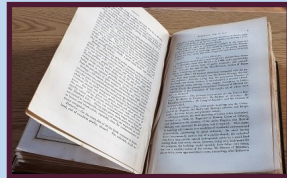


THE SUTHERLAND LONGHOUSE PROJECT

Bringing the Documents to Life

Last Thursday, following a study of maps on the previous day, Dr Elizabeth Ritchie led a workshop which looked at what we can tell about history from reading documents. Guided by a series of suggested questions, participants studied papers and historical research-based materials from pre-clearance times.

Three workstations were set up, each with a variety of books and other written



accounts for study. The participants pored over documents from the National Archives featuring Dalnamain, R J Adams' collection of Sutherland Estate records, Statistical Accounts compiled from records supplied by each Parish Minster including Dornoch, and extracts from The Memorandum of



John Matheson of Brae, with snapshots of his life, his family, his travels and possessions. All

fascinating texts in their own right, the room fell to complete silence as the participants tackled Dr Ritchie's guideline questions based on who wrote the documents and why, and their reliability.



What was the historical context? Who was the author and what was the purpose in writing?

There was much discussion on reliability and style and everyone contributed to the workshop with



their own knowledge as well as with what they had discovered in the documents.

Next the workshop visited the graveyard adjacent to the Cathedral to look at the gravestones - also a form of historical documentation helping to build a picture of life in the past. Dr Ritchie explained that the stones provide evidence through not only who is represented there, but also who is not.



Returning to Burghfield House for a hot drink and biscuits, the participants shared information gleaned from the gravestones about life in pre-clearance times, and changes in attitude to and representation of the dead.

All in all, a thoroughly fascinating afternoon was had by all!