runs to seventy-three pages, covers in great detail many matters of estate management and land disputes, but more importantly, describes in detail the events leading to signing of the National Covenant; as the premier Earl of Scotland, the Earl is said to have been the first to sign. It covers his involvement with the Scottish army and the forces of the Duke of Montrose. After the capture and execution of Charles I in the civil war, the Scottish Parliament had proclaimed Charles II as King, and the Earl of Sutherland was part of this declaration. The Earl survived the Restoration of Charles II and died at the age of seventy, having participated in some of the more momentous events in Scotland's history.

Fraser's accounts of the following Earls are similarly detailed. He notes that John, the fifteenth Earl (1703 – 1733), "lived through a very stirring period of British history, including the insurrection of Argyll in 1685, the Revolution of 1688, the Union of Scotland and England in 1707, and the Jacobite rebellion of 1715."²⁶ The accounts of the Earls and their families ends with that of Elizabeth, Duchess Countess of Sutherland (the only surviving child of William the seventeenth Earl) and her husband George Leveson-Gower, Marquess of Stafford, the first Duke of Sutherland.

It is to the second volume of *The Sutherland Book* containing correspondence, that I now turn in my contention that the Book is often an overlooked resource for historians of Scotland.

VOLUME II: WITH AN ABSTRACT OF CORRESPONDENCE

The correspondence has been grouped together: royal letters, warrants, etc.; state and official letters, including "sixteen letters from John, fourth Earl of Loudoun ... to William, sixteenth Earl of Sutherland" in 1745-46; and a large volume of family and domestic letters. Over thirty-three pages of summaries, each of the items of correspondence is described in a few lines, starting with a letter of 4 April 1304 from King Edward I of England to William the second Earl, thanking him for his good faith and goodwill. In each grouping, the letters have been arranged in chronological order making it possible to track, for example, some of the actions involving the Sutherland family in the Jacobite uprising in 1745-46. While it is likely that much of the Sutherland correspondence has been edited or not been included, we have to assume that the correspondence which has been included has been transcribed accurately.

The first letter in the collection – that of 4 April 1304 from King Edward I of England to William the second Earl – is tantalising for what it says but does not say. It is brief and concludes with (in translation from French) "we thank you ... for the good faith and good will which you have still borne towards us: we assure you that we have good will to do for you that which we can in good manner."²⁷ It begs the question – what was Edward promising to do for William and in return for what? It shows clearly that William had aligned himself with the Hammer of the Scots, and this alignment of the Sutherland Earls with the Kings in the south is a theme which will reappear in some of the correspondence in these volumes.

In the mid-sixteenth century, Royal correspondence to the tenth Earl of Sutherland from Mary of Guise, Queen Dowager, and Mary, Queen of Scots, appears to be administrative: receipts for payments made; and commissions to apprehend a M^cKay/M^cky [both spellings are used, perhaps reflecting the fluidity of earlier spellings of names], and Thomas Robertson, a pirate.

²⁶ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, p. 306.

²⁷ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 1.



Correspondence with Elizabeth I of England shows that John, the tenth Earl had sought permission to live in England under the protection of Elizabeth but that she was being cautious and diplomatic in how she responded to his request, while Mary Queen of Scots complained to Elizabeth that John had been made a prisoner at Berwick. We see that Mary wrote in both French and English, and styled herself as both Queen of Scotland, and Dowager of France.



In 1594 and 1595, warrants from King James VI show that Lady Jane Gordon, Countess of Sutherland had been “inter communing” with the Earl of Huntly but had been forgiven by James and allowed to leave the burgh of Edinburgh and the “Cannongaite” and go wherever she chose.



Two years later, a licence issued in the King’s name allowed John, the twelfth Earl to take a party of men abroad and go to France, Flanders and anywhere else they chose., providing further proof, if any were needed, that while Sutherland may have been in a distant and remote part of the kingdom, it was far from remote from activity in Europe. Robert and Alexander Gordon, brothers of John were also allowed to travel abroad by a licence issued in 1602. By 1611, in at least some Scottish matters, James was still styling himself “James the Sixth [sic]” when he issued a licence to John the twelfth Earl (his “right traist cosine”) to travel abroad again for three years to recover his health, as long as he behaved himself as a dutiful and obedient subject of the King.²⁸ By 1622, James was still styling himself as James VI when he provided proof of his interest in matters concerning the abbey of Glenluce and the bishopric of Galloway. He promised Sir Robert Gordon, “knight, gentleman of our priwie chalmer, etc.” the sum of £2000 sterling for the abbey. By noting that the court was on that day at Henchinbrook the letter gives us confirmation that the court was always styled as being where the King happened to be, rather than having — as it does now — a fixed location.²⁹

Ten years later, King Charles provided a further £2000 sterling to Sir Robert Gordon, who was apparently still a gentleman of the privie chamber in ordinarie. Like his father and grandmother, Charles never gained the calligraphic flourish of Elizabeth.³⁰

²⁸ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 12.

²⁹ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 14.

³⁰ Nor has his successor in that name and position, Charles III.



He was however, and like his father, by 1634 concerned to see that church buildings were maintained and repaired. In writing to John, the thirteenth Earl, he recommended that the Earl take advice from the Bishop of Caithness about repairing the cathedral of Caithness and indicating that all the inhabitants of the diocese should be required to contribute to the work.

The included Royal correspondence then skipped forward when authority was given by William III in 1692-3 for the raising of two regiments of which John, Lord Strathnaver, and Sir James Moncrieff were to be the colonels.³¹ The regiments served abroad and various documents record service under Ferdinand William, Duke of Wirtemberg, and then allowing Lord Strathnaver to return home. No Royal correspondence has been included from the reign of Queen Anne.

John, the fifteenth Earl of Sutherland was commanded to attend the coronation in 1714 of King George I; writing in French in April 1715 to the King, John apologised for his inability to attend on the King in Parliament, due to a combination of gout, and business including that arising from the death of his own mother. The tone of the letter, while formal and formulaic, makes it very clear that John's allegiance was to the King. Instructions from George I to the fifteenth Earl in his capacity as Lord-Lieutenant of Sutherland dated 25 August 1715 concerned the selection and appointment of deputy-lieutenants in Sutherland and instructed that John was to avoid "calling out, assembling, disciplining or arming any of the fensible men or heritors, concerning whom there can be any doubt as to their affection to our Government."³² By January 1716 George was writing, in French, to the Earl of Sutherland commending the service being given in support of actions against the Jacobite rebellion. In response, John confirmed his loyalty ("L'attachement que j'ay toujours eu pour la religion et des libertés de mon pays") although by 19 March 1716-1717, writing from Marlborough Street, far from Sutherland where one might expect to find forces under his command, he was excusing himself from more active service against the Jacobites, due to his gout. More correspondence with the King ensued, to be followed – this time in English – with correspondence with George, Prince of Wales. On the occasion of the coronation of George II in 1727, John the fifteenth Earl was excused attendance, because John could not attend "without great prejudice."

Correspondence to William, the sixteenth Earl, came from William, Duke of Cumberland and from Frederick, Prince of Wales, and dealt with military matters arising from the Earl's support of the King's cause during the final Jacobite rising of 1745-1746; of this, more below. In 1759, he was ordered to raise a battalion of Highlanders with detailed instructions as to the composition of the battalion, including, it is pleasing to see, two pipers to the grenadier company. The men of the battalion were not to be sent out of Great Britain. It should be noted that the inclusion of pipers helps to disprove the commonly held belief that bagpipes were forbidden by the Disarming Act of 1746 (XIX George II, c39).³³ It has been said that it can take seven years and seven generations to train a good piper; had bagpipes been banned after Culloden, it would not have been possible to recruit pipers in 1759.

³¹ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 18. The year is shown as it would appear in both the Gregorian and Julian calendars. The document was issued by John Dalrymple who was to take eventual responsibility for the massacre, eight days earlier, of members of Clan MacDonald at Glencoe.

³² *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 26.

³³ At: <https://archives.blog.parliament.uk/2021/04/23/the-disarming-acts-myth-and-reality/>.

The final, brief, pieces of correspondence are to the first and second Dukes of Sutherland. That to the first Duke was from Augustus-Frederick, Duke of Sussex, congratulating him on being promoted to the dignity of a Duke; the final was from another Augustus-Frederick, Duke of Cambridge, and concerned visits to the Duke's houses.

This royal correspondence has been covered in some detail to help make the point that, although Sutherland was a distant part of the kingdom — that kingdom was initially Scotland, but later Great Britain/United Kingdom — it remained in close contact with the sovereign and events of the day, even including Edward I of England. It is a point about the Highlands of Scotland that continues to be made — geographically remote in some ways, but far from so politically, legally, and socially.³⁴

The collection of state and official letters in the collection starts with a request dated 13 May 1631 from James, third Marquis of Hamilton to John, the thirteenth Earl of Sutherland. It sought help in raising levies, by 1 July 1631, to fight with Hamilton in the cause of the King of Sweden against the (Holy Roman) Emperor to liberate lands in Germany and permit re-establishment there of the “trew religione.” It serves as yet another reminder, if one were needed, that Scotland remained in close contact with the rest of Europe. A letter of 14 December 1827 to George, second Marquis of Stafford (later the first Duke of Sutherland) concludes the collection. That letter dealt with the purchase by Lord Stafford of York House which the King himself had been unable to keep. The correspondence was sent by The Right Hon. William Huskisson, colonial and war secretary, and initially one might wonder why Huskisson's official duties involved him as a go-between dealing with a real estate purchase. The answer lies in Huskisson's close relationship with Lord Stafford and the Countess of Sutherland with whom he became acquainted while staying in Paris with his maternal great-uncle Dr Richard Gem, physician to the British Embassy; Lord Stafford was at that time the British Ambassador to France.³⁵ In this letter Huskisson refers to Lord Stafford as one of the King's “very old friends,” reinforcing the close connection between sovereign and Sutherland.

That close connection can be tracked through a selection of the state and official letters in *The Sutherland Book* at the time of the Jacobite risings in 1715 and 1745-1746. Writing in 1995, Murray Pittock commented that “the Jacobite cause has been (and to an extent still is) ... clouded by myth and romanticisation ... it is here (1745-46) that the clouds of myth are darkest and the romantic light shines brightest.”³⁶ Even accounts as contemporary as 1748 refer to the Jacobite army as “the Highland Invaders.”³⁷ Although simplistic, such a view of the risings seems to be even more readily believed the further one is placed from the events and their locale. The reality is different and just as there were Scots, including Highlanders, on both sides of the battle lines, so there were more than just Scots in the Jacobite forces. Correspondence in *The Sutherland Book* to the fifteenth and sixteenth Earls of Sutherland shows a continuing theme of closeness to the ruling Kings by those Earls over years of conflicts; it shows further a willingness to participate actively on the Government side that

³⁴ A recent example showing that connection with the wider world might be found in David Worthington, *The 'Curious Cleric' and the Highlands Before Culloden: Rev. James Fraser (1634-1709)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

³⁵ As Secretary to the Board of Trade, Huskisson had been responsible for the removal of duties on barilla which led to the devastation of the kelping industry in the Highlands. He was to be the first man killed in a railway accident when he was hit by Stephenson's *Rocket* on 15 September 1830.

³⁶ Murray Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans: The Jacobite Army in 1745* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 2.

³⁷ J. Ray, *A Compleat History of the Rebellion, from its first rife in 1745 to its total suppreffion at the glorious Battle of Culloden, in April, 1746* (York, 1749), p. 155

must be seen as one element which helps, at least partly, to balance out the simplistic “Highlands vs Government” view of the risings. Taking the perspective of correspondence to the Earls, rather than from them, we are afforded the benefit of contemporary views of the Sutherlands, unclouded by their (i.e., the Earls of Sutherland) own views of their actions. This perspective helps to enhance our understanding of the complexity of the inter-relationships between some of the parties engaged in the conflicts and provides a clear example of how material in an often-overlooked volume can enhance our understanding of a pivotal event in Scottish history.

A letter of 13 February 1715/16 to John, fifteenth Earl of Sutherland from John, first Duke of Roxburgh congratulated him on his “glorious and successful campaign”, noting that he had done his King, his country, himself, and his family “great honour ... [T]he wicked designs of the enemies of our religion and happy constitution have been baffled.”³⁸ Further correspondence dealt with the aftermath of the action against the Pretender. Writing to the Earl less than two weeks later, Lieutenant-General Cadogan, commander of the Government armies, appraised the Earl of the current military situation, noting that he had “sent a small detachment ... to the Breys [sic] of Mar.” He concluded the letter by entreating the Earl for advice on what would be the best methods to bring the rebellion to a speedy and definite end. This is clear evidence of how the Earl’s allegiances lay with the Government of King George, and proof of the Government's faith in his abilities.

Letters in *The Sutherland Book* dated during the final Jacobite uprising in 1745-46 provide a great amount of detail about the conduct of the military campaign against the rebels and the part played by William, the sixteenth Earl. Matters covered included the requisition of all available boats for the use of government forces at the Meikle ferry; the supply of arms for the defence of Dunrobin castle and a reported failure to supply these; actions against the rebels; the taking of Dunrobin by forces under the Earl of Cromarty and removal from it of all arms in the castle as well as the horses except for the grey of Lady Sutherland; an attempt to force Lady Sutherland to disclose the whereabouts of her husband; and the capture by government forces of Simon, Lord Lovatt.³⁹ Under a warrant issued by William, sixteenth Earl, enquiries were made about the arms and effects of George, the third Earl of Cromarty, and while a number of persons interviewed refused to swear, others deposed that they could not write, and the results of the investigations failed to deliver any significant cache of arms. In what might be described as a cynical attitude, Alexander Brodie of Brodie, Lyon King of Arms, enjoined the Earl of Sutherland to restrain from any revenge on the house or family of Lady Cromarty noting that if the estate were to be forfeited (to the crown), the forfeiture would be more valuable if the house were not plundered. In a letter of 30 June 1746, Lord Chancellor Hardwicke informed William, the sixteenth Earl, that he was required to attend the House of Lords on Monday, 28 July 1746 for the trial on an indictment for high treason of the Earls of Kilmarnock and Cromarty, and Lord Balmerino. While the general facts of the Jacobite uprising are well known, details in this collection of correspondence allows a deeper appreciation of the actions of individuals: it puts, as it were, further flesh on the bones of history.

The extensive collection of family and domestic letters included in Vol. II date from 1568 to 1850. These letters continue to put flesh on the bones of history, allowing a modern reader to appreciate the very personal matters dealt with by the family. This excerpt from a letter dated 23 February 1615 from John the twelfth Earl to his brother, Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstown [sic] allows a glimpse into the feelings of a father contributing to a family history: “ye desyir to knaw of my younest docteris name. It was Marie. My Lady Mar was hir

³⁸ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, pp. 61-62.

³⁹ The Countess was an aunt of Lord Elcho, commander of the Jacobite cavalry at Culloden and this connection may have saved her grey from being taken.

godmother. Sche died twentie dayis since.”⁴⁰ We can also see that perhaps the Earl was trying for something like the flourishing signature so brilliantly perfected by Elizabeth I.



Women wrote letters as well as men on a wide range of matters. Jane, Countess of Sutherland wrote on 24 September 1616 to Sir Robert Gordon, her son, recommending the appointment of a bishop of Caithness.⁴¹ Two months later, she wrote again to her son that it was impossible to send more linen cloth at “this tyme of year.” Correspondence flowed back and forth, sometimes in long letters, sometimes in short notes, covering a wide range of matters of possible interest to historians. In advising the second Duke of Argyll that he intended to retire from public life, John, the fifteenth Earl, noted that the trade of a soldier was not justly paid and this had impaired his fortune.⁴²

A letter of 25 January 1750 from Katharine, Lady Strathnaver, to William, sixteenth Earl of Sutherland at Chelsea in London speaks across the generations: “My dearest son – I ...am extremely sorry to find you are so averce from living at home. ... a man of your rank need not want the best of compnie, and the management of your affairs would be an amusement full as entertaining as any you at present enjoy. ... Your daughter ... is brought to bed of a boy. His nam is called after you.”⁴³ Ten months later, the Earl was writing to his mother from Montauban in the south of France about his ill health (“My head turns round mee”) but signing his letter formally “I am, honoured dear, your ladyship’s most dutiful and obedient son, Sutherland.”⁴⁴ Three weeks later, Lady Strathnaver had to respond to condolences on the death of her son and become involved in matters pertaining to the affairs of her grandson, the next Earl; within days she stated that it would be impossible for her to manage his affairs.

Just as the Jacobite risings are prominent in popular minds, so too are the Highland clearances. So it might be appropriate to include in this sampling of correspondence a letter from Elizabeth, Marchioness of Stafford (and Countess of Sutherland in her own right) proposing on 3 March 1820, on behalf of Lord Stafford, remedies to relieve the increasing discontent in the country.⁴⁵ The remedies were said to include a property tax which would reach the landed as well as the funded proprietors while abolishing less effective but troublesome and obnoxious taxes which were expensive to collect. The letter finishes “[h]e would have written to you himself [i.e. to Lord Farnborough], had not writing much at a time been fatiguing to him”.

The final letter included is that of 15 October 1850 from Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe to the second Duke of Sutherland concerning “the signatures of Scottish ladies of rank after marriage”.⁴⁶ “As sure as the devil looks o’er Lincoln ... the letter your Grace enclosed to me

⁴⁰ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 116.

⁴¹ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 123.

⁴² *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 200.

⁴³ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 274.

⁴⁴ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 277.

⁴⁵ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 331.

⁴⁶ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. II, p. 335.

is from the 1st Marchioness of Huntly. ... I don't know at what time the Scottish ladies began to retain, in writing, their maiden names after marriage."⁴⁷ A modern reader might be excused for thinking that the family's attention had fallen to the trivial from serious and significant matters of state and the welfare of Sutherland.

VOLUME III: CHARTERS

As well as the indices of persons and places already mentioned (taking up 135 pages), this volume contains the texts of 143 charters; sasines; notes of agreement; petitions, notes of extracts of charters; letters of renunciation, presentation, gifts, and so on; and a wide range of other legal documents. The earliest document is a Charter by Hugh Freskyn granting lands, dated c. 1211, followed by a Charter by King William I ("the Lion") confirming that grant. The final two documents included are a Warrant by King George I noting that John, the sixteenth Earl, being lineally descended from King Robert the Bruce and having served the King well in the Jacobite rising of 1715, could add the "double tressure circonfleurdelizé" followed by an Extract the following year from the Lyon Court Books noting the addition of the double tressure.⁴⁸

The illustrations in this volume provide an opportunity to track the changes in styles of palaeography. Two samples are shown below, with a suggestion of the style of writing or "hand" used in each.⁴⁹

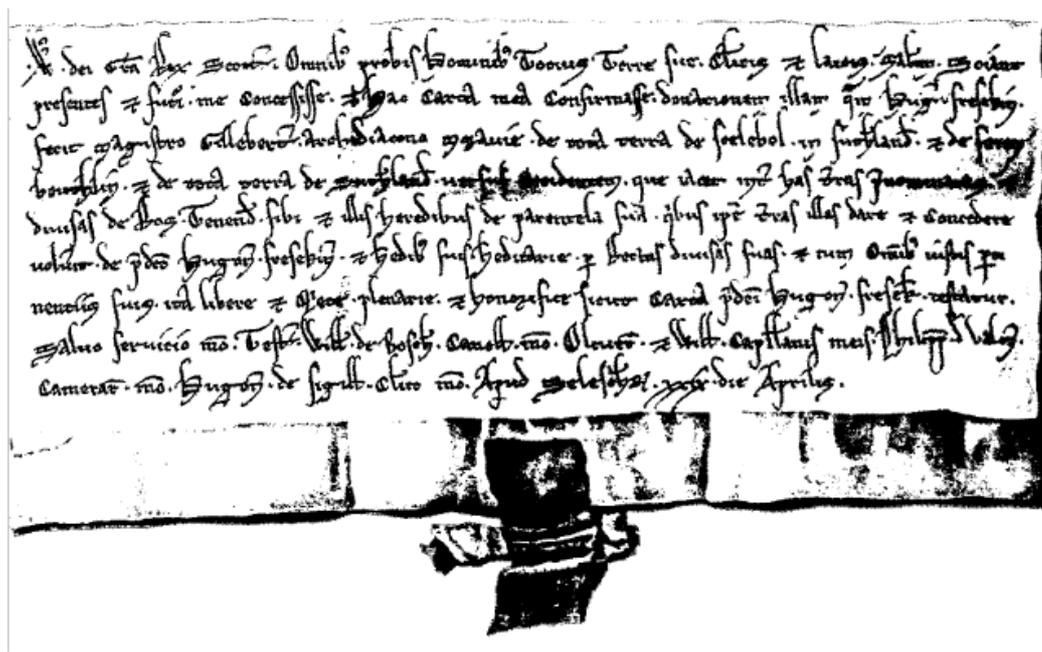


Figure 1. Charter by King William I "the Lion," 29 April 1212.⁵⁰ Probably written in a rounded court hand (note the prominent curl attached to each ascender and descender).

⁴⁷ For the mention of the devil at Lincoln Minster see Grey Hubert Skipwith, 'Lincoln Minster, Lincoln College Oxford, and the Devil', *Folklore* 10, no. 3 (September 1899), pp. 357 – 360.

⁴⁸ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. III, pp. 220-223. Modern scholarship has shown that the royal connection with King David Bruce through Princess Margaret Bruce was a lie and the award of the double tressure was in error.

⁴⁹ For a guide to the style of scripts used, I am indebted to Grant G. Simpson, *Scottish Handwriting 1150-1650, an introduction to the reading of documents* (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press Ltd, 1998).

⁵⁰ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. III, facing p. 2.

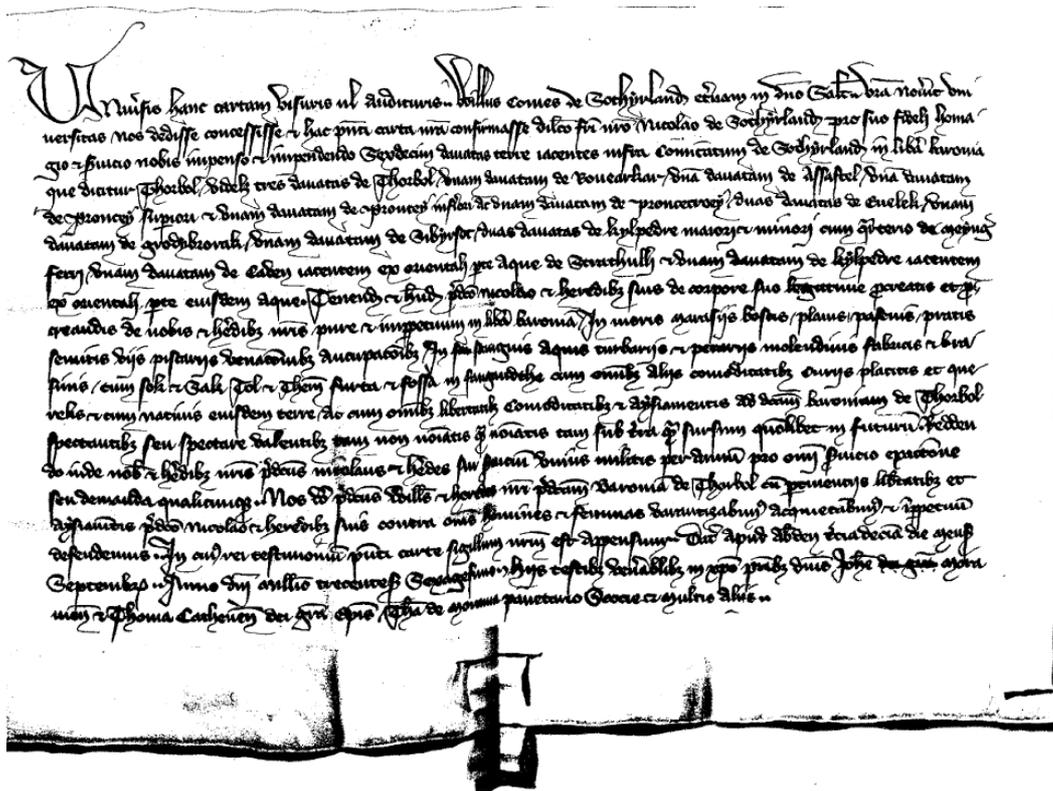


Figure 2. Charter by William, fifth Earl of Sutherland to Nicholas Sutherland, his brother, 13 September 1360.⁵¹ Possibly a hybrid between formal text and informal cursive (a version of the “bastard hand”).

Included in the collection is the Notarial Instrument whereby John, the ninth Earl and against whom a Brieve of Idiocy had been issued, acknowledged that his sister Elizabeth would be his heir “failing lawful heirs of his own body”.⁵² Various follow-up documents were dealt with at the market cross and the tolbooth in Inverness, and these serve as a reminder that Inverness was the administrative centre in the north, rather than Dornoch which is the present county town for Sutherland. We might note also from documents such as #64 in the collection, a Charter by Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland “and heritable lady of the earldom of Sutherland”, that although Elizabeth was the holder of the earldom, she still acted “with consent and assent” of her husband who held only the courtesy title of Earl.⁵³ More than a decade later, on 9 November 1527, Elizabeth, Countess, and Adam, Earl, of Sutherland executed a contract to resign the Earldom of Sutherland in favour of their son Alexander who thereby became the tenth Earl of Sutherland.⁵⁴ The Charter by James V confirming Alexander as the Earl of Sutherland dated 1 December 1527 concludes the arrangement.⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

Sometimes the easiest way to hide something is to hide it in plain sight. Certainly a fine form of camouflage for a useful source of information on the past might be to have it seen in the

⁵¹ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. III, facing p. 18.

⁵² *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. III, pp 52-3.

⁵³ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. III, p. 67.

⁵⁴ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. III, p. 78.

⁵⁵ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. III, p. 83.

twenty-first century as a rather partial history of an aristocratic family written in the high Victorian era with all the attendant prejudices we might bring to our reading of it. Indeed, that is exactly how *The Sutherland Book* can be taken. As a work privately funded by the family which is the focus of the Book its limitations and biases are both obvious and understandable. However, it can be argued that it is more than that and such a view could lead to a reappraisal of how we view similarly sponsored works.

It might be thought that Fraser's organisation of his material could have been better handled. While his Volume I is mainly a series of histories of the heads of the family, those histories could have been more self-contained had each included correspondence which appears in Volume II and where relevant charters from Volume III. A reader wishing to gain as complete an understanding of the life and times of a particular person has to search — albeit using the indexes in Volume III — across all three volumes. Nevertheless, the details in the Volumes allow an over-view of aspects of the history of the Highlands and other parts of Scotland over several centuries.

Activity by Norwegian Earls in “Sudrland” is reported and the narrative includes activity by the Earls of Sutherland in significant episodes of Scotland's history such as the Declaration of Arbroath and the Wars of Scottish Independence, notwithstanding the homage which had been paid by William the second Earl to Edward I of England. The need for a papal dispensation for the marriage of William the fifth Earl reminds us how closely the Papacy sought to control the lives of people in the fourteenth century and later. The succession of Elizabeth as Countess of Sutherland in her own right in 1514, particularly when one considers the line of succession of the Dukes of Sutherland created in the United Kingdom, provides a window onto the sometimes independent role of women in Scottish history. With the involvement of John, the thirteenth Earl in the signing of the National Covenant and in the “bishops wars”, it is clear that although Sutherland was geographically far from much of the kingdom, the family remained involved in national politics and events including the various Jacobite risings.

Correspondence — royal; state and official; and family and domestic — in Volume II helps to bring some substance to the histories in Volume I. Letters written to the Earl of Sutherland during the Jacobite rising of 1745-46 reveal the very real difficulties of maintaining communication and control of forces during a rapidly changing military event; but it is to letters included in Volume I that we are obliged for an account of the courage of the Countess of Sutherland when faced with personal danger during the occupation of Dunrobin.⁵⁶ The personal correspondence in Volume II also allows a glimpse into family events — births, deaths — which confront all families and not just the Sutherland family.

Fraser noted in Volume I some of the events surrounding the presence and condition of the charters and other official and business documents included in Volume III. We must also wonder about the extent of selection, editing and commentary indulged in by Sir James. Any reading of history is by necessity the captive of the available sources and in this case our reading is through a double lens: initially that of survival of documents and then through the selection by Fraser. However those documents which are included serve to present a sample of the important papers which regulated significant matters of property over some 500 years of activity in the north of Scotland. They make a useful resource for anyone interested in that activity.

⁵⁶ *The Sutherland Book*, Vol. I, pp. 419-420. We see here also that the occupation of Dunrobin occurred during a dark and stormy night which allowed the Earl to escape capture by the rebels.

APPENDIX A: EMAIL ADVICE FROM THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND, JANUARY 10 2023

Thank you for your enquiry to The National Library of Scotland.

I have searched the Library's eResources, such as Ebook Central, EUP journals online, Humanities International Complete and SAGE Journals for critical analysis of "The Sutherland Book" by William Fraser but like yourself could not locate any journal resources. ...

Through the entry for William Fraser in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography I found the volume *Sir William Fraser : the man and his work* by Gordon Donaldson (Edinburgh : Edina Press, 1985) [NLS Shelfmark N3.205.4768L]. I scanned the chapter 'The Family Histories' but did not find specific mention of The Sutherland Book. The chapter does mention errors and reviews of Fraser which may be interesting to you;

'Like other authors, Fraser occasionally had the mortifying experience of discovering some flaw after the twelfth hour, and after the first copies of *Buccleuch* had been despatched he gave the Duke an assurance that a 'trifling error in the pedigree' would be corrected in copies not yet issued...Fraser took the time to issue some remarks about accuracy: "It shows how much care is required to attain absolute accuracy in such works. From the nature of them, they can never be wholly free from a certain amount of error. But I am thankful that I have been wonderfully lucky, with so many chances of error, to keep them within a minimum" (MSS held in the Record Office, H.M. General Register House in the categories Gifts and Deposits (GD) - GD 224/197/6/24' (Donaldson, *Sir William Fraser : the man and his work*, p. 37)

A later section will show that Fraser's work did not go without criticism, but there was no disputing that the volumes were treasured. A review in *The Edinburgh Review*, July 1879, ran: "Few are the copies in existence, and favoured are the lovers of rare books who can boast of this addition to their libraries, for no care and no expense has been spared in the production of these ducal volumes [*Buccleuch*], in which, as has been said, "a rivulet of text meanders through a meadow of margin"' (Donaldson, *Sir William Fraser: the man and his work*, p. 41)

I am unable to look through this whole volume, but it does look quite a useful resource if you haven't consulted it already. For other libraries which hold it, you may find [Worldcat](#) and [Lib Hub Discover](#) useful. I've also not been able to consult [The Edinburgh Review](#) yet, but can do so, if you are interested in contemporary reviews.

The [Scottish History Society publications](#) is a valuable online resource and contains over 180 digitised volumes of original source material. The [Papers from the collection of Sir William Fraser, Scottish History Society, 3rd ser., 5 \(1924\)](#) may prove a useful resource. On the [Internet Archive](#) you can find digitised versions of Balfour Paul's *The Scots Peerage*. In this [article](#) by David Moody on [The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History \(2 ed.\)](#), Edited by: David Hey (Oxford University Press: 2008) it states;

The aristocracy played a leading part, financing a series of privately printed family histories written by Sir William Fraser (1816–98) over 40 Victorian years. James Balfour Paul, author of the nine-volume encyclopaedia of the aristocracy *The Scots Peerage* (1904), complained that Fraser 'seems afraid of wounding the susceptibilities of his noble employers by narrating any but smooth and pleasant things about the family'. He also complained that the volumes were too heavy for comfortable reading.

From searching [Newspaper eResources](#) and the [British Newspaper Archive](#) I found an issue of the *Dundee Advertiser* on Monday 01 June 1896 has an article on William Fraser (first column).

From the [Scotsman Digital Archive](#) there is an article from 11 Feb 1924 relating to the Sir William Fraser Collections and an eulogy from 15th March 1898. Although not specific to The Sutherland Book, I have attached these PDFs for your interest.

I hope this has been helpful.

All the best, **Gemma Kelly**

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APPENDIX B: SUTHERLAND ARMS

The original Sutherland coat of arms, the arms of “Sutherland of old”, are illustrated in Figure B1 (left). The arms are blazoned Suthirland Erle of Suthirland: Gules three Mulletts Or [tr. On a red shield three gold stars]. The 8th Earl of Sutherland had only two (legitimate) children. His only legitimate son and heir John succeeded to the Earldom as the 9th Earl in 1501, but died childless in 1514. The title then devolved upon his sister Elizabeth, who became the 10th Countess of Sutherland. Elizabeth Sutherland (d. 1535) married in 1500 Adam Gordon (d. 1538). In right of his wife Adam Gordon took the courtesy title of Earl of Sutherland in 1514. The arms in Figure B2 are those of Gordoun erle Sutherland: Quarterly 1st and 4th Gules three Mulletts Or (for Sutherland), 2nd and 3rd Azure a Boar's Head Or (for Gordon) [tr. On a quartered shield: upper left and lower right, on a red background three gold stars; upper right and lower left, on a blue background a gold boar's head]. These were thus the arms of Adam Gordon, Earl of Sutherland, from 1514 until his death in 1538.



Figures B1 and B2. Two 16th century Sutherland coats of arms, from the 1532 armorial of Sir David Lyndesay of the Mount, Lord Lyon King of Arms. Left: the arms of “Sutherland of old”. Right: the arms of Gordon Earl Sutherland, husband of Elizabeth Sutherland.

By convention the husband's arms usually appear in quarters 1 and 4, and the arms of the heiress wife's father appear in quarters 2 and 3. In this instance, however, as Elizabeth's arms are those of the Earldom of Sutherland (which takes precedence over the Gordon arms), the higher-ranking Sutherland arms appear in quarters 1 and 4 and the Gordon arms in quarters 2 and 3. Adam Gordon was the second son of George Gordon, 2nd Earl of Huntly; because he did not inherit the Huntly title the Sutherland title took precedence in his arms.

As discussed, in Sir David Lyndesay's 1532 armorial Adam Gordon's arms are shown as Sutherland quartering Gordon. Later armorials show these arms in the conventional format as Gordon quartering Sutherland. It is interesting that these later depictions use the ancient Gordon arms of *Azure three Boar's Heads Or*. It is possible that Adam Gordon differenced his arms from those of his elder brother, who became the 3rd Earl of Huntly, by removing two of the three boar's heads to leave the single boar's head depicted in the Lyndesay armorial illustration (Figure B2). In a further variation John Ryland's MS of 1600 shows the arms of Gordon Earl of Sutherland as *Azure three Boar's Heads and a Crescent Or* [tr. On a blue shield three gold boar's heads and a gold crescent]. The crescent included in this blazon was not a *brisure mark* [indication of differentiation] for a second son, but a *charge of differencing* [element to distinguish the arms] of a different branch of the family; in this case the branch which happens to be that of the second son.

The majority of later armorials (21 in fact) show the arms used by Adam Gordon Earl of Sutherland as a modification of his father the Earl of Huntly's arms, illustrated in Figure B3 below.

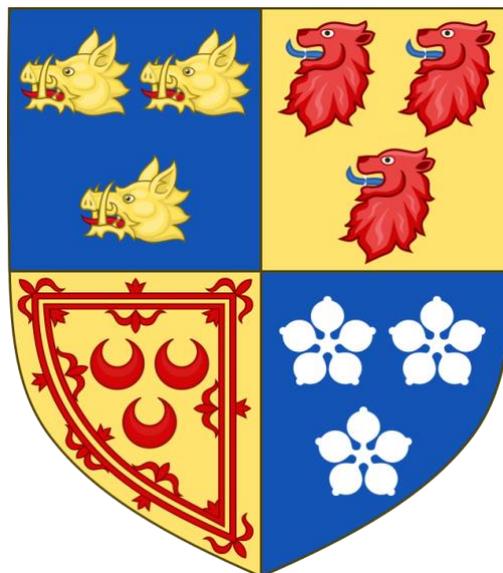


Figure B3. Coat of arms of the Marquess of Huntly⁵⁷

The modification to the Huntly arms used by Gordon Earl of Sutherland is the addition of an Escutcheon of Pretence [tr. A small shield in the centre] showing the arms of his wife, the heraldic heiress Elizabeth Sutherland (Gules three Mulletts Or). These arms are heraldically correct to reflect the period within Adam Gordon's marriage to Elizabeth Sutherland from her inheritance of the title in 1514 to her death in 1535.

⁵⁷ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marquess_of_Huntly_arms.svg

I have seen the re-ordering of arms for political reasons elsewhere: a good example is that of Richard Neville (the "Kingmaker"), who inherited the Earldom of Warwick in right of his wife. While he should, by convention, have shown his Neville arms in the first quarter, he first showed the arms of the Earldom of Warwick, then showed the arms of the Earldom of Salisbury (inherited via his mother), and then only in the 3rd quarter his paternal arms.

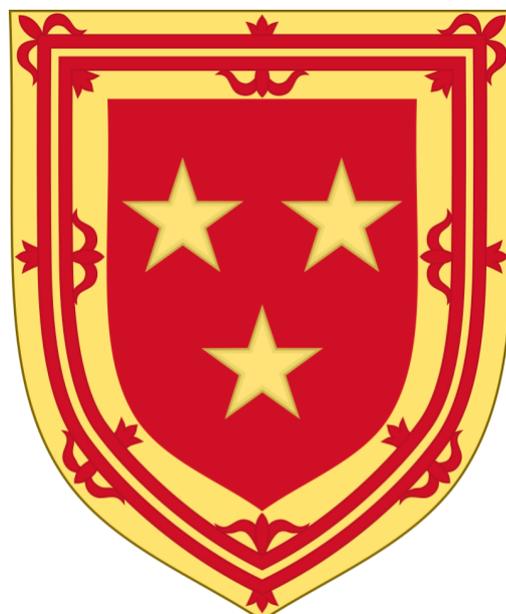
Christopher John Lindesay
The Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra Inc.

PRESENT ARMS OF SUTHERLAND

The 5th Duke of Sutherland was childless; on his death in 1963, the line of the eldest son of the first Duke failed. He was succeeded in the Earldom of Sutherland and lordship of Strathnaver, which could be inherited by females, by his niece Elizabeth. Elizabeth also inherited some of her uncle's wealth, but the Dukedom and other titles could only be passed on to male heirs, and they were inherited by his third cousin once removed, John Sutherland Egerton, 5th Earl of Ellesmere, who became the 6th Duke of Sutherland as well. He was a great-great-grandson of the first Earl of Ellesmere, third son of the first Duke of Sutherland. He also died childless and was succeeded by his first cousin once removed, Francis Ronald Egerton, the seventh and present Duke, a grandson of the Hon. Francis William George Egerton, second son of the third Earl of Ellesmere. The present Earl of Sutherland, Alistair, is the son of Elizabeth, 24th Countess of Sutherland, and following the death in September 2022 of his heir apparent, the Earldom is expected to pass eventually to Lady Rachel Elizabeth Sutherland, Mistress of Sutherland. So, although the arms of the Duke of Sutherland are now those based on the arms of Egerton, the Earldom of Sutherland arms, where the Earldom descent can be passed through the female line as well as the male, continue to show the *Gules three Mullets Or* of the Sutherlands of old.



Arms of the present Duke of Sutherland



Arms of the present Earl of Sutherland

Figures B4 and B5. Arms of the present Earl and Duke of Sutherland.