

Appendix C:**Report by Duncan FORBES of Culloden to John, DUKE of ARGYLL and GREENWICH, dated 24th September 1737.**

My Lord,—In pursuance of what I acquainted your Grace with in m y last, I set out from Edinburgh the 3rd of August on my insular expedition, and got back to this place the 16th of September at night, so tyred that I was not able by the post that went from Inverness next morning to give your Grace any account of my proceedings.

From Edinburgh, I was accompanied by Ronald Dunbar Macmillan and by Sir Duncan Campbell, who was so oblidging as to make out the whole campaign with me, in which he was of great use, his boat and a serjant with eight men of his company, whom I begged of Brigadier Guest, contributed not a little to the transportation and security of ourselves and our luggage. Our road was throw Broadalbine and Glenorchy to Lochawside, where we were received by the Sheriff and the factors, with whom, after waiting a few days at Sir Duncan's for the barge, we proceeded to Arros in Mull, where we sojourned some time under hutts and tents, but the inclemency of the weather soon made the last impracticable.

Upon my arrival in Mull I called the tenants of that island and of Morvern before me, and acquainted them with your Grace's favourable intention of delivering them from the tyrrany of taxmen [tacksmen], of freeing them from the oppression of services and Herezelds²⁹⁵, and of encouraging them to improve their farms by giving them a sort of property in their grounds for 19 years by leases, if they showed themselves worthy of the intended favour by offering frankly for their farms such rent as honestly and fairly they could bear.

Your Grace may remember I did not, from this proposition, expect any considerable advance of rent on the ffarms that were in the occupancy of the natives. The smal tennents, whose rents were already stretched by the late taxmen [tacksmen] as high as they could well bear; but I flattered myself that these would have cheerfully offered the rent they payed to their late taxmasters with some trifle more. I hoped that the exemption from oppression and the certainty of possessing their grounds for the term of their leases, would have enabled them to pay to your Grace the rent stipulated better than hitherto. had been done, and I imagined that the late taxmen and their friends, who are called gentlemen, to whom they let farms very cheap, either from favour or for grassums would have bid reasonably for their several possessions in consideration of the intended lease.

But to my very great surprise, every creature, from the highest to the lowest, seemed to undervalue the leases proposed. The little tennents, for so I shall call the Ter tennents, offered all to a man far short of what they payed to the late taxmen. These taxmen, and those whom I lately called gentlemen their friends, offered far short of the value of their possessions, and justified the little tennents for their low offers, alledging the badness of the seasons, and the low price of cattle for some years as reasons for their inability to pay more; and when they were asked whether the possessions of those little tennents were not worth as much under the conditions proposed by the leases, as they were formerly when subject to the oppressions of exactions of the taxmen, they answered that the little tennents were now totally impoverished and unable to pay, and that they could not be brought to understand the value of a lease, and in conformity to this way of reasoning the little tennents pleaded poverty to a man, and several of them declared themselves more willing to pay a high rent without than with a lease.

This sort of behaviour, which was exceedingly disagreeable to me, led me very soon to discover that the whole was the effect of a combination, which for some time had been framing without any care taken to counteract it. The late taxmen and their friends the gentlemen, who possess at easy rents, were, with reason apprehensive, that if the little tennents bid the value of their possessions, their own must be considerably raised, they, therefore found means to persuade those poor people who, to tell truth, are in miserable circumstances, and naturally desirous to take advantage, that if they stood out unanimously they might have their ffarms for what they would; that the inclemency of the weather would soon drive me out of the island, and leave them in possession of it at what rents they might think fit to offer; that their lowering their rents might well be justified by their present poverty occasioned by the badness of the seasons and the low price of catle for some years past, and those inducements were backed by apprehensions of danger industriously sowed amongst them; that if any of them did presume to offer the full rent, he should be overbid by some of the gentlemen, who would be preferred to him, and be consequently driven from his possession into beggary and starving.

A combination of this kind was not easy to be broke by reasoning or persuasion, especially when all those who understood my language were, from interest, the promoters of it, I therefore, after many days patient attendance found out two or three people who offered above the rent for so many farms. I struck the bargain that moment with them, declared that since all the rest of the people of Mull and Morvern had, by their rascally conduct, proclaimed themselves unworthy of your Grace's favour, I would let no more of your Grace's lands to them, but leave them in the same misery and distress in which I found them; that if the lands were to ly waste till better tennents could be found, you could bear it, and would much rather choise to do so than to have it possessed by such rogues and fools as would enter into confedracys, to defraud a person who had entertained so compassionate purposes towards them; and immediately gave orders for sailing to Tiry. [Tiree] But before I went on board I suffered myself to be intreated to call on my return at Mull, and to receive any further propositions that might be made to me.

²⁹⁵ Hereyeld: The fine payable to a superior on the death of his tenant.

It happened very luckily that one of the promoters of this confederacy, Maclean the minister, had an advantagious farm, for which he offered far short of the value, notwithstanding all my arguments and entreaty with him personally, because he could understand me. This was one of the three farms which we found a person to bid the value for. The minister seeing himself by his own cunning beat out of an advantageous possession he had for many years enjoyed, was raving mad, and you may believe his fate caused some speculation in Mull before my return from Tirry.

From Arros in Mull, we set sail in the morning, and arrived in Tirry before sunset. The people we found more wretchedly poor there than in Mull, as they had been more unmercifully pinched by their exactors. I thought it was proper to view with my own eyes the grounds, and to enquire into their manner of managing them, and their condition, before I made any propositions. And having spent two or three days in that sort of occupation, I called the people together, explained the end of my coming to such as understood English, made the Sheriff do the same in Irish [Gaelic], to such as understood no other language, and to prevent mistakes, put the heads of my speech in writing, which I delivered to the Sheriff to be translated into Irish. Severall copies were made and delivered to the tenants of the different districts, who were desired to consider well of them, and to meet me two days after with their resolutions. They came accordingly, but, notwithstanding all the means I had used, they played the Mull game on me all to a man; their offers were all under the present rent, and several of them persisted they would take no leases. Upon this I was forced to do just as I had done in Mull Two of Sir Duncan's brothers were by him persuaded to make a handsome offer above the present rent for five different farms, as were also two more persons of the island for other possessions. These offers I immediately accepted off, and declared as I had done in Mull, that I would let no more of your Grace's land in Tirry, since the people showed themselves so unsensible of your goodness, or so ungrateful. That I would lease them to their former exactors, which was to them a dreadful threat, and that in two days I would sail on my return to the mainland. In the meantime, I suffered the people who were about me to hint that if proper offers were made before my departure, there were still some hopes they might be received.

Upon seeing some of the lands let, as I have mentioned, contrary to their expectations, and the concert which had been made amongst them broke in upon the threat of leaving them to their former slavery begun to work, they came in one after another with offers, a trifle above what they formerly paid, which, for the poor tenants, whose possessions had been pretty well stretched by their former masters, was as much as what well could have been asked. The gentlemen bid for their own possessions something more. The two ends of Coll, which formerly paid £33 6s 8d, were contended for by the Laird of Coll and MacLachlen, one of the former taxmen, and carried by Coll, who is henceforward to pay £58 6s 8d. In short, adding one day's patient stay to another so long as the state of our provisions would permit, five-sixth parts of the island, besides the two ends of Coll, were set, and directions were given for receiving offers for the remaining sixth, which for the greatest part, is at present waste.

The unmerciful exaction of the late taxsman is the cause of those lands being waste, which had it continued but for a very few years longer, would have entirely unpeopled the island. They speak of above one hundred familys that have been reduced to beggary and driven out of the island within these last seven years. Offers were made for parts of some of the ffarms or townships that are not now set. But I refused to accept of them unless the offerers would find hands to take off the whole township or ffarm together, because the possessor of one part would profite of the grass of the other, so long as it remained unpossessed, and thereby find it his interest to keep it for ever waste. I am, however hopefull the whole will before next Whitsunday be filled up according to the directions I have given, and that the tennents, who have been overbid in their present possessions, will against next Whitsunday think of securing themselves in those which I left open.

The rent of the two ends of Coll, and that part of Tirry which is set, amounts to £484 15s 6d, the rent of the sixth part of Tirry still to be let, if set in proportion to the rest will be £85 5s 9d, so that the constant rent in time coming will be about £570. Your Grace may remember the rent payable by the for[mer] taxmen even after the augmentation agreed to at Inverara, was no more than £324 17s 9½d and the rental given up by them, according to which they said they collected was £422 15s 4½d, so that if our labours produce a constant rent of £570, somewhat is thereby got to your Grace, at least there will be room for making a small expense, hereafter to be mentioned, which will for ever secure a good rent.

The shortness of our provisions, occasioned by a stay much longer than we intended, and the uncertainty of the weather, made us quit Tirry sooner than otherwise we should have done, in our voyage to Mull we touched at Coll, which we spent a full day in viewing, and arrived safe in Mull the third day. It was well we were obliged to leave Tirry so soon, for the ffactor whom we left behind us for one day to regulate some things, while we visited Coll, was wind bound there for severall days after we found ourselves safe in Mull.

To prevent much loss of time in Mull, we sent a messenger before us to give notice of the day we intended to be at Arros, and that we were to remain there for three days, to the end the tenants of Mull and Morven might have an opportunity more of mending their offers; the examples made before I left the island and the proceedings of the people of Tirry, very different from their expectations, helped much to break in upon their combination. I convinced the little tennents that they were not to stand in awe of the gentlemen; by preferring them when they bid reasonably for their own possessions to the gentlemen, who out of caprice or pique, attempted to turn them lose into the world by overbidding them, and at last after much patience and tribulation, in eight days time, the whole estate in Mull, except one tenement of £10 13s 4d. Rent was set, very much to the surprise of all my company. Your Grace may remember the rent paid by the former taxmen for your estate in Mull was £500. The rental sometime since tak up by the Sheriff £669 8s 10¼d. And the rental of the set now made, including the rent of the tenement not yet set, is £793 19s 5d.

With regard to Morvern, upon very careful examination, I found myself obliged not to expect any such increase of rent. The former taxmen had; indeed, a very good bargain, because they paid your Grace no more than £222, as I remember upon the determination of their lease the Sherriff was sent thither to take up a rental which, made out, upon what the tennent's were said to be willing to pay, amounted to £467 4s 7d, and this rental the present factor collects by. But he has been obliged (to prevent lands growing waste) to dispense with some of the casualties. In short, what encouraged the then possessors to offer so high a rent was the vicinity of the works then carrying on with great expense in Sunart and Morven, which afforded mercats for all their product at high prices, the decay of those works reduces the value of their goods, and has been the ruin of several who dealt with them. This being the real case, I was obliged to do the best I could to content myself with the present rent, or a very moderate augmentation, where I could have it; and in two cases to get even a trifle below the present rent. The one is that of the lands of Lawdoll, &c, which formerly paid £54 14s 5d, and are now set to Alexander Maclachlan, late taxman of Coll at £48, the highest offer which is £6 14s 5d short of the former rent, but in setting him this possession, I had consideration of his having raised very high the rent of Coll by bidding heartily for it, as I have already observed. And the other is the farm of Liddisdale which is now in the possession of Sir Alexander Murray at the rent of £41 17s 7½d, alongst with the Morven mines. It is in Sir Alexander's option to quit or continue the possession of those mines at next Martinmas. If he continue, he must continue to possess Liddesdale, if he gives up that possession, it must remain open to be set, this was the reason why I could conclude nothing finally about Liddesdale. But I was willing, whilst there, to receive offers provisionally for it, and £41 are offered which I am told is the full value, tho' a 17s short of the present rent.

There is but one tenement more in Morven called Invine, more rentalled at £13 9s 5d by the Sheriff which nobody having come up to the rent of in their offers, I thought fit to leave open to be set by the factor, and on the supposition that this farm shall be set at the full rent, your lands of Morven will stand set at £467 2s 5d, on the supposition that Sir Alexander Murray shall throw up his farm of Liddesdale, which is but some shillings above the Sherriffs rental, and if he hold that farm, as he now do's, the rent will be some shillings more.

The improvement of the rent of Morven your Grace will observe is a mere trifle. But this I will assure your Grace, that my companions from whom I was to receive my lights, considered the setting of Morven without a considerable diminution as a greater miracle than the augmentation on the other estates, which at the beginning they seemed also to think impracticable. Thus, I have given your Grace a rough sketch of what is done. I am sorry my endeavours have not answered your expectations or my wishes, but I am confident your Grace will not suspect the disappointment is owing to any want of care or patience in me. I have assigned, in the course of the narration, the true causes, the miserable poverty of the people, proceeding from the oppression of their late taxmasters, the badness of the seasons for some years, and the sensible decay of the demand for cattle.

But tho' your Grace's expectations or mine may not be answered as to the improvement of the rent, yet, in this, I have satisfaction, and it may be some to you, that the method you have taken has prevented the total ruin of these islands. And the absolute loss of the whole rent in time coming to your Grace, had the taxmen been suffered to continue their extortions a few years longer, the islands would have been dispeopled, and you must have been contented with no rent, or with such rent as these harpies should be graciously pleased to allow you; and if either I or some one else of consideration, and (if you will pardon me for flattering myself) of integrity had not gone of this errand, the havock already committed amongst the poor people by the extortions of their masters would have been a strong argument for giving way to the combination that was formed in the severall estates, and of letting the lands everywhere far under the rent which is now to be expected.

Another advantage this expedition has brought you is, that the view I have had of the grounds, and the knowledge I have gained of the condition and manners of the people may prevent future impositions, and put your Grace in a method of improving your estate, by bettering the condition of your tennents, which in a small time will bring you a secure rent, and put it in the way of yeelding considerable augmentation, if, or when, a new set happens to be made. To touch at present but one article, barley is the great product of Tirry. There never was one sheaf of barley cut in Tirry since the beginning of the world, nor can it well be cut so long as the present method of culture continues, which occasions their pulling up the straw by the roots, the burning the grain in the straw, and all the other ridiculous proces of husbandry, which almost utterly destroys that island. By burning the straw their cattle perish for want of fodder in hard winters, the burnt com is ground in quarins, and thereby becomes hardly saleable; and the practice of burning and grinding in that manner prevents your Grace's having any rent worth speaking of from Milns. The original error lys in this, that from want of fallowing out one yard of their ground any one year, the whole is so overrun with rank strong weeds † that it is an absolute impossibility to drive a sickle through it. I never saw fields covered with a greater load of herbage than their corn fields are, but when you examine them, hardly one-tenth part of them is corn, the rest is all wild carrot, mustard, &c. The poor creatures do not know which way to clear their fields of these weeds, and think of nothing but to pluck up the corn as their ancestors did, which leaves the seeds of the weeds time to ripen, and shed in order to move complete crops of them against next year. Now, if at your Graces' expense out of the improved rent, a skilful farmer were brought from East Lothian or any other County, by example, to teach the people to clear their ground of weeds, and properly to cultivate them, their crops of corn would be double to what they are, leaving more room for grass. The straw saved would save their cattle from perishing in hard winters. Their grain brought to Milns

to be dressed would yield a better price, and in that advantage your Grace would share, because some of your rent is still payable in corn and meal. Your rent would be secure, and you would have a considerable addition to the Miln rent which at present is a trifle, and which I would not set in lease for a term of years, because I expected this augmentation. Indeed, I have bargained for the building of one miln upon a farm that is pretty high set. The taxman is to be allowed £20 for erecting it, and is to leave it of the same value at the determination of his lease, and the size of it is to support the new method of culture above mentioned. But the other milns are still left open for improvement as your Grace shall see cause. In Mull, I have also agreed to allow a sum not exceeding £8 6s 8d, for improving a miln at Arros, to be left at the determination of the lease in perfect repair, in hopes of bringing the people of that country to a better way of managing their corns.

The small island of Calva which forms the Bay of Tobermory in Mull, and a neighbouring tenement called Ballyseat, have been bid for above the former rent, but I declined finally to declare them set. Because, the only appearance of wood I observed in all your Grace's lands of Mull is on those two tenements, the wood there, it is true, is at present very scrub, but I am satisfied would if saved, rise to account. I, therefore, acquainted the intended tennents that their leases must be clogged with the preservation of the woods, if any leases were granted to them, but that I would not absolutely promise to let the grounds at all in lease, because your Grace might possibly incline to shut out cattle entirely, and to fence the ground at the expense of loosing the rents for some years, but this there is time to consider of.

But what I have said of the misery of the people through the extortions of their late masters, and bad crops, and low prices for cattle, your Grace will guess at the present factor's excuse for bringing together so small a portion of your last year's rent. He was not by his factory to receive such part of the rents as were payable by the late taxmen out of their own possessions. That is now directed to be paid to him, and as he received his factory late, and made no provision for disposing of such of the tenants cattle as might be delivered to him in payment of rent, he was forced to leave them in their own hands, who have before this time turned them into money, and it is owing to his having been employed all this while amongst with us that more of the rent is not yet brought together, tho' it is not impossible some of it may be lost by the very poor condition of the tennents who must for some time be tenderly dealt with, till they recover from a disease, which had it lasted very little longer, must necessarily have been mortall; I think the man, tho' slow, a very honest man, will do to the best of his understanding what he is desired, and knows the country better than any one I know who can be trusted.

I believe by this time your Grace is heartily tired of me and my islands. This abstract is only intended at present to satisfie your curiosity. Exact accounts of the particulars must come when things can be put more accurately together at Edinburgh. And leases must be made out for your signature, and directions given in conformity to what is projected, if your Grace approve of what we have been about.

I could entertain you with descriptions of the oddity's of your insular dominions, and with many observations that might be of use, but that such entertainment will keep cold.

It is very lucky that threw such a tract of bad weather, which the inhabitants of that climate say, was the worst they ever saw, we should all come off without any accident worth speaking of; my son was seised in Mull with a sneaking fever, which I cleared him of by taking between 30 and 40 ounces of blood, and giving him two or three vomits. Sir Duncan's tent, which he imprudently lay in for sometime, could not possibly secure him against the excessive rains and winds which prevail in these watery regions. He was seised with rheumatic pains at Tirry, without any doctor but myself, and I had no medicine but rhubarb and gum pills, however, I doctored him so well as to bring him home in the barge, and as I passed he was perfectly recovered. His volunteering it was undoubtedly of great use, to us.

I do not much wonder that McMillan and the Sheriff stood it out well enough, because they were accustomed to such jaunts, but I confess I am surpris'd that Ronald Dunbar who never before lay without the reach of Edinborrow bell, except once, that he attended your Grace in an expedition where everything was snug and convenient, could bear it out as he did. None of the natives complained less. As the shortest way, at least the best road to Edinburgh, he came amongst with me hither, and now he is to return.

Your barge is a fine boat, her waste is so low for the convenience of rowing, that she is rather to watery for those stormy seas, one moveable plank to be put upon or taken from the waste as occasion might require, would make her more convenient where squales of wind are so frequent, and the waves run so high. We had an excellent steersman, and no accident did harm. In our voyage from Mull to the continent, the barge set upon a blind rock, but the wind being easy she got off next tide without any damage of consequence, and I proceeded in her next day to Fort-William, where I landed safe.

What proceeds was all written in my own hand, but the scrawl was so bad that I doubted your Grace could not without much trouble read it, wherefore I caused to copy it over in a hand writing that is somewhat more legible. The post calls and leaves me time to say nothing but what you already full well know, that I am very truly,—Your Grace's most humble servant,

DUNCAN FORBES

CULLODEN, September 24th, 1737