

# The Coopers Lane project: craft and cooperage in post-medieval Campbeltown

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## ABSTRACT

*The development of the burgh of Campbeltown and its industries, in particular herring fishing and whisky distilling, form the economic setting for a study of the role of the coopering trade in the burgh during the 18th and 19th centuries. The records of the Campbeltown Coopers' Society allow some analysis of the social backcloth, and of the relationships of the craft. The documentary evidence is enhanced by a structural survey at the cooperage site in Coopers Lane, Campbeltown.*

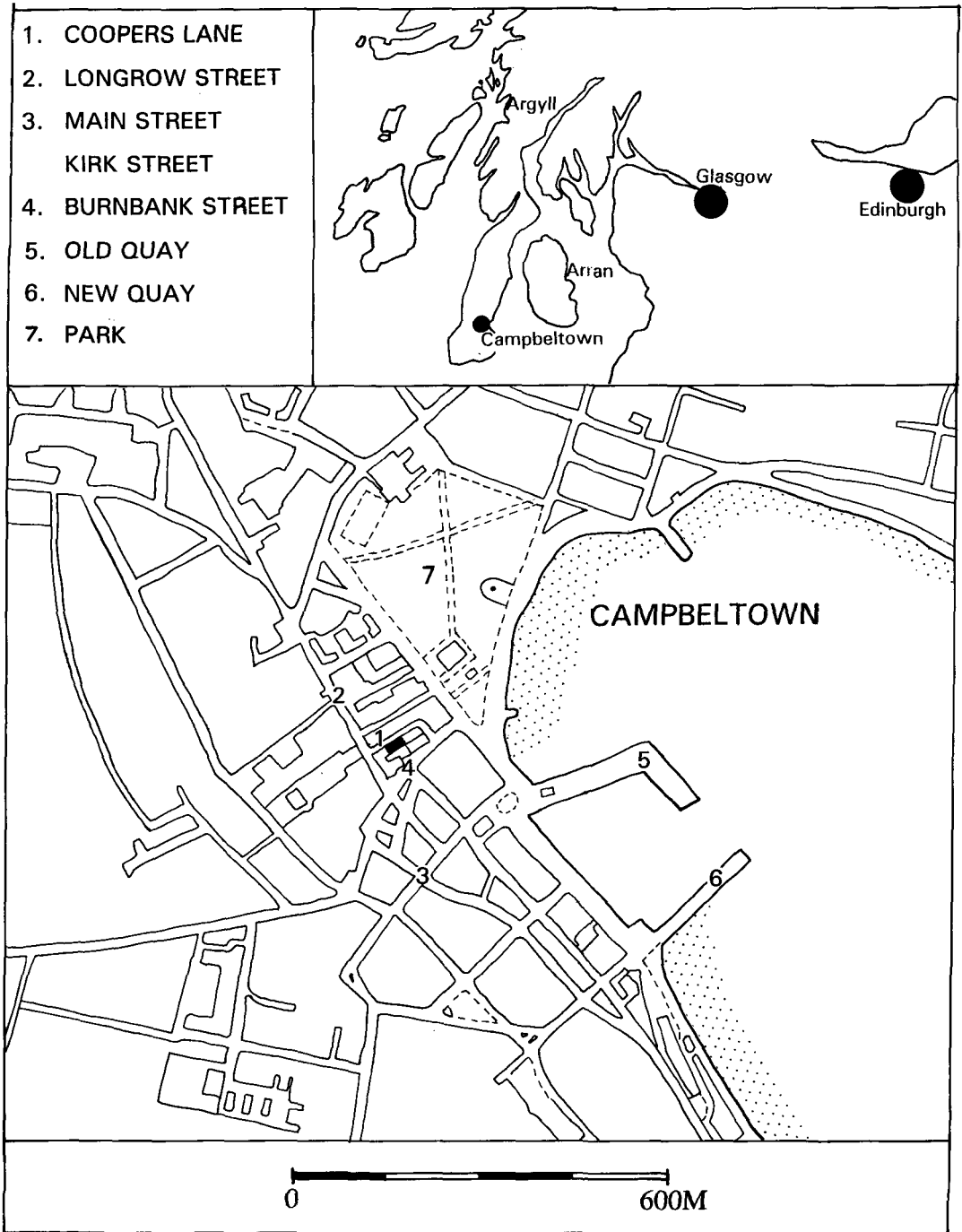
## INTRODUCTION

The Coopers Lane project was undertaken in 1992. The aim of the project was to develop an archaeological analysis of coopering in the burgh, which could be integrated with a comprehensive documentary investigation: in essence the re-creation of the town's history through one of its crafts. Campbeltown was selected because of its heavy reliance on its coopers during the post-medieval period to service its burgeoning herring fisheries and distilling industry. The documented and extant cooperage site in Coopers Lane (NR 7189 2052), which lies to the east of the Longrow, became the focus for this work (illus 1). At an early stage it was decided that a structural survey would be of greater relevance than any attempt at excavation around the structure, which was still utilized as a joiners' workshop, although one of the research aims at the heart of the project was to see if a cooperage could be recognized from its standing remains alone. The project also aimed to highlight the possibility of creating a 'craft' archaeology, that is defining a distinctive archaeology for this trade that would allow a clearer understanding not only of the social development of this West Highland burgh but, more importantly, a better understanding of the social roles and relations of this particular group of artisans.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In common with many early modern burghs, the exact history of Campbeltown's beginnings is rather obscure. McKerral, however, does point out that the erection of the burgh of Lochhead, beginning about 1609, was undoubtedly the first step in the lowland plantation of Kintyre (McKerral 1948, 26). Carried out by Archibald, 7th Earl of Argyll, the establishment of a Campbell stronghold at Lochhead signalled the slow beginnings of Campbeltown's growth. By the

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ILLUS 1 Location plan showing Coopers Lane cooperage, Campbeltown. Based upon the Ordnance Survey map © Crown copyright

late 1660s the town had obtained burgh status, and in 1700 it became a royal burgh (RCAHMS 1971, 184). Similiar to other 18th-century West Highland parishes in many respects, Campbeltown's economic development was initially sparked as organized fishing developed there (Brown 1987, 4). It is quite clear that by 1744 the export of white herring was under way (Atkinson 1993, 2). Together with the fisheries came the whole paraphernalia of new Lowland industrial order, including commerce and manufacture, and, as a consequence, the need for small tradesmen such as coopers was at a premium. There is little doubt that there was a need for coopers in the burgh from a much earlier date, but the herring fisheries caused an expansion in the craft and in the burgh which was sustained until the early 19th century. This period of expansion came to an end with the cessation of the bounty system first introduced in 1750 to encourage the building of a fleet of busses: decked vessels varying from 20 to 80 tons (Dunlop 1978, 9). Although the bounty system failed because it could not be afforded, and consequently sustained, by the Scottish customs, the final blow for herring fishing in Campbeltown was certainly the shift in the herring shoals themselves. By 1790 the herring appeared with greater regularity off the coast of Caithness (Dunlop 1978, 162) rather than off the coast of Argyll. Following the consequent economic downturn, a new boom period was instigated by the passing of the Illicit Distillation Act (1822) and the Excise Act (1823). These Acts signalled a new period of prosperity for Campbeltown and its coopers, forming the basis for a large-scale expansion of the whisky industry in the burgh, and of the burgh itself to the north and west. Although the boom was short lived, the need for coopering services – firstly as providers of barrels, and latterly as repairers of imported barrels – meant that cooperages and coopers operated in Campbeltown well into the 20th century.

## COOPERING: STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Prior to the establishment of the Campbeltown Coopers' Society on 1 April 1777 there is only patchy evidence for the trade in Campbeltown. The earliest documentary evidence relates to James Dunbar, cooper of Campbeltown, who appears in the Register of Sasines for 1723 (SRO RS10/5/48). More importantly, the remains of a gravestone in Kilkerran graveyard, dedicated to William Alexander, cooper of Campbeltown, dated 13 May 1721, not only precedes the documentary evidence, but also implies that the trade was organized sufficiently within the burgh to be utilizing trade insignia as symbolic references on the grave markers of the town's coopers. On the reverse of William Alexander's grave-slab is a quasi-heraldic cartouche, described by the Royal Commission as bearing quarterly: a lion rampant; a dexter hand holding a ? flaying knife; a galley, sails furled, oars in action; two unidentified figures, perhaps trade insignia (RCAHMS 1971, 127). This cartouche is carved below the legend *pere mare pere terras* (by land and by sea). Admittedly there is a likeness to the mid-16th-century arms of Clann Iain Mhoir, who held important lands in Kintyre and Islay (MacDonald 1978, 227 ), and the motto is generally associated with the house of MacDonald. However, the explanation of this semi-heraldic emblem, and the two other trade insignia of roughly contemporary date located in Kilchousland graveyard nearby is surely more complex than simple re-use of associated familial insignia. Trade insignia carved on tombstones were very popular as a device in the 18th century (Willsher 1990, 31). They mark the transference of social power and status from the sole domain of the merchants to the aggrandizement of individual craftsmen and trade organizations. Therefore, re-use and alteration of a 70-year-old cartouche is interpreted as a bid to achieve greater credence in death for an early form of craft structure in Campbeltown. Certainly by the late 1730s and early 1740s coopers were not only playing leading roles in burgh government, but had representatives invited as guests at

town council elections (Argyll & Bute District Archive (ABDA), DC1/1/2), indicating the status of coopers among not only other trades, but among the merchants as well.

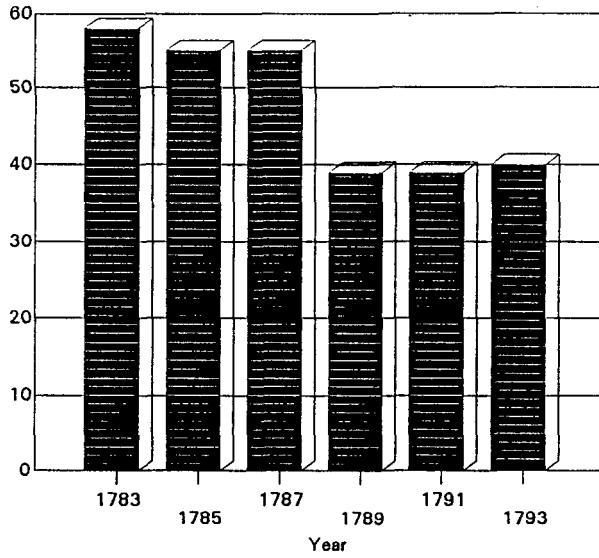
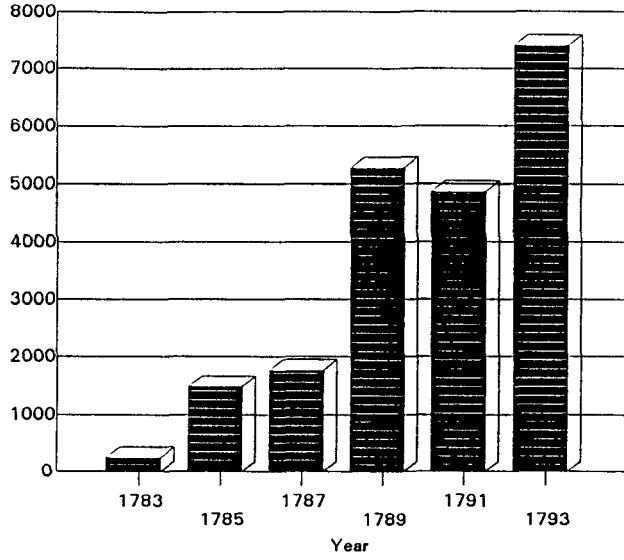
The true nature of the craft structure created by coopers in Campbeltown did not come to the fore fully until the Campbeltown Coopers' Society was established in 1777. The purposes of this friendly combination were to control and to organize the coopers' trade, effectively forming a small guild. In the larger cities, coopers came together in guilds, primarily in order to create a 'closed shop' (Kilby 1989, 6). This was clearly under way in Campbeltown by 1777. Evidence for this is scarce, although it does exist within the documentary record; for example, Ivor Currie was granted a renunciation from being a member (ABDA, DR4/4/1) in 1782. If the trade was granting dispensations from membership it strongly implies a closed shop in operation. It also implies that the Society's ledger must be an accurate guide to the actual numbers working in the burgh between 1777 and 1817.

It had been envisaged that the number of coopers working in Campbeltown would have closely followed the fortunes of the herring fisheries. This does not appear to have been the case, and in fact it was almost the reverse over the short period when figures for the export of cured herring are available for comparison (illus 2). It is difficult to assess the extent to which the export figures given in the customs quarterly accounts reflect the size of catches landed, although Dunlop has suggested that the home market was then very small (Dunlop 1978, 11). What is clear, however, is the relative stability of the numbers of coopers as members of the Campbeltown Coopers' Society up until 1806 (illus 3). Although not sensitive enough to reflect swings in the market for cured herring, this is a better gauge of the attempts by Campbeltown's coopers to retain strength in numbers, even though the herring catches each year could swing radically from one extreme to another.

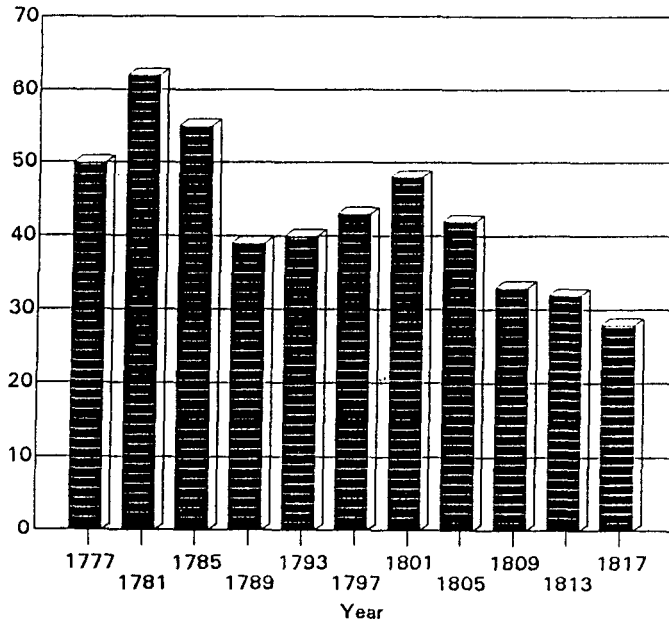
The fact that membership peaked as early as 1780, with a total of 63, probably reflects the attractions offered by a friendly society; not only did it act as a guardian of the trade, but it also instituted both pension and insurance schemes. For example, on 3 July 1787 a petition was presented by Ronald Currie, cooper, setting out his claim for assistance: 'having met with a misfortune in getting one of his hands much hurt which rendered him unfit ..... and craving some support for his family out of society funds' (ABDA, DR4/4/1). These pleas for aid appear on quite a regular basis within the accounts ledger of the Society; all appear to have been answered, giving a standard one guinea relief. Thus although the herring fisheries were going through a period of recession in the early 1780s, the establishment of the Campbeltown Coopers' Society insured that membership levels were high. The rest of the Society's life was marked by relatively stable figures up until 1806, followed by a considerable drop by 1807 and a gradual falling off until the Society was wound up 10 years later. This fall in membership was clearly driven by external forces: by 1806 the bounty system had been abandoned, making the exploitation of herring not as profitable, and the number of forfeitures amongst the coopers rose dramatically as the catches fell.

## COOPERAGES: THE DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

The production of barrels was of significance in all fishing ports, and in centres of brewing and distilling. Cooperages could be found in great numbers in such places, as the 19th-century local trade directories show (Butt & Donnachie 1979, 69). Cooperages were a major phenomenon of 18th-century Campbeltown as well, although tracing them via the documentary record has proved difficult. The Register of Sasines indicates the existence of only five coopers owning property for the period 1617–1780: two in the Longrow, two in Dalintober and one in the High Street. This is mainly because in Campbeltown the heyday of the herring fisheries was relatively early; the pool



ILLUS 2 Barrels of herring exported (top) and the number of coopers working in Campbeltown (bottom) during the period 1783–93



ILLUS 3 Number of coopers in Campbeltown, 1777–1817

of documentary sources for it falls into insignificance alongside Liverpool where almost 100 cooperages were operating by the end of the 19th century (Grant 1976). John Hume's survey of the industrial archaeology of Glasgow, a major port, only located five purpose-built cooperages and three cooperages within second-hand premises (Hume 1974). However, this is probably related to the poor survival rates of industrial workshops rather than to the number of cooperages active in the past urban landscapes. The constant re-use, change of function and alteration of industrial premises within the urban context means that many structural types become difficult to identify, the diagnostic characteristics that they once had becoming obscured (Atkinson 1993, 5).

Sir John Sinclair's own analysis of the data recovered from the *Statistical Account* of the 1790s (Sinclair 1825) allows an impression of the estimated national figure for 1795 to be measured against the known figure for coopers in Campbeltown during that year. Sinclair estimated that 2610 coopers were working in Scotland for the export and domestic markets, compared with 39 coopers in Campbeltown (1.49% of the national total). This should be taken only as a very rough guide; Sinclair's figure was probably quite wide of the mark, because he based his calculation on the returns from the questionnaire sent to ministers and other compilers of parish accounts (Donnachie 1979, 34). This is a real problem for any analysis of the trade on a national scale, and even work on 19th-century data is still faulty. For instance, Donnachie's work on the coopers of the mid-1820s, although helpful as a guide, needs to be seen in the context of the source being used. Any attempt to use Pigot's *Commercial Directory of Scotland* of 1825, or any other year for that matter, as an accurate reflection of the number of coopers working in Scotland, is ill fated. The numbers of coopers derived from Pigot's or Slater's *Directories* can be taken only as the number of coopers who chose to advertise their trade in the directory that year. Although no figures were given by the author for Campbeltown, a quick glance at the 1825 directory lists five

names: Neal Brolachan (Kirk Street), James Ferguson (Longrow), John McMurchy (Shore Street), David Muir (Back Street) and John Reid (Balgom Street).

At least two more coopers were active in the burgh at this time: Robert McMurchy and Archibald Muir were working in 1825, as the Dalaruan Distillery Papers indicate (ABDA, DR4/8/13). The true number of coopers active in Campbeltown that year was undoubtedly higher than seven, especially when the serious lack of good documentary evidence, prior to the Reform Act of 1832, is taken into account. The Campbeltown Voters Claim Book of 1832–52 indicates that five coopers managed to achieve the property qualification between 1832 and 1835; however, as it is difficult to see the majority of coopers in the town belonging to the élite, property-owning class, the number actually working in the burgh must have been considerably higher.

## COOPERS LANE: SITE HISTORY

The distribution of cooperages within the urban landscape of late 18th- and early 19th-century Campbeltown is difficult to assess from the documentary and archaeological evidence that survives. None the less, the site at Coopers Lane does give us an opportunity to view the site history of a cooperage in terms of its physical remains and the cartographic and documentary evidence.

The Coopers Lane site was clearly occupied by a building from the period of the first detailed map of the burgh, drafted in the 1760s by William Douglas; however, reference to the property within the primary documentary sources does not occur until the 19th century. The Valuation Rolls for the town begin in 1860, at which point the property was listed as a workshop, although in later Valuation Rolls the terminology changes to cooperage. Given that strong genealogical evidence has been gleaned from the Register of Sasines, which suggests that the property was owned by the McMurchy family and operated as a cooperage from at least the 1830s, it seems probable that the initial terminology used in the Valuation Rolls is misleading. Robert McMurchy, father of John and Daniel, owners in 1838 and 1839, was certainly operating from a cooperage in the Longrow as early as 1825 (Pigot's *Directory* 1825). This is supported by the Dalaruan Distillery Papers which show that he was producing barrels that year for the distillery (ABDA, DR4/8/13). Unfortunately the poor survival rate of documentary evidence means that there is no way of linking Robert McMurchy's known work record with the Coopers Lane site, even though the probability is high that this was his workshop.

The historical context of cooperage distribution within the burgh is very difficult to assess. Indications developed from a number of sources (none of which is entirely reliable, and all of which merely indicate ownership of workshops, rather than numbers of coopers active in the burgh) suggest that the early focus for the trade was centred on the peripheral streets surrounding the Main Street and off the Longrow. Later burgh development and expansion to the north and west during the 19th century was followed, at least partially, by the siting of cooperages within the newer areas of the town. Longrow still remained an important focus for the locating of cooperages during this period. It is this later development, fuelled by the rise of distilleries, that consequently led to the marginalization of the independent cooperages. This is best shown by the inventory of Daniel McMurchy dated 1873; all the debts owed to McMurchy were owed entirely by 14 separate distilleries, amounting to over £1100 (SRO SC51/32/22). The McMurchy cooperage was specializing in wet coopering by this time. As the century wore on, the role of the independents came increasingly under threat as cooperages were replaced by in-house workshops. It was financially more viable for distilleries such as Hazelburn, which was located to the north of the Longrow, to move over to their own distillery-based cooperages. Although this is a somewhat

silent development in terms of the documentary record, a ground plan of Hazelburn Distillery dating from the 1880s indicates the existence of a purpose-built cooperage at that time (Atkinson 1991, Fig 22).

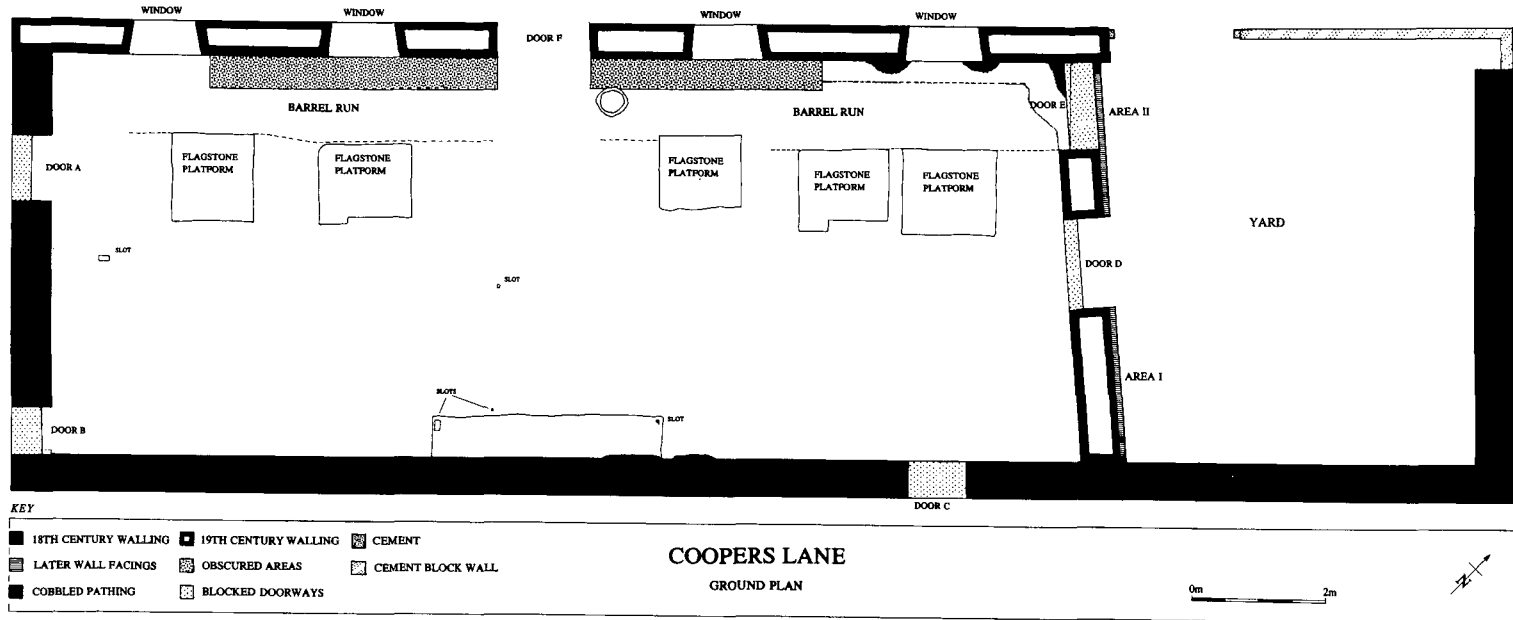
### COOPERS LANE: STRUCTURAL SURVEY

In order to relate the development of the craft of coopering within Campbeltown, with the physical remains of the trade, the site of a cooperage in Coopers Lane became the subject of a structural or standing building survey. This site was opted for as it represented an extant example, the fabric of which had not been too badly altered since it ceased to function as a cooperage in the 1930s.

Owing to the current use of the building as a joiners' workshop, the ground plan proved most difficult to retrieve. The floor was constructed of a series of concrete screeds carried out at different times over a period of years, adding to the confusion introduced by the large work benches and timber racks. The ground plan itself proved to be almost rectangular, measuring approximately 15 m × 7 m. Detailed inspection revealed five squarish flagstones, varying in size, set within the concrete (illus 4). At first these were assumed to be covers for pits in the floor, but on closer examination they proved to be 30–50 mm proud of the concrete. The position of these slabs within the cooperage is of great interest in any attempt to assess their function; they were all in positions where the maximum lighting conditions would be obtained; therefore the siting of these slabs was not by chance. They had the effect of dividing up the floor space into five separate work areas, termed here barrel construction bays. Each would have had a team of two (a cooper and his assistant/apprentice) working at them, undertaking the fabrication or maintenance of barrels or kegs. Earlier flooring was evident along the front wall, made up of relatively small flat slabs, approximately 0.2 m by 0.1 m in size, giving a cobbled effect. These small slabs were spaced quite widely apart, with the intervening areas filled with what appeared to be a mixture of soil and burnt organic material. The discovery of burnt organic residues within the cobbled flooring was not a surprise; the use of fire primarily to soften or 'sweat' the timber staves, and latterly to fire the casks in order to dry them out (Jenkins 1973), were central parts of the cask construction process. Also visible within the concrete screeding was evidence of what appeared to be the covered-over remains of a 'barrel run'; this would have allowed the newly constructed and unwieldy barrels to be removed with ease along the run and out into the stack yard. The positioning of the barrel run directly in front of the bays (mentioned above), and out of door E in the north-east gable, appears to define its use.

Unfortunately, the practice of whitewashing the walls inside the building meant that detailed analysis of the stonework was not possible. This was particularly telling when the exterior of the south-east wall (which was not whitewashed) was examined; this examination could be carried out only under the most difficult of circumstances for the external face of this wall lay c 0.3 m from the next building. The wall had been heightened by two courses, something that the whitewash had obscured inside the building. On the interior of this wall was a series of holes and small slots which related to a number of racks and cupboards, and apparently the locating holes for a timber half-loft which had at one time occupied the south-western third of the building. The only other feature of note was a blocked doorway (door C), 0.8 m wide and 1.6 m high above the current floor level; this lack of height would seem to indicate that the door belonged to an early phase of the building. The doorway had three clear phases of blocking to add credence to this view. The first two phases of blocking were carried out to allow the door to be changed into a window; a sash window was still in place, covered by planking on the outside. Cartographic evidence indicates that the building directly to the south-east of the cooperage was constructed between 1801 (George





ILLUS 4 Coopers Lane coeprage: ground plan

Langland's map) and 1868 (Ordnance Survey), at which point door C must have ceased to be used as an entrance and was converted into a window. The light reaching this window must have always been impeded, therefore it seems quite probable that the window's function was related more to fresh air than to light.

The stonework of the interior of the south-west gable was also obscured by whitewash. It became evident that this was also an early wall, with two low doorways in position. Door A measured 0.9 m wide by 1.5 m high and was filled with a blocking of small stones, apparently executed from the south-west. Door B measured 0.7 m by 1.3 m and also appeared to be blocked off from the structure to the west; thus both doors now appeared as inshots in the wall face defined by decayed wooden frames. In the case of A, the framing had been singed and there were also traces of charring on the stone blocking. Between the doorways there was a small rectangular flue which had been blocked and partially filled with a mixture of lime mortar and rubble and at least 12 sherds of 19th-century pottery. Across the entire length of this wall was a dark band in the whitewash, further evidence of the half-loft already mentioned above. The last feature to come to light on this wall was a large crack running down the wall from the north-western wall-head to the floor. The relevance of this will be discussed below.

The internal face of the north-west wall was obscured in places by cabinets and by whitewash. However, in general this wall was of a very regular appearance, with four large windows, 0.9 m by 1.4 m, set within splays measuring 1.1 m by 1.5 m. The sash window frames and panes were still intact, covered over with blocking from the interior and exterior. In the centre of the wall was one large double doorway, measuring 1.5 m by 2.3 m, which had a small royal crest of Queen Victoria branded into the wooden lintel. This probably indicates re-use of military timber (S T Driscoll, pers comm), unless the brand was applied subsequently, which seems unlikely. It may supply a *terminus post quem* of 1837 for the construction of the doorway.

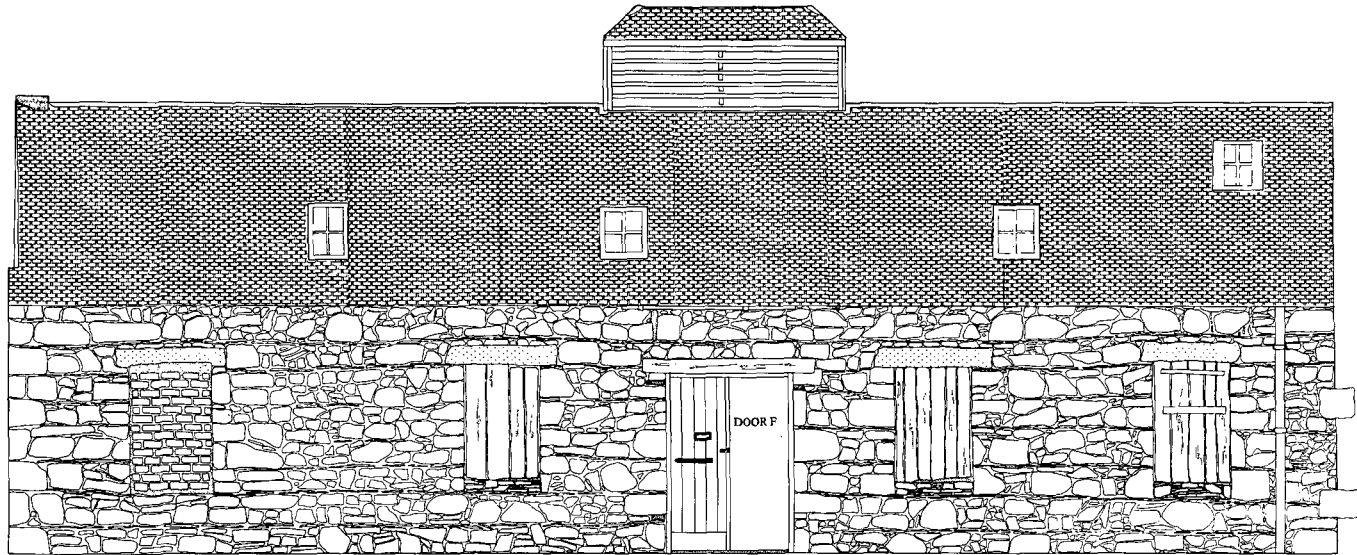
On the exterior of the north-west wall the construction technique was clearly visible (illus 5). The wall was built of sandstone rubble with seven thin levelling courses of small stones and slates. This banded construction is very different from that of the north-east gable or of the walls of the yard, and was done to increase speed of construction. There was evidence of locating blocks and slots around the central doorway which seems to indicate the position of a porch; the 1:500 scale 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1868) depicts a porch at the doorway and another at the far end of the building, up against the current cement-block yard wall. Consequently, no trace of this second porch exists today as this section of the original walling has been removed in the relatively recent past (see below).

The internal face of the north-east gable was obscured by whitewash, but two large blocked doorways were clearly evident. Door E measured 1.3 m by 2.1 m and was filled with rubble blocking, while door D measured 1.4 m by 2 m and was blocked with late Victorian yellow bricks. It would appear that door D is the later of the two, cutting directly through the chimney, the evidence for which was two hairline cracks running down the wall above this doorway (see below). A serious crack, running from the floor to the roofline and very similar in terms of its position, size and effect, to the crack noted on the south-west gable, was also visible.

The external face of the north-eastern gable was by far the most complex of all the walls examined (illus 6). The way in which door D had been cut through the lower portion of the chimney was very clear on this side, showing that the chimney was contemporary in construction with the two mantels on either side (Areas I & II). Farther up on either side of the section appeared the concrete skirting for another roofline: on the south-eastern side of the chimney this appeared to run from the top of the yard wall to somewhere behind the chimney stack and was delineated in some places by areas of broken roof-tiles and bricks, mixed with concrete. On the north-western

COOPERS LANE  
NORTH WEST WALL - EXTERIOR

0m 2m



- KEY
- CEMENT
  - FERROUS ELEMENTS
  - BLONDE SANDSTONE BLOCKS

ILLUS 5 Coopers Lane cooperage: frontage (north-west wall)

side, this concrete skirting ran from behind the stack down to where it faded into area III, better quality dressed stone jutting out some 0.25 m from the gable face. The general make-up of the wall was of roughly cut red sandstone mixed with old red long bricks and Victorian yellow bricks; this mix was especially evident at the top of the chimney and along the roofline butting up against the gable. The serious crack visible on the interior of this wall was also evident on the exterior, and some attempts had been made to cover it up with cement and rubble on this exterior side.

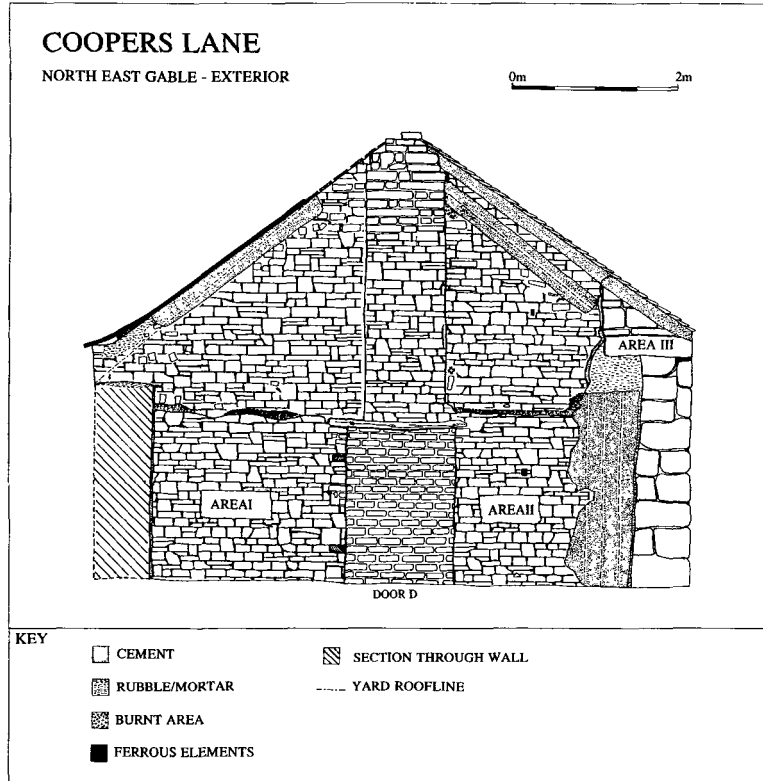
Of the north-western wall of the yard only the internal face was fully accessible. This wall, made of roughly cut red sandstone, was a surviving fragment of the original building, extending from the back wall of the current building. Taken in conjunction with the back wall of the cooperage it represented the full length of the back wall of the original structures. In some places it had been badly masked by concrete screeds, although two slots for the bases of crucks were evident and had been filled with rubble and roofing tiles for stability. Also visible was a small square hollow in the face of the wall, filled with Victorian yellow bricks. The shape and regularity of this suggested that it was a small window, although the other side of the wall was completely obscured at this point and therefore this interpretation could not be confirmed.

The large and distinctive vent, positioned in the centre of the roof and measuring 2.8 m by 0.8 m and 1.2 m high was of a simple build, with louvre slats running along its southern and northern faces. Vents like this one were essential in cooperages given the amount of smoke and, as the 19th century wore on, steam (steam-powered saws and steaming chests) being generated on the workshop floor. The roof itself was constructed of standard 19th-century slate tiles with four small skylights. Internally 23 rafters resting on the wallheads supported the roof, with horizontal cross-bracing some 0.8 m above wallhead height. There was also a series of vertical bracings running between the roof apex and the cross straps.

## COOPERS LANE: INTERPRETATION AND PHASING

It has not been possible to prove whether the original structure was built as a cooperage, though three main phases of use can be identified from the structural evidence, and a fourth phase is inferred. We do know from cartographic evidence, in the form of William Douglas's map, that the building was in existence from at least the 1760s. During this primary phase of occupation the structure was 22.7m long by 6.7 m wide, with evidence from the surviving remains (the yard walls) that it stood 2.5 m to the wallhead. Its roof, apparently supported by wooden crucks embedded in the wall some 0.4 m from the ground, was probably of pantiles and was probably hipped. The evidence for this comes from the inner face of the gable (the north-eastern wall of the yard), where the bottom of two slots for crucks can clearly be discerned, and from the positioning of a piece of tile between the Phase 1 wallhead, and the courses added on when the building was heightened in the late 1860s. This was certainly the case for the later roofing of the yard as pantiles can clearly be seen embedded in the concrete skirting that defines the yard roofline in the current north-eastern gable.

The Phase 1 structure appears to have been destroyed, at least in part, during the 1860s; although the building is shown as a ruin on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1868), the Valuation Rolls and Slater's *Commercial Directory* for the period suggest that it was still in use. It is postulated that a fire may have partially destroyed the structure. In this scenario, three-quarters of the original roof and the front wall may have been destroyed or removed. Effectively this would have left the southern gable still standing, along with the back wall and a 5 m section of the original structure (which was later to become the yard), including the tile roofing. At this point a



ILLUS 6 Coopers Lane cooperage: north-east facing gable

rapid rebuilding occurred, the Phase 2 gable (the current northern cooperage gable) being incorporated to support the remains of the Phase 1 roofing and front wall. The new front wall to the cooperage was also added at this point, with two extra courses added to the back wall, raising the roofline height by c 0.3 m. This rebuilding may also help to explain the anomalous Area III jutting out from the wall of the Phase 3 gable (illus 6). It is evident that the new front wall was established slightly in front of the original one; the cobbled flooring against the interior of the new front wall (Phase 2) must therefore relate to the period of rebuilding in the 1860s and cannot be an original floor deposit.

In terms of internal features, the blocking of doors A and B cannot be tied down to a particular phase, although the charring of the trims and blocking of door A might conceivably relate to the period of destruction during the 1860s. Door C may have been altered by this time to a window, this might be reflected in the primary phase of window blocking. Door F was a direct product of the rebuilding. It would seem most likely that door E was created during the rebuilding to allow access from the new part of the structure to the old one; the cemented-over 'barrel run' lines up with this door, and suggests a primary use of this doorway in the design of this phase of the cooperage. Other evidence to support this phasing comes from the fact that the door is not visible from the exterior, being masked by Area II which is clearly contemporary

with the construction of the chimney. Areas I & II and the chimney were contemporary with each other and represent a third phase of activity on the site when no direct access between the cooperage and the Phase 2 portion of the building was achievable. Door E was blocked by the construction of Area II, while door D had not been cut through yet. (This section of the gable-end was still occupied by the base of the chimney.) The abandonment of door E may well be related to the appearance of the severe structural cracks on both gables, as the weight of the roof forced the front wall (which had merely been butted on) outwards. The remnant portion of the Phase 1 building was still being used at this point (the evidence for which is the construction of the chimney), although it was no longer accessible from the main cooperage building. A possible fourth phase of use is apparent: door D was cut through the base of the chimney, allowing direct access between the Phase 2 building and the Phase 1 structure (the yard). Exactly when Phase 1 (the yard) lost its roof is unknown; door D may be contemporary with the demolition of the Phase 1 roof and front wall. The chronological relationship of the floor features within the Phase 3 building was very difficult to establish, although the large flagstones do tie in well with the Phase 3 windows, and seem to be a result of the rebuilding programme.

Three key elements were identified within the building as indicators that the cooper's craft was undertaken on these premises: the flagstones (indicating barrel construction bays), the cemented-over barrel run in the floor, and the large louvre-sided vent in the centre of the roof. These elements, taken together or as individual indicators of the trade, can help to identify the historical use of a structure; in this case, the support of documentary sources, in particular the Valuation Rolls, the Register of Sasines and the testaments and inventories of Argyll, have strengthened the interpretation of the building.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This survey has gone some way towards the development of an analytical approach to coopering within a West Highland burgh of the post-medieval period. Much of this analysis has focused on this site's particular history; nevertheless, a particularist approach was necessary if any of the complexities of a craft such as coopering were to be drawn out. A heavy reliance on documentary evidence was necessary if any assessment of the social context of the trade was to be achieved. The use of structural survey techniques proved to be successful; several elements became apparent that may be diagnostic indicators of cooperages (both independent and distillery based): in particular the large roof vent, the flagstone platform in each construction bay and the barrel run. If a 'craft' archaeology is to be developed – something that is much needed – then a greater range of trades will need to be targeted.

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