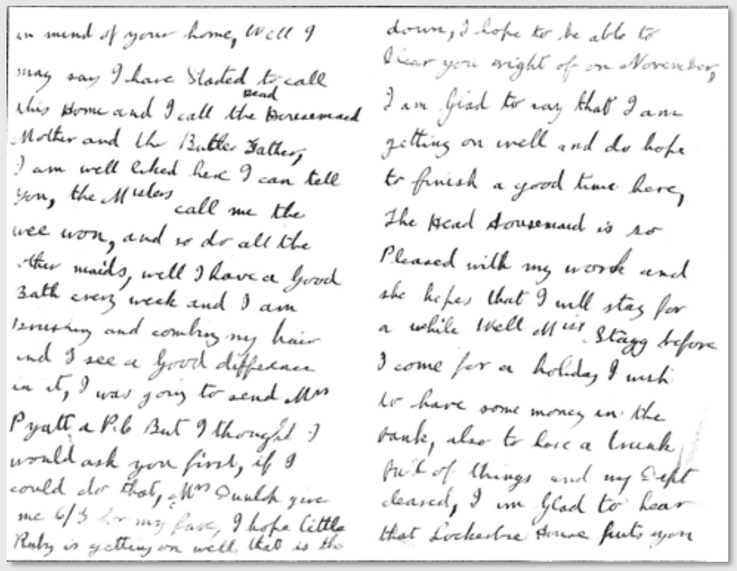
Katie
Letters from domestic service

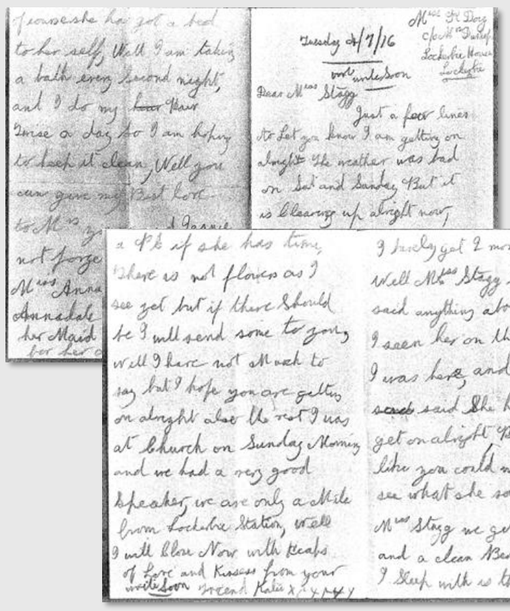
Katie was born in 1898 in Edinburgh and lived with her parents and three older sisters at 5 St Bernard's Place, Stockbridge. There was a total of 21 families living at this address. Katie's mother struggled with alcohol addiction and when Katie was 7 years old she was sent to an inebriate home in Perth. Katie and her family moved in with her granny at St Stephen's Place but Katie soon moved in with her married sister on Rose Street. They fought frequently and late one night Katie was told to leave. She was 16 years old and went to the NVA office at 5 Duke Street (top of Dublin Street) for help.

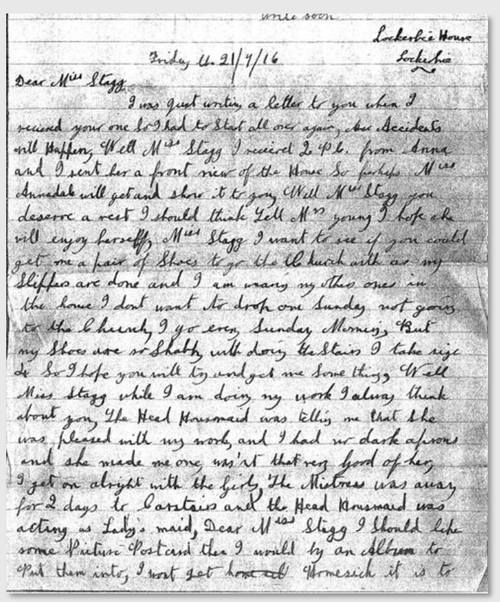
The NVA found Katie several domestic service posts in large country houses including Lockerbie House, Dupplin Castle and Wedderburn Castle. Her letters tell us of her daily life and work.

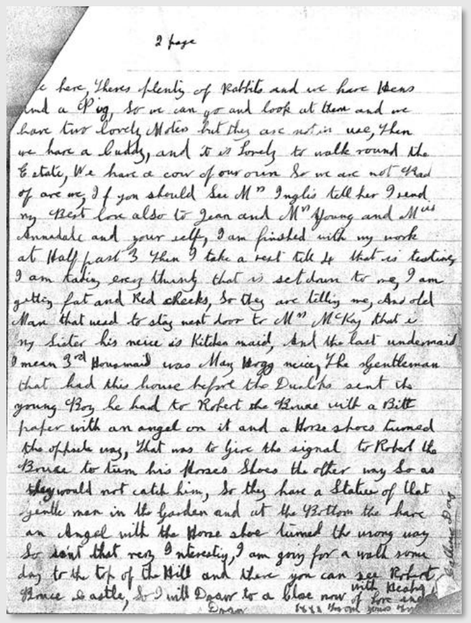


"We get lovely meat and a clean bed. The girl I sleep with is the 2nd housemaid, of course she has got a bed to herself. Well I am taking a bath every second night and I do my hair twice a day so I am hoping to keep it clean"

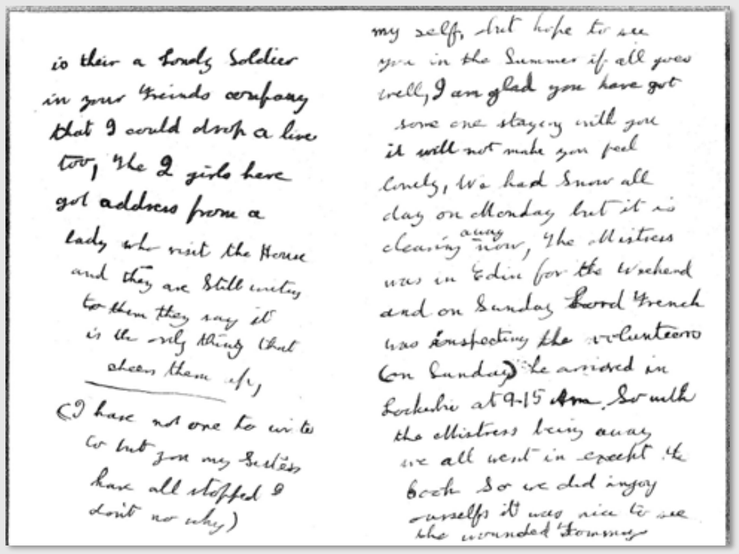
"I have started to call this home and I call the Head Housemaid Mother and I call the Butler Father, I am well liked here I can tell you, the Misters call me the wee one and so do all the other maids. I have a good bath every week and I am brushing and combing my hair and I see a good difference in it."





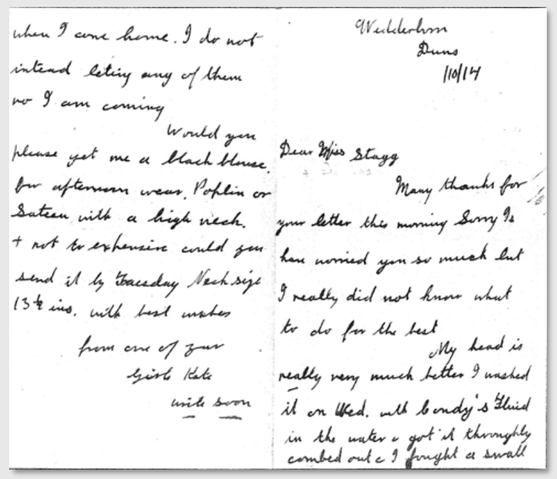


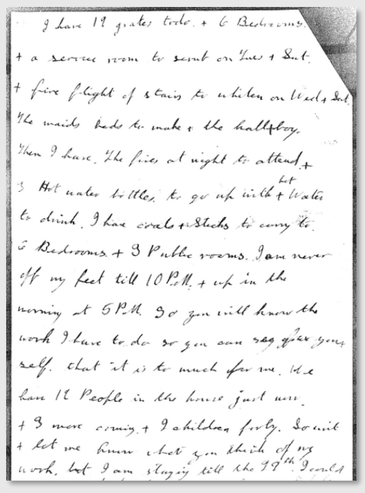
"there's plenty of rabbits and we have hens and a pig, so we can go and look at them and we have two lovely motors but they are not in use, then we have a cuddy, and it is lovely to walk round the estate. We have a cow of our own so we are not bad off are we? I am finished with my work at half past 3 then I take a rest till 4 that is teatime. I am taking everything that is set down to me, I am getting fat and red cheeks so they are telling me."* *donkey



"On Sunday Lord French was inspecting the volunteers, he arrived in Lockerbie at 9.15am so, with the Mistress being away, we all went in except the cook, so we did enjoy ourselves, it was nice to see the wounded Tommys…..(I have not one to write to but you, my sisters have all stopped, I don't know why)."

"My head is really very much better I washed it on Wednesday with Condy's Fluid in the water and got it thoroughly combed out and I bought a small tooth comb and using it twice a day. Eliza the housemaid would not allow me to use paraffin for the smell she says that an ointment mats the hair so easily that a small tooth comb is the best thing."* potassium permanganate





"The work is simply too heavy for me. I have 19 grates to do and 6 bedrooms and a service room to scrub on Tuesday and Saturday and five flights of stairs to whiten on Wednesday and Saturday. The maids beds to make and the hall boy's. Then I have the fires at night to attend and three hot water bottles to go up with the hot water to drink. I have coals and sticks to carry to 6 bedrooms and 9 public rooms. I am never off my feet till 10 pm and up in the morning at 5."