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## The St Mary's Heritage Project

The Jaunt of Pleasure, 1769.

SOURCE AND NOTE:

*Bishop Robert Forbes: The Lyon in Mourning, Edinburgh, 1895.*

*In August 1769 a secret meeting took place in Moffat between the Scottish non-juror Bishop Robert Forbes and a non-juror bishop from England, Robert Gordon, to discuss the exiled Stuarts and a Protestant marriage for Bonnie Prince Charlie. Bishop Gordon arrived with Mr and Mrs Lyon. After the meeting, a 'jaunt of pleasure' to a local waterfall was proposed.*

[RGE, 2009]

## The Jaunt of Pleasure to the Grey Mare's Tail waterfall, 1769.

When in the midst of a wood about halfway to the fall, one of the ends of the flichet of our chaise happened to break which occasioned a halt. Instantly, all got out, and Mrs Forbes held a council of war against me for a safe retreat in time, with the shrill vociferation of a female general.

'I can,' said she, 'with pleasure be fell'd myself rather than that Bishop Gordon should be fell'd. For how can we account to Mrs Gordoun if he be fell'd sae far frae hame?'

'Ay! ay! very pretty indeed,' said Mr Lyon, 'there is not a word of your husband tho' in equal danger with Mr Gordon, or any of us.'

'Oh!' said she, 'he has no fear. He can take care of himself. But for Mr Gordon, who is a stranger, we ought, all of us, to have a particular concern about him.'

This occasioned a loud laugh to the re-echoing of the woods. Mr Gordon would frequently say, 'O that good woman! O that good woman! who is pleased to have such a great concern about my safety.'

The kind contention was so much in earnest that Mr MackDonell, tho' one of absolute courage, joined Mrs Forbes heartily for an immediate return.

'What! Mr MackDonell,' said I, 'did you not tell me that many wheel machines have been driven the same way? And may not chaises go now where chaises have gone before?'

'All true,' said he, 'but then such heavy rains have fallen of late that the fords will be very deep, and they are rough and bad enough of themselves.'

'O then,' said I, 'the fall will be in its greater glory, and if all of you should return I will go on.'

Mr Gordon luckily joined me which ended the debate. But then Mrs Forbes strenuously insisted against Mr Gordon's going into the broken chaise, tho' the breach was inconsiderable, as with the help of a rope it was made as strong as ever, and so Mr Gordon and I went into it again. [...]

At length the rush of mighty waters reached the ear before we could see it with the eye. When we came in view of it I could well see that by crossing that large burn flowing from it into Moffat Water, and called the Tail burn, we could have still a fuller view of the fall, and, therefore, I stept over the burn, and scamper'd up a green hill the best way I could, about the midst of which I came to a level bit of green about the extent of an ordinary table, where I took up my station directly over against the face of the fall about the middle of it.

I then halloed to those below what a fine view I had of the fall, begging them to follow me. [Miss] Jackie MacDonell skip'd up to me like any roe. Mr Gordon mounted the conductor's mare and crossed the burn. I cried to Mr MackDonell to hand Mr Gordon up after me as far as he would chuse to come, which he did only halfway. Mr Lyon likewise mounted the mare and cross'd the burn. He came up with me with such leisurely steps as his corpulence would allow, and squatted down instantly.

'What do you mean, Sir?' said I. 'Get up and view this grand sight.'

'Oh! sir,' said he, 'I have lost all my breath, Oh! Oh! Oh!' After resting a little he rose up and took a view of it with his spects on his nose.

When descending I took hold of Jackie MackDonell and guided her in the spiral way, and Mr Lyon's servant [Sandie] took him by the arm. But no, that would not do. Looking behind me, I saw Mr David hitching down like any hare on his breech.

'Ay ! Mr David,' said I, 'what is the matter with you?'

'O, Sir,' said he, 'I man take my \_\_\_\_\_ to it.'

This I failed not to repeat when down at the burn, taking our seasonable glass of wine, which made the hills resound with a loud peal of laughter.

During all the time we were upon the face of the green hill, Mrs Forbes down below turned her back towards us, and with fright, was seized with a pain in one of her shoulders, taking a peep now and then to see if any of us were tumbling down, and wondering how she would fall upon a scheme to get back to Moffat with three chaises and six dead men, with many a thump upon the pain'd shoulder. The drivers diverted themselves with tumbling stones down the hill, which Mrs Forbes, full of fear, imagined to be some of our hats. [...]

At supper we recounted the beauties and adventures of the chequer'd scene with great good humour and pleasantry.

Mr Gordon smiling in Mr Lyon's face said, 'Well, Mr Lyon, I hope you will indulge me the pleasure of making merry with my wife at your method of moving down a hill.'

'With all my heart,' answered he.

'Then, Mr Lyon, I assure you, your bum shall not be forgot. Ha ! Ha ! Ha !'